*(This is a pre-proof version of the review. It’s a big book and I didn’t have space to cover most of the 28 chapters in detail. However I did I comment on each of the chapters one by one, albeit very briefly, in a twitter thread I posted as I read the book:* [*https://twitter.com/mpmatthew/status/1290573597510119425*](https://twitter.com/mpmatthew/status/1290573597510119425)*)*

**Paul Katsafanas (ed.), *The Nietzschean Mind*. New York: Routledge, 2018. xii + 475pp. ISBN: 978-1-138-85168-9. Hardcover, $200.00**

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Paul Katsafanas has put together a valuable collection of essays covering many of the main areas of contemporary anglophone, philosophically-oriented Nietzsche scholarship. The title of the book may lead some to expect a volume that deals exclusively with Nietzsche’s philosophy of mind or moral psychology, but in fact its themes are much more varied. The 28 chapters address Nietzsche’s views on philosophical and moral psychology, the self, value, society and culture, metaphysics, and philosophy itself, and the book includes a welcome six-chapter opening section focusing on a selection of Nietzsche’s major works.

Without space to comment on each of the 28 chapters I will limit myself to some brief general observations about the volume in its entirety, followed by more specific critical responses to those essays that I found most thought provoking. This should not be taken as an indicator of quality; there are many fine chapters in this book that I could not find space to include in my more detailed comments.

As a whole the book is not evidently intended for a very specific readership, though it is clear the intended readers are philosophers (more on this in a moment). Among the best chapters are some excellent introductions to the content and character of Nietzsche’s thought (see e.g. chapters by Jessica Berry, Scott Jenkins, and Andrew Huddleston), some helpful introductions to popular debates in philosophical study of Nietzsche, usually with a brief presentation of the author’s own position in the debate (see e.g. chapters by Tom Bailey, P.J.E. Kail, Alex Silk, and Neil Sinhababu), and some new scholarship (stand-out examples include Beatrice Han-Pile, Paul Loeb, Allison Merrick, Donald Rutherford, and Herman Siemens). This variety means that there are chapters here for students new to Nietzsche, other chapters for more advanced students beginning to develop their own research on Nietzsche, and still other chapters for academics who are already very familiar with Nietzsche scholarship. It also means that there is no consistency in the level of familiarity with Nietzsche expected from the reader, and the collection does feel a little haphazard as a result.

The volume’s chapters deal with topics that are more or less exactly what one would expect from a book intended for philosophical readers of Nietzsche (or more accurately, readers of Nietzsche within academic philosophy departments). But the selection is of course limited and partial, and it is worth reminding ourselves that there are other themes in Nietzsche’s work that were evidently important to him that do not make the cut here. There are no chapters on, for instance, art and artists, philology and the classics, Christianity and religion, and very little on science. It would be unreasonable to criticize the book for not addressing everything Nietzsche wrote about, but a large collection that attempts to cover a wide range of topics in Nietzsche’s work sets a high bar for itself, and one wonders what readers of Nietzsche outside of philosophy departments would think about the fact that the book contains three chapters about Nietzsche’s relation to contemporary metaethics but nothing about, for instance, tragedy.

The limited range of themes in the book is inevitable. The low number of women authors in the book is not. Only seven of the 29 (just under one in four) authors in the book are women, and though I am reluctant to put a number on what would be a sufficient quota of women to include in such a volume, it seems clear to me that this is not sufficient. This deficiency would perhaps not merit mentioning were it not for the fact that this is not an isolated occurrence. While other areas of anglophone philosophy are currently very active in addressing diversity problems, post-Kantian history of philosophy seems embarrassingly behind the curve, and Nietzsche scholarship is sadly no exception. Indeed, *The Nietzschean Mind*fares better on this front than some comparable recent volumes—consider for example *The New Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*, which features only one woman among 16 authors—but I take this to be cause for concern rather than a reason to excuse this collection. Here is not the place to attempt an explanation for why Nietzsche scholarship is so poor on this matter, but I hope we can at least all agree that it is not because there are no women doing good work on Nietzsche.

I turn now to particular themes and chapters, beginning with two of the chapters in the section entitled “Philosophical Psychology and Agency”. Work on Nietzsche’s moral psychology has taken off in recent years, and has produced a dizzying variety of diverse readings that are often in tension, sometimes diametrically opposed, to one another. It should then come as no surprise that even within a small number of chapters on the topic within *The Nietzschean Mind* we find conflicting accounts of Nietzsche on agency.

On the one hand, Tom Bailey argues that Nietzsche’s account of action is not as reductive as some have made it out to be. According to Bailey, Nietzsche’s diverse criticisms of prevalent beliefs about agency tend to respond to the same “basic misunderstanding” (140): “the idea that conscious choice, or ‘willing’, is causally sufficient for action, given the circumstances” (see *BGE* 19). Bailey observes, quite rightly, that if this were all Nietzsche objected to then this would allow him to consistently endorse much of our familiar picture of agency. Indeed, Bailey attributes to Nietzsche a view of agency that is not as radical a departure from his predecessors as we might usually associate with Nietzsche. Re-reading *BGE* 19, Bailey maintains that Nietzsche thinks of willing as an interaction between a “commanding thought”—which, crucially, Bailey interprets as “the intentional content of an agent’s choice” (142)—and other elements of our psychical hierarchy that fall into line with this command. For Bailey’s Nietzsche, our actions can indeed be the result of our choices, and sometimes we do act on reasons, but the causal efficacy of those choices and reasons is limited; they are not sufficient for action, nor do they exercise a metaphysical causal force.

On the other hand, Neil Sinhababu argues that Nietzsche’s view on agency is Humean insofar as both Nietzsche and Hume maintain that all motivation can be explained by belief-desire pairs held by the agent: “One is motivated to A if and only if desire that E is combined with belief that one can raise E’s probability by A–ing” (153). This means that both Hume and Nietzsche, according to Sinhababu, display the putative virtue of simplifying apparently complex psychological phenomena. Bad conscience, for example, is understood by Sinhababu’s Nietzsche to be the effect of just another desire, the strength of which overpowers other desires and is experienced as the restraining force of conscience. This means, according to Sinhababu, that ostensibly sui generis moral psychological phenomena can be explained solely through appeal to a simplified desire and belief taxonomy.

The views of agency ascribed to Nietzsche by Bailey and Sinhababu are not strictly incompatible, but they are very much in tension. This is most evident in the role that choice does (and does not) play in their respective accounts. Choice is central to Bailey’s claim that Nietzsche’s skepticism about agency is relatively modest, for Bailey’s Nietzsche still accommodates a capacity to make choices and for those choices to play a (non-sufficient) causal role in our behavior. By contrast, though Sinhababu accommodates a minimal infrastructure for practical reason (first and foremost instrumental rationality, combining beliefs and desires to pursue desire satisfaction), choice is unlikely to play a role in his model. This of course depends on what we mean by ‘choice’, but one natural way of doing so, in terms of reflective endorsement, is explicitly ruled out by Sinhababu, whose Nietzsche substitutes decision to pursue or forego a desire for a “Combat Model of desire” (162). For this Nietzsche, we stop short of acting on a desire not because we choose not to, but only because it has been trumped by another desire (Sinhababu cites the very familiar passage *D* 109). Again, the effort to simplify our psychical taxonomy means that choice is reduced to the victory of one desire over another.

Each of the readings have their own exegetical advantages and disadvantages, but to my mind they share a revealing flaw: both Bailey’s and Sinhababu’s models of agency struggle to explain the psychological complexity Nietzsche thinks is involved in self-restraint. The fact that we often prohibit ourselves from pursuing the objects of our desires is at the heart of much of what Nietzsche finds objectionable about modern morality, and is fundamental to the central themes of *On the Genealogy of Morality*: asceticism, conscience, and the priests’ success in restraining oppressive masters (these themes are not exclusive to *GM*: see, e.g., *HAH* 137; *TI* ‘The Problem of Socrates’, 11, and a number of passages concerning self-contempt, helpfully collated in Alfano’s chapter in this volume). It is also fundamental to phenomena Nietzsche found more appealing, most notably processes of edification Nietzsche sometimes calls “self-overcoming” (“On Self-Overcoming” *Z* II).

But what does it mean to exercise self-restraint? Bailey’s model suggests that we do so by choice—I *choose* not to act on a given impulse—but this doesn’t so much explain self-restrain as posit a mysterious faculty of “choice” that does the restraining for us (cf. *BGE* 11). Sinhababu’s model suggests that self-restraint is a misleading name for what happens when one desire wins out over another. But this can’t be what Nietzsche is interested in either, because the restraint associated with moral asceticism is not the exercise of some kind of instrumental hedonic calculus, foregoing the easier pleasures in order to pursue other more satisfying ends, but the restraint of desire *tout court*, an obsession with self-denial for its own sake. Sinhababu may well say that Nietzsche’s explanation for this is that bad conscience is in reality just another desire victorious in combat, but Sinhababu’s aspiration to psychical simplicity means that this moral, ascetic desire must operate in the same way as any other desire: “by causing pleasant and unpleasant feelings when we think of their objects and direct attention to things we associate with their satisfaction” (153). But the point of asceticism is precisely to forego that which gives us pleasant feelings, and direct us away from satisfactions. Perhaps bad conscience is a desire in some sense, but it is not “just another desire”, and seems to be precisely why Nietzsche found it so interesting.

Aside from the relative merits of Bailey and Sinhababu’s opposing views on Nietzsche and agency, their readings conflict in a way that reflects a broader tension in Nietzsche’s thought between his naturalism and his practical or existential themes. Nietzsche at once deflates the metaphysical moral psychologies of philosophers, theologians, and moralists, yet obsesses over ethical challenges of value and meaning that are difficult to reconcile with his more reductive tendencies. This conflict also looms large over this volume’s chapters on the self. Ariela Tubert frames this as a tension between a “third person scientific point of view” and a “practical and first person point of view” (223); Riccardi, following Sebastian Gardner, frames it as a tension between Nietzsche’s theoretical dismissal of the self and the substantive self that his practical philosophy seems to presume (186). Tubert and Riccardi attempt to revolve this tension in divergent fashions.

Tubert doubles-down on the practical, arguing that Nietzsche’s thought on the self is comparable to Korsgaard’s and Schechtman’s ethics of self-constitution. On this reading, Nietzsche’s account has three features also found in the latter: priority for practical, rather than theoretical, reflection on the self; priority for first-person reflection (“who am I?”); and the principle that my self is not given to me, but created through my actions (221). Tubert defends this reading against worries about Nietzsche’s reductive naturalism on the grounds that Nietzsche was interested in the nature of the self from both theoretical and practical points of view, and that reductive readings of Nietzsche make the mistake of focusing exclusively on “the point of view of science” (224).

Conversely, Riccardi argues that Nietzsche is indeed committed to a reductive account of the self, while defending this account against the worry from Gardner that Nietzsche’s denial of the self must presuppose the same concept of self that it repudiates. This particular version of the charge that Nietzsche tries to have his cake and eat it too runs as follows: “[h]ow except in the perspective of an I, of something that takes itself to have unity of the self ’s sort, can a conception of unity sufficient to account for the fiction of the I be formed?” (Sebastian Gardner, “Nietzsche, the Self, and the Disunity of Philosophical Reason”, in K. Gemes and S. May [eds.], *Nietzsche on Freedom and Autonomy*, Oxford University Press, 2009, pp.1-32, p.6). This transcendental self, which Gardner suggests Nietzsche cannot do away with, is replaced by Riccardi’s Nietzsche with “higher-order thoughts” of the form {I am in [mental state M]} (190), and these higher-order thoughts give us the false impression of relating to one another by virtue of all being attributed to the same subject. Riccardi is somewhat elliptical on how this answers Gardner’s worry, but the suggestion seems to be that conscious thoughts such as “Kant is wrong about the self” do not require a transcendental subject, and need only higher-order thoughts such as {I am in [mental state of belief that Kant was wrong about the self]}.

Pick your Nietzsche: naturalist debunker, or existential self-constituter. Either way, on this evidence, it is not clear that the tension in his thought on the self can be dissolved so easily. As Rutherford’s excellent chapter shows, and as we see in the chapters on Nietzsche’s “affirmation of life”, Nietzsche’s practical concerns are more ambitious, and less easily reconciled with his theoretical skepticism than Tubert and Riccardi suggest. Tubert’s dual-standpoint solution is all too easy, and generates a form of duplicity that sits uneasily with Nietzsche’s challenge to affirm life and the world without cherry picking. Do I really love fate if in order to do so I have to partition it to the “theoretical standpoint”? And Riccardi’s higher-order thought model embraces Nietzsche’s naturalism at the expense of the existential significance of so much of Nietzsche’s work. We might ask what is left of the question “who am I?”—as Rutherford puts it, the task of “understanding the peculiar character of one’s own existence, as it matters uniquely to the poser of the question” (201)—if the answer must be articulated in the form {I am in [mental state M]}.

The worry that Gardner raised, and that we still don’t have an answer to, is that Nietzsche’s rejection of the metaphysical entities postulated by other practical philosophies inevitably undermines those same questions of value and significance that Nietzsche also recognized as vitally important. This is a problem in Nietzsche’s thought that makes him very much less “untimely” than he sometimes wanted to be. The tension renders his work continuous with contemporary debates in German philosophy about whether and how ethical, aesthetic, and religious matters could survive the accelerated pace of development in, for example, physiology, psychology, geology, and physics. It also echoes concerns raised by many 19th century German philosophers of science, some of whom we know Nietzsche himself studied (most notably Friedrich Albert Lange, but also e.g. Heinrich Czolbe and Hermann Lotze).

The problem is that the Nietzschean mind, it seems, is itself divided over the question of whether many of the questions that matter to us can survive the debunking naturalism of the late-modern period. The evidence in this volume suggests that if we are looking for how the existential can be reconciled with the scientific, we will not find what we need in Nietzsche.