

Chapter 6

Free Spirits and Free Thinkers: Nietzsche and Guyau on the Future of Morality

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These falsely dubbed “free spirits” belong to the levellers, loquacious scribbling slaves of the democratic taste and “modern ideas”: all of them are people without solitude . . . plain, well-behaved lads whose courage and honourable propriety cannot be denied. It is just that they are unfree and laughably superficial . . . What they are trying with all their strength to achieve is a common green pasture of happiness for the herd, with safety, security, comfort, ease of life for everyone . . .

(BGE 44)

Moral philosophy (La morale), which tries to formulate the most manifold and complex relations existing between the creatures of nature, is, perhaps, also founded on the greatest number of errors. Many beliefs related in history, which have inspired to self-sacrifice, may be compared with those magnificent mausoleums erected in honour of a name. If these mausoleums are opened, nothing is found; they are empty.

(Guyau 1896, p. 70; 1898, p. 60)

Introduction

The main purpose of this essay is to contrast Nietzsche and Jean-Marie Guyau (1854–88) on ethics and the future of morality.¹ Although the novel and challenging character of Nietzsche’s approach to questions concerning morality and its future has been well-attended to in the literature my hope is that by bringing Guyau’s ideas on morality to the attention of readers, and showing how aspects of them resonate strongly with Nietzsche, new light can be shed on the wider intellectual context in which Nietzsche advances his future-oriented project of critique and revaluation.

Nietzsche claims philosophical distinction for himself on account of his being able to undertake the task of a “revaluation of values”: he is adept at inverting perspectives and in possession of contradictory capacities (EH “Wise” 1; EH “Clever” 9). This is a task he calls “immense” in *Ecce Homo* (EH III: ix 3) and describes with the explosive imagery of a “shattering lightning-bolt” (EH III: x 4).

Similarly, in the preface to the *Genealogy of Morals* he claims distinction for himself on account of voicing in his writings a new demand, “we need a *critique* of moral values, *the value of these values should itself for once, be examined . . .*” (GM “Preface” 6). In a note for the preface to *Dawn* he writes of the need to think about morality without falling under its spell and the seductive character of its beautiful gestures and glances (KSA 12, 2 [165]; WP 253. He distinguishes himself from modern German philosophy, notably Kant and Hegel, and what he regards as half-hearted attempts at “critique.” These two cases of criticism, he contends, are 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). Kant, he says, was really a pessimist who believed in morality in spite of the fact that neither nature nor history testify to it and in fact continually contradict it.

In this essay I shall focus on the free spirit aspect of Nietzsche’s project of revaluation. This should prove instructive for clarifying the ambit of the project and what kind of spirit he envisages undertaking it. In a number of late sketches for his planned magnum opus on the revaluation of values, which was invariably to consist of four books, the second book was to be devoted to the free spirit in which philosophy would be examined as a “nihilistic movement” (KSA 13, 19 [8]; see also 22 [14], 23 [13]). Here there are two tasks to perform: first, exactly how and on what grounds are free spirits and free thinkers to be distinguished? Second, how do we differentiate Nietzsche’s own development as a free thinker/free spirit from 1878 onwards? When Nietzsche defines the free spirit in volume one of *Human, all too Human* (1878) it is a straightforward conception he provides and conforms to the typical understanding of the free spirit as the person who lives by reason not faith and who thinks differently from what is expected of them on the basis of their origin, environment, class, profession, the dominant views of the age, and so on (HAH 225–6). However, by the time of *Beyond Good and Evil* (1885) the conception of the free spirit has altered in some significant aspects and Nietzsche was keen to forge a distinction between the free thinker and the free spirit. In short, he appears to be in search of a new kind of free spirit. In *The Anti-Christ* he even claims that the free spirits “already constitute a ‘revaluation of all values’” (AC 13; see also 36). In this paper my attention is focused on the nature of this distinction which predominates in his late writings (1886–88).

Naturalism

That Nietzsche has his intellectual roots in naturalism (and materialism) cannot be doubted.² Recent years have witnessed a serious renaissance of interest in Nietzsche as a naturalist (which is how he was positioned at the very start of

his reception)³ with some important contributions in the history of ideas and in philosophy.⁴ Nietzsche's project has recently been interpreted in terms of methodological naturalism and existential naturalism.⁵ My own preference is to read Nietzsche as a naturalist in the context of nineteenth-century debates about human evolution and the future of morality.

Modern naturalism holds the world of experience, the empirically given coherence of nature, to be the one reality.⁶ It is also accepted in Nietzsche's time that naturalism can assume different philosophical articulations. Three forms of naturalism are identified, which are idealism, materialism, and monism, and these are seen to generate three systems of thought: theism, atheism, and pantheism. Emerson, for example, whose importance for Nietzsche is well known, was taken to be a representative of idealist naturalism.⁷ Nietzsche is a naturalist in the same way other philosophers of his day were naturalists, such as Guyau for example who writes:

We are content to admit, by a hypothesis at once scientific and metaphysical, the fundamental homogeneity of all things, the fundamental identity of nature. Monism, in our judgment, should be neither transcendent nor mystical, but immanent and naturalistic. The world is one continuous Becoming; there are not two kinds of existence nor two lines of development, the history of which is the history of the universe. (Guyau 1962, p. 494)

Nietzsche holds a strikingly similar view to this: "*My intention*: to demonstrate the absolute homogeneity of all events" (KSA 12, 10 [154]; WP 272). The significance of this for Nietzsche is that it removes contradiction from things and it is for this reason that he is a monist.

For both Guyau and Nietzsche naturalism denotes a scientific approach to mind or spirit that places it firmly within nature. Guyau takes naturalism to consist in the scientific view that nature, together with the beings that compose it, make up the sum total of existence. The problems that confront the philosophical naturalist include determining the essential character of existence (for both Guyau and Nietzsche this takes the form of developing a notion of "life"), ascertaining which mode of existence is most typical, and seeking to determine whether existence is material or mental, or perhaps both. A key question facing naturalists and evolutionists is whether the universe is made up solely of dead matter or whether the universe is everywhere alive. If we declare matter to be the sole reality analyzable into force, do we not then have to recognize that force is a primitive form of life? Interestingly Nietzsche conceives the will to power as a *Vorform* of life in *Beyond Good and Evil* (36). Guyau's worry is that materialism, no less than idealism, belongs to the poetry of metaphysics (1962, p. 490), and he thinks that both science and philosophy will make more progress if they now work with a concept of "life" and investigate it free of moral and metaphysical prejudices. This will have enormous

implications, he thinks, for our understanding of morality and of the human animal as the moral animal: "Morality in the beginning is simply a more or less blind, unconscious, or at best, subconscious, power" (ibid., p. 496). Let me now focus on Guyau and some key aspects of his naturalization of ethics or moral philosophy.

Naturalism and Ethics in Guyau

Many of the intellectual figures that Nietzsche read and critically engaged with were seminal figures in the development of philosophy and sociology in the nineteenth century but are little read today. In English-speaking appreciation, Nietzsche is too often read and interpreted in an intellectual vacuum.⁸ Some of the intellectual figures Nietzsche read and engaged with, several of whom he respected as "free thinkers," include Augusta Comte, Eugene Düring, Ernest Renan, Herbert Spencer, Taine, Eduard von Hartmann, and so on. Jean-Marie Guyau (1854–88) is explicitly mentioned by Nietzsche as an example of the modern free thinker. Guyau is an impressive philosopher and the author of pathbreaking books that merit being read and appropriated today. Nietzsche tremendously admired his work even though he regarded him as a free thinker.

Guyau's 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*).⁹ Prior to this work 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 an essay on the "problems in contemporary aesthetics" in 1884 and in 1887 a fascinating tome entitled *The Non Religion (or Irreligion) of the Future* which Nietzsche also read and admired.¹⁰ His study of education and heredity was published posthumously in 1889, as was his highly original study on the genesis of the idea of time in 1890.

The basic principle of Guyau's naturalism is the one established by modern science: man is not a separate being different to the rest of the world and the laws of life are the same from the top downwards on the ladder of life (Guyau 1896, p. 86; 1898, p. 73).¹¹ Guyau's appeal at the time was as the "Spinoza of France." His aim was to promote a renewal of ethics in the face of the rise of mechanical materialism to a position of intellectual dominance in which there would be a focus on emotional and reflective activity in contrast to the exclusive attention paid to physical and external phenomena. The influence of Darwin and evolutionary theory on Guyau is immense. He makes frequent recourse to natural and sexual selection to explain various human phenomena, including moral ones such as courage. His appropriation of the Darwinian

revolution for ethics is incisive and novel. In the preface to his book, Guyau expresses his chief concern:

Apologists who defend a particular system of morals or religion have never proved anything, for there always remains one question which they forget—namely, is there any true religion or true morality? (p. 68; p. 58)

Statements such as this resonate with the perspective Nietzsche develops in chapter five of *Beyond Good and Evil*, starting with aphorism 186 and its criticism of any and all attempts to establish ethics (*der Ethik*) on a real foundation (*das eigentliche Fundament*), which is something, Nietzsche claims, moralists have been seeking for thousands of years like the philosophers' stone.¹² For Guyau a scientific conception of morality cannot be expected to agree with the general conception of morality since the latter is composed for the most part of prejudices and feelings. Attempts have been made to do this in ethics, such as Bentham's utilitarianism, but, Guyau argues, this has been at the expense of violating the facts. Moreover, for him the scientific spirit is "the revolutionary spirit" since it is the enemy of all instinct, the dissolving force of everything nature has bound, and the struggle against the spirit of authority that is at the root of all societies and also that which is in the depths of conscience (p. 132; p. 111). In following habits, instincts, and sentiments human beings, he argues, are obeying not some mysterious obligation, but "the most general impulses of human nature" along with the "most just necessities of social life" (p. 4; p. 2).

It is this 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 Guyau's overall approach to morality. At one point Guyau compares morality to an art that charms and deludes us, against which Nietzsche writes "moi" in the margin (p. 70; p. 59).¹³ Nietzsche was also impressed by the conception of truth Guyau puts forward in the text. I am also confident that he would have found his conception of a "self-sublimation" of morality partly 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. In the face of these striking parallels between the two projects it becomes a genuine search to identify the reasons for Nietzsche's judgment of Guyau as a free thinker and his call for a new type of free spirit.

For Guyau the reign of the absolute is over in the domain of ethics: "whatever comes within the order of facts is not universal, and whatever is universal is a speculative hypothesis" (p. 6; p. 4). 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.).¹⁴ Nietzsche is often depicted

as a philosopher who naturalizes Kant on questions of ethics, and this is undoubtedly true. Guyau does something very similar. The feeling of obligation, he argues, is not “moral” (conceived as an independent reality) but sensible. To suppose otherwise is to generate a “mystery” (a “supernatural law”) with regards to the production of a pathological and natural sentiment, namely, respect. Guyau is perplexed as to how we are to find an *a priori* reason, as Kant wants, to join a sensible pleasure or pain to a law which is suprasensible and heterogeneous to nature (pp. 232–3; p. 198). Nietzsche describes Kant’s ethics as a form of “refined servility” (GS 5). 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 (p. 67; p. 57). He then closely echoes Nietzsche in *The Gay Science* (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.)¹⁵

Guyau, let me make clear, does not contend 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 (pp. 102–3; p. 89).¹⁶ For Guyau an 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” (p. 117; p. 98). The sentiment of obligation and our powers of action are to be examined as “forces,” ones that act *in time*, and according to determinate directions with more or less intensity. 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?” (p. 121; p. 101).

Ultimately, Guyau argues, Kant’s ethics 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; it is thus a kind of “moral despotism . . . creeping everywhere, wanting to rule everything” (p. 170; p. 144). 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. (p. 63; p. 54)

The belief in duty is so questionable because it is placed above the region in which both science and nature move (p. 64; p. 55; compare Nietzsche in D 339). 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,” “common sense requires” are as unconvincing as “duty commands,” “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 (p. 68; p. 58). The extent to which Nietzsche empathized with Guyau on these issues cannot be underestimated. Indeed, one might contend that his conception of what it means to possess intellectual integrity has been deeply inspired by Guyau’s exposure of the new faith in morality:

Nothing is rarer among philosophers than *intellectual integrity* (*Rechtschaffenheit*): perhaps they say the opposite, perhaps they even believe it. But a condition of their entire occupation is that only certain truths are admitted; they know that which they *have* to prove; that they are at one over these “truths” is virtually their means of recognizing one another as philosophers. There are, e.g., moral truths. But a faith in morals is not a proof of morality . . . (Nietzsche, KSA 13, 15 [25]; WP 445)

Guyau conceives “the strictest probity,” to be conceived as “absolute sincerity, impersonal and passionate sincerity” (1962, p. 428–9), as the principal duty of the philosopher.

Guyau and the Philosophy of Life

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 which posits an *a priori* thesis and an *a priori* law. He asks, “what is the exact domain of *science* in moral philosophy (*la morale*)?” (p. 83; p. 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 inquires 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 hypothesis. 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, then, 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 (p. 87; p. 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*” (ibid.).

Guyau is being strictly naturalistic in resolving the question of finality on the level of efficient causality: “In the circle of life the point aimed at blends with the very point from which the action springs” (p. 87; p. 75). For Guyau the cause operating within us before any attraction of pleasure is “life” (p. 247; p. 210). Pleasure is but the consequence of an instinctive effort to maintain and enlarge life. Contra Bentham he argues that “to live is not to calculate, it is to act” (p. 247; p. 211). An essentially Spinozist position—the tendency to persist in life is the necessary law of life—is deduced with the aid of principles borrowed from the English evolutionist school. Guyau 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” (p. 88; p. 75). Therefore, Guyau reaches the conclusion that the part of morality which 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 (p. 89; p. 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 pp. 175–8; pp. 148–51).¹⁷ When Guyau 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 (p. 77; p. 66).¹⁸ A “superior being” is one that practices a variety of action; thought itself is nothing other than condensed action and life at its maximum development. He defines this superior being as one which “unites the most delicate sensibility with the strongest will” (p. 42; p. 35). 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” (KSA 11: 582, 37 [8]; WP 957).

Guyau on the Future of Morality

Guyau contends that when conceived as the “systematization of moral evolution in humanity” the science of ethics will come to exert an influence on this very evolution and alter the human animal in the process:

The gradual and necessary disappearance of religion and absolute morality has many . . . surprises in store for us. If there is nothing in this to terrify us, at least we must try to foresee them in the interest of science. (p. 135; p. 114)

The chief problem thrown up by the new scientific approach to morality is the question Nietzsche also focuses on: Why obedience? Why submission? The only form morality can assume for us today is as a critique of morality (D preface; KSA 12, 2 [191]; WP 399). This is perceived to be our problem today by Guyau because we are bound by an impulse or inward pressure which has only a natural character, not a mystical or metaphysical one that can be completed by any extrasocial sanction (p. 140; p. 117). 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” (pp. 140–1; p. 117). Science 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 (p. 160; p. 134). A mature humanity is one that will decide for itself what it wishes to obligate itself to on the basis of the insights secured by scientific knowledge (e.g., placing the stress on questions of hygiene) and in terms of an experimentation.¹⁹

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 (p. 165; p. 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. Disinterestedness and self-sacrifice are not to be suppressed, but there is no given common object of the imperative. 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 the 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” (ibid.). 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. This is close to the position Nietzsche advocates in *The Antichrist* (AC 11) when he argues that each one of us must fashion our own “categorical imperatives.” Guyau also advocates perspectivism: “The infinity of the points of view ought to correspond with the infinity of things” (p. 167; p. 141). His hope is that heterodoxy and nonconventional living will become in the future the true and universal religion or way of life. He envisages an end to penal justice (p. 182; p. 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 (KSA 13: 425, 15 [30]; WP 765). 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 close to the free spirit Nietzsche celebrates in *The Gay Science* (347) as the enemy of fanaticism (p. 170; p. 143).

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 (p. 245; p. 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 *Human, All Too Human* 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.

In conclusion, then, Guyau’s naturalistic ethics has its basis in a philosophy of life:

There is no supernatural principle whatever in our morality; it is from life itself, and from the force inherent in life, that it all springs. Life makes its own law by its aspiration towards incessant development; it makes its own obligation to act by its very power of action. (p. 248; p. 211)

Naturalism and Ethics in Nietzsche

In examining Guyau on ethics I have indicated parallels between his ideas and ones we are more familiar with from Nietzsche’s dramatic and thought-provoking presentation of them. Nietzsche was impressed by Guyau’s critique of Kant, his insights into the new dogmatic faith in morality, his conception of truth, his understanding of action, and his claim that the reign of the absolute was now over to be replaced by a new pluralism. However, three important differences are signaled in Nietzsche’s annotations: (i) first and most important, Nietzsche contests Guyau’s Spinozist conception of desire in which the chief aim is self-persistence and self-maintenance (p. 92; p. 79)—to this Nietzsche replies that life is “will to power” (Guyau 1912, pp. 287–8). In addition, he regards as a “distortion” (*Verdrehung*) Guyau’s view that the richer one becomes in life, spiritually speaking, the stronger becomes the desire to sacrifice and give of oneself—again Nietzsche notes in the margin, “Life is above all concerned with power” (Guyau 1912, p. 290); (ii) secondly, he finds “incredible” Guyau’s view that “charity for all men, whatever may be their moral, intellectual, or physical worth, should be the final aim to be pursued even by public opinion” (p. 217; p. 186; Guyau 1912, p. 301); (iii) thirdly, Nietzsche disagrees with Guyau’s view that thinking is an impersonal and selfless activity and contends that such impersonality belongs to the herd nature of our consciousness (Guyau 1912, p. 289). Before probing further the nature of Nietzsche’s disagreement with Guyau, I want to highlight some of the salient aspects of his approach to morality.

The Self-Sublimation of Morality

When employed as a term of scientific knowledge, “morality” denotes for Nietzsche the doctrine of the order of rank, and of human valuations in respect

of everything human. Most moral philosophers, he contends, only deal with the present order of rank that rules now. On the one hand, they display a lack of historical sense, and, on the other hand, show that they are ruled by the morality which says that what rules now is eternally valid. There is no comparison and no criticism, only unconditional belief (KSA 11, 35[5]). In this respect moral philosophy is antiscientific (see also BGE 186). The present age has one single conception and definition of morality (“the unegoistic”) which it takes to be of transhistorical validity. This morality is what Nietzsche also calls “herd-animal morality,” “which strives with all its force for a universal green-pasture happiness of earth, namely, security, harmlessness, comfort, easy living . . .” (KSA 11, 37[8]). The two most important doctrines on which it rests its case are “equal rights” and “sympathy with all that suffers,” where suffering is taken as something that is best abolished (BGE 44).

“Critique” is conceived as a preparatory task of revaluation and has several aspects (KSA 12, 1[53]): (a) grasping and ascertaining the manner in which moral appraisal of human types and actions predominates at the present time; (b) showing that the moral code of an era is a symptom, a means of self-admiration or dissatisfaction or hypocrisy, in which the character of a morality is to be not only ascertained but also interpreted (otherwise it’s ambiguous); (c) providing a critique of the method of judging (*Urtheilsweise*) at present: how strong is it? What does it aim at? What will become of the human being under its spell? Which forces does it nurture, which does it suppress? Does it make human beings more healthy or more sick, more courageous and more subtle, or more compliant and docile? On the one hand we can express the “deepest gratitude for what morality has achieved so far,” but on the other we can recognize that now it’s “*only a pressure (Druck)* that would prove disastrous (*Verhängniß*).” Morality (*Moral*) itself, “as honesty (*Redlichkeit*), *compels (zwingt)* us to negate morality” (ibid. 5 [58]). It is an illusion (*Illusion*) of the species—it has helped to preserve the species, compelled individuals to discipline and tyrannize themselves, and helped to breed self-confidence—but now something else is possible and wanted, at least by some. Humanity has needed to gain power over nature and to this end a certain power over the self. “Morality was necessary *in order* for man to prevail in the struggle with nature and the ‘wild animal.’” However, once this power over nature has been gained, we can then use this power to continue freely shaping the self: “will to power as self-elevation and strengthening” (KSA 12, 5 [63]; WP 403).

The insistence on “why?” and on a critique of morality is now to be our present form of morality and is an outgrowth of the sense of “honesty” (*Redlichkeit*) cultivated by Christianity and morality. It now needs to be inspired by a sublime probity:

These are the demands I make of you . . . that you subject the moral valuations themselves to a critique. That you curb the impulse of moral feeling,

which here insists on submission and *not* criticism, with the question: “Why submission?” That you view this insistence on a “Why?”, on a critique of morality, as being your *present* form of morality itself, as the most sublime kind of probity [*die sublimste Art von Rechtschaffenheit*], which does honor to you and your age (KSA 12, 2[191]; see also GS 345).

Nietzsche, then, is drawing upon the virtues cultivated by “morality” as a way of conquering and overcoming its stranglehold on questions of life. He does this because he fully appreciates the fact that they have yielded a profit in our appreciation and judgment of things, such as “finesse (*das Raffinement*) of interpretation, of moral vivisection, the pangs of conscience (*Gewissensbiss*) . . .” (ibid. 2 [197]). Our spiritual subtlety, which we are now deploying in the developing field of a “science” of morality, was achieved essentially through vivisection of the conscience (ibid. 2 [207]). We have been educated and trained by morality; this training now leads us to say “no” to morality (to blind compulsion, to dogma, to God). However, although we now declare this “no” and do not wish to preserve the old life, Nietzsche wants to know whether there is within us a “hidden yes” (GS 377; WP 405).

The kind of morality that Nietzsche wishes to promote is what he calls the “legislative” type which contains the means for fashioning out of human beings the desires of a creative will or a will to the future. We see legislative moralities in operation, he claims, wherever an artistic will of the highest rank holds power and can assert itself over long periods of time, in the shape of laws, religions, and customs. Today, however, he holds that creative human beings are largely absent. The present morality needs attacking and criticizing precisely because it is a hostile force and obstacle to any hope that they might come into existence. “Morality” wants to fix the animal called “human,” which up to now has been the “unfixed animal” (BGE 62). The philosopher of the future, by contrast, does not want the human animal to be something comfortable and mediocre but to breed “future *masters of the earth*” (WP 957), conceived, as already noted, as human beings of the highest spirituality and strength of will.

For Nietzsche it is the free spirit, not the free thinker, who thinks about this problem. He detects in the present a conspiracy against everything that is shepherd, beast of prey, hermit, and Caesar. The free spirit seeks to show that a new deliberate cultivation or “breeding” of the human is now required.²⁰ It will make use of the democratic movement as a way of cultivating a new spiritual tyranny: “the time is coming when we will learn to think differently about politics” (BGE 208). The aim is to allow individuals to be free to work on themselves as artist-tyrants (KSA 12, 2 [57]). He adds an important qualification: “Not merely a master-race, whose task would be limited to governing, but a race or people with *its own sphere of life* [. . .] a hothouse for strange and exquisite plants” (ibid. 9[153]). The concept for this nonaverage type of human being is “the superhuman” (KSA 12, 10 [17]; WP 866).

Nietzsche on Morality and the Future of Morality

Perhaps the main criticism Nietzsche makes of “morality” (*die Moral*) is that it is “the danger of dangers” on account of the fact that it makes the present live at the expense of the future and will prevent mankind from attaining as a species its highest potential power and splendor (GM “Preface” 6). The focus of his critical and clinical attention is not so much on the question of morality’s origin but on its value, especially the unegoistic in which the instincts of compassion, self-denial, and self-sacrifice are deified and transcendentalized. Nietzsche discloses that his desire to vent a mistrust and skepticism against the glorification of the unegoistic by Schopenhauer led him to locate in certain tendencies of modern thinking the “great danger” to mankind, “its most sublime temptation and seduction” to nothingness, in short a new Euro-Buddhism and nihilism (ibid. 5). As he makes it clear in the first essay of the *Genealogy of Morals*, nihilism denotes a state in which we have grown tired of the human: “The sight of man now makes us tired—what is nihilism today if it is not *that*? . . . We are tired of *man* . . .” (GM I: 12). Nietzsche sees a danger here because it means that man is no longer held to be worthy of future tasks of cultivation and elevation: “in losing our fear of man we have also lost our love for him, our respect for him, our hope in him and even our will to be man” (ibid.).

Morality, Nietzsche contends, is frequently made the subject of outlandish claims, for example:²¹

- a. It is supposed 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. Morality expects a person to be dutiful, obedient, self-sacrificing in their core and at all times—this demands ascetic self-denial and is a form of refined cruelty: “Man takes a delight in expressing himself with excessive claims and afterwards idolizing this tyrant in his soul. In every ascetic morality man worships a part of himself as God and for that he needs to diabolize the other part” (HAH 137).
- b. Ethicists such as Kant and Schopenhauer suppose that it provides us with insight into the true, metaphysical character of the world and existence. For example, in Schopenhauer virtue is “practical mysticism” which is said to spring from the same knowledge that constitutes the essence of all mysticism and which gives us the kind of “real foundation” of ethics that Nietzsche criticizes in *Beyond Good and Evil* (186): “harm no-one; on the contrary, help everyone as much as you can.” For Schopenhauer, therefore, “metaphysics is virtue translated into action” and proceeds from the immediate and intuitive knowledge of the identity of all beings.
- c. It is supposed we have an adequate understanding of moral agency, for example, that we have properly identified moral motives and located the sources of moral agency. For Nietzsche, the opposite is, in fact, the case: we completely lack knowledge in moral matters.

- d. It is supposed we can make a clear separation between good virtues and evil vices but 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.
- e. Moral values claim independence for themselves from nature and history and in order to win dominion they must be assisted by immoral forces and affects. It is in this sense that morality is the “work of error” and self-contradictory (KSA 12: 276, 7 [6]; WP 266).
- f. Finally, once morality has attained dominion “all biological phenomena” are then measured and judged by moral values and an opposition between life and morality is established. Morality proves detrimental to life in the following ways: to its enjoyment and the gratitude that can be expressed towards it; to its beautifying and ennobling; to actual knowledge of life; and to its development simply because it seeks to set the highest phenomena of life, as expressed in certain human modes of being, such as greatness, at variance with itself (ibid.).

Nietzsche calls for a “moral naturalism” in which we translate moral values that have acquired the appearance of being emancipated and without nature back into their “natural immorality,” that is, the conditions of life conceived in terms of its full economy of affects (KSA 12, 9 [86]; WP 299). This is essentially what he means by translating the human back into nature (BGE 230): “Homo natura: The will to power” (KSA 12: 132, 2 [131]; WP 391). Nietzsche wishes to demonstrate that in the history of morality a will to power finds expression and that mankind’s supreme values to date are in fact a special case of the will to power. Furthermore, viewed from a “biological standpoint” this makes the phenomenon of morality highly suspicious and questionable: “Morality is therefore an *opposition movement against the efforts of nature* to achieve a higher type” (KSA 12: 334, 8 [4]; WP 400). The question whether Nietzsche is entitled to such a statement about nature cannot be dealt with here. It can be noted that it is a consistent feature of his thinking about nature to attribute an intention to it.

On the one hand, Nietzsche holds that we are living in a moral interregnum in which there is a need to construct anew the laws of life and action and in which inspiration can be taken from the sciences of physiology, medicine, sociology, and solitude. These will provide the foundation stone for our positing of new ideals (D 453). On the other hand, once we become free of morality it will decline in the sense of inherited, handed down, instinctual acting in accordance with so-called moral feelings. The individual virtues such as moderation, justice, and repose of the soul will continue to be esteemed by future humanity since they have a vital role to play in the art of living well. Nietzsche continues to affirm morality, then, as the practice of “continual self-command and self-overcoming . . . in great things and in the smallest” (WS 45; 212).

Morality survives and has a future for Nietzsche in two main senses: (a) as techniques of physical-spiritual discipline (KSA 12, 10 [68]; WP 981); and (b) as an instinct for education and breeding (KSA 12, 1 [33]; WP 720). Regards (b) his attention is focused on the new form this might take in the future. He wants this “unconscious instinct” to be placed in the service of new individuals and not, as he thinks we now have, of “the power-instinct of the herd.”²²

In addition, Nietzsche criticizes the positing of a “moral norm” that stands over reality and judges it. He argues that an attempt has been made to posit a single type of human with its conditions of preservation and growth as a law for all mankind. The effect of this “ethics of desirability” (*Wünschbarkeit*), in which dissatisfaction is the “germ of ethics” (*der Keim der Ethik*) (KSA 12: 299, 7 [15]; WP 333), and in which “‘desirable’ values” (“*wünschbaren*” *Werthe*) are privileged over “the real values of man,” has been to disparage the world and man, to create a “poisonous vapor over reality,” to be the “great *seduction to nothingness*” (KSA 13, 11 [118]; WP 390).²³ The ascetic ideal, for example, is to be criticized for being a closed system of will, goal, and interpretation that permits only the one goal (GM III: 23). The idea that mankind has a single task to perform and is moving as a whole toward some goal is a young idea but also one that is obscure and arbitrary. It needs displacing, Nietzsche argues, before it becomes a “fixed idea” (KSA 13: 87, 11 [226]; WP 339). Mankind, he contends, is not a whole but an “inextricable multiplicity of ascending and descending life-processes” (*ibid.*). Nietzsche criticizes the moral ideal on a number of grounds: first, it considers the one type desirable; second, it presumes to know what this type is like; and third, it considers every deviation from this type to be a regression and a loss of force and power in human progress. This is today how we think the reality of a “goal in history,” as the progress of this ideal:

In summa: one has transferred the arrival of the “kingdom of God” into the future, on earth, in human form—but fundamentally one has held fast to the belief in the *old* ideal. (*ibid.* 89)

In short, although there are new secular ideals they have their source in the old morality, for example, the idealization of the “good man” and the valuation accorded to the “will to good” (KSA 13, 15 [113]; WP 351).

In the preface to the *Genealogy of Morals* Nietzsche makes it clear that it is the value of the unegoistic instincts that he wants to place at the centre of his critique and of the revaluation project. He thinks we need to become suspicious over the unegoistic for a number of reasons. One main concern he has is that we become so caught in our fictions and projections of ourselves as good and pure that we become blind to the dangerously simple-minded view of ourselves we have created. We need to be suspicious of the “moral miracle” the unegoistic allegedly performs, transforming us from amoral animals into saintly humans.

Morality, taken in this sense, makes a claim to knowledge it is not entitled to since it is based on an ignorance of our so-called moral actions and feelings. The study of morality is thus lacking in genuine psychological insight and intellectual probity: "What is the *counterfeiting* aspect of morality?—It pretends to *know* something, namely what 'good and evil' is" (KSA 11 [278]; WP 337). Morality's pretension to knowledge encourages fanaticism. The danger here is twofold: (i) first, supposing the good can grow only out of the good and upon the basis of the good; (ii) second, holding there is a pure realm of morality where we disentangle the nonegoistic and egoistic drives and affects.²⁴ The esteem we moderns accord to "the good man" and the "will to good" rests on a dangerously naïve understanding of life and of the human animal. On the basis of an erroneous and inadequate analysis of morality a false ethics gets erected, buttressed by religion and metaphysical monsters, and "the shadow of these dismal spirits in the end falls across even physics and the entire perception of the world" (HAH 37). If we examine what is often taken to be the summit of the moral in philosophy—the mastery of the affects—we find that there is pleasure to be taken in this mastery. I can impress myself by what I can deny, defer, resist, and so on. It is through this mastery that I grow and develop. And yet morality, as we moderns have come to understand it, would have to give this ethical self-mastery a bad conscience. If we take as our criterion of the moral to be self-sacrificing resolution and self-denial, we would have to say, if being honest, that such acts are not performed strictly for the sake of others; my own fulfillment and pride are at work and the other provides the self with an opportunity to relieve itself through self-denial. There are no moral actions if we assume two things: (a) Only those actions performed for the sake of another can be called moral; (b) Only those actions performed out of free will can be called moral (D 148). If we liberate ourselves from these errors a revaluation can take place in which we will discover that we have overestimated the value and importance of free and nonegoistic actions at the expense of unfree and egoistic ones (see also D 164).

Nietzsche on Guyau as a "Free Thinker"

Nietzsche does not refer to Guyau anywhere in his published writings. What can be ascertained 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)*. Nevertheless, in spite of this paucity what we do find provides us with enough information to shed light on core aspects of Nietzsche's project, especially his distinction between free thinkers and free spirits, as well as the distinctive character of his naturalism and ethicism. 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 (KSA 11: 525, 35 [34]).²⁵ 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.

On the title page of his copy of Guyau's *Sketch* Nietzsche writes the following:

This book contains a "funny" (*komischen*) mistake: in his effort to prove that moral instincts have their root in life itself, Guyau has overlooked the fact that he has actually proved the opposite—namely that *all* fundamental instincts are *immoral*, including the so-called moral ones. The greatest intensity is indeed necessarily related to life's greatest expansion [Nietzsche provides the French: *sa plus large expansion*] but this is actually the opposite of everything altruistic—this *expansion* expresses itself as unrestrained *will to power*. Just as little is *procreation* the symptom of a basic altruistic character: it arises out of discord and struggle in an organism overlaid with captured food and lacking sufficient power to incorporate everything conquered. (Guyau 1912, p. 279)

It is these concerns which inform the criticism Nietzsche makes in an unpublished note from the spring-fall of 1887. He seeks, he reveals in this note, to bring to light the more concealed forms of the cult of the Christian moral ideal (KSA 12, 10 [170]; WP 340). We find this, he says, in an insipid and cowardly concept of nature devised by modern enthusiasts of nature which lacks any sense of its fearful and cynical aspects, and which is an attempt to read moral Christian humanity into nature as if nature were freedom, goodness, innocence, fairness, an idyll, and so on. It is difficult to square Guyau's Darwinism with such a conception of nature and indeed the figure Nietzsche mentions in this regard is, of course, Rousseau.²⁶ He then mentions, before going on to discuss art and then finally the socialist ideal, the insipid and cowardly character of the modern conception of man "à la Comte and Stuart Mill," and claims that this "is still the cult of the Christian morality under a new name—The freethinkers, for example, Guyau."

What is the nature of the distinction Nietzsche forges between free spirits and free thinkers? On some definitions he provides of it the term free spirit would incorporate a thinker like Guyau, but other definitions would, I think, exclude him. The depiction of the free spirit we find in an aphorism such as *The Gay Science* (347, from 1887), with its attack on fanaticism, would seem to definitely include a figure like Guyau. However, overall I think Nietzsche's conception of the free spirit in his late writings serves to exclude him from the rank. A note from 1887 is ambiguous on this point. Here Nietzsche defines the great human being as a skeptic in which freedom from conviction is part of his strength of will.²⁷ Such a freedom of spirit has unbelief as an instinct and as a precondition of greatness. Such a spirit's skepticism does not mean however that it is not committed to the realization of something great as well as the

means to it (KSA 13: 22–3, 11 [48]; WP 963).²⁸ Guyau has unbelief as a free thinker but in Nietzsche's view such a thinker also lacks certain important insights (KSA 13, 11 [151]; WP 904). What are these?

One of the most helpful aphorisms in his corpus on this point is *Beyond Good and Evil* (44, the final aphorism in the chapter of the book devoted to the free spirit), which can be examined in relation to a notebook sketch from June–July 1885 (KSA 11, 37 [8]; WP 957). In this aphorism Nietzsche addresses the character of the coming philosophers of the future. Although they will be free spirits, he says, they will also be something “higher, greater, and fundamentally different.” We actual free spirits of today, he then adds, are heralds and forerunners of these philosophers who did not as yet exist. For both he wishes to dispel a misunderstanding that we find in both Europe and America, in which a kind of intellectual spirit is misusing the name. These spirits are, he says, “narrow, trapped, enchained.” They are such, he holds, because they are “advocates of modern taste” and the genuine free spirit is not. For Nietzsche, as he makes clear in this aphorism and its note, this taste is the “democratic taste.” The phrase “beyond good and evil” is, he thinks, well chosen since it guards against the philosophy of the future from being confused with the philosophy of the free thinker (*Freidenker*). When he employs the latter term he also uses the French and Italian expressions for it. In *Ecce Homo* he reveals that nothing is more alien and unrelated to him than “the whole European and American species of ‘*libres penseurs*’” (EH III ii: 2).²⁹

The error of the freethinkers according to Nietzsche is that they fail to see what is necessary if life is to be developed and the human enhanced. He argues that the free thinker's vision does not allow him to see that the spirit of the human has only become what it is, something subtle and daring, through “long periods of pressure and discipline” and “that its life-will had to be intensified into an unconditional power-will” (BGE 44). In short, it is the philosophy of beyond good and evil in which “everything evil, frightful, tyrannical, predatory, and snake-like about humans serves to heighten the species ‘human being’ as much as does its opposite.” When one thinks like this and argues that this is also a necessary condition for the future development of the human, then one has placed oneself “at the *other* end of all modern ideology and wishful thinking of the herd” (ibid). The freethinkers fail to understand what is necessary for the elevation of the human: “inequality of rights, concealment, stoicism, the art of experiment, devilry of all kinds, in short the opposite of all that the herd thinks is desirable . . .” (KSA 11: 581, 37 [8]; WP 957). In short, the free thinker holds that the human herd can develop without the need of a shepherd; the free spirit upholds the need for one (KSA 23 [4]; WP 282). In *Beyond Good and Evil* (23) Nietzsche speaks of the intellectual conscience as a conscience opposed to the hearty kind that will be distressed by the questions posed by the new kind of free spirit such as whether good and bad instincts reciprocally condition one another. Our attempts at knowledge should not be

motivated by a need to satisfy “the heart’s desire” (AC 12). The theory of the will to power doctrine is an attempt to develop psychology in the direction of a morphology and evolutionary theory free of the prejudices of morality. It is dangerous because it will seek to demonstrate that the active emotions or affects—envy, greed, lust for power and rule, natural aggression, and so on—are as necessary conditions of living as everything else we value, “crucial and fundamental to the universal economy of life,” and if life is to be intensified they will need intensifying. Furthermore, what is missing from the free thinker’s worldview is the insight that the future can only come into being through a new cultivation of the human:

[I]nexorably, hesitantly, terrible as fate, the great task and question is approaching: how shall the earth as a whole be governed? And to what end shall “man” as a whole—and no longer as a people, a race—be raised and trained? (ibid.: 580)

In a note of 1888–89 on great politics from his final notebook Nietzsche spells out what it is he declares war on and against: war not between people and people (*Volk*) but rather against the absurd accidents of people, class, race, vocation, education, and culture, “a war between ascent and descent, between will to life and the *seeking of revenge* against life, between probity (*Rechtschaffenheit*) and spiteful mendacity (*Verlogenheit*) . . .” (KSA 13, 25 [1]). For all these reasons, then, Nietzsche insists that those who reflect on the need for a “reversal of values” are a different kind of free spirit from all previous ones.

Nietzsche’s thinking on the future rests on two viewpoints that are alien to free thinking modernity: (a) another mode of being to the one that prevails under modern conditions needs to be cultivated so that existence can find its transfiguration (*Verklärung*) (KSA 11, 41 [6]; WP 1051); and (b) this superior nature or new “sovereign species” of human will not come into being without “the experiment of a fundamental, artificial and conscious *breeding*” (KSA 12: 73, 2 [13]; WP 954). Nietzsche does value autonomy, personality, and sovereign individuality but he couples his valuation of them not with the Enlightenment ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity but with an unashamedly elitist “radical aristocratism.”³⁰ In some respects he shares Guyau’s emphasis on “anomos” as the future of morality, but Nietzsche’s free spirit recognizes that not everyone will wish to or can live in this manner. Hence his statement, “My philosophy aims at an ordering of rank, not an individualistic morality” (KSA 12: 280, 7 [6]; WP 287). Nietzsche’s recommendation for the future is that we allow for two divergent lines of human development to take place, one in the direction of (natural) gregariousness, the other in the (unnatural) direction of solitariness. The future order of rank by which valuations of life will be made will centre on how solitary or how gregarious one is, and neither viewpoint should be evaluated from the perspective of the other.³¹ Thus, Nietzsche is in favor of

both modes of life: "To evolve further that which is typical, to make the gulf wider and wider" (KSA 12, 10 [59]; WP 886). The key task should be to "establish *distances*, but create no *antitheses*" (KSA 12, 10 [63]; WP 891). In fact, he argues that any hatred for mediocrity is not worthy of a philosopher and is a question mark against his right to philosophy. Rather, the philosopher must keep the mediocre in good heart and take the rule under his protection (KSA 12, 10 [175]; WP 893).

Conclusion: Nietzsche and Guyau as "Immoralists"

Guyau was interpreted in his time as an "immoralist" and he was read in these terms by some major figures, including the pioneers of American philosophy such as William James and Josiah Royce (KSA 13, 11 [325]; WP 353). It is true, however, that he does, as Nietzsche notes, envisage the future as a movement in the direction of the good, but here he is equating the good with the open (as opposed to the closed and the parochial), the novel, the original, the different, and the plural (Guyau 1962: 498). These all seem to be values that Nietzsche associates with those he calls "free thinkers" and who he finds "laughably superficial." Guyau is very much influenced by the naturalistic and evolutionist account of sympathy and so-called altruistic sentiments provided by Darwin in his *Descent of Man*.³² He is also inspired by Alfred Fouillée's conception of an "intellectual altruism:" intelligence is an aspect of moral altruism, it denotes a capacity to conceive the consciousness of others and enter into it, and it presupposes sympathy. "Sympathy of feeling," Guyau writes, "is the germ of the extension of consciousness" and is explicable in terms of life: "This communicability of emotions and of thoughts—which, on its physiological side,³³ is a phenomenon of nervous contagion—is explained to a great extent by the fecundity of *life*, the expansion which is almost in direct ratio to its intensity. It is from *life* that we will demand the principle of morality" (1896: 81; 1898: 70).³⁴

It is clear that Nietzsche has a number of affinities with Guyau: the critique of Kant is strikingly similar and a philosophy of life is central to both projects. Both naturalize Kant and both propose a sublimation of morality. Perhaps the key difference between them is over life and the future of morality. Nietzsche agrees with Guyau that life involves expansion and spiritual growth. He departs from Guyau, however, in interpreting life in terms of a "will to power" which is "immoral," and he criticizes Guyau, who speaks of life's "moral fecundity," for remaining within the ambit of the Christian-moral ideal. 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'" (KSA 11,

35[20]; see also BGE 262). As we have seen, it is precisely “moral variability” that Guyau posits as the most desirable future for morality. Both Nietzsche and Guyau retain the word “morality” but for different reasons: Nietzsche to denote a new discipline and breeding, Guyau to denote the future opening of life beyond what has been customary, parochial, closed, and so on. Nietzsche takes this to denote a desire to serve the herd and to remain within the bounds of Christian morality. Both share a commitment to experimentation but for Nietzsche this cannot be left to chance or accident; on the contrary, the time is now right he thinks for putting a complete end to the chance and nonsense that up to now have reigned in history and defined it (BGE 203).

Nietzsche is heterodox in two main interrelated respects: (a) in his position on freedom, and, (b) in the peculiar manner in which he esteems the “superior nature” of the great human being. Freedom for him is to be understood as a “positive power, as will to power” in which the highest form of individual freedom—sovereignty—emerges “in all probability . . . five steps from its opposite, where the danger of slavery hangs over existence like a hundred swords of Damocles” (WP 770; TI “Skirmishes” 38). He conceives of freedom as an experiment in self-overcoming in which one grants oneself “the right to exceptional actions” (KSA 13: 68, 11 [146]; WP 921). For Nietzsche freedom denotes an experimental practice in self-testing and requires an uncommon and unpopular mode of self-discipline, a natural asceticism, and a veritable “gymnastics of the will”: how much isolation can one endure? Can one promise? Can one will to die at the right time? (KSA 12, 9 [93], 10 [165]; WP 915, 916) On one level for him the future is to be an experiment in the fostering of freedom (what Nietzsche calls the “superfluity of life” is life at its most free). On another level, however, it is a question of power, of the degree of power that is to be exercised over others or over all, and power may entail the sacrifice of freedom: “Put in the crudest form: *how could one sacrifice the development of mankind* to help a higher species than man come into existence?” (KSA 12: 281, 7 [6]; WP 859) The “superior nature” for Nietzsche resides in radical difference, “in distance of rank, not in an effect of any kind—even if he made the whole globe tremble” (KSA 13, 16 [39]; WP 876). He is insistent that in accord with a “Dionysian value standard” for existence the elevation of man can only take place “beyond those values which cannot deny their origin in the sphere of suffering, the herd, and the majority,” and this, he says, is to speak of the “pagan,” the “classical,” and the “noble” “newly discovered and expounded” (KSA 13, 16 [32]; WP 1041).

In the literature on Nietzsche and Guyau it is often assumed that the two differ in that whereas Guyau’s philosophy of life is a philosophy of generosity and love, Nietzsche’s is not.³⁵ But this is questionable. Nietzsche does appeal to “love” as part of his project but again his intellectual integrity tells him that this love is necessarily coupled with malice (*Bosheit*); such is the character of the philosopher’s desire (his will to power) to shape and mould human beings.³⁶ In a note of 1884 Nietzsche distinguishes between two different kinds of love, a

slavish one that submits and gives itself and a divine one that despises and loves, that “reshapes and elevates the beloved.” Love for Nietzsche cannot be altruistic and our psychological integrity should tell us this. “The great human being,” he writes, “feels his *power* over a people, his temporary coincidence with a people or a millennium: this *enlargement* (*Vergrößerung*) in his experience of himself as *causa* and *voluntas* is *misunderstood* as ‘altruism . . .’” (KSA 11, 25 [335]; WP 964).

Guyau’s philosophy of life clearly 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” (p. 247; p. 210). This means that human nature is “sociable” and cannot be entirely self-ish even if it wished to be: “We are open on all sides, on all sides encroaching and encroached upon . . . *Life is not only nutrition; it is production and fecundity*” (ibid.). It is this fecundity of life which 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*” (p. 249; p. 212). Like some neo-Nietzscheans, such as Vattimo for example,³⁷ 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 . . . (p. 101; p. 87)

To what extent the two philosophies of life, of the will to power and Dionysian joy and moral fecundity and charity, are incompatible and a genuine stranger to one another is a question to be pursued on another occasion. Nietzsche’s new image of rule and the ruler along the lines of the Roman Caesar with the soul of Christ *may* point us in an interesting direction in reflecting on this issue (KSA 11, 27 [60]; WP 983). What is clear, however, is that the ultimate difference between the free thinker and the free spirit is an essential one: Guyau’s conception of the future entails a commitment to a self-inventing humanity whereas for Nietzsche humanity is an “*endpoint*.” For Nietzsche the problem is not what should replace humanity in the order of being but rather, “what type of human should be *bred*, should be *willed* as having greater value, as being more deserving of life, as being more certain of a future” (AC 3).