## **Philosophy Midterm**

## **Prompt 1**

Marcel, using his voluntary memory, often recounts and relives moments when his grandmother was still alive. He recalls that he loved her, but not the way he loved her. However, his involuntary memory is the one that revives his past self. It is that which allows him to remember and re-experience the various feelings he had felt. It is this resuscitation of the past self that allows one to go beyond the bounds of time. Many describe the idea of gaining time through reliving memories, and hence transcending time. The desire to transcend time is therefore equated to transcending death itself. However, Marcel was never seeking lost time due to his desire for immortality. He wants to preserve the person that he is.

Marcel was constantly bothered by the idea of his mortality. He always wondered what would happen to his work of literature if any accident were to occur. Instead of being liberated from the concept of death, he was further tied to it due to his fear of it. Marcel eventually did suffer an accident that in turn caused him to suffer from memory loss. Because of this, he doesn't think of himself as a being outside of time, but as "a hoarder whose strong-box had a hole in it through which the riches were progressively disappearing", meaning he is losing his memories slowly. This makes him further aware of his mortality. He knows that one day he will die. And just like him, his works will be lost, and his memories will be lost along with them. The books are destructible, the body is destructible, and no power can provide a solution to mortality. Writing and art can resist and postpone death through temporary preservation, but can never transcend it. Therefore, Marcel, knowing that he is mortal, doesn't seek to live forever, but rather survive longer through preservation.

His desire for immortality is contradicted by his desire for survival. Due to his attachment to his temporal being, he also cultivates the fear of losing that same being. Haglund even states that this fear of death doesn't stem from desire for immortality but because of the investment in survival.

This occurs from Marcel's chronolibidinal attachments. His attachments are both chronophilic and chronophobic. The act of constantly trying to preserve something temporary and irreplaceable results in a chronophilic relationship. But, this act of preservation leads to the fear of losing the thing that is trying to be preserved, but cannot be due to the inevitable passage of time. This leads to a chronophobic relationship. His attachment to life leads to "an incurable chronophilia and an incurable chronophobia". He seeks to preserve what he knows will die, rather than coming to terms with the fact that it will die.

The desire of immortality here is seen as self-refuting as it is this desire for immortality that leads to the act of preservation in order to achieve immortality, which then leads to the desire to survive due to the fear of losing the thing that is trying to be preserved. But, it can also be seen as self-refuting as the desire for immortality can be seen as the desire for death. Due to the nature of immortality, immortality itself entails no change. There is no risk of death, which implies no sense of urgency, which in turn provides no scope for development or meaningful transformations. Anything that entails no change is not alive, that is, death. Hence the desire for immortality can be equated to the desire for death, a state of no change or movement.

## **Prompt 2**

Poetic attunement is the idea of appreciating poetry through emotional awareness. This idea can be extended to living, and responding to life with the same emotional responses and awareness. Rilke

encourages poetic attunement to experience life to its fullest. In his letters, a young aspiring poet is faced with a lot of questions and consults Rilke about them. Rilke tells him, "Don't question it, live it". Life is meant to be lived and not questioned. This way we can fully appreciate both the minutiae and grandeur of what's around us, leading to a richer experience.

Siddhartha is similar to the poet in the sense of him questioning life and craving for a richer, meaningful experience. Throughout the novel, he tries to figure out the missing piece by engaging in various activities. He spent a month in a forest to practice abstinence, he gets into trade, he meets a woman and engages with her, but in the end realizes that what he's missing resides in none of this. What he's craving for is far beyond his sight and can only be achieved by a spiritual journey, which he undertakes. He goes through a journey of self-discovery and comes to a conclusion - he gains wisdom about what life truly is. He begins to appreciate the plurality of life. Furthermore, he attains discipline. Through his attachments in the mortal plane, Siddhartha begins his journey, and his perspective of everything begins to transcend beyond this realm. By the end, he has an epiphany, and turns that epiphany into a way of life.

During his journey, he discovers the power of Om. When he first encountered this holy word of energy, he, for the first time ever, discovered what it was like to be truly, fully joyous. After fully assimilating Om into himself, he sees the world through a fresh lens. People he had once perceived as dull seemed full of life and curiosity. He began to understand people for what they were. They all seemed like brothers, and would share their passions and struggles. He began to love and appreciate life, blossoming into a new person that recognized the oneness of life.

His shifted perspective is perfectly defined in the last chapter "Govinda". Govinda is Siddhartha's friend. He sees Siddhartha after a long time, and it is in this conversation between the two that we see how much Siddhartha has grown. Although he is aware of the world of Maja, and that everything around us is an illusion, he still learns to appreciate everything around him for what they are. He understands that a stone is a stone, but it is also an animal, it is God, it is the Buddha. He loves the stone not because it has the potential to turn into something else, but just for the mere fact that it exists.

Before this, Siddhartha was lost. He could never truly experience life because of his craving for a richer experience. He wasn't capable of experiencing true joy or love. His relationship with Kamala couldn't be fulfilled as he lacked not the feeling of love required for one to fully engage in a meaningful relationship, but he gave up the voice in his heart to Kamala, and hence losing a part of himself in the process. Their relationship couldn't be authentic as neither one of them possessed the emotional maturity and the idea of unity.

Rilke mentions that in order to have a meaningful, authentic relationship, unlike Siddhartha's with Kamala's, the ones participating in it must not lose parts of themselves just to sustain it. They must manage themselves using their own experiences, talents, and nature, and come together with the idea of oneness and unity. They must seek out to be like brother-sister, like neighbors, and unite as humans. Through this, they can sustain a healthy, rich, and most importantly, authentic relationship, which is eventually what Siddhartha does by the end, and the reason he could love the child was because he truly loved Kamala.

Siddhartha's relationship with Kamala did have some aspects of authenticity. He sees her not as a courtesan or in any other objective manner, but sees her as herself, as Kamala. He appreciates her for who she is, and appreciates her existence as herself. Rilke says that in an authentic relationship, the female is not just the male opposite, but something in their own right, a female human being. This is what Siddhartha thinks of Kamala, a female human being with her own characteristics.

## **Prompt 3**

Kierkegaard's "knight of faith" here refers to Abraham, who was willing to sacrifice his son, Isaac, based on the words of God. He is a knight of faith as he completely surrenders to God, suspending all forms of reasoning and ethics. A knight of faith is paradoxical as Abraham is adhering to natural laws while at the same time transcending them due to his relationship to God. His willingness to sacrifice Isaac is both breaking morality while being an expression of faith.

Nietzsche's master and slave morality is a dichotomy. A person is either a master or a slave. A master is one who is powerful, self-affirmed, noble, creative, and possess other "good" qualities. A slave consists of "bad" qualities such as weakness, humility, meekness, suffering, and other such qualities. A slave is an inversion of the master. A slave is a "knight of resignation".

There are some similarities between Nietzsche's idea of slave and master, and Abraham's actions. Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac shows his power to overcome his self. His gesture is almost heroic in the sense that he sacrifices Isaac with no hesitation, and with utmost conviction and commitment to God. These are some of the "good" qualities that a master possesses. On the flip side, he is accepting defeat, a "bad" quality. He fully gives up himself to God and serves God's will.

However, a knight of faith transcends this dichotomy. Abraham was initially a knight of resignation. He gives himself up to God. But, eventually he takes the leap of faith and transitions into a knight of faith. Abraham being a knight of resignation was a necessity for him to take this leap of faith. Abraham's faith goes beyond standard reasoning. His leap of faith is "absurd" as he rejects universal law and transcends it, while at the same time is in the same sphere due to the nature of his connection with the absolute, thereby assuming the role of the slave and master at the same time. Although there are aspects of Nietzsche's framework in Abraham's actions, it doesn't fit into this framework perfectly due to the double roles that Abraham assumes.

Abraham's actions can be seen as noble and heroic, whereas Nietzsche might argue that Abraham's absurd leap of faith is a sign of weakness. A leap of faith can be seen as irrational, beyond any form of conventional reasoning. In fact, Nietzsche argues that Judeo-Christian traditions embody slave morality. He believes that Christians promote the idea of submission, weakness, and suffering. A blind leap of faith could be seen as an irrational surrender to weakness and relies on a construct like God rather than one's own values.

In the case of Abraham, he does heed God's words, but not out of fear or from a point of weakness. He puts all of his faith into God, recognizing Him as the absolute. Abraham's relationship with the absolute transcends him to the absolute. He is a master, and has been a master ever since he took the leap of faith, as it is his faith that propels him further towards the absolute. This event contradicts the entirety of Nietzsche's argument regarding traditional Christians having faith and taking the leap of faith from the point of weakness. The leap of faith that a Christian takes, according to this event, would turn them into masters, rather than the slaves that Nietzsche argues they are. They have always been masters as in order to fully be a man of religion, one takes a plunge and fully devote themselves to God, the absolute, therefore transcending the individual into the absolute.