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Dean Zimmerman (ed.), *Oxford Studies in Metaphysics*, vol. 2. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006. Pp. 400.

Since the publication of the first volume in 2004, the *Oxford Studies in Metaphysics* series has established itself as an indispensable resource for those working in metaphysics. Although officially a book series, *OSM* is in effect a specialized journal. Most contributions appear to be invited, with a small number selected from submissions to an annual prize competition open to scholars within ten years of their PhD.

The second volume reviewed here consists of three contributions each to the topics of property dualism, the philosophy of time, and theism. In addition, four miscellaneous papers are assembled under the heading “Issues in Ontology”. There is not enough review space to discuss all 13 papers.

With the exception of those on property dualism, the papers do not explicitly engage each other. The volume provides an index of names, but not of subjects.

The symposium on property dualism consists of Ned Block’s “Max Black’s Objection to Mind-Body Identity” (ch. 1) and commentaries by John Perry (ch. 2) and Stephen L. White (ch. 3). Block’s paper, which is 76 pages long, defends the identity theory against a close relative of the Knowledge Argument.

In “Goodbye Growing Block” (ch. 4), the first of three chapters under the heading “The Open Future”, Trenton Merricks targets the view that the present is the edge of the growing block of reality, which includes the past but not (yet) the future. A growing block theorist needs to explain how that “objective” notion of the present relates to the ordinary “subjective” one, as deployed in what we might call “present-involving thoughts” - your thought “I am reading at the present time”, and Caesar’s thought “I am crossing the Rubicon at the present time”. Merricks argues that the growing blocker faces a dilemma, with embracing an error theory for such thoughts on one horn and undermining the motivation for her view on the other. If the subjective present is the same as the objective one, then almost all existing present-involving thoughts are false – they do not occur at the edge of the block. Merricks argues that you have no reason to think that your thought is one of the exceptional few. Epistemically, present-involving thoughts on the growing edge of reality are on a par with those inside the block. On the other horn of

the dilemma, the growing block theorist takes the subjective and objective present to be distinct; she gives an indexical account of the former, perhaps. But then, Merricks argues, the growing block view cannot account for our pre-theoretical thinking about time, and it is unclear what would motivate it.

Some growing block theorists may want to challenge the epistemic parity assumption. Peter Forrest has already suggested a more radical response: while past people such as Caesar exist, they are dead and do not have thoughts, let alone present-involving ones.<sup>1</sup> Forrest also contributes to the volume under review, and indeed uses his version of the growing block theory to give an account of physical necessity. His “General Facts, Physical Necessity, and the Metaphysics of Time” (ch. 6) develops what he calls the “mortmain” theory: “the dead hand of the past is constraining the future” (p. 142). The fundamental notion of necessity is time-relative: a proposition is necessary at time  $t$  if there exists a truth-maker for it at  $t$ . Given the growing block theory, truth-makers accumulate over time, and hence what is necessary at some time remains necessary forever after. Forrest then defines other grades of necessity. A proposition is physically necessary if it has been necessary since the beginning of the universe, and it is absolutely physically necessary if it has always been necessary. The truth-makers for such necessities are Russellian general facts, which correspond to universal quantifications.

Eli Hirsch’s “Rashi’s View of the Open Future: Indeterminateness and Bivalence” (ch. 5) and John Hawthorne’s “Epistemicism and Semantic Plasticity” (ch. 10) both explore accounts of indeterminacy that respect bivalence. Hirsch attributes to Rashi, a mediaeval Talmudist, the view that the openness of the future gives rise to cases of genuinely, objectively indeterminate truths. Suppose that it is indeterminate at time  $t$  whether  $p$  is true at a later time  $t'$  (whether a sea-battle will take place at  $t'$ , say). By suitable disquotation principles, it follows that it is indeterminate at  $t$  whether it is true at  $t$  whether  $p$  is true at  $t'$ . This sets the account in contrast to a traditional Aristotelian one, according to which it is determinate at  $t$  (and later) that  $p$  is not true at  $t$ . Moreover, Hirsch’s Rashi takes indeterminacy to be

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<sup>1</sup>Peter Forrest, “The read but dead past. Reply to Braddon-Mitchell”, *Analysis* 64.4 (2004): 358-62. The article replied to is David Braddon-Mitchell, “How do we know it is now now?”, *Analysis* 64.3 (2004): 199-203.

permanent: thus it is indeterminate at every later time whether it is true at  $t$  whether  $p$  is true at  $t'$ . Apart from the apparent openness of the future, the phenomenon of vagueness and certain interpretations of quantum mechanics provide further applications for a theory of indeterminacy. Hirsch usefully compares the menu of theoretical options in these areas. The Aristotelian position corresponds to a standard version of supervaluationism about vagueness, while the view attributed to Rashi corresponds to what Hirsch calls a “modified supervaluationism”. Like Timothy Williamson’s epistemicism about vagueness, modified supervaluationism is committed to bivalence. But, Hirsch argues, it is still substantially different, since it posits genuine indeterminacy rather than mere ignorance. The best place to look for an explanatory payoff of genuine indeterminacy is the philosophy of quantum mechanics, according to Hirsch. The difference between a view which posits unknown “hidden variables” and a view on which there is genuine indeterminacy is not merely verbal.

Hawthorne’s contribution, announced as a “progress report on unfinished business”, focuses on Williamson’s explanation of why we are often irremediably ignorant about facts involving baldness. Williamson grants that semantic facts supervene on non-semantic ones, including facts about use, and hence that there is a function from the latter to the former. But the semantic value of a vague term may differ from its actual one in a possible world that displays only minute differences from the actual one in the facts about use – it is “semantically plastic”. Williamson appeals to semantic plasticity in his explanation of our ignorance. Hawthorne raises a puzzle for this account, starting from the observation that semantic ascent preserves ignorance. We would expect to give a uniform explanation of our ignorance concerning ‘Fred is bald’ and ‘“Fred is bald” is true’. But if both are explained by appeal to semantic plasticity, then we would expect that there is a possible world  $w$  which displays only minute differences from the actual one in use, but in which speakers utter a falsehood when they say ‘“Fred is bald” is true’ iff Fred is bald’ (since the intension of our word ‘true’ maps  $w$  to a class that includes ‘Fred is bald’, but the intension of ‘true’ in the language of the inhabitants of  $w$  does not). Hawthorne argues that the latter is unacceptable, and explores two interesting solutions. The first constrains the plasticity of semantic terms in a way that avoids the unwelcome consequence. The

second denies that semantic terms are plastic altogether. In David Lewis's metasemantic theories, lack of semantic plasticity of certain terms is explained by the "reference magnetism" of perfectly natural properties. Hawthorne suggests that semantic properties and relations like truth and reference may also act as reference magnets.

We may wonder whether this solution really explains our distinctive ignorance, though. For Lewis, natural properties help explain why the claim that our theories are true is non-trivial. But he does not suggest that these theories could not be known to be true. The hypothesis that truth is a reference magnet does not explain why we should not expect a future theory of truth to entail, in conjunction with facts about Fred and facts about use, that Fred is bald. Moreover, we may be worried that the postulation of such reference magnets is *ad hoc* in a way that Lewis's was not. First, it is pre-theoretically clear that some properties are more natural than others. But given the phenomenon of vagueness, it is not pre-theoretically clear that any of the properties that are candidate referents of 'true' is more natural than the others. Thus it is not clear whether it is indeed naturalness, in any intuitive sense, that accounts for the reference-magnetism of truth. Second, Lewis identified a variety of theoretical roles to be played by perfect naturalness. The question whether truth and other semantic properties are perfectly natural then raises a dilemma. If they are not, but still much more natural than suggested by the length of their definition in terms of perfectly natural properties (which seems to determine the degree of naturalness for Lewis), we have in effect two concepts of naturalness. This makes the theory less attractive. If, on the other hand, the perfectly natural properties include semantic ones such as truth, then they can no longer do all their work. Lewis wants to analyse duplication in terms perfectly natural properties. Together with the assumption that truth is a perfectly natural property, that analysis entails that no utterance tokens could be duplicates while differing in truth-value, which appears to be the wrong result. Despite these misgivings, Hawthorne's suggestion to allow non-fundamental properties to be reference-magnets certainly deserves further discussion.

Phillip Bricker's "The Relation between General and Particular: Entailment vs Supervenience" (ch. 9) is concerned with the relationship between what exists and what is the case. Along the way he offers an

insightful discussion of the ontological significance of supervenience claims. Some philosophers have explicated the idea that what exists needs to ontologically determine what is the case by the Truthmaker Principle: every truth has truthmakers. Truthmakers for a truth are here understood as entities whose joint existence entails the truth. Since general facts are not entailed by particular facts, the Truthmaker Principle entails that there exists something beyond particular facts. Bricker argues against the Truthmaker Principle, and proposes a different explication of the claim that what exists ontologically determines what is the case: the Subject Matter Principle, which says that every proposition has a subject matter. In his technical sense, a class of actual or possible entities  $E$  is a “subject matter” for a proposition  $Z$  if any proposition that entails for each members of  $E$  whether that member exists either entails  $Z$  or its negation. In other words,  $E$  is a subject matter for  $Z$  if  $Z$  supervenes on the existence facts involving members of  $E$ . Since the particular facts are a subject matter for the general facts, the Subject Matter Principle does not entail that there exists anything beyond particular facts.

In Bricker’s fundamental ontology, there are only things. This ontology may satisfy the Subject Matter Principle if it is essential to each thing which particular facts hold of it. For on that assumption, the things form a subject matter for the particular facts, and because of the supervenience of the general facts on the particular ones, they also form a subject matter for the general facts. Bricker argues that his ontology, supererogatorily as it were, even satisfies the Truthmaker Principle. If both its intrinsic and extrinsic nature are essential to the world (which is a thing), then the world is a truthmaker for general facts. To satisfy either principle, a fundamental ontology of things only requires strong essentialist claims. According to Bricker, these claims are true, in some contexts, given some ways of identifying the things; and given the inconstancy of *de re* modal predications, they are false in other contexts, where we identify the things differently. This move may make some of us uncomfortable, since it might appear to make fundamental ontology dependent on our identification practices.

In “Inexpressible Properties and Propositions” (ch. 7; included as the winner of the first *OSM* Younger Scholar Prize; subsequently awarded the APA Article Prize), Thomas Hofweber offers a sophisticated articulation of the view that properties and propositions are merely shadows of predicates and

sentences. According to his “internalism”, apparent quantification over properties and propositions is a device to increase the expressive power of a language in a way that could also be achieved by infinitary logical constructions. Roughly, ‘There is a property that interests Fred’ corresponds to an infinite disjunction, with disjuncts such as ‘Tasting better than Diet Pepsi interests Fred’. However, this paraphrase will not be adequate if some properties are not expressible. Hofweber’s idea is to consider context-sensitive terms, and what could be expressed by them in arbitrary contexts. The property of tasting better than Diet Pepsi is expressed by ‘tasting better than *this*’ in a context in which Diet Pepsi is supplied as the referent of ‘*this*’. On Hofweber’s modified proposal, ‘There is a property of beer that interests Fred’ is paraphrased by an infinite string of existential quantifiers ‘there exists  $v_i$ ’ followed by an infinite disjunction with disjuncts such as ‘Tasting better than  $v_i$  interests Fred’. The existential quantifiers range over all things; everything is available for demonstrative reference in a suitable context.

In this story, there is nothing special about English. The above property is also expressed in Ancient Greek by the equivalent of ‘tasting better than *this*’, regardless of whether Ancient Greek is actually ever spoken in a context that allows demonstrative reference to Diet Pepsi. Hofweber suggests that the tenability of internalism crucially depends on whether the following “Expressibility Hypothesis” is true: “Different languages can differ in what can be expressed in them with context-insensitive expressions, and what speakers of these languages can in fact express in them. However, all languages agree on what speakers can express with them in arbitrary contexts” (p. 198-9).

Michael Loux’ “Aristotle’s Constituent Ontology” (ch. 207) compares and contrasts Aristotle’s account of why particulars have the character they do with various contemporary ones. He suggests that the substantial forms, associated with a pattern of functional organization of an organism, can be characterized as structural universals, provided we do not assume that structural universals are to be explained in terms of the distribution of non-structural ones.

In the section “Metaphysics and Theism”, Hud Hudson’s “Beautiful Evils” (ch. 13) suggests a new solution to the problem of evil. What appears evil to us is beautiful for a being who can perceive a hyperspace in which our

space is embedded. Its beauty is a good that compensates for the evil in the world. The two other papers discuss the relationship between theism and theories of universals. Roughly, one argues that theists do not need, and the other that they cannot have universals.

Brian Leftow's "God and the Problem of Universals" (ch. 11) argues that God's concepts, construed as particulars, can do the theoretical work that universals offer to do. However, this reviewer was puzzled by the account it gives of truths such as "orange is more like red than blue is", which are widely seen to pose a problem for nominalists. Leftow suggests the paraphrase "depending on God's concept *orange* is more like depending on God's concept [*red*] than depending on God's concept *blue* is" (p. 338). The 'depending'-locution appears to refer to relational properties. Leftow claims that his solution is isomorphic to the one given by Platonists, and that the latter is generally thought to be adequate. But it would seem that the Platonist can take the statement at face value, with the color terms referring to forms. The forms of the colors, unlike the concepts of the colors or the things that have the colors, are guaranteed to resemble each other in the right way.

Michael Bergmann and Jeffrey Brower's "A Theistic Argument against Platonism (and in support of Truthmakers and Divine Simplicity)" (ch. 12) argue against the conjunction of traditional theism and Platonism. They derive a contradiction from commitments they attribute to traditional theism and Platonism: that it follows that God's creating an exemplifiable both is, and is not, logically prior to the exemplifiable *being able to create an exemplifiable*. The version of Platonism they discuss explains truths of the form 'a is F' in terms of a subject and an exemplifiable *being F*. They acknowledge that Russell's paradox already restricts the scope of that approach. 'John does not exemplify himself' does not admit of such an explanation. However, they claim that an explanation of all predications except those that lead to Russell's paradox might still be interestingly general and unified. If they are right about this, however, then perhaps a further restriction, for example to predications where 'F' does not mention exemplifiables, might still be worthy of consideration.

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