From Nietzschean Autonomy to a Moral Sociology

Ritchie Savage

RESUMO: O presente artigo tem como objetivo discutir a crítica Nietzschiana aos conceitos tradicionais de autonomia e moralidade convencional buscando desenvolver um modelo que se baseie no diálogo entre as trajetórias divergentes das teorias críticas marxistas e weberianas, criando assim uma nova base teórica para a construção de uma sociologia moral. **Palavras-chave**: autonomia, sociologia moral, Nietzsche

Introduction

The task of locating Nietzsche's stance in relation to traditional theories of moral, political and individual autonomy is not an easy one. Such an endeavor entails measuring Nietzsche's philosophy of autonomy against the notion of autonomy as "giving oneself the law," which is explicitly present in the works of Rousseau, Kant, and Hegel. However, it is only through Nietzsche's critique of the traditional conceptions of autonomy and conventional morality that we can develop a framework for bringing together the occasionally divergent trajectories of Marxist and Weberian critical theory in order to provide a fresh grounding for the eternally recurring necessity of a moral sociology.

The first potential problem we run into with the theory of autonomy is that there are aspects of Nietzsche's philosophy that, in a seemingly paradoxical sense, both deconstruct and build off of this traditional conception of giving oneself the law. On the one hand, Nietzsche seems to want to break with the notion of "oneself" present in theories of autonomy insofar as he ardently attacks the conception of the discrete and atomistic "I" or individual posited in the metaphysical tradition. On the other hand, Nietzsche sees the individual as exactly the vital force in history that stands at the pinnacle of culture as species-preserving. And this notion of the sovereign and independent individual giving herself the law, which Nietzsche elaborates in other passages, is similar to Rousseau and Kant's autonomous individual in many respects. But the stark contrast with the notion of the individual present in traditional conceptions of autonomy is that Nietzsche's individual is radically sovereign – an autonomous individual who, in a supramoral sense, creates her own

laws and values. Here we reach our second problem in conceptualizing Nietzsche's work in terms of a theory of autonomy insofar as the previous theories elaborated by Rousseau, Kant, and Hegel all conceived of the law as having an ideal and transcendental dimension, something that was realized within the individual yet in some sense still external and universal.

Regarding the first problem, if it is possible to analyze autonomy as "giving oneself the law" from a Nietzschean perspective, it is the "oneself" that must be questioned. Nietzsche argues that the notion of an individual or self as an immediately present and unitary construct is a problematic and ungrounded assumption. This is because the "oneself," as it is thematized in traditional moral and political philosophy, is premised on a series of unscrutinized assumptions: that of the atomistic individual, the unitary subject, the ego, the "I," etc. In the preface to *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche (1989) accuses the early metaphysicians, such as Plato, of being philosophical dogmatists whose only evidence for the existence of a subject or ego is superstitions about the soul handed down from the ages:

> And perhaps the time is at hand when it will be comprehended again and again how little used to be sufficient to furnish the cornerstone for such sublime and unconditional philosophers' edifices as the dogmatists have built so far: any old popular superstition from time immemorial (like the soul superstition which, in the form of the subject and ego superstition, has not even yet ceased to do mischief) (1).

In order to erase the traces that this inherently religious superstition has left in philosophy and science, Nietzsche (1989) calls for a radical rethinking of the nature of the soul. He writes about the Christian notion of the soul, "Let it be permitted to designate by this expression the belief which regards the soul as something indestructible, eternal, indivisible, as a monad, as an atomon: this belief ought to be expelled from science" (20). Rather than this spiritualized conception of the soul as a singular unit, Nietzsche (1989) suggests a more corporeal and plural soul, using locutions such as "mortal soul," "soul as subjective multiplicity," "soul as social structure of the drives and affects," and he describes the body as a "social structure composed of many souls," as a plurality of drives, through which one drive gains ascendancy by means of the affectual will (20,26).

The problem with this religious superstition of the atomistic soul is that when it is transposed into the language of philosophy as the "ego" or the "I," it takes on a falsely logical irrefutability. Nietzsche (1989) attacks Descartes on this point, arguing that the Cartesian formulation of the *Cogito* disguises the assumption, "I think," as an immediate certainty, whereas for Nietzsche, there is no such thing as an immediate certainty – it amounts to a contradiction in terms: "There are still harmless self-observers who believe that there are "immediate certainties"; for example, "I think" (23). Nietzsche (1989) questions whether there is an "I" that thinks at all. He evokes the freedom in which thoughts come of their own accord; he announces the "it" that thinks, only to later refute *it* as well and reach the conclusion that to posit a someone/something that thinks is simply the result of "grammatical habit" (24). Here we encounter one of the fundamental problems with language from a Nietzschean perspective in how everyday language denies and inhibits the autonomy of thought, in positing/demanding a subject or agent who thinks, solely by its syntactical structure.

With this critique of the individual, Nietzsche complicates any analytical path that would align him with the other major theorists of autonomy. Given the fact that he dismisses the freedom of the "I" even in

its ability to think, it becomes difficult to conceive of an individual with the capacity for self-rule. And as we will see below, the positing of an independent and discrete subject is central to the theories of autonomy elaborated by Rousseau, Kant, and Hegel.

Rousseau

In Rousseau's writings, the independent nature of the individual is a key component that guarantees the possibility of autonomy. In the *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, Rousseau (1992) states that one of the unfavorable consequences of living in a society is that it makes one dependent on the opinions of others: "In reality, the source of all these differences is, that the savage lives within himself, while social man lives constantly outside himself, and only knows how to live in the opinions of others, so that he seems to receive the consciousness of his own existence merely from the judgment of others concerning him" (16). Thus one of the major dilemmas that Rousseau must deal with is how it is possible for one to maintain individual freedom and the capacity for self-legislation while being bonded to others within society. With this in mind, Rousseau (1968) writes, " 'How to find a form of association which will defend the person and goods of each member with the collective force of all, and under which each individual, while uniting himself with the others, obeys no one but himself, and remains as free as before.' This is the fundamental problem to which the social contract holds the solution" (60).

Rousseau seeks to remedy this problem with his concept of the general will. He argues that each individual, by surrendering all her powers to the general will, guarantees that no one will have any power over her; in other words, by surrendering the same amount of freedoms as everyone else, we gain equal rights:

Finally, since each man gives himself to all, he gives himself to no one; and since there is no associate over whom he does not gain the same rights as others gain over him, each man recovers the equivalent of everything he loses, and in the bargain he acquires more power to preserve what he has… Each one of us puts into the community his person and all his powers under the supreme direction of the general will (SC 61).

Whereas it would seem that we lose individual freedoms in our departure from a state of nature, Rousseau argues that we are actually guaranteed more individual freedom and capacity for self-rule in society insofar as we are capable of forming societal institutions that provide a check against subordination to the rule of others. Kenneth Baynes (2007) explains this complex interrelationship between autonomy and social dependence, which Rousseau envisioned, in writing, "Thus, if individuals are to extract themselves form their condition of slavery and alienation, it can only be through a kind of 'bootstrapping' process in which they attempt to design institutions that will allow for maximal self-rule (the absence of subordination to the will of another) while acknowledging the inevitability of social dependence" (557). And as it turns out for Rousseau (1968), it is only through our dependence on and immersion in society that we gain the highest form of independence, which is moral self-legislation: "We might add also that man acquires with civil society, moral freedom, which alone makes man the master of himself; for to be governed by appetite alone is slavery, while obedience to a law one prescribes to oneself is freedom" (65).

Kant

In the "Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals," we see that Kant emphasizes the role of the individual as "rational agent" in her capacity for self-legisla-

tion. For Kant, it is only through the ability of each individual to give herself the universal law that a societal configuration in which individuals are bound by common laws is possible. Kant (1996) states,

> The concept of every rational being as one who must regard himself as giving the universal law through all the maxims of his will, so as to appraise himself and his actions from this point of view, leads to a very fruitful concept dependent upon it, namely that of a kingdom of ends… This lawgiving must, however, be found in every rational being himself and be able to arise from his will (83,84).

And Kant (1996) goes on to distinguish autonomy as self-legislation (from heteronomy) based on the stipulation that this subjection to the universal law must come solely from the individual will and not some external object in order for such self-legislation to be authentic; in other words, the individual will must give or subject herself freely to the universal law based on the principles of the law itself: "If the will seeks the law that is to determine it anywhere else than in the fitness of its maxims for its own giving of the universal law – consequently if, in going beyond itself, it seeks this law in a property of any of its objects – heteronomy always results" (89).

Hegel

The individual self is also an essential construct for Hegel's conception of autonomy. Whether Hegel represents autonomy as "conscience" or "being oneself in another," it is always through a reflexive process in which the self turns inward that the self realizes its identity with the other and its universality, thereby achieving freedom. In the section of *Phenomenology of Spirit* entitled "Spirit That Is Certain of Itself. Morality" Hegel (1977) describes Spirit as passing through three successive stages or "selves" in a teleological movement towards absolute freedom. As Hegel approaches the

third stage, self-consciousness directs its gaze inward and discovers itself as the foundation of pure duty and morality. Hegel (1977) states, "self-consciousness, for us or in itself, retreats into itself, and is aware that that being is its own self, in which what is actual is at the same time pure knowing and pure duty… This self of conscience, Spirit that is directly aware of itself as absolute truth and being, is the third self" (384). Thus, for Hegel (1977), this self, in its ability to purely apprehend itself, becomes conscience, and as conscience, the self reconciles its particularity with universality and, in its recognition of others, achieves absolute freedom: "In calling itself conscience, it calls itself pure knowledge of itself and pure abstract willing, i.e. it calls itself a universal knowing and willing which recognizes and acknowledges others, is the same as them – for they are just this pure self-knowing and willing – and which for that reason is also recognized and acknowledged by them" (397).

In the introduction to *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, Hegel (1991) explains this same process as the self reflects back on itself and achieves universality or recognition of the other, but this time he does so with more emphasis on notions of freedom and the will. He argues that the 'I' is not "restricted" to determinacy, that it is not simply particular, but rather posits itself as such. The truth and essence of individuality for Hegel (1991) is the will; individuality *as* will is the unity of the particular and the universal in self-reflecting consciousness: "The will is the unity of both these moments – particularity reflected into itself and thereby restored to universality" (41). Freedom in this sense is the synthesis of particular and universal, of determinate and indeterminate – it is the outcome in which the individual wills something as particular, whereby the will in its particularity still resonates with the will of the other in the uni-

versal. Hegel (1991) explicates this as follows: "Freedom lies neither in indeterminacy nor in determinacy, but is both at once… Freedom is to will something determinate, yet *to be with oneself* in this determinacy and to return once more to the universal… freedom and will are the unity of the subjective and objective" (42,43 my emphasis). Hence, willing something particular while still resonating with the universal is "being with oneself in another."

From this analysis of the salient position that the individual occupies as the self-generator of universal law in these theories of autonomy, it would seem difficult to carry on a discussion of Nietzsche as a thinker of autonomy in the same sense. However, as we noted in the introduction, Nietzsche also has a significant and elaborated theory of the individual as completely independent and self-sustaining in her capacity for self-legislation. In order to contextualize this aspect of his thought within his broader philosophy, given his aforementioned tendency to want to get rid of the notion of the atomistic and thinking 'I' altogether, we must also consider that Nietzsche (1989) viewed such presupposed given certainties as the "I think" to be fictions that we cannot live without on a certain level. He writes,

> And we are fundamentally inclined to claim that the falsest judgments (which include the synthetic judgments a priori) are the most indispensable for us; that without accepting the fictions of logic, without measuring reality against the purely invented world of the unconditional and self-identical, without a constant falsification of the world by means of numbers, man could not live (12).

As we move on to examine Nietzsche's conception of the autonomous individual, we will see similarities with the type of independence described by Rousseau, Kant, and Hegel, but with one essential difference: Nietzsche's is the *sovereign* individual, who, with a more radical independence, does not just freely submit herself to the law – she is the creator of laws and values.

The Nietzschean Force

In *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche (1989) places the sovereign individual, as the final fruit, at the end of a long historical development of conventional morality, which he refers to as the "morality of mores." We can read this morality of mores as a type of social and moral fact (in the Durkheimian sense) exerting a certain force or pressure on individuals culminating in certain forms of social action. From this perspective, the morality of mores, as a set of customary social laws that bind individuals together, is comparable to Kant's kingdom of the ends or something like a manifestation of Rousseau's general will.[1] And just as Rousseau would argue that moral independence is only possible through participation in a civil society ruled by the general will, Nietzsche states that his sovereign individual, who in a moral sense is endowed with responsibility and "the right to make promises," is a product of this morality of mores. Other than the ability to eventually become supramoral, Nietzsche's (1989) sovereign individual seems quite capable of self-rule in the Rousseauean/Kantian sense insofar as this individual "has his own independent, protracted will and the *right to make promises* – and in him, a consciousness of his own power and freedom, a sensation of mankind come to completion. This emancipated individual… this master of free will, this sovereign man…" (59).

But once again, Nietzsche's theory of autonomy represents a rupture with the

---

[1]Although, for Nietzsche, the morality of mores in not an ideal towards which we strive but rather a moment in history that the sovereign individual will overcome.

traditional framework of autonomy insofar as his sovereign individual dismisses any type of external or transcendental conception of the law, ideal notion of value, or universal conception of "the Good." This ideal of the universal law or good was, as we have seen, a crucial component of Rousseau, Kant, and Hegel's theories of autonomy. As Rousseau (1968) argues in his theory of the social contract, the general will should always align itself with the greatest good of society insofar as the citizens remain knowledgeable and independent from each other's views: "From the deliberations of a people properly informed, and provided its members do not have any communication among themselves, the great number of small differences will always produce a general will and the decision will always be good" (73). Also for Rousseau (1968), law and order, if just, have an ultimate sense of legitimacy in their transcendent dimension: "What is good and in conformity with order is such by the very nature of things and independently of human agreements. All justice comes from God, who alone is its source" (80). Likewise, Kant (1996) admits that his categorical imperative, in which we subscribe to universal moral principles, and his kingdom of the ends, in which individuals' wills are united though universal laws, have a transcendent and ideal dimension towards which we can only strive. "There arises a systematic union of rational beings through common objective laws, that is, a kingdom, which can be called a kingdom of ends (admittedly only an ideal)" (83). And finally with Hegel, we see that actions are only moral (in their form) when self-consciousness realizes itself as universal self and the universal is present in the particular. For Hegel, the presence of the universal in the particular acts as a check and prevents the downslide through which "absolute moral subjectivity becomes indistinguishable from the caprice of the individ-

ual will and the contingency of natural inclination" (Maeve Cooke).

However, Nietzsche (1974) would react to this assumption, which claims that there must be a universally recognizable moral component to individual autonomy, by arguing "The praise of virtue is the praise of something that is privately harmful – the praise of instincts that deprive a human being of the noblest selfishness and the strength for the highest autonomy (93). And in the following aphorism from *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche (1974) gives us an idea of what autonomy is for him: "You will never pray again, never adore again, never again rest in endless trust; you do not permit yourself to stop before any ultimate wisdom, ultimate goodness, ultimate power, while unharnessing your thoughts" (p. 229). Thus, Nietzsche clearly rejects the ideal and transcendent sense of what is moral and good, which is presented in Rousseau, Kant, and Hegel's theories of autonomy. But why does Nietzsche (1989) reject the transcendent and external dimension of moral values? Why are the notions of being autonomous and moral "mutually exclusive" for him (59)?

The short answer to these questions is that Nietzsche rejects the binding notion of what is good in a transcendent sense because, through his genealogical lens, he always sees value judgments, which designate what is good and bad or good and evil, as historically situated and, more specifically, as the embodied values of certain groups or forms of life within society. He provides an example of this type of historical situation in his description of the master and slave moralities. Concerning the master morality, Nietzsche (1989) notes, "the ruling group determines what is good" and that "in this first type of morality the opposition of 'good' and 'bad' means approximately the same as 'noble' and 'contemptible' (204). Thus, morality in its origins was a way for

noble types to create values with which to designate themselves: the noble type "knows itself to be that which first accords honor to things; it is value-creating" (Nietzsche, 1989, 205). In *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche (1989) develops this idea further in positing that it was the priestly caste that developed the slave morality, which created asceticism and the designation of "evil," in order to gain ascendancy over the noble and warrior types.

Because value designations are always the result of some will to power and reflect back on the historical conditions in which some group or "type" attempted to create a *value* for themselves in society, Nietzsche (1974) believes that autonomous individuals should always be above the conventional morality of "herd animals" and the decaying forms of life that these values support. Anything transcendent, "Apart, Beyond, Outside, Above, permits the question whether it was not sickness that inspired the philosopher (p. 34). In the façade of objective dialectical conditions in which philosophers disguise their "truths," Nietzsche (1989) suggests that "at bottom it is an assumption, a hunch, indeed a kind of 'inspiration' − most often a desire of the heart that has been filtered and made abstract − that they defend with reasons they have sought after the fact" (p. 12). In this light, and in direct reference to Kant, Nietzsche (1989) warns us of "the subtle tricks of old moralists and preachers of morals" (p. 13). And given Nietzsche's (1997) claim in the *Untimely Meditations* that "Kant clung to his university, submitted himself to its regulations, retained the appearance of religious belief, endured to live among colleagues and students", we might reconsider whether such a heteronomous creature should be taken seriously as a theorist of autonomy (p. 137).

As opposed to the "scholarly" ambitions of Kant, "Genuine philosophers, however, are commanders and legislators:

they say, 'thus it shall be!'" (Nietzsche, 1989, p. 136). Against the conservative decay of the categorical imperative, Nietzsche looks to the future and possibilities of transvaluation in which philosophers and scientists become the new, autonomous and sovereign individuals who hold the keys to this future as creators of values. Nietzsche (1989) describes these philosophers of the future as experimenters: "They will be harder… than humane people might wish; they will not dally with "Truth" to be "pleased" or "elevated" or "inspired" by her. On the contrary, they will have little faith that truth of all things should be accompanied by such amusements for our feelings" (p. 134). There is a similar passage in the posthumous "On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense" in which Nietzsche (1976) rebukes us for only desiring "the agreeable life-preserving consequences of truth," whereas we are "indifferent to pure knowledge" (p. 45). Thus, there is a sense that in order for science to give itself the law, it must break with these ideal value standards, which inhibit it, and risk the possibility of nihilism and even the destruction of humanity. "Giving itself the law" in this sense would entail the already inherent disposition of science to operate according to and formulate its own rules and procedures independently of any exterior valuation. Blanchot is clear in articulating these facets of Nietzsche's view of science in the essay "Reflections on Nihilism" in *The Infinite Conversation*. Blanchot (1993) writes in reference to Nietzsche's exaltation of physics, "Values no longer have value in themselves. There is also a positive trait: for the first time the horizon is infinitely open to knowledge, "Everything is permitted"… there is no longer a limit to man's activity" (p. 145).

Given Nietzsche's dismissal of any notion of an external law, a moral dimension, or "the Good" in a universal sense, is it

possible to re-articulate autonomy from a Nietzschean perspective?

We would like to argue that there is a positive new ground for autonomy evident in Nietzsche's work, one that might even outstrip the ethical considerations of other current theories of autonomy. In order to re-articulate autonomy in this Nietzschean sense we must first break with one of the most prevalent readings of Nietzsche in academia today, which sees in his theory of the sovereign individual only a philosophy of cruelty and indifference. If we reevaluate what Nietzsche really despises in theories of equality and democracy, we might arrive at the conclusion that it is precisely their leveling affect – the tendency of these supposedly humanitarian ideals to always obliterate difference in some type of consensus, to reduce (or more likely erase) everything individual into something common to all. In this sense, we might reread Nietzsche, in his theory of the autonomous individual, as a proponent of plurality and difference.

Another possibility for re-articulating autonomy can be gathered, as Blanchot has taught us, from the way in Nietzsche writes – his aphoristic methodology. If we depart from both the conception of "oneself" and the notion of an external law that traditionally define autonomy, then all that we are really left with is thought. In Blanchot's reading of Nietzsche, this is thought trying to think its outside, thought attempting to become free from itself, and this attempt is manifested in the very nature of Nietzsche's "fragmentary writing." Blanchot (1993) suggests that Nietzsche attempts to free thought from its fetters in a language that always announces and says "being" and that depends on an "I," whether it be man or overman. This is why the will to power (as overcoming / the force of becoming / being) and the overman (the 'I') are both shattered and dissolved in the face of eternal reccurrence (eternal destruction/rebirth of

the same). This new language, which could provide new possibilities for thought, is comprised of a "plural speech" that affirms difference (p. 82). Blanchot (1993) argues that through this fragmentary writing Nietzsche "thinks the world in order to free thought as much from the idea of being as from the idea of the whole, as much from the exigency of meaning as from the exigency of the good: in order to free thought from thought, obliging it not to abdicate but to think more than it can, to think something other than what for it is possible" (p. 163). The strength of this notion of thought "giving itself the law" in Blanchot's reading is that it allows for a conception of Nietzsche as the ultimate metaphysician, one which still locates him in the tradition of the "logos" eminent in the Greeks, Rousseau, Kant, and Hegel. In the end, there is no nihilism at all, only a hyper-vigilance, which seeks to keep thought close to truth/s. It is in Blanchot's reading of Nietzsche's work as an attempt at a "plural speech" that the theory of autonomy has a future. Whereas theories of autonomy often attempt to *account* for difference, a theory articulating a plural speech could perhaps someday generate claims that *embody* difference. In shaking off the linguistic dust of its self-enclosed immediate certainties, autonomy could become dialogic.

The Paradox of Society: Visions for a New Moral Sociology

We have debunked the commonly held perception of Nietzsche as the proponent of a theory of the 'autonomous' individual, in the sense of a 'sovereign' individual, insofar as Nietzsche deconstructs the notion of self present in any conception of the individual. Along these lines, there is also no sense of freedom without some juxtaposition to the law – without some reference to the 'anonymous social field as such' in the words of Žižek. Absolute freedom is a false construct, and we can only speak of the

capacity to give ourselves the law – to create society for ourselves in a revolution against previous legal and value systems. The idea of an individual reigning freely over everything is as ridiculous as it is pointless and only found in the most perverted Ayn Rand-inspired reading of Nietzsche. There is a problem that comes in with the individual or self as 'brand,' which is problematized in Sloterdijk's (2013) reading of Nietzsche, but like Sloterdijk, we would prefer to remember Nietzsche in "his old noon" (p. 84).

Rather than supporting the notion of the individual who reigns freely above all, Bataille (2006), in his reading of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* presented in the essay, "The Moral Meaning of Sociology," calls us back to the idea that Nietzsche "had hoped to found an order," as Zarathustra desires to 'throw his golden ball' (p. 109). Here we reach the paradox of society: the problem of society rests solely in the fact that it already exists, and as it already exists, it represents the values of a particular group supporting its own interests, whether it be the warrior caste, the priestly caste, the nobles, or the bourgeoisie. This will to power of particular groups is built into language itself. The goal then is to re-found society based on a better system of values that we create, and as these values will always be in flux, perhaps there would be an eternal return of this re-founding. In the time of Bataille (2006) and the surrealists, the problem with society was that "all value was placed in the individual" in a utilitarian conception of a 'contractual' society all too compatible with the deleterious effects of capitalism, which has returned for us now in its neoliberal form (pp. 103, 107-108).

It is no coincidence that Bataille's reference point to an antithetical and morally appropriate conception of society was found through Monnerot and in Durkheim, for it is through Durkheim that we first learn of the power of society over the individual.

Whereas sociologists, especially in the U.S., overly emphasize the role of moral integration as the dominant thread woven through the oeuvre of Durkheimian theory, we must not forget that Durkheim's claim that society is more than the sum of individuals was a rejoinder in a larger dialogue. Durkheim's theory was in part a critique and response to the reigning political utilitarian conception of society at the time found in the work of Herbert Spencer. This was a conception of society that saw in society nothing more than the sum of individuals, which we can see now, in retrospect, as a precursor to Thatcher's "there is no such thing as society." Much like Darwin's theory of natural selection, Spencer's theory of "survival of the fittest" reflected perhaps too closely a justification of its own historical context in competitive, industrial capitalist England, and it comes as no surprise how conveniently Social Darwinism was exported to the U.S. as a justification of racism and its deeply stratified caste-based society.

When Durkheim referred to the power of social facts over individuals and used the terms 'moral facts' and 'social facts' interchangeably, all while making periodic references to the French Revolution in works such as *Rules of Sociological Method* and *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, he was calling our attention to a counter tradition that existed against the Scottish Enlightment and a theory of utilitarianism descended from the economic liberalism and philosophy of the individual and contracts found in Locke and Smith. This counter tradition was the French Enlightenment with its democractic and utopian thinkers, and in this tradition that led up to the French Revolution, Durkheim found himself in the aftermath, acutely aware of the power of society. Whereas British society never knew a revolution on this scale and only witnessed industrial capitalism take off with success, as Smith theorized about the wealth of na-

tions, the generations leading up to Durkheim in France saw a different reality and a different society.

Thus French social theory from Montesquieu to Rousseau and Sieyès, developing out of the problem of a deeply entrenched feudal structure of property, social and political relations, conceived of the role of social theory on moral grounds to push for the instigation of a new society. Rousseau claimed that there is no basis for our current state of social inequality in a state of nature, nor in divine right, and through his theory of the general will, he put forward an argument for popular sovereignty. Accordingly, we know Sieyès as the rabblerousing author of "What is Third Estate?," the veritable manifesto of the French Revolution, who wrote about how the nobility, in their high positions of privilege, did not contribute to society and should therefore be expelled from the Nation. However, he was not just the author that theorized the constituent power and called for "extraordinary representation," he was also the first to coin the term "*sociologie*" in French, as it was recently found in an unpublished document, which predates Comte's usage of the term. And yet we have still not come to embrace the discipline of sociology in its inception as an inherently democratic enterprise founded on the instigation of a new society – and a truly 'democratic' enterprise, 'democracy' here in Rancière's (2013) sense of the term, implying "rule without ground." Why? It was not only Nietzsche who wanted to found a new order beyond the limits of conventional morality.

Kant, even for all of his aforementioned missteps involving the notion of the "kingdom of ends," still held on to conceptions of *kultur* and *bildung* that presupposed the possibility to critique the dominant power structures and institutions of the already exisiting society. In "Answering the Question: What is Enlightenment?," Kant responded to his own academic censorship by informing us that we need to harness the courage to use our own reason against the institutions of church and state – to not let these societal institutions tell us how to think. It follows that Marx need not be mentioned here in the obvious spirit of his critique concerning the existing value systems and institutional structures, except for that his ideas are finally linked to those of Nietzsche through the boldest and most hidden of Nietzschean sociologists, Max Weber.

It is fitting that we should end this quest for the founding of a new moral sociology with Weber, the secret king of the Nietzscheans. Some scholars of the history of ideas have described the impetus behind Weber's work as an attempt to synthesize the theories of Marx and Nietzsche, and nowhere does this idea come more to the forefront than in "Class, Status, Party." A social scientific inquiry pushing beyond the bounds of the narrowly conceived Marxist conception of class, Weber's classic essay bears the stamp of Nietzsche's thought, insofar as his whole discussion of status, honor, and caste is both derived from and in conversation with Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals*. Even though the only direct reference to Nietzsche's *Genealogy* is in Weber's critique of the Nietzschean notion of 'resentment,' much of Nietzsche's ideas about status, honor, and caste remain intact. And although there is a strong critique of the primacy of the notion of class in Marx, the general relationship between class and transformations in the mode of production is preserved.

Basically, Weber's argument is that during the intense moments of social conflict characterized by large scale transformations in the mode of production, much as is the case in Marx, issues of class and class struggle do come to dominate the scene of social relations. But what about the more normalized moments in history when no

sequence of rapid economic developments is present? It is at this moment that social and economic relations settle into a more regular set of power relations, which Weber categorizes as a hierarchy of status groups based on honor. Here we see that the same theorist of the 'iron cage' is the ultimate pessimist relative to Marx and Hegel, for there is nothing at the end of history that can save us. We are reminded here of a passage from the end of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. In a quote attributed to no one, or rather a voice acting as a rejoinder in his own internal dialogue, Weber (2001) writes, "Specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart; this nullity imagines that it has attained a level of civilization never before achieved" (p. 124). We could only imagine one author writing something of this air, and he would have indeed dropped it in as an aphorism unto itself.

In this sense, we can draw a general cleavage between two lines of thought: one is a more romantic tradition found in the works of Rousseau, Hegel, and Marx, and the other slightly more misanthropic tradition is located in the works of Hobbes, Nietzsche, and Weber. Although this is a slightly reductive framework for typologizing these thinkers, it suits our purposes. We begin with Rousseau who, in contrast to Hobbes, believes that inequality is limited in a state of nature. Inequality, rather, comes in with society. Like history itself, "its origin and progress" is "in the successive developments of the human mind" for Rousseau (1992, p. 43) similar to the notion of consciousness developed by Hegel, and it is conjecturally traced to the moment when someone takes ownership of something, or the moment when 'private property' is first fabricated – a form of property that is obviously tied to its own set of problems for Marx. Yet in "The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844," private property is not the cause but rather the effect

of a more fundamental state of alienation for Marx. This state of alienation is derived from a state of a nature in which humanity, as species-being, first represents nature as independent object to be worked on and manipulated for our own subsistence. However, even though alienation is concomitant with the human condition, Marx still presents us with a romantic picture in which we could image humans, although alienated, still working for their general subsistence, following that more serious problems come in with private property and other sets of intermediary steps between humans and their susbsitence, such as wages. And for all these thinkers there is some prize at the end of history, whether it would be the state's embodiment of the general will, absolute spirit, or communism as the abolition of private property.

A more misanthropic tradition had already begun with Hobbes'(1962) "war of all against all," which Nietzsche directly references in "On Truth and Lie in An Extra-Moral Sense" as the starting point of society, when we agree to live together, "herd-style," in a linguistic/social contract based on a collective agreement to endorse and live by a stable set of lies – both nomenclature and law being intrinsically linked in Nietzsche's line of thought here. Subsequently, through Nietzsche's works we see the 'will to power' working as groups, whom we might think of now as castes, try to gain ascendancy of other castes. This urge of groups to dominate others runs so deep in Nietzsche's view of society that it is, once again, built into the very structure of language itself. Sloterdijk (2013) echoes this in *Nietzsche Apostle* in writing, "Languages are instruments of group narcissism, played so as to tune and retune the player; they make their speakers ring in singular tonalities of self-excitation. They are systems of melody for recognition, which al-

ways delineate the whole program as well" (p. 8).

It is at this moment that Weber enters the scene with a theoretical picture of the nation-state in an ideal-typical framework that mirrors some of these Hobbesian and Nietzschean themes. Within this model of the state we are presented with a legal order in which subjects our bound within the confines of a general field of domination. We obey the rational-legal or bureaucratic order, and it in turn provides us with some protection, at least, in the form of rules and laws, which everyone must follow. However, within this general field of legitimate domination held intact by the legal order, power emerges as particular groups seek to gain privilege for themselves and ascendancy over others in either instrumental-rational or value-rational patterns of social action. Where access to material goods and economic resources are concerned, class remains the typical marker of this economic distribution. Yet what Weber offers us beyond the Marxist notion of class is that status groups also come to dominate one another within a legal order, and their positions need not necessarily or solely be determined by economic resources, but can be derived from the honor that accompanies status. Weber was no doubt influenced by Nietzsche here as he goes on to discuss ethnic and religious castes, and we once again confront the notion of groups who honor themselves and devalue other groups through both language and value systems. Against the M. M. Foster-Nietzsche reading that propagates fascism in her brother's thought, through Weber's reading we paradoxically return to our moral message, for it is through Weber's Nietzschean-inflected thought that we can first break out of Marx's conception of class to conceive of hierarchically imposed systems of power rooted in distinctions between race, ethnicity, and religion – as caste. When Loic Wacquant (2002) de-scribes the history of African-Americans as a group "constitutively deprived of ethnic honor," the reference is back to Weber, and Weber's reference is back to Nietzsche (p. 42).

Conclusion: Moral Sociology Drives a Stake Through the Heart of the Vampire That Is the Sociology of Morality

Even though it is the fashion to speak of "sociology of morality" these days, we still need first to develop a moral sociology. There is no reason to be "value-free," and there is no evidence that any social thinker ever truly was. It is true that Nietzsche was not exactly an egalitarian thinker, but what he really despised in democracy was the same notion of 'consensus' that denies plurality, a critique of that which has also resurfaced in contemporary theories of agonistic politics and radical democracy. Nietzsche was a pariah cast out because of his critique of conventional morality and his boldness to urge us to create new values. We need more people like him. In a society where the reigning values of the "individual" and "freedom" only serve the interests of the 'one-percent,' – those who only value themselves – we need to create our own new values in a Nietzschean sense, which are life-affirming, for us. Any college professor knows that we still confront intelligent students who cling dearly to capitalism because they believe it is the only system that will protect their values of the "individual" and "freedom." They are not aware that these are no longer their values. They are unaware of the very different historical context in which thinkers, such as Locke and Smith, espoused these values in economic and political terms, before their subsequent Cold War and then neoliberal reappropriations. Furthermore, they are unaware of the problems inherent in the trajectory of philosophical conceptions of the individual and autonomy traced through work of Rousseau, Kant, and Hegel, and forcefully critiqued in Nie-

tzsche. We, as sociologists, should not make the same initial mistake with morality, which we did with culture. In the movement from the sociology of culture to cultural sociology, we first, in a positivist sense, sought to analyze culture as an object that could be separated from the life-world, before we came to bow before its ultimate ubiquity and pervasiveness and rethink our definitions and approaches. The same can be said for future studies of morality. More than an object that leads to normalized patterns of social action, the question of morality is one of value and judgment, and value seeps into every aspect of our lives as 'cultural significance' does for Weber and the eleventh thesis does for Marx. We should crush the contemporary value system of capitalist distinction and the defunct modes of social scientific inquiry that are created to value and support it.

References

BATAILLE, Georges. "The Moral Meaning of Sociology," in *The Absence of Myth: Writings on Surrealism*. New York: Verso, 2006.

BAYNES, Kenneth. "Freedom as Autonomy." *The Oxford Handbook of Continental Philosophy*. Eds. Brian Leiter and Michael Rosen. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

BLANCHOT, Maurice. *The Infinite Conversation.* Trans. Susan Hanson. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.

COOKE, Maeve. Comment about Hegel on Ritchie Savage's paper prospectus.

DURKHEIM, Emile. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. New York: The Free Press, 1955.

DURKHEIM, Emile. *The Rules of Sociological Method*. New York: The Free Press, 1982.

HEGEL, G. W. F. *Elements of the Philosophy of Right.* Ed. Allen W. Wood. Trans. H. B. Nisbet. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

HEGEL, G. W. F. *Phenomenology of Spirit.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1977.

HOBBES, Thomas. *Leviathan*. New York: Collier Books, 1962.

KANT, Immanuel. "Answering the Question: What is Enlightenment?" 1784.

KANT, Immanuel. *Practical Philosophy.* Ed. Mary J. Gregor. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

MARX, Karl. "The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844" in *The Marx-Engels Reader*. Ed. Robert C. Tucker. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1978.

NIETZSCHE, Friedrich. *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future.* New York: Vintage Books, 1989.

NIETZSCHE, Friedrich. *The Gay Science.* New York: Vintage Books, 1974.

NIETZSCHE, Friedrich. *On the Genealogy of Morals.* Ed. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books, 1989.

NIETZSCHE, Friedrich. "On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense." *The Portable Nietzsche*. Ed. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Penguin Books, 1976.

NIETZSCHE, Friedrich. "Thus Spoke Zarathustra." *The Portable Nietzsche*. Ed. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Penguin Books, 1976.

NIETZSCHE, Friedrich. *Untimely Meditations.* Ed. Daniel Breazeale. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

RANCIÈRE, Jacques. *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2013.

ROUSSEAU, Jean-Jacques. *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1992.

ROUSSEAU, Jean-Jacques. *The Social Contract*. New York: Penguin Books, 1968.

SIEYÈS, Emmanuel Joseph. "What is the Third Estate?" in *Political Writings*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2003.

SLOTERDIJK, Peter. *Nietzsche Apostle*. Cambridge Mass: Semiotext(e), 2013.

WACQUANT, Loïc. "From Slavery to Mass Incarceration." New Left Review 13, Jan/Feb 2002.

WEBER, Max. "Class, Status, Party" in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. Ed. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills. New York: Oxford University Press, 1946.

WEBER, Max. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. New York: Routledge, 2001.

ABSTRACT: This article aims to discuss Nietzsche's critique of the traditional conceptions of autonomy and conventional morality in order to develop a framework for bringing together the divergent trajectories of Marxist and Weberian critical theory in order to provide a fresh grounding for the eternally recurring necessity of a moral sociology. **Keywords**: autonomy, moral sociology, Nietzsche