Simon May (ed.), *Nietzsche's* On the Genealogy of Morality: *A Critical Guide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 345 pages. ISBN: 9780521518802 (hbk.). Hardback: $99.00.

"Another *Nietzsche's* On the Genealogy of Morality?" one might be excused for asking at the sight of Simon May's new collection. This volume has to contend for shelf space with homonymic monographs by Lawrence Hatab (2008) and David Owen (2007), as well as Daniel Conway's (2008) *Nietzsche's* On the Genealogy of Morals, a compilation of the same name edited by Christa Acampora (2006), and Brian Leiter's *Nietzsche on Morality* (2002). Add to this that Hatab contributes to May's collection, Owen and Conway contribute to Acampora's, and Christine Swanton contributes to both, and the question of redundancy becomes even more pressing. Is Nietzsche's *Genealogy* – whether of morality or morals – sufficiently rich, difficult, and interesting to merit such a hubbub of scholarly voices, and, if it is, does the attention paid in May's new volume significantly advance our understanding of it? The answer to both questions is an unequivocal "Yes."

One distinguishing feature of this collection is that, rather than trying to give unifying readings of the whole *Genealogy*, most of the contributors focus on a single part. Edward Harcourt goes furthest in this regard, bookending his attack on the notion that Nietzsche has a distinctively aesthetic approach to character with references to the Preface. Another distinguishing feature is the corrective, almost didactic, tone taken by many of the authors. Harcourt's essay, which pointedly demolishes Alexander Nehamas's claim that Nietzsche replaces ethics with aesthetics by "fashioning himself into a literary character" (1985, p. 13), is again exemplary. And the positive upshot of Harcourt's chapter – that although Nietzschean evaluation is keyed to flourishing understood in terms of promoting life and power, it has little to do with aesthetics as such – resonates with several other chapters.

A plurality of the fourteen contributors focus on some aspect of the *Genealogy*'s first essay. R. Lanier Anderson begins by pointing out that "the *priests* who figure importantly in Nietzsche's story are intended to be *unambiguous* instances of the *noble character type*" (p. 24) and gently scolding otherwise "insightful readers" (p. 25) who think otherwise. Since value-creation is an imprimatur of nobility, the agents of the slave revolt must be priests, not slaves – *pace* Leiter (2002) and Owen (2007), as well as Poellner (chapter 6) and Hatab (chapter 9). In fact, argues Anderson, the priests ultimately win their contest with the warriors and make their foes "*contemptible*" by infecting them with "values fit for slaves" (p. 51) because they are superlatively noble, i.e., even more affected by the "pathos of distance." While this last point seems to contradict Nietzsche's own assertion that the noble man "can endure no other enemy than one in whom there is nothing to despise and *very much* to honor" (*GM*, I, 10), it would if true go some way towards answering the question Hatab sets himself: "Why would master morality surrender its power?" The masters don't surrender to the slaves; they succumb to the priests.

The other chapters on the first essay deal less with the priests than with the purpose and effect of genealogical criticism. Paul Katsafanas aims to explain why the *Genealogy* both "constitutes (or enables) a critique of modern morality" and "takes a historical form" (p. 171). On his view, modern morality (derived as it is from

slave morality) "leads agents to perceive actual reductions in power as increases in power" (p. 171) and to associate "negative emotions with manifestations of actual power" (p. 183), which in turn disposes them to "pursue reductions in their own power" (p. 187). Since Nietzschean flourishing is defined in terms of will to power, modern morality is contrary to flourishing. If right, this meets the first goal; the second is reached by realizing that, when it comes to will to power, the proper units of analysis are not individual actions but whole evaluative orientations, which in turn are best understood historically. P. J. E. Kail agrees that Nietzsche could only criticize modern morality using history, adding that the critique in the *Genealogy* is neither immanent nor a revaluation of values in its own right, but an attempt to destabilize modern moral beliefs by showing that "the mechanisms productive of the beliefs are epistemically unreliable" (p. 229). Raymond Geuss, who claims that the aim of genealogy is to "find a standpoint outside" (pp. 18-9) of two millennia of Judeo-Christian second-nature, would evidently agree.

The chapters by Bernard Reginster and Leiter serve as useful counterpoints to each other, and to the second essay of the *Genealogy*. Like Anderson, both argue against dominant interpretations. Reginster aims to show that Nietzsche's polemical target in the second essay is not "the non-naturalistic account of the feeling of guilt promoted by the Christian outlook," but a "perversion" of the "ordinary feeling of guilt" (p. 57); Leiter sets himself the task of proving that the figure of the "sovereign individual" (*GM*, II, 2) is either not a Nietzschean ideal or a Nietzschean ideal that's consistent with fatalism. For Reginster, the sovereign individual with "the right to make promises" feels a kind of pride in his special "standing or status" (p. 73), and so experiences a decrease in self-worth when he breaks a promise, along with the need to undergo punishment to repair that status. When, under the influence of Christianity, such an individual feels that "he owes more than he can repay" (p. 77), he ends up with a perverted form of inexpiable guilt. For Leiter, by contrast, Nietzsche's image of the sovereign individual is either an ironic mockery of the *petit bourgeois* or "a fortuitous artifact (a bit of 'fate'), not an autonomous achievement for which anyone could be responsible" (p. 103). Nietzsche's positive view of freedom, on the latter, more plausible, interpretation, has little to do with Kantian or Humean visions of freedom, being instead a "persuasive definition" (p. 102) in terms of a "pattern of coherent drives" (p. 111).

Arguably the most difficult to interpret, the *Genealogy*'s third essay is addressed by Peter Poellner, Aaron Ridley, and May himself. Poellner also discusses the first essay, and like several other contributors, he is at pains to show that the historical mode of argument is, if not essential, then at least logically permissible. This is done by arguing for "the persistence of a psychological pattern that figures centrally in [Nietzsche's] account of the origins of morality" (p. 122). Modern morality doesn't just stem from vile sentiments; it, along with its contemporary adherents, still harbors them. Ridley and May analyze, in different though related ways, the nature and meaning of Nietzschean life-affirmation and life-denial. May worries that Nietzsche is "still in the morality game" (p. 78) insofar as the justification of suffering in terms of other goods still figures centrally in his thought; Nietzsche sometimes realizes, though, that affirmation is not a judgment on life but an affective stance towards it – the stance of someone for whom the problem of suffering

does not even arise (p. 92). Ridley doubts whether such an affirmative affective stance (towards oneself, in particular) "deserve[s] to be taken seriously as a contribution to aesthetics" (p. 309).

Although most contributors constrict their focus to a single essay, three attempt more wide-ranging investigations of the *Genealogy*, and all three primarily discuss Nietzsche's notion of flourishing and virtue. Stephen Mulhall's discussion spirals out from the preface to address all three essays, though it remains unclear what – if anything – his argument might be. Swanton, by contrast, is commendably clear that Nietzsche is a "mature egoist" (p. 285) but misunderstands most of the few passages in *GM* she actually cites. (For instance, she fails to realize that in *GM*, I, 11, the nobles *are* the barbarians, and mystifyingly asserts – despite *BGE* 44, 210, 229, 230, 295, and *GM*, II, 6, 7, and 22 – that Nietzsche uniformly condemns cruelty.) Refreshingly, Nadeem Hussain, with characteristic comprehensiveness and plausibility, argues (like Harcourt, Ridley, and May) that Nietzschean flourishing is to be understood in terms of promoting or affirming life. He doubts, though, whether Nietzsche can make good on what he dubs the "Benthamite model" (p. 158), according to which people should live as they are naturally or inevitably disposed to live.

Despite a few blemishes, then, Simon May's *Nietzsche's* On the Genealogy of Morality: *A Critical Guide* marks a significant readjustment and advancement in Nietzsche studies, and sets the agenda for future research into Nietzsche's notions of historical critique, character, flourishing, life, and value.

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