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References

The primary text discussed in this book is Friedrich Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*.

Quotations are taken from the Oxford World's Classics edition translated by Marion Faber, as specified in the AQA A-level Philosophy syllabus. References are given by section number (not page number) prefaced by 'BGE'.

Occasional reference is made to other works of Nietzsche's. These are:

GM *On the Genealogy of Morals: A Polemic*, translated by Douglas Smith. Oxford University Press, Oxford World's Classics, 1998.

GS *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in German Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*, translated by Josefine Nauckhoff. Cambridge University Press, 2001.

TI *Twilight of the Idols*. In *The Portable Nietzsche*, edited and translated by Walter A. Kaufmann. New York: Viking Press, 1982.

WP *The Will to Power*, translated by Walter A. Kaufmann and Reginald J. Hollingdale. Vintage Books, 1968.

References to these works are also by section number (not page number).

The arguments in this booklet summarise original research. Publication details for the full academic statements of the original arguments are as follows:

Simon Robertson, 'A Nietzschean Critique of Obligation-Centred Moral Theory', *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 2011.

Alessandra Tanesini, 'Nietzsche on the Diachronic Will and the Problem of Morality', *European Journal of Philosophy* 2013.

Jonathan Webber, 'A Law Unto Oneself', *Philosophical Quarterly* 2012.

The Disvalue of Morality

Simon Robertson

Nietzsche is an ardent critic of traditional morality. He criticises it on many levels. At the most fundamental level, he attacks two claims that morality makes about its own status. One is the claim that it is an objectively justified standpoint delivering objective truths about what everyone ought to do (BGE 186-203). The other is its idea that we are all responsible for what we do because we have free will (BGE 19, 21). He thinks that these claims about objectivity and free will are false. However, he also says this: 'We do not object to a judgment just because it is false ... The question is rather to what extent the judgment furthers life ...' (BGE 4).

This suggests that what really drives Nietzsche's critique is an evaluative agenda: he thinks morality is overall a bad thing and that it 'constitute[s] the danger of all dangers' because it is not life-enhancing, but rather thwarts the possibility of achieving the most advanced forms of life, 'the *highest power and splendour* of the human type' (GM.Preface.6). Those capable of realizing such an advanced life are Nietzsche's 'free spirits' or 'higher types'. Thus, Nietzsche says that 'to demand one morality for all is precisely to encroach upon the higher sort of human beings' (BGE 228). Elsewhere, he says that to 'men of great creativity, the really great men according to my understanding ... nothing stands more malignantly in the way of their rise and evolution ... than what in Europe is today called simply "morality"' (WP 957).

So, Nietzsche's driving criticism of morality is not that it rests on false claims. He rejects morality because it is *disvaluable* – that is to say, a bad thing. He thinks it is bad because he thinks it prevents those capable of living the highest kind of life from doing so. All of this raises a number of important questions for understanding and assessing Nietzsche's critique. In this essay, I consider two of these questions. Who are these higher types? And what are the good things that morality supposedly thwarts?

Who are Nietzsche's Higher Types?

Fully-fledged higher types are those who realize the highest forms of human flourishing and excellence. But what do these involve? Let's take each in turn

A flourishing plant is one that realizes its potential to be a healthy specimen of the type of plant it is. It realizes this potential by doing or getting what is good for it. Likewise, according to Nietzsche, a flourishing human is someone who realizes their potential to be a healthy human by doing what is good for them. This involves at least two things: 'self-understanding' and 'becoming who one is'.

Self-understanding is crucial because different people are very different: different things are good for different people and how a given person might flourish depends on the particularities of that person. In order to know what to do to flourish, you have got to understand what makes you *you*. So you need an accurate assessment of your own nature and character. Note that one of Nietzsche's worries about morality is that it overlooks the fact that different things can be good for different people: 'Any altruistic moral code that takes itself unconditionally and addresses itself to everyone is ... inciting to sins of omission ... and particularly tempting and harmful to those who are greater, rarer, privileged' (BGE 221). Nietzsche thinks that 'it is immoral to say, "What's good for the goose is good for the gander"' (BGE 221) because 'what is right for the one might certainly *not* be right for the other' (BGE 228).

Self-understanding involves understanding not only who you already are, but also what you can make of yourself. And making something of yourself involves *doing things* – for instance, achieving the goals you set yourself. For Nietzsche, then, to flourish you must set your own goals – goals that express who you are (as revealed through self-understanding) and that reflect what you can realistically make of yourself. A very creative person should set goals that express creativity, and it is through this creativity that the creative person will realize their potential and hence flourish.

Notice that you can express who you are even though the results of your efforts are relatively mediocre. A creative person might set artistic goals, yet end up creating only mediocre artworks. Even if this person lives the most flourishing life that they are capable of, this would not be an example of the highest forms of human flourishing or excellence. For Nietzsche, this mediocre artist would not be a fully-fledged higher type. A fully-fledged higher type is someone who also achieves 'external' or 'externally recognisable' excellences. So what might these be?

Nietzsche says conspicuously little about this. But there may be a good reason for that: there simply cannot be a manual or recipe for achieving the highest excellences, since such excellences are the result of creative activity directed towards novel goals. Consider again an analogy with artworks: we cannot supply a list of specific rules saying 'do this to produce a great artwork', for not only does great art often break established rules, even when it does not do so it is always creative and novel. So, a higher type is someone who achieves the highest excellence, which expresses their own nature and cannot be specified in advance by anyone else, and who thereby realizes their potential to be excellent in that specific way.

How Does Morality Thwart Excellence?

Nietzsche argues that the morality that dominates European culture is inherited from Christianity, which successfully dominated the European ethical outlook for so long that Europeans have come to accept that Christian moral values are 'the correct' values. Even if, in light of 'the death of God', we no longer think that morality is justified directly by the authority of religion, the dominance of these moral values blinds us to the idea that there may be other (perhaps more healthy) values. Indeed, as Nietzsche puts it: 'morality defends itself with all its strength against such "possibilities" ... Stubbornly and relentlessly it says, "I am morality itself, and nothing else is!"' (BGE 202). The result is that we now just accept moral values as given, rather than pursue our own goals and excellences. Hence, Nietzsche laments, 'Morality in Europe today is herd animal morality' (BGE 202). Nonetheless, he urges, 'higher moralities are or should be possible' (BGE 202).

But how does morality come to dominate the evaluative landscape in ways that (supposedly) thwart higher types from realizing the excellences they are capable of? The key to Nietzsche's thought is that, despite the death of God, morality still presents itself as an *objectively justified* and hence *authoritative* standpoint. Here is a way to articulate Nietzsche's challenge:

1. Morality demands that you comply with its norms, values, ideals, and duties, irrespective of whether doing so conflicts with what is good for you personally.
2. Morality takes itself to apply to all people equally, so you cannot escape morality when it conflicts with what is good for you personally.
3. Therefore, morality requires even the higher types comply with its demands – regardless of whether doing so is conducive to expressing who they are.
4. Complying with morality can prevent you from realizing the highest excellences.
5. Therefore, morality demands that the higher types behave in ways that prevent them from realizing the highest excellences that express their flourishing.

This reconstruction of Nietzsche's argument helps us to see where we might disagree with it. Statements 1 and 2 seem correct as characterizations of morality. Statement 3 seems to follow from statements 1 and 2. So the crucial question is whether statement 4 is correct. I will consider this question in my next essay in this booklet.

Comprehension Questions

1. Summarise in fewer than 100 words the ideas of flourishing and excellence, and of the relation between them, that Robertson attributes to Nietzsche.
2. What is the problem that, according to Robertson, Nietzsche thinks morality poses for flourishing and excellence?

Does Nietzsche Think Values Are Merely Expressions of Personal Preference?

Alessandra Tanesini

What does Nietzsche think about the nature of values? On the one hand, he writes that '*there are altogether no moral facts*' and that '[m]oral judgments agree with religious ones in believing in realities which are no realities' (TI.vii.1). He also claims that the world in itself is valueless, and that whatever value it might have has been bestowed upon it by man (GS 301). But on the other hand, he urges 'a *critique* of moral values' because '*the value of these values itself should first of all be called into question*' (GM.Preface.6). These claims are difficult to reconcile. Should we take Nietzsche's own evaluative comments on Christianity, for example, to be merely expressions of his personal preferences? He certainly sounds as though we should take them to be more important than that. In this essay, I explain the difficulty in more detail. I argue that Nietzsche thinks that some people's values are truly, objectively valuable while other people's are not.

Values as Expressions of Personal Preference

The claim that the world in itself has no values implies that Nietzsche rejects moral realism, which is the view that moral and other values have a reality that is independent of our opinions and preferences about them. Nietzsche denies that there are such moral facts. Morality is not supposed to be a human creation; it is supposed to be true independently of what human beings think and want. However, for Nietzsche the facts that allegedly are part of morality such as that cruelty is evil, or self-sacrifice is good, do not have an existence which is independent of human beliefs about them. So these alleged moral facts are no facts at all; they are fictions which, in Nietzsche's view, are actually pernicious.

These claims might be taken to imply that Nietzsche's values are simply what some groups

or individuals take to be valuable. Values would be nothing over and above what people actually value, which is to say what matters to them. So conceived values are always relative to an evaluator. Each person would have his or her own values which are basically the things that person values. Broadly speaking, valuing in this sense is a matter of desires or wants that are stable (rather than fleeting) and in some sense central or important to the person. Thus, strawberry ice-cream is unlikely to be a value since the desire for some tends to be short-lived and not very important even for the person who wants it. Knowledge or sporting success, instead, might be the sorts of thing that people value because many individuals are prepared to go to great lengths to achieve them.

Values Independent of Personal Preference

When Nietzsche writes about values he cannot simply mean the things that people value, although this is what he means at times (e.g. BGE 194). He cannot always mean that because otherwise the whole task of reevaluating the value of traditional values would not make any sense. If one's values are what one cares about, then this is not something that is up for dispute. If you and I seem to value different things, I might try to convince you that you do not really value the things you say you value (as shown in your behaviour). I might also try to change your mind, and convince you to stop valuing what you value, and begin valuing what I value. What I cannot do is show that the things that you value are of no value. If values are just expressions of personal preferences, then whatever somebody values is of value. So, if you do value these things, then these things are of value (for you), end of story.

Yet Nietzsche often writes that the things many people value are really of no value. For instance, he castigates the values embedded in what he labels 'slave morality' (BGE 260). This is the morality of the masses who, in Nietzsche's view, are weak and behave like a herd. Supporters of this morality value pity, patience, humility, friendliness, and self-sacrifice (BGE 260). They value the traits of character that are valued by Christian morality. Nietzsche personally despises these traits of character and Christian so-called values in general. He makes this abundantly clear. But he also claims that these so-called values are

of no value in a manner that suggests he is not merely venting or expressing a personal preference. Rather he takes himself to be making an assertion that can be assessed for its correctness (GM.Preface.6).

How To Approach The Problem

What are we to make of this tangle? Is Nietzsche confused? Is what he says about Christian values just an opinionated expression of his own personal preferences? Should he ultimately admit that all values are objectively equal? Is he wrong to criticise other people's values? I cannot answer all of these questions here, but I can begin to show that Nietzsche was not confused and that when he writes about values, he does not take himself to be expressing only a personal preference.

One of the reasons Nietzsche is so difficult to interpret is that he often appears to make contradictory claims. This is not the only example. In some cases, the contradictions are because he changed his mind. For instance, in his early works he writes that all drives aim at pleasure, a view that he rejects in his more mature period. In other cases, he embraces what seems to be a contradiction in order to make a point about historical development. He claims, for instance, that the desire or will to get to the truth is an evolution of the instinct or will to deceive (BGE 2).

But most often, there is not really any contradiction at all. Nietzsche rejects some traditional notion, such as free will, in order to substitute it with something else that actually does a job that the rejected notion was meant to perform. Because his alternative achieves what the original was meant to do, he calls it by the same name as that deployed for the notion he rejects. For example, he claims that there is no free will (BGE 18, 21), but then also describes his higher type of human being as 'free, very free spirits' who possess 'a surplus of "free will"' (BGE 44). In these cases we must be careful to acknowledge that there are two different ideas being given the same name. Nietzsche accepts one but rejects the other. Because these are different ideas, there is no contradiction. We should take this same approach when we try to untangle Nietzsche's difficult claims about values.

The Values of Great Men

Nietzsche does hold that values are the product of valuing. Things have value because they are valued. So we give things value; independently of our valuing attitudes, nothing is valuable. However, in Nietzsche's view almost all human beings are incapable of truly valuing anything. Thus, although all values are created, very few human beings are capable of creating them through their valuing. At times Nietzsche suggests that the nobles are the creators of values (BGE 260); more often, however, he claims that revaluing so-called values and creating new genuine values are tasks reserved for the philosopher of the future (BGE 211).

There is, in Nietzsche's view, something special about these great men that explains why they are truly capable of valuing. This is something that the ordinary folk cannot do. It is for this reason that ordinary people's so-called values are not really values at all. The great men, instead, are able to value because they possess the sort of self-mastery that is required for self-determination (BGE 260). In a word, values are, for Nietzsche, what those individuals who are capable of self-determination care about.

This answer, of course, opens up further questions. For instance, we might ask why self-determination makes valuing possible. We might also try to find out which traits of character Nietzsche thinks one must possess in order to achieve self-determination. The answer to both questions for Nietzsche lies in the structure of the soul possessed by these men (BGE 212). I will consider this issue in my next essay in this booklet.

Comprehension Questions

1. Summarise in fewer than 100 words the apparent contradiction in Nietzsche's account of values that Tanesini outlines.
2. Summarise in fewer than 100 words the theory of values that Tanesini attributes to Nietzsche to solve this problem.

Is Nietzsche Fair to Kant?

Jonathan Webber

One of the themes of *Beyond Good and Evil* is the idea that philosophical arguments are usually nothing more than complicated defences of their authors' prejudices.

Kant's moral philosophy is one of the examples Nietzsche discusses. 'We have to smile at the spectacle of old Kant's hypocrisy', he writes, 'as he lures us onto the dialectical backroads that lead (or, better, mislead) us to his "categorical imperative"' (BGE 5).

Rather than engage with the argument Kant gives for his moral theory, Nietzsche just dismisses Kant's idea of the 'categorical imperative', or moral law. The reason he gives is that Kant is really just expressing his own image of himself, that Kant 'uses his moral code to announce: "What is honourable about me is that I can obey — and it should be no different for you than for me!"' (BGE 187).

Is this an acceptable way to argue? Kant has presented a sophisticated argument in favour of his moral theory. If that argument works, then we have to accept its conclusion. Surely it does not matter what deep psychological need drove Kant to formulate this argument. The important question is: does Kant's argument work?

In this essay, I argue that Nietzsche's talk of prejudices is really shorthand for a deeper critique of those he considers 'philosophers of the past'. I argue that Nietzsche classifies Kant as a 'philosopher of the past'. Then I question whether this classification is fair, since Kant does not seem to fit Nietzsche's own account of 'philosophers of the past'.

Nietzsche makes this mistake, I argue, because he does not take the time to engage seriously with the argument that Kant has presented for his account of morality.

Philosophers of the Past and Philosophers of the Future

Nietzsche distinguishes between 'philosophical workers' and 'true philosophers'. He tells us that the role of philosophical workers is 'to establish and press into formulae some large body of value judgments (that is, previous value-*assumptions*, value-creations that have become dominant and for a time called "truths")' (BGE 211). These philosophical workers encapsulate into basic principles what they see as the true values. What they do not realise, however, is that their idea of true values is culturally determined. They grow up in a culture that has valued telling the truth, keeping promises, and not harming people, and as a result they see these as valuable. Their moral theories just reflect the values they inherit from their cultural past.

The 'true philosophers' are 'commanders and lawgivers', who do not simply repeat the values of their culture but instead say 'this is the way it *should* be'. These are inventive thinkers who aim to change the world. 'With creative hands they reach towards the future, and everything that is, or has existed becomes their means, their tool, their hammer' (BGE 211). These are the philosophers of the future.

Kant is one of Nietzsche's examples of a 'philosophical worker' who aims 'to subdue the past' into some philosophical principles (BGE 211). Although he does not say so explicitly here, we can assume that Nietzsche means this to echo his earlier claim that Kant's moral philosophy is just an expression of Kant's own prejudices.

The idea would be that Kant's cultural background has imbued him with some basic moral values, which now function as unexamined prejudices, and this is why his moral theory simply summarises those values. It is no surprise, according to Nietzsche, that Kant's primary examples of immoral actions are suicide, making a promise without intending to keep it, allowing one's own talents to rust, and refusing to help other people. His theory just formalises the moral prejudices that his culture has instilled within him.

Nietzsche's Missing Argument

Despite the language he sometimes uses, therefore, it is not really Kant's underlying motivation that Nietzsche is objecting to. It is rather that, whatever his motivation and whatever he thinks he is doing, all Kant is really doing is systematising the set of values that has grown up in Western culture over the centuries before him.

However, it should be no surprise that some of the moral judgments that Kant endorses are ones that have often been made by people before him. After all, the range of possible moral judgments is not infinite, and there have been a lot of people thinking about morality. What is more, it seems that history is filled not with moral agreement, but with moral disagreement. So in endorsing some values that have grown up in his culture's history, Kant is thereby rejecting other ones that are also part of the same history.

To make his criticism bite, therefore, Nietzsche needs to do more than just point out that Kant's moral judgments *often coincide with* aspects of his cultural heritage. He needs to show that Kant's moral philosophy is *nothing but the causal product of* this cultural heritage. Nietzsche does not seem to have provided an argument for this causal claim. It is very difficult to imagine what such an argument would look like.

Kant as a Philosopher of the Future

What is more, there seems to be good reason to deny that Kant is simply reflecting his cultural background. There are aspects of his moral philosophy that challenged that background quite fundamentally. A good example of this is the political theory that Kant drew from his moral philosophy. The only morally defensible form of government, he argued, is what he called 'commonwealth' and we now call democracy. Although he was not the first person to argue this, it was still very much a minority view at the time Kant wrote, and his arguments played a significant role in making it the mainstream view in western Europe. Indeed, they continue to be drawn upon today, over 200 years later, by political theorists interested in justice and the legitimacy of the state.

So why not classify Kant as a philosopher of the future? He has argued for how things should be, rather than just repeated his cultural inheritance, and has been very influential. It is true that he has drawn on his cultural heritage, but it would be too extreme to say that a philosopher of the future shouldn't be influenced at all by their culture or by previous philosophers. Nietzsche is aware of this, and claims that one can only become a true philosopher after passing through the stage of being a philosophical worker (BGE 211).

If he is to count as a truly inventive philosopher, which Nietzsche requires of philosophers of the future, then Kant needs to have done more than transformed his cultural inheritance. He needs to have done so through truly strong and original work. So if we are to classify Kant as a philosopher of the future, we need to do what Nietzsche here failed to do, and that is to consider Kant's argument for his moral theory. My next essay in this booklet focuses on exactly this question.

Comprehension Questions

1. Summarise in fewer than 100 words Nietzsche's idea that 'philosophical workers' merely repeat the past by expressing their prejudices whereas 'true philosophers' do not.
2. What is the argument that Webber claims is missing from Nietzsche's critique of Kant?

Puzzle 1

Can Nietzsche Coherently Reject Christianity?

Robertson points out that Nietzsche rejects Christian morality. He argues that Nietzsche's primary reason is that complying with its demands can obstruct your pursuit of your own personal goals, which is required for realizing the most important excellences.

Tanesini points out that Nietzsche rejects the Christian emphasis on virtues that benefit weaker members of society – such as pity, humility, and self-sacrifice. Nietzsche thinks of these Christian values as 'slave morality' and so not really valuable at all. He argues that the real values are those created by 'great men'.

But we might ask whether Nietzsche is committed to contradictory claims here.

Essentially, the question is: Should we classify Jesus as a Nietzschean 'great man'?

If the answer is 'yes', then it seems that Nietzsche has to admit that Jesus's values are genuine values. So it looks like Nietzsche has to answer 'no'. But can he do this?

This breaks down into at least the following issues:

- (a) does Jesus fit Nietzsche's definition of a 'higher type' or 'great man'?
- (b) does Jesus fit Nietzsche's definition of 'philosopher of the future'?
- (c) does Nietzsche think that the values *taught* by 'great men' are genuine values, or does he think this only of the values that really govern the way they live their lives?
- (d) does Nietzsche need to alter his theory in the light of these questions?

Puzzle 2

Can Nietzsche Coherently Reject Morality?

According to Robertson, Nietzsche rejects the constraints that morality sets on our behaviour. We should aim for the highest excellences of which we are capable, according to this interpretation, and we should not allow the claims of morality to hold us back.

According to Tanesini, Nietzsche thinks that genuine values are created through the kind of self-determination that characterises 'great men'. These people's values are genuinely valuable, unlike the values that most of us hold.

But we might ask whether Nietzsche can make both of these claims.

Essentially, the question is this: Does the second claim require us all to respect the capacity for self-determination?

If the answer is 'yes', then it seems that this sets moral constraints on our behaviour: it would be wrong to do anything that obstructs someone's ability to control their own lives. So it looks like Nietzsche has to answer 'no', if he is to reject morality. But can he do this?

That is, can Nietzsche coherently make all three of these claims? –

- (i) All genuinely valuable values are created through self-determination.
- (ii) We should respect values that are genuinely valuable.
- (iii) We do not need to respect self-determination.

Or, is it that respecting people's ability to determine their own lives does not set any significant moral constraints on our behaviour?

Can Nietzsche Accept Undemanding Moral Theories?

Simon Robertson

Crucial to Nietzsche's critique of morality is the idea that complying with morality prevents the realization of the highest excellences, because morality thwarts the flourishing of those individuals capable of such excellence.

Here is an explanation for how morality might have this effect: if we're brought up in a society dominated by morality, we'll be taught basic moral values from a young age and be punished when we act morally badly; as a result, we'll 'internalize' these moral values – i.e. accept that they are things we ought to comply with and become strongly motivated to comply with them.

Nietzsche's objection to this is that 'higher types' who internalize these moral values will be less likely to pursue their own goals and therefore less likely to realize the highest excellences they are capable of. Take a moral value like altruism: if higher types internalize an altruistic concern for the wellbeing of others, then they will be more likely to think and act altruistically, and therefore will be less likely to prioritize and pursue the goals whose achievement is essential to their own personal excellence and flourishing. Or consider the value morality places on alleviating suffering, not just in oneself but also others: suffering is often a necessary ingredient in producing great things – think of 'suffering for one's art', or tortured geniuses.

Nietzsche writes: 'Wellbeing ... that certainly is no goal ... The discipline of suffering, *great* suffering – don't you know that this discipline *alone* has created all human greatness to date?' (BGE 225; see also BGE 201). Yet someone who has internalized a value like wellbeing, which promotes the alleviation of suffering, will be less likely to undergo the suffering necessary to achieve great things, and might prevent others from doing so.

A Response to Nietzsche's Objection

This criticism of morality may have bite against a range of classical moral theories: Christian, Kantian, and utilitarian. Such theories typically require us to deliberate about what to do impartially. One result of this impartiality is that we may be continually required to prioritize the good of others over our own good.

Since Nietzsche, more recent critics of these moral theories have also objected that these theories make morality too demanding: if we have a continual series of moral duties to help others, they argue, we will thereby be denied the time and space that we need if we are to pursue what is good for ourselves.

In response to such objections, many contemporary moral theories make morality less demanding. Let us call these 'UMTs', as short for 'undemanding moral theories'. UMTs allow us the time and space to pursue our own individual good – to engage in 'personal projects' like sport and art that can contribute to our living fulfilling lives.

According to these UMTs, we may still be morally required to help others sometimes (e.g. when we easily can, or in cases of emergency), but we are not subject to an incessant series of moral duties to help others.

In the context of Nietzsche's objection, this would imply that higher types could also be allowed the time and space to pursue the highest excellences. Thus morality, or at least a relatively undemanding version of it, would be able to evade Nietzsche's objection.

Or can it? The aim of UMTs is to allow for individual flourishing within the context of morality. But if Nietzsche's objection to morality can be applied to UMTs, then anyone sympathetic to Nietzsche's criticism should conclude that these theories have not succeeded in their aim.

A Nietzschean Critique of UMTs

Realizing the highest Nietzschean excellences is itself exceptionally demanding. It requires a single-minded all-out commitment to achieving one's goals. One cannot be half-hearted and still achieve the very highest excellence. Thus, Nietzsche says, 'the essential thing ... is that there be a protracted period of unidirectional *obedience*' (BGE 188), where one remains undistracted by anything else.

This would require that one is not distracted by whatever duties a UMT specifies. One could be lucky enough to be pursuing a goal that allows for the duties required by a UMT, but this will not be the case for all such goals. Therefore, a higher type who realizes the highest excellences may need to violate the duties required by a UMT.

For example, suppose that a higher type sets the goal of being a great artist. There's nothing morally objectionable, in and of itself, about that. But achieving that goal might require breaking the moral rules as these are set out in a UMT.

In fact, Nietzsche himself suggests that to realize excellence a higher type may sometimes be required to treat others in morally questionable ways: 'A person striving for great things will regard anyone he meets upon his path either as a means or as a postponement and an obstacle' (BGE 273); indeed, higher types 'will be *harsher* (and perhaps not always only towards themselves) than humane people may wish' (BGE 210).

So higher types may need to treat others as means to their own ends, or fail to help others out when doing so conflicts with the single-minded pursuit of their projects. Thus, complying with even a UMT and realizing the highest excellences can be incompatible after all.

In which case, even an undemanding form of morality generates the effects to which Nietzsche objects. So if Nietzsche is right, even the undemanding kinds of morality are disvaluable.

Assessing the Nietzschean Objection to Morality

How should a defender of morality respond to this kind of Nietzschean argument? One response would be to say that morality is sufficiently important that everyone, higher types included, ought to comply with it – and if that is incompatible with higher types realizing the highest Nietzschean excellences, so much the worse for these excellences and higher types.

But now recall Nietzsche's claims about how morality dominates European culture in such a way that we tend to just assume that moral values are truly valuable. The response to Nietzsche just given simply *assumes* that moral values have priority over the highest (excellence-oriented) values. But unless moral theorists can justify this assumption, they're just assuming the very thing Nietzsche criticises them for assuming.

And this is where one of Nietzsche's major contributions lies: by calling into question the value of moral values, by showing that morality may be inimical to realizing the highest excellences, he places an obligation on anyone seeking to defend the importance of morality to *justify* the claim (and not just assume) that moral values place constraints on our behaviour.

The defender of morality has this obligation because Nietzsche has arguments to show that morality may well prevent highly valuable things from happening. Therefore, the defender of morality has to show that morality is more important than the kind of excellence that Nietzsche praises.

Comprehension Questions

1. What is a UMT and how are UMTs supposed to allow for individual flourishing?
2. Why does Robertson think that a UMT might fail to allow for the flourishing of the 'higher types' that Nietzsche describes?

Free Will, the Creation of Values, and the Well-Ordered Soul

Alessandra Tanesini

Nietzsche argues that the creation of new values is the main task of the philosophers of the future. These philosophers are commanders and lawgivers (BGE 203, 211, 212). They are free spirits who possess ‘a surplus of “free will”’ (BGE 44). They are the higher type of humanity to whom the demands of ordinary morality do not apply (BGE 228). These individuals, unlike everyone else, are able to create values because they are autonomous and free; they have achieved independence (BGE 41).

How do these claims fit together? And why should we accept them? I argue that Nietzsche rests his thought here on the idea of self-determination. First, I explain what he means by self-determination and why only the higher type of humans achieve it. Next, I explain how self-determination is necessary and sufficient for a well-ordered soul. Third, I explain how a well-ordered soul is sufficient for Nietzschean free will. Finally, I explain why only the self-determined person genuinely creates values.

Self-Determination

The capacity for self-determination is the ability to shape oneself. Nietzsche thinks of this capacity as something very rare. Only a few higher individuals, he thinks, have ever come close to possessing it. These people stand out because of the strength of their will (BGE 21). More specifically, for Nietzsche, self-determination requires that one possesses what he calls a ‘long’ will (BGE 212). To have a long will is to be able to commit to a single plan or goal over a long stretch of time. This long will is necessary for self-determination, but it is not sufficient. For self-determination also requires that the plan one is committed to really is one’s own invention. In sum, self-determination requires both self-control and self-legislation (BGE 262).

Without a long will one could not become an elite athlete, or gain an academic qualification, or even organise a decent party. These activities all require self-control: the ability to have goals, formulate plans for achieving those goals, and persevere with following these plans. Sticking to a plan requires overcoming other desires, such as the desire to sleep a bit longer, or watch the telly, or do nothing. Unless one has the will to resist these desires, one will never achieve any long-term goals. And if one is unable to resist these desires when they occur, then one is not capable of self-determination. If you are the slave of your fleeting desires you will not be in charge of your own life. So self-determination requires self-control and self-control requires a long will (BGE 200).

Self-determination also requires that the goals one pursues are one’s own invention (GS 335). For Nietzsche, this ‘self-legislation’ is possible only when one’s entire life constitutes a single coherent project that one could consistently wish to live again and again (GS 341). When this is the case, one does not reject or disown anything that one does. The coherence of one’s own project means that one can endorse all of one’s actions for the whole of eternity. In this manner one gives oneself a unity across the time of one’s life, a unity that makes sense as a story or narrative, and at the same time constitutes oneself as the author of that story. This person is bound by laws that they have created, laws that shape the unified project of their life.

The Well-Ordered Soul

Nietzsche describes the self-determined person as having a well-ordered soul. When Nietzsche talks of the ‘soul’, he is clear that he does not mean an eternal substance (BGE 12). He means instead the collection of drives, instincts, and habits that cause the individual’s behaviour (BGE 19, 200). Nietzsche thinks that each drive, habit, or instinct has a tendency to be tyrannical (BGE 6) – it demands to influence behaviour. When a person gives in to these demands, allowing themselves to be dominated first by one drive, then by another, the result is a badly structured soul. A well-structured soul, by contrast, is a ‘well-structured happy community where the ruling class identifies with the successes of the community as a whole’ (BGE 19).

Nietzsche here owes a clear debt to Plato who, in *Republic*, first develops an analogy between the ideal constitution for a city and the ideal structure of a human soul. For Plato only a unified and well-structured soul is capable of effective action (*Republic* 352a). The unity of the soul, however, is necessary but not sufficient for it to be well-structured. A soul dominated by a single obsession or addiction is unified, but would not allow for a full engagement in a diverse range of activities. For this reason, argues Plato, the well-structured soul, like the well-structured city, is the one which is ruled by its higher part. This is reason in the case of the soul, and the aristocratic class in the case of the city.

Nietzsche agrees with Plato that the well-structured soul is governed by its higher part, rather than tyrannised by one drive, and that only the well-structured soul is truly capable of engaging in unified activities or projects. But he disagrees over *why* the well-ordered soul is capable of engaging in these activities. Plato argued that it is because the rule of reason allows the soul to resist internal conflict. But Nietzsche does not think that a well-ordered soul is stable in this way. He thinks instead that it is something fragile, difficult to achieve, and difficult to maintain (BGE 62).

This is because the well-ordered soul is characterised by ‘wholeness in diversity’ (BGE 212) – a well-ordered soul includes many drives and instincts that are often in conflict among themselves. It also possesses a long will. The combination of these two features gives the life of the individual a unity across time. Whilst the weak-willed will fritter away their existence in the pursuit of short term goals and disconnected activities, the strong-willed great individual lives a life that make sense as a coherent whole (see TI.ix.49).

The Freedom of the Well-Ordered Soul

One of Nietzsche’s great philosophical insights is that freedom, contrary to what Kant and Schopenhauer claimed, does not require the possession of a special mental faculty (called ‘free will’) outside the realm of ordinary causation. Since no such faculty exists, this kind of free will is a myth (BGE 19). Instead, argues Nietzsche, freedom is the capacity for self-determination.

I have argued that only those with well-structured souls can lead lives that make sense as coherent wholes. They achieve this because, due to their strength and length of will, they can sustain long-range commitments. I have also claimed that in leading a life that makes sense as a unified project, one creates oneself as the author of the life one leads. It is precisely because self-determination is a kind of self-creation that it is a form of freedom. To be free is to make oneself into the self one is. It is entirely up to oneself what one does.

Values and the Well-Ordered Soul

It remains to be explained why Nietzsche thinks that genuine values are created only by those individuals who have created themselves in this way. In his view, values are a particular kind of desire (BGE 211). They are those desires that are stable over time and deeply important to the person, defining who he or she is. But only those who have a well-ordered soul genuinely have such deeply important desires. Without the self-determination required for a well-ordered soul, one merely has a range of desires (such as drives, habits, and instincts). Although one desire might seem important at a given time, this will change as the next desire comes along and takes over. To make one or more of one’s desires genuinely deeply important to oneself, to make these define who one is and rule over all the other desires that might occur, is the goal of self-determination.

Thus, for Nietzsche the only people who really have values are those people who are self-determined, who have a well-ordered soul, who really are someone (BGE 203). That is why only the higher type of humanity can create values. They are alone in this because other human beings have failed in the task of becoming someone.

Comprehension Questions

1. Summarise in fewer than 100 words the ideas of self-determination and the well-ordered soul, and the relations between them, that Tanesini attributes to Nietzsche.
2. How does this theory of self-determination and the well-ordered soul explain the origin of genuine values?

Self-Determination and Moral Constraint

Jonathan Webber

Nietzsche argues against morality and in favour of aiming for the highest excellences. His argument relies on his idea of 'self-determination'. Yet this seems to conflict with Kant's work on 'self-legislation' around a century earlier. Kant argued that there are moral constraints on behaviour because each person's actions lay down laws that govern that person's future behaviour. To understand this conflict more clearly, we need first to look at the details of Kant's argument.

The Universalizability Principle

In chapters 1 and 2 of his *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant argues that the moral law is encapsulated in the following statement: 'Act only on that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law'. This has become known as the universalizability principle. The idea is that an action is morally wrong if you cannot will that everyone else always does, and always did, the same.

The idea of 'will' is important here. It does not just mean 'want'. It is more than that: to will something is to do whatever is in your power to bring it about. To will a good result in your exams is to work hard for those exams. Merely wanting a good result is not enough.

For example, Kant thinks it is wrong to borrow money on the basis of a promise to pay it back when you know that you are going to break that promise. Why? Imagine a world where everyone who ever needs money gets it this way. Very quickly, nobody would ever believe promises to pay money back. So it would no longer be possible to borrow money this way. So there simply could not be a world where everyone in need of money *always* borrowed it on the basis of a false promise.

In making a promise to pay money back, you are relying on that promise being taken seriously. Therefore, you could not also will that everyone who needs money always gets it on the basis of a false promise. Because if you will this, then you are trying to bring about a situation in which your promise does not get taken seriously. And that contradicts your plan of getting money this way. (It does not matter that you cannot actually bring about the world where nobody believes your promise: what matters is that you could not *will* such a world even if you did have the power to bring it about.)

Maxims of Action

Why does Kant think that we are subject to this moral rule? In order to answer this question, we need to understand the rule in a bit more detail. Kant's principle is that we must be able to will the 'maxim' of the action to be a universal law. What is a maxim? Kant tells us very little about what he means by 'maxim'. He does take it for granted that every action has a maxim. We can use this as a clue. What must a maxim be if every action has to have one? To put it another way, what does an action have to involve?

Actions do not require you to move your body, or any part of it. Standing perfectly still can be an action. Ask any soldier. Making a decision and adding up the cost of your shopping in your head are actions that occur entirely in the mind. So what makes an event an action? I think there are two things.

One is that an action has a *purpose*: it aims to achieve something. Saying 'I promise to pay you back tomorrow' has the purpose of making a promise in order to borrow money. But not everything that has a purpose is an action: the purpose of sweating is to cool down, but it is not an action that you do (it is just something your body does). As well as a purpose, an action has a *motive*: it aims to satisfy a desire. Saying 'I promise to pay you back tomorrow' has the motive of getting money, perhaps to buy food.

The reason every action has a maxim, then, is just that the maxim describes the action. It

names the motive and purpose. Kant's example 'out of desire for money, I will make a false promise' has the motive of getting money and the purpose of making a false promise.

Maxims as Rational Precedent

Kant's argument for the universalizability principle is based on his idea that your own maxims set precedent for you to follow. This is because a maxim is a judgement about what to do in the circumstances: it is the judgment to satisfy this motive, and to do so by achieving this purpose.

Having made that judgment, it is unreasonable to make a different judgment in the same circumstances, unless you have a reason to do so. If the circumstances are not really the same in some important way, then you have a reason to act differently. If you have decided that the previous action was wrong, for example you have decided to stop making false promises, then you have a reason to behave differently this time. If you think that any of a range of possible actions would be equally good in that situation, then you have a reason to choose a different one from that range this time. But if you have no such reason to behave differently in the same circumstances, then doing so would be unreasonable.

To put this point another way, reason requires that you respect your previous maxims as precedent. This precedent can be overruled with good reason to do so, but merely ignoring it is irrational. I think that this is what Kant means when he says that through our actions we lay down law for ourselves. He means that our actions set precedent for us to respect in the same way as legal judgments set precedent for judges to respect.

From Precedent to Universalizability

This allows us to see why Kant thinks we should act only on maxims that we could will to be universal laws. The maxim refers only to the action's motive and purpose. It does not refer to anything else. It doesn't mention who you are, where you are, or anything else about you. It does not mention your other desires at the time. And it does not mention

who you are, where you are, or anything else about you. It does not mention your other desires. And it does not mention whether anyone else is currently acting in the same way.

In order that you can respect the precedent that the maxim sets, therefore, it must be possible to act in the way described by this maxim whatever the other details of your life are, and regardless of what anyone else is doing. If it is possible for anyone to act this way regardless of what anyone else is doing, it must be possible for everyone to act this way. It must be possible, therefore, for everyone to act with the same maxim.

Self-Determination and Morality

Kant has argued, therefore, that self-legislation is a fact about all human behaviour and that it imposes moral constraints on our behaviour. He argues that every action lays down law that the individual must respect. This law functions in the way precedent functions in the legal system: it is unreasonable not to respect it. We are self-determined when we set precedents that we can respect, and we then respect them.

But this means that some actions are not permitted, because those actions simply could not function as precedent. Morality is the system of rules that points out which actions cannot function as precedent and so are not permitted.

If this argument is right, then self-determination *requires* morality. If so, then Nietzsche is wrong to see morality as an obstacle to self-determination. In order to defend Nietzsche's view, therefore, it is necessary to show that Kant is wrong about this.

Comprehension Questions

1. Summarise in fewer than 100 words the theory of the relation between self-determination and moral constraint that Webber attributes to Kant.
2. What is the problem that this theory of self-determination and moral constraint poses for Nietzsche's critique of morality?

Puzzle 3

Has Kant Already Met Nietzsche's Challenge?

Robertson argues that Nietzsche has laid down a significant challenge to morality: we should not just assume that morality sets legitimate restrictions on our behaviour, but should *either* show that this is true *or* abandon morality and instead aim for the highest excellences.

Webber explains the argument in favour of moral constraints on behaviour offered by Kant around a century before Nietzsche wrote *Beyond Good and Evil*.

So, the question is: Had Kant already blocked Nietzsche's argument against morality?

If so, then it seems that Nietzsche's apparent refusal to engage with the details of the arguments of his opponents has led him into a dead-end.

This breaks down into at least the following issues:

- (a) Do actions set rational precedent?
- (b) Does self-determination require that we accept precedent?
- (c) If so, does rational precedent really entail moral constraints?
- (d) If so, are these moral constraints of the kind that Nietzsche objects to?
- (e) Can someone be self-determined by refusing to respect the precedent set by their own actions?

Puzzle 4

How Is Morality Related To Self-Interest?

Nietzsche's view of the relation between morality and self-interest is complicated.

He clearly thinks that morality is against the interests of the 'higher types' or 'great men', for whom it is an obstacle to flourishing. And he thinks that morality is used by weak people as a means of protection from those 'higher types'.

But what about the self-interest of those of us who are not 'higher types' or 'great men'? Should the majority of us retain traditional morality? After all, isn't it in our interests to defend ourselves against these 'higher types'?

Here are two ways in which it might be better even for those who are not 'higher types' to abandon morality:

- (i) if we all benefit from the cultural achievements of the 'higher types' when they are unfettered by other people making moral demands of them;
- (ii) if each of us should strive for our own excellence in order to discover whether we are 'higher types'.

Are either (or both) of these Nietzsche's views? Are either (or both) correct?

Kant argues that morality is adherence to the universalizability principle, which is required if we are to be genuinely self-determined rather than at the mercy of our changing desires. Does this mean that morality is in your own interest, no matter who you are?