



Christopher Janaway and Simon Robertson, eds., *Nietzsche, Naturalism, and Normativity*
Nietzsche, Naturalism, and Normativity by Janaway, Christopher; Robertson, Simon

Review by: Neil Sinhababu

Ethics, Vol. 124, No. 3 (April 2014), pp. 617-622

Published by: [The University of Chicago Press](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/674832>

Accessed: 02/04/2014 08:08

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at
<http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



The University of Chicago Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Ethics*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

understand feet as essentially gangrened. This follows from the empirical and ontological nature of human feet (e.g., that they might survive the eradication of gangrene). The moral we might draw from this example is that the aptness of any particular application (e.g., Haslanger's) of the general principle will depend on the empirical and ontological character of the thing investigated. While Haslanger allows that ameliorative projects should begin "with a rough understanding of the salient facts" (353), she appears to overlook the point that ameliorative stipulations can seal off certain empirical possibilities and facts—facts that, as it might turn out, are central or even necessary to meeting one's ameliorative goals.

One such (politically important) empirical possibility closed off by Haslanger's stipulative hierarchical definition is the mutability of categories like *women*. Such mutability would apply if the ontological natures of social categories like *women* are analogous to that of a species or an artifact lineage (see Bach, "Gender Is a Natural Kind"), in which case these groups can survive the loss of a property such as *socially subordinated*. This descriptive possibility informs political possibilities. For example, on this ontological construal (and contrary to Haslanger's), advocating for social justice would not require advocating for the elimination of the groups *men* and *women*. The more general, methodological point is that sometimes the best way to advance one's ameliorative goals will be to prioritize empirical and ontological investigations into the category's nature. Only then can certain avenues for, and perspectives on, social and political change reveal themselves as recommended possibilities.

If any of the above critical remarks have any merit, it is only because *Resisting Reality* is so successful at organizing and restructuring concepts and distinctions so that interlocutors can engage meaningfully with, rather than talk past, one another. The preceding discussions hardly do justice to the richness of Haslanger's volume. I wish I had the space here to discuss Haslanger's illuminating essays on the dynamics and ethics of transracial adoption or the nature of knowledge. I can only recommend that others spend time working through these and other essays in *Resisting Reality*. Haslanger's work is always rewarding, and *Resisting Reality* is required reading not just for philosophers but—more rare—any researcher who has a serious interest in the nature of social construction, human categories, and social justice.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT: I would like to thank Sally Haslanger and David Slutsky for their comments on a previous draft of this review article.

THEODORE BACH
Bowling Green State University Firelands

Janaway, Christopher, and Robertson, Simon, eds. *Nietzsche, Naturalism, and Normativity*.

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. Pp. 280. \$75.00 (cloth).

Central questions of metaethics include whether and how one can give a naturalistic account of normativity. These questions were of great interest to Nietzsche, who rejected some robust views of normativity because of their incompat-

ibility with naturalism. Over the last two decades, philosophers with a detailed understanding of the metaethical options and Nietzsche's writings have made impressive progress in helping us see how he understood and answered these questions. Christopher Janaway and Simon Robertson's volume continues the trend of progress. Several of the essays discuss contributions to *Nietzsche and Morality*, which I edited with Brian Leiter, and this volume is a worthy successor to ours. Most of the essays make significant contributions to the discussion, and the best are among the very best in contemporary Nietzsche scholarship.

The first contribution comes from Peter Railton. He suggests that Nietzsche regards normative concepts with a specifically deontic character (like right, wrong, and duty) as "deeply problematic" and "unavailable for foundational use" (26). On his interpretation, Nietzsche still thinks we can rely on evaluative concepts (like good, bad, and unhealthy) since they can often be grounded in naturalistically respectable ways. Nietzsche and other naturalists could happily accept that water is good for dehydrated people and skilled mariners are good at sailing, to consider two of Railton's examples that bring to mind examples from his previous work. Railton points out that the deontic could then be grounded in these evaluative notions without presupposing free will, universal morality, or anything else Nietzsche rejects. While this is may be the best way to develop naturalistic realism about any kind of normativity, Railton provides little textual evidence that the deontic/evaluative distinction is so important. Nietzsche rejects moral facts of many kinds, seemingly including facts about positive and negative moral value. Maybe the universality of morality is the real problem, as Railton himself allows (48). Or maybe there's an interesting way to apply the deontic/evaluative distinction to help us understand what Nietzsche is really attacking, and we'll see this developed more in the future. (For example, perhaps the good vs. bad/good vs. evil distinction could be understood in these terms.) At any rate, it's a credit to the volume that it presents perhaps the greatest metaethical naturalist of our time discussing Nietzsche. His view may have already acquired influence—several contributors to the volume attended to the evaluative/deontic distinction as he does.

Peter Poellner's "Aestheticist Ethics" claims "that all of Nietzsche's value judgments are grounded in aesthetic experiences" (61–62). These are experiences of objects' features which include affective responses presenting the objects as having value or disvalue in themselves. Often these objects are other people, whom Nietzsche evaluates on the basis of these experiences. Poellner provides good examples of how Nietzsche bases his evaluations on responses of this kind, toward the harsh speech of military-influenced Germans and toward Wagner's *Meistersinger*. He seems to see these affective responses as "aiming at veridicality" in representing values which are "phenomenally intrinsic" to what the agent is considering, extending even into the mental states of those to whom the agent responds (68). Here it's tricky to understand how much is included in the phenomenal and what it's contrasted with. (Poellner's earlier work discusses the notion of the phenomenal in more detail, describing how it's not captured by the objective/subjective distinction and how it's closer to Kant's concept than the one in contemporary philosophy of mind.) Understanding exactly what it is for a value to be phenomenally intrinsic seems important for applying Poellner's view to understand the "'order of rank' among first-order ends," as he intends, and for

understanding what sort of objectivity such an order of rank would have (79). I didn't feel confident that I had a sufficient understanding of this notion, but perhaps readers more familiar than me with Poellner's work will.

Simon Robertson's essay on the "Scope Problem" seeks to determine the scope of Nietzsche's critique of morality and how his own positive ideals stand outside it. As addressing this problem is essential for understanding what Nietzsche wants to tell us about values, it has attracted a great deal of interpretive discussion. Robertson engages with sophisticated recent proposals from Maudemarie Clark and Leiter. To Clark, who uses Bernard Williams's distinction between the moral and the ethical to argue that Nietzsche is attacking morality but advancing his own nonmoral ethics, Robertson responds that Nietzsche's positive values concern an individualist perfectionism so unconcerned with interpersonal relations that it falls outside the scope of even the ethical. To Leiter, who sees Nietzsche as objecting to morality's presuppositions of human free will and responsibility as well as its support for the lowest at the expense of the highest, Robertson responds that we should see Nietzsche as also rejecting its claims of objectivity, normative authority, and universality. On the interpretation of Nietzsche's positive values that results, his "individualist perfection is a *quasi-aesthetic* one" (104). I wonder whether normative authority itself really falls within the scope of Nietzsche's critique. Certainly Nietzsche denies the normative authority of morality, but while he might reject all universal and objective values, would he really deny some kind of normative authority to nonuniversal and subjective quasi-aesthetic values? Still, Robertson's account is probably the best currently available account of the scope of Nietzsche's critique. The editors' introduction categorizes these first three essays as emphasizing affinities between Nietzsche's metaethical views and aesthetics. I'd especially recommend Robertson's essay to Nietzsche scholars, for its clarity and its thorough engagement with both Nietzsche and with some of the best work in the secondary literature.

The next two essays, from Nadeem Hussain and Alan Thomas, criticize accounts of Nietzsche's metaethics from the 2007 collection. Hussain criticizes the noncognitivist interpretation of Clark and Dudrick, skillfully addressing the metaethical issues at hand. First, he convincingly argues that the extra advantages that Clark and Dudrick claim to find in Nietzsche's version of noncognitivism either are present in standard presentations of the view like Gibbard's *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings* or aren't advantages at all. Particularly memorable is his argument that noncognitivism doesn't allow moral theories to gain extra objectivity from the consideration of more perspectives—my preference for chocolate ice cream doesn't gain objectivity from my considering all the reasons people like different flavors of ice cream. Hussain's criticism of the textual support for noncognitivism is also impressive. While Clark and Dudrick see Nietzsche as moving from error theory in *Human, All-Too-Human* to noncognitivism in *The Gay Science*, Hussain cites the right passages from *Twilight of the Idols* to show that any conversion to noncognitivism was soon abandoned in favor of error theory. And even passages like *Gay Science* 299 that Clark and Dudrick rely on support a variety of deflationary interpretations—noncognitivism, subjectivism, and Hussain's preferred fictionalism. Overall, Hussain provides a wealth of convincing arguments against their noncognitivist reading. (It's unfortunate that the volume doesn't include an essay from Clark. While I've agreed with her critics, the high quality of their work is

partly a response to the sophistication of hers. Her essay might have addressed epistemic norms, which the collection doesn't discuss in detail. It also would've added a woman to the all-male list of contributors.)

Thomas, in turn, criticizes Hussain's celebrated paper interpreting Nietzsche as a revolutionary moral fictionalist. I agree with him that Hussain's distinction between practical and theoretical nihilism doesn't do the work against subjectivism that Hussain thinks it does and that Hussain's fictionalist interpretation underplays Nietzsche's interest in the "subjective conditions for valuation on the part of the judge" (133). But I was disappointed to discover that Thomas was accurate in initially characterizing his aims as "not directly to contribute to Nietzsche scholarship but to appraise contemporary interpretations of Nietzsche's metaethics from the point of view of contemporary metaethics" (133). His discussions of fictionalism invoke recent and sophisticated philosophical inventions that were far beyond Nietzsche's grasp, like rigidified sensibility theories, limiting their utility in interpretive debates. (As far as contemporary metaethics is concerned, I'm impressed with Railton's criticisms of these rigidified views in "Red, Bitter, Good.") While the section attacking hermeneutic moral fictionalism mostly doesn't address Hussain, who interprets Nietzsche as a revolutionary fictionalist, it's extremely original and interesting. I was especially intrigued by Thomas's suggestion that the phenomenon of imaginative resistance to fictions that contradict one's moral judgments would raise difficulties for Mark Kalderon's hermeneutic moral fictionalism. If this objection has force against hermeneutic fictionalism, it might also apply to revolutionary fictionalism as well.

Bernard Reginster's "Compassion and Selflessness" examines how Schopenhauer understood the selflessness involved in compassion and Nietzsche's disagreement with Schopenhauer about the value of compassion. Considering Schopenhauer's metaphysics and his criticisms of Ubaldo Cassina's view of compassion, Reginster attributes to him a view on which "there is no *me* and *them* any longer" for the compassionate person (170). Reginster plausibly suggests that one reason Nietzsche's responses to Schopenhauer on the altruistic selflessness of compassion are "scattered and tentative" is "because he has understandable difficulties in circumscribing precisely what Schopenhauer means by it" (173). The main thread of Nietzsche's objection seems to be that the altruistic character of compassion requires the agent to be selfless in not recognizing that others' interests are their own. Reginster nicely illustrates this with Jean Hampton's example of obsessive caregivers who arouse resentment in those they care for, because they don't recognize how others' interests are theirs. The essay is an odd fit for the volume in some ways, as it's at some distance from questions of how to reconcile normativity with naturalism. And its winding path requires some patience as Reginster points out initially appealing ways of understanding Schopenhauer but then demonstrates that they're untenable for textual or philosophical reasons. But these reasons are good ones, and I learned a lot about Schopenhauer from Reginster's lucid and careful presentation. This essay will be useful to anyone trying to understand the roots of Nietzsche's philosophy in Schopenhauer, especially regarding compassion but also concerning broader issues in ethics and metaphysics.

The next two essays dealt with issues regarding motivation and agency. Christopher Janaway's "Nietzsche on Morality, Drives, and Human Greatness"

addresses a variety of issues concerning Nietzsche's ideals of human agency. These include affirming the eternal recurrence and having yes-saying attitudes, which Janaway argues aren't supposed to produce imperatives but are supposed to characterize an ideal way for a person to be. Discussing the nature of drives, Janaway argues that agents need not be ignorant of their drives and that drives can have a very wide range of objects. On the unity of agency, Janaway allows that some great individuals may be internally unified without effort, while others may have to discipline themselves so that their drives take on a unified structure. As far as I can tell, Janaway is right on each of these points and many others concerning how Nietzsche understands motivation and how he wants agents to be. I came away wishing for a little more unity and structure in the essay itself. While it made clear and sensible points on a variety of related topics, it didn't sum these up in any well-defined general account of how Nietzsche thinks agents ought to be and generally avoided making strong and controversial claims. Perhaps it's best seen as a collection of materials that others might draw from in building such an account and a series of useful engagements with others' views.

Lanier Anderson's "What Is a Nietzschean Self?" had the opposite virtues of Janaway's essay. It was bold and provocative in assigning a variety of exciting philosophical views to Nietzsche, particularly on how he understands the self. Anderson argues that Nietzschean selves occupy an "intermediate position, between a Humean bundle and a Kantian transcendental self" (225). I was impressed by his arguments against a Kantian interpretation. I was less impressed by the antireductionist arguments, particularly the section arguing that *Beyond Good and Evil* 12 suggests that Nietzsche isn't a reductionist about the self. In *Beyond Good and Evil* 12, Nietzsche discusses Boscovich's rejection of materialistic atomism and also rejects "soul atomism. Let it be permitted to designate by this expression the belief which regards the soul as something indestructible, eternal, indivisible, as a monad, as an *atomon*: this belief ought to be expelled from science!" Anderson argues that "the tendency to draw eliminativist or reductionist conclusions from the argument of *BGE* 12 turns out to be itself a symptom of the very 'atomistic need' Nietzsche criticizes, which appears here in the guise of a latent assumption that only the psychological *atoms* could be truly real!" (215). Anderson's characterization of the 'atomistic need' is poorly grounded in the text, and his argument is based on a misunderstanding of reductionism. Nietzsche attacks soul atomism for positing indestructible and eternal souls that presumably are irreducible—the opposite of reducing souls to destructible fundamental components. Reducing water to H₂O vindicates water's reality, as Railton once noted, and reductionists about the self can similarly claim that the self is as truly real as the mental states to which it's reduced. (Moreover, functionalism makes mental states resemble Boscovich's centers of force more than material atomic substances, since their nature is in their relations.) While I had similar worries about many of Anderson's antireductionist arguments, I look forward to the stimulating debates that they'll incite. The clear, forceful, and engaging way that Anderson argues for his views will help Nietzsche scholars get a handle on the theoretical options and make progress.

The final paper in the collection, "Nietzsche's Naturalism and Normativity," comes from Richard Schacht, who sees Nietzsche as offering an alternative variety of naturalism to the more narrowly scientific variety that Leiter attributes

to him. Schacht describes this naturalistic picture as “attuned to the full panoply—social, cultural, and artistic phenomena included—of our human reality and world” (241). Schacht occasionally made me nostalgic for Anderson’s clarity. Without a more precise characterization of Schacht’s “extended naturalism,” we can’t understand why Leiter’s version would miss features of our human reality and world and how Schacht’s version would grasp them. Schacht’s picture of how normativity is grounded in our forms of life, and how they shape our sensibilities, is similarly ambiguous between a wide range of theoretical options. These include the subjectivist, noncognitivist, and fictionalist views that other scholars are discussing in this volume. The scholarly consensus already accepts most of what Schacht gets right about Nietzsche’s views regarding naturalism and normativity. This reflects well on Nietzsche scholarship. We’re rapidly getting a clearer picture of Nietzsche’s views on a variety of interesting questions, especially in metaethics. Perhaps this makes it hard for even the most established scholars to keep up. But much better assistance is available today for anyone interested in understanding what Nietzsche was trying to tell us about values than when I found my dad’s old copy of the *Portable Nietzsche* eighteen years ago.

NEIL SINHABABU
National University of Singapore

Keller, Simon. *Partiality*.

Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013. Pp. 177. \$35.00 (cloth).

In *Partiality*, Simon Keller gives us a new theory of partiality that joins the Williams-Stocker-Scheffler line. Like these other theorists, Keller rejects attempts to derive reasons of partiality from impartial ones and, instead, argues that partiality is normatively significant in its own right, a position sometimes called “partialism.” However, by developing his “individuals view” of partiality—as opposed to the projects view familiar from Bernard Williams and the relationships view most influentially developed by Samuel Scheffler—Keller offers us a distinct alternative to these well-known accounts. Its central idea is that our reasons of partiality stem from the value of the individuals with whom we share relationships, not our projects or the relationships themselves. For instance, Keller plausibly contends that when racing to the scene after finding out that her parents’ house was among those that burned in a large fire, a person’s thoughts will be of her parents and what she can do for them, not how this event affects her life’s ground projects or her relationship with her parents. Since, like other partialists, Keller argues that we ought to take our experience of partiality as a guide to the content and source of our reasons of partiality, such examples provide the backbone of his defense of the individuals view.

Though Keller’s case for the individuals view is not fully convincing for reasons I outline below, this book is worthy of serious consideration. One of its several virtues is how well Keller motivates the case for his view by thoroughly surveying its competitors. He devotes one chapter each to the projects view (chap. 2) and the relationships view (chap. 3) and also mixes in several strong arguments against impartialist views (which, like standard forms of consequentialism and