

Ken Gemes and John Richardson, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Nietzsche*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. 783 pp. ISBN 978-0-19-953464-7. Cloth, \$140.

Comprising thirty-two chapters by thirty-four contributors, divided into six discrete sections, and ending with a subject and names index, *The Oxford Handbook of Nietzsche* makes a convincing claim to exhaustiveness. Even if the editors, Ken Gemes and John Richardson, admit that “no single volume can hope to cover all of Nietzsche’s extremely wide ranging-interests” (1), the *Handbook* covers most of the conceivable ground and, to this reader at least, successfully balances its central aims of providing a guide for students, a comprehensive summary of contemporary debates in the scholarship, and original contributions to or significant developments of those debates.

Considered as a whole, some general qualities can be noted. First, the editors must be praised both for the sheer vastness of the undertaking and for bringing into one volume so many of the most credible names in Nietzsche scholarship. The standard of writing is lucid throughout, ranging from more discursive chapters in the opening three sections to more rigorously argumentative and dialectically probing chapters in the later three, more philosophically substantial, sections. Moreover, for the most part, there is a welcome absence of technical jargon of either “analytic” or “continental” stripe, and where specific Nietzschean terms are used—such as “order of rank” and “eternal recurrence”—one often finds whole chapters, or sections within chapters, devoted to their explication.

Second, with the possible exception of the introductory biographical chapters, the structure of the *Handbook* exemplifies the three central approaches by which modern philosophical scholarship on Nietzsche now proceeds, namely, by comparing and contrasting Nietzsche with other major figures in the philosophical tradition (the “Historical Relations” section), close exegetical work with specific texts (“Principal Works”), and, most prominently, exploration of distinctive thematic concerns, usually with the aim of rational reconstruction (“Values,” “Epistemology and Metaphysics,” and “Developments of Will to Power”). While there is naturally significant crossover between sections and methodologies, in its structure and breadth the *Handbook* highlights the philosophical maturity that Nietzsche studies has achieved, exhibiting a level of hermeneutic sophistication paralleled only in philosophical scholarship on figures like Aristotle and Kant, and certainly not yet in evidence in work on any subsequent philosopher. This sophistication is born out in the fact that the majority of contributors are far from initiates on their respective topics and have been selected by the editors precisely because of their expertise and/or their distinctive, in some cases agenda-setting, interpretive stances, many having written

monographs on their themes. To give just one example, Jessica Berry, the leading scholar on Nietzsche's relation to the ancient tradition, contributes an excellent piece on "Nietzsche and the Greeks."

Third, one of the most impressive features of the *Handbook* is that where a topic is especially difficult or Nietzsche's own position is particularly ambiguous, a striking degree of care is taken by the contributors to lay out the various interpretative options in a clear-headed and nonpolemical fashion. Of particular note in this regard are R. Lanier Anderson's "Nietzsche on Autonomy," Nadeem Hussain's "Nietzsche's Metaethical Stance," Ken Gemes's "Life's Perspectives," and Paul Katsafanas's "Nietzsche's Philosophical Psychology." Hussain's own fictionalist reading of Nietzsche's meta-ethics, which takes Nietzsche to be recommending the invention of make-believe values on the basis of a global error theory about evaluative claims (cf. Nadeem Hussain, "Honest Illusion: Valuing for Nietzsche's Free Spirits," in *Nietzsche and Morality*, ed. Brian Leiter and Neil Sinhababu [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007], 157–91), by no means dominates his discussion, but rather is presented as one among a number of competing interpretative options—indeed, readers familiar with Hussain's previous position might even be surprised by his now agnostic stance that "Nietzsche's texts . . . lack the granularity that would really be needed to resolve the claims of competing meta-ethical interpretations" (412). Katsafanas's contribution takes a similarly equanimous approach to Nietzsche's "both tremendously important and terribly obscure" (725) concept of drive (*Trieb, Instinkt*). He tackles head-on Nietzsche's ostensibly misconceived use of the agential language of intentionality, phenomenology, awareness, and so on with regard to a putatively subpersonal realm of psychological explanation (cf. *BGE* 6, *KSA* 12:7[60]), and goes on to survey both the various interpretative options and the historical significance of Nietzsche's use of the term "drive" in relation to Darwin and Schopenhauer. Perhaps a similar style of contribution would have been welcome with regard to the range of available interpretations of the "will to power," although the third section of Peter Poellner's contribution goes some way to providing this.

What the above chapters thus offer readers is an ideal point of entry into already well-established debates, laying out the interpretative landscape on particular issues in a comprehensive fashion (usually also including, naturally enough, the preferred interpretative solution of the author and often pointing to a wealth of further reading in extensive bibliographies). This feature of the *Handbook* will certainly be welcomed by students and nonexperts, generally vindicating its overall philosophical style and what some Nietzsche scholars have been, implicitly or explicitly, supposing for twenty years or more, namely, that the exposition of Nietzsche's thought is most philosophically rewarding when it does *not* attempt to mimic his distinctive style.

Finally, however, one downside for more seasoned scholars to bear in mind is the degree to which authors in the *Handbook* repeat interpretations developed more thoroughly elsewhere. For example, Maudemarie Clark and David Dudrick's contribution on *Beyond Good and Evil* is a facsimile of the introductory chapters of their recent book, *The Soul of Nietzsche's Beyond Good and Evil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); likewise, Aaron Ridley's "Nietzsche and the Arts of Life" is a quicker paced run through of the most substantial insights of his *Nietzsche on Art* (New York: Routledge, 2007). That said, there are definitely enough flash points to allow the *Handbook* to contribute substantial originality on key issues. I will now turn to four specific contributions that stand out in this manner.

The first of these is Simon Robertson and David Owen's piece, "Influence on Analytic Philosophy," one of the most notable chapters in the "Historical Relations" section. Under consideration here are Philippa Foot, Bernard Williams, Alasdair MacIntyre, and Charles Taylor—labeled "morality critics" by Brian Leiter ("Nietzsche and the Morality Critics," *Ethics* 107:2 [1997]: 250–85). As the authors point out, the legitimacy of tracing this influence is dependent on understanding that Nietzsche's self-identification as an "immoralist" does not amount to a wholesale rejection of ethics. Rather, his "re-evaluation of values" is, "at root, a project of ethical reorientation, a project which addresses both the form and content of ethics" (187; a point Nietzsche makes clear at *GM* I:17 and *EH* "Destiny" 4). The connection between Nietzsche and these figures is that they are all concerned that morality, with its overriding obligations, universal applicability, and penchant for inducing guilt, will thwart the pursuit of nonmoral goods that attend to some form of "flourishing life." While to most seasoned Nietzsche readers these points will seem uncontroversial, the significance in making the connections the authors do is that they reveal just how influenced some of these figures are by Nietzsche (something they have not always acknowledged to the full extent) and, more importantly, how Nietzsche's insights can bring fresh and critical perspectives to debates in contemporary (especially moral) philosophy. In particular, Robertson and Owen's own "Nietzschean critique of obligation-centered moral theories" (203) asks what attitude Nietzscheans should take toward moral theory. What the authors want to challenge here is Brian Leiter's claim that there is no reason to think that "a conscientious application of [moral theory] would be incompatible with the flourishing of higher men" (202; Leiter, "Nietzsche and the Morality Critics," 274). In contrast, Robertson and Owen want to show that Nietzscheans have good reason to be worried about the pernicious effects on nascent higher types of undemanding moral theories—those that have made concessions to the demand for nonmoral goods to be taken seriously—as well as the moralized culture that concerns Leiter.

Robertson and Owen's argument is based on the point that even for undemanding moral theories moral considerations or norms are still "pervasive," or perhaps more aptly primary, to the extent that even in projects whose aims or ends are ostensibly nonmoral (say, writing a novel), practical deliberation in those activities will tend to be structured in such a way as to ensure that one does not violate a moral norm, and thus can undermine the otherwise uninhibited pursuit of the nonmoral end (creative excellence, say). However, this point holds only if the standing of such nonmoral goods is measured, *inter alia*, in terms of their relation to the demands of morality, even if only negatively (not violating a moral norm). Much then hangs on the extent to which undemanding moral theories accept moral norms as still "pervasive" or primary in this way, an issue that would presumably have to be settled by looking in more detail at both the content of the deliberative process envisioned and its end results. Robertson and Owen build on this point by claiming that "the conscientious application of theory may in practice make Nietzsche's nascent higher individuals more susceptible to moralization" (203). To defend this implication, they draw on Leiter's analogous point (*Nietzsche on Morality* [London: Routledge, 2002], 280) that if Nietzsche's nascent higher types are typically more thoughtful than others (cf. GS 301, BGE 201) and therefore more likely to take moral considerations seriously, then "they will be more likely to internalize and/or structure their deliberation in terms of the moral values inimical to their flourishing or excellence" (203). Robertson and Owen conclude that, if these two points hold, then a Nietzschean critique of morality, one concerned with the flourishing of higher types, should be wary of the potentially restrictive nature even of "undemanding" moral theory. That there therefore "may remain room for a Nietzschean critique of moral theory—one which is not only akin to more recent morality critics but may offer further ways to develop their worries" (203) seems a distinctive suggestion, not least because the stream of books published on moral theory shows no sign of abating.

Robert Guay's chapter, "Order of Rank," perhaps the most innovative, if difficult, contribution in the "Values" section, takes up a notion that has received little direct attention in the secondary literature. Guay presents his own interpretation as "normative" and "transcendental" in that "Nietzsche presents order of rank not substantively but as a condition for the availability of normative authority" (486). Guay first wants to reject a range of competing interpretations, most of which, he claims, take their lead from a "Natural Aristocracy" approach that he associates with Leiter (*Nietzsche on Morality*) and Thomas Hurka ("Nietzsche's Perfectionism," in Leiter and Sinhababu, *Nietzsche and Morality*, 9–31). As Guay presents it, for Natural Aristocracy readings establishing an order of rank is merely a matter of "determining the correct or suitable classification" (487) among human types—for example, by determining that Christian types rank

lower than Homeric types. These readings suggest that all that is needed to construct the order of rank is to discover the relevant “natural kinds” on the basis of which human types can be ordered and classified. Guay’s chief objection to these readings is that they fail to account for Nietzsche’s insistence that order of rank is in some way problematic. Of the five difficulties he thinks these readings face on this score, the most interesting is Guay’s contention that, for Nietzsche, order of rank is “indeterminate, unstable and constructed,” qualities the Natural Aristocracy readings cannot account for in virtue of being committed to fixed categories of human types (488). Guay’s alternative reading is that Nietzsche’s concept of order of rank is intended precisely to highlight the problem of how any particular normative distinctions and comparative evaluations “obtain or make sense . . . such that some things are better (or ‘higher’) than others” (487). So, for Guay, Nietzsche’s interest in order of rank points toward a question about the conditions of possibility for normative authority—hence Guay’s use of the term “transcendental” for his interpretation.

The core of the “transcendental” argument that Guay attributes to Nietzsche is that we are committed to qualitatively distinct ethical categorizations of “higher” and “lower,” and so some order of rank, as a constitutive condition of possibility for *any* meaningful self-transformative activity or “self-overcoming.” Moreover, Guay claims that this relation of necessity between order of rank and our striving toward ideals is definitive of the “phenomenon of life” for Nietzsche (502), the term “life” thus taking on a normative, rather than strictly biological, meaning (readers might contrast this with John Richardson’s use of the term in his chapter, “Nietzsche on Life’s Ends”). This kind of “transcendental” relation between an order of rank and our striving toward normative ideals undoubtedly expresses a significant theme in Nietzsche’s writing. It is exemplified in his concern over the specter of the “last man,” who can be read as deliberately undermining the kind of qualitative distinctions necessary for self-transformative activity: “No shepherd and one herd! Each wants the same, each is the same, and whoever feels differently voluntarily goes into the insane asylum” (Z P:5).

However, Guay overstates this point in claiming that Nietzsche is not interested in substantive orders of rank or principles of ordering at all (486). For example, recent studies by Bernard Reginster (*The Affirmation of Life: Nietzsche on Overcoming Nihilism* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006], chap. 4) and Paul Katsafanas (“Deriving Ethics from Action,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 83:3 [2011]: 620–60) find such a principle of ethical ordering in some version of the “will to power” doctrine, although exactly which substantive ethical conclusions can be drawn from this doctrine remains a source of intense debate (cf. Peter Poellner, “On Nietzschean Constitutivism,” *European Journal of Philosophy* [forthcoming]). But

Guay's stronger claim aside, his chapter is persuasively argued, with its later sections developing his distinctive position through detailed contrasts with yet more competing interpretations.

Another highlight of the *Handbook* is Leiter's "Nietzsche's Naturalism Reconsidered." Here Leiter revisits his reading of Nietzsche as a speculative, methodological naturalist (*Nietzsche on Morality*, 1–29) in order to reply to its critics. In particular, he takes on the criticisms made by Christopher Janaway, leading him to clarify, most specifically, the "speculative" aspect of his interpretation. However, the real originality of Leiter's contribution is his novel distinction between the "Humean Nietzsche" and the "Therapeutic Nietzsche." For Leiter, the Humean Nietzsche is the speculative methodological naturalist who provides naturalistic explanations of morality and persons, while the Therapeutic Nietzsche "wants to get select readers to throw off the shackles of morality" (582). Rather than attributing to Nietzsche a schizophrenic division, Leiter also links these two "Nietzsches" together: "The 'revaluation of values' involves enlisting the Humean Nietzsche for the Therapeutic Nietzsche's ends, though the Therapeutic Nietzsche has a variety of other rhetorical devices at his disposal" (582). This distinction allows Leiter to better explain characteristics of Nietzsche's philosophy that seem *prima facie* resistant to the naturalistic framework. In particular, although Nietzsche's emotionally engaging style might seem at odds with the project of a naturalistic moral psychologist, Leiter suggests that the Humean Nietzsche's commitments about human beings' general lack of responsiveness to reasons and rational arguments, in terms of both the origins of their values and their continued allegiance to them, imply that, in order to free nascent-higher types from their false consciousness about morality, the Therapeutic Nietzsche must avail himself of stylistic devices and rhetorical means of persuasion that are known to be more effective. Hence Leiter concludes that "the therapeutic project is pursued within and informed by the framework of the Humean Nietzsche's picture of persons and morality . . . one which, in fact explains why rational discursiveness . . . is an ineffective therapeutic technique" (584).

Leiter also puts this distinction to use in bolstering his critique of interpretations that emphasize the metaphysics of will to power. Looking to those few passages in the published corpus that imply such a metaphysics (*BGE* 36, *GM* II:12), Leiter suggests that in fact they appear "like an attempt to utilize metaphysical claims for rhetorical ends" (593). On this reading, then, the "Therapeutic Nietzsche" makes metaphysical claims about the will to power in nature (that all organic matter is will to power) that, as a good naturalist, the "Humean Nietzsche" is not committed to, but which he knows to be rhetorically effective because of his understanding of persons. More specifically, Nietzsche is willing to exploit the positive epistemic valence that metaphysical foundationalism might still have for certain readers insofar as this might serve his therapeutic aim

of inculcating a more critical attitude toward the morality he is opposed to. This is a neat stance for naturalistic readings to take, and while it was briefly suggested as an option in Leiter's book (*Nietzsche on Morality*, 141), the distinction between the two "Nietzsches" make his position both clearer and more appealing.

However, there is a danger also lurking in Leiter's distinction: if not carefully policed, it could end up categorizing anything deemed not sufficiently naturalistic as a rhetorical device for therapeutic ends. This problem is already evident in the dispute over the "sovereign individual" passage (*GM* II:2), of which elsewhere Leiter has provided a revisionary reading ("Who is the 'Sovereign Individual'? Nietzsche on Freedom," in *Nietzsche's On the Genealogy of Morality*, ed. Simon May [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011], 101–19) that Mark Migotti challenges in his detailed chapter on Nietzschean promise making, "A Promise Made Is a Debt Unpaid': Nietzsche on the Morality of Commitment and the Commitments of Morality." Undoubtedly, then, Leiter's distinction will lead to debate over the extent to which Nietzsche's departures from his naturalist commitments are to be considered as sophistic persuasion for therapeutic ends or, as some commentators see it, as expressing independent dissatisfaction with aspects of the naturalistic project more generally. Readers might look to Maudemarie Clark and David Dudrick's contribution on *Beyond Good and Evil*, based on their recent book, to see one way in which naturalistic readings of Nietzsche are being challenged while still paying close attention to Nietzsche's complex use of rhetorical and stylistic devices.

Peter Poellner's contribution, "Nietzsche's Metaphysical Sketches," provides a robust setting for the most philosophically substantial section of the *Handbook*, "Developments of Will to Power." Poellner seeks to provide two crucial desiderata that have often been at the center of interpretive conflicts about the will to power, namely, an explanation of why a philosopher whose published works evince a hostility to metaphysical speculation engages in such detailed metaphysical exploration in his notebooks, and a rational evaluation of the arguments for a metaphysics of will to power developed therein. While the latter theme treads familiar ground with regard to Poellner's monograph, *Nietzsche and Metaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), the originality of his contribution to the *Handbook* lies in his detailing how both Nietzsche's metaphysical sketches in the notebooks and his indifference—or, rather, outright hostility—to metaphysics in the published works have a common source in his different responses to the apparent constitutive *incompleteness* of the research project of the modern physical sciences.

Charting the significance of Newton's famous declaration that he would not "feign hypothesis" about the "causes" of gravitation, Poellner notes that Nietzsche came to see the research project of the "mechanistic" modern physical sciences as exclusively predictive and descriptive – that is,

as concerned with measuring force in exclusively numerical or quantitative indices (581 n. 5) and as such not providing acquaintance with or knowledge of the quality in virtue of which certain causal relations or “forces” are effective (KSA 12:2[76]). In response to this we have, on the one hand, Nietzsche’s positive “metaphysical sketches” that attempt to provide precisely that quality and, on the other, his anti-metaphysical stance that rejects the possibility of “completing” or providing that which physical science cannot give us, and instead adopts practical indifference toward metaphysical projects as the correct stance.

Poellner reads Nietzsche’s claim that “[t]his world is the will to power—and nothing besides!” (KSA 11:38[12]) as his positive solution to the above dilemma. According to Poellner, Nietzsche postulates that we have knowledge of the quality in virtue of which forces are effective (the “capacity to produce effects” (KSA 13:14[98]) in a specific kind of volitional agency. So it seems that Nietzsche wants to say that our acquaintance with effective force “constitutively depends on actual experiences of willing” (682) and, furthermore, that our experiences of willing always involve will to power. Nietzsche thus proffers his metaphysics of will to power as based on what seems like an “inference to best explanation” or “analogy” form of argument (one common to panpsychist thinkers, most pertinently in this context, Schopenhauer; 688), that is, one moving from what is experientially given in the psychological realm to an all-encompassing metaphysics. Proceeding to criticize this argument, Poellner notes that if, as Reginster has argued, “the will to power cannot be satisfied unless the agent has a desire for something else than power” (*Affirmation of Life*, 132), then the will to power could not sufficiently characterize *all* of an agent’s desires. If correct, this point undermines any *prima facie* sense for Nietzsche’s “inference” from what is experientially given in the psychological realm to his own will to power metaphysics, since he has failed to show that the psychological realm (let alone the metaphysical one) is exhaustively or exclusively characterized as involving will as will to power. This is a powerful criticism and is significant in that it will provoke responses from those who still think Nietzsche has good grounds for holding a strong (metaphysical or ontological) form of the doctrine and also challenge those who hold revised psychological versions of the doctrine, but take different stances on its explanatory import and extent, to clarify their positions.

Poellner then turns to Nietzsche’s second response to the incompleteness of modern science, a position Poellner characterizes as a “metaphysical indifferentism” according to which we should not allow our “practical” commitments to be undermined by the “results” of a priori arguments whose basis extends beyond anything we can encounter through our best empirical science or descriptive phenomenology. So, with regard to what this attitude has to say about our acquaintance with the qualitative nature of efficacious force, Nietzsche insists that “[w]e have no

idea, no experience, of such a process" (KSA 10:24[9]) and that we should resist drawing conclusions from "the famous realm of "inner facts," none of which has ever proven factual" (TI "The Four Great Errors" 3), a stark contrast to the line of argument he adopts in support of his will to power doctrine. What are we to make of this "official" hostility to metaphysics when Nietzsche's notebooks nonetheless present "descriptive developments of the conclusions from his contestable premises, evidently striving for both consistency and empirical adequacy" (696)? Poellner's novel explanation is a residual unease that he thinks Nietzsche might have had about that official position in the published works, such that "at least in some of his moods, he seems to have been dissatisfied with that stance [namely, 'metaphysical indifferentism'] and to have been attracted, not by an interest in metaphysical knowl- edge for its own sake, but by the traditional idea that one's practical commitments ought to be in harmony with 'the nature of things'" (698). This conclusion would need more unpacking to be entirely convincing, yet it remains an original suggestion, and one which points toward a re-examination of the (dis)merits of Nietzsche's "official position." Moreover, it will generate critical responses from the growing number of commentators, mostly informed by naturalistic readings of Nietzsche, who wish to paint him as the anti-metaphysical thinker par excellence. This latter picture is one that Poellner's contribution serves to make less clear-cut, revealing a recalcitrant unease and indecision that inflects Nietzsche's attitude to the metaphysical tradition.

The four chapters highlighted above, like other excellent contributions to the *Handbook* that I regrettably could not examine in more detail, furnish important materials for much further debate and research. And while the impressive scope and interpretative variety of the *Handbook* testify to the fact that little can be said about Nietzsche without some (often significant) dissent and disagreement, the volume undoubtedly both demonstrates and cultivates the sharpened critical tools and increased level of philosophical sophistication that Nietzsche scholarship has now achieved.

Jonathan Mitchell University of Warwick - j.mitchell.3@warwick.ac.uk