

## Book Reviews

*Moral Psychology with Nietzsche*, by Brian Leiter. Oxford: OUP, 2019. Pp. x + 198.

*Moral Psychology with Nietzsche* draws from the last two decades of Professor Leiter's writing on Nietzsche, combining substantially revised articles and book chapters into one coherent volume. Those who know Leiter's Nietzsche will recognise the main ideas, but he has organised the material to bring out his central theses, responded to criticisms and clarified his position. Those who know his style will not be surprised to find some biffing and thwacking, but the emphasis in this book is always on argument.

Leiter fights a war on two fronts. First, he gives an interpretation of Nietzsche's moral psychology. On this front, interlocutors are other Nietzsche commentators; support comes from Nietzsche's texts. Second, broadly speaking, he defends the (purportedly) Nietzschean view. Nietzsche is not right about everything in moral psychology, just 'much of [it]' (p. 10). On this front, interlocutors are moral philosophers, past and present; support comes from philosophical argumentation and empirical psychology. Leiter's work distinguishes itself by fighting on both fronts, although they are independent. What, then, is the Nietzschean-and-right view?

There are several, connected strands, but they can be summarised as follows:

- (1) Speculative, methodological naturalism (pp. 1-14). 'Methodological' meaning 'calling for continuity with the methods of successful sciences' (pp. 2-3). 'Speculative' because many claims of central relevance to moral psychology had not then been subjected to scientific evaluation: Nietzsche was making good guesses, based on materials he read and on acute observation (p. 83; pp. 5-9).
- (2) Anti-realism about *all* values, including moral (pp. 17-66) and epistemic values (pp. 84-111).
- (3) Sentimentalism. Moral judgments are best explained by emotional responses, namely by 'basic affects' (p. 67) (inclinations and aversions), which are non-cognitive, and by affective responses to these basic affects, which may contain cognitive components (p. 67-83).
- (4) Type-fact fatalism. 'Heritable type-facts' (p. 9) centrally determine our personality and our behaviour, insofar as it is morally relevant,

including the inclinations and aversions mentioned above. ‘Type-facts’ are physiological and/or psychological facts about a person, which might be innate or acquired (p. 3, fn. 5). Leiter defines ‘hereditary’ in terms of ‘genes’ and ‘genetic material’ (p. 168), which looks anachronistic when applied to Nietzsche. But the aim, with these ‘facts’, is to mark out a space for explanations of our values and behaviours which appeal neither to what our parents taught us nor to our rational capacities (pp. 162-180).

- (5) Scepticism about the causal efficacy of conscious deliberation in motivating action. Purported moral reasons or justifications are ‘post-hoc rationalisations of feelings that have an antecedent source’ (p. 9, pp. 115-146).
- (6) ‘No one has free will or is morally responsible’ (p. 117; pp. 115-161).

The result is a wide-ranging, contentious, but (Leiter argues) empirically supported naturalist moral psychology. In sum: this is Nietzsche; and Nietzsche wins.

This review says more about ‘this is Nietzsche’ than about ‘Nietzsche wins’ because, although the latter may be more significant, I have more to offer regarding the former. Leiter’s Nietzsche certainly seems right that we vastly overestimate the role of conscious, rational deliberation when it comes to action. Elsewhere, I am more sceptical, but I leave the finer details to others. Leiter’s anti-realism about epistemic values looks subject to a self-refutation problem: how to defend such a claim without invoking the kinds of values – epistemic norms – whose existence it denies. He answers that we shouldn’t defend it by appealing to epistemic norms; we should defend it because the naturalism underpinning it ‘works’. I can’t see a way to cash out what counts as ‘working’ that won’t rest, eventually, either on a dogmatic assertion or an epistemic norm, but Leiter’s defences against self-refutation and other charges are easily found (pp. 99-111).

Is this Nietzsche? This is a complex question but, in key respects, my answer is no. Leiter’s methods are the best place to start. Four features of his approach deserve attention. First, Leiter spends little time with the books that Nietzsche himself read, whether philosophical, scientific or historical. Nietzsche did not read English, and much of what he read remains untranslated, but Leiter quotes and cites next to nothing in German or French (which Nietzsche did eventually read). Much of the contemporary, high-quality philological literature is in German. Virtually none of this finds a place here, either. There are good, English-language summaries and analyses. Leiter refers to some of these, but he rarely discusses, in any detail, either the sources themselves or Nietzsche’s relation to them. Moreover, there are some contentious, unsupported assertions, for example about Nietzsche’s ‘lively interest in contemporary psychological research’ (p. 83; cf. Sommer 2019, p. 45). Second, Leiter treats ‘mature’ Nietzsche (pp. 30, 70) as everything from *Daybreak* onwards

(1881-88). Third, at crucial points, Leiter sets out some predetermined philosophical positions (naturalism, anti-realism) and then isolates quotations in the texts which seem or seem not to categorise Nietzsche accordingly. Finally, Leiter is a liberal user of the principle of charity.

None of these four decisions guarantees, *a priori*, that the resulting interpretation is faulty. But, here, they add up to make it easier for Leiter to interpret Nietzsche as having philosophical views Leiter considers, independently, to be right, and easier to ignore a reading which has considerably more exegetical plausibility. The first decision sidesteps difficult questions about Nietzsche's sources and how he used them. I am about to ask some. The second enables Leiter to draw from a wide range of texts without asking whether things might have changed between them. I am about to describe some changes. The third pushes the reader towards a pre-established set of options without giving her pause for thought about whether the whole issue might simply be orthogonal to Nietzsche's aims. I am about to suggest that, in some cases, it is. The fourth enables Leiter to push through his philosophically favoured option and then to complain that Nietzsche has not received the credit he deserves. In Nietzsche's late works, I am about to suggest, things are not so rosy.

Nietzsche's alleged speculative, methodological naturalism kicks off Leiter's reconstruction. It also brings together some of the methodological features noted above. We can usefully begin by saying a little more about Nietzsche's working methods than Leiter does, before turning back to the question of naturalism.

Leiter notes Nietzsche's 'extensive readings in the biological sciences' (p. 68; similarly, p. 11), but this is hardly the whole truth. Nietzsche certainly used scientific and historical sources, but he preferred writers who agreed with his general attitudes and whose writings he could understand given his limited natural-scientific education. He read, in the words of one historicist scholar, based on what was 'more fruitful for his thoughts' (Holub 2018, p. 341), rather than looking for the best contemporary science available. J. G. Vogt's theory of force was consulted, despite resting on what are fairly called 'highly arbitrary *a priori* assumptions' (Small 2001, pp. xiii, 137). Why? Summarising roughly, Vogt's book had user-friendly illustrations but no mathematics; it offered some material for a cosmological eternal recurrence doctrine, while stimulating Nietzsche's ideas about power (Small 2001, pp. 137-39; Sommer 2019, p. 44). He read obscure figures like William Rolph, who argued that egalitarianism was contrary to the fundamental biological workings of living things. He read Wilhelm Roux, who thought, contra Darwin, that there was a Darwinian struggle *within* organisms, enabling them to survive. The physician Charles Féré, a major influence, claimed that criminals were physiological degenerates against whom society had every right to defend itself, including by preventing them from reproducing; unfortunately, sickly anti-natural modern morals stood in the way (for example, Féré 1888, p. 104). Nietzsche drew from (but also misrepresented the claims of) serious

historians like Julius Wellhausen, who, Nietzsche thought, provided empirical evidence that Judeo-Christian morality resulted from an anti-natural confidence trick performed by a self-interested priesthood (Stern 2019a). But Nietzsche also used sources considered hopelessly unscientific by the standards of his own time (Sommer 2012, p. 367). Louis Jacolliot, for example, claimed to have access to curiously unidentifiable ancient documents linking the origins of the Jews to an inferior Eastern caste which, on Nietzsche's own summary, was a kind of 'excrement' emitted from the noble classes (Nietzsche 1988, vol. 13, p. 378; henceforth 'KSA' followed by volume and page number). Nietzsche drew repeatedly on Jacolliot (see Sommer 2013, pp. 265-70, 2012, pp. 365-71), with a view to saying that Judeo-Christian morality was anti-natural in comparison with an Eastern model which legislated differently according to the different natural-physiological types of its subjects. Note that Nietzsche *distorted* Jacolliot in summarising him (Sommer 2013, pp. 274-75). Here, Nietzsche was not merely, at best, an outstandingly credulous reader: he misrepresented what he read.

Was Nietzsche, then, a speculative, methodological naturalist? Nietzsche certainly *speculated*, though his distortions of Jacolliot do not, *prima facie*, imply that we are dealing with the inspired predictions of someone working with the best available materials (cf. pp. 9-11). I am reluctant to call him a *methodological* naturalist, because philosophising in a manner that is 'continuous with the methods of the successful sciences' (p. 2) sounds incompatible with cherry-picking and fabricating, which Nietzsche obviously did when it suited him. If Leiter thinks, conversely, that these things *are* compatible, he ought to emphasise that counterintuitive claim.

*Does Leiter think that?* It is hard to tell. Leiter does not really discuss Nietzsche's use of his sources and certainly none of the well-documented cases described above. In his brief account of the continuity he has in mind (pp. 2-3), Leiter builds on Stroud's Hume, who was seeking to explain '*everything* in human affairs' in terms of 'relatively few extremely general, perhaps universal, principles' (p. 3, emphasis in original). Leiter also rules out 'supernatural entities which play no explanatory role in the successful sciences' (p. 2). If that, or something like it, is really all, it might permit Nietzsche's actual methods: speculative, methodological naturalists can cherry-pick and fabricate their way to a small number of principles explaining human nature, as long as they don't mention God. This forgivingly expansive definition would likely invite some undesirable 'naturalists' to the party. Pseudoscientists, for example, are not obviously excluded, if their principles are few and godless, and their explanatory ambitions wide-ranging. Later on, though, Leiter gives an account of 'best explanation' deriving from 'successful empirical sciences' (p. 23). The desiderata include 'explaining phenomena in a way consistent with [...] other beliefs about the world that have been well confirmed' (p. 23). Would this not rule out cherry-picking and distorting? Generally, which intuitive restrictions on the kinds of principles available to

methodological naturalists won't end up excluding the methods we know Nietzsche employed?

A different response might be adapted from a reply Leiter gives to some of Janaway's criticisms. Leiter allows that Nietzsche's naturalism can sometimes be 'enlisted', 'subordinated' or 'displaced' (p. 6) as part of a strategy of persuasion. These metaphors are ambiguous. They might mean that naturalism is put to use yet still completely respected, as material science might be 'enlisted' (though hardly 'displaced') to build a bridge. If so, we have come no further than the dilemma just elaborated. But perhaps Leiter means that Nietzsche was trying to push his subjective values and that these values sometimes justified *not* philosophising naturalistically. Now, though, the claim that Nietzsche was a speculative, methodological naturalist would look difficult to falsify on the basis of Nietzsche's own texts and methods, since it would be consistent with his suspension of that stance on any given occasion.

I have suggested the following. Either, Nietzsche was not a speculative methodological naturalist. Or, if he was: either, first, the concept's application is counter-intuitively broad, likely even by *Leiter's* standards, and Leiter does not indicate how it could be narrowed without excluding Nietzsche; or, second, Leiter's claim is hard to falsify. *None* of this, however, is my main point. It is that we need not choose: Nietzsche never claims to be a speculative methodological naturalist; all the urgency comes from Leiter. The burden rests on Leiter to justify *asking* the question and then, of course, to answer without begging it.

Much of Leiter's analysis remains standing once the naturalism is removed. Some elements are uncontroversial – points 5 and 6, above, for example. Elsewhere, it matters when Nietzsche was writing. In his middle period (here, I mean roughly: 1881-86), Nietzsche looks closer to Leiter's picture than he does after that in two key respects. First, Middle Nietzsche talks of physiological and psychological grounds for moral views, but he offers no discernible unifying physiological *theory*: this is amenable to Leiter's Nietzsche, who likewise keeps the physiology vague and promissory. Second, Middle Nietzsche gives little suggestion that anything is naturally valuable. Indeed, in one place, Middle Nietzsche claims that there are no values in nature, which is conducive to Leiter's moral anti-realist reading (KSA 3, pp. 539-40; Leiter, pp. 20-21). Not everything in Middle Nietzsche fits Leiter's Nietzsche. In one place, Nietzsche has moral inclinations and aversions passed from parents to children via *observation* (KSA 3, p. 43). This Nietzsche would probably not be a 'Nietzschean', following Leiter's typology, but rather an 'Aristotelian' (cf. Leiter, pp. 171-4). The very next aphorism says something more 'Nietzschean', though. Middle Nietzsche provides the best support for Leiter. But things soon changed. Nietzsche's physiological theory took more definite shape and his views on natural value changed, too. There is more nuance, vacillation and fuzziness than this suggests (see Stern 2020), but, here, we can boil Late Nietzsche's moral view down to these four claims:

- (1) What Nietzsche calls 'Life', 'Will', 'Will to Power' or (sometimes) 'Nature' is a force which operates through all living things, promoting something like growth, expansion, power-seeking, accumulation, exploitation or resource-increase. (I use 'Life', capitalised, to indicate this force.)
- (2) Any animal, humans included, may be understood physiologically in relation to Life, typically – this is what matters most – in *binary* terms: increasing or decreasing in power; ascending or declining; healthy or decadent.
- (3) Moral values expressed by humans may be traced back to this physiological increase or decrease.
- (4) We ought to side with Life.

This picture retains Middle Nietzsche's idea that physiology explains values. But Late Nietzsche is more specific. He categorizes values, and the physiological facts that underlie them, along binary lines: those which help Life and those which obstruct it. Next, he endorses the former, and opposes the latter. Here, he was indeed drawing on contemporary (at least purportedly) scientific and scholarly literature: Féré, Rolph, Roux, Jacolliot and Wellhausen are some of the authors who played a part, as can be gleaned even from the summaries given above. Nietzsche read many of them only well after 1881, hence after Leiter's Nietzsche reached maturity. Rolph and Roux supplied material relevant to Nietzsche's biological account of life as a domain of power-seeking and appropriating. Nietzsche's notions of decline, decadence and degeneration borrow from Féré and his milieu (Holub 2018, pp. 408-53). Usually, Nietzsche uses these latter terms to refer to those who fall on the wrong side of his binary division between those who are physiologically flourishing and those in whom Life is not doing its thing. The decadent person is not a louche afternoon drinker; he is the physiological equivalent of a batch of cookies that didn't turn out well.

This reading takes 'will to power' seriously, whereas Leiter argues that its significance has been overplayed. He denies that, for Nietzsche, 'power is itself an objective, natural property' (p. 51), without reference to Rolph, Roux and company. When arguing for Nietzsche's naturalism, then, Leiter advertises the fact (though relatively little detail) of Nietzsche's reading in natural science; when denying that power is a natural property for Nietzsche, Leiter does not directly discuss or acknowledge Nietzsche's well-documented scientific influences.

Unfortunately, the above account of will to power is not the interpretation that Leiter spends most of his time disputing (pp. 50-62). He prefers to target a different reading – something of a red herring, in my view – and consequently many of his criticisms miss the point. The red herring is that power is a human, psychological goal (p. 58), rather than a defining physiological feature of all living things. Moreover, because Nietzsche sometimes speaks

of 'Life' or 'nature', rather than 'will to power', it is unconvincing when Leiter claims that, because Nietzsche doesn't often use the *words* 'will to power' in his autobiography or his 1886 Prefaces, the idea plays no major role (p. 57). Nietzsche has plenty to say about this idea in these texts (KSA 1, pp. 1719; 3, p. 349; 6, pp. 307, 313). In one, he looks to the future, hoping that he will have assassinated 'two millennia of antinature' and that a 'party of Life' (Team Life, if you will) will have attempted 'the relentless destruction' of Team Anti-Life, 'of everything degenerating and parasitical' (KSA 6, p. 313). Not the *words* 'will to power', but do not be mistaken: this is vintage, gold-plated will-to-power talk.

Interestingly, Leiter seems inclined to agree with elements of this assessment. He refers to Hussain's 'clever' article (p. 59, fn.19) summarising Nietzsche's view along lines close to those given here (Hussain 2011; Hussain's reading departs a little from my own, but, for present purposes, we can treat them as more or less identical). Leiter agrees that Hussain's reading is superior to the reading he criticises. He swiftly dismisses it, however, on *philosophical*, not textual, grounds: in my terms, it does not provide a route from facts about Life (1-3) to the claim that we ought to help Life out (4). But this is Nietzsche's problem, not his interpreter's. Here, as so often, charitable reading seems to obstruct our understanding of Nietzsche. (See Stern 2016.) It would have been helpful to see a more careful, exegetical analysis of a view Leiter clearly takes seriously as an interpretation – even if, philosophically, it is not plausible.

This issue is pressing for a striking reason. Many of the (late) quotations which Leiter himself chooses to support his reading look, on closer inspection of the passages from which those quotations are taken, to support the alternative reading just given. I limit myself to five examples, for reasons of space.

Leiter writes: Nietzsche 'holds that "[i]t is *not* error as error that" he objects to fundamentally' in Christian morality (p. 12, emphasis in original). So, *to what* does Nietzsche object fundamentally in Christian morality, in the passage from which Leiter quotes? Leiter does not say, but Nietzsche does: 'It is the lack of nature, it is the utterly horrible fact that *anti-nature* itself received the highest honours as morality' (KSA 6, p. 372, emphasis in original). The fundamental objection is that Christianity is *anti-natural*, that is, anti-Life: '[O]ne taught men to despise the very first instincts of life' in favour of a 'morality of decline'.

Leiter repeatedly refers to a note he renders as follows: "Moral judgments [are] symptoms and sign languages which betray the process of physiological prosperity or failure" (WP: 258)' (pp. 4, 68). Already, we see a physiological binary – prosperity (*Gedeihens*) and failure (*Missrathens*). *Gedeihen* is a term one might use for the healthy 'flourishing' of a plant or child. *Missrathen* suggests 'turning out badly' – like those cookies. Nietzsche, in this very note, gets sharper: 'Applied to the specifically Christian-European morality: our

moral judgments are signs of decay [*Verfall*], of not believing in Life [...]' (KSA 12, p. 149).

Leiter writes: 'A "morality of sympathy", [Nietzsche] claims, is "just another expression of... physiological overexcitability" (TI IX: 37)' (p. 4). But what does Nietzsche *say* (in that very passage) about that physiological overexcitability? It is 'characteristic of everything decadent' (KSA 6, p. 137). 'Our softening of morals [...] is a consequence of decline [*Niedergangs*]' We display the signs of a 'general loss of vitality', whereas stronger ages displayed the consequences of 'a surplus of Life'.

While claiming that Nietzsche works from morality back to affects, Leiter renders another passage as follows: '[A]nswers to the question about the *value* of existence may always be considered first of all as the symptoms of certain bodies' (pp. 4, 68, emphasis in original). *Prima facie*, this is not about morality but about 'the question about the value of existence' – that is, the central concern of the so-called 'pessimism dispute', a raging contemporary controversy which Leiter doesn't discuss and which I haven't mentioned here, but which casts further light on Nietzsche's Life theory (Stern 2019b). What *kinds* of bodies, though? In the passage Leiter is quoting from, answers to this question are, again, indexed to a binary distinction between 'success and failure [*Missrathens*]' (KSA 3, p. 349). Nietzsche is not tracing *morality* to *affects*; he is positing a link between one's view about whether life is or is not worth living and whether one's living body turned out well or was one of a bad batch.

Finally, allegedly in support of Nietzsche's anti-realism, Leiter writes:

[Nietzsche] describes the 'revaluation of Christian values' as an 'attempt, undertaken with every means' to bring 'the *counter-values* [*die Gegen-Werte*]...to victory' (A 61) – not the 'true' values or the 'objectively correct' ones, but simply the opposite ones [...] that appeal to a very different taste. (p. 46, emphasis in original)

Leiter is saying that Nietzsche's choice of the term 'counter-values' indicates a reluctance to ascribe any objective status even to those values Nietzsche favours: appropriately enough for an anti-realist, his values are merely a matter of 'taste'. But *taste*, in that very passage, is not the issue. The revaluation Nietzsche describes is the Renaissance, which he often sees as anti-Christian (pro-Life). During the Renaissance, to Luther's horror, 'Christianity sat *no more* on the papal seat! But rather, Life! Rather, the triumph of Life!' (KSA 6, p. 251, emphasis in original). The direction of argument is that Luther's anti-Life, anti-natural Reformation opposes the Life-endorsing Renaissance. Christianity is against Life; Nietzsche, who is *for* Life, therefore favours the counter-values.

By comparing these passages with the way Leiter quotes from them, we see something of the effort it requires – I do not mean deliberate falsification, of course – to use late Nietzsche's words on physiology and value without revealing what Nietzsche is saying with those very words. Even in many (late)



passages Leiter selects to support his reading, a different reading is seeping through the cracks. It is unattractive, philosophically. Yet there it is. Late Nietzsche does absolutely seem to think that power, suitably understood, is an objective, natural property (cf. p. 51).

But was Late Nietzsche a moral anti-realist? For, as Leiter notes, power might be an objective, natural property, but not objectively valuable (p. 51). Leiter gives two Nietzsche-independent arguments for anti-realism: a best-explanation argument for what is most basic (probably not objective moral values) and a best-explanation argument treating moral disagreement (the best explanation for which would probably not be one that included objective moral values). Are these ‘Nietzsche’s [...] arguments for value anti-realism’ (p. 51, emphasis added; also pp. 61, 68)? I have already said something about ‘best explanation’ and its relation to Nietzsche. In sum, Leiter offers no good grounds for attributing the first argument to Nietzsche. He finds one unpublished note which resembles the second argument, but little from the late, published works. One alleged exception is BGE 186, which is, at best, vague – Leiter claims it ‘gestures’ in that direction (p. 29), but I found no such gesture. Conversely, Late Nietzsche sometimes resembles nothing so much as a naïve, natural realist who thinks something is good if it does what nature intends (accumulation, power-seeking). He is happy to speak of ‘natural values’, of the ‘right, that is to say, natural relation to all things’ (KSA 6, p. 193, emphasis in original) of ‘every demand supplied by the instinct of Life, in sum, everything which has value *in itself*’ (KSA 6, p. 196, emphasis in original). *Why* is it right to be natural? Here, Nietzsche simply has less of an answer. He effectively labels this problem ‘inaccessible’ (KSA 6, p. 86), because Life (and the humans it inescapably operates through) can’t form a reliable judgment about itself. It doesn’t follow from a problem’s inaccessibility, or from Nietzsche’s lack of a comprehensive answer, that Nietzsche thinks the problem is accessible and that the answer has to do with anti-realism. Leiter does not analyse such passages, but they would surely be the place to begin. Meanwhile, it is odd to present Nietzsche as having much to contribute to contemporary debates about moral anti-realism.

Leiter sometimes presents himself as someone who is not afraid of offering up Nietzsche’s perhaps disturbing, yet nonetheless perfectly correct, philosophical views. But, to my mind, Leiter is not, himself, entirely innocent of shying away – in his case, from offering up disturbing but less defensible aspects of Nietzsche’s thought. In the final chapter (co-authored with Joshua Knobe), Leiter cites Nietzsche as assuming the view, subsequently empirically supported (they claim), that:

morally-relevant traits [...] are the product of not only environmental factors but also of heredity [...] ‘It is simply not possible that a human being should *not* have the qualities and preferences of his parents and ancestors in his body,’ as Nietzsche quips, ‘whatever appearances may suggest to the contrary’ (BGE: 264). (p. 169, emphasis in original)

It is unclear why Leiter considers this a 'quip', especially in the light of Nietzsche's very next sentence, which Leiter omits: 'This is the problem of race'. 'Race' had a different, vaguer set of connotations in Nietzsche's context, but he has, with careful qualifications, been appropriately called a 'philosopher of racialized breeding' (Bernasconi 2017).

Elsewhere, Leiter claims that opponents who have downplayed Nietzsche's views on freedom or responsibility 'aim to make Nietzsche less appalling to us delicate modern readers than he really is' (p. 161).

He continues:

The resistance to these points in the recent scholarly literature [...] reflects the continuing malign influence of moralizing readings of Nietzsche, of the failure to remember what he says about his conception of Renaissance virtue, namely, that we understand it, and him, 'moraline-free' (A 2).

If you look at what Nietzsche says next in *that* passage (A 2), you discover the following consequence of remaining 'moraline-free' (free from Christian-moral bias): 'The weak and the failures [*Missrathnen*] should perish: first principle of our love of humanity. And they should be helped to do this. What is more harmful than any vice? - Active pity for all failures and weakness - Christianity ...'

It is unsurprising, given Nietzsche's context and outlook, that he was drawn to the thought that a solution to physiological decline might lie in what he calls helping the failures (the bad batches) to perish – in what was already beginning to be called 'eugenics'. Use people's values to detect the *Missrathnen* and then, well, follow the first principle. Leiter, it seems, is quoting Nietzsche in support of his claim that other Nietzsche scholars shy away from the appalling bits, while simultaneously declining to reproduce, even from that very passage, Nietzsche's repeated suggestion that the physiologically decrepit ought to be shuffled off for the greater good. If so, I consider this ironic. But the more important point is that the criticisms set out here emerge from my attempt to understand what Nietzsche was saying, regardless of its soundness. That seems a good way of getting someone right – even if he was wrong. If merely setting out Nietzsche's own ideas is sufficient to see them wither, then I hope Nietzsche would have appreciated at least this: it is a case of helping something perish, but out of love.

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*The Exchange of Words*, by Richard Moran. Oxford: OUP, 2018. Pp. 254.

The publication of Richard Moran's book *The Exchange of Words* (EW) is a significant and most welcome event both in epistemology and in the philosophy of mind and language. Anyone interested in these central topics of philosophy cannot afford to neglect it. Why is this such a good and important book? One kind of answer cites the relevant virtues of the author deployed in its writing: Moran has thought deeply for many years about his topic, and he brings to bear a rich wealth of insights from wide reading in key