

Contra Kant

Experimental ethics in Guyau and Nietzsche

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1. Introduction

Powerful critiques of Kantian ethics are mounted towards the end of the nineteenth century by naturalistic-minded philosophers such as Jean-Marie Guyau (1854–88) and Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900). This chapter examines the basis of these critiques and what, if anything, they have in common. The aim of such critiques is to challenge the universalist assumptions of Kantian ethics and favour instead a genuinely experimental ethics, one that is premised on a commitment to moral variability and that seeks to promote heterodox forms of living. As Nietzsche puts it in his text of 1881, *Dawn*, the idea of ‘the human being’ is a ‘bloodless abstraction’ and ‘fiction’ (D 105, KSA 3.93). But on what precise grounds do figures such as Guyau and Nietzsche challenge universalism in ethics? And what kind of future for ethical life do they envisage? Here we are not so much concerned with whether these figures get Kant right, but with exploring the nature of their experimentalism and its grounds.

2.

In the preface to *On the Genealogy of Morality* (1887) Nietzsche claims distinction for himself on account of voicing in his writings a new demand, ‘[W]e need a *critique* of moral values, *the value of these values should itself for once, be*

examined' (GM Preface 6, KSA 5.253). In a note for the preface to *Dawn* (1881) he writes of the need to think about morality without falling under its spell and the seductive character of its beautiful gestures and glances (NL 1885–6 2[165], KSA 12.147–9). He distinguishes himself from previous philosophy, notably German philosophy, such as Kant and Hegel, and what he regards as their half-hearted attempts at critique. In both cases, he contends, criticism is directed only at the problem (how morality is to be demonstrated, whether as noumenon or as self-revealing spirit) but never at the 'ideal'. In the actual preface to *Dawn* Nietzsche claims that morality is the greatest of all mistresses of seduction and that all philosophers have been building 'majestic moral structures' under its seduction (D Preface 3, KSA 3.13–14).

Nietzsche exaggerates his singularity, and this can be shown by bringing his critique of morality into rapport with the ideas of Guyau. Guyau is a neglected figure today but was read as making an important contribution to ethics in his own day by the likes of William James and Josiah Royce. His major work on ethics was published in 1885 (Nietzsche read it at this time) and is entitled in English *Sketch of Morality Independent of Obligation or Sanction* (*Esquisse d'une morale sans obligation, ni sanction*).¹ Prior to this work, which Kropotkin described as 'remarkable' in his *Ethics*,² Guyau had published, in 1875, 1878 and 1879, studies of ancient and modern ethics (especially English utilitarianism), being especially concerned with Epictetus and Epicurus with regards to the ancients and with Darwin and Spencer with regards to the moderns. He also published in 1887 a fascinating tome entitled *The Non Religion of the Future*, which Nietzsche also read and admired.³ We can note at the outset that Nietzsche's attitude towards Guyau is ambivalent. On the one hand, he calls him 'brave Guyau', and regards him as a courageous thinker who has written one of the few genuinely interesting books on ethics of modern times (NL 1885 35[34], KSA 11.525).⁴ On the other hand, he thinks Guyau is caught up in the Christian-moral ideal, and partly for this reason he is only a free thinker and not a genuine free spirit. Nietzsche does not refer to Guyau anywhere in his published writings. What can be certain of his thoughts about him, and his work comes from a few unpublished notes and from the marginal remarks he makes in his copy of Guyau's *Sketch* (*Esquisse*). As one commentator has noted, the richness and diversity of late-nineteenth-century free thought is symbolized by the similarities and dissonances between these two thinkers.⁵

It is his novel and even daring approach to questions of morality that Nietzsche greatly admired and led him to describe Guyau as 'brave'. An examination of the annotations he makes to his copy of Guyau's text on morality makes it clear that

he strongly empathized with core aspects of Guyau's approach to morality. At one point Guyau (1896: 70; 1898: 59) compares morality to an art that charms and deludes us, against which Nietzsche writes 'moi' in the margin.⁶ We are confident that Nietzsche would have found his conception of a 'self-sublimation' of morality prefigured and echoed in Guyau's text. There are indications in the annotations he makes to the section in the book on 'the morality of faith' which strongly suggest this was the case.

Guyau's thinking takes its bearings from a number of influences. On the one hand he is strongly influenced by naturalist and positivist developments and on the other by an idealist legacy. He has respect for three works of modern moral philosophy: Spencer's *Data of Ethics*; Hartmann's *The Phenomenology of the Moral Conscience*; and Alfred Fouillée's *The Criticism of Contemporary Moral Systems*.⁷ Naturalism offers, to its credit, no unchangeable principles either with regards to obligation or sanction; idealism can furnish at best only hypothetical and not categorical imperatives. As one commentator on Guyau has noted, his goal is to provide a satisfactory holistic approach to modern ethics since positivist and idealists consider only one aspect, either the factual or the ideal, at the expense of the other. Thus a proper account of the dynamics of moral life must account for both moral ideas and moral actions.⁸ For Guyau (1896: 6; 1898: 4) the reign of the absolute is over in the domain of ethics: '[W]hatever comes within the order of facts is not universal, and whatever is universal is a speculative hypothesis.' For Guyau, a chief characteristic of the future conception of morality will be 'moral variability': 'In many respects this conception will not only be *autonomous* but *anomos*' (ibid.).⁹

According to Guyau, we are witnessing today the decline of religious faith, and this faith is being replaced by a dogmatic faith in morality. Although its fanaticism may be less dangerous than the religious sort it is equally menacing. The new voice is conscience and the new god is duty:

The great Pan, the nature-god, is dead; Jesus, the humanity-god, is dead. There remains the inward and ideal god, Duty, whose destiny it is, perhaps, also to die some day. (Guyau 1896: 63; 1898: 54)

The belief in duty is so questionable because it is placed above the region in which both science and nature move (Guyau 1896: 64; 1898: 55). Guyau maintains that all philosophies of duty and of conscience are, in effect, philosophies of common sense and are thus unscientific, be it the Scottish school of 'common sense' derived from Thomas Reid or neo-Kantianism with its assumption that the impulse of duty is of a different order to all other natural impulses. Phrases

such as ‘conscience proclaims’, ‘evidence proves’ and ‘common sense requires’ are as unconvincing as ‘duty commands’ and ‘the moral law demands’. Guyau, by contrast, appeals to scientific truth, which he conceives not as brute fact but as a ‘bundle of facts’, a ‘synthesis’ not simply of the felt and the seen but of the explained and connected. What lies outside the range of our knowledge cannot have anything obligatory about it, and science needs to replace habituated faith. Like Nietzsche, Guyau recognizes the paradox – we immoralists remain duty-bound and freely impose on ourselves a new, stern duty (BGE 226). Guyau calls this ‘the duty of being consistent to ourselves, of not blindly solving an uncertain problem, of not closing an open question.’ In short, the new method of doubt is not without its obligations and cannot be (Guyau 1896: 68; 1898: 58). The extent to which Nietzsche empathized with Guyau on these issues cannot be underestimated.

With respect to Kant, Guyau notes, like philosophical predecessors such as Hegel, the formalism of his ethics. With its stress on the absolute character of the imperative independent of the idea of its object and application, such an ethics makes appeal to natural or empirical facts virtually worthless since it is always possible to find an answer by appealing to the distinction between the alleged intention behind the act and the act itself: ‘If the act is practically harmful, the intention may have been morally disinterested, and that is all that the moral philosophy of Kant demands’ (Guyau 1896: 57; 1898: 48). Furthermore, the good intention of the feeling of obligation in Kant must make an appeal to a suprasensible and suprainelligible reality. Guyau (1896: 57; 1898: 48) corrects Kant on this point:

The *feeling* of obligation, if exclusively considered from the point of view of mental dynamics, is brought back to a feeling of resistance . . . This resistance, being of such a nature as to be apprehended by the senses, cannot arise from our relation to a *moral law*, which hypothetically would be quite intelligible and independent of time. It arises from our relation to natural and empiric laws [emphases in the original].

Guyau points out that the feeling of obligation is not moral but sensible, that is, the moral sentiment is, as Kant himself concedes, *pathological*. Kant’s position is distinctive in holding this sentiment to be aroused by the mere form of the moral law and not its subject matter. This generates a mystery, as Kant fully acknowledges: an intelligible and supranatural law generates a pathological and natural sentiment, namely, respect. How does a pure idea that contains nothing sensible produce within us a sensation of pleasure and pain? Kant acknowledges

that he cannot explain why and how the universality of a maxim, and consequently morality, interests us.¹⁰

Guyau cannot see any reason a priori why we should connect sensible pleasure or pain to a law that would, hypothetically, be suprasensible. Equally, can duty be detached from the character and qualities of the things we have to do and the actual people to whom we have obligations? Like Hegel, Guyau appeals to ‘social life’ (what Hegel calls ‘Sittlichkeit’) as the context in which duties and obligations find their sense. The ‘moral law’ can only be a ‘social law’; just as we are not free to get outside the universe, so we are not free (in our thinking) to get outside society (Guyau 1896: 232–3; 1898: 198). Moreover, even if we were to suppose that the universal, qua universal, produces in us a logical satisfaction this itself remains ‘a satisfaction of the logical instinct in man’ and ‘is a *natural* [emphasis in the original] tendency’ because it is ‘an expression of life in its higher form . . . favourable to order, to symmetry, to similitude, to unity in variety’ (Guyau 1896: 59; 1898: 50).

The will cannot be indifferent to the aims it is seeking to pursue or promote. Guyau contends that a purely formal practice of morality, as Kant’s ethics demands, would ironically prove demoralizing to an agent: ‘it is the analogy of the labour which the prisoners in English prisons are obliged to do, and which is without aim – to turn a handle for the sake of turning it!’ (ibid.; see also Guyau 1896: 218–20; 1898: 186–8). Nietzsche describes Kant’s ethics as a form of ‘refined servility’ (GS 5, KSA 3.377). Guyau makes the same criticism of Kant when he questions the performance of duty for the sake of duty, which he regards as pure tautology and a vicious circle. We might as well say be religious for the sake of religion, or be moral for the sake of morality (Guyau 1896: 67; 1898: 57). He then closely echoes Nietzsche in GS 335 when he argues, ‘While I believe it to be my sovereign and self-governed liberty, commanding me to do such and such an act, what if it were hereditary instinct, habit, education, urging me to the pretended duty?’ (ibid.).¹¹ As Nietzsche points out, one’s judgement that ‘this is right’ has a prehistory in one’s instincts, likes and dislikes, experiences (including the lack of them) and so on (GS 335, KSA 3.561).

Guyau does not dispute that Kant’s thinking on ethics is without importance or merit; indeed, he holds the theory of the categorical imperative to be ‘psychologically exact and deep’ and the expression of a ‘fact of consciousness’. What cannot be upheld, however, is the attempt to develop it without the requisite naturalistic insight in which what we take to be a practical, internal necessity will be demonstrated to be an instinctive, even mechanical, necessity (Guyau 1896: 102–3; 1898: 89).¹² In short, Guyau holds that there is within us a primitive,

impersonal impulse to obey that is prior to philosophical reasoning on ‘goodness’, but our understanding of this needs to be opened up to naturalistic and critical inquiry. For Guyau (1896: 117; 1898: 98) this inquiry into the sentiment of obligation is to take the form of a ‘dynamic genesis’ in which we come to appreciate that we do not follow our conscience but are driven by it and in terms of a ‘psycho-mechanical power’. In addition questions of evolution – the evolution of the species and of societies – also need to be taken into account. What kind of ‘impulse’ is duty? How has it evolved? And why has it become for us a ‘sublime obsession’? (Guyau 1896: 121; 1898: 101). Ultimately, Kant’s ethics, Guyau argues, must be seen as belonging to an age that future humanity will outgrow. It is ‘a moral philosophy similar to ritualist religions, which count any failure in ceremonial as sacrilege; and which forget the essence for the sake of the form’; it is thus ‘a kind of moral despotism, creeping everywhere, wanting to rule everything’ (Guyau 1896: 170; 1898: 144).

Guyau argues that a strict method is to be followed if we are to determine the nature of a moral philosophy to be founded exclusively on facts. The contrast to be made is with a metaphysical thesis that posits an a priori thesis and an a priori law. He asks, ‘[W]hat is the exact domain of *science* in moral philosophy (*la morale*)?’ (Guyau 1896: 83; 1898: 71). Metaphysical speculation beyond the empirically given and ascertainable can be permitted in moral philosophy, but the most important task is to work out how far an exclusively scientific conception of morality can go. Guyau enquires into the ends pursued by living creatures, including humankind. The unique and profound goal of action cannot, he argues, be ‘the good’ since this is a vague conception which, when opened up to analysis, dissolves into a metaphysical hypotheses. He also rules out duty and happiness: the former cannot be regarded as a primitive and irreducible principle, whilst the latter presupposes an advanced development of an intelligent being.

Guyau is in search of a natural aim of human action. The principle of hedonism, which argues for a minimum of pain and a maximum of pleasure, can be explained in evolutionary terms in which conscious life is shown to follow the line of the least suffering. To a certain extent Guyau accepts this thesis but finds it too narrow as a definition since it applies only to conscious life and voluntary acts, not to unconscious and automatic acts. To believe that most of our movements spring from consciousness, and that a scientific analysis of the springs of conduct has only to reckon with conscious motives, would mean being the dupe of an illusion (Guyau 1896: 87; 1898: 74). Although he does not enter into the debate regarding the epiphenomenalism of consciousness, except to note

it as a great debate in England (he refers to the likes of Henry Maudsley and T. H. Huxley), he holds that consciousness embraces a restricted portion of life and action; acts of consciousness have their origins in dumb instincts and reflex movements. Thus, the ‘constant end of action must primarily have been a *constant cause* of more or less unconscious movements. In reality, the ends are but *habitual motive causes become conscious of themselves* [emphases in the original]’ (ibid.).

For Guyau (1896: 247; 1898: 210) the cause operating within us before any attraction of pleasure is ‘life’. Pleasure is but the consequence of an instinctive effort to maintain and enlarge life, and nature is to be regarded as self-moving and self-governing. Guyau (1896: 90; 1898: 77) writes:

One does not always act with the view of seeking a *particular pleasure* – limited and exterior to the act itself. Sometimes we act for the pleasure of acting . . . There is in us an accumulated force which demands to be used. If its expenditure is impeded, this force becomes desire or aversion; if the desire is satisfied, there is pleasure; if it is opposed, there is pain. But it does not follow from this that the stored-up activity unfolds itself solely *for the sake* of pleasure – with pleasure as motive. Life unfolds and expresses itself in activity because it is life. In all creatures pleasure accompanies, much more than it provokes, the search after life.

For Guyau, Epicurus, along with his faulty thinking about evolution, in which pleasure is said to create an organ’s function, needs correcting on this point. In addition, he argues contra Bentham that ‘to live is not to calculate, it is to act’ (Guyau 1896: 247; 1898: 211). An essentially Spinozist position – the tendency to persist in life is the necessary law of life – is deduced: ‘The tendency of the creature to continue in existence is at the root of all desire, without forming in itself a determinate desire’ (Guyau 1898: 79). Guyau (1896: 88; 1898: 75) takes this tendency to be one that goes beyond and envelops conscious life, so it is ‘both the most radical of realities and the inevitable ideal’. Therefore, he reaches the conclusion that the part of morality that can be founded on positive facts can be defined as ‘the science which has for object all the means of *preserving* and *enlarging* material and intellectual life’ (ibid.). He acknowledges that with a scientific conception of morality living well is largely a matter of an enlarged hygiene. His ethics centre, then, on a desire to increase ‘the intensity of life’ which consists in enlarging the range of activity under all its forms and that is compatible with the renewal of force (Guyau 1896: 89; 1898: 76). Like Spinoza and Nietzsche, Guyau thinks that ‘becoming-active’ is the cure to many of life’s ills and to passive pessimism (see also Guyau 1896: 175–8; 1898: 148–51).¹³ When Guyau

(1896: 77; 1898: 66) argues that all action is an ‘affirmation’, a kind of choice and election, this elicits from Nietzsche one of only four ‘bravos’ he makes in the margins of his copy of the book.¹⁴ A ‘superior being’ is one that practises a variety of action; thought itself is nothing other than condensed action and life at its maximum development. Guyau (1896: 42; 1898: 35) defines this superior being as one which ‘unites the most delicate sensibility with the strongest will’. This finds an echo in Nietzsche when he entertains the idea of a future superior human being as one composed of ‘the highest spirituality and strength of will’ (NL 1885 37[8], KSA 11.582).

As we shall see, however, Guyau’s conception of the future of morality differs from Nietzsche in placing the emphasis on an expansion of the social and sociability: ‘Develop your life in all directions, be an “individual” as rich as possible in intensive and extensive energy; therefore be the most *social* and *sociable* being’ (Guyau 1896: 140–1; 1898: 117). Science, he argues, can only offer ‘excellent hypothetical advice’ and not anything that would purport to be categorical or absolute. If we wish to promote the highest intensity of life, then we have to experiment, that is, if we take the realm of the practical seriously, we must recognize that a scientific conception of morality cannot give a definite and complete solution of moral obligation (Guyau 1896: 160; 1898: 134). A mature humanity is one that will decide for itself what it wishes to obligate itself to and on the basis of the insights secured by scientific knowledge (for example, placing the stress on questions of hygiene) and in terms of an experimentation¹⁵:

There is one unchangeable moral philosophy – that of facts; and, to complete it, when it is not sufficient, there is a variable and individual moral philosophy – that of hypotheses. (Guyau 1896: 165; 1898: 139)

Morality in the future will move in the direction not simply of autonomy but of anomy in which the differences between individuals and temperaments are taken into account along with the absence of fixed and apodictic laws and rules.

Although Kant begins a revolution in moral philosophy by seeking to make the will autonomous, as opposed to bowing before a law external to itself, he stops halfway with the constraint of universality of the law. This supposes ‘that everyone must conform to a fixed type; that the ideal “reign” of liberty would be a regular and methodical government’ (Guyau 1896: 165; 1898: 139). In contrast to this Guyau argues that true autonomy must produce individual originality and not universal uniformity. The future of intelligence demands that we allow for genuine pluralism of values and ideals freely chosen and rationally deliberated over, as opposed to a uniformity that can only annihilate intelligence.

Guyau's hope is that heterodoxy and non-conventional living will become in the future the true and universal religion or way of life. He envisages an end to penal justice (Guyau 1896: 182; 1898: 154), which again brings him remarkably close to Nietzsche, who expresses the desire to restore innocence to becoming and purify psychology, morality, history and nature of the concepts of guilt and punishment (NL 1888 15[30], KSA 13.425). Moreover, his championing of a 'truly scientific and philosophic mind' as one which does not entitle itself to possession of 'the whole truth' and whose only faith is that of continual 'searching' brings Guyau (1896: 170; 1898: 143) close to the free spirit Nietzsche celebrates in GS 347 as the enemy of fanaticism.

In effect, what Guyau has done is to put aside every law anterior or superior to the facts, anything a priori and categorical. Instead we need to start from reality and build up an ideal, extracting 'a moral philosophy from nature'. Guyau wants to know what the essential and constitutive facts of human nature are. He has curtailed consciousness since unconscious or subconscious life is the real source of our activity. Ethics concerns itself with achieving harmony between the two spheres of existence, unconscious and conscious, and this may reside in living life in 'the most intensive and extensive possible' so as to increase the force of life (Guyau 1896: 245; 1898: 209). In the sphere of life we necessarily deal with 'antinomies' (conflicts, contestations, etc.); the moralist is always tempted to resolve them once and for all by appealing to a law superior to life: 'an *intelligible, eternal, supernatural* law' (ibid.). But we need to give up making this appeal to such a law. The only possible rule for an exclusively scientific moral philosophy is that it is a more complete and larger life that is able to regulate a less complete and smaller life. Again, we find this echoed in Nietzsche when he writes in the 1886 preface to volume one of HH that it is necessary 'to grasp the necessary injustice in every for and against . . . life itself is conditioned by the sense of perspective and its injustice'. The greatest injustice is to be found in a state 'where life has developed at its smallest, narrowest, and neediest'. Nietzsche wishes to aid the cause of what he calls the 'higher, greater, and richer' life.

3.

Nietzsche was impressed by Guyau's critique of Kant, his insights into the new dogmatic faith in morality and his claim that the reign of the absolute was now over to be replaced by a new pluralism. Nietzsche has, in fact, anticipated many

of Guyau's insights in the works of his middle period. For example, Nietzsche has argued that there is no single moral-making morality (D 132, KSA 3.123–5), that the moral law should not be beyond our likes and dislikes (D 108, KSA 3.95–6) and that we are experiments and our task is to want to be such (D 453, KSA 3.274). Both Guyau and Nietzsche, as we shall see in the next section, move thinking in the direction of a commitment to an experimental ethics. Guyau's conception of the future is one of new individuals, of individual difference, of the greater intensity of life and so on. These are all things we find promoted in Nietzsche, as when, for example, he argues, '*Up to now morality has been, above all, the expression of a conservative will to breed the same species, with the imperative: "All variation is to be prevented; only the enjoyment of the species must remain"*' (NL 1885 35[20], KSA 11.515). As we have seen, it is precisely 'moral variability' that Guyau posits as the most desirable future for morality.

In *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche informs his readers that his 'campaign' against morality begins in earnest with *Dawn*, and he adds that we should not smell gunpowder at work here but, provided we have the necessary subtlety in our nostrils, more pleasant odours. Nietzsche is here drawing the reader's attention to something important, namely, the fact that he wants to open up the possibility of plural ways of being, including plural ways of being moral or ethical. His act is not one of simple wanton destruction. Nietzsche directs his main criticism against what he takes to be the dogmatic view that there is single moral-making morality.

Nietzsche's 'campaign' against morality centres largely on a critique of two modern tendencies: the Kantian notion of practical reason and its categorical imperative and its Schopenhauerian opponent – the idea that the mark of morality is living according to sympathetic affects, especially *Mitleid*, rather than according to the 'a priori soap bubbles' of practical reason. Significantly, however, Nietzsche carries forward one key aspect of the Stoic and Kantian conception of morality: viz., their rejection of 'pathological' emotions as the grounds of moral action. Kant rejects compassion as the basis of moral action primarily because, so he argues, it puts agents at the mercy of natural necessity. Moral autonomy, he argues, entails freedom from such necessities. While Nietzsche endorses Kant's rejection of compassion and sympathy as motives of action he does so for different, anti-Kantian reasons: viz., he believes these motives fundamentally and necessarily compromise individual (and species') flourishing. Nietzsche claims that sympathetic affects are incompatible with eudaimonia. In this section we will first examine Nietzsche's arguments against Kantian and Schopenhauerian morality before turning to his defence of the Stoic-Kantian critique of the tender

emotions. In the final section we will argue that Nietzsche's ethical eudaimonism takes a wrong turn by incorporating Stoicism and Kantianism's anti-pity perspective. As we shall see, while Nietzsche shares and endorses Guyau's attempt to formulate a post-Kantian, naturalistic and experimental ethics, his critique of sympathetic affects puts him at odds with Guyau's identification of flourishing with sociability. We will briefly assess Nietzsche's divergence from Guyau's positive conception of sociability in the final section. Nietzsche, we shall argue, was wrong to conceive sociability and compassion as incompatible with human flourishing.

Many of Nietzsche's claims against morality encompass problems he believes are common to the Kantian and Schopenhauerian perspectives. Nietzsche rejects both moralities first because they both wrongly presuppose that morality must have a universally binding character in which there is a single morality valid for all in all circumstances and for all occasions. Second, Nietzsche suggests that both Kantian and Schopenhauerian conflate morality with asceticism: their moralities require a person to be dutiful, obedient, self-sacrificing at all times. By contrast, Nietzsche own ethics harks back to and reinvents ancient ethical eudaimonism. Nietzsche conceives Kant's moral insistence on ascetic self-denial as a refinement and remnant of *Sittlichkeit's* ancient cruelty (D 539, KSA 3.307–8). He laments that Kant's anti-eudaimonistic morality demands that moral agents sacrifice their own natural interests and desires on the altar of practical reason and its categorical imperative and that Schopenhauerian morality requires that they sacrifice themselves in the name of others' welfare. Third, Nietzsche rejects Kant and Schopenhauer's supposition that morality provides us with insight into the true, metaphysical character of the world and existence. Following Darwin, Lamarck and Paul Rée, however, Nietzsche argues that '*moral man stands no closer to the intelligible world than physical man*' (HH 37, KSA 2.61). Nietzsche argues that Kant and Schopenhauer's metaphysical picture of morality fails to give us an adequate understanding of moral agency: it does not properly identify moral motives or locate the sources of moral agency. As a result of their focus on ascertaining the metaphysical groundwork of morality, he argues, we currently almost entirely lack scientific knowledge of moral motives and agency. Metaphysics cannot explain our moral motives; this is properly the domain of evolutionary, sociological and psychological thought. Nietzsche and Guyau's naturalistic, empirical study of moral agency aims to overcome the deficit in our understanding of morality. Nietzsche believes such metaphysical accounts of morality wrongly locate the 'good' in the noumenal realm and 'evil' in the phenomenal realm. In sharp contrast Nietzsche maintains that we cannot clearly

separate 'good' virtues and 'evil' vices: they are both explicable in purely naturalistic terms. For Nietzsche the two are reciprocally conditioning: all good things have arisen out of dark roots through sublimation and spiritualization, and they continue to feed off such roots.

Yet even as Nietzsche rejects Kant and Schopenhauer's metaphysical notion of morality and its anti-eudaimonistic, ascetic, self-sacrificing character, in formulating his alternative ethical eudaimonism he retains and defends one central Kantian and Stoic motif: viz., the claim that a fully flourishing life requires rejecting the pathological, 'soft' emotions as motives of action. For all its failings, Nietzsche believes that Kant's conception of morality deserves our praise for standing *outside* the compassionate or sentimental undercurrent of the modern age. Nietzsche observes that Kant expressly teaches that 'we must be insensible towards the suffering of others if our beneficence is to possess moral value' (D 132, KSA 3.125).¹⁶ Nietzsche applauds Kant for making the value of other-regarding actions contingent on judgements or evaluations made independently of our sensitivity to others' pain. On this account our beneficence has no value if it is motivated by our sensibility or sensitivity rather than our practical reason. Of course, Nietzsche does not thereby endorse Kant's own principle or formula of moral judgement, but he does share the view that we ought not to measure the value of other-regarding actions by our sensitivity to others' pain. Why does Nietzsche applaud Kantian insensibility?

Nietzsche's fundamental objection is that pity is incompatible with eudaimonia. For this reason Nietzsche approvingly glosses Kant's claim that by echoing others' suffering through our pity (*Mitleid*) we increase the amount of suffering in the world (D 134, KSA 3.127–8), and in doing so we rarely reduce or eliminate this original suffering (D 144, KSA 3.136–7).¹⁷ We can see then that while Nietzsche rejects Kant's a priori, anti-eudaimonistic conception of the moral law, he nevertheless shares the Stoic's and Kant's suspicions about the value of pity (*Mitleid*), fellow-feeling (*Mitgefühl*), 'philanthropy' (*Menschenliebe*) and love (*Liebe*). Pouring cold water on the Schopenhauerian and sentimentalist current of his age Nietzsche surmises that if its obsession with elevating compassion, altruism, philanthropy and love as the highest motivation really took root in practice our 'poets would dream of nothing but the happy, loveless past, of divine selfishness, of how it was once possible to be alone, undisturbed, unloved, hated, despised on earth, and whatever else may characterise the utter baseness of the dear animal world in which *we* live' (D 147, KSA 3.138–9). The animal world in which Nietzsche's free spirits live is devoid of tender passions. In Nietzsche's estimation giving and receiving love and pity is deeply distressing

and disturbing. He therefore conceives it as incompatible with his new ethical eudaimonism.

Nietzsche argues then that a fully flourishing life excludes tender passions and motivations. He identifies at least two separate reasons why we can rightly consider them incompatible with happiness. First, as we have just seen, Nietzsche argues that as the *object* of these passions we are encumbered and disturbed by others' demands, interests and motives. Second, he argues that as *agents* of such passions we are obliged to shape our aims and goals around others' needs and interests. As compassionate agents we adapt ourselves to the need of our community and in doing so sacrifice ourselves. Regarding the effects of the morality of compassion and altruism he writes: 'It seems to do every single person good these days to hear that society is on the road to *adapting* the individual to fit the needs of the throng and that *the individual's happiness as well as his sacrifice* consist in feeling himself to be a useful member of the whole' (D 132, KSA 3.124). The morality of compassion, as Nietzsche sees it, makes individuals mere functions of the whole. We can, he thinks, explain the modern in terms of a movement towards managing more cheaply, safely, and uniformly individuals in terms of 'large bodies and their limbs'. This, he says, is 'the basic moral current of our age': 'Everything that in some way supports both this drive to form bodies and limbs and its abetting drives is felt to be good' (ibid.).

Nietzsche reasons that if we endorse Stoicism's and Kant's rejection of compassion we can limit this complete adaptation of the individual to the whole. It is on this basis that he applauds both the Stoics and Kant's rejection of the ethical value of such motives. He conceives this ban on the soft emotions as a precept that will enable individuals to prioritize their own flourishing rather than functionalize themselves for the sake of their community.¹⁸ Following Schopenhauer Nietzsche conceives Stoicism as a doctrine of happiness (or the 'blessed life') rather than a doctrine of virtue or duty. If we measure Stoic morality and the morality of compassion according to this yardstick of flourishing or health, he argues, then we can judge the former as a higher morality. 'You say that the morality of being compassionate is a higher morality (*Moral*) than that of Stoicism? Prove it! But remember that what is "higher" and "lower" in morality is not, in turn to be measured by a moral yardstick: for there is no absolute morality (*Moral*). So take your rule from somewhere else – and now beware!' (D 139, KSA 3.131).

For our purposes the important point is that even though Nietzsche rejects the Kantian notion of moral autonomy he maintains that any viable alternative notion of self-mastery and flourishing must also place a ban on tender

sympathetic affects. Schopenhauer's morality of compassion, he argues, gives our attempts at self-mastery a bad conscience and infuses our self-interested attempts to achieve 'happiness' with guilt. If we examine what is often taken to be the summit of the moral in philosophy – the mastery of the affects – Nietzsche argues that there is pleasure to be taken in this mastery: I can impress myself by what I can deny, defer and resist. It is through this mastery that I grow and develop. And yet morality as we moderns have come to understand it, in which it is tied to the unegoistic, would have to give such ethical self-mastery a bad conscience.

It is clear, we would contend, that in *Dawn* Nietzsche is not advocating the overcoming of all possible forms of morality. Nietzsche endeavours to formulate an ethical eudaimonism that requires 'continual self-command and self-overcoming . . . in great things and in the smallest' (WS 45, KSA 2.573–4). Nietzsche, however, wants to ensure that we do not compromise individual flourishing by endorsing universal or unconditional imperatives (Kant) or compelling individuals to adapt themselves to the needs of the community (Schopenhauer). Nietzsche's concern is that 'morality' in the forms it has assumed in the greater part of human history, right up to Kant's moral law, has opened up an abundance of sources of displeasure and to the point that one can say that with every 'refinement in morality' (*Sittlichkeit*) human beings have grown 'more and more dissatisfied with themselves, their neighbour, and their lot' (D 106, KSA 3.94). Against the Kantian notion of morality as unconditional duty Nietzsche maintains that we cannot prescribe to individuals who wish to become their own lawgiver the path to happiness simply because individual happiness springs from one's own unknown laws and external prescriptions only serve to obstruct and hinder it: 'The so-called "moral" precepts are, in truth, directed against individuals and are in no way aimed at promoting their happiness' (D 108, KSA 3.95). Indeed, Nietzsche himself does not intend to lay down precepts for everyone. As he writes, 'One should seek out limited circles and seek and promote the morality appropriate to them' (D 194, KSA 3.167). Against Schopenhauer and the entire sentimentalist tradition, Nietzsche argues that individual flourishing is incompatible with prioritizing the so-called tender, soft, other-regarding emotions.

Against these moralities Nietzsche identifies and supports a kind of ethical and social experimentation that he thinks will facilitate individual flourishing and species diversification rather than the construction of uniform, fully adapted pseudo-individualism that flows from the dogmatic, universalist models of morality. For Nietzsche it is necessary, for example, to contest the

idea that there is a single moral-making morality since every code of ethics that affirms itself in an exclusive manner ‘destroys too much valuable energy and costs humanity much too dearly’ (D 164, KSA 3.147). In the future, he hopes, the inventive and fructifying person shall no longer be sacrificed and ‘numerous novel experiments shall be made in ways of life and modes of society’ (ibid.). When this takes place we will find that an enormous load of guilty conscience has been purged from the world. Humanity has suffered for too long from teachers of morality who wanted too much all at once and sought to lay down precepts for everyone (D 194, KSA 3.167). In the future, care will need to be given to the most personal questions and create time for them (D 196, KSA 3.170–1). Small individual questions and experiments are no longer to be viewed with contempt and impatience (D 547, KSA 3.317–18). Contra morality, then, he holds that we ourselves are experiments and our task should be to want to be such. We are to build anew the laws of life and of behaviour by taking from the sciences of physiology, medicine, sociology and solitude the foundation stones for new ideals if not the new ideals themselves (D 453, KSA 3.274). As these sciences are not yet sure of themselves we find ourselves living in either a preliminary or a posterior existence, depending on our taste and talent, and in this interregnum the best strategy is for us to become our own reges (sovereigns) and establish small experimental states. As we shall see in the next section, Nietzsche dedicates his new free spirits to the practical task of bringing about a new epoch in human history centred on individual and social experimentation.

This is Nietzsche’s dawn. To understand it fully we need to explore the notion of ethical experimentation he identifies as the key to facilitating individual flourishing and pluralization. What is this ethical experimentation he wants to supplant Kant and Schopenhauer’s anti-eudaimonistic moralities and their bogus metaphysics? What is required of individuals when they move from a metaphysical to an experimental ethics?

4.

We shall now examine Nietzsche’s experimentalism in more detail. Our focus will largely be on the middle period. Here Nietzsche can be seen to be carrying a kind of moral therapy in which the chief aim is to cure us of inflated conceptions of morality, including its imperial and universalist ambitions. Nietzsche does not take the view that there is any necessary conflict between his critique of universal

morality and his philosophical therapy. Indeed, this is obvious from the fact that in the very same sections that Nietzsche criticizes universalist moralities he proceeds to offer general therapeutic recommendations. Nietzsche assumes that his moral anti-universalism is compatible with his therapeutic ambitions. We need to examine how Nietzsche understands the relationship between his moral critique and his philosophical therapy.

Let us consider first the reasons for Nietzsche's rejection of universal moral laws before turning to its implications for his therapeutic ambitions. In *Dawn* Nietzsche opposes the idea of a universally binding moral law for at least two reasons. First, as an anti-metaphysical naturalist Nietzsche assumes that we should only accept a universal moral law if it can be shown to have 'natural' foundations. In other words, he argues that we can legitimately prescribe a course of action as right – as something that everyone should or ought to do – only if we can identify a universal goal or telos intrinsic to our species. Yet following the general Darwinian anti-teleological principle he argues that we cannot find in nature any final species' goals or ends. On the Darwinian view, evolution is a purposeless, mechanical process that 'selects' from the species' random variations those that contingently happen to foster its self-preservation. Second, Nietzsche argues that prescribing universal moral imperatives conflicts with his view that every individual has 'the right to act arbitrarily (*Willkürlicher*) and foolishly according to the light, bright or dim, of [their] own reason' (D 107, KSA 3.94–5). In *Dawn* one of Nietzsche's claims is that individuals and groups should be free to impose on themselves laws that they judge to be in their own interests or conducive to their own flourishing. Nietzsche implies that the legitimacy of moral claims depends on individuals endorsing it on the basis of their own reason.

What implications does Nietzsche draw from his evolutionary insight into nature and his Enlightenment commitment to individual self-legislation for the project of reinventing philosophical therapy? We should focus on Nietzsche's evolutionary theses. 'Only if mankind possessed a universally recognized goal' he argues 'would it be possible to propose "thus and thus is the right course of action": for the present there exists no such goal. It is thus irrational and trivial to impose the demands of morality upon mankind' (D 108, KSA 3.95–6). It is irrational to impose universal moral demands, Nietzsche supposes, because no species has an intrinsic or fixed design or final purpose. From the perspective of natural history, he maintains, there is simply nothing that our species is intrinsically designed to achieve; our species has no essential telos. Rather species' attributes, he maintains, emerge randomly and are mechanically selected,

adapted and transformed or deselected if they prove disadvantageous in the struggle for existence.

Nietzsche makes explicit his non-teleological, evolutionary view of nature a few sections later. Nietzsche speculates that if an impartial investigator studied the evolution of the eye he ‘must arrive at the great conclusion that vision was not the intention behind the creation of the eye, but that vision appeared, rather, after chance has put the apparatus together’ (D 122, KSA 3.115). We can borrow Stephen Jay Gould’s example of non-teleological evolution to illuminate Nietzsche’s point.¹⁹ Gould explains how the feather evolved as a consequence of its adaptive capacity to provide insulation and temperature regulation. Only after they had evolved to serve this function were feathers later ‘exapted’ for their aerodynamic properties. The feather was not designed for any given purpose, rather it was an accidental variation that natural selection mechanically transformed. Flight, in Nietzsche’s terms, was not the intention behind the creation of the feather, but flight appeared, rather, after chance had put the apparatus together. The original use of an organ, drive or practice, therefore, by no means exhausts its possible range of uses; bird’s feathers may have evolved as means of insulation, but they were subsequently co-opted or exapted for another, altogether different purpose (see D 44, KSA 3.51–2). Vision and flight are accidents of evolutionary history, not intrinsic purposes built into nature. ‘A single instance of this kind’, Nietzsche remarks, ‘and “purposes” fall away like scales from the eyes!’ (D 122, KSA 3.115).²⁰

In the absence of such divine, intrinsic or essential purposes, Nietzsche argues, moral philosophers have no grounds for proposing that the human species must adopt a universal maxim of action or goal. The Christian and Kantian notion that there is universal goal or moral law that ought to constrain individual judgements of how and to what end to act is inconsistent with the evolutionary perspective. From the evolutionary perspective species’ and individual attributes and goals emerge by chance and they vary across the evolutionary timescale. In this context there simply are no a priori or timeless goals or purposes; there are rather accidents of natural history that have proven adaptive or maladaptive for the species in its struggle for existence. The evolutionary test is whether a given variation (or principle of conduct) gives the species a slight advantage in the struggle for existence. In this respect, evolution is ‘neutral’: any principle can be selected or deselected depending on whether it contributes to the species’ advantage, and what is productive of the species’ advantage changes as its environment changes. ‘Morality’ is simply the species’ condition of existence at

any given time. 'Morality' has no metaphysical basis, only a natural basis that changes over time.

Nietzsche's evolutionary perspective rejects Christian and Kantian idea of universal, timeless moral imperatives. 'For there is no longer any "ought", as he explains . . . for morality insofar as it was an "ought", has been annihilated by our way of thinking as has religion' (HH 34, KSA 43). Yet Nietzsche does not thereby rule out the possibility or legitimacy of therapeutic recommendations offered as hypothetical or conditional imperatives of the form: if you wish to flourish pursue 'thus and thus course of action' or act according to 'thus and thus judgement'. In other words, Nietzsche argues that philosophers can offer recommendations based not on metaphysical notions of the species' intrinsic purposes or telos, but on their evaluation of what the species and individuals require to flourish in their given context. 'To recommend a goal to mankind is something quite different', as he explains, 'the goal is then thought of as something which lies in its own discretion; supposing the recommendation appealed to mankind, it could in pursuit of it also impose upon itself a moral law, likewise at its own discretion' (D 108, KSA 3.96).

Nietzsche contrasts recommendations (*Empfehlungen*) and prescriptions (*Vorschriften*): the philosophical therapist can offer the former since these are conditional imperatives that allow their recipients to decide for themselves rather than categorical imperatives that by definition deny that the application of rules is a matter of choice or discretion. Here Nietzsche does not directly contest the metaphysical groundwork of a priori moral laws. Rather he offers an explanation of why moral preachers issue such universal moral commands and why these commands may find traction with those to whom they are directed. Nietzsche assumes that an explanation of the genesis of a metaphysical belief is sufficient to make the need for a direct counterargument superfluous. Historical refutation, as he puts it, is the definitive refutation (D 95, KSA 3.86–7).

Nietzsche claims that moral preachers present their prescriptions as categorical imperatives in order to maximize their power over others. They maximize this power by mobilizing an 'obscure fear and awe' of the moral law (D 107, KSA 3.94–5).²¹ Nietzsche maintains that moral preachers have a deeply profane motive for inspiring this fear: protecting their own social and political power. It is not from 'sacred' motives of ensuring that others are set free or redeemed by obeying the moral law, but from the profane motive of ruling their followers that moral preachers issue categorical imperatives. Nietzsche treats the metaphysical notion of a categorical imperative as a rhetorical device moralists use to maximize their power by minimizing their followers' autonomy. Kant's metaphysical

conception of a categorical imperative, he argues, merely enshrines a peculiarly German moral attitude: to prioritize unconditionally obedience to authority over and above one's own practical interests in flourishing. Unconditional obedience, he remarks, is 'the basis of all German moral teaching' (D 207, KSA 3.185–7). 'How different an impression' Nietzsche observes 'we receive from the whole morality of antiquity! All those Greek thinkers . . . seem as moralists like a gymnastics teacher who says to his pupil: "Come! Follow me! Submit to my discipline! Then perhaps you will succeed in carrying off the prize before all the Hellenes." Personal distinction – that is the antique virtue. To submit, to follow, openly or in secret – that is German virtue' (D 207, KSA 3.187–8).

By contrast Nietzsche suggests that philosophical physicians can develop therapeutic recommendations as experientially testable propositions. That is to say, he claims that philosophical physicians' recommendations should be the result of and subject to a type of experimental testing. Once again Nietzsche draws directly on the Hellenistic model of ethics in developing this notion of ethical experimentation. 'So far as praxis is concerned', he observes, 'I view the various moral schools as experimental laboratories in which a considerable number of recipes for the art of living have been thoroughly practised and lived to the hilt. The results of all their experiments belong to us, as our legitimate property' (NL 1881 15[59], KSA 9.655–6). In order to discover whether the various recipes for the art of living are conducive to health or sickness, Nietzsche suggests, we must put them into practice and observe whether they have a regular set of effects on our health. Nietzsche's therapist draws heavily on therapeutic knowledge derived from 'experience' rather than mere 'knowledge'. The Nietzschean physician, as he puts it, lives 'with a head free of fever, equipped with a handful of knowledge and a bagful of experiences' (D 449). Through such experimental testing, Nietzsche implies, the physician can develop reliable knowledge about what contributes to the species' flourishing in its current context. Nietzsche's therapist, in short, replaces metaphysically grounded moral laws with empirically tested health recommendations.

Nietzsche then does not believe that his anti-teleological evolutionary principle or his Enlightenment principle of legitimacy necessarily rules out the identification of successful therapies. Nietzsche's evolutionary principle simply entails that the human species has no essential purpose or telos. In the Darwinian framework this means that the species' attributes are chance occurrences mechanically selected, so to speak, because they give it a slight edge in the evolutionary struggle. The eye was not designed for vision, the feather for flight or the species for any particular purpose or 'higher' end – be this conceived as

reason, duty or happiness. 'Evolution (*Entwicklung*)', as Nietzsche puts it, 'does not have happiness in view, but evolution and nothing else' (D 108, KSA 3.96). Philosophers cannot therefore claim to have knowledge of such an essential telos and to use this knowledge as the basis of their therapies. If therapists recommend a certain type of medicine as generally or universally applicable, they can do so not on the grounds that they believe it coheres with a universal human telos, but because they believe it enables individuals to achieve their optimal flourishing at a certain stage of evolution. Nietzsche sees this as an important advance in our 'meta-ethical' knowledge: we can now see moral rules not as metaphysical or divine mandates, but rather as rules that may or may not serve our flourishing as natural creatures.

He also identifies this as an important breakthrough in our method of evaluating moral principles. Nietzsche claims that since we cannot know in advance whether a new rule or principle will facilitate our flourishing the only way to evaluate this is by way of experiment. Experimentation, he claims, is a learning process. Nietzsche proposes experimentation as a means of 'moral' or 'practical' learning. We must put rules or norms into practice in order to determine their effects and evaluate their worth. Nietzsche argues that in order to determine the value or necessity of a traditional or new morality we must experiment with the form of life it prescribes. We can measure moralities, Nietzsche implies, by testing them in practice and comparing the results of such experiments in living (D 61, KSA 3.61–2).

This still leaves open the question of what these experiments test and the criteria Nietzsche proposes we use to evaluate their outcomes. Nietzsche suggests that these experiments test the effects of different types of 'moralities' or value structures on human life, in particular their effects on the possibilities for leading a 'heroic' life, or, in Guyau's terms, on the 'intensity of life'. In GS 7, KSA 3.378–80, Nietzsche elucidates this point by drawing an analogy between moralities and climates: just as different climates enable different types of species to flourish so too different moralities allow different ways of life to flourish. By following universalist moral prescriptions, Nietzsche implies, it is as if the species had compelled itself to live in one particular climate zone while shunning the whole range of other possible climates and the forms of life that they allow to flourish. Since in this way universalist moralities proscribe experimentation with different climates or values, he argues, we remain ignorant of the full range of value perspectives that might act as conditions of existence and therefore also of the full scope of human diversity or what he calls 'beauty'.

Against this proscription Nietzsche imagines a millennia of ethical experimentation. Its outcome will be a comprehensive knowledge of how moralities contribute to growth of ‘the plant “man”’ (BGE 44, KSA 5.61) and what value climates are optimal for the propagation of different types of plants. Nietzsche conceives his ethical experimentalism as a way of discovering this array of as yet unexplored climates and their forms of life. We may have completed our physical geography, but we have barely begun to map our moral geography. Our current map, he believes, identifies only a small portion of our moral geography. For this reason he conceives ethical experimentalism in terms of the promise of new dawns – days that will reveal new, unexplored human possibilities.²² There are so many new days ahead of us, he implies, because we have barely begun to discover these new types of human flourishing. ‘As surely as the wicked (*Bösen*) enjoy a hundred kinds of happiness of which the virtuous have no inkling’, he writes, ‘so too they possess a hundred kinds of beauty: and many of them have not yet been discovered’ (D 468, KSA 3.280–1). Nietzsche’s experimentalism aims to discover the many different types of beauty that remain as yet undiscovered.

In order to achieve this goal Nietzsche proposes that instead of following metaphysical moralists in contemplating allegedly eternal forms or seeking to identify the groundwork of morality we investigate moralities scientifically and experimentally: i.e. we investigate the genesis, evolution and outcomes of previous moralities and we test the outcomes of new values through experimentation. Nietzsche’s science of morals involves tracking historically all the many values and practices that have given life a certain shape, appearance and direction. Nietzsche conceives his experimentalism as an integral part of this science: it is analogous to a laboratory experiment where we can isolate a specific set of values by practising them in our own lives and observing their regular set of effects. We might ask, for example, ‘How has morality as a condition of existence, a so-called “moral climate”, nurtured or impeded the human drives, and what type of “plant” does it propagate?’ We can conceive previous moralities such as Stoicism and Epicureanism as experimental moralities that reveal how certain moralities act as conditions of existence, or we can experiment with other values to achieve the same end. Nietzsche’s metaphor implies that morality establishes the basic conditions that shape the human drives and that some moral climates might be more ‘favourable’ to some forms of life than others. In other words, Nietzsche’s idea of morality as a condition of existence opens up the possibility that we can measure the value of moralities in terms of the way in which they shape, nurture or develop human drives. Nietzsche emphasizes that human drives ‘*still could*

grow' in very different ways depending on the moral climates brought to bear on their development.

Nietzsche suggests that his new scientific study of morality identifies the erroneousness 'of moral judgements *to date*'. Nietzsche identifies at least three moral 'errors'. The metaphysical error that consists in the belief that good and evil are objective, independent properties of actions or drives. Against this view, he holds that nothing is good/evil in-itself (D 210, KSA 3.189–90). If we experience moral norms as objective or inescapable this is merely a contingent outcome of our contingent natural history (see HH 39, KSA 2.62–4).²³ Contra Kant Nietzsche identifies the value of moralities in terms of their natural effects on 'life' or the drives. Nietzsche conceives this post-metaphysical conception of values as significant because it permits ethical experimentation. By definition the metaphysical view proscribes experiment by identifying one and only one set of value judgements as objective or permissible. By contrast, Nietzsche's post-metaphysical, naturalist view, which conceives values as conditions of existence that promote certain types of 'plants' within the species allows that (1) the value of our values turns on which particular kind of plant/s we wish to cultivate; and (2) we may not yet have discovered the full range of variations our species is capable of producing and the values required to promote such as yet unrealized variations.

Nietzsche identifies another type of 'error' in contemporary naturalists' conception of morality as a naturally selected mechanism of adaptation. Nietzsche's criticism of these naturalists provides us with clue about the measure he uses to establish an 'order of rank' among values. As with Guyau, Nietzsche claims that experimentation should not simply be aimed at multiplying the available number of climates and forms of life, but at identifying the values that facilitate the most 'intense' forms of life. Nietzsche argues that if we measure altruistic moral values by the Darwinian naturalist's measure – the species' adaptation to its environment – we can conclude that they are 'errors': they do not facilitate species' preservation. Against these contemporary naturalists Nietzsche argues that the contemporary altruistic morality of good and evil, which naturalists have inherited from earlier metaphysical systems, does not sum up what is useful for the species. In fact, he argues, the morality of good and evil is an evolutionary danger: if we were to allow this morality to operate as the species' fundamental condition of existence, it would in fact perish (GS 1, KSA 3.345–6). Nietzsche does not contest their evolutionary or genealogical explanation of morality, only their substantive claim that the cooperation altruism promotes is a necessary condition of existence. The 'error' here lies not in the metaphysical conception

of values as eternal and objective but in the mistaken judgement that our current values accurately select the drives required to facilitate species' flourishing and deselect those that impede its. Nietzsche then identifies two distinct kinds of error: the metaphysical error of value objectivity and the naturalist error of utility miscalculation. Nietzsche's indictment of the naturalist's moral 'error' is still only an immanent critique: it indicts the Darwinian naturalists according to their own criteria. It does not yet contest their measure of value (adaptation) or spell out an alternative measure of value.

Nietzsche then takes the controversial step of contesting what he conceives as the Darwinians' fundamental error, viz., measuring the value moralities in terms of the allegedly naturalistic principle of species' adaptation. Nietzsche suggests his *alternative* naturalistic line of inquiry into moralities as conditions of existence culminate in 'the most delicate question: "Can science not only eliminate morality as 'error', but also *furnish (zu geben)* goals of action?"' (GS 7, KSA 3.379). After proving that it can annihilate goals of action Nietzsche suggests that ethical experimentation can help address this question. In place of the Kantian search for the metaphysical ground of morality and the Darwinian search for the natural grounds of morality as a successful mechanism of adaptation, he envisages centuries of moral experimentation in which '*every kind of heroism could find satisfaction*, an experimenting that would 'eclipse all the great projects and sacrifices of history to date' (GS 7, KSA 3.379–80; our italics). Nietzsche conceives this great ethical experimentation as a means for ascertaining how different moralities or value regimes might cultivate or support different 'heroisms' and the structure of human drives on which they depend.

Nietzsche's target here is both the metaphysical picture of morality and his contemporaries' naturalist picture of morality. Kantians and naturalists alike identify a single type of morality as legitimate, but unlike Kantians the naturalists justify this morality a posteriori as an evolutionary mechanism of self-preservation. Nietzsche's ethical experimentation rejects the Kantian a priori claim that there is a single, unconditional morality and the naturalists' a posteriori claim that value or measure of morality lies in its contribution to a species' self-preservation. Against Kantians he maintains that there are many moralities and their value lies in their effects, but against the Darwinians he uses a very different, non-Darwinian measure of the value. Nietzsche insists that this non-Darwinian measure is nonetheless true to nature. We should not conceive nature as a utility maximizer that 'aims' at self-preservation, he claims, but as an absurd squanderer of life (GS 349).²⁴ Moralities that structure the drives to make self-preservation possible, he claims, are exceptions within

nature; the rule is 'heroic' squandering of energy. Nietzsche's allegedly naturalistic measure is implied by his choice of the word 'heroism'. Heroic life, as Nietzsche conceives it, is the antithesis of self-preservation: '*What makes one heroic? To approach at the same time one's highest suffering and one's highest hope*' (GS 268).²⁵ Nietzsche's experimentation aims not at identifying moralities that establish secure conditions of life (self-preservation via adaptation), but identifying the full range of moralities that make possible 'heroic' lives or lives that require enormous risks in the pursuit of 'higher' goals (see also GS 292 and 303, KSA 3.532–3 and 541–2). Nietzsche shares the Hellenistic view that the fundamental principle of ethics is to 'live according to nature', but this is not to live in serene, untroubled harmony with a providential order (Stoic), tranquilly through the satisfaction of natural and necessary pleasures (Epicurean), or through 'modest' adaptation to the environment (Darwinian), but to live heroically. Nietzsche's concept of ethical experimentation challenges Kantian ethics (as he understood it) insofar as it defends a plurality of moral perspectives and identifies the natural origins of metaphysical morality. Nietzsche's ethical experimentation also challenges Darwinian naturalism insofar as it rejects the view that nature 'measures' different moralities in terms of successful adaptation. Nietzsche replaces Kantian universalizability and Darwinian adaptation as measures of value, with the measure of 'heroism', or in Guyau's terms 'the intensity of living'. Nietzsche's ethical experimentation aims to expand the scope for different kinds of heroism by identifying the climates or value conditions that enable them to flourish. Nietzsche ethical experimentation replaces universality and self-preservation with 'heroism' as the measure of the value of values.

5.

Although the late Nietzsche criticizes Guyau for remaining within the ambit of free thinking, in his middle period writings he too favours the kind of ethical experimentalism Guyau champions. Their criticism of Kant is strikingly similar. Both see Kant's ethics as a mode of thinking that has been superseded by evolutionary theories' insights into the origins of moral feelings or sensations. On the one hand, they investigate the historical sources of feelings of duty and obligation, and on the other they champion the 'rights' of free-spirited individuals to engage in ethical experiments. They also both identify such ethical experimentation as a way of promoting moral variability and species' diversification.

As Guyau notes, although the ‘rigorous law’ of Kant’s philosophy still reigns in some minds, it is necessary to deviate from it practically. This moral philosophy is no longer the Jupiter whose frown was sufficient to move the world, but rather ‘the prince’ that can now be disobeyed without too much danger. Guyau (1896: 171; 1898: 144) asks: is there not something higher than this mock royalty, and must we not reject all ‘absolute sovereignty’ and in order to promote ‘individual speculation’?

Similarly, in his middle period writings, such as *Dawn*, Nietzsche seeks to advance the cause of emerging individuals who no longer consider themselves to be bound by existing mores and laws and are thus making the first attempts to organize and create for themselves a right. Hitherto, he claims, such individuals have lived their lives under the jurisdiction of a guilty conscience, being decried and decrying themselves as criminals, freethinkers and immoralists (D 164, KSA 3.146–7). Although Nietzsche thinks their experimentalism will make the coming century a precarious one (it may mean, as he notes, that a rifle hangs on each and every shoulder), it is one that he thinks we should support since it at least ensures that there will be opponents of any claims to a moral monopoly.

Though on some occasions Nietzsche gives the impression that he wishes to see the abolition of morality tout court in truth he argues for something more specific and limited: namely, liberation from the narrow and superstitious, fear-ridden bonds of unconditional morality (NL 1887 10[164], KSA 12.551–2). After Kant he thinks we need a new perspective on moral values, one that will enable us to discover how the type ‘man’ can be further strengthened and elevated (NL 1885–6 2[131], KSA 129–32). This requires, so he claims, that we extend the concept of ‘morality’ and recognize the need for a moral pluralism – as he says, the values of the herd can be allowed to rule but in and for the herd (NL 1886–7 7[6], KSA 12.273–83; see Schacht 1983: 463, 469; Conway 1997: 28–34). Moreover, Nietzsche suggests that we should extend this pluralism to cater for constitutional differences between individuals and types. Different moralities, he argues, are warranted in different human contexts and in relation to different human types.

We should also not conflate Nietzsche’s ‘experimental morality’ (NL 1883–4 24[15], KSA 10.651–2) in which one gives oneself a goal with a petty egoism that aims at identifying how to lead a life of minimal danger, risk or adversity. On the contrary, Nietzsche conceives this experimentalism as practices in the service of discovering how one might expand and ‘elevate’ the species’ capacities and powers. Nietzsche’s experimentalist ethic requires individuals to test various modes of living and maxims of action to determine which

enable them to expand the scope of human flourishing. Nietzsche maintains that this experimentalism requires free spirits to overcome the suffering they necessarily experience when they jettison comforting horizons and moral codes, or 'murder' the law, as he puts it, and not give way to the pity they might feel over the distress their moral transgressions cause those settled spirits wedded to tradition (D 146, 562, KSA 3.137–8, 327). Free spirits must, as he puts it, sojourn in the wilderness. Nietzsche therefore suggests that the key features of spiritual superiority include indifference to one's own and others' tender emotions and feelings for the sake of pursuing goals that go beyond the species' current limits. The type of morality Nietzsche posits for the future, therefore, might best be described as 'supra-individualistic' even if it is specific individuals who practise the experimental life and lead the way by offering themselves and their lives as sacrifices to knowledge. Here the goal is a new 'ploughshare' of potential universal benefit and enrichment, leading to a strengthening and elevation of the human feeling of power (D 146, KSA 3.137–8).

Finally, one cannot overlook the differences that ultimately separate Guyau and Nietzsche. Guyau's philosophy of life departs from the core assumptions of Nietzsche's thinking. For him, life is expansive in the sense of a need to share: 'It is as impossible to shut up the intelligence as to shut up flame' (Guyau 1896: 247; 1898: 210). For Guyau human nature is sociable and cannot be entirely selfish even if it wished to be: 'We are open on all sides, on all side encroaching and encroached upon . . . *Life is not only nutrition; it is production and fecundity*' (ibid.). It is this fecundity of life that reconciles egoism and altruism for Guyau. He thinks that an evolutionary growth can be located in the development of human nature in which from a growing fusion of sensibilities and the increasingly sociable character of elevated pleasures there arises a superior necessity, a kind of duty in fact, which moves us towards others and does so naturally and rationally: 'We cannot enjoy ourselves in ourselves as on an isolated island . . . Pure selfishness . . . instead of being a real affirmation of self, is a *mutilation of self*' (Guyau 1896: 249; 1898: 212). Guyau objects to any ethics of pure egoism: 'We cannot mutilate ourselves, and pure egoism would be meaningless, an impossibility. In the same way that the ego is considered an illusion by contemporary psychology, that there is no personality, that we are composed of an infinite number of beings and tiny consciousnesses, in the same way we might say that egoist pleasure is an illusion: my pleasure does not exist without the pleasure of others . . . My pleasure, in order to lose nothing of its intensity, must

maintain all of its extension'. Guyau regards morality conceived as *caritas* as the great 'flower of life':

There is a certain generosity which is inseparable from existence and without which we die – we shrivel up internally. We must put forth blossoms . . . in reality, charity is but one with overflowing fecundity; it is like a maternity too large to be confined within the family. (Guyau 1896: 101; 1898: 87)

Nietzsche finds this aspect of Guyau's thinking incredible. Like Guyau he wishes to push life in the direction of a maximization of individual difference or 'individual speculation'. Yet in opposition to Guyau Nietzsche often seems to assume that this entails a radical form of self-sufficiency, associability and incommunicability (NL 1880 6[158], KSA 9. 237). Nietzsche stresses that his model of individual experimentalism is incompatible with all or most forms of shared sentiment, especially shared suffering (*Mitleid*).

In many ways Nietzsche's ethical experimentalism would have benefitted from following Guyau in recognizing the value of shared sentiment for human flourishing. In this respect Guyau's ethic helps to clarify an important philosophical and ethical inconsistency in Nietzsche's perspective. In *The Gay Science* Nietzsche is acutely aware that the Stoic strategy of eliminating the passions, conceived as a capacity to be affected by external causes, significantly limits on our capacity to flourish (GS 12, 306, 326, KSA 3.383–4, 544, 553–4; see Ure and Ryan 2014). 'In denying value to stimulation, suffering and passion' as Armstrong (2013, 20) explains 'Stoicism also denies what, for Nietzsche, is a fundamental condition for growth in activity and joy; namely, openness to being affected. Insofar as Stoic ethics advocates withdrawal, endurance and indifference towards the world, it closes the door to valuable sources of stimulation and struggle, thus impeding rather than promoting human freedom and flourishing'.

Yet Nietzsche follows just this course in rejecting *Mitleid* or shared suffering as a pathological affect that only leads to ill-health (D 134, KSA 3.127–8). If, as Nietzsche argues strongly elsewhere, overcoming one's *own* suffering is a necessary condition of individual flourishing then *prime facie* there is good reason for supposing that receptivity to and overcoming *others'* suffering can also contribute to one's own and others' flourishing. Indeed, on the score Nietzsche wants to have his cake and eat it too. In GS he declares that he wants to 'teach . . . what is understood by so few today, least of all by those preachers of pity: *Mitfreude!*' (GS 338, KSA 3.568). Nietzsche concedes that *Mitfreude* is an important part of those mutually beneficial friendships that contribute to both parties' flourishing,

but he draws the line at *Mitleid*. *Mitfreude*, he declares, not *Mitleid*, makes the friend (HH 499, KSA 2.320). Yet, the same judgements that motivate *Mitfreude* with friends must also motivate *Mitleid*: one cannot genuinely have one with the other, and in fact, if Nietzsche is correct, one must maximize the latter in order to maximize the former. In the first place, if we genuinely share in others' joy, then we must also suffer with them when they experience misfortune or defeat. The condition of our joy in others' success or good fortune is distress over their failure or misfortune. Second, Nietzsche argues that maximal suffering is a necessary condition of maximal joy. Nietzsche makes just this conceptual point in criticizing what he sees as Stoicism's cowardly or prudent failure to embrace the conditions of human flourishing: 'To this day you have the choice: either *as little displeasure as possible*, painlessness in brief . . . or *as much displeasure as possible* as the price for the growth of an abundance of subtle pleasures and joys that have rarely been relished yet' (GS 12, KSA 3.383–4). The same applies (*mutatis mutandis*) to our relations with others: if we wish to have as much pleasure or joy as possible in and through our relations with others (*Mitfreude*), then we must also be prepared to derive as much displeasure as possible through shared suffering (*Mitleid*). One cannot be a teacher of *Mitfreude* without being a teacher of *Mitleid*.

No doubt Nietzsche had reason for his scepticism about whether *Mitleid* might contribute to one's own and others' joy in life. As he noted with a mixture of despair and contempt, Rousseau and Schopenhauer argued that those who suffer with others are also those who also envy their success (Ure 2006). However Nietzsche's justified suspicion that in some cases 'pity' merely masks envy should have led him to criticize inauthentic pity and friendship, not mistakenly and inconsistently sever the ties between shared suffering and shared joy. Perhaps then even if we are destined to forget Guyau as an intellectual figure, we should not forget his warning that we mutilate ourselves without sharing others' pleasures *and* pains. Guyau signposts the post-Stoic, post-Kantian road Nietzsche should have taken in formulating a new ethical eudaimonism.

Notes

- 1 Brobjer (2008: 91) notes that Nietzsche's reading of the text 'is likely to have been of major importance for his views on ethics'. For Guyau's text we have consulted the fourth edition of the French from 1896 and the English translation of 1898 based on the second edition. The differences between the different editions are slight.

- 2 Kropotkin (1924: 322).
- 3 For some details, see Brobjer (2008: 102, 235 n. 32). Guyau's text was first translated into English in 1897.
- 4 This note is from May–July of 1885. It begins with Nietzsche noting the deplorable condition of literature on morality in today's Europe and then reviews contributions in the area from England, France and Germany. Nietzsche singles out Guyau's book for special praise along with Réé's *The Origin of Moral Sensations* (1877) and W. H. Rolph's *Biological Problems* (1881). He regards these three texts as the strongest in contemporary ethics.
- 5 Glatzer (1962: 11).
- 6 Guyau's *Esquisse* appears as part of a set of books listed by Nietzsche in a note from the beginning of 1885 (NL 1884–5 29[67], KSA 11.352). His annotated copy of the book has been lost but his annotations can be found in the appendix to the German translation of Guyau's text by Elisabeth Schwarz: see Guyau (1912: 279–303). The marginal notes were copied from the original by Gast and obtained by Schwarz, supported by Fouillée, from the archive. For further insight see Fidler (1994: 77 n. 3) and Brobjer (2008: 234 n. 22). Nietzsche writes 'Ja' approximately ten times, 'bravo' four times, 'ecco' two times and 'gut' and 'sehr gut' approximately thirty times.
- 7 Nietzsche was, of course, very familiar with Spencer and Hartmann, including these particular works, and he critically engages with them in his notes. Although he did read Fouillée's book on contemporary social science in 1887, we do not know if he was familiar with his book on moral systems though we think not. See Brobjer (2008: 102, 181 n. 67). Nietzsche refers to Fouillée in NL 1887 10[171], KSA 12.559 (along with Guyau), and NL 1887–8 11[137] and 11[147], KSA 13.63 and 13.69. Fouillée was Guyau's stepfather and wrote a book on Nietzsche after Guyau's premature death, *Nietzsche et l'immoralisme* (1902). Nietzsche's annotations to his copy of Guyau's *Esquisse* are also discussed in it. NL 1887–8 11[137], KSA 13.63, indicates that Nietzsche regarded him as another free thinker: "The "growing autonomy of the individual": these Parisian philosophers such as Fouillée speak of this they ought to take a look at the *race moutonnaire* [race of sheep] to which they belong! Open your eyes, you sociologists of the future! The individual has grown strong under *opposite* conditions; what you describe is the most extreme weakening and impoverishment of mankind; you even desire it and employ to that end the whole mendacious apparatus of the old ideal! You are so constituted that you actually regard your herd-animal needs as an ideal! A complete lack of psychological integrity!"
- 8 Orru (1983: 503–4).
- 9 In the French original Guyau employs the Greek for both terms. Guyau's conception of 'anomos' was of course taken up by Emile Durkheim and put to quite different

- ends in his well-known theory of 'pathological anomie'. For further insight, see Orru and Miller (1996).
- 10 GMS 460. On this issue, see Ross (2009).
 - 11 In GS 335, KSA 3.560–4, Nietzsche seeks to show that any attempt to truly know ourselves must have recourse to the intellectual conscience which works as a conscience behind our moral conscience and which may be little more than the product of habitually acquired opinions and valuations.
 - 12 Guyau's insight seems to anticipate the approach to the categorical imperative Bergson (1979: 26) proposes in his *Two Sources*: 'an absolutely categorical imperative is instinctive or somnambulistic, enacted as such in a normal state . . .'. See also Nietzsche on 'the automaton of duty' in A 11, KSA 6.177.
 - 13 There is an extended treatment on pessimism by Guyau in his *Non-Religion of the Future*, where he treats the same figures that occupy Nietzsche's attention: Leopardi, Schopenhauer, and von Hartmann (Guyau 1962: 457–66).
 - 14 For Nietzsche's annotation, see Guyau (1912: 286).
 - 15 On the need for an 'experimental morality', compare Nietzsche, BGE 210, KSA 5.142–4, NL 1883–4 24[15], KSA 10.651–2, and NL 1885–6 1[136], KSA 12.42.
 - 16 Arguably, Nietzsche oversimplifies Kant's analysis of pity (*Mitleid*). Drawing on his argument in the *Doctrine of Virtue* 34/35 Gudrun von Tevenar plausibly argues that Kant in fact 'rejects *Mitleidenschaft*, tolerates pity, and recommends compassion'; Tevenar (2001: 252). On Kant's troubled reflections on the value of pity (*Mitleid*) as a motivation of moral action, see Tevenar (2001: 235–54), Baxley (2010: 163–71) and Fraser (2010: chapter 5).
 - 17 Nietzsche glosses Kant's 'Doctrine of Virtue', MS §34 457.
 - 18 It is true that Nietzsche occasionally advocates a kind of 'empathy', but he does so for epistemic not social reasons. Indeed, he advocates empathy without sympathy. In GS 249, KSA 3.515, for example, he claims that we need to develop what we might call 'empathy' in order to appropriate others' perspectives for ourselves, but he does *not* advocate that we ought to use this empathy to develop our concern about their fate. Indeed, as Nietzsche takes great pains to stress in this very section, *his* kind of empathy is motivated by a purely selfish greed to appropriate others' eyes for the sake of expanding or refining one's own vision. Nietzsche's empathy is a *greed* for possession (see also GS 14, KSA 3.386–7). Nietzsche goes on to explain in GS 338 that if what we might call our natural, 'autonomic' empathy begin to tilt over into sympathy, we need to shut it down by placing a layer of several centuries between ourselves and the cries of distress in the present that threaten to lure us down the path of sympathy or pity with our fellow citizens or friends. So Nietzsche endorses empathy as a way of expanding ourselves and appropriating others for ourselves, but he does not by any means endorse or support sympathy. In fact Nietzsche urges us to protect and immunize ourselves against this pathological love lest it lure us into helping others rather than following our own way.

- 19 Gould (1991).
- 20 Nietzsche ironically alludes here to Paul's famous conversion on the road to Damascus, *Acts* 9:1–19. When the scales fall from Paul's eye he is able to see that Jesus is the Son of God who can deliver believers from the *via dolorosa*. Paul's conversion is by way of a religious epiphany. It converts him from Judaism's defender to its attacker. By contrast, when the scales fall from the eyes of the Nietzschean he is able to see that there are no purposes or designs in nature, only the operations of blind chance. The Nietzschean conversion is by way of evolutionary history.
- 21 Nietzsche clearly alludes to Kant's GMS and KpV, especially the chapter 'Incentives of Pure Practical Reason.' 'Two things fill the mind with ever-increasing wonder and awe (*Ehrfurcht*), the more often and the more intensely the mind of thought is drawn to them: the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me.'
- 22 Nietzsche prefaced *Daybreak* with a phrase from the *Rig Veda*: 'There are so many days (*Morgenröthen*) that have not yet broken' (D, KSA 3.9).
- 23 See also Joyce (2006). For a cogent analysis of the significance of such genealogical accounts for the epistemic standing of our moral judgements, see Hanfield (forthcoming). His analysis supports the Nietzschean claim that genealogical considerations suggest that 'we are not justified in believing certain core [Kantian] claims about morals: claims about the inescapability of moral demands and the appropriateness of guilt.'
- 24 We do not have space here to examine the competing interpretations of Nietzsche's concept of life as 'will to power'. For an excellent summary and analysis of these interpretations, see Loeb (2015).
- 25 This heroic conception of Nietzsche's ethics of experimentation is consistent with what we might call Bernard Reginster's (2006) 'Olympian' conception of Nietzsche's ethics. He argues that it 'essentially rests on the view that the difficulty of an achievement contributes to its value' (13).

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