

Theodicy shading off into Anthropodicy in Milton, Twain and Kant

Antinatalism as Eve's Escape Route

in the Face of Wrongful Creation, Unrequested Existence and the Evil of Freedom

Through the ages the established Christian Church has tried to eradicate the Gnostic image of an evil Creator. Even though John Milton was not a Gnostic and perhaps not even a heretic, there is Gnostic imagery in his poem *Paradise Lost*. In what follows, I will elaborate on the Gnostic element in Milton's poem that perhaps has not attracted due attention. It is the anti-natalist stance: the idea of rejecting procreation so as not to produce further evil. I suggest we call this stance *the Gnostic temptation*. After dealing with Milton, I will present the late Mark Twain as someone who – presumably unwittingly – illuminates Milton's subtextual Gnosticism I will conclude with some pertinent reflections on Kant.

Although the anti-natalist escape route from existence is genuinely Gnostic in nature and had been propagated by Gnostic sects through the centuries, it has Christian foundations. In early Christianity, as well, man is but a sojourner in a world in which to procreate would not make sense. To quote an anti-natalist sample from the New Testament:

Art thou bound onto a wife? Seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? Seek not a wife. [...] But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; And they that weep, as though they wept not; [...] He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. (Pauli epistola ad Corinthos I., VII. 27ff)

In Luke and Matthew the same spirit appears in downright anti-human vestments when Jesus says:

If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. (Lucae XVI., 26) He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. (Matthaei X. 37)

According to the New Testament and the Church Fathers, it is better not to have children at all in order for redemption to come earlier. Abstention from procreation is thoroughly in keeping with the teachings of early Christianity even though the Church later succumbed to pro-natalism. So the most heretical thought to be found in Gnosticism is deeply rooted in the teachings of early Christianity. This thought perseveres and is present in John Milton's poem *Paradise Lost*, where it serves to bring before our eyes the tyranny of a God conceived of as a merciless monarch. In this poem, Milton at the same time develops a rationale to show that attempts at rendering a theodicy are doomed. Incidents of evil in a world that has been created by an omniscient and almighty God beggar justification (for details see A.D. Nuttal, *The Alternative Trinity. Gnostic Heresy in Marlowe, Milton and Blake*, Oxford University Press 2009 (1998)). It remains to be shown how, in *Paradise Lost*, one of the world's great literary works, theodicee shades into anthropodicy.

Ditheism. Our world moulded, not created out of nothing

At the heart of the Gnostic tradition – which has often been described as dualistic – resides the idea of the God-creator as a malevolent being: An evil demiurg, rather than a benevolent and extra-worldly God is responsible for the creation of this world. Therefore, all matter is evil, and hence the Gnostic's *anticosmism*. Since many Gnostic and, later on, Manicheist sects have as a common denominator the idea of an inferior creator God on the one hand and an

extra-worldly supreme deity on the other, one should speak of *ditheism* rather than dualism. Like Plato's demiurg, the evil creator did not create the world out of nothing. Rather, he formed pre-existing matter. Even though Milton was not a Gnostic, there is Gnostic – or at least Platonic – imagery regarding his account of the world's origins. He refers to the formation of pre-existing matter that is moulded into our world rather than our world's creation out of nothing. Uriel, the "sharpestsighted spirit of all in Heaven", says:

I saw when at his word the formless mass,
This world's material mould, came to a heap
(...)

*Till at his second bidding darkness fled,
Light shone, and order from disorder sprung*
(Third Book, 708-713, p. 162)¹

This deviation from traditional accounts of *creatio ex nihilo* might serve as a first indicator with respect to the presence of Gnostic imagery in *Paradise Lost*.

Anti-natalism and suicide as escape routes from existence in Paradise Lost

To minimize contact with the demiurg's world, the Gnostics propagated asceticism. Accordingly, and in order to shorten the concatenation of evil on earth, man is not to procreate. If man does not procreate, the divine souls incarcerated in the human flesh – with the right amount of wisdom and insight – will eventually return to where they belong and will reunite with the supreme deity. Hence the Gnostics' *antisomatism* and *antinatalism*.

In *Paradise Lost*, after the Fall and before the expulsion from paradise, it becomes clear to Eve that all future generations will have to suffer as a result of the first parent's sin. In the face of future suffering, she suggests to Adam to either refrain from procreation or to commit suicide:

*If care of our descent perplex us most,
Which must be born to certain woe, devoured
By death at last, and miserable it is
To be to others cause of misery,
Our own begotten, and of our loins to bring
Into this cursed world a woeful race,
That after wretched life must be at last
Food for so foule a monster, in thy power
It lies, yet ere conception to prevent
The race unblest, to being yet unbegot.
Childless thou art, childless remain: So death
Shall be deceived his glut, and with us two
Be forced to satisfie his ravenous maw.
But if thou judge it hard and difficult,
Conversing, looking, loving, to abstain
From love's due rites, nuptial embraces sweet,
And with desire to languish without hope,
Before the present object languishing
With like desire, which would be misery
And torment less then none of what we dread,
Then both our selves and seed at once to free
From what we fear for both, let us make short,
Let us seek death, or, he not found, supply
With our own hands his office on ourselves;*
(Tenth Book, 979-1002, p. 512)

Milton's Eve is promoting here either abstention from procreation or suicide to escape from the suffering of existence. In the face of wrongful existence for the future members of the human race, Eve first suggests the anti-natalist option, then suicide. In fact, , suicide is condemned by all major monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Also Adam, in the very beginning of mankind, rejects suicide as suggested by Eve². In antiquity – at least for some and in some periods – suicide was deemed an acceptable escape from suffering. In Milton's account, the first human, being a paradisiac criminal, resembles a slave in ancient Rome rather than in ancient Greece. In ancient Greece, criminals were granted the option of committing suicide as a means of self-punishment. With so many slaves at a later period in ancient Rome, taking one's own life wasn't an option, lest slave-holders be deprived of a valuable property. In Milton's account, something similar applies to the relationship between man and God. Suicide is not an option against a Christian backdrop; so much less so if we take into account the Christian doctrine of life in hell after death. Pointing to eternal punishment, Milton has no difficulties with having Adam reject suicide. Committing suicide, Milton's Adam explains to Eve, would be to no avail:

*Eve, thy contempt of life and pleasure seems
To argue in thee something more sublime
And excellent than what thy minde contemnes;
But self-destruction therefore saught, refutes
That excellence thought in thee, and implies,
Not thy contempt, but anguish and regret
For loss of life and pleasure overlov'd.
Or if thou covet death, as utmost end
Of miserie, so thinking to evade
The penaltie pronounc't, doubt not but God
Hath wiselier arm'd his vengeful ire then so
To be forestall'd; much more I fear least Death
So snatcht will not exempt us from the paine
We are by doom to pay; rather such acts
Of contumacie will provoke the highest
To make death in us live.*

(Tenth Book, 1013-1028, p. 514)

This argument allows Adam to dismiss suicide easily. Not to procreate, however, is and remains a Christian path and supererogative and cannot be so easily dismissed. By promoting abstention from procreation, Eve might even be seen as a Christian overachiever.

Milton's general portrayal of God will be utterly disturbing to the Christian believer, as it draws a monstrous picture of a God obsessed with power and glory and at the same time rhetorically evasive. These observations have been elaborated on and epitomized in a single sentence by Michael Bryson in his study *The Tyranny of Heaven*: "Milton constructs a God who is nearly indistinguishable from Satan." (M. Bryson, *The Tyranny of Heaven: Milton's Rejection of God as King*. Newark: University of Delaware Press 2004, p. 25) The verses quoted above evoke the image of a tyrannical God and give evidence of Milton's rejection of God as king. Transferred into a contemporary setting, the impossibility of suicide as an escape route from unbearable existence reminds us of modern detention camps, in which all measures have been taken in order to prevent the inmates from committing suicide lest they suffer less.

In book five of *Paradise Lost*, Raphael is sent to Adam before the Fall, to admonish him:

*God made thee perfect, not immutable;
And good he made thee, but to persevere*

*He left it in thy power, ordained thy will
By nature free, not overruled by fate
Inextricable, or strict necessity;
Our voluntary service he requires,
Not our necessitated, such with him
Finds no acceptance, nor can find.*

(Fifth Book, 524-531, p. 250)

A blatant contradiction evinces that has been arranged by Milton in a subtle manner: On the one hand God requires voluntary service of a free being while at the same time man is not entitled to opt out of existence. At the same time Milton frames the whole plot with God's foreknowledge as described in the beginning of book three: "*God sitting on his throne sees Satan flying towards this world, then newly created; shows him to the Son who sat at his right hand; foretells the success of Satan in perverting mankind; clears his own justice and wisdom from all imputation, having created man free and able enough to have withstood his tempter.*" (p. 124) In Milton's account, *it was foreknown to God from the outset* that man would have to be expelled from Paradise in the wake of primal sin. Thus the question arises of why God created man – and why Satan? – in the first place. If he knew from time immemorial that Eve would not be able to resist Satan's temptation, why did God not refrain from creation or create a more finely tuned world?

Man superfluous against the backdrop of other inhabited worlds

In the following passage, Milton is in keeping with The Old Testament's pro-natal stance.

*Whatever Hypocrites austerely talk
Of puritie and place and innocence,
Defaming as impure what God declares
Pure, and commands to som, leaves free to all.
Our Maker bids increase, who bids abstain
But our destroyer, foe to God and Man?*

Fourth Book, 744-749, p. 206)

Only a few verses earlier, however, Milton has Adam explain that a world without man would not be to the detriment of God. Without man, the stars

*then, though unbeheld in deep of night,
Shine not in vain, nor think, though men were none,
That heav'n would want spectators, God want praise;
Millions of spiritual Creatures walk the Earth
Unseen, both when we wake, and when we sleep:
All these with ceaseless praise his works behold
Both day and night.*

(Fourth Book, 674-679, p. 202)

According to these verses, even without man there would be sufficient praise for God. The latter passage almost renders man superfluous. This is all the more so, once we take into account other inhabited worlds, the existence of which is mentioned more than once in Milton's poem:

*Of amplitude almost immense, with Starr's
Numerous, and every Starr perhaps a World
Of destined habitation; but thou know'st
Thir seasons:*

(Seventh Book 620-623, p. 354)

Unrequested existence

According to many and as Milton expresses in his *Areopagita*, man's suffering after the Fall is to be justified and explained with respect to God-given freedom.. "Many there be that complain of divine Providence for suffering Adam to transgress. Foolish tongues! When God gave him reason, he gave him freedom to choose, for reason is but choosing; he had been else a mere artificial Adam, such an Adam as he is in the motions." (*Areopagita* 902) However, man was created good. If he fell, he fell because – prior to man's existence – there was evil in the world that pushed him. That is to say, man fell because he was tempted by Satan, an angel who had been created by God. Viewed from this angle, Adam and Eve are innocent victims who do not deserve punishment (for more details cf. Nuttalls study *The Alterntive Trinity*, p. 99f). So much less so do their offspring. In this context, Milton has Adam conceive of freedom as an unbearable burden. Hence he wants to "*render back / All I received, unable to perform / Thy terms too hard, by which I was to hold / The good I sought not.*" (Tenth Book, 749-752, p. 500)

Viewed from this perspective, man was not only pushed into a world that had already been tainted by God-made evil (the serpent-Satan), man was pushed into existence without being having asked, man was created wrongfully:

*Did I request thee, Maker, from my Clay
To mould me Man, did I sollicite thee
From darkness to promote me, or here place
In this delicious Garden? as my Will
Concurd not to my being, it were but right
And equal to reduce me to my dust,*
(Tenth Book, 743-748, p. 500)

At no point in time was Adam given a chance to consent to his own existence. His existence is decreed by God. Adam thus laments:

*Why is life giv'n
To be thus wrested from us? rather why
Obtruded on us thus? who if we knew
What we receive, would either not accept
Life offer'd, or soon beg to lay it down,
Glad to be so dismiss in peace. Can thus
Th' Image of God in man created once
So goodly and erect, though faultie since,
To such unsightly sufferings be debas't
Under inhuman pains? Why should not Man,
Retaining still Divine similitude
In part, from such deformities be free,
And for his Makers Image sake exempt?*
(Eleventh Book, 503-514, p. 548)

The following statement which stoked the so-called romantic interpretation of *Paradise Lost* is arguably among Mill's most heretical phrases: "*Better to reign in hell then serve in heaven*". (First Book, 263, p. 36) Adam adds to this Satanic verse, saying that not to exist is preferable to existence under God's conditions. Adam wasn't asked whether he wished to exist or not. He never experienced the freedom of choice not to exist. And this cannot be the case as Milton explains on several occasions, two of which go as follows:

*Who saw
When this creation was? rememberst thou
Thy making, while the Maker gave thee being?*

We know no time when we were not as now;

(Fifth Book, 856-859, p. 268)

Tell, if ye saw, how came I thus, how here?

Not of myself; by some great maker then,

In goodness and in power pre-eminent;

(Eighth Book, 277-279, p. 372)

Adam and Eve were given freedom, but not the freedom not to exist by committing suicide. Still, the Gnostic temptation perseveres in Milton's poem, as abstention from procreation is not the same as suicide. When thinking of herself, Eve suggests suicide. With respect to suffering future generations she suggests remaining childless. This antinatalist stance cannot be so easily dismissed from a Christian point of view and one will have to resort to the Old Testament to attack antinatalism on Biblical ground, since the New Testament lends support to an antinatal attitude, as quoted above.

Milton depicts a divine tyrant whose ruthlessness becomes blatant as we see him proceed with creation despite his foreknowledge of human suffering and the fact that his creatures cannot create a compensatory theodicee. So that Eve – knowing that there can be no anthropodicy, no justification of procreation in the face of imminent suffering – has the severest qualms about procreation. In the same manner in which Adam and Eve reproach God for having been created without asking for existence, any future human will condemn the first couple for having been created. To mention one current outlook: Milton's account of man's being created without having asked for existence is echoed in current debates on the topic of wrongful birth.

Giving freedom to man, God bestowed him with the freedom to do evil. The deed of giving freedom itself proves evil as it is an almighty and omniscient being endowing this "gift" upon a limited being, such as man. The evil of freedom is that it involves the freedom to do evil. In the next section, I will provide the reader with an overview of how Mark Twain, unwittingly echoing Milton, convincingly shows that the freedom to do evil demonstrates the wrongfulness of creation.

Mark Twain: Unrequested Existence and Freedom to do Evil as the Evil of Freedom

Being created without consent is taken up again in Twain's *The Mysterious Stranger* – a work unpublished in the author's lifetime. In his post-humorous and posthumous Gnostic prose, Twain repeats Milton's heresy and takes it to new heights:

“A God who could make good children as easily as bad, yet preferred to make bad ones; who could have made every one of them happy, yet never made a single happy one; who made them prize their bitter life, yet stingily cut it short; who gave his angels eternal happiness unearned, yet required his other children to earn it; who gave his angels painless lives, yet cursed his other children with biting miseries and maladies of mind and body; who mouths justice, and invented hell – mouths mercy, and invented hell – mouths Golden Rules, and forgiveness multiplied by seventy times seven, and invented hell; who mouths morals to other people, and has none himself; who frowns upon crimes, yet commits them all; who created man without invitation, then tries to shuffle the responsibility for man's acts upon man, instead of honorably placing it where it belongs, upon himself; and finally, with altogether divine obtuseness, invites this poor abused slave to worship him!” (Mark Twain, *The Mysterious Stranger and Other Tales*, Signet Classics, N. Y. 2004, p. 241)

The allegedly benevolent supreme being is exposed as a stingy and sloppy creator. And the exclamation „Who created man without invitation“ in *The Mysterious Stranger* matches

sentiments expressed by Twain in other writings such as “Little Bessie” (chapter two) where Twain compares God to Dr Frankenstein and, by the same token, man to Frankenstein’s unhappy monster:

“Frankenstein took some flesh and bones and blood and made a man out of them; the man ran away and fell to raping and robbing and murdering everywhere, and Frankenstein was horrified and in despair, and said, I made him, without asking his consent, and it makes me responsible for every crime he commits. I am the criminal, he is innocent.”

“God made man, without man's consent, and made his nature, too; made it vicious instead of angelic, and then said, Be angelic, or I will ill punish you and destroy you. But no matter, God is responsible for everything man does, all the same; He can't get around that fact. There is only one Criminal, and it is not man.”

(<http://www.positiveatheism.org/hist/twainbes.htm>)

In addition to this, Twain unmaskes the highly prized gift to choose between good and evil as a hideous heavenly legacy. Once again, man’s freedom to do evil testifies to the creator’s malignance:

No brute ever does a cruel thing – that is the monopoly of those with the Moral Sense. When a brute inflicts pain he does it innocently; it is not wrong; for him there is no such thing as wrong. And he does not inflict pain for the pleasure of inflicting it – only man does that. Inspired by that mongrel Moral Sense of his! A Sense whose function is to distinguish between right and wrong, with liberty to choose which of them he will do. Now what advantage can he get out of that? He is always choosing, and in nine cases out of ten he prefers the wrong. There shouldn't be any wrong; and without the Moral Sense there couldn't be any. And yet he is such an unreasoning creature that he is not able to perceive that the Moral Sense degrades him to the bottom layer of animated beings and is a shameful possession. (Twain, l.c., p. 180)

Of course, Twain does not want to make the case for immoral behaviour. It is only from the heavenly point of view of a supreme Deity, before man had been created and endowed with a free will, that he stresses it would have been better had God not created us. Twain himself was not a man without a moral sense, as is demonstrated by his commitment to anti-imperialism

The Gnostic image of an evil God never disappeared. A further common denominator in Milton and Twain is their presentation of the future in store for us. Milton’s narrative of earthly things to come reminds us of Dante’s most sinister delineations of hell and reveals that man’s freedom will be of no avail unto the last day.

Our future in Milton as revealed by Michael:

thou mayst know

What miserie th' inabstinence of Eve

Shall bring on men. Immediately a place

Before his eyes appeard, sad, noysom, dark,

A Lazar-house it seemd, wherein were laid

Numbers of all diseas'd, all maladies

Of gastly Spasm, or racking torture, qualmes

Of heart-sick Agonie, all feavorous kinds,

Convulsions, Epilepsies, fierce Catarrhs,

Intestin Stone and Ulcer, Colic pangs,

Dæmoniac Phrenzie, moaping Melancholie

And Moon-struck madness, pining Atrophie,

Marasmus, and wide-wasting Pestilence,

Dropsies, and Asthma's, and Joint-racking Rheums.

*Dire was the tossing, deep the groans, despair
Tended the sick busiest from Couch to Couch;
And over them triumphant Death his Dart
Shook, but delaid to strike, though oft invoc't
With vows, as thir chief good, and final hope.*
(Eleventh Book, 475-493, p. 546f)

Such are the horrors visited upon man by a monarchical tyrant-God as depicted in Milton's poetry. Now for Twain's prose, a Gnostic's revelation of our future:

“Would you like to see a history of the progress of the human race? – its development of that product which it calls Civilization?” (l.c., p. 219) “In five or six thousand years five or six high civilizations have risen, flourished, commanded the wonder of the world, then faded out and disappeared; and not one of them except the latest, ever invented any sweeping and adequate way to kill people. They all did their best, to kill being the chiefest ambition of the human race and the earliest incident in its history....” (l.c., p. 221f)

“»And what does it amount to?« said Satan, with his evil chuckle. »Nothing at all. You gain nothing; you always come out where you went in. For a million years the race has gone on monotonously propagating itself and monotonously re-performing this dull nonsense – to what end? No wisdom can guess! Who gets a profit out of it? Nobody but a parcel of usurping little monarchs and nobilities who despise you.” (l.c., p. 222)

Twain's narrative is a place where the old treasure hunt for a theodicy – a bad debt and unfeasible in the face of deliberately chosen malign design – yields to the necessity of an anthropodicy (a justification of procreation against the backdrop of imminent suffering). This is not marred by the fact that Twain's quest for an anthropodicy is rather implicit than explicit. And no sooner has he adumbrated the quest for an anthropodicy than he denies its possibility, saying, with regard to procreation: “To what end? No wisdom can guess!” In Milton and Twain, God created man without the latter's consent; man's history as a whole is tainted by wrongful creation. In Kant, man creates man. Is anthropogenic creation less wrongful? Does Kant provide an anthropodicy, where Milton and Twain despair of the possibility of a theodicy?

Kant – Existence without consent on the part of the exister

In Kant, God – and his impact upon the world – can never be an object of experience and has faded into an idea. Still, the problem of wrongful creation remains unsettled. Kant picks up the quest for an anthropodicy (the justification of procreation in the face of suffering) where Twain left off. Procreation, Kant explains in his *Metaphysics of Morals* (§ 28 of the *Metaphysics of Right*), is an act in which we,

“without the person's consent, bring her into this world, bring her across, for which deed there is an obligation henceforth on the part of the parents to do everything within their power to make the child content with its condition.”³

Surprisingly, by saying to “bring the person across” Kant here (perhaps inadvertently) employs imagery that refers to the pre-existence of persons as human souls. To bring a person across implies her existence prior to her being brought across. The imagery suggests a pro-natal stance as it evokes a sense that the child existed – longing for embodiment – before being brought into this world by its parents. Here, the siren song of metaphysics is appealing as ever. It appeals, however, to a transcendent realm that is not in keeping with Kant's transcendental position.

When a person – ie a being equipped with freedom – is transferred into this world, this happens without consent on the part of the new sojourner on earth. Therefore, says Kant in his *Metaphysics of Morals*, the parents must not escape responsibility and are obliged to do

everything within their power to make the child content with his condition. They are not entitled to leave him to his fate. A first problem that arises at this point is that Kant leaves out of his account a facet that goes along with the very nature of procreation: Parents can never guarantee their offspring's well-being, as procreation always implies the unknown, a lottery. Not only biologically, but also inasmuch as our future is unknown to us. Kant, it is true, tries to forestall the lottery of existence by calling on parental responsibility. Yet their responsibility expires as the children come of age, as Kant says. Thus, the new earthling who has come of age might find himself in dire straits biologically or socially. And of course, as the person did not exist prior to his existence on earth, she has all the right to rue the day in retrospect when her parents decided to procreate (or did so accidentally) and to address reproaches to her parents who – endowed with a free will – could have abstained from procreation.

There is yet another aspect in Kant's philosophy that dooms any attempts to create an anthropodicy. In a similar fashion to Milton and Twain, Kant acknowledges that a person brought into existence is brought into existence without having requested it. This, however, cannot be reconciled with the following Kantian decree from his *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals*: "So act as to treat humanity, whether in thine own person or in that of any other, in every case as an end withal, never as a means only." (Quoted in *Ethics: The Study of Moral Values*, by M. J. Adler and S. Cain, Encyclopedia Britannica, inc. Chicago-London 1962, p. 219) Any Kantian will have to face the precept never to reduce a human being to a means but always to treat her also as an end.

Now, someone who does not exist yet, cannot be treated as a means. Neither can he be treated as an end. However, when deciding to procreate, parents inevitably conceive of the future person rather as a means than an end. They cannot, ontologically speaking, procreate for the sake of the person who will exist⁴. They can, however, procreate in the pursuit of their own happiness or their country's well-being. Note well that parents and countries do exist already. Creating a new human being inevitably goes along with conceiving of a human being as a means without being able to treat him as an end. The parents, the family or the institutions for the benefit of which the new person might exist do already exist, while the person that is conceived of does not exist yet. There is an asymmetry here inasmuch as procreation yields new people for the sake of existing people or institutions while procreation will never benefit someone who does not yet exist.

To repeat the aforementioned: Someone could object that – in the same manner in which they cannot be treated also as an end – future people cannot be treated as a means as they do not exist yet. Looked at from a different point of view, from the point of view of imminent procreation, the argument is not convincing: If people procreate, pre-existing parental or societal needs, wishes, aspirations or demands are fulfilled (or not). The same does not apply to those who will start to exist because, had their parents not procreated, there wouldn't have been thwarted needs and wishes on the child's part.

Procreation always involves pre-existing ends into which a new person fits as a means. Regarding procreation, it is not possible for us to treat non-existing future persons also as an end, whereas it is possible to conceive of them as a means. Therefore, in light of the Kantian request to always treat persons also as an end, we had rather not procreate.

¹ All Milton quotes are taken from John Milton, *Paradise Lost/Das verlorene Paradies*, English/Deutsch, Zweitausendeins Versand, Frankfurt/Main 2008

² Later on, however, Adam will join Eve, exclaiming:

*The misery, I deserved it, and would bear
My own deservings; but this will not serve;
All that I eat or drink, or shall beget,
Is propagated curse. O voice once heard
Delightfully, 'Increase and multiply',
Now death to hear! For what can I increase
Or multiply, but curses on my head?
Who of all ages to succeed, but feeling
The evil on him brought by me, will curse
My head, 'I'll fare our ancestor impure,
For this we may thank Adam';*
(Tenth Book, 726-736, p. 500)

³ Immanuel Kant, Kant Werke 5, *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft und Die Metaphysik der Sitten*, Könnemann Verlag, Köln 1995, p. 338

⁴ I am elaborating here on an observation made by David Benatar in his *Better never to have been. The harm of coming into existence*, Oxford University Press 2006, p. 129f