The final chapter, by Amy Schmitter, is an excellent piece on the history and influences of Hume’s theory of the passions, with due attention paid to Malebranche and Hobbes. It is here that emotions as aspects of the social life become the topic of interest: for Hume, as for Malebranche, the transmission of an emotion from one person to another is mechanical in nature. Moreover, Schmitter’s Hume recognizes a ‘division of sentimental labor’ by which ‘affective experts’ make judgements which set the standards of taste (274–5). It is through our sympathy-generating mechanisms that we are able to respect and value such judgements made by others (275).

Pickavé and Shapiro have collected together some very strong papers, each of which contributes to the aims of the volume. Those who take interest in the history of philosophy will appreciate the intricate and detailed analyses of these various theories of emotions. And those who are primarily interested in contemporary philosophy of emotion may well find motivation to challenge their own dependencies on contemporary concepts and debates.

Jordan Taylor

*University of Pennsylvania*

© 2013, Jordan Taylor

http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09608788.2013.852967

Christopher Janaway and Simon Robertson (eds.): *Nietzsche, Naturalism, and Normativity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, pp. 262. £40.00 (hb). ISBN 9780199583676.

This volume is one of three that examine relations between Nietzsche’s thought – in particular his critique of morality – and contemporary work in ethics. It presents selected contributions to the research project ‘Nietzsche and Modern Moral Philosophy’ that was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and ran from 2007 to 2010 at the University of Southampton. As the title suggests, this volume focuses on the relation between Nietzsche’s naturalism and his views on what is nowadays called the phenomenon of normativity.

In fact, the issue of naturalism is present, but rather like a *basso continuo* that accompanies the score. The questions that I find most likely to be deepened by the contributions are located at a different level. Did Nietzsche hold, or was he committed to, recognizable views in metaethics? If so, how are those views best understood? This leads to the further question of what views in metaethics can claim inspiration or support from him, and which ones might turn out to be subject to a Nietzschean critique. Of course, if it is to be adequate, any such discussion will have to involve discussion of his substantial ethical views, his views of human psychology, agency and the human condition, and the papers in this volume fully bear this out. In this way, they naturally connect with the question of what kind
of naturalist Nietzsche was or could have been, and what we can learn from that fact.

The volume opens with a very helpful introduction, which is rightly counted as a chapter in its own right. Here, the editors sketch a map of the territory, taking both Nietzsche scholarship and recent developments in analytic philosophy into account. Starting from Nietzsche’s central concern, the ‘revaluation of values’, they ask in what way a broadly naturalist outlook contributes to the critique of the present morality and helps pave the way to a ‘higher’ ideal. Apart from evaluative differences, there is a further, distinctly foundational challenge, aimed at what Nietzsche sees as the illusions that keep – and that are needed to keep – morality as we now have it in place. These illusions include morality’s claim to truth and objectivity, its commitment to blame and free will, and its supposed supernatural or metaphysical grounding. This raises not only the question of what the alternative and – according to Nietzsche – superior view of morality is, but of what the suggested alternative to morality might or should be. And what could be the force of that ‘should’, given a powerful naturalistic commitment?

In a searching, independent spirit, Peter Railton argues that Nietzsche provides the materials for a substantial response to this question. Even if we accept the naturalist premise, and accept that this leaves no room for ‘normative concepts proper’, Nietzsche still has a range of evaluative terms like ‘good’ and ‘bad’, ‘virtue’ and ‘excellence’ at his disposal. These are sufficient for normative guidance, and Railton thinks that they might be enough to sustain Nietzsche’s critique. Seen from this angle, we would be left with a notion of value that leaves room for ethical orientation, including aesthetic appraisal and the appreciation of reasons, even if there is no room for universal, necessary, a priori duties. Value turns out to be ‘part of the fabric of lived existence’ (47), and Nietzsche’s normative ‘theory’ would then be best understood as a ‘theory’ of what it would be to live well.

Peter Poellner also takes his cue from the analogy between modes of evaluation in ethics and aesthetics. According to him, Nietzsche employs a distinctive ‘aestheticist style of evaluation’ (57), where the mark of this style of evaluation is that a perceptible property of an object is ‘noninferentially taken as presenting intentional contents and/or attitudinal characteristics of some actual or possible mental state’ (60). On the basis of this account of ‘expressive properties’, Poellner suggests that all of Nietzsche’s value judgements are ultimately grounded in aesthetic experiences so defined (61f.). More than other papers, this one left me wondering just what is being said. As Poellner reads him, Nietzsche not only seems to be stuck with a highly contrived and implausible view of aesthetic experience; just as importantly, someone who ties the notion of ‘expressive properties’ to the expression of some ‘actual or possible mental state’ seems to me to implicitly model the complex variety of aesthetic modes of evaluation on a simplified view of the ethical mode. If that is what has happened, then it comes as no surprise that the ‘aestheticist’ style of evaluation readily fits
the ethical, placing a value on ‘subjectivity’. But what exactly would that contribute to our understanding of either?

Simon Robertson tackles the ‘scope problem’, which revolves around two questions: what exactly is the target of Nietzsche’s attack on morality? And how does his alternative differ from what he rejects? On Robertson’s reading, Nietzsche emerges as a ‘fairly radical individualist perfectionist’ (103) who is guided by an ideal of the highest form of human excellence. Arguing from this broadly ethical perspective, the target of Nietzsche’s critique is morality as opposed to a particular conception of it, and his view of the pursuit of human excellence is ‘quasi-aesthetic’ (104).

A pair of papers by Nadeem Hussain and Alan Thomas directly pursue the question of what metaethical view best fits Nietzsche’s commitments. Hussain argues against the interpretation, recently advanced by Clark and Dudrick, that Nietzsche was in effect a non-cognitivist. Hussain objects, plausibly enough, that there is not enough textual evidence to support that ascription. Less plausibly, Hussain suggests that Nietzsche is best understood as advancing an error theory combined with a fictionalist interpretation of ethical discourse. This strikes me as highly speculative, especially given that Hussain objects to Clark and Dudrick on the grounds that Nietzsche did not endorse or employ a specific semantics of ethical language (131). So Thomas rightly objects to this reading, but then goes on to offer his own, ‘subjectivist realist’ reading of Nietzsche. Although both papers make many excellent points, their discussion also left me dissatisfied. They argue a long way away from the texts, at a considerable height of abstraction, and as Thomas himself acknowledges, any attempt to cast Nietzsche as a precursor of a specific conception of ethical language such as fictionalism will be highly anachronistic (140). But by the same token, it would seem that his views will resist being paired not only with those of Simon Blackburn, but with those of John McDowell and kindred spirits as well.

Other papers widen the focus of the discussion. Bernard Reginster examines the conception of compassion and selflessness that he finds in Schopenhauer, and attempts to clarify the grounds on which Nietzsche objects to it. Christopher Janaway asks how the ideal of self-affirmation and the ideal of human greatness as internal constitution of the drives are related. He argues that attitudes of self-affirmation and self-negation can cause alterations in our drives and their relation to one another in such a way as to move them nearer to a state in which they satisfy the internal conditions for human greatness (195). Lanier Anderson asks how Nietzsche conceives of the self, and argues for a third way between an extreme naturalist, reductivist interpretation on the one hand, and a quasi-Kantian, transcendental reading on the other. On his view, Nietzsche endorses a ‘minimal’ but non-reductive view of the self, according to which the self is ‘a diachronic, structured whole within which enduring drives and affects stand in causal and functional relations with identifiable patterns’ (224). As such, it is something ‘over and above the constituent drives and affects’, but not a simple,
essentially unified, conscious transcendental ego (225). Finally, Richard Schacht argues that Nietzsche was indeed a naturalist, but that his approach to naturalism was ‘scientian’ rather than ‘scientistic’. While his philosophy is meant to be scientifically informed and treats the world of life, nature and history as the only world there is, it does not consider science to be either ‘paradigmatic methodologically’ or ‘decisive substantially’ (237). According to Schacht, this leaves room for the phenomenon of normativity, which he spells out in terms of ‘sensibilities’ and ‘forms of life’. While there will be no hope of a ‘single, true morality’, there will be many moralities, authoritative for agents through internalization and identification, embedded in the complex reality of human life (249).

As a whole, this volume is a welcome and worthwhile addition to the growing literature on Nietzsche and his normative, ethical and metaethical commitments. The quality of papers is consistent, marked by expertise and a high degree of exegetical and philosophical sophistication. Judged by the title, the selection somewhat lacks in close thematic focus, and the discussions of naturalism tend to be fairly brief; but it offers a variety of interesting perspectives on the work of Nietzsche and his relevance for ethics as we practise it today. It remains an open question how we can both benefit from reading Nietzsche and do justice to his texts. As Bernard Williams rightly said, these texts are systematically mined against the extraction of theory, and this is not what more analytically minded readers expect.

Mario Brandhorst

*Georg-August-Universität Göttingen*

© 2013, Mario Brandhorst

http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09608788.2013.852969

Ayon Maharaj: *The Dialectics of Aesthetic Agency: Reevaluating German Aesthetics from Kant to Adorno*. London: Bloomsbury, 2013, pp. xv + 212. £64.99 (hb). ISBN 9781441140845.

The transformative potential of art and aesthetic experience has been a familiar article of faith for modern European philosophy, particularly in the continental tradition, which has tended to understand this potential in terms of social and political change. Terming this transformative potential ‘aesthetic agency’, Ayon Maharaj gives a genealogy of this notion in post-Kantian German aesthetics as primarily embedded in, and struggling with, the central aporia of Kant’s *Third Critique*.

This central aporia, in Maharaj’s view, lies in Kant’s attempt to bridge the ‘gulf’ between the sensible realm of nature, governed by causal necessity, and the supersensible faculty of freedom. Kant intended aesthetic experience to bridge this gulf by vouchsafing a consciousness of the purposiveness of nature. This consciousness of the purposive structure of nature was intended