

Summer Project – II
On
‘A Critique on the Dictum of Morality’

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for Award of Degree of
BA Hons English

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DECLARATION

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I, Aditi Guha Thakurta, student of Bachelor of Arts (Hons.) in English of Amity Institute of English Studies and Research, Amity University Uttar Pradesh, hereby declare that I have completed the Non-Teaching Credit Course on ‘A Critique on the Dictum of Morality’ in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Bachelor of Arts (Hons.).

I declare that it is an original work and has not been submitted so far in part or in full, for award of any other degree or diploma of any University or Institution.

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Abstract

Plato had, under the semblance of Socrates, engendered the wisdom of the fool in *The Republic*, wherein he personized a prisoner who eluded, in *The Allegory of the Cave*. The prisoner was deemed a lunatic, who was born as a captive in a cave; returned to his inmates and attempted to persuade them that there is a world, far greater and exciting than the world of the cave.

What has remained constant since the genesis of literature, is the fact that it is the mirror of the society around us. Thus, it would be sensible to assume that those regarded as fools, are in fact some of the wisest, most sagacious of individuals for harbouring the ability to mutilate the threshold of societal norms: the black sheep of the society so as to say.

My primary text, *Beyond Good and Evil*, explores a similar concept but with a nihilistic, antithetical approach. It is a text that dismembers the comfort zone. Friedrich Nietzsche prudently articulates the rejection of Western conceptions of truth and God, good and evil. Nietzsche argues to evince that the Christian worldview is entrenched in falsities in lieu of the divine, and is debased with a 'slave morality'. He implicitly solemnizes Darwin's theory of the 'Survival of the Fittest' by introducing a philosophy which grounds the self in the present, foisting their own 'will to power'.

About the Author

Friedrich Nietzsche's inordinate inspiration for his works has been derived from his own life. His birth into a devoutly Catholic family; his education which directed him towards being a clergyman and his eventual rejection of religiosity and contempt for Christianity. He was born in 1844 in a town known as Rocken, near Leipzig. The inception of his diminishing faith in Christianity began when after graduation, Nietzsche started studying theology and classical philology at the University of Bonn, hoping to become a minister. However, after a semester he quit it and lost faith as well. In his 1862 essay, *Fate and History*, he discerned that history had refuted and invalidated the central indoctrinations of Christianity.

Encumbered in the group of the population who rely on facts and figures rather than mere word-of-mouth allegories, with alacrity he turned on whatever he had known his entire life. Even in his later works, Nietzsche exemplifies the importance of inquiry rather than impetuous and blind faith.

Understanding the rudimental framework of Nietzsche's life is pertinent in the comprehension and analysis of his works. Friedrich Albert Lange's works also had a profound impact on Nietzsche: his compendiums on Kant's dismissal of the up-and-coming consumerism in society; Europe's burgeoning materialistic demands, its exponential interest and advance in science; Charles Darwin's postulations on the evolution of humanity; and the growing suspicions against tradition and faith: all equitably influenced Nietzsche's philosophies.

In order to synthesize my findings in lieu of this paper through means of literature review, I have chosen two supporting research papers which corroborate my theory. They are, *A Morality of Immoralism* by Olatunji A. Oyeshile and *Beyond Good and Evil*, by Brian Leiter, published in the *History of Philosophy Quarterly*. The first paper argues for Nietzsche's reward of empowerment he grants man by virtue of Will to Power and the

concept of the Superman. He had explicated and justified how man should be endowed with authority over his own life with utmost freedom and hegemony, rather than acquiescing to human institutions and how these institutions are not utilitarian in the slightest when it comes to social order as they create an entity of ambiguity which shies itself of morality. This essay critically appraises the indenture on some of the significant presuppositions in Nietzsche's work in *Beyond Good and Evil* which is a stalwart on his ideas regarding existentialism.

The second paper, titled *Beyond Good and Evil* has pledged to explore the meaning the title of the primary text holds. However, there has been no coherent process to fathom it in the secondary literature of its philosophical holdings. This secondary text has made an attempt to distinguish what Nietzsche truly aimed at philosophizing by making use of these terms: good and bad – videlicet, a departure from certain peculiar values and agency.

Research is the creative and systematic work undertaken to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of humans, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications. (Wikipedia) There are several facets of research concerning the same and different methods to facilitate the aspiring process. Quantitative method is numerical, non-descriptive, applies statistics and uses mathematics and numbers. Qualitative method is non-numerical, descriptive, applies reasoning and uses words. Mixed method is a culmination of both quantitative and qualitative research methods and paradigm characteristics. Nature of data is a mixture of variables, words and images. Other types of research are exploratory research methods which involve a literature search or conducting focus group interviews. The exploration of new phenomena in this way may help the researcher's need for better understanding, may test the feasibility of a more extensive study, or determine the best methods to be used in a subsequent study. Explanatory method's primary goal is to understand or to explain relationships. It uses correlations to study relationships between dimensions or

characteristics of individuals, groups, situations, or events. Longitudinal method involves data collection over multiple periods of time. Cross-sectional studies or one-shot studies are those in which data is gathered once, during a period of days, weeks or months. Many cross-sectional studies are exploratory or descriptive in purpose. (International Network for Natural Sciences)

To begin this paper, firstly, I would like to delve into the idea of values: in terms of its existence in civic society and the inevitable conformity to it, according to how Nietzsche interpreted it. He perceived it with a radical attitude – one that coincides with my beliefs – which brings into question the ethos of values in itself, insofar as to refute its consolidations. According to how I perceive it, values today exist as a pillar of society in itself. What is ironic however, is the fact that these values are enforced, more than they are exercised willingly by people. The predecessor to *Beyond Good and Evil*, is *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* wherein he enunciates and births the idea of the Superman, who invariably is a person who authors accountability of his actions, rather than submitting to a higher power, or fate: ‘Thus it happened’ to ‘Thus I willed it’. In my primary text, the author assumes a counteraction to Stoics by virtue of the Superman, despite the fact that both are complicit to an “attitude of acceptance” (Tanner, 19) with respect to one’s individual life. But the grounds on which they perceive this view is fundamentally juxtaposing, hence, their attitudes are divergent as well. The Stoics surrender to the world and to their fate, without battling their individual covetousness, assuming that it is futile to reject what is to come. They maintain that their values are predetermined and are impositions of the world which they yield to after contemplating that only a singular attitude exists.

Nietzsche attacks this attitude by claiming that the Stoic has no special distinction of its own accord, and is rather analogous to other philosophers: “This is an old and never-ending story: what formerly happened with the Stoics still happens today as a

philosophy begins to believe in itself.” (Nietzsche,) The pivotal point of concern in his doctrine of perspectivism is that he proclaims this order is in reverse because there is not, and cannot be, any perusal which is free of values of the world in accordance by either the acceptance of a systemic vessel of values which is awarded by the world or the fact that one is enforced to comply to build his own value system: because existence of either option would pervade a dichotomous relationship in black and white which would eliminate the extant of a gray area, one that forces us to think and construct a different worldview which is in lieu of the idea of accountability of actions rather than dealing with life encumbered by a system of values which thinks for the individual.

The interdependence and interrelation of the terms ‘good and evil’ could suggest a peripheral view of the whole matter which attempts to heighten the importance of the binaries of these terms if we were to look at them as discernible opposites. Characteristically, Nietzsche does not try to declassify the terms. Rather, he brings centerstage the conundrum of morality and how it affects the lower classes due to the privileges bestowed upon the bourgeois. A willingness to “recognize untruth as a condition of life” (BGE, 4); defying being a “free spirit” which in today’s “modern” world is equal to advocating for those social groups who lack a platform and being a pallbearer for the people’s suffering (BGE, 44); not selling oneself out by being “under the spell and delusion of morality” (BGE, 56) and most importantly, how the “ruling group” treats the “lower rank” (BGE, 220).

When Nietzsche puts forth the topic of master morality and slave morality, one would inevitably place these two on the opposite ends of the spectrum and while that is one way to look at it, we cannot eliminate the possibility of how the concept of good and evil in themselves are entrenched into the value systems of these archetypes. However, while he does make use of these labels to ascertain a level of distinction, it should not be interpreted as a passing of judgment on controversial analysis of questions which arise from this, such as:

are master and slave moralities the only existing moralities that embody this difference? Are they only limited to oppressed classes and their ruling counterparts? The answer is 'no'. To answer the first question, when Nietzsche endorses the idea of slave and master morality, he is only exemplifying the real status quo of the society by providing it as an example. On the other hand, I think that even though he is merely citing examples as an attempt to make us understand the distinctions, it would not be incorrect to assume that the world is indeed deftly bifurcated into these two classes. Whatever that the media feeds us, in entertainment and in news, every seemingly unworthy thing is tied to the two classes. If we bring into question today's post-modern, liberalized society where even a miniscule item is commodified and the body is a site of commercialization, it is invariably the lower classes who 'sell themselves' to the upper classes. This further expands a space for a question that suggests how and where morality comes into the picture. Nietzsche propounds the idea that in order to survive, man must do whatever he needs to. The master who thrives and profits upon the labour of the slave is supposedly immoral for devaluing a fellow human on the grounds of superficial qualities. But this immorality also assumes that the slave is toiling to feed himself and his children which is deemed as an act of God. Therefore, survival transcends morality in this essence. It must be mentioned that this crude dichotomy that I just elucidated upon, is my way of understanding the dichotomies holistically and an opinion which I have borrowed from Nietzsche's distinctions, since it is valid to me that to construe morality as something human, it is pertinent to look beyond the religious worldview that it is seemingly encumbered in.

Such a distinction creates a sustainable semblance of man's relationship with man. I believe, this is a notion that Nietzsche would reluctantly agree with: the *homo sapien* is a social animal which thrives off of verification and institutionalized relationships for the sake of limiting volatility. Knowing that a certain distinction exists which demarcates an

individual's and a group's social and economic position, is assuaging in an uncanny way for a lot of people. The human psychology functions in such a way that when one is aware of the other's stature, one feels less threatened; and this feeling is more nuanced and pronounced for those who adhere a higher position in society for it bestows feelings of power and authority. According to me, the province of master and slave morality is functional in a way similar to this distinction.

The question that arises is: who creates this distinction? Is it God who differentiates among his children? Or is it his children who betray him, his love and are complacent to their vices of greed and power? Nietzsche's account of the "history of morals and forming the foundation of his immoralism" (Oyeshile, 2012), informs that it is the "aristocracy or the ruling class that formulates the principle of morality at any given period in society." This idea, although foreign and outdated for the current taste of society, still exists. The idea that one is subservient to persons of lower rank and only has duties towards one's equals carries a sternness of principle that is corresponded as God's way. Hence, the values embedded in such thought and practice is beyond good and evil.

According to Nietzsche, in more evolved cultures, there have been attempts made at mediation between master and slave morality. "The moral discrimination of values has originated either among a ruling group whose consciousness of its difference from the ruled group was accompanied by delight, or among the ruled, the slaves and dependents of every degree. Here is a place for the origin of that famous opposition of good and evil." (Oyeshile, 2012) In evil, the individual's emotions project power and harbour precariousness, a certain terribleness, and strength that does not permit contempt to develop. According to slave morality, those who are evil thus inspire fear, and according to master morality, it is precisely those who are good that inspire, and wish to inspire, fear, while the bad are felt to be contemptible." (Nietzsche, 1886:204-207).

Nietzsche defined master morality as the morality of the determined man. He condemns the view (which he identifies with constituted of everything that is harmful. He argues that apostles of this view have pretermitted the origins of its values and it is a trifling fundamental of a reproving acceptance of habit: something that has any kind of use to society has perpetually been deemed as something good: like an employed man is of use to society, but one who is unemployed is a burden. He further explicates that in the prehistoric state: “The value or non-value of an action was derived from its consequences” (Nietzsche, 1967) but at the endmost point, “there are no moral phenomena at all, only moral interpretations of phenomena.”

The essence of master morality is nobility. Nobility is synonymous to other attributes such as, open-mindedness, courageousness, truthfulness, trustworthiness, and an unambiguous sense of one’s self-worth. Master morality is embedded in the ‘noble man’, with a impetuous idea of the good; then the idea of ‘bad’ comes into being as what is contrary to ‘good’. “The noble type of man experiences ‘itself’ as determining values; it does not need approval; it judges, ‘what is harmful to me is harmful in itself’; it knows itself to be that which first accords honour to things; it is value-creating.” (Solomon, Martin, 2005) In master morality, individuals define what is good based on whether it benefits that person and their pursuit of self-defined personal excellence. (Nietzsche, 2008) To the extent that something is useful to the determined man, it resembles what he esteems in himself; therefore, the determined man glorifies this since they help him in a life-long interaction of self-actualization through the will to power.

According to Nietzsche, masters are architects of morality; slaves respond to master morality with their slave-like status quo in society. Unlike master morality, which is sentiment, slave morality is grounded in re-is cogently present, slave morality emanates from the frail. Due to the fact that the latter is reposite to oppression, it naturally vilifies its

oppressors. It is the inverse condition of master morality. Henceforth, it is characterized by pessimism and cynicism; and it exists only in opposition to what master morality appraises as 'good'.

Slave morality doesn't target applying one's will by strength, yet via cautious disruption. It doesn't try to rise above the masters, yet to reduce them to slaves as well. The pith of slave morality is utility. Nietzsche considered this to be a logical inconsistency. Since the powerful are smaller in number, juxtaposed with the majority of the weak, which is why they appreciate their power by adulterating the master into accepting that the reasons for slavery (viz., the will to power) are "evil", just as the characteristics the powerless possesses. By saying quietude is deliberate, slave morality tries not to concede that their modesty was in the first place constrained upon them by the master. Scriptural standards of quietude, good cause, and piety are the consequence of a ubiquitous predicament of the slave onto all mankind, and consequently subjugating the masters also. "The democratic movement is the heir to Christianity" (Nietzsche, 1973:125)—the political manifestation of slave morality is due to its fixation on opportunity and fairness.

This battle among master and slave moralities has been recurring throughout history. As indicated by Nietzsche, antiquated Greek and Roman social orders were grounded in master morality. The Homeric legend is the strong-willed man, and the traditional underlying foundations of the Iliad and Odyssey exemplified Nietzsche's master morality. He calls the heroes "men of a noble culture", giving a considerable illustration of master morality. Historically, master morality was defeated, as the slave morality of Christianity spread throughout the Roman Empire.

After the obliteration of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in 70 AD, Judea totally lost its freedom to Rome, and after the loss of the Bar-Kokhba revolt in 136 AD it stopped to exist as a public territory of Jewish individuals. Around then began the foundational battle

between polytheistic culture of the Rome (master, strong) and newly developed Christian monotheism in previous Judea and encompassing domains in the Middle East (slave, weak), which lasted consistently until 323 AD when Christianity was anointed as the official religion of the Roman Empire. Nietzsche denounces the victory of slave morality in the West, claiming that the popularity based development is the "collective degeneration of man". He claimed that the nascent democratic development of his time was rudimentarily slavish and powerless. weakness vanquished strength, slave vanquished master, re-sentiment vanquished sentiment. This re-assumption Nietzsche calls "priestly vindictiveness", which depends on the envious weak looking to subjugate the master, and consequently dissolve the reason for power itself by pulling the master down. Such developments were, as indicated by Nietzsche, propelled by the most shrewd retribution of the weak. Nietzsche saw in democracy and Christianity, the identical emasculating impulse which sought to equate the populace by making everyone a slave.

The conceptualisation of the will to power is rooted in existentialism. It is popular with respect to atheism as well. Nietzsche believes that philosophers of yore were chasing the doomed question of truth which was a futile attempt by all means. By searching for the "untruth as a condition of life means resisting accustomed value feelings in a dangerous way and a philosophy that risks this would by that token alone place itself beyond good and evil." (Oyeshile, 2012) He stresses further that philosophy is a tyrannical drive and the lost spiritual will to power. (Nietzsche, 1966:9-16).

To Nietzsche, an unfree will adds up to an abuse of cause and effect. One ought not wrongly reify cause and effect, as the natural scientists do. Then again, one should use cause and effect just as unadulterated ideas, that is, as customary fictions for repurpose of assignment and correspondence, and not for clarification. In the "in itself", there isn't anything of causal associations, of need, or of mental non-opportunity, there the effect doesn't

follow the cause. Nietzsche says there is no rule of law. That cause, effect and so on are our own conjectures. The unfree will, he accepts, is mythology and that, in actuality, it is anything but a conundrum of strong and weak wills. (Nietzsche, 1966:29)

Nietzsche did not necessarily surmise that adopting the way of the master morality would be the solution to the world's problems, rather he was of the opinion that a re-evaluation of both distinctions would be much more preferable and convenient so as to say. However, for the individual, adopting the master morality would be more appropriate.

Conclusively, co-dependence is the way earthly relationships sustain. In the above case, we see this through the lens of binaries of master and slave morality. It would have been hard to define what one is without taking away or adding to what is the 'other'. Nietzsche takes into account the Christian worldview as the herald of morality and then conveniently vilifies it and the European man. He both criticises yet praises the dictum of master morality: portrays it as something that is desired yet abhorrent at the same time. This ambivalent stance perforates the essence of *Beyond Good and Evil* which is why it is regarded as a dramatic treatise that builds and then destroys the Western thought into fragments that sustains yet probes relevant questions about why and how it deems society as it is.

