Reply to Critics

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Being invited to give the Rousseau Lecture is a great honour and I am grateful to Sorin Baiasu for this invitation as well as all the tremendous work that he has done bringing together a range of critics and commentators to engage with the Kant and Nietzsche section of my rather disparate range of work that most directly related to the topic of my Rousseau lecture. In philosophy, respect often takes the form of crafting challenges to the assumptions, claims, arguments, and ends of another's work – and unsurprisingly I have learnt much from the time, care and attention that the critics and commentators have given to engaging with my writings. Because the main lines of argument and objection that they develop are quite diverse, I will address the challenges they propose one by one rather than in parallel, before trying to reflect more generally in my concluding comments.

I. SAUNDERS - THE SELF, LOVE AND THE OTHER

Joe Saunders takes up my discussion of Kant and Nietzsche on self-love, and the different strategies that each of the philosophers adopts to address the fact that self-love is a feature of our human constitution. Saunders' argument is not to directly contest the account that I offer but to target what he sees as an assumption shared by Kant and Nietzsche (perhaps rooted in their shared Protestant backgrounds) and problematically carried over into my discussion (conceived as a philosophical and not merely historical contribution), namely, that self-love is an ineliminable feature of our human make-up. For Kant, this appears as the view that the kind of finite desiring creatures that we are cannot but be concerned with our own happiness. For Nietzsche, this appears as the view that the kind of beings that we are cannot but be concerned with our power, that is, with being effective agents who can shape the world in which they find themselves. The desire for happiness for Kant and for power (effective agency) for Nietzsche are seen as important features of human psychology. Neither of these claims amounts to the view that these are the only psychological motivations that human beings have – as Saunders seems to suppose – but they do amount to the claim that these are important and abiding features of our psychology and hence need to be addressed in any plausible account of ethics. As we will see in more detail shortly, contra Saunders, neither Kant nor Nietzsche deny that "human being can be motivated by the thoughts and feelings of others" (Saunders, 21) and both take the fact that we can be so motivated as an ethically significant fact.

The core of Saunder's argument does not, however (happily), hang on the claim that Kant and Nietzsche are psychological egoists. Rather his key argument has two

central claims. The first is that we can overcome our propensity to self-love through cultivating affective empathy with others – and that we should do so. This will, Saunders argues, enable us to recognise our mutual vulnerability and dependence. The second is that while autonomy, independence, self-responsibility and self-mastery are good things, promoting these can lead us to overlook or fail to give sufficient emphasis to vulnerability, dependence and empathy – and that which of these it is important to emphasise will be indexed to social circumstances and contexts. Saunders concludes by acknowledging that Kant and Nietzsche do have moments where the values that he is concerned with come to the fore, but he presents this as "uncharacteristic" in Kant's case (24) and as underemphasised in Nietzsche's (26-28).

I have sympathy for Saunders second argument – and I think the important work of feminist philosophy has been a central corrective here. But I do have concerns about Saunders' overall argument.

The first is that, in contrast to Kant and Nietzsche, Saunders seems to be rather indiscriminate in his promotion of affective empathy which "opens us to the influence of others by causing us to resonate with their emotive states" (Aaltola cited in Sanders 23) and not perhaps alert enough to the potential dangers that empathy involves. Consider, by contrast, Kant on this issue who not only recognizes that human beings can be affected by empathy with others but argues that there are important distinctions to make in virtue of this fact:

> *Sympathetic joy* and *sadness* (*sympathia moralis*) are sensible feelings of pleasure or pain (which are therefore to be called "aesthetic" [*ästhetisch*]) at another's state of joy or sorrow (shared feeling, sympathetic feeling.) Nature has already implanted in man susceptibility to these feelings. But to use this as a means to promoting active and rational benevolence is still a particular, though only a conditional, duty. It is called the duty of *humanity* (*humanitas*) because man is regarded here not merely as a rational being but also as an animal endowed with reason. Now humanity can be located either in the *capacity* and the *will* to *share in others' feelings* (*humanitas practica*) or merely in the *susceptibility*, given by nature itself, to feel joy and sadness in common with others (*humanitas aesthetica*). The first is free, and is therefore called *sympathetic* (*communio sentiendi liberalis*); it is based on practical reason. The second is *unfree* (*communio sentiendi illiberalis*, servilis); it can be called *communicable* (since it is like the susceptibility to warmth or contagious diseases), and also compassion, since it spreads naturally among men living near one another. There is obligation only to the first. (Kant, 6: 457)

Kant's concern is that the second contagion-like mode all too easily leads to the worst kind of beneficence in which just the sort of compassion or pity at which Nietzsche also took aim is exhibited.[1] Nietzsche, for example, charges that affective empathy is liable to produce this objectionable pity because it is superficial:

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[1] We may note, in passing, that contemporary criticisms of humanitarianism (Fassin 2011) exhibit the same critical concern.

> That from which we suffer most profoundly and personally is almost incomprehensible and inaccessible to everyone else: in this matter we are hidden from our neighbour even when he eats at the same table with us. Everywhere, however, where we are noticed as sufferers, our suffering is interpreted in a shallow way; it belongs to the nature of the emotion of pity to divest unfamiliar suffering of its properly personal character: - our "benefactors" lower our value and volition more than our enemies. In most benefits which are conferred on the unfortunate there is something shocking in the intellectual levity with which the compassionate person plays the role of fate: he knows nothing of all the inner consequences and complications which are called misfortune for me or for you! The entire economy of my soul and its adjustment by "misfortune," the uprising of new sources and needs, the closing up of old wounds, the repudiation of whole periods of the past - none of these things which may be connected with misfortune preoccupy the dear sympathiser. He wishes to succour, and does not reflect that there is a personal necessity for misfortune; that terror, want, impoverishment, midnight watches, adventures, hazards and mistakes are as necessary to me and to you as their opposites, yea, that, to speak mystically, the path to one's own heaven always leads through the voluptuousness of one's own hell. (GS s.338)

There are further concerns that one may have that Nietzsche highlights of which I will mention one. It is that we can be all too easily overwhelmed via empathy. Nietzsche's various remarks on making oneself hard should be read not as a denial of human being's ability to be affected by the thoughts and feelings of others but precisely an acknowledgment of the fact (which, as we have seen, Kant also recognizes) that we are naturally open to being so affected. When he remarks in *The Gay Science* – and the reference here should be taken to be to, for example, military commanders or political leaders – "But not to perish from internal distress and doubt when one inflicts great suffering and hears the cry of it - that is great, that belongs to greatness" (s.325), his point is precisely that to undertake a rightful or necessary course of conduct knowing that it will cause suffering and in the face of the suffering caused requires a cultivated hardness.

Another potential line of criticism is advanced by Estrada's commentary on Saunders' essay which seeks to offer an account in which the role of empathy is not to serve as the direct motivating force of our ethical response to others. Rather empathy's role is to motivate our acknowledgment of the other as a being of dignity worthy of respect and it is then respect for the other that does the main work in terms of our direct ethical responses to the other – for example, our responses to refugees should be governed by respect for them as being entitled to dignity, not by empathy for their suffering. I am basically in agreement with Estrada on this point and I take it to be supported not only by contemporary criticisms of humanitarianism (Fassin 2011) but also by reflection on the ways in which processes of dehumanisation work in relation to groups such as refugees (Owen, 2019).

None of this is to deny Saunders' point that acknowledgment of our vulnerability and mutual dependency is important, on the contrary – and I think that his reflections

on what it is important to emphasise here and now are salient for our activity in ways I have not sufficiently appreciated.

II. SATNE - MORAL DEVELOPMENT, REPENTANCE, AND SELF-AFFIRMATION

Paula Satne's rich and careful work on Kant is manifest in her close engagement with my essay on Kant and Nietzsche on autonomy and self-love. In this essay I address the tension between love and law within the European tradition of moral philosophy as it manifests itself in Kant and Nietzsche, advancing the rather bold claim that Nietzsche has a greater claim to have resolved this tension than Kant. As Satne correctly identifies, this claim is predicated on a range of challenges that Nietzsche's philosophy poses to Kant's in this context.

Satne's previous work has drawn out an account of moral development in the Kantian agent and she summarises this effectively in order to show that there are a number of parallels between Kant's account of the morally autonomous agent and Nietzsche's account of the sovereign individual that my less developmental reading of Kant had failed to appreciate. I am happy to defer to Satne on this point. However, as she notes this simply sets up the two major challenges that Nietzsche's view (as reconstructed by me) poses to Kant's moral philosophy. The first of these concerns the distinction that I draw (along with Aaron Ridley and Robert Pippin) between Nietzsche's expressivist view of ethical autonomy in which our promises (read: ethical commitments) are such that their success conditions are, at least partly, internal to the performance of the commitment in a way that is similar to aesthetic agency. This point can be registered by distinguishing between the letter and spirit of the law (that one gives oneself) and the claim that Nietzschean autonomy requires both, whereas Kantian autonomy requires only the former. I express this point, following Ridley, by arguing that the categorical imperative in ruling out maxims that cannot be universalised serves to identify a range of unconditional "I will not" statements in which only the letter matters.

Satne argues that this is "a simplistic reading of Kant's ethics" (Satne 41) and that "each person's project of moral development is personal and shaped by features of their own psychology and personal history as well as features of their social circumstances" (Satne 8). But doesn't the point remain that the Kantian process of moral development that Satne sketches operates through revising one's maxims which are conceived as formulable independently and in advance of the actions they prescribe? Satne's argument does cause me to reconsider whether the letter/spirit objection is better seen as applying to positive commitments rather than negative prohibitions. Consider Ridley's example of marriage:

> It is true that there are some independently specifiable success-conditions here (although they are defeasible). Respect is presumably necessary, for example, as are caring for the other person's interest and not betraying them, say. But what exactly might count as betrayal, or what caring for the other person's interests might look

like in this case – or even whether these things are what is at issue – cannot be specified independently of the particular marriage that it is, of the circumstances, history and personalities peculiar to it, and of how those things unfold or develop over time. It is, in other words, perfectly possible that everything I do is, as it were, strictly speaking respectful, considerate and loyal, and yet that I fail to be any good as a husband – I am true to the letter but miss the spirit, as we might say. (Ridley 2009, 186)

But, we might think, while the full range of what might count as betrayal cannot be specified independently of the particular marriage, this does not mean that some actions would not count as betrayal in any marriage because incompatible with the point of the institution. Ridley's focus is on the point that one can be "true to the letter but miss the spirit' but one can also fail to be true to the letter (in ways incompatible with the spirit). If this is right, then there may be scope for Satne's Kant to argue that Nietzsche's objections to the categorical imperative are illicitly conflating a procedure for testing maxims where contradiction generates unconditional "I will not"'s with a process for formulating maxims concerning, for example, what loyalty positively requires in a way that generates confusion. This creates space for a reading of Kant like Satne's to argue that Nietzsche's challenge to Kant, to the extent that it is cogent, can be met since the Kantian agent can continuously reformulate their maxim in the course of the performance of their commitment (e.g., to their marriage).

The second challenge to Kant that Satne addresses concerns Kant's framing of the distinction between morality and egoism in a way that rules out "true" self-love as the general orientation to *eudaemonia* whether conceived in Aristotelian or Nietzschean terms. Satne's strategy in addressing this challenge is, drawing on the important work of Alice Pinheiro Walla, to argue that Kant's philosophy has considerably more space for happiness than is generally recognized. I see no reason not to agree with Satne and Pinheiro Walla on this point. As they cogently argue, for Kant "it is precisely because morality is the natural end of human beings that morality and happiness are not necessarily incompatible and there can be space for the pursuit of happiness in human life', where "Kant's conception of happiness should be understood in broadly hedonist terms" (Satne, 50). But what this rules out is precisely what Aristotle and Nietzsche, in their different ways, both affirm, namely, an ethical understanding of human flourishing as the natural end of humanity in which flourishing is not conceived either in purely moral nor purely hedonist terms. Aristotle and Nietzsche both distinguish between "true" self-love and "pseudo" self-love where it is the latter that is construed in terms of a hedonist notion of happiness. Both are concerned to reject the diremption between man as a rational being and as a finite desiring creature that underlies Kant's outlook. Here then I think that while Satne's Kant can accommodate much more of a concern with happiness than many readings of this philosopher, this does not answer the challenge that Nietzsche poses. The natural strategy for the Kantian in this context though is offer a counter-challenge to Nietzsche. One reason that Kant rejects Aristotelian virtue

ethics is that such an ethical outlook hangs on a view of nature that is, Kant takes it, incompatible with modern science. Nietzsche agrees with this objection to Aristotle (and classical virtue ethics). But then Kant's reasons for treating morality as the end of humanity and for treating happiness in hedonist terms that respect the pluralism of individuals' cares and interests are perfectly intelligible, and the fundamental challenge is the one that Nietzsche confronts in attempting to persuade us of the commitment to *amor fati* as the orientation of "true" self-love (assuming that my reconstruction of Nietzsche's view is plausible). Whether Kant has any challenge to answer thus hangs on whether Nietzsche can make good his account – and that is still very much an open question.

III. MUDD - TO WHAT EXTENT DOES KANT'S DOCTRINE OF THE HIGHEST GOOD EMBODY A REALIST ORIENTATION TOWARDS ETHICS?

In her fascinating and complex essay, Sasha Mudd addresses what she will call "the problem of alienation" in Kant as a way of exploring the limits of the constitutivist reading of Kant and revealing an enduring tension between the moral standpoint construed in constitutivist terms and the good of non-alienation. Taking up an objection to constitutivist approaches to morality given acute expression by Tenenbaum (2019), she construes alienation thus:

> Alienation … refers to the agent's failure to stand in a correct affective or motivational relation to the ends and norms to which he is, supposedly, implicitly committed just in virtue of acting at all. To be alienated from the constitutive end of agency, is just, in the first instance, for the agent to fail to be motivated by this end sufficiently enough for it to function as the felt constraint it is meant to be on her choice of other ends and maxims. (65)

Her central claim is that while Kant can solve a first version of the problem of alienation (moral alienation), his philosophy remains vulnerable to a second, more subtle version (practical alienation) and indeed is made vulnerable to this second problem precisely by the framework through which he addresses the first problem. She concludes that Kant's decision to recast morality teleologically through the doctrine of the Highest Good discloses a central concern with the question of what is needed for human beings to sustain confidence in morality even if this inevitability imposes costs on us in terms of practical alienation and here, surprisingly, Kant exhibits some features of a realist outlook.

Rather than reconstructing the whole of Mudd's argument, it will suffice here to focus on two points. The first is that Mudd takes it that Kant can resolve the problem of moral alienation by showing that individuals can be motivated by respect for the moral law. The second is that Kant's way of doing this simply entrenches the distinction between our rational and animal natures, and hence the problem of practical alienation, as a constitutive part of his account of human beings:

The point, in a nutshell, is just that insofar as the ends of happiness and morality are fundamentally heterogenous and insofar as both are equally expressive of one or the other part of our essential nature, neither moral action nor action from the principle of self-love can be considered expressive of or aligned with our true nature taken as a whole. In this sense, it seems that there is no course of action or maxim of action that can leave us fully un-alienated, for just as sure as heteronomy expresses moral alienation, so moral autonomy threatens practical alienation. (67)

One question which arises here is whether the issue of moral alienation is resolved. In his commentary Testini raises this issue:

Let's concede that the Kantian doctrine of respect can shoulder the explanatory burden by showing (I am admittedly oversimplifying this doctrine here) that human beings can actually act out of deference to the moral law and out of a sense of awe toward it. I contend that this falls short of showing that there is nothing *objectively* alienating about Kantian morality. Indeed, although the notion of respect may reconcile us with the moral and autonomous dimension of ourselves, one may argue that it does so by alienating our moral agency from the social dimension of morality itself: our immediate concern for other persons. (78)

I think Testini has a point here, but it is one that highlights the interpersonal dimension of the issue of practical alienation and how this follows from Kant's way of resolving the problem of moral alienation. As Mudd remark's "the solution to moral alienation, action from the motive of respect, in fact creates the conditions of practical alienation, insofar as respect abstracts completely from all ends and motives associated with happiness." (68) Of course, there is a wider sense in which Testini is surely right if we think of what we want from an account of morality outside of the specifically Kantian context that Mudd is addressing.

The next step in Mudd's argument is to argue the doctrine of the Highest Good represents Kant's attempt to resolve the problem of practical alienation (rather than mitigate it which is, I take it, what the type of reading of Kant we find in Satne attempts to do). The problem is that this attempted resolution raises a critical problem for Kant's constitutivism because, given the conditions under which the Highest Good may be conceived as possible – Kant's *res fidei*, realizing the Highest Good is not something that we can rationally aim at since it is not, even in principle, something within our agential control. But then seeking the Highest Good cannot be the constitutive end of rational agency because it is not something we can intelligibly seek to realize.

Mudd's final step is to argue that Kant's reworking of morality in terms of the Highest Good might be seen as disclosing some features of a realist orientation in the way that I have, drawing on Williams, generally characterised that orientation. She acknowledges that Kant is directly at odds with realism's central methodological principle ("never explain the ethical in terms of something special to ethics if you can explain it in terms that apply to the non-ethical as well") but argues that Kant does share something of the "pessimism of strength" that characterizes the realistic outlook. Mudd makes a plausible case here in terms of Kant's rejection of the claims that the

world is fully intelligible to us, that correctly understood it will make moral sense to us, that reason necessarily contributes to happiness, or that there is fit between the exercise of reason and human flourishing. But if Kant is a pessimist in this sense, is he also a realist? Kant's doctrine of the Highest Good requires *res fidei* – free will, God and immortality of the soul – as the condition of possibility of the Highest Good. We "must" accept these postulates as matters of faith. But what is the status of this "must"? Is it a requirement of reason or of empirical psychology? Only if it is the latter would Kant's view align with the realistic outlook.

Perhaps the more important point that Mudd has developed across her whole argument, however, is one on which I think she is right in ways that matter. So Mudd points out that I situate Kant as a constitutivist and locate the more general constitutivist endeavour of which I take Kant to be an example as a response to the breakdown of the Aristotelian-type picture in which inside and outside perspectives on the value of ethical life can be reconciled through a teleological picture of nature. Mudd's argument suggests that Kant's philosophy is more complexly related to this question. I quote at length here because of the significance of this argument:

> [...] the tension between what we might think of as an inside and an outside perspective on ethics remains within Kant´s system, since it is precisely this tension that, on my reading, Kant's doctrine of the Highest Good seeks, however unsuccessfully, to resolve. That is to say, contrary to Owen, it is not the case that for Kant there is no tension between an inside and outside perspective insofar as our reasons to be moral are constitutive of or intrinsic to rational agency as such. Such a tension would plausibly disappear if we were solely pure rational beings, but instead, for Kant, we are essentially bifurcated beings, both sensible and rational. It follows that the moral norms constitutively derived from the pure rational part of our nature do not prevent us from asking justificatory questions from a different normative standpoint, namely that defined by our animal nature, with its distinctive set of ends and interests. On Kant's account, then, we are rationally compelled to step "outside" ethics in order to ask about the fate of happiness, construed as that end to which we are inescapably attached though a kind of "natural necessity". (73)

She continues:

> But, importantly, for Kant, the project of attempting to reconcile our need for happiness with the demands of morality through postulating the Highest Good as the end of pure practical reason is not undertaken for the sake of justifying morality. This is not Kant's view at all. Rather, morality and its chief law are fully justified without any appeal to ends, even that of the Highest Good. Instead, in establishing the Highest Good as the end of pure practical reason Kant is trying to re-orient us, practically, to the task that morality sets us, which is justified on independent grounds. This project of practical reorientation, in turn, displays a concern that Owen takes to characterize the realist orientation, namely a concern with "our ability to sustain confidence in the moral outlook," whatever its justificatory supports.

To put this in the slightly different terms of my Rousseau lecture, Kant is concerned to vindicate our moral outlook, to show that that we have reason to affirm our

commitment to this outlook. Of course, if Mudd is right, Kant fails to achieve this task – the problem of practical alienation is not overcome – but it is a great merit of Mudd's argument to demonstrate that the constitutivist move does not escape the problem that the collapse of the Aristotelian picture engenders. Although this is not Mudd's concern, her argument thus raises the stakes of the issue with which I concluded my response to Satne by making clear what hangs on the challenges that Kant and Nietzsche pose to one another. Nietzsche's doctrine of *amor fati* is, after all, above all else a response to the problem of practical alienation.

IV. BENNETT - NIETZSCHE'S (IM)MORAL PSYCHOLOGY: COMPETITION, DISTINCTION AND INEQUALITY

I have admired and learned from Matt Bennett's work on Nietzsche since I read his PhD thesis, and his critical reflections here provide an opportunity for me to engage with one dimension of his important work in the field. Bennett's aim is to show that the portrayal of Nietzsche as an ethical thinker that I have proposed is one that elides or ignores features of Nietzsche's ethical outlook which we have good reason to be disturbed and reject. In taking up Bennett's challenge, I hope I will be able to clarify the differences between our views.

Starting by noting, as I (and many others) have also done, some similarities across Nietzsche's and Bernard Williams' criticisms of morality , Bennett proposes that there is also an important difference between the two – "where Williams offers a study of ethics that insists on a broader scope than that he thought allowed by narrowly moral concerns, Nietzsche offers a study of ethics that is by design a rival to moral ethics" – which he locates in terms of Nietzsche's affirmation, in contrast to Williams, of the concept of "immoralism" given clear expression in *Ecce Homo*:

> My word immoralist essentially entails two negations. First, I am negating a type of person who has been considered highest so far, the good, the benevolent, the charitable; second, I am negating a type of morality that has attained dominance and validity in the form of morality as such, - decadence morality or, to put it plainly, Christian morality. (EH, IV, 4)

It is not clear to me that as much hangs on this as Bennett proposes since I take it that Williams also rejects the claim we have reason to see the good, benevolent, charitable type as the highest type of human individual and the claim to dominance of the type of (Christian) morality to which Nietzsche objects. But regardless of whether my view of Williams is right or not, the deeper question here concerns what commitment to being an immoralist entails. Consider in this context an important remark from *Daybreak*:

> It goes without saying that I do not deny - unless I am a fool - that many actions called immoral ought to be avoided and resisted, or that many called moral ought to be done and encouraged - but I think that one should be encouraged and the other avoided *for other reasons than hitherto*. (D s103)

This seems to sit uneasily with Bennett's contention that Nietzsche is committed to "an ethical ideal that is incompatible with moral commitments and at times actively opposed to them." (3) With this issue in mind, let me turn to Bennett's arguments.

After reviewing the outlines of my account of Nietzsche on autonomy and self-love, Bennett proposes to expose features elided in that account that point towards the objectionably immoralist features of Nietzsche's ethical psychology. The first that he addresses combines the point – on which we agree – that Nietzsche see the law that one gives oneself as "unique", that is, as indexed to the particular individual and as giving expression to their individuality with the observation that the law one's gives oneself and the requirements of morality can come into conflict. Let's address each and then the combination.

The idea of one's own law being unique is not a very complex thought insofar as Nietzsche is committed to the idea that some of one's commitments to values have internal success conditions. There is nothing particularly tricky about the idea that the expression of a value or norm can be individualised and indeed this seems integral to the very idea of style (a concept central to Nietzsche's work). We can recognize the individual ("signature") style of an artist, a musician, a chef, etc., and that they have reached a level where they have a distinctive style is part of their achievement. The same point applies in the context of ethical practices. It is possible to hear a thick description of an act of kindness or of courage (to take two examples) performed in one's social circle and know which of one's friends performed the act because one recognizes their personal ethical style. Nietzsche's attention to the issue of exemplars (always plural for Nietzsche) and exemplarity is based precisely on this point about giving one's own law to oneself.

It is, however, also true as Bennett argues that one's own ethical law can come into conflict with the demands of social morality. Williams' Gaughin case illustrates this point as does Wolf's example of the mother who must decide whether or not to hide her (guilty) son from the police which Bennett deploys. He remarks:

> There are I think a number of ways of unpacking the ethical dilemma here, but there is one reading of this case that is particularly important for my purposes, which is that the dilemma here is a conflict between the requirements of morality and what it would take to continue to be myself. As Wolf herself puts it: "if the meaning of one's life and one's very identity is bound up with someone as deeply as a mother's life is characteristically tied to her son's, why should the dictates of impartial morality be regarded as decisive?" (Wolf, 2014, p.41) In this sense, Wolf's case illustrates the conceivability of scenarios in which a person's identity, the things that distinguish them, that make them who they are, can generate ethical demands that do conflict with morality. And it is this possibility that makes Nietzsche's ethical ideal of following our own laws an immoralist ideal. (7)

Two points. First, if this is Bennett's argument, then it entails that, contra his earlier claim, Williams (and Wolf) is embracing immoralism in Nietzsche's sense so the distinction between them he sought to draw essentially collapses. Second, Bennett's

argument simply prejudges the question that Nietzsche and the morality critics are raising about whether so-called "impartial morality" should be seen as comprehensive and authoritative with respect to our ethical lives, whether – as it claims – "morality" just is the rational form of ethics. One point of presenting such ethical dilemmas is to say that the fact that these strike us as *dilemmas* and as *ethical* dilemmas speaks against that claim. Moreover, given that on Nietzsche's account the law that one gives oneself is not a maxim that can be stated independently and in advance of one's conduct, I have to work out what my deepest commitments are in such contexts and whether I can meaningful go on in a way that allows me to affirm living this life if I act one way or another. Such dilemmas are a (painful) source of self-knowledge concerning who and what I am, and they may be tragic in the sense that however I continue my sense of self is damaged.

Bennett may seem to be on safer ground when he turns to Nietzsche's invocation and apparent affirmation of Napoleon's grandiose claim, in response to his wife questioning his marital fidelity, that he wants to reply to any charges calling him to account with the avowal "That is me". But it matters here that we hear the silent "Take it or leave it". Napoleon's response appears, and is, arrogant and prideful, but it is not at all clear that it isn't also a way of Napoleon saying something truthful to his wife, namely, that he has sufficient self-knowledge to acknowledge that he can't honestly promise marital fidelity and if that is a red line for her then she should divorce him. To the extent that Nietzsche endorses the "That is me" type of response to being called to account by others, he is not thereby committed to the claim that this justifies the actions – e.g., marital infidelity – in question. (After all, a justified response by Europe to Napoleon's "That is me" was to exile him to St Helena.) If we consider Williams' Gaughin or Wolf' son-hiding mother and ask what is involved in them responding "That is me" to family or police seeking to call them to account, what they are saying is that they identify with and affirm their actions, that they accept responsibility for what they have done: "Here I stand, I could do no other." (as Luther put it).

Bennett's next step is to ask what are the conditions that enable the "That is me"-type response. Here he argues that Nietzsche is committed to the claim that the kind of ethical "nobility" expressed in this kind of response requires social hierarchy and that ethical nobility is available only to those at the top of the system of social stratification whose position grants them a pathos of social distance which generates a pathos of inner distance. Bennett acknowledges that I have argued that Nietzsche is not committed to the view that the cultivation of the pathos of inner distance (which is the key pathos for ethical excellence) requires the pathos of social distance and hence social hierarchy but he wants to push back against this argument – and he does so by proceeding in two steps.

The first step is to argue that Nietzsche was committed to an anti-egalitarian outlook:

even if we grant that Nietzsche's ethics do not commit him to favouring social inequality, he nonetheless was undeniably anti-egalitarian. Nietzsche's distaste for egalitarianism, and for related social and political movements including democracy, socialism, anarchism, and feminism, is very clear (see e.g. BGE 202), and over his later works (works after 1886), his distaste for social equality is consistent. (9)

Bennett identifies three specific arguments that Nietzsche exhibits for seeing social and political egalitarianism as a threat to the kind of ethical culture that he is concerned to cultivate:

1. The "Equality => Conformity" Objection.
2. The Levelling Down Objection.
3. The Leisure Class Objection.

The first of these expresses a worry that is a common feature of nineteenth century perfectionist thinkers, so Nietzsche stands here alongside Mill, Emerson, Tocqueville, Jefferson, Thoreau, etc. Mill's call for the valuing of eccentricity and experiments in living aligns perfectly coherently with Emerson's and Nietzsche's concern with becoming what you are and giving style to your character. This concern leads into the second, a version of the levelling down objection in which the worry is that social equality means reducing the opportunities and quality of life of the privileged in a way that undermines the production of great individuals and cultural greatness. As Bennett rightly notes, Nietzsche associates this with a particular type of egalitarianism (what we might call "telic egalitarianism") according to which inequality is intrinsically bad, and sometimes opposes to it a form of egalitarianism focused on raising others up (aristocracy for everyone?). A third objection which follows from Nietzsche's opposition to telic egalitarianism relates to his view that the production of great culture requires "an unequal distributive pattern whereby the work of the many secures abundance of resources and leisure to allow a select few to be free to pursue greatness" (10).

Bennett is perfectly correct that we clearly find all of these anti-egalitarian views expressed in Nietzsche's work. The question, however, concerns whether these outlooks are necessary outcomes of his ethical immoralism. To establish this connection, Bennett needs to show that Nietzsche holds that the kind of ethical psychology he aims to promote and the production of greatness (individual or cultural) requires social hierarchy. He needs to demonstrate this because none of the preceding three arguments are sufficient to establish this conclusion. An (non-telic) egalitarian state can coherently promote individuality, realise great cultural achievements (e.g., the space programme) and public funding of the work of artists, for example.

It is worth considering, in passing, the US space programme as an example since this is undoubtedly a great cultural achievement on Nietzsche's criteria (just as the pyramids were) and while only a very few people can be astronauts, the American people can legitimately see the successful landing of a man on the moon as a collective

achievement in which they all participated (even if only through paying taxes) and which is expressive of their national values. It can thereby act as a source of meaning and value, as well as a spur to further achievement, in their individual and collective lives. There is also a moral objection to the space programme, namely, that it cost a great deal of money that could have been spent addressing poverty and suffering in the USA or elsewhere. This is the view that Nietzsche rejects.

To make his case, then, Bennett needs to show that Nietzsche's ethical psychology commits him to the necessity of social hierarchy, to the view that the pathos of inner distance requires the pathos of social distance. He tries to show this by drawing attention to the fact that the Greek agonism which Nietzsche, like Burkhardt, credits with the cultivation of individual genius and cultural greatness in Athens is, on the one hand, predicated on the equality of competitors (the relevant essay is *Homer's Contest*) and, on the other hand, on social inequality (the relevant essay is *The Greek State*). Bennett reasonably draws attention to the point that the take up of Nietzsche's agonism by contemporary "left-Nietzscheans" (such as myself) often focuses on *Homer's Contest* and ignores the anti-egalitarian argument of *The Greek State* which Nietzsche seems to reaffirm in *Beyond Good and Evil* (s.257). In addition to this point, Bennett further stresses that "Nietzsche thought that equality among equal competitors goes hand in hand with a discerning selection of opponents, and contempt for those unworthy of opposition."

There are two claims here and it is important to keep them separate. The first concerns the necessity of social hierarchy. I agree with Bennett that Nietzsche affirmed the claim that Bennett advances in early work such as *The Greek State* and may (although this is more contestable) have remained committed to it in *Beyond Good and Evil*, but I think that the connection between the pathos of social distance and that of inner distance is decisively severed by Nietzsche in the final essay of the *Genealogy of Morals* in which the ascetic priests redirection of ressentiment onto the individual develops a reflexive capacity for inner distance with no connection to social distance.[2] We become capable of orientating and disciplining our conduct by reference to an internalised ethical ordering of values expressed, for example, in the pathos of the contrast between the Overman and the Last Man. If this is right then the pathos of inner distance does not hang on social hierarchy and Nietzsche's ethics does not commit him to anti-egalitarianism even if Nietzsche, at times, mistakenly took it to do so.

What of Bennett's second point that, for Nietzsche, "equality among equal competitors goes hand in hand with a discerning selection of opponents, and contempt for those unworthy of opposition"? This is, I think, entirely right but it is not incompatible with egalitarianism. I recognize Matt Bennett as a worthy opponent who raises serious objections to my arguments and will, no doubt, have further cogent objections to my

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2] I first advanced this argument in Owen 1998 and have refined and reaffirmed it in a number of later publications including Owen 2007, 2014 and 2017.

replies to his objections, whereas I do not recognize – indeed have contempt for the utterances of – "Joe Bloggs" on Twitter who is spouting nonsense about Nietzsche based on ignorance or idiocy. This does not mean that I am committed to denying the equal status of "Joe Bloggs" as a human being. Or, to give another example, having contempt for the racist or conspiracy theorist is perfectly compatible with respecting their equal standing and defending their entitlement to equal rights. A judgment about someone's ethical character and hence ethical worth in this sense does not entail a rejection of their entitlement to equal rights. Now it should be said that it is not clear to me that Nietzsche would agree with what I have just said. But my argument is not that Nietzsche did think this but that his ethical philosophy is not incompatible with this.

I am tempted by a further thought here – partly as a result of thinking about Bennett's comments – that relates to Nietzsche's agonism. The thought is this: a central problem that Nietzsche identifies with Christian morality is that it claimed sovereignty over the ethical domain; the "death of God" undercuts that claim to authority and thus makes it possible to construct an agon in which Christian morality in its secular forms is engaged in a duel with a different ethical outlook of the kind that Nietzsche reconstructs and proposes. Perhaps what Nietzsche is aiming at in his philosophical work is not the triumph of his view over its competitor if that means their utter elimination from the field of contest, but rather the construction and maintenance of the contest itself.

CONCLUSION

I hope it is at least partly clear from these replies to my critics how much I have benefitted from their engagement with my work even if I have not been able to address all their challenges or exhibit all the ways in which they have made me think again about questions I have elided, overlooked, failed to register or perceive clearly, or ways in which I have underestimated the richness of Kant or Nietzsche's work, or things I have just got wrong. It is one of the great pleasures of intellectual life that one's thinking is always open to challenge and to learning anew and differently what one thought one knew. The experience of the Rousseau lecture and the symposium that followed has been a site for such pleasure, and I am grateful to all of those involved for making it so.

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