Moral Fictionalism by Mark E. Kalderon (OUP, 2005)

The popular expedient of identifying noncognitivism with the claim that moral judgments are neither true nor false leaves open the question of what *kind* of thing a moral judgment is—an indeterminacy that has led to decades of confusion as to what the noncognitivist is more precisely committed to. Sometimes noncognitivism is presented as a claim about mental states ("Moral judgments are not beliefs"), sometimes as a claim about meaning ("X is morally good" means no more than "X: hurray!"), sometimes as a claim about speech acts ("Moral judgments are not assertions"). Focus on the last two possibilities. The former calls for a translation schema from a propositional surface grammar to a non-propositional deep structure. Such schemata from the noncognitivist are familiar to students of metaethics. (Cf. A.J. Ayer's claim that in saying "You acted wrongly in stealing that money" one is "*not saying anything more than* … 'You stole that money,' [but] in a peculiar tone of horror.") It is less widely realized that the noncognitivist is not obliged to offer any such translation schema, for she might instead plump for the last option, of formulating noncognitivism as a theory not of meaning but of use. Perhaps the moral cognitivist is correct about the meaning of moral sentences (there is a wide range of possibilities here) but wrong about the way people *use* moral sentences: perhaps people do not assert moral sentences, perhaps the nature of acceptance of a moral claim is not belief.

This theoretical possibility is Mark Kalderon's point of departure in his book *Moral Fictionalism*—a possibility that he admits once struck him "with the force of revelation" (ix). He offers a terminological disambiguation to help us hold the theories apart. The term "noncognitivism" is reserved for the thesis that moral utterances are not used assertorically (or, as he puts it, "the acceptance of a moral sentence is not belief in a proposition"). The thesis that moral utterances are non-propositional in semantic content (something that has often passed under the moniker "noncognitivism") he prefers to call "nonfactualism." It seems pretty clear that nonfactualism implies noncognitivism (since the thing that is asserted in an "S asserts that…" context must be a proposition[1]), but the reverse implication certainly does not hold. Indeed, examples of noncognitivism coupled with factualism are easy to come by. The sentence "The moon is full tonight" expresses a proposition, but when it is recited as a line of a play, or entertained as a hypothesis, or uttered sarcastically, or spoken as the punch-line of a joke, etc., then the speaker will withhold assertoric force, and whatever kind of acceptance relation the speaker has to the proposition is not one of belief. (In such contexts, the *meaning* of the sentence remains unaffected.) This combination of factualism and noncognitivism Kalderon calls "fictionalism" (leading to the slight terminological embarrassment that *fictionalism is factualism*—something that Kalderon understandably keeps quiet about).

Kalderon's two tasks in *Moral Fictionalism* are (1) to elbow his way into the crowded landscape of modern metaethics and stake out space for this neglected theoretical option, and (2) to advocate the case that morality might plausibly inhabit that space. On the face of it, the

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[1] I word it this way in order to put aside uses of "assert" that are not instances of speech acts, such as "John asserted his rights," "Sally asserted herself," etc.

first task is less challenging than the second. It is one thing to convince us that it is *intelligible* to claim that morality is a combination of noncognitivism and factualism; it is quite another to persuade us that the thesis might actually be *true*.

Note here how Kalderon's fictionalism contrasts with that developed by others (including myself). The *revolutionary* moral fictionalist starts with a moral error theory: She finds something systematically flawed about morality and offers fictionalism (conceivably precisely the conjunction of noncognitivism and factualism that Kalderon describes) as a *practical solution*—as an attitude we might come to adopt for pragmatic reasons. The revolutionary fictionalist doesn't claim that fictionalism is true, but rather that it is good advice. None of this for Kalderon. He is a fictionalist of the *hermeneutical* stripe, arguing that fictionalism accurately describes our actual moral discourse as it presently stands. Thus Kalderon is no error theorist: If our moral discourse was never in the business of *asserting* in the first place, then, irrespective of the content of moral sentences, we could hardly be accused of committing an error in employing it. (Here I cannot resist quoting Sir Philip Sidney: "the Poet, he nothing affirmes, and therefore never lyeth … though he recount things not true, yet because hee telleth them not for true, he lyeth not.") The pragmatic case for revolutionary fictionalism depends on some far-fetched counterfactuals (concerning a comparison of the costs/benefits of eliminating moral discourse entirely from our lives with the costs/benefits of maintaining morality as a fiction—all of which depends on speculating as to precisely what we do gain from engaging in morality, to what extent taking a fictive attitude might recoup these benefits, etc., etc.)—and as such revolutionary fictionalism is sufficiently wishy-washy that it is perhaps injudicious either to deny or affirm it with any strength of confidence. The hermeneutic fictionalist, by contrast, makes a much bolder claim—he purports to describe reality—and thus bares his chest to accusations of straightforward *falsity* in the way that his revolutionary cousin never had to. He must, moreover, overcome the natural reaction that his theory is simply outrageous. The claim that it might be a good idea to adopt an attitude of pretense towards morality may be a curious one, but the claim that we have been pretending all along is surely astonishing. It is, in a sense, even more astonishing than the error theorist's declaration that we have all been terribly mistaken about morality. After all, we've all been terribly mistaken before, about all sorts of things; it's a familiar enough human possibility. But the idea that centuries of heartfelt and conscientious grappling with moral concerns has been nothing but an expression of "an unwitting pretense" (152)—that we have never had moral beliefs but have, rather, made "*as if* to believe" (156)—seems really strange. One of the great achievements of Kalderon's book is that it renders the really strange credible. Almost.

To establish this form of fictionalism, Kalderon need accomplish only two things: convince us that moral noncognitivism is true and convince us that that moral nonfactualism is false. Much of the content of the book is devoted to these two tasks.

Against nonfactualism Kalderon deploys the familiar Frege-Geach Problem to show that the nonfactualist faces an unanswerable dilemma: Either (A) moral sentences in both freestanding and embedded contexts have the same semantic content—in which case the nonfactualist account of moral sentences in embedded contexts makes no sense—or (B) the nonfactualist purports to cover only the freestanding occurrences—in which case patently valid arguments (containing both freestanding and embedded appearances of moral sentences) will have to be classified as invalid. This is old news, of course, though it must be said that Kalderon's presentation of the dilemma is as good as they come. He takes his target to be the

expressivist, splitting his efforts between first impaling on the horns of the dilemma the "primitive" exponents from the 1930s, and then demolishing their descendant, the "sophisticated expressivist." (The latter category seems to be exhausted by Simon Blackburn and Allan Gibbard, and, even so, Kalderon devotes himself to a penetrating critique of just the latter, saying, rather weakly, "I suspect that the same is true of any version of sophisticated expressivism" (82).) One of the novel aspects of Kalderon's anti-nonfactualist case is his taking into consideration the fact that the primitive expressivists were semantic behaviorists whereas their sophisticated successors endorse a kind of functional role semantics. Ultimately, though, their air of sophistication merely postpones the inevitable: Sophisticated expressivism falls to obstacles "echoing [those] that beset its primitive predecessor" (82).

Kalderon's demolition of the nonfactualist may be no more than an impressive retelling of an old tale, but what is innovative is his contention that the noncognitivist survives the attack unscathed. The Frege-Geach Problem—so often described as the bane of the noncognitivist—turns out to be the bugbear of only the nonfactualist. And, moreover, Kalderon's arguments in favor of noncognitivism are definitely something new for the metaethicist to ponder. He offers two: the argument from intransigence and the argument from aspect shift. These are not only possibly the most original pieces of argumentation in the book, they are also absolutely central to Kalderon's case. If he cannot get noncognitivism off the ground, then at best all he has accomplished is to add an extra branch to the evermore excrescent tree of metaethical taxonomy. I will devote the remainder of this review to a critical analysis of these two arguments.

The structure of the argument from intransigence is this: When acceptance of sentences from a certain region of discourse is an instance of belief (i.e., when cognitivism is true of those sentences) then the epistemic norms surrounding acceptance have a certain property P. However, the epistemic norms governing acceptance of moral sentences lack P. Therefore, acceptance of moral sentences is a noncognitive affair.

What, then, is P? It's complicated. When someone believes something (fully, as opposed to tentatively), and encounters another rational, reasonable, and fully informed person who steadfastly disagrees, then we have a disagreement about what counts as a reason for belief. In such a circumstance, it may be rationally permissible for the agent to persist in his belief, and it may also be permissible for him to revise his belief. However, it is sometimes epistemically admirable for the agent at least to give consideration to doxastic revision. In such cases, the agent has a "lax obligation" to inquire further about his reasons for belief. Let us sum this up by saying that the epistemic norms of belief sometimes decree "noncomplacency." Kalderon then introduces a distinction for when the norms of belief decree noncomplacency and when they do not: He distinguishes between accepting *for oneself* and accepting *for others*.

> Suppose Bernice asks Edgar for the address of the UCL Philosophy department. If Edgar accepts the address on behalf of others, then, by his lights, there is no need for Bernice to inquire further—she may simply take his word for it. By his lights, his acceptance of the address can stand proxy for her own reasoning in inquiring about that address. (23)

Noncomplacency, it turns out, is intended to be a claim about the norms governing belief *on behalf of others*. (It doesn't matter to Kalderon's argument whether noncomplacency is a claim about the norms governing *only* such beliefs; it does matter that it is a claim about the norms governing *all* such beliefs.) Thus the aforementioned "P" turns out not to be a property

of the norms of belief *per se*, but a property of those norms governing a certain proper subset of belief: those that are accepted on behalf of others.

But Kalderon is unfazed by this restriction, since, in his opinion, moral acceptance is always acceptance on behalf of others. If, then, it can be demonstrated that moral acceptance is epistemically *complacent*, then the norms governing belief on behalf of others have a property lacked by the norms governing moral acceptance (which is always on behalf of others); thus, moral acceptance is not an instance of belief; hence, noncognitivism (QED).

It would be neat if it worked, but it is impossible to assess whether it does work, because key pieces of conceptual apparatus are so underdescribed that the reader is left guessing as to their meaning and significance. Most problematical is the central notion of *acceptance on behalf of others*. If we don't really know what this means, then we cannot evaluate the claim that the norms governing beliefs with this property are noncomplacent, and nor are we in any position to evaluate the claim that moral acceptance always instantiates this property. It may also be doubted that moral acceptance is epistemically complacent. Let me develop these concerns at further length.

Acceptance on behalf of others "is the object and grounds of public inquiry: if a competent speaker accepts S on behalf of others, he takes himself to have sufficient reason to end public inquiry about S, ... he takes himself to have sufficient reason for others to rely on his acceptance of S in their own theoretical and practical reasoning, ... he must coherently suppose, at least implicitly, that others do not accept reasons that would undermine his acceptance of S" (23-4). On the face of it, these qualities would seem simply to be those manifested by someone who is *confident* of his belief; but evidently Kalderon means something else. He returns to the case of Bernice asking Edgar the address of the UCL Philosophy Department, but the example gets increasingly convoluted by Bernice having seen flyers announcing that the department has moved, Edgar knowing of the flyers but supposing them to be a prank, and Kalderon also complicates matters by mixing up the discussion of whether Edgar *does* accept this belief on behalf of others with whether he is *justified* in doing so, and also with whether he is *motivated* to do so. (It is difficult to know whether these complications are necessary.) As for accepting the belief (about the location of the department) both for himself and for others, Kalderon adds cryptically and parenthetically that Edgar may be motivated to do so if "Edgar and Bernice have a joint appointment there" (24). Struggling to comprehend all this, the reader is more likely to experience a furrowed brow than a mental light bulb.

Is belief on behalf of others noncomplacent? In other words, if someone who accepts S on behalf of others encounters an epistemically respectable detractor, is the former person under some kind of "lax obligation" to inquire further into his own grounds for acceptance of S? It's very hard to say with any conviction. Certainly there is an intuition that there would be something admirable in the epistemic modesty of a person questioning his own grounds for belief, but whether that intuition underwrites something deserving to be called "a norm governing acceptance of S" is highly moot. One may be able to think up circumstances for which that intuition evaporates. What about religious beliefs based on faith? Isn't the whole idea that one should resist any urge to question such beliefs too carefully, even when encountering epistemically respectable atheists? (I certainly have no truck with religious faith, but so long as plenty of other people do, this would be sufficient to undermine the claim that there exists a norm of the sort Kalderon describes.) I suppose Kalderon may deny that faith-based belief is a case of acceptance on behalf of others. A major problem with his

presentation of the argument is that I remain unsure how to employ the distinction, so I cannot predict what will be claimed about faith-based belief. My suspicion is that the distinction cannot be motivated independently of the intuition that there are some beliefs for which there seems something admirable about epistemic self-examination (call these ones those that are accepted "on behalf of others") and some beliefs for which there does not seem to be anything particularly admirable in self-examination (call these ones those that are accepted "for oneself"). But if this suspicion pans out, then the claim that beliefs accepted on behalf of others exhibit noncomplacency is empty.

What now of moral acceptance? Kalderon's argument requires that he convince us of two premises: first, that moral acceptance is always on behalf of others; second, that moral acceptance fails to exhibit noncomplacency. Both attempts are dubious.

Kalderon starts out discussing moral authority, and sets out to tease apart different aspects of it:

1. Precedence: When a person accepts a moral judgment, she accepts a practical reason that takes precedence over others. (This is not to say that moral reasons necessarily override any other, but at least that "they very often do, and it is part of their nature and importance that they do" (28).)
2. Noncontingency: The practical reason that a person accepts when she accepts a moral judgment is not contingent on her, or anyone else's, acceptance.
3. Well-groundedness: When a person accepts a moral sentence, she believes that the grounding reason for accepting the sentence is a reason for anyone else as well.
4. Demand: When uttering a moral sentence, a person demands that her audience accept it.

The first two, in particular, seem to have no bearing on whether moral acceptance is always on behalf of others, so let us focus attention by striking them off immediately. The fourth sounds like it might have something to do with the crucial question, but on examination it is doubtful. There's a sense in which any assertion of a sentence comes with a demand that one's audience accept it; this just follows from what the speech act of assertion is designed to accomplish. When one asserts "The moon is full tonight" one is putting a proposition forward for one's audience to accept—one "aims to secure uptake."[2] Saying that one "demands" that one's audience accepts maybe sounds a little too draconian, but certainly assertoric force is constituted (inter alia) by conventions concerning the intentions and expectations that a speaker has regarding her audience's beliefs. Given this, the sense of "demand" mentioned in (4) must be something stronger. But read as something stronger, it becomes less plausible. A lot depends, I think, on the severity and importance of the moral matter in question. Perhaps regarding matters of life and death (genocide, rape, pedophilia, etc.), our moral pronouncements come with a kind of demand that others agree, that someone who does not concur may be subject to criticism. But this norm hardly seems to hold for less sensational (but no less paradigmatically *moral*) subjects. There would be nothing terribly surprising in hearing someone say "Well, I personally don't have a moral problem with illegally downloading songs off the internet, but if you do then let's just agree to disagree" or "I know that Mike's lack of social graces annoys you to such an extent that you see it as a moral failing—and I can see where you're coming from; I know a lot of people share your view—but nevertheless I personally find that very trait refreshing, and I classify it as a kind of virtue." Even if such cases of moral toleration are rare, their existence suffices to show that it

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[2] See Strawson, P.F., "Intention and convention in speech acts," in J.R. Searle (ed.), *The Philosophy of Language* (Oxford University Press, 1971): 23-38.

cannot be a defining characteristic of moral utterances that they demand concurrence.

It is, in any case, pretty clearly (3) that Kalderon principally intends to rely on in getting to his desired conclusion. Indeed, his summary of *well-groundedness* ends: "… so, in sincerely uttering a moral sentence that he understands, a competent speaker accepts the sentence on behalf of others." (It is thus not obvious what purpose is achieved in recounting the other characteristics; perhaps they are presented in order to tease them apart from the component that he really wants to focus on.) It is tempting to think that lying behind Kalderon's *well-groundedness* must be some Kantian notion of the moral judge "legislating for all"—a notion that has been championed in modern times by the likes of Michael Smith and Christine Korsgaard. But Kalderon doesn't draw on any such Kantian resources in arguing for well-groundedness; his presentation is disappointingly dogmatic. One possible explanation for the absence of even a friendly wave in Kant's direction is that a close examination of (3) reveals that the reasons it speaks of are reasons *for accepting a sentence*, not reasons for acting. This contrasts with (1) and (2), both of which embody a move from uttering sentences to reasons for acting. And the Kantian idea, I take it, pertains to *action*: When I accept that I am morally obligated to ϕ, I accept that I have a reason to ϕ, and, moreover, that everyone else in similar circumstances also has a reason to ϕ. (Whether Kant himself believed precisely this is not anything we need concern ourselves with here.) But evidently this is not the idea lying behind well-groundedness, or else why would it be formulated in terms of reasons *for accepting sentences*? Once, however, this becomes clear, then what becomes less clear is the substantive difference between (3) and (4). (3) states that when I take myself to have a reason for accepting S, I take others also to have a reason for accepting S, while (4) states that when I utter S I demand that others accept S. There's not much in it, is there? And once we see the proximity of (3) and (4), then the problem I raised with (4) in the previous paragraph raises its head again for (3): It seems either to be a fairly trivial truth that could just as easily apply to assertions concerning household furniture as it does to moral acceptance, or it is something stronger but less plausible.

I do not doubt that moral normativity embodies a special kind of practical authority, and in discussing *precedence* and *noncontingency* Kalderon does a decent job of capturing something about that authority. But *precedence* and *noncontingency* have no bearing on whether moral acceptance is always on behalf of others. By contrast, *well-groundedness* and *demand* might well have bearing on the matter, but they seem to have nothing to do with any special practical authority with which moral claims may be imbued. I am left thinking that the whole framing of the dialectic as having something to do with morality's *authority* is a red herring.

Ultimately, we don't understand the claim that moral acceptance is always on behalf of others well enough to evaluate its truth. When we cast our eyes back to Kalderon's initial presentation of the distinction concerning acceptance of beliefs (back with Edgar and the location of the UCL philosophy department) we are told that someone might accept the belief that the department is at 19 Gordon Square either *for himself* (such that "he takes himself to have sufficient reason to end his individual inquiry" (23)) *or for others* (such that "he takes himself to have sufficient reason for others to rely on his acceptance" (ibid.)). To the extent that I understand the distinction, I can discern no ground for denying that it might not just as readily hold for Edgar's *moral* judgments. Morality can have all the inescapable, categorical, overriding mystical bells-and-whistles practical authority that you care to imagine, but a person may still accept that something is morally required without supposing that others may

simply "take his word for it."

The third premise Kalderon needs for the noncognitive conclusion is that morality is complacent. This time Bernice and Edgar disagree about the permissibility of abortion. In the face of Bernice's steadfast opposition to abortion, Edgar "feels no embarrassment" for his liberal pro-choice views; he "lacks a motivation to inquire further into the grounds of moral acceptance" (35). In point of fact, whether someone lacks the motivation is not relevant; what we need to be wondering about is whether Edgar's lack of motivation in this regard is permitted by the relevant epistemic norms. Recall also that the kind of obligation that we are looking for is only the "lax" kind: It is one the discharging of which Edgar may, for any number of reasons, postpone or ignore without incurring criticism or being "in any way epistemically blameworthy" (18). The problem here is that a norm so lax is hard to spot. How would we feel about Edgar if he *were* to question the basis of his moral beliefs when faced with an intelligent detractor? I think that typically we would think that there is something admirable in his open-mindedness—possibly even courageous. But the very fact that we are inclined to assess favorably someone prompted to self-examination upon encountering intelligent opposition over a moral matter suggests that the governing norms do not entirely underwrite complacency. As with the other premises, the case for the complacency of moral acceptance is fragile and murky.

In sum: The argument for intransigence can be presented as an inconsistent quartet:

a) Moral acceptance is belief.
b) Moral acceptance is always on behalf of others.
c) Belief on behalf of others is always noncomplacent.
d) Moral acceptance is complacent.

Kalderon argues for (b), (c), and (d), and therefore rejects (a). But (as we all know) one philosopher's modus ponens is another's modus tollens. Anyone keen to defend (a) could have his pick of which of the other three to reject: Not one of them seems to be built on particularly solid ground; indeed, rejecting all three looks highly defensible.

Kalderon's other basis for embracing noncognitivism is the argument from aspect shift, which comes in a weak version and a strong version. The weak version is based on "inference to the best explanation" reasoning. Consider, first, the way that affect structures a person's consciousness. Erotic desire, for example, "involves a tendency for certain features of the situation to become salient in perception, thought, and imagination [e.g., the presence of the beloved in a crowded room], and a tendency for these features to present a certain complex normative appearance" (44-5). Now compare the way that a normative perspective structures a person's moral consciousness. Here Kalderon focuses on intrapersonal conflict, such as a person being tugged by competing arguments for and against abortion. His contention is that a normative perspective impacts upon a person's thinking "in just the way" that an affective attitude does, and that noncognitivism "provides the best explanation" of this phenomenon (44).

It is a curious argument. Consider, by comparison, a case of belief. One might believe that Australia is a continent, or alternatively believe that it is but part of the continent of Oceania. One might believe that Europe is a continent, or alternatively believe that it is but part of the continent of Eurasia. One might be unsure which of these beliefs to endorse, and so suffer from a kind of intrapersonal conflict. Clearly, such beliefs can have an impact upon one's consciousness similar to that described by Kalderon. They involve certain aspects becoming salient in perception, thought, etc., and they "present a normative appearance." (Anyone who

doubts the last just needs to walk into a crowded Australian pub and loudly deny that Australia is a continent.) Given this, Kalderon's contention that moral acceptance is a lot like adopting an affective perspective *in contrast to accepting a doxastic perspective* is problematic.

It might be complained that in the example of what counts as a continent, the belief is inextricably tangled with certain desires (broadly construed)—after all, Australians by and large *want* their country to count as a continent (for various predictable hubristic reasons)—and thus, it might be claimed, it's not really an example of *belief* having these influences upon one's consciousness, but just a messy case of affective attitudes having these influences. But accepting this possibility just makes the analogy break down elsewhere: for how do we now know that moral acceptance is not similarly a case of *belief* inextricably coupled with various affective elements? Even the most hardened metaethical cognitivist does not deny that moral judgments have an intimate connection with emotions and desires. The cognitivist can allow that moral judgments reliably prompt emotional activity, can allow that moral judgments generally (or even always) flow from seething emotional activity, can allow that the most effective way of swaying someone's moral opinions is to influence their emotional life, can allow that what goes on when one makes a moral judgment is that one "projects" one's emotional life onto the events of the world. It would seem then, that the phenomenon singled out by Kalderon might well be explained by the fact that moral judgments have all these affective concomitants, while moral acceptance *remains a case of belief*.

The stronger version of the argument from aspect shift (47-50) is a little harder to follow. (The fact that Kalderon here draws inspiration from John McDowell and T.S. Eliot's critique of *Hamlet* signals that something less-than-straightforward is being attempted.) Kalderon wonders what the noncognitivist should say, in positive terms, about the kind of attitude involved in moral acceptance, such that we can account for the aforementioned type of impact it has on consciousness. His radical suggestion is that the attitude *just is* "the way in which events in the person's consciousness are structured" (48); it is not an independently specifiable something-or-other that *has* these effects. This "minimalist" view, he reckons, strengthens the case of noncognitivism: "It would no longer be a question of noncognitivism providing the best explanation of the normative aspect shift: minimalism and the claim that the affect is noncognitive would entail a noncognitive account of the normative aspect shift" (50).

The problem with the weaker version of the argument was that Kalderon didn't attempt to compare the way that affective attitudes (such as erotic desire) influence attention, etc. with the way that certain beliefs might similarly influence attention, etc. Without having that comparison displayed before us (even if it included the acknowledgement that sometimes matters are so messy that it's hard to distinguish belief from affect) we were in no position to denounce the cognitivist's ability to explain the phenomena just as readily. With the stronger version, it is no longer a matter of what *influences* attention, etc., but rather what is *constituted by* this cluster of events in a person's consciousness. But the problem remains the same. On the face of it, items that we are strongly inclined to categorize as *beliefs* seem also to play this kind of dynamic role in consciousness. The cognitivist can claim that moral beliefs are one such example of this. To the rejoinder that beliefs *per se* do not play this role, but rather beliefs that are entangled with affective elements (the latter being the real explanans of this dynamic functional role), the cognitivist can simply reply that this is how matters stand with moral acceptance.

It is a testimony to the richness of *Moral Fictionalism* that even though it is a very short book (just four chapters) I have exhausted my efforts in this review almost entirely on chapter 1. There is much of interest that I have not discussed here. Chapter 2 dismantles the case for nonfactualism (as mentioned above). Chapter 3 turns to taxonomic matters—characterizing realism, the error theoretic position, hermeneutic versus revolutionary fictionalism—recarving the metaethical terrain in a subtle and skillful manner. In this chapter Kalderon also draws the comparison between the status of moral utterances (as he sees it) and that of the make-believe assertions of fictional discourse—thus justifying his adoption of the title "fictionalism." The final chapter is hard to sum up; to say that it covers "miscellaneous topics not covered elsewhere" might not be entirely inaccurate but should not be taken to suggest that the chapter lacks depth or originality. Here Kalderon discusses how it might be that we are *unwittingly* pretending when we engage in moral discourse, what the fictionalist can say about moral facts, and how fictionalism can possibly accommodate moral authority.

Despite the valuable and often penetrating metaethical inquiries undertaken in chapters 2, 3, and 4, I think it is, nevertheless, fair to say that chapter 1 is where most of the action is. A whole quarter of the book is devoted to getting the arguments from intransigence and aspect shift up and running—and with good reason, for if the defense of noncognitivism fails then much of the live interest in the rest of Kalderon's case will evaporate. Unfortunately, both arguments, though admirably innovative and interesting, are ultimately unpersuasive and somewhat obscure.

Stylistically, *Moral Fictionalism* is rather on the dry side—despite a scattering of enticing examples from such luminaries as Herman Melville, Robert Musil, and Tony Soprano—and if Kalderon ever received the advice from his publishers to try to eliminate philosophical jargon from his prose, he did not heed it. For such a short book, there is a lot of repetition. To a certain extent this is welcome: the reader gets reminded of tricky terminology, is resituated in an unfamiliar argument, and so forth. But one has the feeling that the repetitiveness is not all strategically purposeful; a degree of cutting and pasting is annoyingly apparent, and sometimes the extent of verbatim duplication is surely accidental. (The worst example of this that I noticed is a whole page of text serving both as the conclusion of chapter 1 and the introduction to chapter 4.) The discussion takes place on a highly theoretical plain, and anyone entering these pages without any background in metaethics will, I fear, quickly sink. But if this counts as a vice at all (which is debatable), it is forgivable. *Moral Fictionalism* is a confident, challenging, sophisticated and mature work, and for those readers already versed in contemporary metaethical debate, the book provides a pocket-sized feast of ideas.