CHRISTINE SWANTON

The Virtue Ethics of
Hume &
Nietzsche

The Virtue Ethics of Hume
and Nietzsche

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The Virtue Ethics of Hume and Nietzsche

Christine Swanton

WILEY Blackwell

To the memory of Bob Solomon

Contents

Preface

This book is dedicated to the late Robert Solomon whose regular visits to the University of Auckland Philosophy Department over a period of many years caused, by a process of osmosis, an increasing appreciation of the resources for ethics of the Continental tradition and particularly Nietzsche. Both he and Kathy Higgins, to whom I am also indebted, helped me to see how the area of virtue ethics could be enriched by attention to not only Continental philosophy but also psychology including psychoanalysis, important for a study of Nietzsche.

In the case of Hume, my interest was also triggered by people, devotees of Hume, and in particular those attending a Hume Society dinner at an APA Pacific Meeting whose attendees displayed all the Humean virtues of charm, cheerfulness, and friendliness, not to mention wit. They encouraged me to attend the International Hume Society Conference in Utah which featured many great papers on Hume's ethics, and I was hooked. My thanks in particular to Jackie Taylor, and Rachel Cohon. I owe thanks also to Anne Jacobson for encouraging me to write a paper for her edited collection *Feminist Interpretations of Hume*.

I am indebted to Julian Young, a former colleague, for many conversations on Nietzsche (and Heidegger) and for inviting me to present at a conference on communitarian aspects of Nietzsche's thought at Wake Forest. My thoughts on Nietzsche and altruism were also developed in an invited paper at the University of Southampton at a conference on Nietzsche.

I would like to thank Garrett Cullity for comments on response dependence, and many conversations and comments on the thick concepts. I am grateful too to my PhD student Nicholas Smith who provided comments on all chapters of my penultimate draft, and who had an unerring eye for weaknesses and obscurities. Thanks Nick.

A great debt of gratitude is due also to the series editors Marcia Baron and Michael Slote who made comments on all chapters of earlier drafts, which resulted in considerable improvements.

Acknowledgments to previously published work are as follows:

Chapter 3 is a modified and extended form of "Can Hume Be Read as a Virtue Ethicist?" *Hume Studies* 33 (2007), 91–113. Reprinted with permission.

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Chapter 7 contains material from "Can Nietzsche Be Both an Existentialist and a Virtue Ethicist" in *Values and Virtues*, ed. Timothy Chappell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 171–188. © Oxford University Press 2006, reprinted with permission.

Chapter 8 contains material from "Robert Solomon's Aristotelian Nietzsche" in *Passion, Death and Spirituality: The Philosophy of Robert C. Solomon*, ed. Kathleen Higgins and David Sherman (Dordrecht: Springer, 2012), 113–126. © Springer 2012, reprinted with permission.

In this work I use the Selby-Bigge, Nidditch, and Miller editions of Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature*; the *Enquiries Concerning the Principles of Morals*; and the *Essays Moral, Literary and Political*, respectively. I also made an effort to include the Norton and Norton paragraph citations to the *Treatise* in the first citation of a passage. Abbreviations used for these purposes are:

E = *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, 3rd edition, ed. P.H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975)

Miller = *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. Eugene F. Miller (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1987)

T = *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L.A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), preceded where applicable by the paragraph numbering of David and Mary Norton's edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000)

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Introduction

As is well known by now, virtue ethics is a vibrant development in modern substantive moral theorizing, no longer in its infancy. What is relatively new in that development is the deployment of texts other than those of the ancient Greek moral theorists, for contemporary virtue ethics has to date been dominated by the eudaimonist tradition of the ancients, notably Aristotle. Yet other philosophers can also be seen as having an ethics of character, and as rich sources for the future development of virtue ethics. For Hume and Nietzsche to be included within this category, a virtue ethical interpretation of their texts is needed, just as attention to Aristotle's texts has underpinned neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics. The task of this book is to provide just such an interpretation.

Hume and Nietzsche are among the great philosophers in the field of ethics. Yet it is still a matter of controversy how their moral philosophy should be read. Are they skeptics or immoralists, relativists or subjectivists, of perhaps an existentialist kind (in the case of Nietzsche) or sentimentalist kind (in the case of Hume). If their moral theory is to be read as objectivist and substantive should they be read as consequentialists, or perhaps virtue ethicists? This book rejects readings which are neither realist nor objectivist, offering instead a virtue ethical map of their moral philosophy.

Yet their moral theorizing has been understood as starkly different from each other, so much so that it may seem odd to think of them both as virtue ethicists. Hume and his predecessors such as Francis Hutcheson have been described as "warm" while Nietzsche is "cool" (if not downright cold and ruthless).[1] Nietzsche is popularly thought of as an immoralist egoist, while Hume on recent interpretations is seen as a forerunner of an ethics of care.[2] On my view this contrast should not be overstated. Hume has a central role for self-love in his moral philosophy as well as for benevolence, while Nietzsche is not an egoist in a crude sense, making room for altruistic virtue properly understood. For Hume, lack of self-love contaminates character; not only is a person so afflicted "abject" but her self-contempt underlies

vices such as tendencies to insolence (to inferiors) and servility (to superiors). Nietzsche traces the role of self-contempt in vice more extensively. By contrast with Nietzsche, Hume focuses more on other-regarding aspects of virtue and vice. However in a "Wide Reflective Equilibrium" of the "Grand Unified Virtue Ethics" the thoughts of these thinkers and others would be integrated, but that mammoth task is not attempted here.

In a work which purports to offer virtue ethical interpretations of philosophers who have not traditionally been read in this way, four basic questions need to be addressed.

(1) Given that my interpretation presupposes that virtue ethics is not defined in terms of the eudaimonist tradition of the ancients, how should we understand virtue ethics, and a virtue ethical interpretation?
(2) Why should the ethical writings of Hume and Nietzsche be understood as fitting naturally into the virtue ethical fold?
(3) Granted that there are features of Hume and Nietzsche which might appear to provide insuperable obstacles to a virtue ethical interpretation, how can these features be seen as compatible with a virtue ethical map of their thought?
(4) Given that the virtue ethics of Hume and Nietzsche differs from that of Aristotle, what aspects of their ethical writings add to the virtue ethical tradition broadly conceived?

The first two problems are the topics of Part I. Chapter 1 discusses the idea of interpretation as a map, and argues that virtue ethics should be seen as a genus (or more accurately a family) of moral theory. More particularly virtue ethics as such is a family; Aristotelian (or neo-Aristotelian) virtue ethics is a genus of virtue ethics; while Aristotle's virtue ethics is a species of virtue ethics. This understanding, which I argue mirrors deontology as a family, Kantian ethics as a genus, and Kant as a species of deontology, allows for the possibility of Nietzsche and Hume being read as virtue ethicists.

Can Hume and Nietzsche be seen as natural candidates for interpretation as virtue ethicists? It would seem so, for the normative ethical concepts under scrutiny in both Nietzsche and Hume are qualities of persons and actions as described by the so-called thick concepts, such as truthful, honest, just, benevolent, as well as charming, witty, hasty, attentive, complaining, craving solitude, joyful, and a host of others. This feature of Nietzsche's and Hume's works makes their ethical writings extremely rich and subtle. Furthermore their focus on the thick concepts allows for no natural place to drive an important distinction between the moral and the non-moral. A vast number of virtues are all important to varying degrees, in varying circumstances, to leading a good life proper to human beings. Leading such a life is the overarching organizing concept in their moral theorizing, as it is for Aristotle, and indeed for virtue ethics in general.

Not only are Nietzsche's and Hume's writings notable for the prevalence of thick concepts, the excellences of character (virtues) are central in their moral theorizing.

It is not unusual now for Hume to be read as part of a virtue ethical tradition. Jacqueline Taylor claims that "Hume's moral philosophy may plausibly be construed as a version of virtue ethics [for] among the *central* concepts of his theory are character, virtue and vice, rather than rules, duty, and obligation."[3] This reason for classing Hume as a virtue ethicist conforms to my basic definition of virtue ethics in *Virtue Ethics: A Pluralistic View*,[4] and elaborated in my article "The Definition of Virtue Ethics"[5] according to which virtue ethical theories are those in which virtue concepts are central. Nietzsche too has been seen as a fitting subject for a virtue ethical reading. In his *Living With Nietzsche*,[6] Robert C. Solomon maps Nietzsche onto Aristotle in a fundamental respect. Agreeing with Julius Moravscik's claim that Aristotle and Nietzsche were "two of a kind … both functionalists, both naturalists, both 'teleologists,' standing very much opposed to the utilitarians and Kantians," Solomon claims: "Nietzsche's ethics, like Aristotle's can best be classified in introductory ethics readers as an ethics of 'self realization.'"[7] Accordingly, for him, "what is essential to this view of ethics … an ethics of virtue, aretaic ethics – is that the emphasis is wholly on excellence, a teleological conception."[8] Chapters 6 and 7 elaborate the way in which excellence features centrally in Nietzsche within a self-realizationist understanding of the doctrine of will to power. Essential to this understanding is taking seriously Nietzsche's claim that psychology is the "queen of the sciences," for it is through his psychology, in particular the psychology that goes beyond the surfaces of human motivation to its "depths," that we can understand the way in which "will to power" is distorted or otherwise. This qualitative evaluation of will to power is the key to understanding the difference between virtue and vice in Nietzsche.

Despite the apparent naturalness of embracing Hume and Nietzsche within the virtue ethical fold, serious obstacles to such a reading exist. The third basic question above thus needs to be addressed: in Part II I consider problems raised by Hume's sentimentalism and notion of justice, and in Part III problems raised by Nietzsche's apparent egoism, immoralism, and existentialism. Consider first Hume, the subject of Part II. To be clear about the task ahead, let me summarize how you *cannot* read Hume if he is to be part of the virtue ethical tradition. All of the following common readings of Hume have to be rejected.

(A) *A "non-sensible" subjectivist*. Wiggins's "sensible subjectivism" I do not regard as incompatible with virtue ethics. Discussion of this issue is a topic of Chapter 3. There I argue for an (emotional) response dependence interpretation of Hume which allows for a realist and objectivist interpretation of virtue, according to which properties of persons can be properly understood as "naturally fitted" to be called virtues. This view is the essence of Hume's sentimentalism; hence I argue that a virtue ethical map is compatible with Hume's sentimentalism.

(B) *A non-rationalist*. In standard virtue ethics, ethics is at least in part a reason giving and reason responsive enterprise. In Chapter 3 I show how Hume can be understood as conceiving ethics as a rational enterprise of a kind compatible with virtue ethics. Central to this view is the idea that the "Reason" proper to the

operations of what Hume calls the faculty of understanding does not exhaust the space of rationality, and indeed the view of ethics as a reason responsive enterprise.

(C) *A hedonist*. To show that Hume can be read as a virtue ethicist one also needs to show that he has an aretaic conception of many important values such as pleasure. This is a complex but vital issue for a virtue ethical reading, so in this Introduction I shall say a little about it. According to virtue ethics, many so-called values are not truly values or goods unless they are, as we may say, infused with virtue. Pleasure, on this view, is not, as Aristotle would put it, good without qualification unless it exhibits virtue. As I have argued elsewhere, virtue ethics rejects "list theories" of the good or "values" which subscribe to what I have called "The Thesis of Non-Aretaic Value": "Virtues and vices are understood derivatively as forms of responsiveness to, or as instrumental in the promotion of (or minimization of respectively) 'base-level' goods or evils, or intrinsic values or disvalues, understood non-aretaically."[9]

Can Hume be seen as rejecting such a thesis? Although he does not actively address the issue, his writings, by comparison with modern theories, are shot through with aretaic notions, such as decency, admirability, good breeding, and politeness, which inform the value notions. For example one may think that cheerfulness is a virtue simply because it spreads pleasure. But not so for Hume; his view is more sophisticated than that. What merits approbation is cheerfulness which diffuses pleasure having a certain aretaic quality, dependent on the status of those spreading cheer, and on the nature of the pleasure as temperate and decent: "In all polite nations and ages, a relish for pleasure, if accompanied with temperance and decency, is esteemed a considerable merit, even in the greatest men; and becomes still more requisite in those of inferior rank and character" (E para. 203, 251).

The passage suggests that the status of cheerfulness as a virtue is dependent on the aretaic *sources* of the pleasure diffused, as well as on the aretaic *nature* of that pleasure. Pleasure can be indecent, crude, impolite, and intemperate, and if it possesses these qualities it is no longer valuable or good.

Another problem lies in the fact that Hume says in the *Treatise* that "the very essence of virtue … is to produce pleasure and that of vice to give pain" (T 2.1.7.4 / 296). This may suggest a hedonistic reading of the *criteria* of virtue. However as I argue in Chapters 2 and 3, Hume's remark concerns meta-ethics and not the criteria of virtue. The claim about essence refers to Hume's response dependent view of virtue: one might say that just as it is the "essence" of redness to produce red sensations, so it is the "essence" of virtue to produce pleasure (more specifically that kind of pleasure which constitutes the *moral* sense). In fact, directly after the quoted passage, Hume claims that "the virtue and vice must be part of our character in order to excite pride and humility." He is referring to the definition of virtue as a power to elicit certain sentiments. In short, as I shall argue, to read the claim about essence as endorsing a hedonistic understanding of the criteria of virtue is to confuse the definition of virtue and the moral sense, with the criteria of virtue.

(D) *A consequentialist.* Virtue ethics is a type of non-consequentialist normative ethical theory, because not all virtues have as their point or rationale the promotion of good, or value. Some are virtues because they are expressive of flourishing states (e.g., joyfulness), some are closely connected to respect and status (e.g., justice and honesty), some are centrally concerned with the manifestation of love, affection, or other bonds between individuals or between individuals and institutions or projects (e.g., friendship, loyalty, perseverance). Responsiveness expressive of bonds in, for example, grief is not and need not be proportional to degree or strength of value. Consequences then are not the only things that matter morally for the virtue ethicist.

In Chapter 5 (and also in Chapter 4 in relation to justice) I argue in detail that Hume should be read in this manner, as a pluralistic non-consequentialist about virtue. Though we may admire and take delight in some, indeed most, virtues because they are effective in promoting some end – the good of mankind – some may be delighted in and admired for other reasons. Hume's system allows for the possibility that judgments about what traits are virtues may be correctly grounded in features other than consequences, features that also make a trait "naturally fitting" for possession by human beings. Charm, tenderness, enthusiasm for dazzling qualities may be fitting or not, for all kinds of reasons. For example, charm that is fitting is engaging, as opposed to sleazy or insincere; the right sort of honesty is honorable as opposed to weak divulgence of what should not be divulged; proper deference, opposed to servile deference, is well bred; attentiveness can be delicate, as opposed to invasive; tenderness can be cloying or fittingly expressive of affection. One of the marks of an authoritative judge is that she is discriminating, and is able to distinguish between the excessive joyfulness of a mind "disordered by the frenzies of enthusiasm" ("Of Refinement in the Arts," Miller 299) and healthy joyfulness. Charm that is employed in a manipulative way to get a job, is unnaturally excessive, or is expressive of a narcissistic personality, will not give immediate pleasure to an authoritative judge. It will not be registered as engaging. This permits considerable latitude allowed by difference in social custom: what might count as excessive politeness or charm in Australasia may not be regarded as such elsewhere. There is not here however a recipe for relativism: much scope for social critique exists.

It is unquestionable that virtue and vice are the central objects of moral evaluation for Hume, but if any of the above types of interpretation are correct he can be read as a theorist of virtue but not as a virtue ethicist.

Second, let me summarize common understandings of Nietzsche which also have to be rejected if he is to be understood as a virtue ethicist.

(A) *An egoist (of an "immoralist" kind).* In Chapter 6 I argue that the sense in which Nietzsche is an egoist is compatible with a virtuous altruism. Nietzsche subscribes to what may be called "virtuous egoism" and attacks what may be called non-virtuous altruism. Central to virtuous egoism is affirmation of one's *own* life, and central to non-virtuous altruism is that it is self-sacrificing in a deplorable way. Virtuous egoism for Nietzsche, I argue, is compatible with having a stake in one's society and other people, and is to be contrasted with the egoism of the immature.

(B) *A perfectionist-consequentialist.* According to this view, life affirmation is not for all; the point of many lives is to be mere instruments for the production of the highest good, whether understood as the highest form of culture or the highest types of human being. In Chapter 6 I argue against this view, distinguishing it from the much more benign view that even if the above are the highest values, the majority are not to be seen as mere instruments for its production. Rather the failure of the "herd" to affirm their *own* lives in ways proper to *them* (e.g., such failures as being lazy, excessively imitative, hedonistic, complacent, resentment-filled) creates an environment completely inimical to the development of "man's lucky hits": the higher types.

(C) *A consequentialist about power.* According to this type of consequentialism the highest value is power, a value to be maximized, either within an egoist or non-egoist consequentialist moral framework. From the perspective of a virtue ethical interpretation the problem here is structurally similar to the problem of reading Hume as a hedonist. To be a virtue ethicist, Nietzsche has to have an aretaic conception of power, or the "will to power." According to this conception, at the core of virtue is undistorted will to power, whereas vice is marked by distorted kinds. Taking seriously the importance Nietzsche places on depth psychology, I argue in Chapters 6 and 7 for an evaluation of will to power as qualitative, showing how vice is characteristically marked by distorted forms of will to power as forms of escape from self. A number of distortions are discussed through understanding Nietzsche via the psychological dissection of Freudian and Adlerian conceptions of neurosis and perversion characterizing self-sacrifice, resentment, forms of punitive rigoristic "justice" unleavened by grace, cruelty, bad conscience, and forms of the ascetic ideal.

(D) *A moral relativist.* Nietzsche's apparent relativization of virtue to types of human beings, as well as his perspectivism about knowledge, have led to understandings of Nietzsche as a moral relativist. I argue against this view in Chapter 8, showing how a universalism in Nietzsche's conception of many important virtues such as generosity, justice, consideration (respect), wisdom, is compatible with a sophisticated relativization of virtue to such factors as one's talents, strength, and the narrative particularities of one's life. This relativization occurs within a dynamic "virtue ethics of becoming," described further in Chapter 10.

Consider now the fourth question posed earlier. It is not enough to show how Nietzsche and Hume can be read as virtue ethicists; we want to know how they in their different ways take virtue ethics further than does Aristotle. What new insights would virtue ethicists do well to examine? Consider first Hume. Book II of the *Treatise*, "The Passions," provides an insightful and remarkably detailed account of various emotions and feelings ranging from love and pride, hope and joy, esteem and contempt, compassion and benevolence. This discussion is of immense value for accounts of the virtues, and what makes traits virtues. What I call "virtue clusters" are associated with these various "passions." We can speak accordingly of the joy-based cluster, the pride-based cluster, the esteem-based cluster, and so on. Of particular importance is the fact that attention to the nature of these clusters allows

for an understanding that the features which make traits virtues are quite varied. For example, passions such as grief and love in the form of tenderness, affection, friendship speak to the bonds we have between individuals, and as Hume makes clear, in for example his discussion of grief, the strength and virtuousness of bonds does not necessarily track the value of those to whom we are bonded. Again, Hume speaks of virtuous modes of deference, at the core of which is the passion of esteem, according to status properties. The variety of features which make traits virtues demonstrate, as I argue in Chapter 5, that Hume should be read as a pluralist about virtue of a non-consequentialist kind.

It is unquestionable in my view that the great contribution made by Nietzsche to virtue ethics is his depth psychological account of the nature of virtue and vice. Unlike traditional virtue ethics Nietzsche focuses on motivational failings of great concern to the existentialist tradition, forms of escape from self, which are the topics of Chapters 6 and 7. Chapter 6 is specifically occupied with one such form, escape from self into otherness manifested by the self-sacrificing individual. Nietzsche is especially concerned too with escape from one's individuality, creativity, and "genius" manifested by the "herd" personality in his hedonism, laziness, imitativeness, and complacency. Resentment as externalized self-contempt is also a "danger of dangers" for Nietzsche, for its powerful cultural contagion results finally in an overturning of values into those which suit the weak, values which provide a hostile environment for the development of "higher" human beings.

In keeping with the name of the series to which this book is a contribution, Part IV "New Directions" addresses another aspect of the fourth question above: Can we see Hume and Nietzsche heralding new types of virtue ethics? In Chapter 9 I outline a virtue ethics of love which is inspired by Hume's notion of discussed in Chapter 5. In Chapter 10 I explore a Nietzschean virtue ethics of creativity inspired by the dynamic features of Nietzsche's notion of overcoming, and his elusive phrase "Become who you are."

Notes

1 See Michael Slote, "Agent-Based Virtue Ethics," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, 20 (1995), 83–101.
2 See, e.g., Anne Jaap Jacobson, *Feminist Interpretations of David Hume* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000); Michael Slote, *Morals from Motives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), viii–ix.
3 "Virtue and the Evaluation of Character," in *The Blackwell Guide to Hume's Treatise*, ed. Saul Traiger (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 276–295. My italics.
4 *Virtue Ethics: A Pluralistic View* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 4–5.
5 "The Definition of Virtue Ethics," in *The Cambridge Companion to Virtue Ethics*, ed. Daniel Russell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 315–338.
6 *Living With Nietzsche: What the Great "Immoralist" Has to Teach Us* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).
7 Ibid., 129.
8 Ibid., 131.
9 *Virtue Ethics: A Pluralistic View*, 34.

Part I

A Virtue Ethical Map

Chapter 1

Interpretation as a Map

1.1   The Notion of an Interpretative Map

In recent times there has been a broadening and enrichment of the church of virtue ethics: Aristotle and neo-Aristotelianism are no longer seen as the sole inspiration for modern developments of a virtue ethical tradition.[1] Hume and Nietzsche are now important figures in this trend, but to fully justify this view we need to see how their philosophies can reasonably be seen as species of virtue ethics.

Placing philosophers within certain philosophical traditions is a fraught business, which requires some justification. To situate Hume and Nietzsche within a virtue ethical tradition in particular may raise eyebrows. Marcia Baron puts the problem this way:

> The history of ethics is not generally well served by asking whether Kant, or Rousseau or Hume counts as a –ist, where the relevant "ism" was developed in an entirely different era, responding to very different concerns from those that animated the work of the person in question.[2]

To classify Hume as a sentimentalist or as a moral sense theorist is acceptable. To classify him as a virtue ethicist, however, may fall foul of the worry: it may unhelpfully employ a category whose home in a modern context is a protagonist in modern debates about, for example, consequentialism versus deontology, conducted in books such as *Three Methods of Ethics*.[3] In Hume's day the central debates were between moral sense theorists and the Rationalists. In Nietzsche's times cultural critique within a historicist *Volkisch* tradition emphasizing concepts such as heritage and decadence held sway.

As the hermeneutic tradition has taught us, however, interpreting texts is an ongoing process, characterized not only by a sensitivity to the historical conditions of the writer but also by a critique of patterns of interpretation that themselves have been conditioned by the then prevailing theoretical preconceptions and concerns. Such critique may transform earlier interpretation in the light of new possibilities opened up by new ways of understanding. For as Ricoeur argues, the process of interpretation is "ill represented by a personification of the text as a conversational partner," for with writing, the conditions of dialogue are no longer fulfilled.[4] So how can we conceptualize more precisely the requirements of both historical sensitivity and meaning relative to the world of the interpreter?

I address this problem by employing David Schmidtz's helpful notion of moral theory as a map.[5] A map offers an interpretation of a terrain or subject matter that is "stylized," "abstract," and "simplified."[6] A virtue ethical reading of Hume then, as a map of the terrain of Hume's texts, is a somewhat abstract simplified reading of that terrain. In essence, the idea of a map enables us to conceive of interpretation as satisfying the twin desiderata of accuracy, understood in terms of sensitivity to historical context and authorial intent, and meaningfulness within the world of the interpreter. For Schmidtz such meaningfulness is essentially helpfulness: indeed for a map to be a good map it must be, according to Schmidtz, both accurate and helpful.

How can the notion of moral theory as a map resolve the problems posed above? In response to any charge that a virtue ethical map is historically insensitive it may be claimed that not only is virtue ethics a well established and indeed ancient tradition, or set of traditions, but that it need not be constrained by the modern debates, which are even now developing an "old fashioned" feel. Virtue ethics has moved on from debates about virtue versus duty and rules for example. Nonetheless, the objection goes, even where use of a virtue ethical framework is not distorted by modern concerns of little relevance to Hume and Nietzsche, reading Nietzsche and Hume as virtue ethicists is untimely, for virtue ethics was not a category salient in their philosophical context. However that does not imply that the category is not applicable: the accuracy of that claim depends on one's conception of virtue ethics, discussed in the next chapter.

Whether or not the application of the category is appropriate depends on the second desideratum of interpretation: meaningfulness relative to the world of the interpreter. Interpretation is not only a creative critique of past patterns of interpretation of the text by deploying possibly new or neglected understandings and theoretical media (such as virtue ethics). It is also contextualized by implicit criticism of the manner in which those very media are currently understood. In particular I shall open up new understandings and developments of virtue ethics which are arguably more suitable for interpreting Nietzsche and Hume.

We have seen that for Schmidtz a good map is (a) accurate and (b) helpful. Let us consider each of these requirements in more detail. The requirement of accuracy implies that there is a definite terrain or subject matter of a map, and that it is therefore

possible for maps to be inaccurate. In arguing against subjectivist or irrationalist interpretations of Hume's ethics, then, one argues that these readings are inaccurate and should be discarded. However the requirement of accuracy allows for the possibility that several different maps may be good maps of the same terrain. For example I argue in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 that a virtue ethical map of Hume is not incompatible with a map that reads him as a sentimentalist or as a moral sense theorist. I shall also argue in Chapter 7 that a virtue ethical reading of Nietzsche is not incompatible with an existentialist reading. Indeed requirement (a) is the more satisfied *ceteris paribus* the richer and less simplified is the map. Integrating several different maps within the overall category of one map (such as virtue ethics) is *ceteris paribus* the way to make the overarching map more accurate. However requirement (a) is constrained by requirement (b): to maintain helpfulness a map must remain simplified and abstract. There will then be a creative tension between accuracy and helpfulness, precluding an extreme reading of the requirement of accuracy where there is a refusal to categorize at all.

The requirement of helpfulness addresses the worry that only categories current at the time of Hume and Nietzsche be applied to those figures. Helpfulness is a contextual notion. An extremely important context is the need to bring into salience features of Hume and Nietzsche which have been systematically ignored, neglected, or distorted as a result of interpretations reflecting previous (or indeed current) moral theoretic tendencies, such as forms of moral skepticism, emotivism, or subjectivism. The provision of objectivist moral theoretic maps of these thinkers has proved difficult in a climate where virtue ethics was relatively invisible as a moral tradition, but where non-objectivist readings have continued.

Another aspect of helpfulness is the ability of a map to provide a sufficiently rich understanding. As suggested, richer understanding is gained by showing how various maps (e.g., the sentimentalist and virtue ethical maps of Hume) can be seen as compatible with each other. This feature harmonizes with the requirement of accuracy, but as already noted, at some point going for richness may come into tension with the requirement of helpfulness. As Schmidtz says, maps are not comprehensive, and in two ways. They do not map everything: "they do not say how to reach all destinations."[7] Nor do they show all the fine details. A virtue ethical map for example makes virtue and vice salient, and in so doing will fail to highlight other aspects of thought which are of concern in other maps. For example, my virtue ethical map does not emphasize Nietzsche's relationship with Jonathan Ree and the progression of his thought from the "positivist" influence of Ree's thought and Darwinism, to the rejection of this thought in later writings.[8] Furthermore my virtue ethical map will concentrate on Nietzsche's mature ethical writings which are of greatest importance for elucidation of the virtue ethical nature of Nietzsche's ethics. Nor will my virtue ethical map emphasize or attempt to map in detail ongoing debates about differences between Hume's *Treatise* and *Enquiries* except insofar as aspects of that debate impinge on interesting features in a virtue ethical interpretation.