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BOOK NOTES

Alston, William P., ed., *Realism and Antirealism*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2002, pp. viii + 303, US\$22.50 (paper).

Putnam's internal realism provides the antirealist pivot around which the essays in this collection turn. According to Alston (in his own contribution to the collection) realism is the metaphysical thesis which holds that, 'The world consists of some fixed totality of mind-independent objects' [103] thereby contrasting with the antirealist view paradigmatically developed by Putnam that 'whatever there is exists and is what it is only within a certain way of "conceptualising" or "describing" what there is' [98]. This 'relativised Kantianism' allows for the possibility of potentially incompatible conceptualizations of reality.

The collection is organized into four parts, the first three dealing with realism as a global doctrine, the fourth with local realisms. The majority of the essays take a pro-realist stance. Those in Part I focus on basic issues concerning the realism-antirealism opposition. Miller's paper mounts an argument from common sense to demonstrate the rational superiority of realism over antirealism, while Cortens's develops an 'ontological pluralism' attempting to make better sense of the idea that there could be equally acceptable ways of slicing reality into objects. Both Lynch's and Alston's papers map the topography of the realist-antirealist landscape. *Pace* Devitt and Putnam, Lynch argues against the compatibility of metaphysical realism and radical conceptual relativity ('metaphysical pluralism' in Lynch's terms), he distinguishes different forms of both and discusses the nature of mind-independence. Alston sets out to show 'What Metaphysical Realism is Not' by surveying antirealists, such as Rorty's, Wright's and Putnam's, 'gratuitous accretions', which often form the target of their opposition to realism. Such accretions on the part of Putnam include the view that 'There is exactly one true and complete description of the way the world is' [103] and a commitment to a correspondence theory of truth.

Part II considers the relation between metaphysical realism and truth. Van Woudenberg argues against Alston's view (presented elsewhere) that a realist conception of truth is neutral between realism and antirealism. Anderson's essay argues for 'semantic antirealism'—the view that God has arranged things so that statements about perceptible objects have antirealist truth conditions.

The essays in Part III address epistemological issues from a realist perspective. Taking McDowell's account of cognitive freedom as his starting point, Tollefsen employs the notion of cooperation to effect a broadly realist re-conceptualization of our cognitive relations with the world. Smit's essay considers Saint Bonaventure's epistemology as a Christocentric form of realism. Part IV is subdivided into sections

on the realism-antirealism opposition as it manifests in religion, science, literature, and moral discourse.

The essays in this somewhat eclectic collection provide an overview of realism-antirealism debates as they occur in contemporary American philosophy while also contributing to those debates. The collection would be a useful acquisition for any philosophy library.

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Hale, Bob and Crispin Wright, *The Reason's Proper Study: Essays Towards a Neo-Fregean Philosophy of Mathematics*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001, pp. xiv + 455.

This large and impressive volume consists of six papers by Bob Hale, seven by Crispin Wright and two by the two of them jointly. There is also an Introduction by Hale and a Postscript listing eighteen philosophical or technical problems on which further research is desirable if a proper assessment of the neo-Fregean philosophy of mathematics is to be completed. Besides the Introduction and the Postscript only the joint one on the Julius Caesar problem has not been previously published, but this hardly diminishes the value of the collection.

Frege's aim was to show that mathematics, or at any rate arithmetic, is logic. Hale and Wright do not claim this, even though they expand the scope of logic by following the lead of Boolos, who plausibly argued that second order logic should be seen as indeed logic, not as Quine said, as set theory in sheep's clothing. They even reject the view that arithmetic follows from logic plus definitions, that is, 'analytic' in the philosophers' (not the mathematicians') sense of this word. They want to argue, however, that mathematics is 'in some sense conceptual'. Singular terms are important in Fregean and neo-Fregean philosophy. (Contrast Quine's canonical notation.) Hale says [8] that after we have identified the singular terms we have the mathematical Platonism found in Frege, or at any rate the style of Platonism that Wright and he want to defend. Some of us may worry that this makes their position consistent with (even though not implying) fictionalism (might numbers be no more real than Sherlock Holmes?) and will desire a stronger Platonism. However we cannot always get what we want. Hale and Wright treat Hume's principle as a postulate rather than as a definition but see it as a purely conceptual truth. They make great use of Frege's notion of abstraction, refined somewhat. Wright puts it, a little cryptically, 'An abstraction principle is meant to embody a *reconceptualisation* of the type of state of affairs depicted on [its] right' [312]. On the way there are discussions of the paradoxes and consequential revision of Frege's Basic Law V, and many other issues.

As far as I can make out the ontology of this neo-Fregeanism is that of states of affairs or facts, and these will include purely conceptual facts. This contrasts with the Tarski/Davidson theory of reference where it is things or sequences of things that hook language on to the world. This book should be of outstanding concern to those interested in philosophy of mathematics. However successful the neo-Fregean approach may be in dealing with arithmetic and even saying

something about the reals, there is the even more vital task of dealing with Analysis. Tentative steps towards this are made in a couple of the essays. I do not feel competent to write a review but felt that I could accept the editor's invitation to do a Book Note. For one thing I was desirous of possessing and reading this important book.

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Ruben, David-Hillel, *Action and Its Explanation*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003, pp. vii + 240, £35 (cloth).

David-Hillel Ruben has been an admirable and stalwart analytic presence in the philosophy of social sciences for some time. In two fine monographs, *The Metaphysics of the Social World* (1985) and *Explaining Explanation* (1990), as well as an important edited collection on explanation and numerous papers, Ruben has explored a range of topics that arise from thinking, *qua* analytic philosopher, about the social sciences. Ruben continues this trend in a book on action, a careful and intricate exploration of the metaphysics and explanation of yet another central concern of the social sciences.

The core of the book is Chapters 2–5. Of the others, Chapter 1 is the most interesting. There Ruben defends a ‘prolific’ account of action individuation. A complex action like my killing a weed involves (i) a ‘real’ action, limited to the movements of my body, and (ii) a ‘Cambridge’ act, not identical with the first, which happens later when the weed dies. Chapter 6 is an endorsement of the counterfactual theory of explanation. In an appendix, Ruben argues that it is possible to act without knowing that one is so doing; unfortunately, he neglects to tell us why we should find this interesting.

The argument in the central chapters is mostly negative, targeting various versions of what Ruben refers to as ‘causal theories of action’. One kind of causal theory holds that actions are to be differentiated from other behaviour in virtue of their being rationalized by their causes, *viz.*, beliefs, desires, and intentions. Ruben's central argument against such theories is that it is implausible to think that we have enough beliefs to rationalize all such actions. The argument is not implausible, but Ruben misplays his target: it is not the *causal* theorists he is after, but those who think that *rationalization* plays a key role in distinguishing actions from other behaviour. Perhaps he is right that the former all include the latter, but Ruben's argument should worry those like John McDowell, who tend to play up rationalization, but play down causality, in their work.

The second kind of causal theory that Ruben discusses includes so-called agent causal theories. He claims that all such theories (indeed, he says, all causal theories whatsoever) claim that all physical actions (e.g., my moving my arm) have events that are intrinsic to them (e.g., my arm's moving). Ruben, extraordinarily enough, denies this: ‘My view is that, when X moves his hand, there is in one sense no such event at all as his hand's moving’ [177].

After this argument, at the end of Chapter 5, that Ruben finally, and all too briefly, steps back to give us a glimpse of his positive picture.

So, what does my theory say about basic actions? In one sense, shockingly little. Actions just are, well, actions. The concept of a basic action is unanalysable, a conceptual primitive . . . Basic actions are actions, but not in virtue of some other feature of them.

[183]

It was at this point—awakened by my utter surprise at what Ruben was here telling me—that I became aware of how much his focus on the trees had led me to lose sight of the forest, that is, of Ruben’s positive view of action.

As with many largely negative philosophical texts, one is left wishing the author had spent more time delving into his positive picture. *Why* is the nature of basic action unanalysable? What is the status of the ‘common-sense tests’ [136] of action (i.e., intention, responsibility, control) to which Ruben refers at various times? Ruben has a positive overall picture of action, but I would prefer to have known what it is from the beginning, as well as the positive lessons that we are supposed to take home from the careful attacks that Ruben levies on his opponents. Ruben’s arguments are focused, compelling, and challenging. My disappointment with the book derives from his not placing them within a structure, a framework, for the reader’s perspective.

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Rowlands, Mark, *Externalism: Putting Mind and World Back Together Again*, Chesham: Acumen, 2003, pp. x + 246, US\$70.00 (cloth), US\$22.95 (paper).

In his new book, Rowlands defines externalism roughly as the thesis that ‘not all mental things are exclusively located inside the head of the person or creature that has these things’ [2]. The book has two distinctive features. One is that while philosophers’ discussions of externalism tend to be very technical, Rowlands presents his own discussion in an accessible manner. The second, more distinctive than the first, is that Rowlands treats the concept of externalism as a topic in both analytic *and* continental traditions of philosophy.

In Chapter 2 Rowlands introduces the Cartesian internalist conception of the mind, which appears inconsistent with externalism. Rowlands claims that Cartesianism consists of three types of thesis: ontological, epistemological, and axiological. Throughout the book he focuses on the ontological thesis, except for Chapter 8, where he discusses the epistemological thesis, and Chapter 11, where he discusses the axiological thesis.

The rest of the book is roughly divided into two parts. In the first, Rowlands discusses the relationship between externalism and idealism, the latter of which is, according to him, a natural development of internalism. Rowlands advances his discussion by treating Edmund Husserl as an internalist and idealist, and Jean-Paul Sartre and Wittgenstein as externalists. In the second, he examines content externalism. He finds content externalism unsatisfactory and tries to establish a more robust form of externalism, which he calls ‘vehicle externalism’. He shows that vehicle externalism is applicable to conscious experience, which, on the face of it, has nothing to do with externalism.

There are at least two possible impressions that readers might have about this book. The first is that the book is unfocused because it covers a number of distinct

topics in two different traditions by relying on the widest construal of the term 'externalism'. A reader only interested in recent topics on content externalism in epistemology and the philosophy of mind—i.e., externalism and authoritative self-knowledge, externalism and scepticism, externalism and memory, and so on—might have this impression. The second is that this book is useful because it provides a comprehensive study of externalism, which has not previously been done effectively. A reader looking for a good general introduction to externalism might come away from the book with such an impression.

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Gaut, Berys and Dominic Lopes McIver, eds., *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*, London: Routledge, 2003, pp. 600, £75 (cloth), £19.99 (paper).

Among the numerous anthologies, encyclopaedias, and other general reference books that have been published recently in aesthetics, Berys Gaut and Dominic Lopes's *Routledge Companion to Aesthetics* distinguishes itself as an outstanding resource in aesthetics for students and faculty alike.

Like other standard reference books, this companion provides a general and thorough overview of the central problems and issues in the philosophy of art. Divided into four parts, it contains essays about the history of aesthetics, central concepts in aesthetics, issues of contemporary interest, as well as the individual arts. But unlike other books of its kind, Gaut and Lopes have ensured that the individual articles are sufficiently detailed to be of use not only to students just beginning philosophy, but also to students in upper division aesthetics courses. In fact, the articles almost always go beyond the standard survey of the issue, frequently leading to the development of the author's own position on the topic at hand. As a result, this text not only would serve as a handy reference source for students and faculty alike, but it could also be used as a text for a course in the philosophy of art.

A second way in which this book stands out among reference sources in aesthetics concerns the attention paid to some of the key contemporary debates in aesthetics. The section titled 'Issues and Challenges' exposes readers to issues that are currently being debated, such as art and ethics, environmental aesthetics, and humour, in addition to the perennial questions that regularly appear in standard reference books. Such contemporary topics are sure to generate interest in students who are new to aesthetics.

The only unusual feature of this book concerns the section covering the history of aesthetics. Given that the bulk of articles and issues treated in the book as a whole are of an analytic bent, one cannot help but notice the figures discussed in this historical section: Hegel, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, Barthes, and Derrida. While one might commend the authors' desire to present an even-handed history that goes beyond the analytic tradition, one also cannot help but notice the authors who are missing: Goodman, Wollheim, and Danto to name but a few.

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