

we are interrogating the intuition that it is not fair to hold someone accountable—in that case it seems much more as if we think it is not fair because she is not really accountable when she has had an unfortunate history.

But there is another response that Shoemaker could make, which is to deny that the quality of will of someone who has had an unfortunate history really is the same as the quality of will of someone who has not. That is what he says about another case that has been much discussed in the literature on attributability and accountability, the case of Robert Harris. Harris had a brutal upbringing, and as an adult killed two people in cold blood and showed no remorse. Shoemaker imagines an identical but not historically brutalized agent, Spector. Shoemaker says, “Once we become aware of Harris’s upbringing, we may begin to understand how a more or less permanent (nonvoluntary?) retreat might have occurred: he could well have come to view everyone from the objective stance via a deeply ingrained defense mechanism. If so, then I do not think we view Harris as even having an identical quality of will to Spector” (202). In my view this line is essential to defending a pure quality of will account, as it obviates the need for appeals to history, but also, possibly, capacity.

The question that arises for Shoemaker’s account of answerability is whether this sort of line could cover the whole range of cases of acting for reasons. I think it is easy to grant that someone who acts with contrastive reasons in mind has a different quality of will to someone who acts for a reason without the contrastive reasons in mind. The worry is that in many cases, and appropriately so, those who have a capacity for seeing the contrastive reasons do not actually act with them in mind. Rather, and of course this looks a lot like Wolf’s view, what makes them responsible (accountable or answerable) is just that they have the capacity to see the reasons they are not acting on.

This is a wonderful book, and there are layers of value to be had from it. Shoemaker’s theory is rich and provocative; his survey and analysis of the empirical research is exemplary. His discussion of the use and misuse of the “moral/conventional task” is a particular standout. In many of his discussions, Shoemaker is breaking new ground, enriching the field with new examples and areas to consider. This book is a major contribution.

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Swanton, Christine. *The Virtue Ethics of Hume and Nietzsche*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015. Pp. 248. \$99.95 (cloth).

This book has a noble aim: to free virtue ethics from the grip of the neo-Aristotelianism that limits its scope in contemporary Anglophone philosophy. Just as there are deontological views that are not Kant’s or even Kantian, just as there are consequentialist views that are not Bentham’s or even utilitarian, so, Swanton contends, there are viable virtue ethical views that are not Aristotle’s or even Aristotelian. Indeed, the history of both Eastern and Western philosophy suggests that the majority of normative ethics has focused primarily on understanding and explaining the nature and development of virtue and vice. There are other alternatives to Aristotle (Mengzi springs to mind), but it’s not unrea-

sonable to start with Hume and Nietzsche, as has already been demonstrated by Erin Frykholm (“A Humean Particularist Virtue Ethic,” *Philosophical Studies* 172 [2015]: 2171–91) and myself (Mark Alfano, “The Most Agreeable of All Vices,” *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 21 [2013]: 767–90).

In the meta-ethical introduction, Swanton argues that interpreting a philosopher’s normative perspective is a matter of mapping the most important ethical properties and relations in that philosopher’s writings. Such a map always abstracts certain details but is answerable to expectations of accuracy, adherence to authorial intent, and helpfulness to both the interpreter and the interpreter’s audience. In the interest of accuracy, Swanton is keen to show that the views she attributes to Hume and Nietzsche satisfy the “Constraint on Virtue,” according to which, “What counts as a virtue is constrained by an adequate theory of human growth and development” (8). This seems to be Swanton’s quick-and-dirty version of Owen Flanagan’s Principle of Minimal Psychological Realism, which says, “Make sure when constructing a moral theory or projecting a moral ideal that the character, decision processing, and behavior prescribed are possible, or are perceived to be possible, for creatures like us” (*Varieties of Moral Personality* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991], 32). In the case of Hume, this is done by mining Paul Bloom’s *Just Babies* (New York: Penguin, 2013) for empirical support. For Nietzsche, Swanton relies primarily on Freud’s dissident disciple, Alfred Adler (*The Neurotic Constitution*, trans. B. Glueck and J. E. Lind [London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1918], and *Understanding Human Nature*, trans. W. B. Wolfe [London: Allen & Unwin, 1932]), a somewhat odd choice. Chapter 2 argues that both Hume and Nietzsche are response-dependence virtue ethicists, according to whom ethical properties are “open to certain responses or construals in responders having appropriate sensibilities, and these responses or construals are what make the property intelligible as an ethical property” (23–24). Her commitment to respecting authorial intent is less clear, as I explain below. Whether her maps are helpful depends on the reader. This one, at least, did not find them so. The book concludes with Swanton’s reflections on the prospects for a Humean “virtue ethics of love” and a Nietzschean “virtue ethics of becoming.” In this review, I focus on the six central chapters, which will be of most interest to potential readers.

The chapters on Hume explore the compatibility of his sentimentalism with virtue ethics (chap. 3), the compatibility of his view of justice with virtue ethics (chap. 4), and the variety of virtue ethics he’s best understood as espousing (chap. 5). In chapter 3, Swanton argues that Hume’s sentimentalism is corrigible in several ways, making it immune to standard objections, such as the charge that sentimentalism cannot distinguish between what someone is merely disposed to (dis)approve and what merits (dis)approval. First, only agents who possess a moral sense (especially the sentiment of benevolence) are capable of responding emotionally in such a way as to constitute virtue (through approbation) and vice (through disapprobation). Second, even these select few may err; only those with an “authoritative” moral sense tend to respond with apt emotions (47). Third, even among those with authoritative moral senses, errors may crop up when “the cooperation of the reason of the understanding” is not forthcoming or when, despite such cooperation, “there can be mistaken views about for example ‘tendencies’ of traits in certain conditions” (47). In sum, “for Hume what makes a trait a

virtue at the thinnest level of description is that through properties possessed it is *naturally fitted* to be a virtue” (57). Swanton’s underuse of commas here and elsewhere is surpassed only by her overuse of inverted commas in the chapters about Nietzsche, of which more below.

Chapter 4 begins with a footnote praising the notorious moral imbecile, Ayn Rand (70), who lurks like Baba Yaga in the book’s back matter. In this chapter, Swanton contends that the artificial virtue of justice is recognizable even within Hume’s sentimentalist framework. She goes on in chapter 5 to explore various sorts of traits that Hume countenances and that mark him as an ethicist who gives special emphasis to virtues that are appropriate or fitting even though they do not tend to produce optimal consequences. These include modes of expression of bonds of love “fitting or appropriate to the merits of the valuable qualities of the” beloved (95), bonds of love “proper to forms of blood relationship” (97), bonds of reciprocity (98), and bonds of amity (98). In addition, these virtues include dispositions to expressions of pride (100), joy in what is valuable in one’s local material and social environment (102), realistic optimism (103), respect for persons and their property (104), and respect for “legitimate” hierarchies (105) such as the English monarchy (!).

The chapters on Nietzsche explore the compatibility of his alleged egoism with virtue ethics (chap. 6), the compatibility of his existentialism with virtue ethics (chap. 7), and the variety of virtue ethics he’s best understood as espousing (chap. 8). What is “virtuous egoism” (111)? Nietzsche’s own texts are of no help in answering this question. Despite Swanton’s quotation marks, he never uses the phrase “*tugendhaften Egoismus*,” even in his unpublished writings. Instead, Swanton refers to Tara Smith (*Ayn Rand’s Normative Ethics* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006]) and provides this gloss: “The fundamental shape of an individual’s life ought to be one where her own life is affirmed by him or her [*sic*]” (115).

Surely a senior philosopher like Swanton would not make such a seemingly egregious misattribution without some textual evidence. The one passage she is able to cite in favor of this interpretation is *Human, All Too Human* 95 on the “morality of the mature [*reifen*] individual.” Here, Nietzsche says, “To make of oneself a complete *person*, and in all that one does to have in view the *highest good* of this person—that gets us further than those pity-filled agitations and actions for the sake of others.” In her attempt to make the Randian pill easier to swallow, Swanton plays up the distinction between maturity and immaturity. The problem is that *Human, All Too Human* is not one of Nietzsche’s mature works, and he rarely uses “*reifen*” or its cognates in later works (or, for that matter, “*erwachsen* [adult/grown-up]” or its cognates). When he does so, it is usually to express an agricultural metaphor of ripeness for picking (e.g., *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* II “Blessed Isles”)—never, so far as I can tell, to characterize an ideal of egoism. (You can check for yourself at www.nietzschesource.org.) Swanton also tries to make hay of *Daybreak* 516, but in this passage Nietzsche merely argues that a character with benevolence and self-hatred is not as good as a character with benevolence toward both self and other—hardly a revolutionary proposal.

Such basic errors are shockingly common in this book. On page 33, Swanton equates the “man of the future” from *On the Genealogy of Morals* II.25 (Zarathustra) with the “man of the future” from *Beyond Good and Evil* 203 (“the dwarf

animal of equal rights and claims”). She claims that Nietzsche holds that the “convalescent” masses should self-overcome,” illegitimately transferring his self-characterization as a convalescent to the general public, whom he never described in such terms (117). She quotes Nietzsche as diagnosing the “Christian neurosis” despite the fact that he never uses this phrase (120). Perhaps she has in mind his description of the “*religiöse Neurose*” in *Beyond Good and Evil* 47 or *On the Genealogy of Morals* III.21? She provides no citation, so we cannot be sure. She claims that Nietzsche speaks “often” of the “will to memory of the sovereign individual” (122). He does not. The sovereign individual is discussed precisely once, in *On the Genealogy of Morals* II.2, but the “will to memory” is not ascribed to him; indeed, the phrase “*Wille zur Erinnerung*” is not attested in Nietzsche’s entire corpus (including his unpublished writings), nor is “*Wille zum Gedächtnis*” or “*Wille zum Speicher*.” Swanton claims that “Many writing on Nietzsche think that for Nietzsche (a) we have a ‘basic instinct’ for cruelty and (b) that it is healthy for this instinct to be manifested” (142). The secondary literature suggests otherwise, insofar as the only author to consider attributing this view to Nietzsche is Swanton herself (“Nietzsche and the Virtues of Mature Egoism,” in *Nietzsche’s “On the Genealogy of Morality”: A Critical Guide*, ed. Simon May [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011], 292, and “Nietzsche and the ‘Collective Individual,’” in *Individual and Community in Nietzsche’s Philosophy*, ed. Julian Young [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015], 184). Brian Leiter (*Nietzsche on Morality* [New York: Routledge, 2002], 231–32) comes close, but he only endorses (a), not (b). Swanton also attributes to Nietzsche the diagnosis of the vice of “justice to excess” (164), a phrase and concept he never employs.

I could multiply these examples ad nauseam, but I will finish with the one that forced me to retrieve my jaw from the floor—Swanton’s attempt to reconcile Nietzsche’s valorization of forgetting with his doctrine of the eternal recurrence (162). It goes something like this:

DEMON: The eternal hourglass of existence is turned over again and again, and you with it, speck of dust!
 SWANTON: Fuhgeddaboutit!

According to Donnie Brasco in the eponymous film, one meaning of “fuhgeddaboutit” is that something is the greatest thing in the world. It’s a bit more Brooklyn than, “*du bist ein Gott und nie hörte ich Göttlicheres!*” but it’s an approximation. According to Christine Swanton, “Forget it!” is Nietzsche’s life-affirming response to contemplating the eternal recurrence. Brasco also says that “fuhgeddaboutit” can simply mean, “Forget about it,” and Swanton evidently has this purely disquotational gloss of the phrase in mind. One is, she says, “enjoined not to dwell on things.” She contends that Nietzsche advocates merely “affirmation of one’s life as a whole,” not “affirmation of each detail of one’s life.” Can this be his view? In *The Gay Science* 341, he is at pains to emphasize that every single detail—whether pleasurable, painful, or trivial—would be repeated, right down to the spider in one’s room. And in *Beyond Good and Evil* 56, he describes the life-affirming character as “shouting insatiably *da capo*” because he has “not only come to terms and learned to get along with whatever was and is” but wants it all to be

repeated, down to the last detail. Yet another meaning of “fuhgeddaboutit,” according to Brasco, is, “I disagree,” so to Swanton’s misinterpretation of the eternal recurrence, I say, “Fuhgeddaboutit.”

Reading this book, one gets the impression that Swanton has not so much studied Nietzsche as eavesdropped on a couple of teenage boys shooting the bull after reading *Atlas Shrugged*. Snippets of his ideas are glued together haphazardly with commonsense bromides, poorly disguised tenets of Rand, and unhelpful allusions to Adler and other individual psychologists. The resulting pastiche is a chimera: *proste Swanton opithen te Rand messos te Adler*.

Should you spend your money or your time on *The Virtue Ethics of Hume and Nietzsche*? Fuhgeddaboutit!

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Tessman, Lisa. *Moral Failure: On the Impossible Demands of Morality*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014. Pp. x+281. \$69.00 (cloth).

In this engaging and thought-provoking volume, Lisa Tessman argues that there are circumstances in life that make moral failure unavoidable. By this she means, primarily, that we may find ourselves in situations in which we have conflicting nonnegotiable moral requirements. Since they conflict, whatever we do we will violate at least one of these requirements and so we will fail morally in that respect. This is so, she believes, even if from the standpoint of action guidance, of deciding what to do, we correctly judge that we should fulfill one requirement rather than the other. Since the overridden moral requirement is nonnegotiable, we fail morally even when we fulfill the overriding moral requirement instead. In her view, the important issue in the moral dilemmas debate inaugurated by Bernard Williams in his 1965 paper “Ethical Consistency” (*Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, supp., 39:103–24) is not whether or not some moral conflicts are irresolvable. Rather, it is whether or not some moral conflicts make moral failure unavoidable. In this work Tessman defends a “pro-dilemma” position in the debate so understood, and she relates her position to a variety of discussions concerning Holocaust witnessing, oppression theory, supererogation, and feminist care ethics.

Part of Tessman’s defense is based on a form of moral pluralism according to which the sources of moral value are plural and may be nonfungible (meaning that, in a conflict, choosing one kind of value does not make up for the loss of the value not chosen). The last point is especially important because it is the basis of her concept of a nonnegotiable moral requirement. For Tessman, if A and B are conflicting nonnegotiable requirements, then even if A is correctly chosen, the “unique value” of fulfilling B will be lost and the cost of violating B will be “a cost that no one should have to bear.” When these conditions obtain, B remains a “standing moral requirement” and the failure to fulfill it is a moral failure (44). However, Tessman does not think all conflicting moral requirements are nonnegotiable. In a conflict of negotiable requirements, either fulfilling the overridden requirement would not have had unique value or its violation would not involve a cost that no one should have to bear. In this case, it does not continue as a standing moral requirement, and the failure to fulfill it is not a moral failure. In