Editors’ Introduction

Jean-Marie Guyau on Epicurus and the Art of Living: A Novel Approach to the History of Philosophy

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Once called the ‘Spinoza of France’ and considered one of the ‘greatest eudaemonist philosophers’ of his century,[1] Jean-Marie Guyau remains an unjustifiably forgotten and marginal figure in the history of philosophy. During the time when Guyau produced most of his philosophical work he remained an outsider with regards to the academic institution. His state of poor health did not allow him to occupy the teaching position he obtained at the Lycée Condorcet,[2] and he was forced to seek refuge in the milder weather of southern France; he settled first in Nice, then in Menton, where he worked until the end of his short life. Despite Guyau’s extra-institutional position his work met an enthusiastic reception during his lifetime and was later championed by his stepfather and life-long interlocutor Alfred Fouillée, which assured its reception in the first decade of the twentieth century.[3] Guyau’s contemporaries praised his precocious philosophical maturity and intellectual boldness.

The stature and importance of the figures that intellectually engaged with Guyau’s work is striking. Friedrich Nietzsche read the books of the philosopher he called ‘the brave Guyau’, filling the margins with enthusiastic, and also critical, comments.[4] The anarchist thinker Peter Kropotkin expressed his admiration for Guyau’s attempt to establish ethics on a scientific foundation and judged his contribution to be ‘remarkable’.[5] Henri Bergson read and reviewed Guyau’s work on the philosophy of time. In his book on art Tolstoy praises Guyau’s conception of beauty.[6] A young Émile Durkheim wrote a review of Guyau’s 1887 book, *L’irréligion de l’avenir,* extracting from it the notion of *anomie.*[7] The philosopher and magistrate Gabriel Tarde engaged with Guyau’s work on sanction, and lamented the fact that he was ‘prematurely taken from us in the full bloom of a train of thought’.[8] Guyau’s impact was not less remarkable in the Anglophone context. In the United States he was read by important and inspiring thinkers and ethicists, such as Josiah Royce and William James.[9] In England, Henry Sidgwick wrote a review of Guyau’s *La morale d’Épicure* for *Mind*.[10] G. E. Moore also read and reviewed Guyau’s work in 1899,[11] and discussed it again in his *Principia Ethica*.[12] As one can see, in the late nineteenth century Guyau was far from being an obscure figure; rather, he was a necessary reference for thinkers from different traditions and schools of thought.

Guyau was born in Laval on 28 October 1854. He began his classical and philosophical education at a very early age under the mentorship of his relative, Alfred Fouillée. At the age of 17 Guyau obtained the title of *licencié ès lettres*, translating and writing commentaries on a series of ancient texts.[13] Alongside the *Ethics of Epicurus*, Guyau published at least five other philosophy books and regularly contributed to the *Revue philosophique de la France et de l’étranger*, the *Revue bleue* and the *Revue des deux Mondes*. Additionally, he wrote poems and literary texts, as well as a series of schoolbooks.[14] This prolific output was interrupted by a serious lung disease, aggravated by an earthquake that occurred in southern France. Guyau died in Menton on 31 March 1888 at the tender age of 33. After a short-lived reception in French academia, and the deaths of Fouillée, and Guyau’s son Augustin, his work gradually fell into oblivion, and the majority of his personal papers and manuscripts were lost.[15]

During his lifetime, Guyau was best known for two main works, the *Irréligion de l'avenir*, and the *Esquisse d'une morale sans obligation ni sanction*. In the *Esquisse* in particular, Guyau proposes a notion of life that stresses its expansive, social and cooperative character. He thinks life can best be defined by two fundamental movements. The first is that of 'gravitation upon itself', which consists in 'nutrition, appropriation, [and] transformation for itself of the forces of nature'.[16] This dimension explains the egoistic drives of the living being, such as self-preservation and hedonistic behaviours. The second movement is one of 'expenditure' of accumulated force, which gives rise to an expansive, generous and sociable drive. This aspect is the key to understanding one of the central notions of Guyau's philosophy of life: *fecundity*. Fecundity appears in its physical dimension in the reproduction of life: the expansion of life's force and energy through (and with) others. It also appears in what Guyau calls the superior or elevated pleasures, which presuppose the existence of others. For him, the most intense life is also the one that is more extensive and sociable, the one that communicates and associates itself with others. With this philosophy and ethics of life Guyau attempts to harmonize egoism and altruism, while also maintaining that the expansion of life also presupposes a bursting of the 'narrow shell of the self'.[17] The main philosophical issues occupying Guyau's attention and that will lead Guyau to formulate his philosophy of life are to be found in his book on Epicurus. In this work, he favours a notion of pleasure over conceptions of duty, and inquires into the different solutions found in the history of ethics – and in the Epicurean tradition in particular – concerning the relationship between individual enjoyment and collective well-being.

The Ethics of Epicurus constitutes one of the most significant receptions of Epicurean teaching in the nineteenth century. Although today it is a neglected source, a situation that this translation and edition aims to correct, Guyau's reception of Epicurus makes a major contribution to our understanding of Epicurean teaching as an ethics based on a refined and enlightened form of enjoyment, and for him this is an ethics that shapes the entire existence of those who adhere to it. Guyau sets out to reveal the emancipatory potential of the Epicurean way of life, while at the same time challenging its traditional depiction or, one should say, caricature, as a coarse form of hedonistic egoism, marked by lassitude and debauchery. Guyau is keen to demonstrate that Epicurean teaching does not amount to a simple-minded hedonism, but rather supposes an ethical way of living in the world, which is what he calls an 'art of conduct'. Through this mastery of conduct the Epicurean is able to govern himself, overcoming the bondage of vain opinions and fears, and shaping his life as a work of art.[18] For Guyau, no other doctrine has been the object of more attacks and criticism than ancient and modern Epicureanism, and this is largely because it goes so strongly against received opinion on those things that are most dear to the human heart, notably received moral ideas and religion: 'the moment seems to have arrived,' he writes, 'when we can more fairly appreciate the Epicurean doctrine and seek the portion of truth it contains' (381).

The Ethics of Epicurus

In 1871 a competition was announced by the 'Section de Morale' of the Académie de Sciences Morales et Politiques. The panel presided over by philosopher Elme-Marie Caro solicited contributions on the history and critique of utilitarianism. Three years later, in 1874, a lengthy dissertation won the competition. The author of this 1,300-page-long monograph was the 19-year-old philosopher Jean-Marie Guyau. In 1879 he published the first part of his dissertation as a separate book: *La morale d'Épicure et ses rapports avec le doctrines contemporaines*, while the second part would become *La morale anglaise contemporaine.*

The way in which Guyau chose to engage with the proposition of the Académie was rather peculiar and surprising: he historically displaces the main theme, resituating it in ancient Greece, and begins his dissertation with a reconstruction of Epicureanism. Guyau notes that Epicureanism was the most popular philosophy of ancient Greece and Rome. Indeed, he writes, 'the first Greek doctrine to enter Rome and to be expressed in Latin was the irreligious doctrine of Epicurus' (39). While their main adversaries, the Stoics, struggled against this teaching for the whole duration of the Roman Empire, the struggle was, he holds, largely in vain since they found it impossible to defeat its popularity or to escape its influence. As Guyau observes, Seneca, a strong critic of the Epicureans, was attracted to the very doctrines he fought against. The same is true of Marcus Aurelius, who although meditating under the influence of Epictetus, and himself a severe critic of Epicureanism, kept returning to Epicurus, the 'pagan master', as a model to be inspired by.

Guyau appreciates the significance of Epicurean teaching in a specific manner, which he develops in the context of a consideration of Epicureanism's defeat by Christianity. The Epicureans found themselves weak, he notes, when they confronted this religion simply because of their emphasis on the reality of our death and ultimate annihilation, when the vast majority of human beings crave immortality. 'At this time,' Guyau remarks, 'human beings were weary of life, overwhelmed by servitude and decadence. Saint Augustine rejects, as did his era, a doctrine that promised him only a happy life' (41). Over time the gardens of Epicurus, which for centuries had been graced by sages of every nation and surrounded by an enchanted crowd, became deserted and depopulated. Epicurus' words, which had been incorporated as sacred truths, were forgotten and effaced by what seemed to be a more powerful word.

However, although defeated, Epicurean teaching was not destroyed. After several centuries, Guyau notes, the teaching was rediscovered and 'the earth was found to have value and to be worth taking seriously' (42). Human beings eventually grew tired of having their eyes restlessly oriented to heaven, and the earth came to have importance for humanity once again. Guyau locates this development taking place in the thinking of Montaigne, whom he notes was not an Epicurean but a Pyrrhonian sceptic. Although Montaigne may have been keen to refute his despised nickname of being an Epicurean, Guyau contends that numerous Epicurean thoughts find a rebirth in his *Essays*: 'In this "handbook of the honest" … it is not the scepticism of Pyrrho that will come out of this meditation, but rather the *ethics* of Epicurus' (2). Guyau's narrative then reaches the modern epoch, and he closely examines how in France the system of Epicureanism was reawakened by the erudition of Gassendi, and in England by the genius of Hobbes. Furthermore, this reawakening continues in the work of Helvétius and almost all eighteenth-century French philosophers, while from the time of Bentham onwards almost all English thinkers are Epicurean. Finally, notes Guyau, the influence of Epicureanism continues to grow in spite of the new Stoicism of Kant and the Kantian school.

As this narrative outline indicates, Guyau prudently brings the topic closer to his own intellectual background and the philological training in Classics, ancient philosophy and the Early Church fathers, which he had pursued under Fouillée's mentorship. It is, therefore, from the perspective of antiquity – and of Epicureanism in particular – that Guyau will propose to write an alternative critical history of utilitarianism. This fertile, and at first sight anachronistic, approach allows Guyau to interpret modern utilitarianism as an accomplished expression of Epicureanism. It also allows him to read Epicurus through the lens of John Stuart Mill, to quote Caro's expression in his report to the Académie, providing an original and stimulating reading of the philosopher of the garden.[19] In this sense, modern ideas such as utilitarianism, positivism and evolutionism will constitute the privileged perspective from which Guyau views the philosophy of Epicurus and his followers.

Indeed, for Guyau, 'Epicurus and Lucretius already embody the scientific spirit of modern utilitarians' (2). If, on the one hand, Epicureanism is chosen by Guyau as a privileged perspective for writing a history of ethics, which sheds light upon modern ideas, helping us understand their foundations and implications, then, on the other hand, Epicureanism itself is seen as a modern idea – the 'most modern' of ancient ideas (xxix). Evidently not in a chronological sense, but in what we could call a logical and normative one: for Guyau, the Epicurean system has generated ideas such as evolution and progress (which Guyau observes emerging for the first time in the work of Lucretius),[20] and has sought to put forward a secular, probabilistic and scientific account of natural and physical phenomena, challenging religious notions of miracles, as well as supernatural explanations. Guyau observes that despite preserving an ethical admiration for the gods – seen as models of tranquillity and ataraxia for the sage – and a political respect for the religious rites of the city, the system of Epicurus is essentially irreligious. For Epicurus, the natural seed of religion is held to reside in superstition, which refers back to fear, ignorance and man's innate penchant for hasty conclusions. Moreover, as Guyau argues, 'no master can be more tyrannical than the master that one gives to oneself'.[21] However, Guyau shows that Epicurus and Lucretius equally resist replacing the arbitrary tyranny of the pagan gods by the much deeper and inescapable tyranny of fate and necessity – both in their scientific and philosophical versions.[22] Finally, Guyau notes the successes of Epicureanism in his own time: the cosmological systems of Democritus and Epicurus are triumphing again in the natural sciences with the renewal of materialism and the atomistic system, and in the moral and social sciences the doctrines that derive from Epicureanism are receiving a vital renewal in the English school and its emphasis on utility. 'How many old ideas and rooted customs Epicureanism has contributed to ridding the moral domain of!' (245). These Epicurean ideas can be seen as constituting the core of a modern philosophical attitude and that reappears throughout Guyau's appreciation of the history of ethics, referring to thinkers such as Hobbes, La Mettrie and Helvétius, and the *philosophes* of the Enlightenment.

Guyau's apparently naive position cannot be reduced to a mere anachronism. It finds its philosophical foundations both in his underlying appreciation of the history of Western ethical thought and in his method in the history of philosophy. Let us seek to illuminate the latter.

Guyau's method rests upon a certain 'vitalist' premise according to which philosophical ideas form systems that are organized in such a way that each of their parts is organically connected, forming what Pierre Hadot called, following Schopenhauer, an 'organic type of system'.[23] Guyau sees philosophical systems as living beings and, ultimately, as organisms. This is why a merely structural or architectonic reconstruction of the system – which Guyau calls a 'geometric projection' or the 'anatomy of a philosophical system' (xxvii) – although it might provide an informative synchronic picture of the organization and structure of the system – is still insufficient for an understanding of its development, movement, and the transformations it undergoes through history. For Guyau, this understanding can only be achieved once the system is considered in motion and subject to development throughout time.

Guyau proposes, then, to study the genesis of philosophical systems in the same way one studies the formation of biological organisms, for 'the laws of life and the laws of thought are the same' (28). And how does an organism develop? The genesis of an organism can always be traced back to a cell or a small number of associated cells, which gradually develops into an increasingly complex entity. The same process, Guyau argues, characterizes the genesis and formation of a philosophical system; and the task of the historian of philosophy amounts to identifying this first seminal and fertile idea – or set of associated ideas – that Guyau calls the 'key idea' (*idée maîtresse*), and then to analyse its development and growing complexity in the course of time. In a word, to the ' architecture' or the 'anatomy of thought' that analyses the structure and the relations of a certain system of ideas, and that studies its different parts independently of time, one must add an ' embryogenesis of thought' (xxviii). This approach focuses on the genesis and gradual development of a living philosophical system, starting from a fertile principle, which encounters other ideas, and then undergoes differentiation in the course of time.

In this sense, Guyau's approach to the history of thought is defined by an *evolutionary* perspective: one cannot understand the dynamics and evolution of a living system, be it an organism or a system of thought, simply by analysing its internal constitution. The structure of a certain philosophical system is but a snapshot of a state of its living development and is, therefore, to be explained by this development. This is why, he maintains, we can only fully understand modern utilitarianism by looking at ancient Epicureanism, for they are different states of an evolving living system. Moreover, a sole focus on internal development only gives us a part of the story: it is only when we focus on the interaction of an organism with an environment – or what Guyau calls 'a resistant *milieu*

’ – and the obstacles and challenges it poses to it as a form of life – that we can begin to properly understand its evolution. Here, again, it is the consideration of the living system in time, and in relation to specific spatial coordinates, that will provide us with the key to understanding the living structures it presupposes as solutions to this dynamic, and sometimes conflictive, interaction with the environment.[24] In the case of a system of thought, this interaction is characterized by the different appropriations and subsequent transformations that the system undergoes in different linguistic, national and cultural contexts, and more importantly the particular challenges it confronts, including the objections and contradictions it is likely to encounter in its development.

What, then, initially appeared as an anachronistic approach is, in truth, Guyau’s attempt to write a history of ethics from the perspective of the development and evolution of a philosophical system. In order to understand modern utilitarianism we must go beyond its present anatomy and current state of development so as to comprehend its formation, its embryogenesis, by looking at the ‘key ideas’ of pleasure and utility, which first emerge with Epicureanism. In a way, one could say that utilitarianism is but a chapter (although an important one) in a broader history of Epicureanism. However, there is another reason why Guyau thinks we should read utilitarian ethics as an instance of Epicureanism. This leads us to the philosophical presuppositions of the kind of history that Guyau is putting forward in the *Ethics of Epicurus.*

By highlighting a fundamental form of Epicureanism Guyau enables the reader to instructively conceive the history of ethics in terms of an antagonistic relationship it has with a fundamental Stoicism that embodies an ethics of duty and virtue. These two forces reappear, Guyau argues, every time religious enthusiasm and moral fanaticism dwindle, and human beings seek to freely investigate their ethical experience in the world. Consequently, we will also find exemplars of this fundamental Epicureanism and Stoicism in modernity:

> Epicurus’ influence (…) is increasing despite the new Stoicism of Kant and his school. Everywhere, in theory and practice, we find two moralities (…) split philosophical thought and divide human beings. We can say that today the fierce half-a-millennium struggle between Epicureans and Stoics has rekindled and is burning anew.
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If utilitarianism represents a modern version of the ethics of pleasure, Kant’s moral philosophy represents the renewal of the ethics of duty.[25] This suggests that Epicureanism and Stoicism embody two fundamental organizing poles of human ethical experience, two irreducible principles both in thought and in action: pleasure and duty. The latter is centred upon the notion of *obligation*, which it seeks to found upon rational, formal and non-empirical principles and rules of action; the former, by contrast, focuses on action based on interest and characterized by an empirical principle of enjoyment.

A key aim of Guyau’s text is to restore the dignity of the earthly pleasures advocated by Epicureanism against its detractors and against abstract and transcendent rules of action. This focus on the importance of pleasure allows him to uncover a forgotten, or at least overlooked, Epicurean tradition in the history of thought, one mainly concerned with human emancipation and happiness, and in which he situates the work of thinkers such as Gassendi, Hobbes, La Rochefoucauld, Spinoza, La Mettrie, Helvétius, Feuerbach and others. This tradition finds in pleasure and enjoyment a path to the achievement of personal independence to be attained through the victory over fear and superstition – the principal sources of trouble and anguish for human beings – and it inspires the creation of collective forms of emancipation. Indeed, as Guyau shows, Epicureanism and its modern successors were not concerned only with individual happiness and well-being: it is within the Epicurean tradition, and beginning with Epicurus himself and his analysis of friendship, that a series of reflections result in key political ideas, such as conventional justice and the social contract. Against the traditional reconstruction of Epicureanism as an egoistic and apolitical morality, characterized by a lack of attention to social concerns and a withdrawal from politics, Guyau shows that it was within the Epicurean tradition that important notions of modern political thought were first developed, such as a society founded on mutual agreements and the idea of social progress. To the Stoic tradition of natural law Guyau opposes the Epicurean 'pact of utility', which embodies the natural right of not harming and not being harmed by others. The pact, as Guyau sees it, is a way to come to terms with the tension existing between individual and society, between egoism and altruism. He writes: 'Epicurus in antiquity, and Hobbes in modernity, were the first thinkers to solve the issue in a utilitarian way. They invoked the interest of each one of its members as the end of society and, as a means for its organization [they posited] mutual consent, that is the mutual acceptance of burdens with a view to the common enjoyment of benefits; in a word, the social pact' (126). However, the social pact is not seen as a merely formal device since it also entails a community of ends founded on harmony and sympathy, and such a community of interests can only exist through mutual aid (120).

Guyau shows how the Epicurean approach to society is marked by a profound realism regarding the human condition: it does not deny the self-interested nature of human beings and the tendency of individuals towards pleasure and utility. The developments of this Epicurean view in psychology, which we witness in La Rochefoucauld's *Maxims*, for example, show the extent to which self-love and its transformations inform almost all human interactions, never fully disappearing in our encounters with others.[26] However, this realistic insight into the human heart, and the apparently pessimistic observation of human nature, do not amount to a form of moralistic contempt. Like Spinoza, the Epicurean tradition seeks not to 'bewail, or laugh at, or disdain, or (as usually happens) curse' the affects and actions of human beings.[27] In this sense modern Epicureanism, while deepening the social and political aspects of an ancient philosophy of pleasure, does not deny the affective and passionate nature of human beings. On the contrary, it is through the prism of the powerful naturalistic insights provided by Epicurus that his modern followers come to reflect upon the 'social problem'. Their great concern will be, then, how to create collective arrangements in which individual and common enjoyment and happiness can be most effectively and rationally brought together.

If Epicurean reflections on society seem to be merely founded upon utilitarian concerns, Guyau also stresses other aspects that, while based on utility, seem to exceed it, such as the importance accorded to friendship, which is seen as necessary for the attainment of virtue and happiness (115), as well as the importance of life lived in common, the *conspiratio amoris* that emerges from the habit of acting in common (116; 118). In the conclusion to the book Guyau claims that we have reached a time when our individual pleasure presupposes the pleasure of others: 'egoism will turn back and retreat further and further into ourselves, becoming less and less recognizable' and human beings 'will no longer be able to *enjoy* [pleasure] in solitude: their pleasure will be as if part of a *concert* in which the pleasure of others will take part as a necessary element' (241). Or, as he will later write in his *Esquisse*, the 'truly human pleasures are all (…) social. Pure selfishness (…) instead of being a real affirmation of self, is a mutilation of self'.[28]

Guyau guides us through the different attempts of the Epicurean tradition to come to terms with the problem of the pleasure of others, or that which he called 'the social ideal'. In the *Ethics of Epicurus*, Guyau thinks of the social contract, for example, as a collective and consensual organization of enjoyment and pleasure. He writes: 'According to Epicurus, the social idea consists of a strong union of all the contractors in mutual trust, in a form of happiness where everyone would have their share, and which everyone would enjoy at once' (128). However, if the Epicurean tradition has sought to harmonize self and others, Guyau writes, 'this is not a primitive and fundamental harmony. The egoisms of individuals function together like pendulums, without merging into one another, and without becoming deeply united. Ethics does not have as its goal to produce this union, since that would be ultimately impossible' (241).

Epicurean pleasure and self-cultivation

We now wish to illuminate how in his text Guyau conceives of an Epicurean ethics centred on the nature and tasks of self-cultivation.

Guyau's positioning of Epicureanism remains significant for one important reason: as we already mentioned it seeks to champion a pagan teaching against the menace of religious enthusiasm and moral fanaticism and, in so doing, it seeks to renew humanity's commitment to the earth as the place of its existential flourishing. For Guyau, modern human beings find themselves in a sceptical search for the truth about things – 'We are now less willing to believe, more willing to search' (4) – and Epicureanism can be enlisted as a mode of living and thinking that can greatly aid us in our search. For Guyau, Epicurean teaching is to play a fundamental role in developing a new research programme about ethics, in which, sceptically and honestly, we pose a series of daring questions, including: Does duty exist? Does morality exist? Should we replace duty by the common interest? Should we replace merit in action by the enjoyment of acting? For Guyau, it is the thought of Epicurus that echoes in the greatest minds of our own modern times and that may provide some answers to our searching questions. In short, for him Epicurean teaching is once again alive, and its enduring vitality shows that both history and its critical systems are never finished. For him, as for Nietzsche, 'Epicurus has been alive in all ages and he lives now.'[29]

In the opening chapter of his book Guyau highlights the distinctive character of Epicurus' teaching by making a helpful contrast with Aristotle. Where Aristotle holds that science in its highest forms is the thing that is least useful, Epicurus focuses on the positive and practical aspects of his doctrines, asking the question: What is the use or purpose of philosophy? Epicurus can thus be seen to be rejecting, Guyau says, 'every abstract speculation and every vain subtlety' (12). Most significantly perhaps, Epicurus 'breaks the Aristotelian distinction between contemplative and active virtue, between the goal of thought and that of action' (12).

The practical problem par excellence is to determine the end of our actions and the end or goal of our lives. As is well known, for Epicurus this end is pleasure; we delight in enjoyment (*jouissance*) and we revolt against pain. The challenge, Guyau notes, is to contend with the intelligence and reason that would judge pleasure as the end of life: when we live in accordance with the pleasure principle we are simply being faithful to nature and to our natural drives, so that when an animal inclines itself towards pleasure it is nature that judges in it and in its purity and integrity. For Guyau, this makes Epicurus the founder of naturalism: pleasure is the natural end of every being that lives. Let us be clear: for Guyau, nature and intelligence are not opposed; rather, the decisive point for Epicurus is that we cannot conceive of an abstract good divorced from a sensible element. It is only through an error that human intelligence conceives of an end that differs from the one pursued by the whole of nature since it is from sensation that thought first comes to life. The task is to do away with the abstractions of metaphysical thinking and to identify a good that is truly living (*vivant*), that is accessible to all, and that we cannot doubt. Even the self-denying Stoic, Guyau astutely notes, is, in effect, searching for a refined kind of satisfaction, namely, that of overcoming their suffering and pain, and in the process the desire for pain is transformed into some actual enjoyment. This curious kind of enjoyment in oneself, and in one's overcomings, plays a crucial role in the psychology of a refined egoism: it consists in taking a refined, even heroic, pleasure in oneself. This was also understood well by Nietzsche: 'There is a serenity the Stoic possesses whenever he feels constricted by the duties he has prescribed for his way of life: he takes pleasure in himself as the ruler.'[30]

In Guyau's reading, Epicurus' teaching results in a reconfigured doctrine of virtue: virtue is always a means to the end of pleasure and without pleasure the virtues would be neither commendable nor desirable. This is where Epicurus appeals to reason: if they are to serve the end of pleasure the virtues need to be rationally organized and subordinated to the end in a way that is skilful, and this is the task of science as well as the domain of wisdom. Here we can praise philosophy as this science and as this wisdom; we do not praise it on account it being the highest speculation of the intellect. We might think this is to subordinate physics, or the study of nature, to ethics, and to be worried by this. However, as Gilles Deleuze points out, there is a need of both: 'Everything happens as if physics were a means subordinated to practice, but practice would not have found this means all on its own and is incapable of achieving its end without it.'[31]

To be found in Epicurus' teaching is a temperate reason, and this forms an important component in Epicurus' conception of an art of living conceived as what Guyau calls 'the art of conduct', and to be conceived more fully as 'the art of spiritual and material direction' (15). This means that, for Epicurus, philosophy is not a pure, theoretical science but constitutes a practical rule of action. Indeed, for him, philosophy is in itself a *praxis*, 'an *energy* that seeks to produce, by discourses and reasoning, the blissful life' (15). As Guyau notes, thought without flesh (*chair*) is, for the Epicureans, nothing but a 'distant and uncoloured image, an effaced picture in which one can only glimpse the vaguest and most irresolute lines' (16). We thus need to pay attention to the pleasures of taste, of hearing, of sight, and those of Venus; but the principal pleasure, Guyau concludes, is the pleasure of living. James Porter has recently echoed this when he observes, with respect to Epicurean teaching: 'To love life is to be in an unqualified state of affirmation about what lies most immediately to hand: it is the pleasure, the unalloyed passion, and even thrill, of living itself.'[32] For Epicurus, then, a correct understanding of our mortality is one that should lead to the enjoyment of this mortal life. Moreover, this Epicurean love of life is not a longing for life, but 'rather an immediate expression of what is dear about life,[33] what is most life worthy in life', and which makes it something fragile and easily ruptured.[34] Moreover, 'what an Epicurean enjoys is not some pleasure that is distinct from life, but life *qua* pleasure'.[35] Similarly, arguing against the idea that Epicurean pleasure is a merely negative or empty concept, Pierre Hadot conceives of it as a positive sentiment, namely, the pure pleasure of existing.[36]

Guyau, we think, is especially incisive in seeing that Epicurean ethical teaching is focused on seeing the cultivation of happiness (*bonheur*) as a task to be carried out over the course of a whole lifetime. The task is one of genuine, far-sighted wisdom in which happiness is the new element in the doctrine of pleasure and that can lead to the attainment of blessedness. This is where Epicurus differs from Aristippus. Guyau depicts Aristippus' position as a form of radical hedonism, an absolute fidelity to the present moment, and consequently to the pleasure that is possible to achieve in each singular ephemeral fragment of the present. For Aristippus, the present alone is ours (28); for who could tell what the future reserves to us? We must avoid every thought involving duration and succession in pleasure, making ourselves fully present to the sole actuality of enjoyment, and thus dispersing ourselves in the multitude of ephemeral instant pleasures we experience.

For Epicurus, by contrast, we must consider pleasures and pains from the perspective of the whole of our lives (*ho holos bios*). Passions and desires appear to us as completely dominant when considered in the present moment. However, when we consider them in time and, specifically from the perspective of the duration of our whole life, we can reassess their ethical significance and ultimately master them. Guyau explains this idea through a physical analogy: *time* is for our *passions* what *space* is for *atoms* (30). Take, for example, the shocks and collisions of atoms; they are less violent and frequent in a vast space than they would be when atoms find themselves compressed in a small space and have less room to move freely without the hindrance of other atoms. The same applies to our passions in the short and long term. When considered in the short span of the present they appear absolute and unconquerable. However, when we view them from the perspective of the duration of our whole life, what can their impact upon us be?

One of the unique aspects of Guyau's interpretation of Epicurus resides in the way he conceives the temporality of pleasure. While other interpreters from Nietzsche to Hadot have highlighted the value of the *present instant* in Epicureanism,[37] Guyau shows that the experience of the present moment, and the emphasis on the pleasure that can be found in it, is *not* distinctive of Epicureanism – since we also find it in other hedonist thinkers.[38] For Guyau, Epicureanism's distinctive character resides in also considering the *future* when acting in the present. For the Epicurean, the present must be linked to the future, and both present and future converge in the composition of a 'whole of life'.[39] It is this encounter between present and future in enjoyment that Guyau calls 'utility': utility is pleasure fecundated by the idea of time.

When Guyau proposes to shift our attention from this complete and total belonging to the pleasure in the instant, focusing instead on the duration of our whole life, he also shifts focus from the object and moment of enjoyment to the *subject* of enjoyment. It is this subject, which persists in pleasure and pain, that must craft his or her own existence as a coherent unity. Guyau's interpretation of Epicurus stresses the necessary cultivation of this subject who is capable of surrendering to present enjoyment when convenient, but also able to resist pain and even mobilize it as a means for achieving a superior and lasting pleasure in the future. This is why the introduction of the notion of temporality in the consideration of pleasure is concomitant with the appearance of the figure of the sage – who embodies the subject of this renewed experience of pleasure, conceived form the viewpoint of *ho holos bios*.[40] The sage is the moral agent and the philosophical persona that Epicureanism seeks to craft; one which perhaps only Epicurus himself had fully embodied.

The fundamental existential choice of the Epicurean sage is that of a coherent and consistent life over time, and that is why the Epicurean is not someone who pursues unstable and fleeting pleasures. He is neither the Cyrenaic hedonist who disperses himself in a multitude of fleeting instants nor the *stultus* depicted by Seneca, and who is never able to unify his desires. In order to accede to the underlying pleasure of existence the Epicurean sage must cultivate a rational organization of means that will allow him to achieve happiness, conquering the chaos and contradiction of desires and passions, directing his or her 'thought [and actions] towards the future'. The Epicurean subject cultivates the whole of his or her life as a work to which they endeavour to give a rational and beautiful form. This is why when the sage chooses a present pleasure, he does so considering it as a part in the process of the constitution of an ordered totality – that of a beautiful life. The assurance and confidence that the sage obtains in this process of self-cultivation allows him to cope with pain when it presents itself. If at times Guyau's picture of an austere and lofty Epicurus may recall the Stoic, it is important to bear in mind that the main force driving and sustaining this austerity – when it is necessary – is the achievement of a superior form of pleasure that one takes in life itself, and in the cultivation of one's own life as a masterpiece.

Guyau also casts valuable light on the aesthetic sensibility that informs Epicurean ethics. The cultivation of a consistent way of life can be understood as an ethical and aesthetical continuity in *style*. The style that the Epicurean applies to his whole life is characterized by a form of beauty to be found in harmony, that is, in a certain orderly relation of parts and whole, and that connects current instants with one's entire lifespan. The modest pleasures one chooses to affirm in the correct doses, and the pains that one chooses to endure as a means for a greater, more stable and lasting delight with one's own existence, result in what Michel Foucault in our own time characterizes as an aesthetics of existence, an understanding of 'the *bios* as a material for an aesthetic piece of art'.[41] Similarly, Guyau uses the metaphor of the painter to depict the sage, this 'artist of happiness' painting emotions, pleasures and pains on the canvas of life, so making use of an aesthetic and ethical work of selection. As Guyau writes: 'Life then becomes this *cadre* of undetermined contours, in which the sage, this "artist of happiness" groups his emotions to come, placing some of them in the second plane, some others in the first, bringing these to light, and casting the shadows of oblivion over the others.' The aesthetic value and beauty of the work comes from its rational order, which emerges from the intelligent organization of a lifestyle, and in which certain pleasures are cultivated, aiming at a superior happiness.

Epicurus' teaching is significant since it brings heaven to earth and the happiness of the gods to human beings. It is on account of his appreciation of the whole of life that Epicurus' teaching amounts to an ethical one: it sets us the work of cultivation. As we have shown, it is even possible to appreciate this ethical teaching on aesthetic grounds, finding beauty in the rational disposition of life that subordinates the parts of life to the whole of it (31). Moreover, in Guyau's portrait of Epicurus we find a hedonistic morality that does not neglect the cultivation of virtue, but presupposes it: Guyau reveals the interdependence that exists between the enjoyment of pleasure and the care of self and others. Unlike typical conceptions and appreciations of utilitarianism as a straightforward hedonism, Guyau provides us with a rich ethics of self-cultivation that focuses on the subject and agent of pleasure rather than simply on the objects of pleasure. There is, then, a great deal to learn from an encounter with Guyau's appreciation of Epicurus and Epicureanism, including the continued inspiration we can draw from the art of cultivating earthly happiness.

Notes

1 See, respectively, Gertrude Kapteyn's 'Translator's Preface', in Jean-Marie Guyau, *Sketch of a Morality Independent of Obligation or Sanction,* translated by G. Kapteyn, London: Watts & Co., 1989, xii; Ilse Walther-Dulk, *De Guyau à Proust: Essai sur l'actualité d'un philosophe oublié,* translated by Marianne Dautrey, Weimar: VDG, 2008, 7.

2 Walther-Dulk, *De Guyau à Proust*, 15.

3 For example, in 1906, Gabriel Aslan defended his philosophy thesis at the Sorbonne, entitled *La morale de Jean-Marie Guyau* (see *Revue de métaphysique et morale*, 'Supplément', July 1906, 12–14). In 1905, the *Societé française de philosophie* discusses Guyau's notion of life (see *Bulletin de la Société Française de Philosophie*, 6:43, 1906. 'De l'idée de vie chez Guyau'. Séance du 28 décembre 1905. Thèse: Georges Dwelshauwers, Discussion: R. Berthelot, Dauriac. Edité par A. Colin). See also Contini, *Jean-Marie Guyau. Una filosofia della vita e l'estetica,* Bologna: CLUEB, 1995, 66 ; Riba, *La morale anomique de Jean-Marie Guyau,* translated by Mariló Fdez Estrada, Paris: L'Harmattan, 1999, 52.

4 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1884-5*, *Kritische Studienausgabe*, edited by Giorgio Colli & Mazzino Montinari, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1988, 525. As Mazzino Montinari has shown, Guyau was part of a constellation of authors that Nietzsche read during his stay in southern France (see Montinari, 'Nietzsche e la décadence', *Studia Nieztscheana*, 7 June 2014, 18).

5 Peter Kropotkin, *Ethics: Origin and Development*, translated by Louis S. Friedland & Joseph R. Piroshnikoff, New York: Lincoln MacVeagh/Dial Press, 1924, 322.

6 'According to Guyau, beauty is not anything foreign to the object itself, is not some parasitic growth on it, but is the very blossoming of that being in which it is manifest. Art is the expression of life, reasonable and conscious, which evokes in us, on the one hand, the deepest sensations of existence, and, on the other hand, the loftiest feelings, the most exalted thoughts. Art raises man from his personal life into universal life not only by means of participation in the same ideas and beliefs, but also by means of the same feelings' (Leo Tolstoy, *What is Art?* translated by A. Maude, introduction by V. Tomas, Indiana: Hackett, 1996, §3).

7 Durkheim's review of Guyau's *L'irréligion de l'avenir* appears in *Revue Philosophique,* vol. 23, 1887. See also 'The Conception of Religion' in *Emile Durkheim: Selected Writings*, edited and translated by Anthony Giddens, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972, 219–22.

8 Gabriel Tarde, *Penal Philosophy*, translated by P. Berne, New Brunswick & London: Transaction, 2001, 29.

9 See Josiah Royce, *Studies of Good and Evil: A Series of Essays upon problems of Philosophy and of Life*, New York: Appleton & Co.) 1899, 349–84 (chapter 12), and William James, 'The Moral Philosophy and the Moral Life', in *The Will to Believe*, New York: Dover, 1956, 184–216.

10 Henry Sidgwick, 'M. Guyau, La Morale d'Épicure et ses Rapports avec les Doctrines contemporaines', *Mind* 4:582, 1879.

11 G. E. Moore, 'Book Review: A Sketch of Morality Independent of Obligation or Sanction. M. Guyau, Gertrude Kapteyn', *International Journal for Ethics* 9:2, 1899.

12 G. E. Moore, *Principia Ethica,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, 98 (chapter II, §29).

13 Alfred Fouillée, 'Note Biographique', in *La morale, l'art et la religion chez Guyau*, Paris : Félix Alcan, 1913; Walther-Dulk, *De Guyau à Proust,* 14.

14 Namely, the *Vers d'un philosophe,* published in 1881, and *Première Année de lecture courante* (1875), *l'Année préparatoire* (1884), *l'Année enfantine* (1883), respectively.

15 Walther-Dulk, *De Guyau à Proust,* 96.

16 Guyau, *Sketch of a Morality,* 81.

17 Guyau, *Sketch of a Morality,* 84.

18 Guyau, *La morale d'Épicure*, book 1, chapter 3. References to *The Ethics of Epicurus* will be given in the text.

19 See 'Foreword' below.

20 See book 3, chapter 3 below.

21 See book 2, chapter 1 below.

22 'It would be better,' says Epicurus, 'to accept the fables about the gods than to be enslaved by (*douleuein*) the fatal necessity of the physicists. Indeed, the fable gives us the hope that we can bend the gods by honouring them, but one cannot bend necessity (*aparaitēton tēn anankēn*)' (62).

23 Pierre Hadot, *The Selected Writings of Pierre Hadot: Philosophy as Practice,* edited and translated by Matthew Sharpe & Federico Testa, London & New York: Bloomsbury, 2020, 125

24 Guyau's thinking here develops a biological analogy: one can only understand the development and evolution of living systems by looking at the creative solutions it proposes to the environment. Every structure of the living system can be traced back to this engagement and this proactive response to the problems posed by the environment, which is what physiologist Kurt Goldstein calls the 'debate' (*Auseunaudersetzung*) between an organism and its surrounding world (see Goldstein, *La structure de l' organisme. Introduction à la biologie à partir de la pathologie humaine,* translated by E. Burckhardt & Jean Kuntz, Paris: Gallimard, 1981, 95). What we here refer to as a 'dynamic and conflictive relationship between a living system and its environment' is the fact that the development of a living system of thought is relative to its history (to time and the events it faces and the challenges to which it responds) and to its changing geographies (or to space: to its changing geographical, cultural and linguistic contexts).

25 In the light of the fact that we now have access to Kant's lectures on ethics it is necessary to reassess Guyau's positioning of Kantian ethics. Although in his published work Kant proposes an ethics based on duty and formal principles, he was more sympathetic to the philosophy of the garden than Guyau and many other commentators have suspected. For example, in his lectures Kant is keen to distinguish – like Rousseau before him – between a 'brutish Epicureanism' and a 'true Epicureanism' (Kant, *Lectures on Ethics* , translated by Peter Heath, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, 66), and he sees Epicurus as espousing '*voluptas*' in terms of possessing a 'constantly cheerful heart' (386). For Kant, Epicurus teaches contentment with oneself and in this self-contentment is to be found an embodied wisdom. It is an embodied wisdom in that it is an embodiment of reason. For Kant, the successors of Epicurus lost sight of the morality of the system 'and pursued an ethic that was coupled only with a new enjoyment of pleasure' (387). He adds: '… they heaped up their needs, but also drew upon themselves a misery that was all the greater, the greater the want of morality' (387). Self-sufficiency has as its basis what Kant calls 'good cheer' and 'the culture of our soul'. Morality means imposing a regimen of discipline and control over oneself, a mastery and care of self.

26 See book 4, chapter 2 below.

27 Baruch Spinoza, *The Ethics,* translated by Edwin Curley, London & New York: Penguin, 1996, 69 (Part III, Preface).

28 Guyau, *Sketch of a Morality,* 212.

29 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1884-5*, 10.7 [151].

30 Nietzsche, *Dawn. Thoughts on the Presumptions of Morality,* translated by Brittain Smith, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011, 251.

31 Gilles Deleuze, 'Lucretius and Naturalism', translated by Jared C. Bly, in Abraham Jacob Greenstine & Ryan J. Johnson (eds.), *Contemporary Encounters with Ancient Metaphysics*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017, 250.

32 James I. Porter, 'Epicurean Attachments: Life, Pleasure, Beauty, Friendship, and Piety,' *Cronache Ercolanes*, 2003, 33, 205–27, 212.

33 James I. Porter, 'Epicurean Attachments', 212.

34 Porter, 'Epicurean Attachments', 212.

35 Porter, 'Epicurean Attachments', 213.

36 Pierre Hadot, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie antique?* Paris: Gallimard, 1995, 180. For this for an appreciation of Epicureanism as a teaching of living in the present, see Nietzsche, *The Wanderer and His Shadow*, translated by Gary Handwerk, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013, §295.

37 Hadot depicts the realization of importance of the present as the outcome of the spiritual exercise of meditation on death, which opens the perspective gratitude to the gift of existing here and now. He quotes Horace's understanding of each moment is the product of chance, an unexpected gift, that we should accept with immense gratitude (*Qu'est-ce que la philosophie antique?,* 196). Similarly, for Nietzsche: 'For the middle period Nietzsche, Epicurus is the philosopher who affirms the moment, having neither resentment toward the past nor fear of the future' (Ansell-Pearson, 'True to the Earth: Nietzsche's Epicurean Care of Self and World', in Horst Hutter and Eli Friedland (eds.), *Nietzsche's Therapeutic Teaching For Individuals and Culture*, Bloomsbury: London & New York, 2013, 111).

38 However, in *The Ethics of Epicurus,* we also find a beautiful account of the eternity that the Epicurean finds in the moment. For a closer study of the place of temporality in Guyau's reading of Epicurus, as well as his conception of eternity, see Federico Testa, 'Nietzsche and Guyau on the Temporality of Epicurean Pleasure', in Vinod Acharya & Ryan J. Johnson (eds.), *Nietzsche and Epicurus. Nature, Health and Ethics*, Bloomsbury: London & New York, 2020, 96–109.

39 Similarly, the future plays a key role in utilitarianism and in every form of utilitarian calculus, which according to Guyau is the compass that guides the Epicurean in the present.

40 We could recall Kant's phrase according to which 'the pleasure of the Epicurean is the pleasure of the sage' (Kant, *Lectures on Ethics,* 46). On the other hand, it is possible to object that the Epicurean gods play this *exemplar* role which is more important than that of the sage. According to Hadot (*Qu'est-ce que la philosophie antique?*, 190), the gods provide a vision of the 'model of wisdom', being the 'projection and incarnation of the Epicurean ideal of life', for their life consists in the enjoyment of their own perfection, of the pure pleasure of existing. See also Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers,* X, 123; Lucretius, *De rerum natura,* II, 646–51, and III, 14–24. In his translation Strodach identifies this as the role played by the gods in Epicureanism (Epicurus, *The Art of Happiness,* translated by George Strodach, London: Penguin, 2012, 40–3). The blessedness of the gods and the possibility of achieving a godly state among men is well expressed by Epicurus in the closing of his *Letter to Menoeceus,* 135.

41 Michel Foucault, *Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth. The Essential Works of Michel Foucault (1954–1984),* volume 1, edited by Paul Rabinow, translated by Robert Hurley et al., London & New York: Penguin, 1994, 260.