

REVIEW ESSAY

METAPHILOSOPHY AND THE PROMISES OF PLURALISM

Ralph Shain

BOOKS UNDER REVIEW:

Søren Overgaard, Paul Gilbert and Stephen Burwood, *An Introduction to Metaphilosophy* (Cambridge University Press, 2013)

Jeffrey A. Bell, Andrew Cutrofello, and Paul M. Livingston, editors, *Beyond the Analytic-Continental Divide: Pluralist Philosophy in the Twenty-First Century* (Routledge, 2016)

Analytic philosophy was refuted in the fall of 1932. In his lectures, Wittgenstein is reported to have said:

“I have wanted to show by means of language-games the vague way in which we use “language”, “proposition”, “sentence”. There are many things, such as orders, which we may or may not call propositions; and *not only one game can be called language*. Language games are a clue to the understanding of logic. Since what we call a proposition is more or less arbitrary, what we call logic plays a different role than what Russell and Frege supposed.”¹

Analytic philosophy is the philosophical tradition that takes formal logic as the paradigm of meaning, and thus, of knowing. Analytic philosophy arose out of this picture, and analytic philosophers, even if they consciously oppose it, are still trapped

¹ *Wittgenstein's Lectures*, Cambridge, 1932-35, edited by Alice Ambrose (University of Chicago Press, 1979), pp. 12-13 (emphasis added).

by it.

Wittgenstein's refutation, developed further in the *Blue Book* and *Philosophical Investigations*, joined the metaphilosophical discussions (to which the *Tractatus* had contributed in a major way) which were prompted by the rise of analytic philosophy. Although Lakatos's term "progressive problemshift" may not actually be applicable, the metaphilosophical discussions were initially spurred by the confidence of the early analytic philosophers in their new approaches and new tools. These metaphilosophical discussions, culminating in Rorty's *Linguistic Turn* anthology, struck me as among the most interesting when an undergraduate.

By that time, another round of metaphilosophical discussion was in full swing. This round was spurred by the challenges of non-Analytic traditions, especially Continental ones. Actually, discussion was a pretty small part of what would better be called polemic and activity, the activity involving institutional maneuvers and career blocks. Rorty was again a major player with *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. This round was epitomized by the anthology *After Philosophy*.²

By the time I was in graduate school, it looked like analytic philosophy would lose its preeminent position, and the whole world of academic philosophy would change over. Of course, this never happened. Analytic philosophy not only maintained and strengthened its position, it retrenched. The philosophy practiced became even more analytic. Metaphilosophical discussion pretty much disappeared. This had the appearance, to again use terminology from Lakatos, of the avoidance and defensiveness of a degenerating problemshift.

Metaphilosophy seems to be making a slight comeback.³ The appearance of the two books under review allow for a consideration of the current status of metaphilosophy and the analytic-Continental divide. I will start by examining *An Introduction to Metaphilosophy* by Overgaard, Gilbert, and Burwood (OGB), and then turn my attention to the anthology *Beyond the Analytic-Continental Divide—Pluralist Philosophy in the Twenty-first Century*, edited by Bell, Cutrofello, and Livingston (BCL).

Overgaard, Gilbert, and Burwood have provided what they believe is the first textbook for a course in metaphilosophy. This is an important book, and mostly very

² Kenneth Baynes, James Bohman, and Thomas McCarthy, editors, *After Philosophy* (MIT Press, 1986).

³ Two other recent books on the topic fully support the view that analytic philosophy has retrenched. Timothy Williamson, *The Philosophy of Philosophy* (Blackwell, 2008); David Chalmers and David Manley, editors, *Metametaphysics—New Essays on the Foundations of Ontology* (Oxford, 2009).

well done. The topics are well chosen and form an excellent framework for metaphilosophical discussion. They are five: “What is Philosophy?”; “The Data of Philosophical Arguments”; “Analytic And Continental Philosophy”; “What is Good Philosophy?”; and “What Good is Philosophy?” Each of these topics is a chapter title. Due to the importance of the first, the authors have wisely chosen to add two additional chapters which extend discussion of that topic. One of these is “Philosophy, Science and the Humanities”; the other, concerning Rorty, is “Philosophy and the Pursuit of Truth.” The book is well-written, with a low-key style which is appealing; however, a few striking examples would be welcome.⁴ Quotations are well-chosen and thought-provoking; a couple of significant ones, mentioned below, could be added. From the very beginning up to the end the authors show a laudable concern that philosophy not be mere “navel gazing”. The argumentation is generally sensible. However, there are several flaws, one of which is quite grievous. These will predominate in the remainder of my discussion, but I don’t want that to obscure the positive qualities of the book. These flaws could be corrected with relatively little modification. I hope that a second edition does so, and that it becomes a widespread reference point for metaphilosophical discussion. Its importance exceeds the use it will have as a textbook.

A. WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY?

This chapter, and the two which extend it, focus on the comparisons of philosophy with science and the ensuing issue of progress in philosophy. The predominance of naturalism is a guiding thread of the presentation. Nine possible answers to the question posed are considered. Philosophy is either: part of science; immature science; ‘midwife’ and ‘residue’ of the sciences; ‘the study of some particularly ‘deep’ and intangible part of reality’ (Platonism); the logic of science; “a contribution to human understanding” (Hacker’s interpretation of the later Wittgenstein); transcendental inquiry; “world views”; or ‘edifying conversation’ (Rorty).

Comparing philosophy to science requires that “we need to know what is meant by ‘science.’” (p. 24) This is the correct starting place. In this discussion, they at the same time make things easier for themselves than they should and more difficult. They

⁴ Sometimes the key is a bit too low. The chapter on the virtues of philosophy opens with a restatement of the accusations made against Derrida by those objecting to his receiving the honorary degree from Cambridge University. The context is one where the reader is likely to accept these accusations. The few mentions of Derrida elsewhere in the book provide tentative suggestions that they should not be taken at face value. I would prefer that these suggestions were not so tentative, but regardless, a reminder in a footnote in the later chapter help out.

make things too easy for themselves by giving an empirical characterization of science (“very roughly, the attempt to determine the laws of nature by means of observation and experiment” (p. 24); also pp.46-47 re Renaissance). I wholeheartedly agree with the empirical characterization (I am not sure about the “laws of nature” part), but it should be noted that many philosophers claim that the key aspect of science is entirely mathematical—either because mathematics is the “language of nature” or because science could be formulated as a formal system. This isn’t captured by OGB’s treatment of the question of whether formal systems should be included as sciences, and needs to be discussed.

They make things more difficult for themselves through an inadequate treatment of which disciplines count as sciences, thus mattering in our discussion of philosophy and science. The problems that arise from the tendency to treat ‘science’ as meaning ‘physical science’ are resisted only by a couple of qualifications in the first chapter and a footnote in the second. These problems are never given the appropriate stress, and thus are easily missed and easily forgotten when science is mentioned later in the book. Quine’s qualification of the term ‘science’ is reduced to an aside and placed in a footnote: “We should note that Quine construes ‘science’ broadly and includes under this heading fields of inquiry such as economics, sociology and even history.” (p. 56)⁵ Overcoming the equation of ‘science’ with ‘physical science’ was one of the major themes of twentieth century philosophy of science. A full realization of this point would dramatically change how science is viewed by many. The failure to give social sciences their due also surfaces in the failure to consider the possible legitimacy of philosophy as similar to some type of ‘social science’ with a cognitive status different from but equally legitimate to that of the natural sciences. The distinction between understanding and explanation, which has been offered to support this view, is discussed by OGB in arguing for a legitimate epistemic status for the humanities and in their interpretation of Wittgenstein, but the connection to social science isn’t made.

Another major theme of philosophy of science which is lost is the need to consider actual scientific practice, both historical and current, in discussions of science. No mention is made of this, nor of the problems that result when this is ignored. The phrase “secure path of science” is mentioned twice, but not explained. A secure path would seem to be one that one is confident of continual and predictable forward movement. Much progress in science has not proceeded that way. Recently physics seems to have found itself in a cul-de-sac with String Theory, all math and no empirical support. The belief that galaxies were moving away from each other with

⁵ Quine’s unwillingness to include linguistics is not discussed.

decreasing speed turned out to be an error, and a major one. The lesson of the philosophy of science of the last century, explicitly drawn by Lakatos and Kuhn, is that rationality in science is retrospective. Does this fit the image of a “secure path”?

The authors draw a distinction between ontological naturalism and what they call methodological naturalism, aka reductionism. They argue quite sensibly that ontological naturalism fails to imply reductionism. This argument could be strengthened in a couple of ways. In their discussion of primary and secondary qualities, they could cite the analyses which argue that no such distinction holds up.⁶ Also, they should carry over their concern with “actually existing philosophy” to “actually existing science”, as discussed above. Doing so makes it much more difficult to argue for strong reductionist ontological views as proven (as opposed to arguing for them as research programs).

Of these disciplines which need further discussion, special mention should be made of history. In the introductory chapter, they state that we need to consider “what sort of results we can expect” from philosophy “and, in particular, whether they are the same sort of results we get from science, history and other subjects which deliver truths about the world.” (p. 15) Aside from the footnote quoting Quine mentioned above, history is never mentioned again and its epistemic status is never discussed. This created problems throughout the book, as we will see.

The question of progress and the lack thereof in philosophy is important, and many of the important points are well-discussed. The idea of philosophy as “midwife” and “residue” of the sciences, one of the views of philosophy offered, is a conception which can be used to explain the seeming lack of progress in philosophy as a failure to give credit to philosophy for the progress which takes place. Seeing philosophy as “midwife” leaves open the possibility that additional disciplines will spin off from philosophy in the future. Seeing philosophy as “residue” allows one to see how philosophy is interstitial.

This discussion could be tweaked a bit. It could be portrayed as a continual process rather than a one-time occurrence (in the Renaissance). Also, the view of philosophy as residue of the sciences gives rise to the idea of the heterogeneity of different parts of philosophy. Such heterogeneity is important in any further discussion, since it makes general claims about philosophy more difficult to make, but also more difficult to refute. This is the only view of philosophy offered which provides for such heterogeneity, and this possibility of heterogeneity could use more emphasis.

⁶ e.g. John O’Neill, “The Varieties of Intrinsic Value,” in *Environmental Ethics—An Anthology*, edited by Andrew Light and Holmes Rolston III (Blackwell, 2003), pp. 131–142, 136.

OGB consider one view that has been put forward which attributes the lack of progress in philosophy to psychological interests—specifically the quarrelsomeness of philosophers. OGB rightly find that view implausible. They should consider other ways psychology plays a role. One view which could be considered is Hobbes's. Hobbes thought that moral and political philosophy were hindered from the sort of progress and agreement achieved in mathematics because every question in moral and political philosophy involves a direct interest for all discussants. Hobbes thought that mathematical questions don't involve such interests. I think that this is an interesting idea which would require little space and could be considered independently of Hobbes's general epistemological views. Gilbert Harman presents another view that psychological interests have effects of metaphilosophical significance on the philosophical field. He makes the interesting claim that most moral philosophers are moral universalists, and that moral relativism is relatively absent from the field, as a matter of self-selection because moral philosophy would simply not be an interesting subject to spend time on if one was a moral relativist.⁷ (This essay is also an interesting one to show how arguments for strong reductionist views rely on a floating conception of science, as careful reading shows that the meaning is limited to physical science to make the case for reductionism but broadened to include psychology elsewhere in the essay.) These sorts of situation suggest that there could be a subfield of metaphilosophy analogous to the field of behavioral economics.

Unlike psychological impulses, which are mentioned, institutional incentives and imperatives are entirely absent.⁸ OGB, in their concern for dealing with “really existing philosophy”, note that they take the failure of a metaphilosophical claim to match any actually existing philosophy to be evidence against that claim. They note that such widespread conflict provides evidence that the claim it concerns some endeavor other than philosophy. However, they fail to consider the way in which beliefs about philosophy can become self-fulfilling prophecies if institutional hiring is based on them. Institutional imperatives are an important issue in Continental social theory, but are absent from analytic philosophy and phenomenology, and they are absent from this book. If metaphilosophy is concerned with “really existing philosophy” and with fostering progress in philosophy, then it should consider institutional factors.

⁷ Harman, “Is There a Single True Morality?” in *Moral Relativism—A Reader*, edited by Paul Moser and Thomas Carson (Oxford, 2000), pp. 165–184.

⁸ They could easily tie this in with their comments about what “disciplines” philosophy. (p. 70) Here they are referring to Timothy Williamson’s use of the phrase, which involves what philosophers consciously strive for. I think it should be expanded to include what philosophers unconsciously lapse into.

One more point about progress in philosophy or the lack of it. OGB state that “...it is still true that science is capable of delivering a surety of outcome that eludes philosophy. ...It is not just that philosophy does not, as a matter of fact, achieve this degree of security for its conclusions but that such security is so alien to the subject that it would appear distinctly odd if a philosophical thesis were to claim it. One might well wonder if such a thesis were a philosophical thesis at all.” (pp. 50-51) Now consider the claim, “God doesn’t exist” and the further claim “Philosophical considerations conclusively prove that God doesn’t exist.” These claims show that it is not distinctly odd for a philosophical thesis to claim this security. Instead, I find it odd that they do not discuss this claim at this point. In fact, they do discuss it just a few pages later, under the heading of naturalism. There they discuss it in a way that seems to directly contradict what they have just said. They begin by saying “Most contemporary philosophers—like the vast majority of natural scientists—accept some version of a view we can call ‘ontological naturalism’” (p. 54) This is a view OGB seem to agree with as they consider no challenging arguments and raise no doubts about it. It is a view that says that “an accurate and complete description of the world” would not “include any reference to supernatural entities and powers. So naturalist ontology does not include supernatural entities such as the gods, Platonic forms or Cartesian mental substance, nor any supernatural powers such as those exercised by Gods, angels and mediums.” (pp. 55-56) So here is the sort of security for philosophical claims that they earlier say is alien to philosophy.

Let us take a closer look at this contradiction. There are two ways that I can see that would make the contradiction only apparent. Perhaps they think that the naturalists are mistaken in their certainty. If this were the case, they wouldn’t base their entire argument against the naturalists on the distinction between reductive and non-reductive materialism. The other possibility is that they think that scientific and philosophical questions are mutually exclusive categories, and that the disproof of God’s existence is a scientific one, and not a philosophical one. Bringing the question out into the open this way allows one to see that it can be both, and further discussion would show how philosophical and scientific/factual claims work together, as well as the continuity between philosophy and the sciences.

Like the chapter on science, the chapter on Rorty (“Philosophy and the pursuit of truth”) is a continuation of this discussion. Including this chapter was an outstanding idea, and it is generally well done. I am no longer in a position to pass judgment on their presentation of Rorty, having stopped reading him at a certain point, but much of what I remember is here. Their bibliography includes a list of essays by Rorty published after 1995, which would be very handy for those in my situation who wish to

return to his work.

They parse Rorty's claims as following from three theses: (1) pragmatic theory of truth; (2) contextual view of justification; and (3) contingency of language. On one point, I think they fail to consider a conclusion which Rorty drew which is significant for their presentation. I recall Rorty relying on the second of these to argue (persuasively, as far as I was concerned) for the epistemological continuity of the sciences, social sciences, history, ordinary claims, and philosophy. If there is no unmediated contact with reality, then all truth-claims are interpretive. This is of some significance as they treat Rorty as arguing for philosophy as poetry, in Heidegger's sense of the term, and frame their discussion in terms of trying to find some middle position between philosophy as science and philosophy as literature. A proper consideration of the second thesis might lead one to conclude that Rorty had either dissolved this problem or already found such a position.⁹

The main criticism I would address to this chapter is in their treatment of Nietzsche. They say they are talking about Rorty's (and Vattimo's) take on Nietzsche, and I cannot comment on that. But they treat Nietzsche as holding a "world views" view of philosophy—that is as an anti-realist and relativist. This definitely makes sense with regard to a couple of lines of thought in Nietzsche. But there are other lines of thought which are clearly and unequivocally realist. Given the anti-systematic aspects of Nietzsche's philosophical views, it seems problematic to me to resolve Nietzsche's views one way or another without extensive discussion of the texts. One of their citations of Rorty shows the problem: "And Rorty endorses Nietzsche's realization that 'Plato's "true world" was just a fable'..." (p. 151) This text of Nietzsche, in *Twilight of the Idols*, is a classic *dissolution* of the problem, and is one of Nietzsche's *realist* threads. One of the most interesting resolutions of the different threads is the interpretation of this section, which unfolds in a series of steps, as Nietzsche describing the changes in his own views over time, moving from an early Kantian inspired anti-realism to a later realism.¹⁰ In another place, they rely on someone else's take as well: "Vattimo applauds Nietzsche's aphorism, 'There are no facts, only interpretations', adding that this too is an interpretation." This sentence is footnoted, and the footnote cites a commentator on Vattimo. The footnote continues "This is of course also Nietzsche's view. As he writes in *Beyond Good and Evil*, 'Granted that this too is an

⁹ I wish they had devoted a couple of lines to Rorty's idea of philosophy as "culture criticism", with its attendant view that the centers of gravity in philosophy should shift from epistemology and metaphysics to social theory and aesthetics.

¹⁰ John Wilcox, *Truth and Value in Nietzsche—A Study of His Metaethics and Epistemology* (University of Michigan, 1974); Maude-Marie Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1991). .

interpretation—and you will be eager enough to raise this objection?—Well, so much the better.” (p. 155n) The quote is in section 22 of BGE. The aphorism is not found there, nor does the text support the claim in the aphorism, which appears not in Nietzsche’s published writings but in his notebooks. More attention to Nietzsche’s texts would have helped out Rorty against their criticisms. They conclude the paragraph by noting that this Rortyan/Nietzschean view does not rule out criticism in philosophy “any more than in say, music, where different interpretations of a piano sonata, say are allowed, while some are judged too sentimental, too lacking in feeling or whatever.” (p. 155) Such an interpretation of Nietzsche is not obviously wrong, as art was one of his touchstones, and in his early work, he advocates an aesthetic approach to reality. (In his later works, he switches to suggesting—or adds the suggestion—that we substitute aesthetic values for moral values.) But the section in BGE referred to compares metaphysical interpretations of physics not to art but to philological interpretations of texts. I think it’s generally thought that textual interpretation faces more constraints than musical interpretation. In addition, philology counted for Nietzsche as “*Wissenschaft*”, or science, so his response to the objection might mean that he is appealing to his expertise as a philologist rather than embracing a thoroughgoing anti-realism. Once again, forgetting the qualifiers offered regarding the category “science” and falling back into the idea that the choice on offer is between physics and poetry damages the exposition.

A lesser objection which should be noted concerns their treatment of Rorty’s opposition to system in philosophy. They take issue with his view of system—but the weakness of their criticism is shown because they advocate working systematically, not producing or aiming for a system. Working systematically, i.e., drawing connections among different points and tackling questions raised by such questions, need not imply any relation to a totality, which having a system does imply.¹¹ This is the only place they discuss this very important issue, so it is good that it arises here. At the very least, though their criticism of Rorty looks like a cheap shot. And, as noted above, given the way Nietzsche’s approach to philosophy raises the issues of system and (the different point) working systematically, it’s a missed opportunity to delve a bit more deeply into the topic.

¹¹ I note that there is a significant difference; Roland Barthes goes even farther and sets forth a diametrical opposition between system and the systematic. Barthes, quoted at length by Jean-Michel Besnier in *Georges Bataille, politique de l'impossible* (Cecile Defaut, 2014), pp. 224-5. For example, Barthes sees system as monological and the systematic as dialogical.

B. "THE DATA OF PHILOSOPHICAL ARGUMENTS"

In this chapter, the authors discuss two types of data for philosophy, phenomenological description re phenomenology, and intuitions re conceptual analysis. These examples are well-chosen and of great interest. However, there are some problems in their discussions.

Their explanation of phenomenology is not bad, especially given the exceptional difficulties of trying to provide an explanation to someone without any background. I take issue with their attribution to phenomenology the view that "we do not construct representations of the world around us" (pp. 76-7). This is a plausible but questionable interpretation of phenomenology, which places a lot of weight on the idea that we "constitute" the world in our intentional acts, and of which most variants are forms of transcendental idealism. At the very least it needs to be said that they are taking a side on a matter that is contested within phenomenology.¹²

The discussion of intuitions in conceptual analysis has a number of more serious issues. The first of these involves concepts and conceptual analysis entirely apart from the question of intuitions. OGB end this section with a discussion of concepts in which concepts and conceptual analysis are presented as entirely apart from and in opposition to empirically oriented philosophy. While it can be practiced this way, and is perhaps usually done this way, it should be kept in mind that conceptual analysis is a necessary part of empirical inquiry and thus crucial for scientific progress. Without the correct concepts, experiments can be worthless. Lakatos's discussion of Prout is the classic case in support of this claim. According to Lakatos, Prout's hypothesis that the atomic weights of the elements were whole-number multiples of hydrogen's failed to be confirmed because chemists lacked the concept of an isotope. One can add the example of physicists fruitlessly trying proofs of the nature of light by showing that it did not behave like a wave, or alternatively, that it did not behave like a particle. Conceptual analysis then, may have a relation to science, even if when done in an a priori fashion and conceived of in terms of intuitions, it becomes unscientific.

Turning to intuitions, they could be a bit clearer about what is the range and weight of intuitions. As they present it, an intuition gives a conclusive reason for thinking that something is true, equivalent to Descartes's "clear and distinct ideas". The range is the same—drawing a conclusion in a deductive argument is an intuition, as well as...well, just about any other claim where "you see that it must be so." (p. 87)

¹² I discuss some aspects of the problems that arise in trying to interpret Husserl's use of the term "constitution" in my paper in this journal, "Derrida, Husserl and the Problem of Prior Sense". *Cosmos and History*, 12:1, 2016.

They present the view of contemporary intuition skeptics, and I'm glad they do, but if I have accurately characterized what intuitions are supposed to be one doesn't need such sophisticated resources. One could simply point to all of the uncertain or false claims that Descartes made, of which he claimed that he had a clear and distinct idea. Quine's treatment of Descartes's claims of "self-evidence" in *The Web of Belief* is clear and convincing.¹³ One should also note that there are problems with combining the two types of judgments which they include as intuitions, which seems to serve no purpose other than to try to give one's prejudices or hunches the same weight as the drawing of a conclusion to a syllogism. Descartes includes the same two categories as "clear and distinct ideas", but the purpose is closer to the reverse. He wants to give the same evidential weight to the conclusion as to those immediately known initial premises.

The only case of the use of intuitions that they discuss is Gettier's article, which they claim to be "undeniably of philosophical interest". I guess that I'll have to deny the undeniable (maybe I don't share their *intuition* on this one); but I'd be hard-pressed to name a philosophical problem of less interest than Gettier's. I would say that with an appeal to Gettier their concern to keep philosophy from turning into mere navel-gazing has gone entirely out the window. They conclude the section on phenomenology with a (too quick, in my view) acceptance of the phenomenologist's dismissal of the significance of marginal cases. Is this consistent with a valorization of Gettier?

The main problem with their argumentation here is that they end up assimilating the Socratic elenchus to conceptual analysis involving intuitions, thus presenting the intuition skeptic as calling for the abandonment of "the method of traditional philosophy", whose defender is called the "traditionalist". (p. 92) Socratic elenchus can be worthwhile even if one accords *no* evidentiary weight to intuitions, as it shows someone that they hold contradictory views. I don't see that intuition skepticism implies the abandonment of Socratic elenchus.

Finally, a problem with the chapter is that it calls out for another section on empirical and historical examples in philosophy. They need look no farther than their

¹³ I take their word that analytic philosophers appeal to intuitions in this way. My recollection of my undergraduate teachers is that their appeal to intuitions was not quite so strong. I got the sense that intuitions (which they constantly appealed to) counted as a reason for a view, but how strong a reason wasn't clear. It might be just enough to prevent the elimination of a view from consideration, it might place the burden of proof on other views, or it might tip the scale for the view, but not before other reasons were considered. But this is my recollection of their (long ago) classroom presentations. In any event, whatever claims are made for intuitions by analytic philosophers, you can class me as one of the skeptics.

own earlier examples, mentioned above, of the splitting off of sciences from philosophy. Additionally, given their interest in science, they could draw on examples in Popper (the eclipse predictions), Kuhn, and Lakatos (e.g. Prout). Or the empirical examples Hobbes uses to support his claims, initially derived *a priori*, of the horrors of a state of nature, as well as those used by the critics of Hobbes. If they want to go even farther along these lines, they could briefly mention the Frankfurt School and its empirical approach. This discussion would be important for conveying the idea that armchair philosophy can also be empirical (if one knows stuff), and, although this is more contentious, would perform the valuable service of shifting epistemological predilections of philosophers away from logic to history.

C. WHAT IS GOOD PHILOSOPHY?

In this chapter, the authors draw out a number of philosophical virtues from Plato's criticisms of the Sophists. From examining what Plato claimed was non-philosophy, they describe what they take to be the character of good philosophy: clarity, seriousness, rigor, reflectiveness, curiosity, integrity. This way of proceeding is ingenious.

The discussion of philosophical virtues has many appealing points. In their discussion of philosophical rigor, they make the point that "there is no standard of what a philosophical vocabulary should be like independent of a particular philosophical position." (p. 171) Stated differently, reflective philosophers write as they do because of their philosophical views of language. As this statement follows Derrida's views on metaphor, they imply that Derrida writes the way he does because of his philosophical views on language—a point that it would have been nice to see made explicitly. In addition, it implies that philosophical views are implicit in all philosophical writing, and that no way of writing is philosophically neutral. "Philosophical reflectiveness displays itself in self-consciousness about what methods to adopt." (p. 180)

The aspiration to assimilate philosophy to mathematics is discussed under the headings of "Philosophical Style" and "Philosophical Rigour". "Precision is gained only at the risk of losing touch with the real life of language..." (p. 170) (This statement obviously resonates with the point with which I begin this review.) Their responses to Timothy Williamson's metaphysical views are brief, but right on point: "...Williamson's preferred model of the sort of rigour which can be taught is that which is exhibited in mathematics, though he does not appear to explain why this should be so." Lack of justification is compounded by problems of self-refutation. "He is apt to contrast the progress in mathematics which its rigour facilitates with the lack of advances supposedly occasioned by its absence: 'the community of participants has not

held itself responsible to high enough methodological standards', he writes; for example, 'crucial claims are vaguely stated. It has to be said, unfortunately Williamson's own claim here is not sufficiently explicit to be readily assessable.' (p. 173)

Under the topic of seriousness, the authors offer what they call "the requirement of realism for serious philosophy: It is the demand that serious philosophical claims be grounded in reasons most of us can appreciate..." (pp. 184) Here they hit on a very important aspect of philosophy which is very hard to spell out and justify. I would probably side with the view that this requirement should revolve around reality as it is rather than as it is perceived (as they say), but I'm not sure this distinction will be ultimately be of great significance in this context. However, I would not mention "reality as it is perceived", which is glossed as consensus, without bringing in the hermeneutics of suspicion.

The authors offer Aristotle's view that different standards of rigor will apply in different fields as a positive reason for avoiding mathematization as the ideal in philosophy. This is adequate, but given the importance of the question for metaphilosophy, more should be said. I would suggest that Hume's view of formal systems be considered—that they do not inform one about matters of fact. This view received confirmation—and the Kantian view of mathematics was refuted—by the production (or discovery) of non-Euclidean geometries. Less significant, but directly relevant to the concept of rigor, they could mention Lakatos's (have I mentioned Lakatos?) argument in *Proofs and Refutations* that standards of rigor have changed over time in mathematics. This challenges the idea of perfect method in mathematics.¹⁴

I have one objection to their discussion. I think they seriously underplay the importance of originality and profundity in philosophy. They discuss these very briefly in the conclusion, setting them aside as not constitutive of the practice of philosophy. This may even be correct, but this view misses something important. Given the extensive consideration they give to science as a standard against which they measure philosophy, they should consider the analogy, or connection, of philosophy to science in the context of creativity. If you accept Kuhn's distinction between normal science and revolutionary science, then one can see that originality and profundity are constitutive of the latter and not of the former. How important they are for science depends on how important past revolutions are for the science we now have (pretty important!), and how happy one is with the current paradigm in any particular science. If one thinks of philosophy as pre-paradigm science, then originality and profundity

¹⁴ Another article worth a look here is Michael J. Crowe, "Ten Misconceptions About Mathematics and Its History," in *History and Philosophy of Modern Mathematics*, volume XI, Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science, edited by William Asprey and Philip Kitcher (University of Minnesota Press, 1988).

would seem to be of even greater significance because one is hoping to achieve something greater.

D. WHAT GOOD IS PHILOSOPHY?

This is an important question, and specifying it this way is an excellent idea. There are some good aspects of their discussion—they make a distinction between the products of philosophy and the practice of philosophy, and discuss the possible benefits of each in turn. The formulation of the triviality objection by Dennett is provocative: “Can anybody outside of academic philosophy be made to care whether you’re right?” (p. 191) Explicitly discussing applied and public philosophy is a good idea.

However, the absence of some key points undermine their presentation. They quote Posner’s view that philosophy is pointless, but don’t quote or refer to Peter Singer’s response.¹⁵ They discuss the significance of Hart’s and Dworkin’s disagreement on the existence of law, but fail to mention the importance of this issue for the Nuremberg trials. And perhaps Dennett’s objection should be discussed in terms of the analytic/Continental divide.

The two main problems with this chapter are these: first, they discuss the issue of the possible moral improvement of philosophy too narrowly. They focus on the question of whether the study of moral philosophy can, and ought to be expected to, result in moral improvement. This should be broadened to include the possible improving effects of political theory, and also the question of whether the possible improvements in thinking *in general* from studying philosophy *in general* will result in moral (and political) improvement. Is it so ridiculous to hope that philosophy will improve one’s thinking in areas other than the specific focus of inquiry?

Second, they carry out their discussion of the moral implications of seeing philosophy as a matter of “world views” in a way which I find extremely distasteful. Again the problem is related to their treatment of Nietzsche. The one mention of Nietzsche in this chapter is as follows: “Philosophers like Nietzsche are often cited in this connection, since his distinction between the ‘overman’ and the ‘herd’ was employed with terrible consequences by the Nazis.” (p. 203) This comment builds on, and compounds, a problem with the few other mentions of Nietzsche (mentioned above), which take Nietzsche as unproblematically espousing a ‘world-view’ or ‘edifying conversation’ version of philosophy. While there is a line of thought in

¹⁵ Singer, “Ethics beyond Species and beyond Instincts: A Response to Richard Posner,” in *Animal Rights—Current Debates and New Directions*, edited by Cass Sunstein and Martha Nussbaum (Oxford, 2004), pp.78-92.

Nietzsche along these lines, there are also realist lines of thought which are just as, and probably more prominent. Of direct relevance for this chapter is the fact that Nietzsche abhorred the proto-Nazis and explicitly criticized them. These criticism are not ad hoc, but are based on basic concepts of his thought. This is certainly relevant here.¹⁶

Not merely is Nietzsche accused via hearsay, but Heidegger, the actual Nazi, is given a virtual pass. Heidegger's ideas are mentioned and discussed frequently throughout the book with only one mention of his Nazism—in a footnote in an earlier chapter (p. 111n). One cannot absolve OGB on the grounds that they see no need to mention, beyond a footnote, the political implications of a philosopher's thought. Each of the three times they mention Herder, they are careful to note the negative political implications of his thought.

Nor can this be dismissed as a matter of distinguishing the person from the thought. First, Heidegger stated that his political engagement was a result of his thought. Whether one ultimately accepts this or not, there is a great deal to be said for it and it needs to be considered.¹⁷ Second, even if one were to make such a distinction, omitting this issue omits the most striking example for what many take to be the most important metaphilosophical issue—whether one can expect moral and political improvements from pursuing philosophy in general. Certainly Heidegger's Nazism appears to be a striking counterexample, probably the most striking, to such an expectation. A book on metaphilosophy should not omit one of the most interesting metaphilosophical cases.

The major arena of metaphilosophical activity in American philosophy for the last half century has been the Analytic-Continental divide. James Conant's important paper in BCL can be fruitfully considered along with OGB's chapter devoted to this topic.¹⁸ Both OGB and James Conant (in BCL) start by noting the unhelpfulness of

¹⁶ The question of whether Nietzsche bears responsibility, regardless of what he explicitly believed, or the use of his thought by the Nazis and others can still be raised, and has been by Derrida. But his explicit views need to be mentioned.

¹⁷ Bourdieu's discussion of this point seems to me decisive. Pierre Bourdieu, *The Political Ontology of Martin Heidegger* (Stanford, 1991).

¹⁸ In this chapter, they mention the institutional reality of the divide (p. 107), but don't treat it at any length or in any detail. They could, at least, have mentioned here the protest of Derrida's honoring by Cambridge, as this would have provided helpful context for that event in the later chapter.

the names. OGB cite Bernard Williams as calling the names a “cross-classification”, and Conant refers to them as “orthogonal”. This might seem rote enough to need no serious consideration, but I mention it because I would like to propose the idea that not only are the names “orthogonal”, but so are the referents of the names. Analytic and Continental are orthogonal categories, but not so orthogonal as to be completely incomparable. Given the failure to consider this in the works under review and elsewhere, this would seem to be an extremely difficult idea to consider.

OGB go looking for essences of analytic and Continental philosophy, and their consideration and rejection of various possibilities provides the framework for the chapter. This strikes me as somewhat unfortunate; it does allow them to introduce some important points, but taking this as an obvious starting point reinforces a traditional (and analytic) ahistorical approach at the expense of a more obvious historical approach. Here they would have been better served by introducing the discussion with Nietzsche’s dictum, “only that which has no history is definable.”¹⁹ This would have provided a caution to the reader that one is going to have to shift to thinking historically rather than analytically, and the additional attention to Nietzsche could have helped with the exposition in (at least) two ways. First, some of Heidegger’s criticisms of analytic philosophy they present in this chapter could also come from Nietzsche, and second, it might have saved them from a serious problem in their Nietzsche references in later chapters (which I have already discussed).

In addition, they fail to take proper care in making their argument. They rightly say that “Wittgenstein’s remark that a dispute about the precise border between two countries doesn’t put the citizenship of all their inhabitants in question seems apposite.” (p. 107) However, borderline cases do need to be resolved or avoided when one is citing counterexamples as refuting claims about general categories. I don’t think they avoid using such cases, and Wittgenstein—the Wittgenstein cited here, the later Wittgenstein—is the most prominent problem case.

Nevertheless, they do end up (sort of) in the right place. After considering possible essences in the topics, doctrines, methods, and styles, they conclude that analytic and Continental philosophy are traditions. BCL also characterize analytic and Continental as two traditions. (p. 3) I would suggest that this is not quite right. Analytic philosophy is a tradition. Continental philosophy includes multiple traditions. This is the orthogonality of the categories.

Before considering this, I wish to note the positive aspects of the

¹⁹ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil/Genealogy of Morality*, translated by Adrian del Caro (Stanford University Press, 2014), p. 268.

analytic/Continental chapter in OGB, even if the constraints of their framework interfere with the insightfulness of their discussion. One, they discuss the “central role of history” in Continental philosophy and the ahistoricality of analytic philosophy. This section can be supplemented by Conant’s (BCL 53) and Catarina Dutilh Novaes’s very valuable discussions of the ahistoricality and atemporality of analytic philosophy (BCL p. 77-78). Two, they provide examples which others can use to test their theories. Three, they devote space to a discussion of clarity, which is of critical importance given the frequency with which analytic philosophers have used this as a slur on Continental philosophy. (Especially noteworthy is their lengthy quote from Waismann (p. 125) which concludes: “I’ve always suspected that clarity is the last refuge for those who have nothing to say.”) Four, they mention that Continental is a “term of exclusion”, although much more should be said about this. But at least this points in the direction of how insights from social theory about such terms—and the hierarchies they reinforce—could be brought to bear on the divide.

After rejecting the idea that any essence defines analytic or Continental, they conclude that one should think of them in terms of traditions. As noted above, I think this is correct. However, I would propose three corrections or objections.²⁰

First, analytic philosophy is a tradition, the tradition which takes formal logic as the paradigm of knowing. (By paradigm, I don’t mean anything as sophisticated as Kuhn’s use of the term; merely as the “form” of knowing or “preeminent” way of knowing. But I would insist on the vagueness of the term and the multiplicity of ways one can devote oneself to the pre-eminence of formal logic.) Continental philosophy includes many traditions, some of which also can be characterized by their paradigm of knowing—history of the world (Marx, Nietzsche), history of philosophy (later Heidegger), art (early Nietzsche, Lyotard), transcendental logic (Husserl).²¹ (Existentialism might be seen as taking some sort of psychology as its paradigm of knowing, or as not defined by such a paradigm since its central claim is that the answers to life’s important questions cannot be known.) In characterizing Continental philosophy as one tradition, OGB take a too broad view of a philosophy “growing out of” another, so that they claim that “overthrowing” of the basic claims of a tradition is a way of staying within the tradition, rather than starting a new one (p. 132). Finally, I would note the obvious point that not all other traditions are included under the term Continental. Pragmatism and later Wittgenstein would be two such non-Analytic

²⁰ Their argument also suffers (again) from their treatment of “science” and the contrast between philosophy as science and philosophy as art/literature.

²¹ Due consideration needs to be given to the difficulties of talking about recent thinkers in this context. Rejecting or standing outside a tradition is not sufficient to start another.

traditions.

Second, OGB recommend three concepts for thinking about traditions: family resemblances, ties of mutual influence, and the fluidity and porousness of borders (pp. 132-4). This is very good, but it is not enough. In trying to interpret traditions one needs to consider how certain dead ends are rejected immediately, but others are reached over and over again; which points can be accepted without argument and which require hundreds of pages of argument; which sorts of examples can be used to make a point and which cannot; which positions are safer, and which are more risky; which positions can be espoused in early career and which are to be brought out in later career (Quine's and Rorty's careers are instructive in this regard); which positions are rejected on account of serious objections, and which ones remain in consideration in spite of serious objections; and which sort of positions achieve the most prestige.²²

Conant's essay in BCL goes much farther in the necessary direction. He approaches the characterization of analytic philosophy through three perspectives, in sequence: that of practitioners, that of ideologues, and that of historians. In the third, he discusses how one must consider what is entrenched, what participants are deeply committed to and deeply invested in, "what goes without saying" in the field; he applies the concepts of resistance, fantasy and repression, and he argues for the use of the tools of the historian. There is much that is extremely interesting and important in all parts of his account. A problem remains, in that his treatment of the views of practitioners is never corrected to take these ideas into account.

In the first section he sets forth some "representative quotations" about the nature of philosophy by eminent philosophers: Moore, Russell, Early Wittgenstein, Schlick, Carnap, Later Wittgenstein, Ryle, Austin, Strawson, and Quine. This is very valuable and Conant's discussion is worthwhile. However, the stopping point is conspicuous and instructive. No Kripke? No Lewis? The return of formal logic to the positions of highest eminence should be combined with the disappearance from general discussion of some of the thinkers quoted. As OGB note, after Quine there was "the almost complete disappearance of linguistic philosophy from the analytic scene." (p. 117) Richard Eldridge and Tamsin Lorraine confirm this in their essay in BCL, noting that

²² I take it as confirmation of my characterization of analytic philosophy that the positions of highest prestige go to logicians. It might be thought that Davidson and Rawls present counterexamples. I would claim Davidson, not a logician himself, would not have gotten anywhere if he hadn't relied so heavily on Tarski in his early work. And Rawls "Theory of Justice" is not merely ahistorical, but an exercise in decision theory—a branch of mathematics. (His admission that history cannot be excluded comes late and without fanfare. See the footnote in *Political Liberalism*.)

what they call the “practice-directed version of conceptual analysis”, naming Austin, Wittgenstein, and Ryle “have been largely forgotten or ignored.” (BCL p. 61)²³ Since Conant doesn’t mention these developments, we are not told how this might affect our consideration of the quotes by Austin, Wittgenstein and Ryle. What does this disappearance tell us about the tradition of analytic philosophy?

The tools that Conant recommends for thinking historically are probably adequate for considering these developments, but he doesn’t follow through on his insights and apply them to the quotes presented. He concludes, as do OGB, that analytic philosophy is a tradition, and that in a tradition each moment is linked to others in a significant way, and in the succession the significance of each moment illuminates the others. (p. 55) This conclusion fails to differentiate adequately according to the depth accorded by historical thinking advocated previously—concepts of entrenchment, resistance, commitment, fantasy, and so forth. He takes the work of each of the ten philosophers²⁴ quoted to make up “only a single stone in the overall mosaic of the analytic tradition.” (p. 27) A mosaic is flat. The metaphor aptly captures the lack of dimension in this part of his essay.

Third, the two traditions view, also espoused by BCL, is likely to hinder important work which goes beyond analytic philosophy. OGB recognize this objection, noting that engagement across the divide is likely to be between analytics and those Continentals who stand in the closest proximity. Their response to this: “Surely any genuine rapprochement between paradigmatically analytic philosophers and paradigmatically continental philosophers is just that: a genuine rapprochement.” (p. 135) It should be noted that it is themselves that they are defending here—phenomenology, the Continental tradition with the most in common with Analytic philosophy, is the Continental tradition they explore at greatest length.

On my view there are no “paradigmatically” Continental thinkers in the way there are in analytic philosophy because Continental philosophy involves multiple traditions. The implication of my view is that work which engages Benjamin and Merleau-Ponty (e.g.) would be pluralistic, but it would not count as such on OGB’s and BCL’s “two traditions” view. Adopting their view of pluralism as our goal would lead to narrower scope of philosophy than we might otherwise have, while leading to undeserved self-congratulation and a failure to see what is missing.

²³ I certainly noticed that this had occurred by the time I was in graduate school (late 80s and early 90s) with regard to the later Wittgenstein, who of these three was the figure of greatest interest to me.

²⁴ Conant refers to ten philosophers. I like the fact that Early Wittgenstein and Later Wittgenstein are counted as two philosophers.

When I was in graduate school, “pluralism” was a buzzword. It had different meanings depending on who was advocating it. When Continentals said it, it meant “Give us a seat at the table and we won’t try to wipe you out the way you tried to wipe us out,” and there was an undertone directed to other Continental traditions, “Let’s not try to wipe each other out the way Analytics tried to wipe us out.” When Analytics said it, “We’ll speed up the process of bringing you in if you don’t try to wipe us out (the way we tried to wipe you out).” And for everyone else, it meant “How about us? Can we be included?”

It was not the only one. Other buzzwords included capital T “Theory” and the “hermeneutics of suspicion.” These seemed to promise more. They were both pluralistic, but also more concrete than “pluralism”. Both were interdisciplinary; pluralism was not. Pluralism, nevertheless, did offer some noteworthy benefits over the status quo. First, it carried with it the recognition that analytic philosophy is one tradition among others, a point which Conant says is now more widely acknowledged (p. 40), but which certainly was not acknowledged then. Pluralism could mean merely having philosophers of different traditions in the same department, but for those who were interested in engaging with different traditions, it offered the possibility of adding more tools to one’s intellectual toolkit.

Reading *Beyond the Analytic-Continental Divide*, subtitled “Pluralist Philosophy in the Twenty-First Century”, a collection of essays edited by Jeffrey Bell, Andrew Cutrofello, and Paul Livingston, allows one to consider how some philosophers are trying to overcome the divide. What does pluralism mean now?

Two important cautions before attempting to answer that question. First, some criticisms that apply to the book may not apply to the authors whose papers are presented. I noted above that OGB don’t consider the institutions of philosophy, and that same criticism applies to BCL. However, I know that John McCumber, one of the contributors, has done very important work on the institutions of philosophy.²⁵ But there is no institution-critique in his paper here. It is only this book that is under consideration, and the vision of pluralism presented is that of the editors. That vision may or may not be shared by the other contributors.

The second caution is that nearly all of the contributors are well established philosophers with long publication histories. I would expect that my objections and

²⁵ *Time in the Ditch* (Northwestern University Press, 2001); *The Philosophy Scare* (University of Chicago Press, 2016).

questions are addressed in their other published works. However, I have only this book in front of me; those who think a project sounds promising or intriguing are directed to the contributor's other writings.

The editors provide a brief but very helpful introduction. Their philosophical view is one of "synthetic philosophy", which narrows down the way in which they envision getting "beyond" the divide. They construe "philosophy as a cosmopolitan endeavor... To this end, each of the essays draws centrally on problems, methods, and results of *both* traditions to produce new work across a variety of areas." (p. 2) They then discuss the essays under five headings—very roughly, language, realism and anti-metaphysics, time, and practice.

I have already noted two ways in which this view is less cosmopolitan than one might hope—it's not interdisciplinary, and is likely to constrict the work done in Continental philosophy to that which is of greatest proximity to analytic philosophy. BCL's anthology shows that these fears are justified. In the remainder of the review, I will discuss the essays under five headings, pointing out where these overlap with those of the editors.

a. "*Time is the true hero of every feast.*" (Bakhtin)

The editors stress a difference between the atemporal and ahistorical aspects of analytic philosophy and the tendency of much Continental philosophy to see time and history as of great importance, and I have already mentioned that Conant and Novaes do so as well in their essays. I do not follow Wittgenstein in thinking that philosophical problems about time are pseudo-problems, and consider these legitimate and important problems, metaphysics with a small 'm'. The essays which focus on time and history are the most interesting in the book.

I have already discussed Conant's paper; Catarina Dutilh Novaes's essay, "Conceptual Genealogy for Analytic Philosophy" also falls under this heading. She begins by discussing (as already mentioned) analytic philosophy's ahistorical view of philosophy. She then sketches her project, which is to use ideas from Nietzschean genealogy in investigating the history of analytic philosophy. Her references to Canguilhem and the History and Philosophy of Science movement are welcome.²⁶ Her discussion of Foucault's archaeology and genealogy, which stresses the differences and argues for the preferability of genealogy over archaeology, can be usefully

²⁶ HPS was a major event at the time of its founding and resulted from a recognition of the need for the alteration of standard conceptions of science. Has it retained its influence?

compared with Lee Braver's account in his contribution (discussed below).²⁷ She proposes a "neutral" genealogy, one that fulfills "a purely explanatory function". (p. 97) Her genealogy traces concepts and finds assumptions which are embedded in concepts which are in current use in analytic philosophy.

By pointing out unnoticed assumptions, Novaes's method makes history more philosophical and gives it a critical edge. This edge may not be as critical as full-fledged genealogy, but there is no problem as long as one doesn't see this as a replacement for a genealogy motivated by a philosophy of suspicion (and Novaes never claims that it should be seen as such). By steering the finding of assumptions to an historical inquiry, Novaes project helps to provide safeguards to the imputing of assumptions, which can be a way of imputing errors which haven't been made. Her project has the promise to get philosophers to see their work historically, thus making philosophy more historical, which would be a major accomplishment.

Andrew Cutrofello's essay, "Revolutionary Actions and Events" is helpful in many ways. He begins by contrasting the standard analytic view of events (ordinary) with a view of events held by a number of prominent Continentals (extraordinary). Among the latter, he treats Badiou and Arendt, examining Arendt's views of revolutionary actions and Badiou's of revolutionary Events. The dialogue he sets up between them is very interesting, and the Arendtian response he provides to Badiou's critique of her theory is very valuable. He then skilfully uses the debate between the analytic A-series and B-series theories of time (which arise out of McTaggart's discussion of time) to elucidate these theories, and the theories in return elucidate the A-series/B-series debate. In interpreting Arendt's view as one where, without thinking subjects, time would have a B-series structure (p. 298), I think he has hit on the best possible view of time that transcendental philosophers can hope for.

There are a few points where I would contest or question his claims. He says that Arendt is "a resolute *A* series theorist", but this would be only true relative to her view

²⁷ There are a couple of points of interpretation where I disagree. However, these don't affect her main points. The main one would be her designating Nietzschean genealogy as finding shameful origins, which she corrects to finding origins inconsistent with the practitioners self-conception. I interpret Nietzsche's genealogy as including the latter as well as the former, as most of the points he finds in his Genealogy of Morals conflict with Christians' self-conception but are not flaws in his view (e.g., Christianity as an exercise in will to power, which is inevitable according to Nietzsche). In addition, finding a shameful origin, if shameful means shameful according to standard ways of thinking, is not a negative in Nietzsche's book. He does, of course use genealogy to find material for his external criticism—Christianity is reactive. This part would fit in Novaes view, but since Nietzsche does not commit the genetic fallacy—a point left up in the air by Novaes—this is only of concern because Christianity (and its successors) are still reactive—still nihilistic, still vengeful, and no longer have compensating active functions in society.

of revolutionary actions; a truly resolute A series theorist would apply the designations of past, present and future to all actions, and indeed all moments, ordinary as well as extraordinary. Also, his account of the open future version of the A-series is highly questionable. According to Cutrofello, the A-series view “precludes the possibility of revolutionary events. Even if it isn’t determined now whether or not a sea battle will occur tomorrow, its eventual occurring won’t involve a radical transformation of the existing ontological order. In Lewis’s terminology, it won’t involve a hitherto alien property, a property not previously present in the world.” (p. 100) Of course the A-series/open future describes the appearance of anything new—thing or event—as the occurrence of something “not previously present in the world” and as a “transformation of the existing ontological order” if one wants to use this grandiose description. If that’s what’s needed for a radical change, then every ordinary event and action is a radical change—and looks pretty radical compared to Plato’s metaphysics. It may not be radical enough for Kantian views, such as Arendt’s and Badiou’s (and Cutrofello has an important footnote comparing Badiou with Kant (p. 301 n.5)), but Cutrofello doesn’t discuss the ways Kant’s project was a reactive attempt to put the brakes on the French and Scottish Enlightenments; nor does he discuss the ways in which Badiou’s view of an Event (which Cutrofello presents accurately as beyond objective proof or refutation for Badiou) is a reactive attempt to save his past failed political and religious commitments. Finally, I find it worrisome when Cutrofello brings in Lewis’s Possible Worlds view, as this may indicate that he is heading for an atemporal view himself. But that is only hinted at in this paper, and does not detract from the points mentioned above.

John McCumber’s paper is the most ambitious in the book. As indicated by the title of his paper, “Why is Time Different from Space?”, he not only dives directly into the basic question in the philosophy of time—How does time differ from space?—he also attempts to show that this new question “Why?” is legitimate and to provide the answer. His discussion treats together the phenomenological and empiricist take on experience. This would be very important if successful. I don’t think it is, and will pose a few objections.

There are two parts of his paper which I think are of special note. First, he opens by rejecting the typical claims (typical of Analytics) that the beyond of the analytic/Continental divide lies in an *Aufhebung*, specifically bringing analytic clarity to the important issues addressed by Continentals. Instead, he suggests that going beyond the divide should be “neither-nor” rather than “both-and”. I definitely concur. In addition, McCumber sets out a theory of “nearings” and “farings”, which along with the concept of “scripts”, will be the basis of his theory of time. Rocks, animals, and

people are all involved in multiple ways (e.g. walking toward, thinking of, imitating, attaining a closer position in a hierarchy are all “nearings”) in nearings and farings, and the extensive discussion shows that none of the meanings of these terms is primary, as a reductive physical view is going to claim. All of these meanings are legitimate.

Objections:

(1) McCumber begins by mentioning our empirical experience of time and often juxtaposes empirical with phenomenological. But these sit together uneasily, and ultimately the phenomenological wins out over the empirical. He calls his approach a “humbler” version of phenomenology. McCumber spends much of his essay looking for a phenomenological experience which will be the basis of space and time. He is trying to do so in a way which takes Edward Casey’s work as a starting point, but tries to correct Casey’s mistakes, as Casey in turn was trying to correct Merleau-Ponty, who was trying to correct Heidegger, who was trying to correct Husserl. (Rich tradition or degenerating problemshift?) Although it is beyond the scope of this review to establish this objection, it seems to me that McCumber’s approach is not neither/nor enough.²⁸

(2) One of the errors of these precursors that McCumber addresses is that they fail to “explain how non-human entities are in time”. (p. 216) He then goes on to note that the “crucial move in this is to see that nearing and faring need not be with respect to us; they can be motions of non-human, and indeed non-sentient bodies.” (p. 216) I don’t think this is enough to claim an advantage for his view. As I read McCumber’s paper, nearings and farings are not enough for time. Time arises only with a “script”, and he never addresses the issue of whether non-human animals have scripts.

This latter idea points to the possible significance of McCumber’s paper. I would consider his theory successful, not if it provides better ad hoc adjustments to the work of a long series of precursors making ad hoc adjustments to what was a pretty bad theory to begin with. The question is whether the theory is fruitful in adding to our empirical knowledge of the world. Does his concept of “scripts” lead to fruitful questions in the investigation of animal minds? Do the concepts of “nearings” and “farings” add anything to our knowledge of social hierarchies or of art? (I mention the latter because they are reminiscent of Benjamin’s concept of aura.) It seems quite

²⁸ A key point is that the originary experience he looks for and finds, where time and space are “indifferent” is where travelling is measured not in spatial units, but in temporal units. (Think trekking.) While one should grant that this way of experiencing space is just as legitimate as more abstract measurement, there is no reason to take it as primary (other than the demand by phenomenology for an “originary” experience). Furthermore, I would suggest the B-series as a view in which time and space are indistinct. The B-series is a spatial figure, and a lot of people have been convinced that it is the structure of time. Related sorts of experiences, where time and space are ‘indifferent’, would be reading a diary and looking at a calendar.

possible. But McCumber's metaphysical views—helpfully laid out in an appendix—show a sharp distinction between philosophy and science of the sort too often at work in OGB, and which I think creates a barrier to empirical investigation.

Although it may not fit as obviously, I will treat Jeffrey Bell's essay under this category. Bell lays out the ontological view known as “truthmaker philosophy” and argues that Deleuze's metaphysics of difference would meet its needs and deal with the objections to that theory better than its proponents have. I think he does an exceptionally good job of explaining truthmaker theory and laying out the various objections it has faced and its attempts to respond to those objections. That Deleuze's dynamic, open-ended theory (“There is no final determinate point upon which all of our truths will settle.” (p. 146)) handles in a superior manner objections to a static, atemporal theory should not come as a surprise. Bell, though, does not address the concern which prevented me from getting far in my attempt to read *Difference and Repetition*. The book—or at least as far as I got—is an unremitting barrage of a priori claims. Of course, the truthmakers are unlikely to push this objection.

b. Return of Capital M Metaphysics.

As mentioned above, pluralism suggests the promise of having more tools in one's intellectual toolkit to solve and dissolve problems. Some of the essays in this book remind us that it also provides more tools for avoiding problems and indulging in pseudo-solutions. (I don't think it's a coincidence that it's the essays which strive to provide atemporal metaphysical views are the worst offenders.) The editors note in their introduction that, after a great deal of activity in the twentieth century generating critiques of metaphysics, “Recent years, however, have witnessed a variety of “returns” of metaphysical theorizing for both analytic and Continental thinkers.” (p. 8) They class this under the heading of “Critique of the Critique”. They supply plenty of evidence that these returns have taken place, but that subtitle makes a promise that they do not make good on. Nowhere in the introduction, nor (with one exception, a footnote in Paul Livingston's paper, discussed below) in any of the essays are the anti-metaphysical critiques directly addressed and no objections are provided. Instead these critiques are ignored, and one is left wondering why the editors want to further this trend.

David Woodruff Smith wishes to add Husserl's model of intentionality to Tarski's model of truth. This will allow us to talk of an “experience of truth.” I can see why each sort of theory would appeal to a devotee of the other, as they both privilege formal systems (formal logic for Tarski, mathematics for Husserl) as ways of knowing. However, instead of solving the problems of each, the conjunction saddles each with the problems of the other.

First Tarski: A theory of truth for formal logic is taken as the theory of truth for matters of fact. This requires the concepts of truth conditions and possible worlds (substituting for Tarski's models). All of this so that we can have tautologies for truth conditions in an attempt to avoid objections to the earlier view of truth conditions developed for logical atomism. This is thought to be safe from objection because of the tautologous nature of the truth conditions. Of course it might be thought to be the epitome of metaphysics, not merely because of the need for models or possible worlds, but because it only works if one neutralizes time—the ‘is’ has to be tenseless—and requires univocity, as there's no guarantee that the terms will match reality if they are vague or ambiguous. (Rules of well-formed sentences will have to be provided as well.) Either way you look at it, it drains all of the meaning of the term “truth conditions”, as they no longer provide any assistance in determining the truth of a statement. It gives us a lot of metaphysical machinery only to leave us with the same practices—here, practices of justification—that we use anyway. This is the way Metaphysics typically works.

Now Husserl: Smith explains Husserl's concept of intentionality by equating Husserl's “Noema” with Frege's “Sinn”.²⁹ What is noteworthy is what is left out in this account of Husserl. No mention of “originary experiences”. No “constitution” or “production” of objects. No mention of the transcendental. This is not all that's omitted. He explains Husserl's epoché as a case of semantic ascent. However, the question is what happens during the *descent*? Husserl promised solutions to foundational problems in philosophy, including the problem of the external world. All we get from Smith's account is that “we appreciate the role of meaning in our experience”. In other words, with Tarski we take the quotations off of a statement, and with Husserl we put the quotations back on. But now we *appreciate* the statement more.

One thing Smith has picked up from Husserl is the capacity to seem to make an important claim but qualify it out of existence, or discuss a claim as to be proven but never quite get around to proving it. This is repeated endlessly in his discussion of the “experience of truth.” Is this an experience of truth or of seeming-truth? Smith is clear that these differ: “truth does not reduce to the phenomenological character of seeming-veracity.” (p. 120). But every time he says he experiences truth, he both says that he experiences the veridicality (or veracity) of the statement, but then includes the qualifier “from my first-person perspective”. (p. 119, 121) “Veridicality” and “veracity” mean truth, but Smith says that he “may be wrong” (p. 119), and he equates them with

²⁹ I believe this goes back at least to Dagfinn Føllesdal. See his paper “Husserl's Concept of Noema”.

“truthiness”, which as he notes “does not itself guarantee truth”.³⁰

Paul Livingston brings together Wittgenstein and Heidegger in his paper “Wittgenstein Reads Heidegger, Heidegger Reads Wittgenstein.” The Wittgenstein here is the early Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus*. Livingston is interested in the “still obscure linkages among being, language, and truth.” (p. 222) He is interested in “...the possibility of a level of appearance or manifestation, beyond all facts and beings, that gives rise to the very sense with which all facts and worldly beings are endowed.” (p. 235) He is interested in “foundational problems about logic, sense, and meaning, and the totality of the world...” (p. 237) Instead of talking about languages, he wants to talk about language as such (p. 227); instead of forms of life, he turns to Agamben’s concept of “‘form-of-life’ as an essentially unitary concept.” (p. 246 n. 63) Foundations, unity, totality, essence (‘as such’), the transcendental. To the Wittgensteinian, this sounds like nonsense.

In the paragraph Livingston devotes to the *Philosophical Investigations*, he signals that he interprets the book in a way which sharply diminishes its critical edge. On his view, the book “displaces the theoretical tendencies to assume in advance...” I would reply, “not just in advance”. And Wittgenstein was not just “displacing” the theoretical tendencies, he was trying to eradicate them. Livingston’s response to the dismissal of his questions is confined to a footnote addressing Rorty, and is hardly persuasive against the great weight of argumentation concerning the kinds of nonsense philosophers talk.

Graham Priest proposes that the answer to Heidegger’s question of Being can be found in “paraconsistent logic”. His paper is an example of analytic reading of Continental philosophy, and I would say that it falls outside the category of pluralism. Only someone who took formal logic as the paradigm of knowing would think that formalizing a part of discourse which escaped (or refuted) the previous logics would answer or solve a philosophical question. History plays no role in his approach to Heidegger’s question of Being.³¹

Priest begins with an a priori claim: “Take an object with parts. What makes them into a single thing: There must be something in virtue of which they form a unity. Quite possibly, this thing depends on the unity in question. ...But whatever this binding agent is, there must be one.” (p. 252) Why *must* there be? Why must it be *one*?

³⁰ “Veracity” has multiple meanings, one of which provides a bit of wiggle room, but there is none for “veridicality”.

³¹ For my take on Heidegger and Being, see “Language and Later Heidegger: ‘What is Being?’” *Philosophical Forum*, 40:4, 2009, 489-499.

Priest should apply this thinking to traditions and philosophical problems. What makes Heidegger's "question of Being" one?

The philosophical work is all done in the application of the formal system. Consider now the part of the quote just above which I skipped: "If the unity is a house, its parts are bricks, and maybe what makes them into a unity is their geometric configuration. If the unity is a symphony, its parts are notes, and maybe what makes them into a unity is their arrangement" (p. 252) The "maybes" show that the interesting questions are pushed into the application. The same is going to be the case in applying the special paraconsistent variable. The decision to specify which kinds of things permitted to entail contradictions will have to be made outside of the logic; if anything can entail a contradiction, then you've ruled out logic altogether.

Since he avoids taking a position ("maybe"), there's no use exploring counterexamples. There is also another reason to avoid counterexamples—they will be ruled out by the apparatus. Regarding plural objects, indicated by plural forms of reference ("Russell and Whitehead"), Priest says: "The reply is simple, however, The machinery does not allow us to refer to objects that are plural, but to a plurality of objects. If something is, it is one, a unity; and if some things are, they are ones, unities. The machinery of plural reference does indeed enable one to refer to a plurality of objects, but each is one. So to be is still to be one." (p. 255) The machinery decides what the characteristics of objects are ("middle-sized dry goods" as Austin quipped). This recalls Quine's "To be is to be the object of a bound variable." Ontology is dictated by formal logic.

c. Anti-Realism is Rife

Anti-realism is prominent throughout. It is not clear whether there are more anti-realists than realists, but anti-realism has a more prominent profile. The two essays in which the realism-antirealism dispute is the focus, by Lee Braver and Carol Rovane, both argue for anti-realism. In addition, the realists (like McCumber) or those who don't say in their essay, tend to come out of or rely heavily on the Kantian and phenomenological traditions so there is an anti-realist drag on their work. I take this to be a highly problematic view for reasons of social justice, and Braver and Rovane both take up ethico-political concerns in their essays. So this might be a good opportunity for addressing these issues.

Braver argues that Foucault's anti-realism is superior to Putnam's anti-realism (this argument includes an argument that Putnam's internal realism is actually anti-realism). Braver is also arguing for anti-realism and I will spend more time on this aspect of the essay. His Foucault is primarily the Foucault of the archaeology, but also bringing in

the Foucault of the genealogical period and interpreting this period in such a way as to make it (quite plausibly) consistent with the epistemological claims of the earlier period. In short, we have the historical aprioris (of different epochs) and power. Braver argues that Putnam falls back on a timeless/ahistorical view of truth, but that Foucault has achieved a truly temporal/historical, hence non-Metaphysical, view.

The first point to be made is that Braver's presentation of Foucault undercuts his arguments against realism. Braver says that "...Foucault draws the conclusion that whatever affects the formation of these concepts and justificatory practices plays a role in determining reality and truth, and so has a rightful place in determining reality and truth, and so has a rightful place in ontology and epistemology. In particular, what he calls power influences the formation of concepts..." (p. 158) Also "Without a transcendental safe house, power partially determines concepts..." (p. 160) If power *partially* determines concepts, then the realist could say, let's focus on the other determining factors. And if they are partially determined by power, let's consider whether that part could be more or less. If power *influences* the formation of concepts, influences could be more or less, and let's consider cases where there's less influence, as well as the other influences. The realist might have to reconsider their account, changing from all-or-nothing to more-or-less, but the realist can grant everything Braver says of Foucault's views (leaving aside the question of its interpretive accuracy), and still maintain realism.

The second point, and more significant for Braver's account, is that although he accurately shows how Putnam's account falls back into Metaphysics, I believe that his does as well. Putnam does so, as Braver points out, when he appeals to an idealized future under ideal epistemological conditions. (p. 160) But examining Braver's response to Putnam shows that his view ties truth too closely to the present, and this privileging of presence (to use the Derridean locution), is also atemporal. Both his view and Putnam's view close off the connection of the present to the future; they merely do so in different ways.

Consider the following three claims Braver makes in response to Putnam (emphases mine in all three): (1) "If this ideal state cannot have any effect on, and possess no knowable relationship to, how we know things *here and now*, then the same pragmatic intuitions that lead Putnam to reject noumena should also eliminate these." (p. 160) (2) An important footnote to a later point asks this rhetorical question: "Rorty is right to point out the 'cautionary' use of truth in the sense that we might later come to reject what we now hold to be true, but *what is gained* by saying "p is justified but not true because it might later turn out to be false" instead of "p is now true but might later be false?"" (p. 168 n. 69) (3) Instead of looking for ideal conditions, Foucault studies the

de facto historical justificatory practices that have actually occurred, believing that truth cannot be located anywhere else than *within* actual knowledges or scientific practices.” (p. 161)

Here a bit of suspicion directed at the Kantian origins of Foucault’s anti-realism is useful. Kant rejected noumena in order to reverse the Copernican turn—to put human beings back at the center of the universe. Bringing history to bear on Kant’s account of categories and constitution of objects is not necessarily going to escape this problem. Braver’s account sticks with the “here and now” with no connection to the future; truth is located “within” current practices, again cutting off a connection to the future.

Let us consider Braver’s rhetorical question about what is gained. I am going to try to answer a related question—not exactly the same but close enough and sharing the important focus on “what is gained”. Let us examine our practice of talking about mistakes, initially within the context of an umpire’s or referee’s call in a game. Suppose someone asserts after the entire season is over, that a crucial call was blown. The response might be, “What is to be gained by saying the call was wrong?” The game, and season is over, and the call decided the game (and season). In one sense, the call was “true”—the player was out (or whatever)—owing to the performative aspect of the call. In another sense, though, it makes perfectly good sense to say that the player was safe—he or she got to the base before the throw, or the tag was late. What is gained though in thinking in the latter way? Maybe a sense of grievance.³² Rather than argue that a grievance is a gain, I would reply—maybe nothing is gained. There are pointless truths. That is one of the sadder aspects of life. Ruling them out because they are pointless is also Metaphysical.

One can see that this leads right into the ethico-political objection to anti-realism. Identifying injustice requires a realistic account. This objection is most forcefully expressed by MacKinnon:

Take the problem of “is there a reality and how do I know I’m right about it?” The “is there a there there?” business. How do we deal in the face of Cartesian—updated as existential—doubt? Women know the world is out there because it hits us in the face. Literally. We are raped, battered, pornographed, defined by force, by a world that begins, at least, entirely outside us. No matter what we think about it, how we try to think it out of existence or into a different shape or us to inhabit, the world remains real. Try some time. It exists independently of our will. [...] Cartesian doubt—this anxiety about whether the world is really

³² One would like to see a sense of humility gained. Braver is right that humility seemed to be in short supply among mental health professionals through the period in question. I agree that this is a major problem.

there independent of our will or our representations, if I can doubt it, maybe it doesn't exist—comes from the luxury of a position of power that entails the possibility of making the world as one thinks or wants it to be. Which is exactly the male standpoint.³³

Now consider the case of mistake in a criminal conviction. Was a gun fired in self-defense or not? Was the contraband planted by the police or not? If the gun was fired in self-defense, or the contraband was planted by the police—what good is it to claim after a conviction that the court's judgment was in error? (If the Foucaultian objects that these are falsehoods under the existing set of practices, one can change the example to considering investigatory practices for whether fires have been set, or the believability of eyewitnesses.) This is going to depend on how soon it can be established. If established before the sentence is completed, and while the one falsely convicted, is still alive, it can secure a release and some compensatory payment. That is not nothing. If it is established too late, then the answer may be that it's too late, nothing is gained. It doesn't make it any less true merely because it is pointless. Foucault's view, like pragmatism, ties truth too closely to current practices.

Braver's responds to the ethico-political objection to anti-realism by arguing that realism leads to injustice, and the anti-realist view will have salutary effects. Expertise, according to Braver, depends on a realist view, and claims of expertise result in oppression and unjust suffering: "And the actions committed by claims of expertise, according to Foucault, are a form of oppression and enforced conformity. In general, the power that experts like psychologists wield in our society is underwritten by our faith in their knowledge of a realist self" (p. 163) Braver believes that anti-realism will undermine faith in the authorities because their views "lack a neutral means of adjudication" (p. 164). This may happen, but it certainly doesn't follow as a matter of logical implication. Given that (according to Braver) truth is only internal to actual practices, expert knowledge becomes true by definition. The expert is the one who knows and follows the current practices, and truth is only to be found *within* those practices.

The question of whether an anti-realist view will lead to more caution and humility with regard to judgments or less is a factual question. It may be that it would have no effect, because various other motivations (power? self-interest?) have a greater effect on people's actions than their conception of reality. The point I wish to make is that I don't think an anti-realist can make such a vast, difficult, empirical claim without making some concession to realism.

³³ MacKinnon, "Desire and Power," in *Feminism Unmodified* (Harvard University Press, 1987), pp. 57-8.

Braver cites Wittgenstein in support of his anti-realism: “Wittgenstein agrees that heterogeneous language-games cannot be resolved rationally, since rationality exists only within particular language-games.” (p. 165) Because I have leaned so heavily on Wittgenstein in this review, a reply is necessary.

All of Braver’s citations are to *On Certainty*, which I think it is best to avoid. My Wittgenstein, the Wittgenstein that I have appealed to in this essay, includes the *Blue Book* and the *Investigations*. There are a number of reasons to support the view that the latter have the best claim to presenting “Wittgenstein’s” work. First, Wittgenstein took particular care with what he put into the *Investigations*. This was the work he considered his most important and most finished. He let his literary executors know that he wanted them to publish the *Investigations*, but left it to their discretion to publish anything else from his writings. Similarly, the *Blue Book* was dictated to students and thus deliberately distributed to others. I would suggest that these considerations indicate that my “Wittgenstein” has some claim to be closer to Wittgenstein’s most considered self-conception than other versions. Second, Wittgenstein had plenty of ideas of which he had not decided how or whether they fit in with the ideas of the *Investigations*. These ideas include holdovers from his earlier phase, such as his belief in the ineffability of ethics, which appear to be in direct conflict with the *Investigations*, as well as new ideas that he took up during and after the writing of the *Investigations*. The separateness of these latter is shown by the fact that he started new notebooks or card files rather than simply inserting these thoughts into the *Investigations*. It seems appropriate to consider the relation of Wittgenstein’s ideas in his notebooks or card files to the *Investigations* as unsettled without careful consideration.

These considerations hold especially for *On Certainty*. Although there are many connections between the two—and the point seized upon by Braver and other relativists—that justification comes to an end somewhere—also appears in the *Investigations* (with no anti-realist implications there), the ideas in *On Certainty* are far more tentative than the *Investigations*. Different lines of thought are presented in *On Certainty*, generally addressing each of Moore’s specific examples, but they never converge on one particular correct view. Whereas the interlocutor in the *Investigations* presents views which are rejected, and the openness comes from extending the ideas into new areas or presenting new perspectives, in *On Certainty* there is genuine openness as to which of the lines of thought are correct and how they might fit together. Very grave doubts are expressed throughout, including towards the relativist view (e.g., section 358).

In addition to these interpretive matters, there are important philosophical considerations which suggest that Wittgenstein erred in giving as much consideration to

relativism in *On Certainty* as he does. I noted earlier that I don't think that philosophical problems dealing with time are pseudo-problems as Wittgenstein did. With the issue of time in mind, let us consider the passage quoted by Braver, "At the end of reasons comes persuasion." (p. 165) Well, tomorrow could one find more reasons than one has today? Wittgenstein's basic approach has been described by Marjorie Grene as putting language "back in the context of movement" against the "immobilizing influence of philosophy."³⁴ Wittgenstein himself described his method in this way in his notebooks and lectures, even though he did not include this view in his "official" philosophy.³⁵ This line of thought concerning changes in circumstances and how they alter considerations of doubt and justification appears repeatedly in *On Certainty* (sections 96-99, 134, 256, 420-1, 492), where they pose a sharp challenge to the relativist view.³⁶ Braver's position, and the passage he relies on, does the reverse—they immobilize rather than placing in time. I would take the metaphysical self-description and strategy Wittgenstein repeatedly considered for his major work but did not ultimately adopt as one that is philosophically superior to any that would allow for the reinforcement of the "immobilizing influence of philosophy".³⁷

Rovane's essay is also a consideration of and argument for anti-realism. Her main concern is with the main participants in the analytic debates and their anxiety that with relativism, "anything goes". She also aims to explore "the moral sources of resistance to relativism", mentioning Habermas, Hegel, Marx, and Honneth, although only the last of these is substantively addressed. Some of what I say about Braver's paper will apply to Rovane's as well.

Rovane's contribution to analytic moral epistemology is to argue that it should talk directly about universalism and bracket issues about realism and objectivity. I agree, but don't think that this will provide any reason for thinking that this will support a

³⁴ Grene, "Life, Death and Language: Some Thoughts on Wittgenstein and Derrida", in Philosophy in and out of Europe (University of California Press, 1976), p. 150.

³⁵ For Wittgenstein's self-description along these lines, see Philosophical Remarks (University of Chicago Press, 1975), pp. 59, 80-81; Philosophical Grammar (University of California Press, 1974), p. 55; Lectures on the Foundations of Mathematics (University of Chicago Press, 1976), 182. He didn't follow through on this line of thought, perhaps because he didn't want to legitimate philosophical questions about time.

³⁶ Section 96: "It might be imagined that some propositions, of the form of empirical propositions, were hardened and functioned as channels for such empirical propositions as were not hardened but fluid; and that this relation altered with time, in that fluid propositions hardened, and hard ones became fluid." Section 256: "On the other hand, a language-game does change with time."

³⁷ A more complicated substantive issue which is relevant to a reading of *On Certainty* (and is closely related to the issue of whether all philosophical problems can be dissolved) concerns Wittgenstein's view that there is a sharp separation of philosophical questions and scientific/empirical questions. I don't follow Wittgenstein on this point, but will leave this issue aside.

“multi-mundialism”, as she refers to her version of relativism.

Her multi-mundialism is based on the concepts of “alternativeness”, “epistemic indifference”, and “normative insularity”. The key points in her argument turn on pragmatic concepts: (1) whether different views can be alternatives for specific people, that is, whether there is a genuine possibility that they could adopt a different action or practice; (2) the question of whether there is a normative point to claiming that there is a disagreement. According to Rovane, these concepts allow for some measure of objectivity in moral decisions without universality. “What would be correct is for them to live in the *best* way that is *actually feasible*, given the actual options they face, and given the best guidance they may draw from the thick moral values that speak specifically to those options.” (emphases in original; p. 280) The example she mentions as a culture which should be (is?) insulated from normative criticism is a culture in which honor and modesty are thick concepts.

The pragmatic concepts are worth investigating. The concept of genuine possibility is an important one. Looking at particular historical circumstances is important and would be welcome.³⁸ In addition, one sometimes has the sense that some moral criticism of past or other cultures is empty point-scoring, or worse, smug avoidance or contemporary moral failings of one’s own. Rovane’s approach, though, undermines any positive impetus these ideas might have. Rovane issues a call to examine concrete historical circumstances, but she doesn’t mention a single one for a single example. She inveighs against thin concepts and attempts to counter abstractions with further abstractions and the thinnest of concepts—“world”. And Rovane fails to explain why her concepts not only shield the colonized and the conquered from normative critique, but also shield the colonizers and the conquerors.³⁹

With regard to the question of the normative point of criticism, she limits her discussion to a normative demand she finds in Continental philosophers (Marx, Habermas, Honneth) to overcome alienation from others. She doesn’t discuss

³⁸ One thinks here of work by Loretta Kopelman and Ruth Benedict. Both of these would seem to be touchstones for any approach which treats moral values as attempts to solve problems. See Kopelman, “Female Circumcision/Genital Mutilation and Ethical Relativism” and Ruth Benedict, “Anthropology and Abnormal”. Both can be found in *Moral Relativism*, edited by Paul Moser and Thomas Carson (Oxford University Press, 2001), at pp. 307–326 and 80–89, respectively.

³⁹ My guess is that she would rely on concepts of moral parity of viewpoints and personhood, both derived from Kant. (The first of these she discusses in order to criticize, but leaves open the possibility of adopting mutual recognition but accepting different forms of it.) If she would, then it is not clear why we should not think that her concepts—and not just specific forms of them—should be allowed universal applicability. Furthermore, her view does not really allow for “multimundialism”, since she claims universal applicability of the most fundamental moral judgments.

condemnation of others, rescuing people, and taking sides in disputes as normative considerations in refusing normative insularity and allowing that normative critiques are genuine disputes. Her response is to charge moral universalism with moral errors which have led to moral atrocities: Unimundialism, she says, “refuses to acknowledge the genuine differences there are in human situations and the implication that one’s own moral values may have only local normative force—the moral concern here is that refusing to recognize this can be a moral mistake, a mistake that has arguably been repeated throughout the long history of conquest and colonization, in which conquerors and colonizers wrongly assumed that any moral *differences* they encountered must be instances of ignorance and error.” (p. 281) No mention is made of consequentialism, a type of Unimundialism which would seem to take into account differences in circumstances, just as Rovane wishes, and in exactly the way she would wish.

There is only one form of moral problem in Rovane’s world—intercultural. Not only is the one type of moral atrocity cited the one of “conquerors and colonizers,” her references to morality assume cultural unity. She refers to “the mistake supposing that the moral values by which we live have a normative force that reaches beyond the particular circumstances in which we are able to meaningfully live by them...” (pp. 263-4) and to moral values “that we are not willing to adopt for ourselves.” (p. 264) Who is this “we”? Have “we” all adopted all of “our” moral values? Have “they” all adopted “theirs”? Just as with any sort of cultural relativism, the possibility of criticism of “one’s own” culture’s values is eliminated.

Rovane’s views, intending to protect diversity, suffer predictable dialectical reversals. The Fugitive Slave Laws were normative insulation; the U.S. was “epistemically indifferent” to the pleas of many German Jewish refugees prior to WWII. Rovane fails to discuss how respecting the difference of others’ *worlds* involves treating people as groups and thus involves reinforcing structures of domination within cultures and taking sides in internal conflicts whether one wishes or not. Furthermore, with no conceptual distance provided between norms and problem-solving, Rovane’s view will run up against a problem regarding norms similar to the one noted above for Braver with regard to tying truth to practices. Social institutions which are ways of solving problems will ipso facto be legitimized, thus making colonialism and slavery (of those from other “worlds”) acceptable as a solution to problems of work and profit. Seeing culture as problem-solving would allow accepting as legitimate some claimed “solutions”, like maintaining racial hierarchy, that many of us (and I hope Rovane) would not accept as legitimate.

d. Interpretation is Perilous

Interpreting philosophers in a specific tradition may present difficulties which differ from those involved in interpreting philosophers of another tradition. Overcoming these difficulties may be especially difficult, since those working within a single tradition often don't have to face the difficulties of interpretation in the same way. The term "clarity" often applies to what is a consensus within a tradition, rather than something written in a way that can be understood across traditions.

Samuel Wheeler's essay on Derrida and Davidson illustrates one type of such difficulty. Wheeler focuses on the topic of metaphor in their works, and argues that bringing their work together is mutually beneficial for their respective positions.

Wheeler provides a careful and insightful reading of Derrida's "White Mythology", which is a significant accomplishment given the difficulty of the essay. However, his attempt to instigate a mutually productive interaction runs aground on an interpretive problem—not in terms of the specific essay, but in terms of Derrida's philosophy as a whole. The problem has to do with Derrida's position vis-à-vis metaphysics.

Wheeler begins his essay with the important (but mistaken) claim that Derrida and Davidson share a common philosophical orientation: "Derrida and Davidson are both anti-metaphysical." (p. 172) According to Wheeler, "Derrida regards metaphysics as a pervasive set of notions that dominate our thought on almost every topic." (p. 173) The problem is that Wheeler omits Derrida's claim that there is no escape from metaphysics. Metaphysics dominates our thought according to Derrida, not on *almost* every topic, but on every topic. Arguing that one can dissolve metaphysical problems doesn't supplement Derrida's thought, as Wheeler says, but defeats it (and perhaps improves it⁴⁰).

Taking Derrida's claims on metaphysics more seriously might have led Wheeler to give less credence to Davidson's claims to successfully dissolve metaphysical concepts. In fact, Davidson's work, in the terms that Wheeler presents it, seems open to deconstruction of a very straightforward sort for reasons explained very clearly and convincingly in Wheeler's reading of Derrida's essay on metaphor. For Davidson, according to Wheeler, "A central thesis of his philosophy of language is that semantics should be sharply separated from what speakers are doing with sentences." (p. 182) Derrida, as Wheeler points out, denies that sentences (and other connections of words) can "be systematically divided into the logical and the rhetorical". The deconstruction would work by showing that what was excluded at the level of sentences returns at the

⁴⁰ I agree with the anti-metaphysical position Wheeler wants to reach—defeat capital T Truth in favor of truth. (p. 186) I don't think Davidson's approach is going to reach that goal.

level of words—they will have rhetorical force because, as Wheeler says, “Derrida, following Hegel and Heidegger, thinks of the origins of concepts as continuing to be relevant as those concepts are used historically.” (p. 184) It might be thought that the Davidsonian reply, according to Wheeler, is that words only have their literal meanings, and thus “Most metaphors are in fact false sentences. The Earth is not really a floor, even though Dante says it is. The literal meaning is the only *meaning* the sentence has.” (p. 182) This appears to be a flat denial of the Derridean view. That such a denial doesn’t work, would be shown by noting the appeal to the falsity of the sentences, hence the appeal to the concept of truth, and then focusing on the following sentence: Davidson “takes truth to be a primitive concept intimately tied to our understanding of ourselves and the world, whose structure is illuminated by the Tarski truth definition.” (p. 183) The words in this sentence that would need to be examined are: primitive, concept, intimately, tied, world, structure, illuminated, definition. The Davidsonian would have to show in each case that one can rigorously distinguish between the literal and non-literal meanings; otherwise, one is led into a self-referential *mise-en-abyme*. At this point, the deconstruction could take two turns. First, it could examine Davidson’s view that the meaning of metaphor depends on the speaker’s purpose in using the sentence. The Derridean would then turn to the philosophy of mind underpinning the view, following Derrida’s treatment of Husserl in *Speech and Phenomena*. (I would also note that I think that most analytic philosophers who follow Davidson’s appropriation of Tarski believe that one of its advantages is that it would seem to avoid issues in the philosophy of mind.⁴¹) The second turn could be to examine the concept of “illumination” in this sentence in particular. This is the key sentence in justifying Davidson’s view, so that the cost of Davidson’s view is that his philosophical discourse is false. (Even if one could rigorously separate the literal and metaphorical meanings of “illumination” as used here, “illumination” is clearly metaphorical, making it likely that this statement is a false statement, or possibly, undecidably true or false, since we would have to determine Davidson’s purpose in presenting this sentence (182).) Fittingly, the metaphor of “illumination”, the central metaphor of philosophy according to Derrida, underlies the Davidsonian claim that one can “sharply separate” literal from non-literal meanings. The sentence is a false statement.

While the deconstruction will be concerned with elaborating the paradoxes involved, I would note that the deconstruction works here because Tarski’s truth theory (and Davidson’s use of it) involves the attempt to remove truth and meaning from

⁴¹ This is worth considering in connection to Smith’s essay, discussed above.

history. On the views I have been pushing in this review, the sentence is false in a different (but related) manner. It is false because, looking to formal languages, which are atemporal and ahistorical, Davidson's theory of truth and meaning is not illuminating in any way—literally or metaphorically. I don't think anyone would think that Tarski's theory of truth was illuminating who didn't take formal languages as the paradigm of knowing.

The essay by Eldridge and Lorraine illustrate these dangers in a different way. They propose that we should look at philosophy as a kind of “conceptual articulation”, arguing that bringing together Austin and Deleuze will be helpful in this endeavor. The project seems promising, since as they stress, Austin's view of language is “practice-directed” and Deleuze sees concepts as “events of thought”. The metaphysical questions are important, and the emphasis on temporality bodes well. Bringing attention back to Austin is something I would cheer.

Two problems interfere. The first involves interpretation. After presenting some of Austin's essays as a way of showing his way of working, they ask, “What exactly is Austin doing...?” (p. 64) They answer, following a couple of Cavell's followers, that he is doing what Kant says in the third Critique we do when we are talking about art. Much of their description here is innocuous enough to apply to any utterance (“felt satisfaction and rightness” (p. 65)), other parts get closer to something specifically aesthetic (“the achievement of a kind of heightened life”). While this sounds more to me like Cavell's project than Austin's, I am not raising this point to contest any specific point of interpretation; this seems like a different and more important kind of interpretive error. This seems like a huge leap which contravenes Austin's entire way of working. The care, caution and patience which was characteristic of Austin's essays goes out the window.

The second problem is their attempt, similar to the problems noted in OGB, to demarcate the conceptual from the empirical. They begin the essay by setting up two alternatives with regard to concepts—Platonism and reductive materialism, the latter of which they offer as the only “empiricist” approach to concepts. Other empirical disciplines—history, sociology—are not considered. The appeal to the third Critique thus provides the same options that OGB tended to fall back on—math/physics or art.⁴² Since art is historical, the appeal to art is not entirely out of the question. But Kant treats art as ahistorical. And why not, Kant or no Kant, take a more direct approach to the task of thinking historically—e.g., thinking about history? This essay

⁴² This appeal to art connects more directly to Deleuze, as they present Deleuze's conception of philosophy.

is not the only one where the absence of philosophy of history as a presence in American philosophy departments and the philosophical curriculum is sorely missed.

e. Time (and history) is not enough.

The above discussion of Eldridge and Lorraine's essay and of Braver's illustrates the insufficiency of bringing time into view without further reflection. Without attention to the questions of what time is, about the temporality of time, one might say, one is likely to miss the variety of ways that considerations of time or history can be neutralized.

f. De-emphasis of Social and Political Philosophy

In BCL, there is no feminist theory, no critical race theory, no discussions of hierarchy, the environment, or technology. In spite of the concerns for social and political matters, the overwhelming impression left by this book is that pluralism involves metaphysics and epistemology to the detriment of political and social theory. The answer is apparent in the title of the last section of the editors' introduction: "New (Problematic) Foundations for Action and Practice". (p. 10) In the most traditional manner, the concern for foundations—no matter how problematic those foundations are accepted to be—interferes with philosophical discussion of practice. And if we are faced with a choice between crossing the analytic/Continental divide or crossing the foundations/practice divide—a big if, which I would not subscribe to, but that is the impression provided by this book—it is not at all clear from the results that the editors have made the right choice.

Livingston's essay on Heidegger and Wittgenstein is an example. His approach is offered to address concerns about "the contemporary global regime of capital, technology, and information" which he wishes to approach through "a critical reflection on the unity of the world". (241) However, instead of addressing capital, technology, or information, he addresses "foundational problems about logic, sense, and meaning, and the totality of the world..." (p. 237)

Another example is the essay by Dan Zahavi and Glenda Zatne which closes the book, "Varieties of Shared Intentionality". Zahavi and Zatne are critical of current accounts of collective intentionality for, among other reasons, analyzing "it in abstraction from the various specific forms that social relationships assume in actual and historical contexts." (p. 104) Their treatment suffers from the same problem. They discuss different varieties of collective intentionality, but they do so without explaining how these differences matter for any philosophical problems. This is a result from their concern with ahistorical philosophers as their touchstones—Bratman, Husserl, other phenomenologists, Quine, and Davidson. There is no discussion of sociology.

The possibility is definitely there. One valuable contribution they make is the discussion of the dissertation of the phenomenologist Gerda Walther from 1923, of whom I was not aware. Walther's work is presented as describing different ways communities constitute themselves, these differences demarcating different kinds of communities. The historical resonances suggested could be fascinating, if one considers the relationship between this work and the distinction between community and society which was prevalent in German social thought at the time. Did Walther discuss that distinction? How does her typology interact with that distinction? Does it, by describing both face-to-face communities and non-face-to-face communities as both types of *communities* soften that distinction (which was often used to impugn modern urban life)? Or, because it considers them as different *types* of communities, does it reinforce that distinction? Zahavi and Satne do not broach these issues.

Instead, we get a discussion of Davidson in support of universal community, in line with Husserl's claims. What we have are attempts to bring ahistorical theories of mathematicians and logicians in accord with the challenges that history poses for their theories. Why not start with history or historical thinkers?

At the spring 2015 Pacific Division meeting of the APA in Vancouver, Catherine MacKinnon, probably the most important American philosopher of the last half century, spoke at a session marking the 25th year since the publication of *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State*. It was said that this was the first time she had ever spoken at an APA meeting. In what follows, I am relying on my memory of the occasion.

One of the speakers suggested that MacKinnon's work be seen in the context of major 20th Century Continental philosophers, taking Heidegger as her example. In her reply, MacKinnon agreed with the general point, but said that Foucault was the better term of comparison. She said that her analysis of knowledge was the same as Foucault's concept of "power/knowledge", but that there were two important differences. First, she was unhappy with the workings of knowledge, while Foucault was happy about it. Second, she was pilloried for her analysis of knowledge, while Foucault was hailed as a genius.⁴³

rshain@missouristate.edu

⁴³ I am very grateful to Scott Anderson, Jeff Kasser, and Lee Kerchkove for very helpful comments on a draft of this essay. They certainly should not be blamed for the views expressed or the errors that remain.