Stanisław Jędrczak*

# CONTEMPORARY METAPHYSICS – A PICTURE OF THE LANDSCAPE

M. Szatkowski (ed.), *E. J. Lowe and Ontology*, New York–London: Routledge 2022, pp. 316, ISBN: 978-1-032-04837-6.

## Abstract

*E. J. Lowe and Ontology*, edited by Mirosław Szatkowski, is the outcome of the international conference *Jonathan Lowe and Ontology*, which took place in Warsaw on 21–23 May 2019. The book consists of fifteen essays by philosophers of international renown; it concerns, among others, meta-ontology, theory of categories, persistence in time, agency, and mental causation. In addition to summarizing the book's contribution to contemporary formal ontology, this review includes a critical discussion of selected chapters on meta-metaphysics, as well as general and special metaphysics.

*Keywords*: meta-metaphysical realism, four-category ontology, categorial fundamentality, non-Cartesian substance dualism, atomism

This three-hundred-page volume was published in spring 2022 and is somewhat of a delayed outcome of the international conference *Jonathan Lowe and Ontology*, which took place in Warsaw on 21–23 May 2019. The book, edited by Mirosław Szatkowski, who also organized the aforementioned memorial conference (along with Christian Kanzian and Ziemowit Gowin), consists of fifteen essays by philosophers of international renown. Many of them, including John Heil, Peter van Inwagen, Kevin Mulligan,

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* University of Warsaw, Faculty of Philosophy, Krakowskie Przedmieście 3, 00-927 Warsaw, Poland, e-mail: s.jedrczak@uw.edu.pl, ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4814-2409.

and Peter Simons, have ensured the high quality of contemporary metaphysics over the last few decades. Polish philosophy is represented by Michał Głowala (from the University of Wrocław) and Janusz Kaczmarek (from the University of Łódź). Tuomas E. Tahko and Christof Rapp, although participating in the conference, did not contribute to the volume. Szatkowski, the Vice President of the *International Society for Formal Ontology*, associated with Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, is himself a meritorious editor: in the years 2012–2019, eight books were published under his editorship, of which the last to date is a collection of essays in honor of van Inwagen, *Quo Vadis, Metaphysics* (Szatkowski 2019).

Observe that the volume was given the title *E. J. Lowe and Ontology*, not *E. J. Lowe's Ontology*. By no means is it an introduction to or a systematic exposition of the metaphysical system of Lowe. The essays are divided into four parts: I. *Metaphysics in the Manner of E. J. Lowe* (2022: 29–90); II. *The Four-Category Ontology* (2022: 91–188); III. *Persons, Minds, and Agency* (2022: 189–276); and IV. *Powers and Persistence* (2022: 277–310). They are preceded by the *Introductory Note* (2022: 1–28), in which Szatkowski outlines Lowe's scientific biography and his metaphysical views, set against a "historical and general-philosophical" background (2022: 1). The *Note* also provides the reader with a handy overview of each essay in the book. The essays reflect the diversity of metaphysics in the early twenty-first century, but they are not only linked by the time and place of the conference or the themes from the metaphysics of Lowe. It is the shared *thought style* – in the sense of Ludwik Fleck's philosophy of science (Wolniewicz 1998: 123–126) – that makes them, as the editor assures us, a "coherent whole" (2002: 1). The book, as one is tempted to say after Wittgenstein, is an album of sketches, "so that if you looked at them you could get a picture of the landscape" (Wittgenstein 1986: vii). All contributors to the volume, to refer to Uwe Meixner's expression (2022: 279), are friends of logic and metaphysics. Moreover, they adhere to *meta-metaphysical realism*, i.e., the following theses:

($T_1$) Reality "as it is in itself" has a fundamental structure.

($T_2$) The fundamental structure of reality "as it is in itself" is knowable and is

($T_3$) revealed by metaphysics.

Hence, reality is, at least to some extent, knowable *a priori*. For the purpose of this review, let us agree on ($T_1$). Meta-metaphysical realism is, therefore, op-

posed to *idealism*, which accepts (T$_1$) but rejects (T$_2$), claiming that the fundamental structure of reality "as it is in itself" is unknowable. On the other hand, it is opposed to *scientism*, which accepts (T$_1$) and (T$_2$) but rejects (T$_3$), claiming that the fundamental structure of reality as it is in itself is revealed exclusively by physics (i.e., knowable *a posteriori*). Consequently, to paraphrase Lowe, ontology is the heart of philosophy, and category theory is the heart of ontology (Lowe 2006: 3). Thus, realism is equivalent to the thesis that (some) categories cut ontological ice (Simons 2012: 133). This style of thought is friendly to logic and metaphysics, as understood by Christian Wolff, but it certainly does not prevail in the philosophy of our time.

Reviewing a collection of essays is a hard nut to crack. The properties of the whole may differ from the properties of its (proper) parts or their sum.[1] Therefore, this review is an attempt to take a cross-section of this book. The book concerns meta-metaphysics (in Part I) as well as both general (Part II) and special metaphysics (Parts III and IV). In what follows, I will address some problems in each of these branches of metaphysics. Only Part I, which consists of essays by John Heil, Christian Kanzian, and Chris Daly, will be covered in its entirety (see Sections 1 and 2). Subsequently, I will discuss the essays representative of parts II and III by Jani Hakkarainen and Eric Olson, respectively (Sections 3 and 4). The common thread of these articles is the realism *versus* idealism debate. In this way, a future reader of *E. J. Lowe and Ontology* will get a picture of the volume as a whole (which, we hope, will encourage him to read it in its entirety).

## 1. META-METAPHYSICAL REALISM AND ITS ENEMIES

Lowe defends realism against idealism and scientism in *The Possibility of Metaphysics*, the essay that opens his book of the same title, published a quarter century ago (Lowe 1998). He distinguishes between the two kinds of idealism that deflate metaphysics, namely *neo-Kantianism* and *semanticism*. Both assume that reality as it is in itself is unknowable, holding that metaphysics reveals the fundamental structure of language or thought ("conceptual scheme") at best. Categories, in other words, are merely epistemic. Nevertheless, neo-Kantianism, represented by Peter F. Strawson, claims that we know of the necessary features of any conceptual scheme, while semanticism, represented by Michael Dummett, claims that we only know of contingent fea-

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[1] As Aristotle wrote in book VIII of *Metaphysics*, sometimes a thing "which has several parts is such that the whole is something over and above its parts, and not just the sum of them all" (Aristotle 2003: 1045a).

tures of *our* conceptual scheme. Under the assumption made by Kant that our conceptual scheme is the only possible one, neo-Kantianism and semanticism turn out to be a pair of equivalent theses.

> [S]emanticism . . . does not differ fundamentally from what I have been calling neo-Kantianism. If anything, semanticism threatens to reduce metaphysics to something even more parochial, by making answers to its questions turn on the linguistic practices of an arbitrarily chosen human community. (Lowe 1998: 7)

According to Lowe, the Kantian argument can be recapitulated as follows: (i) *a priori* knowledge concerns either reality as it is in itself, or the conceptual scheme; (ii) metaphysics is *a priori* knowledge; (iii) metaphysics does not concern reality as it is in itself, therefore (iv) metaphysics concerns the conceptual scheme. Subsequently, he refutes (i), pointing out that the conceptual scheme is a part of reality, which implies that (iii) and (iv) contradict each other. Thus, idealism, as self-contradictory, is "fatally flawed" and "doomed to failure" (Lowe 1998: 6). Lowe, however, attacks a straw man, since Kant never posed a dilemma (i) that is indeed false.

Kanzian endorses Lowe for better and for worse (2022: 55–67). Echoing Lowe's interpretation of Kantianism, he argues against Amy Thomasson's Easy Ontology and Thomas Hofweber's "modest ontology." "Metaphysics," he sums up his considerations, "cannot be reduced to an analysis of conceptual schemes" (2022: 67).

Let us now take a glance at the passages A 367–380 of the A-Edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (Kant 1998: 425–431), left unmentioned by Lowe and Kanzian. Kant contrasts his *transcendental idealism* with both *transcendental realism* and *empirical idealism*. The former claims that *a priori* we know reality in itself, meaning "outside us" or "existing distinct from us" (A 373). The latter claims that only the inner sense (representing the self and its mental states), not the outer sense (representing external objects), is the source of *a priori* knowledge (A 370): "all cognition through the senses and experience," as Kant puts empirical idealism in words elsewhere, "is nothing but sheer illusion, and only, in the ideas of the pure understanding and reason there is truth" (Kant 2004: 125). Hence, in line with empirical idealism, *a priori* we know only the conceptual scheme. Steering the course between Scylla and Charybdis, Kant suggests that the opposition of real and conceptual is a *continuum* rather than a dichotomy. A conceptual scheme extends to reality like an endless ocean to the horizon. This does not imply, in spite of Kanzian's assertion, that "metaphysics tells us nothing about 'reality in itself,' but only speaks of features of our thinking about reality" (2022: 56). In general, we *do*

know of reality outside us – that exists distinct from us. However, in some particular cases – although Kant does not rule out that this might be possible in all of them – we cannot decide whether a feature in question is a feature of reality or a conceptual scheme. There is a boundary delimiting reality from the conceptual scheme, but where this boundary actually is also lies beyond it (Poręba 2017: 324). For Kant, what reality and the conceptual scheme have in common is their fundamental structure. The categories, then, are both ontic and epistemic.

Suppose that the philosopher from Königsberg was wrong and the problem – whether a certain feature is ontic or epistemic – is decidable. This being the case, an analysis of the conceptual scheme can eventually delimit it from reality, providing us with knowledge of it as it is in itself. Would metaphysics *qua* semantics not be plausible then after all? Either way, Lowe's argument against Kantianism and Kanzian's argument against semanticism usurping metaphysics are both inconclusive. However, this very argument against so-called neo-Kantianism is conclusive, insofar as its adherents – such as Thomasson and Hofweber – acknowledge premise (i).

The roots of the misinterpretation that blurs the difference between transcendental and empirical idealism go back to the first review of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, written by Christian Garve and edited by Georg Heinrich Feder (1782), which Kant responded to in *Prolegomena* (1783) and in the B-Edition of his opus magnum (1787), trying to prove the existence of the external world. However, one may find the same misinterpretation again in Strawson's *The Bounds of Sense* (2006). Contrasting the inner sense with the outer one, he announces that "Kant, as a transcendental idealist, is closer to Berkeley than he acknowledges" (Strawson 2006: 22). Strawson, as a (transcendental) realist, claims that inference from the features of the conceptual scheme to the features of reality is unsound. Next, he says that "descriptive metaphysics is content to describe the actual structure of our thought about the world" (Strawson 2003: 9), which makes him an empirical idealist (which is in line with Kant's observation that transcendental realism and empirical idealism are two sides of the same coin). Descriptive metaphysics was labelled "modest" (in opposition to "ambitious") in the course of the debate on Strawson's transcendental arguments, which culminated in the 1970s. Kanzian seems to be unaware of these historical nuances, since he says: "[i]t is interesting to note that Lowe also describes such fatally flawed metaphysics as 'modest' and 'less ambitious,' anticipating Hofweber's self-characterization of his Neo-Kantianism" (2022: 65).

## 2. THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

According to Lowe:

(T$_4$)          There are exactly four fundamental ontological categories,

namely substances, modes (tropes or individual accidents), properties, and kinds. Substances and modes are particular. Properties and kinds are universal. Here, I ignore relations, which together with properties fall into a more general category of attributes, for, as Keinänen points out, "[i]n his posthumously published paper *There Are (Probably) no Relations* (2016), Lowe joins the ranks of eliminativists about relations" (2022: 105). The four categories are represented by the vertices of the ontological square. Categories stand in formal ontological relations represented by the line segments joining two vertices, whether they are on the same edge (instantiation, characterization) or not (exemplification). Substances exemplify properties. Kinds are instantiated by substances and are characterized by properties. Properties are instantiated by modes that, in turn, characterize substances.
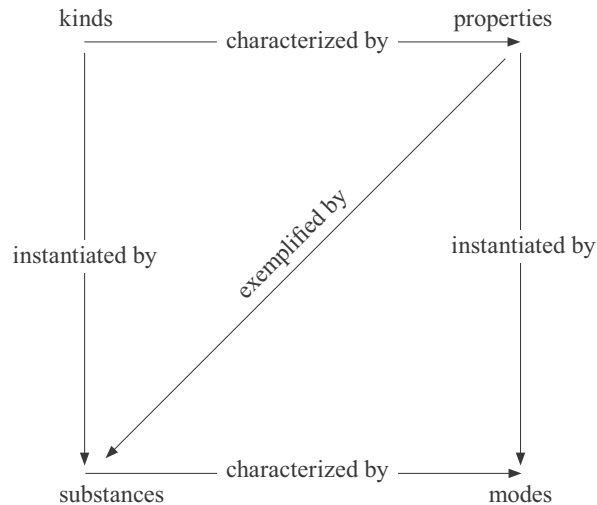


Fig. 1. Ontological Square

Heil has been a long-time proponent of a more parsimonious two-category substance–mode ontology. Thus, the bone of contention between him and Lowe was the status of universals as categories. Interestingly, in the "incorri-

gibly personal" essay that opens the first part of the book (2022: 31–54), Heil argues that their views have been converging over time. "After decades of hostility towards essences" (2022: 54), he agreed with Lowe that substances and modes have essences, but essences are not entities (recall that the essence of *x* is just what it is to be *x*) (see, e.g., Lowe 2008: 10). On the other hand, in their one-to-one conversations, Lowe had assured him – admittedly, with a certain amount of restraint – that they "did not disagree" on the status of kinds and properties (2022: 32, 54). How to understand Lowe's assurance? Heil's argument is divided into two stages.

Consider the first. Heil observes that substantial and accidental forms in Aristotle's sense stand in the same formal ontological relations as kinds and properties in Lowe's sense. There is therefore a parallelism between Aristotle's and Lowe's ontological schemes: substantial forms correspond to kinds, while accidental forms correspond to properties. Furthermore, Heil assumes that forms, both substantial and accidental, are reducible to essences (or derivable from them). Substance *s* of kind *K* is an instance of what it is to be *K*. Analogically, the mode *m* – which instantiates a property *P* – is an instance of what it is to be *P*.

In the second stage, in line with Lowe, Heil grants that essences are not entities, whereas categories are pluralities of entities (the latter was not explicitly stated in the text, though; see, e.g., Lowe 2006: 43). On that account, essence is not a category. The argument comes to the conclusion that neither kinds nor properties are categories.

(1)     Substantial and accidental forms in Aristotle's sense correspond to kinds and properties in Lowe's sense.

(2)     Forms, both substantial and accidental, are reducible to essences (or derivable from them).

(3)     Essences are not entities.

(4)     Categories are pluralities of entities, thus

(5)      neither kinds nor properties are categories.

Heil intends to "strip off the upper tier of the ontological square" (2022: 54) and establish that the fundamental structure of reality as it is in itself does not consist of universals. Universals are not ontic but epistemic categories. Is this argument conclusive? For the purpose of this review, assume that it is valid.

Anyhow, it is clear that an ontological scheme is a conceptual scheme. Additionally, reducibility (or derivability) relates a pair of concepts, meaning that one may be defined in the terms of the other (notice, e.g., that a line may be defined as a set of points whose coordinates satisfy a linear equation, although by no means is a line a set of points). There is a difference between statements (1) and (2) on the one hand, and (3), (4), and (5) on the other. Premises (1) and (2) concern a conceptual scheme – or, preferably, schemes – while premises (3) and (4) along with conclusion (5) concern reality. This is a vivid example of inference from the features of the conceptual scheme with the features of reality, but one cannot deliver a real rabbit out of a conceptual hat! This is not to say that conclusion (5) turns out to be merely epistemological or semantical and not ontological, thus the argument is unsound. Rather, as Kant instructed us, in some cases we cannot decide whether a feature in question is conceptual or real (consequently, the notorious dualism is to be overcome). This is the case here. Unlike Alice, a heroine of Lewis Carroll's children's fiction, we cannot climb through the mirror of a conceptual scheme into the world beyond it.

Moreover, Lowe advocated the following theses:

($T_5$)        It is not the case that there are exactly four entities that are fundamental ontological categories.

($T_6$)        Entities are divided into ontological categories in virtue of the formal ontological relations they stand in.

($T_7$)        Formal ontological relations are internal.

Lowe claimed that categories of entities are not entities themselves (Lowe 2006: 43). There are substances, but there is no category of substances that is particular or universal. The same holds true for modes, properties, and kinds. The singular term "the category of $x$'s" is an empty name. Categorial distinctions cannot reflect relations between categories that do not exist. However, entities stand in formal ontological relations of instantiation, characterization, and exemplification that are anti-symmetric. Heil's two categories arise from the instantiate–instantiated-by distinction (substances instantiate, and modes are instantiated by). The four categories of Lowe, in turn, arise from the crossing of two distinctions: instantiate–instantiated-by and characterize–characterized-by (substances instantiate and are characterized by, while modes instantiate and characterize). It is formal ontological relations that are behind categorical distinctions (Simons 2012: 131). For Lowe, all these relations are internal to the entities that stand in them. A relation $R$ is internal to

entities $x$ and $y$ if and only if $x$ stands in relation $R$ to $y$ in every possible world in which both $x$ and $y$ exist. By definition, the mere existence of $x$ and $y$ makes it true that $x$ stands in relation $R$ to $y$. The assumption that relation $R$ exists separately from $x$ and $y$ is redundant. Lowe also insists that $x$ and $y$ are internally related by virtue of their essences (or forms) – and that essences, as we have already mentioned, are not entities.

In the closing chapter of the first part of the book, Daly raises a number of objections to Lowe's meta-metaphysics. Let us focus solely on one of them. As he suggests, the thesis $(T_5)$ – allegedly incompatible with $(T_4)$ – implies that there are no ontological categories knowable *a priori*: "By denying that ontological categories exist, Lowe's view is indistinguishable from someone who denies that there are ontological categories" (2022: 81). In consequence, the structure of reality as it is in itself is either unknowable or knowable *a posteriori*. Thus, we find ourselves on the horns of a dilemma, having to choose between two options equally undesirable from the viewpoint of meta-metaphysical realism, namely idealism and scientism.

However, denying that ontological categories are not entities is not denying that they exist. As a matter of fact, Lowe defines ontological categories in terms of formal ontological relations and, subsequently, denies that the latter exist separately from their relata. Hence, categorial distinctions have a foundation in the thing (*fundamentum in re*). Here is an explanation: The sentence "There are substances" is made true by the mere existence of entities that instantiate (kinds) and are characterized by (modes). Accordingly, the sentences "No objects are kinds" and "No objects are modes" are made true by the anti-symmetricity of instantiation and characterization, which comes down to the essences of entities, i.e., entities themselves. To say that instantiation and characterization are anti-symmetric is to say that entities that instantiate are not instantiated by, and entities that characterize are not characterized by. In other words, there are $x$'s, for example substances (that is, all entities that instantiate and are characterized by), that are denoted by plural terms, while there is not "a category of $x$'s" denoted by a singular term (2022: 133). This does not mean, as Daly maintains, "that the notion of an ontological category does not work" (2022: 81). It only means that *the category* of category is not ontic but epistemic: categories are reducible to formal ontological relations that are internal and reducible to essences, and essence is just what it is to be an entity, not an entity itself. For that very reason – as expected – categories are not among the entities represented by the vertices of the ontological square.

## 3. CATEGORIAL FUNDAMENTALITY AND NON-FUNDAMENTALITY

In an insightful essay in the second part of the book (2022: 123–142), aimed at a reader familiar with formal methods in philosophy, Hakkarainen, a senior lecturer at Tampere University, Finland, investigates the problem of categorial fundamentality and non-fundamentality. In the spirit of Lowe, he defines categories as "pluralities of entities standing in the same formal ontological relations in the same order" (2022: 133). Being pluralities of entities, they are not numerically distinct from these entities being plural. As one might expect, categorial fundamentality and non-fundamentality are derivable from the fundamentality and non-fundamentality of formal ontological relations. Instantiation and characterization are direct and represented by the lines joining two adjacent vertices of the ontological square: there is only one side of the square between them. On the other hand, exemplification, represented by a diagonal, is indirect. There are two sides between the opposite vertices along the path around the square from one vertex to another. Therefore, Lowe claims that instantiation and characterization are fundamental formal ontological relations ($T_8$), while exemplification is a non-fundamental one ($T_9$).

($T_8$)         Instantiation and characterization are fundamental formal ontological relations.

($T_9$)         Exemplification is a non-fundamental formal ontological relation.

Hakkarainen puts it in a more formal way by referring to the relation of *generic identity*, which is the main operator in expressions of the form "for an entity to be $F$ is for it to be $G$" (2022: 129–133). Every instance of a fundamental relation is identical with and only with itself. Assume that $F$ is fundamental. Thus, if for an entity to be $F$ is for it to be $G$, then $F = G$. Analogically, every instance of a non-fundamental relation is identical to an instance or instances of another relation. Consider an example: it is the case that for Socrates to exemplify mortality is for him to instantiate the kind of man characterized by the property of mortality. Exemplification is non-fundamental: it occurs by means of instantiation and characterization. Yet, it is not the case that for Socrates to instantiate man as a kind is for him to exemplify mortality. In a possible world in which Socrates exists but mortality does not characterize man, Socrates is a man who is not mortal. Similarly, it is not the case that for mortality to characterize man is for it to be exemplified by Socrates, because there are possible worlds in which men are mortal and Socrates does not exist. Needless to say, Socrates instantiating man is not equivalent – in any sense whatsoever – to

mortality characterizing man. For this reason, instantiation and characterization are fundamental (or undefinable). "We cannot say," as Hakkarainen emphasizes, "that for an entity to instantiate or characterize something is for it to be related in some different manner to that something. The only thing we can truly say is that for an entity to instantiate or characterize something is for it to instantiate or characterize that something" (2022: 131).

Substances exemplify properties through kinds or modes. Hakkarainen's condition for fundamentality and non-fundamentality applies to the relations between substances, properties, and kinds. However, it does not apply to the very same relations between substances, properties, and modes.

Consider another example. Without a doubt, for Socrates to exemplify wisdom is for him to be characterized by the mode of wisdom of Socrates that instantiates the property of wisdom. Lowe agrees that modes are individually (or strongly) existentially dependent on substances they characterize (Takho 2020). In every possible world in which the wisdom of Socrates exists, there is also Socrates characterized by his wisdom. It is therefore the case that for the wisdom of Socrates to instantiate wisdom is for it to characterize Socrates as exemplifying wisdom. An instance of instantiation is identical to an instance of characterization. Hence, under Hakkarainen's condition, instantiation turns out to be a non-fundamental relation, against the thesis ($T_8$).
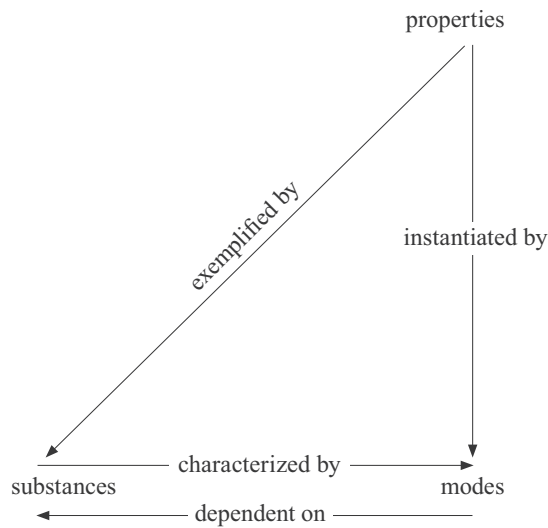


Fig. 2. Ontological Triangle

What moral is to be learned from this story? Formal ontological relations are inter-definable. There are two competing conceptual schemes with two pairs of fundamental relations: within the first one, instantiation and characterization are fundamental, and exemplification is non-fundamental; within the second one, on the pain of circularity in definition, it is exemplification – next to characterization – that is fundamental, and instantiation is non-fundamental. The decision between these conceptual schemes is not a matter of fact: reality, as it is in itself, may be truly described in both the former and the latter. The fundamentality and non-fundamentality of formal ontological relations are relative to the conceptual scheme. And the same holds true for categorial distinctions. Until an adequate condition for fundamentality and non-fundamentality is given, one may be content with saying that categorial distinctions are "ways of carving up reality," echoing the "rebarbative metaphor so often favored by antirealists" (2022: 81), as Lowe contemptuously puts it (2004: 307).

## 4. REFUTATION OF (EMPIRICAL) IDEALISM

Lowe's non-Cartesian substance dualism consists of the following three theses:

(T$_{10}$)            We are extended things.

(T$_{11}$)            We are thinking things and living things.

(T$_{12}$)            No thinking thing is a living thing.

A human being is in fact two extended things: a thinking one and a living one, a person and an organism (or, as Olson aptly says, "a non-living thinker and a living nonthinker," 2022: 225). Therefore, Lowe maintains that there are two different kinds of substances (T$_{12}$) that coincide with each other. Unlike René Descartes, however, he holds that *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, a material or physical thing, are one and the same (T$_{10}$), (T$_{11}$). As a consequence, we are mentally identical to persons, having all the mental properties they have, and physically identical to organisms, having all the physical properties they have.

In addition, Lowe endorses atomism, saying that persons are simple things, i.e., they do not have any (proper) parts.

(T$_{13}$)            Persons are mereologically simple things.

Non-Cartesian substance dualism and atomism are logically independent. One may accept dualism and reject atomism, claiming that persons and organisms are mereologically complex, i.e., they have spatial and/or temporal parts. One may also accept atomism and reject dualism, claiming that the personal pronoun "I" refers to the same extended simple that thinks and lives. Nevertheless, in an inquisitive essay in the third part of the book, Olson focuses on a couple of problems that arise from the conjunction of non-Cartesian substance dualism and atomism. Let us discuss them briefly.

The first is "the intelligibility problem." In line with ($T_{13}$), I am mereologically simple. On the contrary, my organism seems to be complex: the organs, tissues, and cells that it is made of are nothing but its proper parts. Now, non-Cartesian substance dualism implies that I am physically identical to my body. This raises a question: "I consist of matter and matter consists of particles. Does it not follow that I consist of particles?", asks Olson. "But to consist of particles," he continues, "is to be composed of them: to have them as parts . . . What could be the difference between being made of matter consisting of particles and being composed of particles? If someone claimed that a certain object was made of particulate matter but had none of the particles of which that matter consists as parts, we could only wonder what she meant by the word 'part'" (2022: 227).

Olson suggests that one way to solve this problem seems to be to distinguish between derivative and non-derivative predication. "I 'inherit' my body's parts, even though in the strictest sense I'm simple," he explains. "Whatever is made of particulate matter non-derivatively must have parts non-derivatively; whatever is made of particulate matter derivatively must have parts derivatively. But it may still be possible for a thing made of particulate matter only derivatively to be non-derivatively simple" (2022: 229). However, this strategy fails, as demonstrated by Olson (2022: 235). Suppose that my organism is non-derivatively material. Thus, I am *not* non-derivatively material (there is a physical difference between me and my organism, otherwise I would have the material parts that my organism has). Hence, I am non-derivatively immaterial (assuming both that *not* being material is being immaterial, and that the law of excluded middle holds). Therefore, while an organism is material, a person is immaterial. There are two different kinds of substances: material and immaterial. And this is precisely the thesis of Cartesian dualism. For this reason, an adherent of *non*-Cartesian dualism cannot appeal to the "derivative-predication defence," as Olson dubs it (2022: 228).

Is Olson's argument valid? It points to the inconsistency of the following set of sentences.

(1)          We have no physical parts.

(2)          Some material beings, including organisms, have physical parts.

(3)          We have all the physical properties of organisms.

Note that we may weaken one of the premises (2) or (3) in order to avoid the impression of inconsistency. On the one hand, one may insist that organisms, like persons, are simples extended in space and/or time. The physical identity of persons and organisms would then become intelligible. On the other hand, one may maintain that we have some but not all of the physical properties of organisms. To my knowledge, Lowe was silent about this. Both options are open to his successors. In any case, there is a need for either an independent argument for the simplicity of organisms or an explanation of why we inherit some properties of organisms but not others (otherwise, going either way would be unjustified or *ad hoc*).

The second problem – which Olson calls "epistemic" (2022: 228) – is more difficult to solve. How do we know whether things have or do not have parts? We seem to know this from their physical properties. Simple things (like electrons, fundamental fermions, and fundamental bosons) have no physical structure. Organisms, in contrast, have a biological, chemical, and physical structure, thus they are complex. If I am physically identical to my organism – in particular, me and my organism are made of the same matter – it appears that I have parts as well. Indeed, it appears that this is true, but it is not. "Everything we thought we knew about the connections between a thing's physical properties and its parts is wrong," as Olson sums up. "That makes atomism epistemically self-defeating: even if it were true, we could never know it" (2022: 229). This conclusion is too strong: we are only justified to say that we have no empirical knowledge of complex things (thus, even if atomism were true, we could never know it *empirically*). Does that not sound familiar? Recall that "all cognition through the senses and experience is nothing but sheer illusion" was, according to Kant, the thesis of empirical idealism, as was quoted in the first section of this review. Once again, as Kant anticipated, transcendental realism collapses into empirical idealism, i.e., skepticism that undermines our empirical knowledge.

## CONCLUSIONS

To conclude this review, I would like to point out a few shortcomings of the volume (I ignore such trifles as the lack of a bibliography in one of the chapters or the non-uniform citation style).

First, the division of the book into four parts leaves something to be desired. I see no reason to make a separate Part IV out of the essays by Uwe Meixner (*Powers Are Not Enough*, 2022: 279–289) and Rognvaldur D. Ingthorsson (*A Causal Theory of Constitution and Persistence*, 2022: 290–310). Both would fit well in Part III. The essays collected in the book might be naturally divided into three parts: I. *Meta-Metaphysics*, II. *General Metaphysics*, and III. *Special Metaphysics* (in reference to Wolff's distinction between *metaphysica generalis* and *metaphysica specialis*). Also, a comment on Meixner's essay comes to mind. In a laconic paper (2022: 279–289), he puts forward an argument for the existence of mere possibilities. One of its premises is that the existence of powers (i.e., real abilities "which a given particular has to actualize something," 2022: 279) implies the openness of the future, which is a negation of determinism. The openness of the future is a thesis that future-contingent statements are unsettled, i.e., lack determinate truth-value. Thus, the negation of this is the thesis of the eternity of truth. However, the latter is true in both deterministic and indeterministic possible worlds (the openness of the future and determinism are, therefore, logically independent; see, e.g., Kuźniar 2016: 357) There are also convincing arguments for the consistency of freedom – in particular, having powers – with the eternity of truth (beginning with Leibniz, who disagreed with Aristotle on this point). This calls into question whether Meixner's own argument is conclusive.

Second, none of the chapters in the book concerns Lowe's account of essence and modality (leaving aside a few inquisitive questions raised by Daly, 2022: 83–87), though the "essence-based" theory of metaphysical modality, along with a theory of metaphysical dependence (also passed over in silence in the volume), secured Lowe's place among the great philosophers of the last half century. By comparison, in *Ontology, Modality, and Mind: Themes from the Metaphysics of E. J. Lowe*, the book published in 2018 and edited by Alexander Carruth, Sophie Gibb, and John Heil, there are four papers devoted to this issue that make up a separate part of over seventy pages. It is worth mentioning that in recent years, mainly due to a critical paper by Penelope Mackie (Mackie 2020), the "essence-based" theory of metaphysical modality, as she calls it, has been challenged and hotly debated (see Fine 2020, Noonan 2022, see also Romero 2019).

Third, the index, located at the end of the volume, is incomplete. Not all names that are mentioned in the book are included in the list (Kant seems to be the most prominent example here).

Much more could be said about the book. In particular, this review has passed over the paper by Simons, *Persons and Other Physical Objects* (2022: 191–206). This paper is noteworthy, among other things, because it provides an invariantist account of personal identity (recall that invariantism, as its author sometimes calls it (see, e.g., Simons 2007: 182), is a theory of persistence in time that Simons has been developing for the last twenty years). Here, for the first time, Simons puts forward the condition for diachronic personal identity (2022: 206). In a nutshell, the book is highly recommended to all interested in contemporary metaphysics (especially meta-ontology, theory of categories, persistence in time, agency, or mental causation). Many of the essays collected in the book will soon be discussed in philosophical seminars around the world. However, the reception of the book will not go beyond the narrow group of professional philosophers who deal with formal ontology on a daily basis.

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