Lukáš Novák, Daniel D. Novotný, Prokop Sousedík, David Svoboda (eds.):
Metaphysics: Aristotelian, Scholastic, Analytic
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In 2010, Prague hosted a conference dedicated to contemporary reflections of traditional metaphysical problems. The primary aim of the conference was to point out the main differences between traditional forms of metaphysics and their modern alternatives. Interestingly, the conference brought together both analytic philosophers and historians of philosophy and thus mapped the current states of metaphysical debates from analytic as well as from historian's point of view. It is thus not a surprise that the conclusions of the conference have been published as edited book entitled *Metaphysics-Aristotelian, Scholastic, Analytic*.

As the title of the book indicates, the whole edition is explicitly or (at least) implicitly concerned with analytical methods applied to historical matter. The *prima facie* example of the strategy is the first section – *Categories and Beyond* – and the very first paper by Peter van Inwagen called 'What is an Ontological Category?'. In the paper, van Inwagen explores the definitional (and ontological) priority of the concept of natural class, by means of which we could be able to define the concept of ontological category. Interestingly, it is not only the list of categories that philosophers should provide. There are also questions like 'what the relations between categories are' or 'what is it for a category to be non-empty' that philosophers should account for. Daniel D. Novotný's 'Scholastic Debated about Beings of Reason and Contemporary Analytical Metaphysics' provides a comprehensive introduction to the ontological framework used by scholastic philosophers, maintaining how (if at all) scholastic beings of reason fit into (and stimulate) ontological frameworks used by contemporary metaphysicians. (Here, I'd like to highlight the table (p. 27) in which author very clearly sketches the relation between particular beings. I will get back to some of the issues in the second part of the review).

The second section under the heading of *Metaphysical Structure* opens Michael L. Loux with his 'What is Constituent Ontology'. The author introduces the constituent strategy of ontological explanation as opposed to relational approach. Due to the fundamental differences between them, Loux sketches various problems that the former as well of the latter strategy have to meet. Namely, there are problems of persistence through time, essentialism, concrete/abstract distinction or putative identity of indiscernibles that arise, once one accepts constituent ontology. All those problems are discussed in details and this makes the paper an excellent introduction to various branches of metaphysics. 'Elemental Transformation in Aristotle: Three Dilemmas for the Traditional Account' by Anne Siebels Peterson argues for the thesis that traditional Aristo-

telian account of prime matter contradicts three other widely accepted doctrines attributed to him. First of all, there is a conflict between prime matter and essentialism, as the acceptance of traditional account of elemental transformation brings theoretical commitments concerning 'persistence of prime matter without appealing to its numerical identity' (p. 64). Secondly, the doctrine of prime matter contradicts actualism, the view that something must *actually* be to be at all. Finally, there is a conflict between prime matter approach and constituent ontology, as 'it is not clear how prime matter is supposed to be able to come to have a new pair of contraries predicated of it' (p. 71). Whether to deny essentialism, actualism or constitutional ontology remains open. Moreover, the author speculates, we could sustain all of them, while, somehow (theoretically) relaxing the account of matter. The last paper of the section is Ross Inman's 'Essential Dependence, Truthmaking, and Mereology: Then and Now'. In it, Inman considers the truthmaking thesis, according to which truth is determined by reality. Formulating (also formally) truthmaking principle, truthmaker necessitarianism, truthmaking relation, rigid existential dependence and, finally, essential dependence, he demonstrates the turn towards essence as one promising way to go in still quite controversial debates about truthmaking. In particular, author takes Aquinas's hylomorphic ontology in order to demonstrate the very turn.

Substance & Accident section commences with E.J. Lowe's 'Essence and Ontology'. In Aristotelian spirit, Lowe considers such an account of essence, which, when combined with Aristotelian constituent ontology, can account for (rather narrowly understood) modal truths. In particular, Lowe's own version of the Ontological Square (p. 98) distinguishes between four kinds of (fundamental) ontological categories, namely kinds, objects, attributes and modes. He also categorically differentiates between relations between them, namely characterization, instantiation and exemplification. By means of the distinctions, Lowe provides metaphysical foundations for modal truths without appeal to possible world by using the term of essence. Finally, he motivates its epistemology. In his 'An Aristotelian Argument against Bare Particulars', Lukáš Novák considers an argument against the claim that particulars do not have nontrivial *de re* necessary properties. Taking the world of particulars and accidental change in it for granted 'it seems that instantiation must have a certain particular "formal effect" that 'must be really distinct from the changing subject' (p. 119): tropes. The last paper of the section is 'The Ontology of Number: Is Number an Accident?' by Prokop Sousedík and David Svoboda. As the title indicates, the authors consider various conceptions as what the ontological status of number is. To begin with, they consider Aristotelian division into substance and accident and subsequently rethink the conception of number as

a species of entity. Due to problems on its own (p. 127-131), they reject the strategy and outline Fregean (rather platonistic) position (p. 132). Even this position, however, does not seem to answer the question sufficiently since, according to Frege, '[n]umber is not attributed to a concept in the same manner as properties are ascribed to individuals' (p. 134). One way out of the troubles is, according to the authors, a "shift" from ontology to abstract linguistic structures (p. 139).

Next two papers are concerned with the problem of *Existence*. First of them, 'Existential Inertia' by Edward Feser, scrutinizes Aquinas's five ways – or arguments for the existence of God – and their relations to the Doctrine of Divine Conservation (DDC) and the Doctrine of Existential Inertia (DEI). It is the latter, Feser concludes, that Aristotelian/Thomists should reject, while only the former that they should take seriously. Finally, Aquinas's "intellectus essentiae" is discussed in Gyula Klima's 'Aquinas vs. Buridan on Essence and Existence, and the Commensurability of Paradigms'. Beside the introduction of the argument, Klima quite persuasively shows Buridan's criticism of the argument as well as thomistic response to the criticism. Although, as the paper concludes, the validity of the argument is 'relative to conceptual framework in which it is evaluated' (p. 181), it would be a mistake to trivialize the issue as a mere verbal disagreement.

The paper 'Potentiality in Scholasticism (potentiae) and the Contemporary Debate on "Powers"' by Edmund Runggaldier SJ opens the penultimate section of the book called *Modality*. In the paper, Runggaldier discusses a distinction between subjective and objective potencies (p. 187), a distinction going back to scholastics. Putting the potencies in a contrast, he finds its contemporary equivalencies in possible worlds approach and powers (so discussed in these days), respectively. Let me just stress the very distinction between possibility and impossibility (pp. 188-189). Powers and dispositions play the main role also in David Peroutka's 'Dispositional Necessity and Ontological Possibility'. However, the strategy is quite different as, according to Peroutka, it is the essence of a particular quality that dispositions belong to. Putting traditional and contemporary analysis together, it is further showed that the Aristotelian concept of natural law finds its explanation in analysis of dispositional properties. The last "modality" paper – 'The Optimal and the Necessary in Leibniz' Mathematical Framing of the Compossible' by Mark Faller – wonders into Leibniz's metaphysics of modality as a tool in our clarification of modal concepts. Historically very appealing, the paper puts together several Leibniz's works to provide a unified reading of (his conception) of modal matters, including logic, mathematics, science (see, especially, very instructive paragraph 5.1), causality, human affairs, probability etc.

Finally, section IV – *Predication*. Two papers on the topic – Uwe Meixner's 'The Interpretation(s) of Predication' and Stanislav Sousedík's 'Towards a Tho-

mistic Theory of Predication' – concern predication from both historical and contemporary perspective. While Meixner's paper presents an outline of the most important conceptions of predication – Aristotle, Plato, Leibniz and Frege – and expresses his sympathy to the Fregean way of predication (falling under the so-called functional paradigm of predication), Sousedík's observations (pp. 248-251) terminate in such a theory of predication that is based on a (metaphysically understood) notion of identity (see his definitions 1-7, pp. 251-254).

So much for the book. Let me now go back to one issue slightly discussed in almost every mentioned paper, namely a modal phenomenon of impossibility. Surely, as the preceding summary has made clear, the topic is not supposed to play the main role here. But a simple reflection can show that impossible phenomena are frequent throughout the Aristotelian, Scholastic as well as Analytic metaphysics. To begin with, Meinongian ontology does contain impossibilia of one sort or another (van Inwagen, p. 23); there *are* impossible items among beings of reason (pp. 27, 30, 36, my *italics*); metaphysical theories – say constituent ontology (Loux, pp. 43-57), actualism (Peterson, p. 64), truthmaking thesis (Inman, p. 84) essentialism (Lowe, pp. 104-110), the existence of bare particulars (Novák, pp. 116-120), the platonistic conception of numbers (p. 135)– if true, are necessarily so, while its rival, naturally, impossible. Yet, we still rationally scrutinize them (say substratum theory, possibilism, the Humean denial of necessary connections, anti-essentialism, the existence of thick particulars, nominalism in mathematic etc.). Moreover, we can explicitly reason about impossible: '[b]ut if S or S's essence did this conjoining, then S would be the cause of itself, which is impossible (p. 149); 'if this formal content involves the existence of the thing, then it is impossible to form this quidditative concept of any single thing' (p. 178); and so on. Put briefly, disputes in metaphysics *do* involve reasoning about the impossible.

We all believe that things could have been otherwise. Bratislava could have been closer to Manchester than it actually is, there could have been more cars in Bratislava than there actually is, I could have been British rather than Slovak and so forth. Philosophers call the 'ways things could have been' possible worlds. Briefly, possible worlds are all the ways the world could have been. However, by parity of reasoning, we also believe that nothing could be black and green all over at the same time, that there cannot be round squares, married bachelors or even primes bigger than 2. But if that is so, we should provide an explanation of the phenomena, using the apparatus similar to possible worlds. Consequently, the talk of *im*possible worlds – various ways the world could *not* have been – seems to be nothing but a regimentation of our prephilosophical talk about reality. Although it is usually claimed that the impossible cannot be imagined (p. 189), that our representational capabilities are li-

mited only to the possible, there are quite persuasive reasons against these claims. For example, we can meaningfully wonder what would or would not happen if, say, something were red and yellow all over, or if there were a round square. Thus, possible worlds do not suffice in the analysis of modality.

The term of possible world penetrates the whole book. Its usefulness is apparent in various parts of metaphysics, including structure of the world, reference, predication, existence and modality. But it seems that the term 'impossible world' parallels the term 'possible world'. If something is possible *iff* it is the case at some possible world, what else could better systematize our pretheoretical opinions about the impossible, if not the analogical conditional, namely something is impossible *iff* it is the case at some impossible world? Put otherwise, and even more strongly: once existence is granted to possible worlds, there is no non-question-begging reasons to deny it to impossibilia. Briefly, impossible worlds are in a similar situation in which possible worlds were thirty-five years ago (*cf.* Priest 1997, 487). So why to ignore them?

All in all, the book *Metaphysics – Aristotelian, Scholastic, Analytic* is a great guide into the metaphysical debates throughout the history of philosophy. Moreover, it does not only present, but also critically evaluate traditional metaphysical problems from analytical point of view (such a useful approach to philosophical problems). I, therefore, recommend the book to laymen interested in the history of metaphysics as well as experts in the field. Both of them, in my opinion, will find the book philosophically appealing.

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References

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Vojtěch Kolman: *Idea, číslo, pravidlo. Prolegomena k analytické filosofii, která se nechce stát přísnou vědou*
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Najnovšia kniha českého filozofa Vojtěcha Kolmana príznačne nazvaná *Idea, číslo, pravidlo* obsahuje fundované štúdie z oblasti filozofie jazyka a filozofie matematiky. Kolman tu predovšetkým objasňuje pôvodné motivácie filozofického