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***Diseases of the Will: Alcohol and the Dilemmas of Freedom*, by Mariana Valverde (Cambridge, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 251 pp., \$59.95 (cloth), \$19.95 (paper).**

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Acute alcohol impairment and sustained alcohol addiction have long raised difficult questions about the scope of, and exceptions to, human freedom and responsibility. Efforts to frame addiction in medical as opposed to moral metaphors have been met with the criticism that such conceptualizations do individual and social harm by undermining the concept of free will and by providing the addict a window of escape from personal responsibility. In America, this debate has raged since Dr. Benjamin Rush declared that drunkenness was a disease that created a “palsy of the will.” The continued debate filled the pages of 19th century inebriety texts (Crothers, 1893; Kerr, 1894) and has been revived in a growing interest in the philosophical underpinnings of addiction mutual aid societies (Kurtz, 1982), addiction treatment (Fingarette, 1988), alcohol and drug control policies (Szasz, 1975; Husak, 1992), and the very concept of addiction (Seeburger, 1993). What has been lacking, until now, is a definitive genealogy of this debate. Mariana

Valverde’s book, *Diseases of Will*, makes a significant contribution that will provide a foundation for all future discussions about addiction and the nature and limits of human freedom and responsibility.

Diseases of the Will is ultimately about governance: the mechanisms that individuals and societies use to prevent or manage alcohol intake and its personal and social consequences. The individual chapters—which stand independently as exceptionally well-researched and masterfully constructed essays—address such subjects as: 1) the evolving view of personal will from the 19th century inebriate asylum movement through the modern field of alcoholism treatment, 2) the techniques of “self-governance” found in *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 3) the theoretical assumptions that have buttressed governmental control of alcohol, 4) the evolution of alternative beverages to alcohol (including a fascinating discussion of the history of Coca-Cola), and 5) a closing chapter on evolving medico-legal interpretations of free will and personal

responsibility of alcoholics involved in the criminal justice system. Particularly interesting is the discussion of the how concepts such as vice, sin, habit, compulsion, dependence, codependence, addiction, and disease have reflected changing conceptions of free will and personal responsibility.

Diverse audiences will warm to this book. Historians will find an important contribution to the history of ideas. Those who work professionally with alcoholics will find a useful discussion of the evolving philosophical foundations of addiction treatment. Those interested in alcoholic mutual aid societies will find fresh insights about the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous (although there will likely be objections to Valverde's lack of distinction between A.A. and the modern recovery movement). And forensic specialists who daily seek to tip the scales of justice in its judgment of the scope and limits of personal responsibility will find rich reading here.

Many books take too long to say too little. A few rare books like *Disease of the Will* leave one in awe of the scope and depth contained in their relatively few pages. If there is more one could ask from this book, it would be a more clearly articulated premise, more connecting tissue between chapters, and a more detailed presentation of the author's conclusions. The fact that the reader must construct their own linkages and conclusions may simultaneously stand as the book's greatest weakness and strength. This is a terrific book that will leave the reader anxiously awaiting Mariana Valverde's future writings in this area.

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