Girle, Rod, *Possible Worlds*, Chesham: Acumen, 2003, pp. viii + 216, £40.00 (cloth), £16.95 (paper).

Philosophers nowadays make extended use of the notion of possible worlds. Informally, the concept is used to talk about possibilities—ways the world might have been. But the use goes far beyond that; possible worlds are employed in connection with a wide range of issues, from the debate over the nature of necessity to the problem of evil. David Lewis famously writes:

> I think that it is clear that talk of *possibilia* has clarified questions in many parts of the philosophy of logic, of mind, of language, and of science—not to mention metaphysics itself.

[Lewis 1986: 3]

While philosophers generally acknowledge the usefulness of the notion of possible worlds, few books have been written focusing exclusively on its applications. Rod Girle’s book *Possible Worlds* fills this gap. In this very well written book, the author examines applications of possible worlds to philosophy and logic. Somewhat surprisingly, the main thesis is a negative one: the book aims to show that ‘possible worlds are not as helpful as we might have thought for a range of issues’ [193]. Girle draws attention to areas in which the concept of possible world has been employed but does not make any substantial contribution. ‘Those include: what we mean when we say that something is essentially φ; what we mean by existence; how we refer to and talk about nonexistent entities; and what is going on in fiction’ [193].

The book is written for the non-specialist—it is introductory in tone and will particularly benefit philosophers interested in learning something about the topic without demanding a background in formal logic. The formalism required to understand the basic features of modal logic is introduced along the way. Girle also makes a constant effort to trace back the discussion to its historical source and an annotated bibliography supplements the majority of positions discussed. So graduate students who do not have familiarity with logic but need to know something about possible worlds talk will find the book very helpful.

Another strength of the book is the fact that some advanced issues such as varying domain semantics and free logic are discussed in a very accessible way, while the more technical details are relegated to an appendix at the end of each chapter. It is worth mentioning, however, that *Possible Worlds* is not an introduction to modal logics. (For a very accessible introduction to modal logics the reader is advised to consult Girle’s previous book *Modal Logics and Philosophy.*)

*Possible Worlds* is a provocative book in the sense that it advances some fairly radical theses. For instance, in Chapter 3 Girle raises the question of whether
quantifiers in predicate logic should have existential import (that is, whether the
domain of quantification should include only existing objects). He is inclined to
endorse a non-standard view, which rejects the assumption of existential import
for quantifiers. According to this view, quantifiers should be allowed to range
over all sorts of nonexistent objects which we ordinarily talk about (including,
perhaps, impossible objects!).

The book consists in eleven chapters; most of them concern one area or another in
which possible worlds are employed. It begins with an introduction focusing on the
relationship between ordinary language and formal logic. This is followed by a
chapter introducing the basic features of modal propositional logic with possible
worlds semantics. Chapter 3 extends possible worlds semantics to modal predicate
logic. It also discusses some interesting philosophical problems arising from the
introduction of quantifiers in modal logic. Chapter 4 restates the question of
existential import, but now with regard to individual constants. It presents free logic
as an interesting alternative in which sense can be made of the idea of individual
constants referring to nonexisting entities. Chapter 5 deals with two notions of
possibility and necessity found in natural language and examines how these ideas are
translated into possible worlds semantics. Chapters 6 and 7 discuss applications of
possible worlds semantics to epistemic and doxastic logics, that is, to logics for
knowledge and belief. Chapter 8 addresses the question of whether modal logics with
possible worlds semantics provide a satisfactory logic for time. Chapter 9 discusses
possible worlds in connection with the debate on modal realism. In Chapter 10 the
author takes the idea of ‘impossible possible worlds’ seriously [181].

The book aims at showing that possible worlds do not have the explanatory power
they are usually taken to have. Let me illustrate this point by focusing on the chapter
that discusses the connection between possible worlds semantics and temporal logic.

It is well known that modal logics with possible worlds semantics can be used to
provide a logic for time. In particular, we can provide a model for some
conceptions of time by interpreting states of the universe at some instant of time in
terms of possible worlds. But once we model time in terms of possible worlds
semantics, there is a general worry about what this fact amounts to. Does it mean
that now we have a better understanding of what time is? For instance, a system of
modal logic called Cocchiarella’s linear time [147] allows for circular models of
time. But in what sense does the fact that we have a model for cyclic time provide
an explanation for cyclic time? The issue here is whether the models in question
have explanatory power. And Girle seems to suggest that they don’t. That is, we
do not learn anything new about time by modelling it with possible worlds
semantics. In this way, the discussion touches on many interesting issues such as
the nature of explanation and the role of models in explanation.

Here is another interesting point for discussion. In examining the kinds of
explanation that benefit from the notion of possible worlds, Girle often assumes a
very distinctive conception of possible worlds; he generally talks about them from
the perspective of modal logic with possible worlds semantics. For instance, in
Chapter 5 he convincingly argues that this semantics fails to capture the senses of
possibility and necessity that permeate natural language. The question now is
whether this shows that possible worlds are not so useful. After all, one might
argue that possible worlds semantics does not capture the full and rich notion of
possible worlds (in the everyday sense of ‘ways the world might have been’).
Indeed, this point about the priority of natural language is one Girle is very sympathetic towards. For instance, in many places he raises the question of whether logic should play a descriptive role, showing logical connections between concepts employed in ordinary language or whether it should play a normative role, showing how natural language should behave. The author shows sympathies for the first approach, so one might think that a more ordinary language conception of possible worlds would fare better. But this is not Girle’s line of argument. Although he tells us that ‘[m]odal logic is not the final arbiter when it comes to possible worlds and modality’ [23] and that ‘possible worlds will take us beyond formal systems’ [24], he rarely discusses the use of possible worlds outside the context of modal logic (although Chapter 9 is an exception to this). This suggests that perhaps one should see the book’s main thesis as a more restricted one; for the most part it argues for the limits of applicability of possible worlds semantics and modal logic.

To close this review I return to the problem posed at the beginning: how useful are possible worlds in philosophy and logic? Girle concludes: ‘[s]adly, possible worlds do not solve the problems, but they make some of the problems more accessible’ [193]. But this need not be thought of as a pessimistic conclusion. In philosophy, making problems more accessible is already an important contribution. By pointing out some of the contexts in which possible worlds semantics succeeds or fails to illuminate philosophical problems, the book makes a welcome addition to the literature on possible worlds. I strongly recommend this book to anybody interested in the rich topic of modality.

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This revised and expanded edition of Arthur Prior’s Papers on Time and Tense is a welcome addition to the literature addressing issues in the philosophy of time and tense logic. The first edition was published in 1968, a year before Prior’s untimely death at the age of 55 years. The revised edition was planned by Prior, and he prepared the preface, now published more than 30 years after it was written.

The original edition of Papers on Time and Tense consisted of thirteen papers, the first eight mostly addressing philosophical issues while the remaining five are predominantly formal and technical. This edition includes an additional seven papers, six of which are broadly formal. The collection is very much a record of work in progress and as a result there is a certain amount of repetition, though this is often beneficial in helping to articulate Prior’s philosophical views. The collection also
includes a detailed bibliography of Prior’s work and an interview with Mary Prior, his widow.

Prior’s philosophical work was innovative and profound. Indeed no twentieth century philosopher contributed more than Prior to the development of temporal logic (a field which he effectively invented, though he generously tries to share the credit) and the metaphysics of time. This book, together with Prior’s earlier books *Time and Modality* (OUP, 1957) and *Past, Present and Future* (OUP, 1967), provides a record of the most significant advances in temporal logic and the metaphysics of time.

Prior notoriously championed the view that the temporal modalities past, present, and future are basic ontological categories of fundamental importance for our understanding of time and the world. The first paper in the collection ‘Changes in Events and Changes in Things’ is a lucid analysis of puzzles associated with the notion of temporal passage. This paper displays a productive synergy between Prior as constructor of formalisms and Prior as recorder of idioms. Natural language, as Prior elsewhere remarked, can embody folly and confusion as well as the wisdom of our ancestors, and no one was more skilled than Prior in separating the wisdom from the confusion, even though, arguably, some confusion remains (for example in his view about reference to former existents such as Queen Anne).

As well as providing innovative analyses of modern philosophical problems, Prior manifests a close affinity with his ancient and medieval precursors. His scholarship is worn lightly, and his dissection of the arguments of such philosophers as Diodorus, Boethius, Buridan, Aquinas, and Jonathan Edwards generates a sense of continuity and kinship with millennia of philosophical inquiry. Reading Prior you feel you are sharing a project of serious engagement with a long tradition of rational reflection. This depth of scholarship is combined with an intellectual exuberance and a sense of fun in dealing with philosophical puzzles that makes Prior a thinker who does not merely enlighten: he lifts the spirits.

Prior’s papers ‘Identifiable Individuals’ and ‘Time, Existence and Identity’ grapple with problems about beginning to exist and reference to future individuals. In the first of these papers Prior discusses a puzzle (raised by N. L. Wilson) of whether Mark Antony could have had all of the properties of Julius Caesar, and vice versa. This leads Prior not just to the conclusion that this ‘property exchange’ is conceivable but at no time possible; it also leads him to views about the essential origins of individuals and a ‘branching-from-the-actual’ conception of possible worlds which anticipate doctrines subsequently developed in more detail by Kripke.

Prior’s work, here and elsewhere, provides a systematic and extended defence of a tensed conception of reality in which material objects are construed as three-dimensional continuants which are wholly present at each moment of their existence. An opposing metaphysical view (defended for example by David Lewis) is perdurantism, according to which material objects are four-dimensional with different temporal stages or parts existing at different times, with no one part existing at more than one time. The resulting time-slice ontology of objects (sometimes called ‘space-time worms’) is one with which Prior profoundly disagreed. Prior nevertheless was always scrupulous in setting out the views of his adversaries, and provided constructive suggestions about how their views might be formally developed (see for example, ‘Tense Logic and the Logic of Earlier and Later’ and ‘Tensed Propositions as Predicates’.)
Philosophers such as Prior who take the tensed notions associated with the past, present, and future to be the irreducible foundations of temporality and our conceptions of temporal fact, are called A-theorists, while those who wish to eliminate all talk of past, present, and future in favour of a tenseless ordering of events are called B-theorists—labels derived from J. M. E. McTaggart’s notorious analysis of time and change. The past, the present, and the future feature very differently in deliberation and reflection (we remember the past and anticipate the future, for example, but not vice versa), and these facts were important in shaping Prior’s views about time (see ‘Contemplation and Action’, ‘The Consequences of Actions’, ‘Limited Indeterminism’). The B-theorist view that the fact that we know much less about the future than the past simply reflects an epistemological difference between the future and the past has many supporters, but it is one which Prior found simply incredible.

The metaphysical issues that divide A-theorists and B-theorists concern the reality of the past, the reality of the future, and the ontological status of the present. No one has done more than Prior to clarify these issues. This book provides a feast of rational reflective engagement with these basic metaphysical concerns.

There are a few disappointments however. The Polish logical notation favoured by Prior has been replaced by more familiar Russellian equivalents. While that is no bad thing there are a number of careless errors that have been introduced in the process. Also the proofing of the book is slipshod, especially so for a work long in preparation. It also includes a number of features of formatting and layout which are well below the standard expected of Oxford University Press. Finally, while the additional papers in this edition are welcome I would have liked at least one more of Prior’s more philosophical papers, ‘The Notion of the Present’, to have been included.

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Gendler, Tamar Szabo and John Hawthorne, eds., *Conceivability and Possibility*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002, pp. viii + 507, £40 (cloth), £22.50 (paper).

Is conceivability a reliable guide to possibility? The fervent hope of many philosophers is that at least sometimes it is. The motivation is obvious: we are in the business of proclaiming what is and is not possible, we make great use of these proclamations in further philosophizing, conceivability often seems the only guide, and besides it’s so easy to do. Yet justifying the conceivability-possibility move is a formidable task. In the last ten years a lot has been written on the topic, and this collection contains the latest contributions, including some important examples of applying the conceivability-possibility move in a reflective way.

What exactly is the conceivability-possibility move? If we can conceive of P then P is possible. If we can conceive of a giant egg that is broken on top of Mount Everest then a giant egg that is broken on top of Mount Everest possibly exists. If an egg that is both scrambled and poached is not possible then we cannot conceive of it. Less reasonable is an inconceivability-impossibility move: if P is possible then we can
conceive of it. (Why expect our imaginations to be limited only by the extent of possibility?)

Conceivability does not seem promising as a guide to nomological possibility. Don’t bother to tell a chemist that you have performed alchemy in your dreams. Is conceivability a guide to metaphysical possibility? Following Kripke, there is a sense of possibility in which it is not possible that water is not H₂O. God could not have made it true that water is not H₂O. This is metaphysical impossibility. But conceivability is not a foolproof guide to metaphysical possibility. Many of us think we can imagine it having turned out that water is XYZ. Are we not really conceiving of this? Or perhaps there is a further sense of possibility in which it is possible that water is not H₂O. This is a starting point for many papers in this collection.

Although the central question of the collection could be classified in the narrow field of modal epistemology, it also takes us through territory central to contemporary discussions in philosophy of language, philosophy of mind, philosophy of science, philosophy of mathematics, ethics, and aesthetics. With some helpful cross-referencing throughout, a number of debates develop:

(1) Most papers in the collection are optimistic about modal rationalism: the view that there is a species of possibility that is a priori accessible (tracked by some species of conceivability), and many of them confront this issue head-on. The papers by Bealer, Chalmers, Rosen, and Yablo discuss it in the most detail, and give important taxonomies of species of conceivability.

(2) A controversial and ambitious application of the conceivability-possibility move is the Descartes/Kripke argument against materialism. This can be formulated in terms of the conceivability of zombies, exact physical duplicates of human beings who lack consciousness. The papers by Chalmers, Della Rocca, Stalnaker, Wright, and Yablo deal directly with this.

(3) Since Naming and Necessity, there has been a renewal in the popularity of scientific essentialism, the view that the laws of nature are all metaphysically necessary. But many of us think that we can conceive of scenarios in which the laws of nature are false. The papers by Bealer, Fine, and Sidelle examine this particular conceivability-possibility move with care.

(4) Some of us also think that we can conceive of scenarios in which a mathematical truth is false. Chalmers discusses this as a potential problem with his case for modal rationalism. Rosen, in an interesting turn, carefully considers taking such conceivings seriously as establishing the contingency of mathematics.

(5) The puzzle of imaginative resistance asks why it is harder to imagine that moral beliefs conflicting with our own are true, than to imagine that all kinds of bizarre fictions are true. The answer is not that moral beliefs conflicting with our own are not possibly true. As Currie says, ‘It would be wrong to suppose that the problem of imaginative resistance arises only for people (us presumably) who have correct moral views’. This is currently a lively debate amongst aestheticians. Currie and Yablo contribute to this debate while illuminating the nature of conceiving.

This collection would be very suitable, though challenging, as a text for a graduate seminar. Some supplemental readings may be useful for this purpose, such as Yablo’s ‘Conceivability and possibility’ [1993], and Gendler’s ‘The puzzle of imaginative resistance’ [2000]. However, the (70-page) introduction does an excellent job of explaining the basics of Kripke and what has happened since, as well as providing concise summaries of individual papers.
Let me return to the zombie argument against materialism. Several contributors (Stalnaker, Wright, Yablo) conclude that it begs the question in some way. Does it? The key problem with the argument, according to Wright, is that it underestimates the ways in which conceivability can lead us astray. Sometimes when we conceive of P we are merely ‘conceiving of what it would be like, if per impossibile, P were (found to be) false . . . For a large class of impossibilities, there are still determinate ways things would seem if they obtained’. Wright argues that genuine conceiving and per impossibile conceiving cannot be distinguished phenomenologically, and hence that conceivability is only a useful guide to possibility in a case we don’t know to be impossible.

We use the phrase ‘per impossibile’ within counterfactuals to indicate that we realize that the antecedent is false, but that we are about to make some discriminating inferences from it. If, per impossibile, God wanted to do evil, then God would be able to’ is true. ‘If, per impossibile, God wanted to do evil, then God would not be able to’ is false. Perhaps sometimes, when we are unaware whether P is possible or impossible, we use this same style of conceiving. I really do not know whether per impossibile-style conceiving can be distinguished phenomenologically from other conceivings. Let us grant Wright that it cannot. But does it really follow from this that conceivability is only a useful guide to possibility in cases where contingency is an epistemic possibility? Yablo gave an extended defence of modal rationalism against arguments of this sort in his 1993 paper, and many of his points carry over to Wright’s new argument. As Yablo says, the modal rationalists are not claiming conceivability to be an infallible guide to possibility. Even if impossibilities are often conceivable, that is consistent with conceivability being a fairly reliable guide to possibility.

Stalnaker’s contribution to the collection also evaluates the zombie argument against materialism, and is one of the least intimidating discussions I have seen of the topic. He ultimately draws a similar conclusion to Wright. In addition, he provides something like group therapy for disputing philosophers suffering from communication problems and unproductive fighting. The advice turns out to be to use two-dimensional modal semantics. This is suggested by Anne, a fictional type-B noneliminative materialist whom Stalnaker gives the last word in the dialogue. (To say that Anne is a type-B materialist is just to say that she believes that phenomenal truths are necessitated a posteriori by physical truths, so she thinks that zombies are conceivable but not possible). There is an impasse between dualists, like Chalmers, who claim to be able to conceive of zombies, and noneliminative materialists, like Shoemaker, who claim not to be able to conceive of zombies. The latter seem to build into the meaning of ‘consciousness’ that it is a functional property, and the former that consciousness is a non-physical property, so they seem to be talking at cross-purposes. Stalnaker’s advice (from the mouth of Anne) is to describe the world in question from the perspective of your opponent’s world, considered as actual. It is conceivable that Chalmers is right that consciousness is a non-physical property. When we imagine that this is true at the actual world, then a world of which it is true that zombies exist is conceivable.

However, Anne concludes ‘if this [convoluted sense] is the only sense in which zombies are conceivable, their conceivability will provide no argument against materialism, since we must assume that materialism is false to be justified in inferring that zombies are possible from the fact that they are conceivable’. This seems right,
and Chalmers agrees (in the Appendix to his contribution). It remains to be seen whether the notions of conceivability developed by Chalmers and the other contributors can avoid this problem.

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Godfrey-Smith, Peter, *Theory and Reality: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Science*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003, pp. xii + 272, US$60 (cloth), $24 (paper).

This book aims to be a brief elementary introduction to the philosophy of science. It grows out of the author’s own course lectures and presupposes no prior philosophical background. It is devoted largely to epistemological rather than to metaphysical questions. It addresses exclusively various questions that concern science generally; it includes no chapters or sections devoted to questions arising especially from the philosophy of physics, philosophy of biology, or philosophy of social science, for instance.

The book’s first three-quarters trace philosophy of science from logical positivism through feminist approaches, the ‘science wars’, and recent studies of the social structure of science. After a chapter on Hume, Hempel, and Goodman on induction, followed by a fairly (in both senses) critical chapter on Popper (perhaps ironically entitled ‘Conjecture and Refutation’), two full chapters are wisely devoted to Kuhn. The first is an especially fine chapter on the idea of ‘normal science’ and its morals for traditional empiricism. The second concerns revolutions, incommensurability, and criticism of Kuhn’s unfortunate talk of the world itself depending on the paradigm. Subsequent chapters concern Lakatos, Laudan, and Feyerabend; take a sober look at the strong program, Shapin/Shaffer, and Latour/Woolgar; and survey feminist epistemology, science studies, and the Sokal hoax. There follow two chapters favourably discussing naturalism, including the theory-ladenness of observation, the division of intellectual labour, and the distribution of intellectual capital.

This largely chronological approach, having reached the present day, is then abandoned in the final quarter of the book. It includes a chapter each on scientific realism, scientific explanation, and Bayesian personalism. The concluding chapter sketches the author’s own combination of scientific realism and a naturalistic brand of empiricism that considers both the individual scientist’s perspective and the scientific community’s efficient functioning. These views had already made themselves felt in previous chapters. (Sometimes blatantly so. For instance, having stated van Fraassen’s constructive empiricism, the book says flatly, ‘But this view cannot be defended’ [185].)

Examples are drawn from medicine, economics, and psychology, as well as from physics, astronomy, evolutionary theory, and molecular biology. Some of the examples are nicely topical:

[T]he government of Thabo Mbeki in South Africa has shown an interest in radical ideas about the causation of AIDS. According to these ideas, the virus identified by mainstream science as the cause of AIDS, HIV, is regarded as either relatively
unimportant or altogether harmless. In reply to the storm of criticism that resulted, Mbeki has sometimes said that he is simply interested in an open-minded questioning of theories and the exploration of diverse possibilities. Surely that is a properly scientific attitude? This reply has been rightly criticized as disingenuous. Science needs the invention of alternatives, but it also needs mechanisms for pruning the range of options and abandoning some.

The writing is brisk, vigorous, informal, and user-friendly. (There are ‘smoking-gun’ quotations [97], a ‘Bad View’, opposition to which motivates much sociology of science [183], and ‘wild flights of fancy that make Bruno Latour look like Rudolf Carnap’ [144–5].) Sentences are short. The absence of footnotes may make the book easier for students to read, but apparently obliges the author to include in the main text all of the qualifications that he deems it necessary to make. Sometimes a host of seeming side-remarks (e.g., acknowledging that the view being presented is not universally accepted) are given before the main view has even been presented and occupy as much space as the main presentation itself. Students may find this distracting. I would have preferred that certain caveats and qualifications be relegated to endnotes for a cleaner read.

Generally speaking, the book places greater emphasis on reporting the views commonly associated with some philosopher or philosophical movement, and then critiquing those views, than on carefully presenting the arguments originally given for those views. For example, in setting out Reichenbach’s distinction between the context of discovery and the context of justification, the book makes clear that this distinction will later come in for sharp criticism. But the motivation for drawing the distinction in the first place is never really explained, apart from the idea that the logical positivists saw logic as ‘the main tool for philosophy’ [28]. The author could have discussed the standard arguments that there exists no ‘logic of discovery’, the genetic fallacy, or canonical examples such as Kepler’s mysticism or Kekulé’s inspiration for the benzene ring. Without this kind of run up to the two contexts, it will inevitably tend to seem just plain narrow-minded for the positivists simply to have ‘dismiss[ed] the relevance of fields like history and psychology to the philosophy of science’ [29].

In several places, students are not given sufficient motive for sympathizing with a view before being told that it is counterintuitive, oversimplified, or grossly mistaken—even if it is. For example, having been told about phenomenalism, a student will read:

I hope phenomenalism looks strange to you, despite its eminent proponents. It is a strange idea. But empiricists have often found themselves backing into views like this. This is partly because they have often tended to think of the mind as confined behind a ‘veil of ideas’ or sensations. The mind has no ‘access’ to anything outside the veil. Many philosophers, including me, agree that this picture of the mind is a mistake. But it is not so easy to set up an empiricist view that entirely avoids the bad influence of this picture.

Naturally, no one likes to think of herself as confined. It would have been helpful to be told why these philosophers thought of the mind as having no ‘access’ (an unfortunate slip into philosophical jargon) to anything but sensations. A few
perceptual illusions, hallucinations, and lookings could have gone a long way here toward making phenomenalism seem attractive—even liberating, in freeing us from worries about whether we really know about the external world, over and above actual and possible sensations—rather than making phenomenalism seem sadly confining or merely eccentric.

The same goes for views that the author finds attractive:

Naturalists think that the project of trying to give general philosophical foundations for science is always doomed to fail. They also think that a philosophical foundation is not something science needs in any case. Instead, we can only hope to develop an adequate description of how knowledge and science work if we draw on scientific ideas as we go.

But what arguments do naturalists give for these views? What sorts of questions have made some philosophers crave such ‘a philosophical foundation’ for science? A reader cannot really be expected to appreciate how radical these naturalistic doctrines are unless she has sometime heard the siren song of the ‘foundationalist’. And don’t we sell philosophy short when we fail to dwell on the creativity and ingenuity that philosophers have displayed in arguing for their views?

The book performs a valuable public service in cutting a path for us from positivism, Popper, and Kuhn through feminism, naturalism, and realism. Certain questions recur, unifying the chapters: Is science just careful ordinary reasoning or does it require a special, fragile, and relatively recent kind of social structure? Is philosophy of science a descriptive or normative enterprise? How has the ‘Scientific Revolution’ served as a pivotal case for accounts of science? I found the book generally reliable. (However, constructive empiricism claims not ‘that science should aim at no more than empirical adequacy’ [185], but that the best empiricist interpretation of science takes science’s goal as empirical adequacy.)

Of course, any introductory text that tries to tell a coherent story must make hard choices about what to exclude. This book pays little or no attention to metaphysical topics that have been prominent in the philosophy of science: space and time, reduction, determinism, dispositions, causal relations, and so forth. There remains plenty for a semester-length course to chew on, especially if this book were supplemented by some of the readings that it discusses. However, when the author mentions that operationalism was motivated by special relativity [30], that quantum mechanics suggested to some that logic should be revised [33], and that in quantum mechanics ‘the state of a physical system is partially determined by the act of measurement’ [175], these remarks are all left completely unelaborated. Either the author has exercised admirable and necessary self-restraint, or he has missed golden opportunities to say something more.

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Davies, Stephen, *Musical Works and Performances—A Philosophical Exploration*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001, pp. vi + 374, £45/US$74.00 (cloth), £17.99/US$24.00 (paper); *Themes in the Philosophy of Music*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003, pp. 283, £35/US$65.00 (cloth).

The title of the first of these two fine volumes makes clear what it is about. But Davies is able to place a surprising number of issues under the description—e.g., non-Western notational systems, opera on film, and standards of authenticity in a wide range of performance contexts. He nicely cuts through the heavy breathing that surrounds issues about the use of ‘period’ instruments; and he takes on what he terms the ‘myth of purity and stability’ of non-Western musical forms. The second book includes fifteen essays, published between 1980 and 2003, of which two are published here for the first time. Of the several topics addressed, expression and music ontology receive the most attention.

What makes both of these books especially relevant to many of us working in music aesthetics is that they serve as a substantial antidote to the classical paradigm, as we might term it, with its fixation on the European tradition of concert music. No writer has expanded the philosophical study of music beyond those limits in a more systematic way than Davies.

In *MWP*, Davies curtly surveys terms the ontological theories of the ‘philosophers’ about musical works—e.g., that they are universals, that they are ‘abstract particulars’, and so on. His lack of enthusiasm presumably reflects the healthy breadth of his approach, as compared with that of traditional ontologists who focused almost entirely on ‘classical’ works. No standard ontological theory, he says, ‘is true of all musical works, not even of all musical works created for live performance’ [*MWP*: 43]. In *Themes*, Davies does choose from among the foregoing options. A musical work, he says, is a kind of a kind—namely, one that makes allowances for malformed instances. Most importantly, it is the product of ‘social construction’. Criteria specifying what counts as an instance of a musical work depend on when and where that kind of specification is made. The criterion individuating proper instances of ‘Happy Birthday’, for instance, will not serve for Beethoven’s ‘Great Fugue’.

The contextualist perspective is also stressed throughout *MWP*. Davies nevertheless rejects the kind of ‘fashionable’ scepticism about musical essentialism espoused by Lydia Goehr, who, Davies claims, over-contextualizes musical works by linking their identity ‘to a concept applying mainly to nineteenth century Western classical pieces’ [*MWP*: 98]. On the other hand, he says, Jerrold Levinson over-contextualizes musical works by making a work’s identity depend on that of its composer [*MWP*: 98]. Contrary to Levinson, Davies argues that, if conditions are carefully specified, it is theoretically possible for two composers closely situated historically to have created the same work.

Given his chilly attitude toward the ‘philosophers’’ ontologies, it is curious that Davies regards his own typologies as an ontology. In spite of their apparent irrelevance to real issues in music aesthetics, the disputes between the universalists, individualists, etc., are at least recognizable species of ontology, in the tradition of Plato, Occam, and Russell. But it is not clear what the point is of dignifying a distinction between works for live performance and others, for example, by dubbing it ‘ontological’. What is important about Davies’s types is not their home in the
classic metaphysical zoo, but whether the distinctions are, in his own words, ‘significant to the way composers, performers, and listeners understand’ the musical roles they play [MW: 44].

Within the scope of Davies’s several discussions of musical kinds, one finds a type he terms studio performances, which in turn includes simulated and virtual performances. Both types make use of technological gimmickry—e.g., digital tweaking and tape-splicing. The former ‘provides the aural experience as of a live performance, even though no unitary…playing event … took place’. The latter ‘generates the sound of a performance that not only did not take place but could not have done so’ [MW: 36]. The use of the term ‘performance’ in the second kind of case seems a little strained, given the range of sonic sculptures we presumably find there. Davies also refers to traditional unmanipulated studio performances as ‘simulated’, presumably on the grounds that they are not for a live audience [MW: 7]. In this case, it is the use of ‘simulated’ that seems strained.

Davies claims that a thick–thin contrast explains why music displays such a great ‘variety of ontologies’ (Themes: 4). A thicker work specifies in advance more properties than a thinner one that must be instantiated by any ‘maximally faithful performance’ of it [ibid.]. Two interrelated aspects of Davies’s treatment of his own duality seem problematic.

First, note that according to Davies’s basic usage, we compare musical works with each other, with respect to degrees of thickness [MSW: 20]. Symphonies by Mahler are thicker than eighteenth century works, and the ‘Great Fugue’ is far thicker than ‘Happy Birthday’. Having launched this remarkably useful way of comparing certain kinds of works with each other, however, Davies goes on to compare works with their own performances in degrees of thickness. Standard works in the European concert tradition, he says, will be ‘inevitably thinner than the performances that instance them’ [MW: 26]. Why does Davies want to slide to this different contrast between works and their instances with regard to thickness? Perhaps it is because he wishes to apply his concept, not just to the type cited above, but to musical works of all kinds. Perhaps too he can only do so by sliding over to this different employment of the thick–thin contrast. Consider an example.

In his notable study of rock, Theodore Gracyk tried to assimilate works of rock music to the type of artefact I have, since 1994, termed a ‘work of phonography’. A playback of such a work is the final result of blending multiple ingredients into sonic sculptures that are not performable, but only ‘playbackable’ on your stereo system. Thus, live playing or singing is only one ingredient in an electronic stew. Davies objects on the grounds that with many rock albums, we are not listening merely to a non-performable sonic sculpture but to a song-performance strongly similar to a live performance such as we might hear played or sung from sheet music—except that the song is ‘thickened and stiffened’ through retakes, tweaking, superimposition, and other electronic ‘interventions’ [MW: 31, 35]. But this appears to shift to the second, different use of the thick–thin distinction. It is one that construes thickness as involving quantity of sonic detail. This use surfaces explicitly when Davies notes that a performance (of a work for live performance in this case) is ‘as rich in sonic properties as the ear is capable of discriminating and as the mind is capable of discerning’ [MW: 26]. Never mind the fact that Davies’s words suggest that all performances are equally
thick in the apparently tautological sense that each makes available whatever sonic detail comprises it. The point is that he is here referring to thickness in the sense of quantity of sonic detail. So, a rock tune could be thin in two different, confusible senses. One has to do with the original idea of how skeletal the work is, that is, the degree to which details in a legitimate sounding are prescribed in advance rather than being filled in by the performance, however rich in detail it be. The other has to do with the richness in detail of the sounding. Incidentally, on Davies’s account of studio performances, a given piece could vary greatly in the sonic detail its performances make available, depending on how they are thickened in different studio performances.

At any rate, we arrive at the view that works in general—even ordinary concert works—can be compared in thickness with their instances. However, we have done so with the help of the secondary use of the thick–thin distinction. Note too that we have glossed over another matter. Works themselves would seem to have no thickness at all in Davies’s secondary sense, since they do not make available any sonic detail. We would have to construe a characterization of a work’s sonic detail as an elliptical way of speaking of the quantity of detail that the work’s sounding makes available. (Consider performances of an elaborate orchestral work by Ravel, for instance, compared with that of a piano sonata by Mozart.) However, this would seem to muddle up the putative contrast between works themselves and their soundings.

There is, however, one type of case where we might regard a work itself as possessing a degree of thickness in the secondary sense. Consider the type of artefact I earlier termed a work of phonography. Davies seems aware of the type [MWP: 316–17] and presumably extends his thick–thin duality to them. Now the distinction in the primary sense seems ill suited to describe such artefacts. They are, in that sense, absolutely thick. To put it otherwise, the contrast does not apply, since every complete instance of such a work has all the constituent properties of the relevant kind. Ideally, there is nothing to add (or subtract) from such a work, except what might be introduced by faulty playback equipment. In Davies’s discussion of electronic studio music, he suggests that gaps can and do appear in such cases anyway, because of factors such as noise, e.g., tape hiss [MWP: 27]. In light of such factors, we might then try to apply the contrast in the secondary sense. If we regard such a work itself as a template containing a specific quantity of sonic information, then we might speak of gaps of the sort Davies cites. However, could such gaps not result either in an increase or a decrease of information? Anyway, the kinds of factors Davies cites are not normally part of the musical agenda, as are the thickenings involved in either live or studio performances. They are, so to say, a species of collateral damage.

The second question about Davies’s duality is about exactly how the thick–thin distinction functions as the kind of global organizing device he thinks it can. Part of the answer depends on the generalization of the distinction to cover all musical works, as described above. But if we were to accomplish this generalization, how would the thick–thin contrast function as a principle of organization? One possibility is that every variation in thickness marks an ontological subspecies. But it would surely be ponderous to mark every one of these as an ‘ontological’ dividing point. And even if we drop that label, the option seems strange. (Degree of length in general is a type of determination; but not much would normally be served by
regarding every variation in length as a type of determination.) As Davies himself (usually) sees, a typology should reflect practice. We might try to view the thick–thin duality as dividing music into two ontological subspecies—the territory where the contrast holds and that where it doesn’t—e.g., to pure works of phonography. Fine, except that—with the help of his dual usage—Davies tries to apply the thick–thin contrast to all the types he distinguishes.

Other kinds of case would make a different kind of trouble for the use of the contrast as an all-round ontological organizer. Consider free jazz improvisation, such as that sponsored by Lennie Tristano in the late 1940s, and documented in recordings titled, e.g., ‘Intuition’. What would determine whether ‘Intuition’—itself, as contrasted with its recording—is thick or thin? The question doesn’t apply, because ‘Intuition’ is not a work-kind, of the sort he describes in Themes. As I have elsewhere argued, such an item, having no instances, cannot be regarded as thick or thin. Any genuinely impromptu performance, that was, by a fluke, an acoustic clone of ‘Intuition’ would not be a second instance of a kind. Perhaps the assumption that concepts of such kinds apply to music generally is a ghost of the classical paradigm—a paradigm we expect Davies to oppose.

In detailing options for understanding musical expression in Themes, Davies casts aside the view that music conveys emotion by arbitrary designations and associations. That theory, he says, does not do justice to the fact that when sad, for example, music wears its sadness on its face, so to say—the way a basset hound wears its droopy look on its face, an analogy that first surfaced in Davies’s 1976 dissertation.

Davies also distances himself from Suzanne Langer’s theory that forms of music stand in iconic relationships with forms of feeling. However, like Langer, Davies appeals to resemblances. True, Davies claims that Langer’s iconicities cannot be ‘demonstrated’. But what might Davies say to someone who does not hear the music wearing the behavioural ‘face’ of sadness? When we read that ‘no amount of . . . evidence entails that’ a person will be able ‘to hear’ the expressiveness harbourd in a piece of music, we might attribute the words to Langer. In fact, they are Davies’s [Themes: 143]. Davies massages our intuitions to recognize that we do hear these things in music. But so does Langer.

Davies’s theory, which he calls ‘appearance emotionalism’, has affinities with Peter Kivy’s ‘contour theory’ (although Kivy does not seem to have noticed the fact). Will the appeal to perceived resemblances successfully underpin a theory of expression? Interestingly, Kivy wondered if the relevant resemblances must also be ‘animated’, after the analogy in representational visual art of ‘seeing in’.

Davies’s view is that expression in the music, like that on the dog’s face, has nothing to do with occurrent mental states. (We cannot understand sad music as an expression of the sorrow of the composer; nor can we explicate it in terms of sadness supposedly aroused in its listeners.) At the same time, Davies notes that the reason the sadness of others can move us is that others are the presumed subjects of occurrent experiences. So, how can mere emotion appearances move listeners? His answer is that the expressive features of music are ‘contagious’. This is not, he notes, a way of backsliding into the arousal theory. The reason music moves us—in the relevant way—is that we do find it expressive. Arousal theory puts the cart before the horse.

Is the contagion theory convincing? If a piece of happy music is even slightly more contagious than a smiley face, that may only be because the latter is an irritating
cliché. Kivy has challenged the thesis that people are actually moved by sad music. Davies registers the objection [Themes: 186], but dismisses it. This is interesting, because he appears to regard our emotional responses to music as evidence for the emotion appearance theory [Themes: 145].

In another chapter of Themes, Davies argues that the reason we wince in the face of the abuse of musical instruments is that we respect them as ‘honorary persons’. In an essay on hermeneutics in the same volume, Davies discriminates several senses in which a musical work might be interpreted, arguing for pluralism in each case. A chapter on Cage’s notorious 4’33’’ maintains that it isn’t really a work of music, but a theatre piece. A piece on transcriptions is the best thing on the topic of which I am aware. Transcriptions do not merely repackage their prototypes into further instances of a work but are distinct works that ‘invite reconsideration of and comparison with the original’ [Themes: 53]. Such cases, one might further suggest, are representations of their prototypes, analogous to artistically significant oil portraits, in that part of their telos is to make a statement about their subject matter. In that respect, they may even share features with ‘covers’ in popular music.

Both volumes are full of subtleties to which I cannot do justice here. Davies is pretty thorough in his coverage of relevant scholarship, rigorous in his criticisms, gracious in his concessions to those with whom he even partly agrees, and gentle with those he regards as quite wrong. A happy reader will be one who enjoys philosophizing by counterexamples, because they fly thick and fast in key chapters of both volumes—a natural consequence of a strategy of advancing the argument by taking on all the actual and potential philosophical competition. Davies’s index in Themes appears not to be quite complete. (It does not include all his references to Lydia Goehr.) He mistakenly attributes the swing classic, ‘In the Mood’ to someone called ‘Garland Razaf’ (MWP: 180–1.) (In fact it was Joe Garland who wrote the tune, Andy Razaf, its lesser-known lyrics.) Small glitches do not take away from the fact that these splendid studies will be must reading for anyone with any serious interest in philosophy of music.

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D’Agostino, Fred, Incommensurability and Commensuration: The Common Denominator, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003, pp. xiv + 211, £39.95 (cloth).

As Jonathan Swift pointed out, the problems of locating adequate sustenance for the poor in Eighteenth-Century Ireland could have been solved by the simple expedient of eating the flesh of the young. Leaving behind an ‘essentialism’ that would reify persons as entities deserving moral respect, Swift’s famous proposal parodied the callousness and depravity that can attach to a ‘can-do’ attitude. Hilariously, ‘A Modest Proposal’ is written entirely in the earnest, digressive style of a gentleman farmer proposing an improved drainage system. One has to wonder whether something similar is going on in D’Agostino’s book. Most of it is written in the straight, schematic-matrix style of the economist or rational-choice theorist. Officially eschewing any ‘essentialism’ that would have us worry about the nature of values or goods, D’Agostino instead pursues a ‘can-do’ approach about making
goods or values commensurable (establishing fixed trade-off ratios among them). He explains that we can almost always do it, albeit at the cost, often, of introducing mechanisms of domination or of riding roughshod over the values that are at stake. (D’Agostino is evasive about whether there is ever any truth of the matter about what values are at stake. He merely notes that participants in a practice of making things commensurable must proceed as if they were discovering the truth about the values involved [68].)

To be sure, D’Agostino invokes no example as lurid as the eating of children, who are calorie-wise commensurable with other foods. Instead, his recurring example concerns university researchers. As he rightly notes, the idea of ‘research’ is inchoate and ill-understood . . .. An auditor, of course, can’t assess the accuracy of claims made in terms of such a vague or disputed concept’. Accordingly, in order for the university administration and its auditors to get a handle on research, they need to find a way of making the output of different researchers commensurable. For instance, they might use ‘the measure of an individual’s weighted publications’ [186].

This book is at its most fascinating and original in describing the social preconditions and mechanisms that are involved in establishing such a practice of making items commensurable. D’Agostino is widely read in economic theory, social theory, anthropology, and other related fields. He has brought his insights from this reading to bear quite strikingly in his sociologically concrete account of the circumstances in which making things commensurable seems called for [64]. Yet D’Agostino’s wider reading comes out in quite a different mode in the final chapters, in which he details how practices of making things commensurable serve as tools of domination. In these chapters, it is as if he drops the act of the matter-of-fact, ‘can-do’ commensurator. Schematic matrices are left behind, and instead we are offered a series of piquant but cryptic quotations from the likes of Mikhail Bakhtin and Judith Butler. Finally, in what is surely the author’s own voice, we get a call for a whole ‘new mode of engagement for philosophy . . . through which effective resistance to domination might be organized’ [191].

So what does D’Agostino really think about university administrators wielding reductive indices of research excellence? If a philosopher’s proper calling is to resist domination, and if making things commensurable is typically a mode of dominating, surely he should be against doing so; yet most of the book is devoted to a detailed, matter-of-fact explanation of how to make things commensurable. That is why the parallel to Swift’s tone suggests itself. Yet there is another, more likely interpretation. D’Agostino notes that although making things commensurable does provide an avenue for domination, it does not follow that a given, new way of making things commensurable always generates more domination than existed hitherto (186). If his book is not a satire of economistic reasoning, then perhaps its suggestion is that we make things commensurable in the ways that generate the least domination.

But why is making things commensurable necessary? D’Agostino never explains. He presents the ‘circumstances of’ making things commensurable mentioned above as conditions that make commensurating ‘necessary’ [61]. As far as I can see, this supposed ‘necessity’ rests simply on the desirability of having an auditable system for generating consistent decisions. D’Agostino never explores the possibility of there being other kinds of systems for achieving this besides ones that establish fixed trade-off ratios. To be sure, he does interestingly describe the possibility of devolving decisions to individuals, as we do in protecting the freedom of conscience. He calls
this devolution a mode of making the considerations commensurable, but offers no good reason for so classing it. It generates no trade-off ratios. Yet there are also some important, systematic ways of generating shared, collective decisions that do not involve making the competing considerations commensurable. Among these are some truly ‘rationalizing’ and auditable systems. Consider, for instance, the cascade of specifications of principle involved in many kinds of law-making: a political party enunciates a broad principle, a legislature enacts it into a still rather vague statute, and then the implementing agency spells out the necessary details in published regulations. That is a system, ‘rationalizing’ in the Weberian sense, for generating collective decision that nowhere involves generating fixed trade-off ratios. Yet it is fully auditable, in the broad sense glossed above, by the administrative law courts.

Of course, in recent decades in the U.S., such a non-commensurating system of law-making has been the bugbear of the anti-regulation conservatives, who have sought to superimpose upon it the further regimentation of cost-benefit analysis (CBA). CBA appears to make competing considerations commensurable on the basis of monetized willingness to pay. D’Agostino has been taken in by this appearance. He rightly notes that arriving at a preference-satisfaction index for each individual fails to make things commensurable at the collective level. In addition, one needs to supply a way of making those individual satisfaction numbers interpersonally comparable. CBA appears to do that; but in fact it does not. Instead, CBA is built upon the idea of hypothetical Pareto improvement: if an option passes the CBA test, then all of the gainers could compensate the losers by making side-payments, such that each person would be a gainer. Hence, CBA represents an auditable mode for generating decisions that does not commit itself to any collective trade-off ratios.

D’Agostino’s account of how we make things commensurable never fully explains how two options can ever be made commensurable, all things considered. Instead, he concentrates on commensurating practices that—barring the possibility of devolution discussed above—are limited to establishing trade-off rates as among a fixed, finite number of ‘standards’ or dimensions of comparison. This allows reducing multiple dimensions of comparison to the auditors’ preferred singular. Yet he plausibly observes that there is generally an inexhaustible number of evaluatively significant differences between any two distinct options [149]. If that is so, then no method of reducing a fixed, finite number of evaluative standards to a single one will suffice to yield the decisiveness that D’Agostino, in his economist’s voice, seems to prize.

The ‘pragmatism’ that avowedly underlies the book’s approach is, like that of the can-do cannibalism of Swift’s proposal, a shallow one. It does not concern itself to look critically at our ultimate aims. We need decisions, and here’s a way to generate them. Yet, as with D’Agostino’s closing call to arms against the forces of domination, occasionally a more robust moral sensibility shows through. He notes that making things commensurable can have ‘moral risks’ [29]. To address them properly, one would need to ask whether achieving decisiveness is worth running those risks—and so the problem of commensurability would reappear within the pragmatist’s schematic idea of ‘success’. Deeper pragmatists, such as Dewey, are thoroughly aware that their notion of success is an explodable schema.

D’Agostino’s book provides us with a generally clear exposition of what is involved in making standards of evaluation commensurable, whether as a single individual sees it or as a collective matter. It also gives us an unusually rich picture of
the social practices of commensuration, illuminatingly analysing what is generally involved in getting people to go along with evaluating things on a single scale and articulating in a nuanced way the social costs and benefits of accepting this mode of social rationalization. While we might have wished for a more forthright evaluative conclusion, unequivocally recommending this mode for some cases and unequivocally condemning it in others, it is perhaps understandable that the book does not provide this. After all, as has been intimated, such an overall recommendation would require invoking ultimate standards that are difficult to commensurate with a straight face.

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Waldron, Jeremy, *God, Locke, and Equality: Christian Foundations in Locke’s Political Thought*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. xii + 263, £45/US$60 (cloth), £16.95/US$22 (paper).

Ever since John Dunn’s path-breaking interpretation of Locke’s political thought in 1969, the role of religion in Locke’s argument, and the political implications thereof has been a major topic for those working in the field. Here Jeremy Waldron asks specifically what is ‘the relation in Locke’s thought between basic equality and religious doctrine’ [19]. Since he judges Locke’s theory of basic equality one of the best we have and since its reliance on religious premises are clearly considerable, his interest is not simply in the historical fact that Locke claimed certain relationships obtained between religious premises and a doctrine of basic equality, but in the logical relationship between theological foundations and egalitarianism. He also therefore, addresses a methodological issue that has much preoccupied historians of political thought, namely that of how compelling a non-anachronistic reading of seventeenth-century theory (even a very good seventeenth century theory) can be to moderns. On the one hand Waldron wants to show that even though Locke’s argument may have religious premises, these are not, or at least not always, of a kind that renders his argument ‘strange’ or uninteresting to secular modern philosophers (as line-by-line scriptural refutation of Filmer clearly is). On the other hand he wants to explore whether any workable theory of basic equality might presuppose theological foundations.

The book is rich and full of insights showing how fertile can be the interplay between acute philosophical and informed historical understanding, both of which Waldron displays. One reason for the interplay is his central claim that ‘theological foundations’ are not to be taken in the sense of premises given at the start of a long chain of reasoning which can be ‘bracketed off’, but as informing not only premises but distinctions and moods and moves throughout the argument. An instance—crucial for the argument—is the way the identity of the categories ‘human’ and ‘rational’ are constructed around religious premises in a way that persistently affects their cognitive and not just their normative operations. One of the best—and strategically most important—discussions around this issue addresses the apparent contradiction between Locke’s scepticism about natural kinds in the *Essay* and his reliance on the distinctiveness (and species-equality) of humans in the
Second Treatise. The latter would seem to imply some great (and discrete) chain of being that both the former (and the animus of the latter) would deny. How could Locke (or we) ground intra-species equality without some clear (and relevant) inter-species differentiation? Conventional—nominal—essences won’t do the job in the sense of providing anything but prescriptive equality. As Waldron points out, for Locke: ‘The boundaries of the Species are made by Men; since the Essences of the Species distinguished by different names are . . . of Man’s making.’ Consequently, shared and distinct speciesdom, seems to offer no grounds for distinguishing those kinds of beings whose consent is required for rule to be exercised over them. Instead Waldron says, we should look at those characteristics (species-defining or not) in virtue of which such equality is claimed. At this point he stops to rebut the (anachronistic) criticism that in pursuing this tactic Locke must be guilty of the naturalistic fallacy, arguing that the claim that the descriptive statement, that if 1, 2, 3, etc. are D implies (strictly entails) the normative assertion N, is different from the claim that if 1, 2, 3 etc are D obtains some supervenient difference must be shown in order to treat 1 differently from 2, . . . n [69]. The threshold quality that marks off those to whom equality is to be ascribed is the capacity for abstraction and this is a relevant property—for Locke—because it is what individuals need in order to think of themselves as ongoing morally responsible persons, and what enables them to arrive at the idea of God from the ‘visible marks . . . in all the works of creation’. True, not all human beings have this property developed to the same degree—it is a ‘range property’, a region on a scale, but the boundaries of the relevant region, are—for the purposes of establishing moral equality before God—claimed to be more salient than the differences within it. Once natural species-kinds are given up, equality can only be grounded in the light of resemblances, the salience of which is in Locke, and Waldron claims can only be, established by theological concerns.

In the chapter on ‘the Democratic Intellect’ he re-enforces this argument by rejecting claims—associated with C. B. Macpherson’s reading—about the class basis of full rationality. Rather, he claims Locke held that all classes of humans have enough rationality to deploy it in the relevant task of working out their duties to God. In the relevant senses it is arrogant scholars and lazy rentiers rather than ‘the illiterate and contemned Mechanick’ who lack rationality. This claim is somewhat undermined by the hermeneutic skill Waldron claims Locke displays in a chapter devoted to the latter’s Biblical exegesis in which he argues Locke shows that Scriptural interpretation and philosophical argument must be intimately connected.

In a couple of robust chapters on political institutions and property, stress is laid on the egalitarian presuppositions of Locke’s majoritarianism. Although conceding that egalitarianism isn’t systematically carried through as a requirement of any set of political arrangements (‘Locke was not doctrinaire about political institutions’), it is absolutely required (through the majority principle) for their establishment. But here surely the egalitarianism is being overplayed—and over-identified with majoritarianism. Locke, claims Waldron, believed ‘a constitution derived its legitimacy from having been chosen by the people, not from anything inherent in its character’ [137]. But this won’t do at all. Locke asserted an independent and objective standard of legitimacy—the Law of Nature—and was aware of the logical and practical possibility that majorities could make decisions in contravention of it. The fact that we have invariably to use our moral judgement in order to decide what is and what
isn’t in accordance with the Law of Nature never, for Locke, leads him—as it might lead a modern philosopher—to collapse the standard being aimed at into the necessary empirical institutions that might or might not realize it. Indeed Waldron himself subsequently makes a similar point about the Locke holding onto the right–power distinction.

The work finishes with a consideration of the tolerability of Atheists.

There are some strange side-swipes here. And some of the claims are less innovative than the author seems to think. Who, for example, are the ‘Cambridge school’ who teach their students to read the Two Treatises as though Locke were concerned to put forward a partisan political argument, rather than a philosophically tight one? True there is a remark to this effect in Laslett’s edition, but who else? John Dunn has probably done more than anyone to show that taking Locke’s theology seriously reveals the underlying philosophical coherence of his argument. Those who have most insisted on the salience of Locke’s political (sc. polemical) purpose are not members of the Cambridge School—Richard Ashcraft, Neal Wood—although neither of them could be said to have ignored the relationship between Locke’s philosophical concerns and his political argument, indeed both wrote extensively about it as have Ian Harris and John Marshall, both ‘Cambridge’ scholars in the wider sense. Another puzzle is the lack of attention that is paid to the character of the Christianity that supports the thoroughgoing egalitarianism ascribed to Locke.

Moreover, although Waldron’s claims about Locke are clear, his intentions in making them do not become fully so until the end. This wider argument, whilst suggestive, is not well enough constructed to sustain the claims advanced on its behalf. The conclusion he wishes us to draw is that grounding modern egalitarianism is going to require some theological premises, and that thoroughly secular cultures will find it difficult/impossible to sustain egalitarianism. But reaching this conclusion entails accepting some very questionable claims, not only about the extent of Locke’s egalitarianism, but about the supposedly egalitarian character of Christian cultures (as opposed to some of their theories), claims too about the more general relationship between the logical properties of philosophical theories and the way their ideological analogies function in societies. Moreover, even accepting these substantive claims, as an argument it ignores many other implications in preference those chosen. To parody (but only slightly), from the proposition that

Locke’s argument is a type E (Egalitarian) argument.

And that

Locke’s argument presupposes categories of type T (Theological)

it does not follow that

All type E arguments presuppose type T categories.

The plethora of undistributed middles here are far more striking than the exiguous argument that is supposed to thread its way through them. Aren’t there other E arguments that don’t use T? What about the notorious non-E arguments which type T premises support? The dominant historical vehicle of Christianity in Western
Europe (and latterly the world) has been the Roman Catholic Church. To categorize
this institution, its belief systems, or the culture it supports as egalitarian would be
(at least) idiosyncratic. Christianity (like communism) has tended to behave
differently in opposition than it has when in power. Even acknowledging the
difficulty of generating secularly based egalitarian arguments, readmitting theolog-
ical premises may be an even greater threat to egalitarian cultures than trying to work
without them.

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Mulgan, Tim, *The Demands of Consequentialism*, Oxford: Clarendon Press,
2001, pp. vi + 313, US$ 65.00 (cloth).

Perhaps the most potent objection to consequentialism is that it is unreasonably
demanding: its injunction always to maximize the overall good leaves far too little
room for individuals to pursue personal projects, interests, and relationships. The
objection arises in particularly sharp form in any world remotely like ours, where
relatively affluent individuals are in a position to alleviate at least some of the
extreme suffering that afflicts hundreds of millions of the earth’s inhabitants.

*The Demands of Consequentialism* is a comprehensive investigation into the
question whether it is possible for any consequentialist moral theory to meet this
objection. As Mulgan makes clear in the introduction, the objection is not in fact
limited to consequentialist theories: it effectively arises for any moral theory
according to which the needs of others impose obligations on us. This is because such
obligations typically take a consequentialist form, even within theories that are non-
consequentialist in overall structure. The demandingness objection thus presents a
deep problem for any minimally plausible moral theory.

Mulgan’s book is broken into four parts, comprising ten chapters. Roughly the
first half of the book, Parts One through Three are given over to criticism of some
leading consequentialist theories. These criticisms are generally constructive, and
they form the basis for the ‘Combined Consequentialism’ that Mulgan develops in
Part Four. His own attempt to meet the demandingness objection, the New Theory,
is sketched in the final chapter. This is a rich book, and I cannot hope to do justice to
the depth and originality of its arguments here. The book as a whole is very well
integrated and it is written in an exceptionally clear style, with an occasional touch of
dry humour. In short, it is a pleasure to read. I turn to a more detailed look at its
contents, before airing some criticisms.

Part One is titled ‘Simple Consequentialism’, and focuses mainly on act
consequentialism. After introducing the demandingness objection in Chapter 1,
Chapter 2 canvasses some of the options available to consequentialists in responding
to it. One option is to deny that extremely demanding moral theories are in fact
unreasonable, a position taken by Peter Singer and Shelly Kagan, amongst others.
Mulgan rejects this extremist position, noting that it fails to meet the burden of
showing why the reason to promote the general good must always override other
moral reasons that carry considerable intuitive weight. He goes on to consider and
reject the other main strategy open to simple consequentialists, which is to deny that
their theory is as demanding as the demandingness objection claims. The remainder of the book examines various attempts to meet the demandingness objection by altering the basic structure of consequentialism.

Part Two looks at one set of approaches toward this end, which Mulgan calls ‘Collective Consequentialism’. The basic idea is that morality, and beneficence in particular, is a collective enterprise that we all engage in together. The best-known collectivist theory is rule consequentialism; Chapter 3 focuses mainly on a recent version of the theory due to Brad Hooker. This holds that an act is right if it is directed by that set of rules, general acceptance of which would produce the best consequences. Mulgan’s central criticism of this position, centred on the issue of demandingness, is as follows. First, the extent to which rule consequentialism is demanding is prima facie unclear. The answer hinges, of course, on what the optimal set of rules is. Yet this largely depends, Mulgan points out, on a range of facts that may vary enormously, e.g., how many persons are starving, how many others are helping, how efficient aid organizations are, and so forth. Rule consequentialism seems to be committed to counting such facts as relevant, but Mulgan argues, they seem intuitively irrelevant to the question how much a given individual—who in any case may only put a tiny dent in the overall problem—is required to contribute. This ‘Wrong Facts Objection’ recurs throughout the book.

Chapter 4 examines other forms of collective consequentialism. The main target here is Liam Murphy’s ‘Compliance Condition’, which holds that an acceptable principle of beneficence must not increase its demands on individuals as expected compliance by others decreases. The idea is that each person is required to do her fair share, but she is not required to do more than her fair share. Mulgan’s objections to theories that respect this condition are similar to those he levels against rule consequentialism. In particular, the demands of such theories vary wildly according to facts that seem irrelevant to the ability of any given individual to render assistance. The problem facing all collectivist consequentialist theories, Mulgan argues in Part Four, is that they rely exclusively on outcome related considerations (including the number of potential aid-givers) to determine what each individual should give. Such theories thus take into account the question of individual cost only indirectly, and in doing so generate deeply counter-intuitive results across a range of actual and potential cases. Any acceptable theory, Mulgan argues, must take individual cost into account directly. It is, he acknowledges, a fair question whether any such theory would remain recognizably consequentialist.

Part Three, titled ‘Individual Consequentialism’, is devoted to two theories that depart from simple consequentialism along non-collectivist lines. Chapter 5 discusses the sub-maximizing or ‘satisficing’ consequentialism associated mainly with Michael Slote. Chapter 6 takes up Samuel Scheffler’s well-known ‘hybrid’ theory, which I discuss in the context of Mulgan’s New Theory below. Since the notion of satisficing ends up playing no role in that theory, I note here only that it comes in for criticism similar to Mulgan’s criticism of collectivist theories in Part Two. In particular, sub-maximizing theories fail to take the cost to individuals into account directly, this time with the result that the theory seems to be unreasonably undemanding in many cases where one could have done (much) more good at little or no additional cost to oneself.

Part Four is titled ‘Combined Consequentialism’, and makes use of the critical discussion that precedes it as the basis for constructing a consequentialist theory that
Mulgan begins this task in Chapter 7 by introducing two moral ‘realms’, which he calls the Realm of Necessity and the Realm of Reciprocity. Essentially, these realms are meant to mark out two different kinds of moral reason that apply to different areas of moral life. In particular, the Realm of Reciprocity is meant to apply in cases where we, as full members of the moral community, decide how to interact with each other. The Realm of Necessity, on the other hand, is meant to apply to cases where we, as full members of the moral community, encounter someone effectively outside that community whose basic needs are unmet or whose basic capacities are undeveloped.

These realms, which receive elaboration in Chapters 8 and 9, are intended primarily as a device for explaining what has gone wrong with the theories criticized in previous chapters, as well as a guide for constructing the New Theory sketched in the final chapter. As Mulgan notes, there is a danger in distinguishing the realms too sharply, for in the real world we must of course deal with both. Indeed, the central question that any theory must face, given the facts about world hunger, is how the demands of the two realms are to be properly balanced. Much of the discussion of Part Four is devoted to showing how the theories discussed in previous chapters apply at best to one realm, and hence fail to address adequately the crucial question of balance. In particular, Mulgan argues that rule consequentialism is the best account of the Realm of Reciprocity; simple consequentialism is the best account of the Realm of Necessity; and Scheffler’s Hybrid View is the most promising account of how to balance the two realms.

Mulgan’s New Theory comprises all three of these basic elements, but it is his proposal about how the Hybrid View can be altered to meet the demandingness objection that holds the most interest. Scheffler’s original account of the Hybrid View contains an agent-centred prerogative, which permits individuals to assign proportionately more weight to their own interests than such interests would receive from an impersonal standpoint. Mulgan’s prerogative diverges from this model in two important respects. First, it is a non-proportional version of the prerogative. This brings it into line with one of our central intuitions about beneficence; namely, that the cost an individual can reasonably be expected to bear in acting beneficently is not strictly proportionate to the amount of overall good at stake. Second, and more radically, Mulgan adds two different constraints to the prerogative. These restrict (1) the goals an individual may pursue; and (2) the actions she may perform in pursuit of those goals. These constraints effectively rebut the well-known objection to Scheffler’s prerogative that it permits an agent to harm others in pursuit of her goals, just as long as the impersonal disvalue of such harm does not exceed the proportionally extra weight she is entitled to assign to her own interests.

I believe that Mulgan’s New Theory does succeed in showing how the demandingness objection can be answered, at least in the sense that it shows, albeit very abstractly, what an agent-centred prerogative would have to look like not to fall afoul of some of our firmest moral intuitions. Nevertheless, the theory is open to criticism on at least two fronts. First, and most obviously, it is far from clear that the resulting theory is distinctively consequentialist in structure. In particular, the constraints that Mulgan adds to his theory look very much like agent-centred restrictions, as he himself is well aware. He argues that there is at least a conceptual gap between a constrained prerogative (such as the one he describes) and a genuine agent-centred restriction, but he concedes that the gap may not be very significant in
practice. Of course, if the theory is a good one it may not be terribly important whether it remains recognizably consequentialist in structure. A more serious objection is that the New Theory is effectively silent on what to my mind is the crucial question about the issue of moral demands: how are the two realms to be properly balanced? At the very end of the book, Mulgan concedes that he has said nothing about this question, but he suggests that it is unreasonable to expect this sort of guidance from a moral theory. Certainly there are others who feel the same way. However, I disagree with this view, and I would have liked to see at least some attempt to answer this difficult but crucially important question.

This criticism notwithstanding, The Demands of Consequentialism is an excellent book from which any philosopher can profit, particularly those who are looking for a comprehensive treatment of the problem of demandingness.

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Widerker, David and Michael McKenna, eds., Moral Responsibility and Alternative Possibilities: Essays on the Importance of Alternative Possibilities, Aldershot: Ashgate, pp. 364, US$89.95.

Open any book on contemporary epistemology and one will likely find treatment of Gettier cases. The field, at large, seems smitten with developing and responding to ever more complex Gettier cases. The same is true in action theory with regard to treatment of free will/moral responsibility and Harry Frankfurt’s ingenious counterexample to the Principle of Alternate Possibilities (hereafter, \textit{PAP}). Indeed, Frankfurt’s counterfactual intervener Black and his cousins enjoy a popularity that rivals Mr. Nogot’s fame. In \textit{Moral Responsibility and Alternative Possibilities: Essays on the Importance of Alternative Possibilities}, editors David Widerker and Michael McKenna bring together 17 essays, plus some insightful concluding remarks by Frankfurt himself, on Frankfurt-style counterexamples (hereafter, \textit{FSC}s) and the debate over alternative possibilities. The focus of the present volume is narrower than other recent anthologies on free will, such as the \textit{Oxford Handbook of Free Will}, but it explores the issues it does cover with extraordinary depth. The contributions to the present volume all, to some degree or other, discuss the purported success of \textit{FSC}s in showing \textit{PAP} to be false. Contributors include Harry Frankfurt, John Martin Fischer, David Widerker, Carl Ginet, Robert Kane, Bernard Berofsky, Alfred Mele, David Robb, Eleonore Stump, David Hunt, Derk Pereboom, Michael McKenna, William Rowe, David Copp, Michael Zimmerman, and Charlotte Katzoff. A number of the essays contained in this volume, such as Frankfurt’s own article that initiated the current debate over alternative possibilities, have been previously published. Most, however, appear here either for the first time or in an expanded and modified form.

As Frankfurt himself notes, in recent years \textit{FSC}s have become ‘disconcertingly intricate’ [339], and the current volume contains some of the most complex \textit{FSC}s developed to date. Despite their complexity, at the heart of an \textit{FSC} is what has come to be called an \textit{IRR}-situation. An \textit{IRR}-situation is one that makes it impossible for a person to avoid performing a certain action, but in no way brings it about that that he
performs that action. If, it is claimed, FSCs are indeed IRR-situations, then they will show PAP to be false. However, there is significant disagreement over whether FSCs really are IRR-situations. This volume evidences the degree of that disagreement.

Perhaps the two main strategies for rejecting the efficacy of FSCs in showing the falsity of PAP are the flicker-of-freedom strategy and what the editors call the prior-sign dilemma defence. The flicker-of-freedom strategy argues that FSCs are not IRR-situations by finding remaining alternative possibilities that might be morally relevant. The editors ‘do not believe that the flicker defense is fruitful’ [8], and, other than Fischer’s introduction of the strategy from his Metaphysics of Free Will, articles devoted specifically to this strategy are notably absent from this volume. Perhaps some of this is due to Frankfurt’s own evaluation of the flicker strategy: ‘The pertinence of the kinds of situations I have proposed as counterexamples to PAP does not depend upon supposing that the agents in those examples have no alternatives at all. Attempts to locate some sort of alternative in them are, in my view, beside the point. If the agent acts for reasons of his own, in other words, it is irrelevant whether or not his situation includes a flicker of freedom’ [1999: 370]. Nevertheless, many of the essays do indirectly deal with the flicker strategy by exploring what would have to be true of alternative possibilities in order for them to be ‘robust’ alternatives (for example, the contributions by Kane, Pereboom, Widerker, McKenna, Zimmerman).

Many of the articles in the present volume directly engage the second strategy for responding to FSCs, i.e., the prior-sign dilemma defence. In typical FSCs, the counterfactual intervelner looks to the presence or absence of a prior sign in order to know if he should intervene or not. For example, if the agent blushes at $t_1$ if and only if he will decide to do action $A$ at $t_2$, then the intervener can know whether he needs to intervene in order to guarantee that the agent does $A$ based on whether the agent blushes or not. In response, the prior-sign dilemma defence argues as follows: either the relationship between the prior sign and the action in an FSC is deterministic or it is not. Either way, however, FSCs fail to refute PAP. If the relationship between the prior sign and the action is deterministic, then the PAP-defender can claim that the agent is not morally responsible, since something for which she was not morally responsible (namely, the prior sign) is nomically sufficient for her action. On the other hand, if the relation between the prior sign and the action is not deterministic, then it would still be possible for the agent to do otherwise even after she showed the relevant sign. A number of the articles develop this defence and apply it to recent FSCs (for example, see the editors’ introduction and the contributions by Widerker, Ginet, Kane), while others attempt to develop FSCs that avoid both horns of this dilemma (see the contribution by Pereboom, Mele and Robb, Stump). The discussion of these latest generation FSCs involving, for example, blockage is among the most technical material in the volume and some degree of familiarity with the debate will be useful for readers.

One way to avoid both horns of the prior-sign dilemma is by developing FSCs that do not involve a prior sign. For example, Stump’s contribution contains two no-prior-sign cases, one based on the possibility of middle knowledge and another based on the correlation between volitions and neural firings in the philosophy of mind. (Rowe also briefly considers a Molinist-inspired FSC in his contribution.) These examples show that the presence of a prior sign is not essential to FSCs. If such a case can be developed, then the prior-sign dilemma defence can be easily avoided (a
similar conclusion is reached in Timpe [forthcoming] and Bergmann [2002]). Despite such FSCs that do not involve a prior-sign, much of the present volume focuses on the prior-sign dilemma defence. In fact, McKenna suggests that the debate over the success of the FSCs just ‘is the debate over whether it is possible to get around the excellent point made by those incompatibilists defending the [prior-sign dilemma]’ [205]. If the no-prior-sign cases are cogent, as I believe they are, such an evaluation of the debate will be false.

A further benefit of the no-prior-sign cases is that they also avoid Ginet’s objection [77ff] that FSCs necessarily involve a temporal discrepancy between the actual and alternate sequences and that, as a result of this feature, there is still something for which an agent in an FSC is morally responsible. According to Ginet, even if the agent in an FSC is not morally responsible for doing some action A by time $t_2$ (given the presence of an intervener who is sufficient for A occurring by $t_2$), she still could be morally responsible for doing A by $t_1$. Thus, the ‘finding as to what Jones is and is not responsible for depends on there being a difference between the time at which Jones actually does B and the time at which Jones would do B if he were caused to do it by Black’s mechanism’ [79]. Though Ginet’s response is specifically addressed to an argument given by Mele and Robb originally published in [1998] and defended in their contribution to this volume, Ginet presumably thinks it also applies to all FSCs [79ff]. However, if no-prior sign cases such as Stump’s are coherent, then Ginet’s objection will also fail.

One of the greatest strengths of this volume is the recognition by many its contributors of the need to locate the debate surrounding FSCs within larger metaphysical discussions, such as the discussion of causation in general. Berofsky, for example, considers the possibility that an FSC can be based on trumping preemption, but suggests that trumping is not a form of preemption; it is rather a case of overdetermination. Hunt, Mele and Robb advocate FSCs based on blockage, where all alternative possibilities other than that pertaining to what the agent does in the actual sequence are blocked. They attempt to show how blockage cases do not involve determination, but admit this depends on one’s account of the nature of causation, namely whether it is simply counterfactual dependence or something richer, such as a real, non-reductive relation. Dealing with the relationship between blockage and determination, Mele and Robb admit that ‘perhaps the primary disagreement between us and our objectors is over an issue in the metaphysics of causality’ [130]. Along a similar line, when discussing blockage cases, Hunt considers the objection that by eliminating all alternatives, blockage cases make it that the result that happens in the actual sequence is the only result causally possible. ‘But then every state or event of possible relevance to Jones’s exercise of agency is causally determined by the device, leaving no opening for the causal indeterminism critical to libertarianism’ [172]. A complete reply to this objection, according to Hunt, ‘equires a pretty solid grip on the notion of an actual sequence’ and ‘this is a large and important subject which cannot be pursued adequately here’ [173]. As these brief remarks suggest, the present volume does help to locate the debate over FSCs within the context of larger metaphysical issues, even if it does not do this to the extent that some would like.

Perhaps of greatest interest is Frankfurt’s own concluding contribution to this volume, where he reflects on the state of the debate that he began. Frankfurt thinks that much of the debate, and—it would seem—a great many of the essays in this
volume, have missed the ‘most essential point’ of FSCs by focusing on whether or not they really are IRR scenarios: ‘the usefulness of the examples ... does not really depend upon supposing that they describe circumstances that actually make an action altogether unavoidable while playing no role in bringing the action about. The examples effectively undermine the appeal of PAP even if it is true that circumstances that do not bring an action about invariably leave open the possibility that the action might not be performed’ [339]. FSCs do this by showing that making an action unavoidable is conceptually distinguished from bringing it about that the action is performed. The appreciation of this distinction, Frankfurt thinks, ‘tends to liberate us from the natural but nonetheless erroneous supposition that it is proper to regard people as morally responsible for what they have done only if they could have done otherwise’ [340] and can do so even if FSCs fail to show the unavoidability of the action in question. Frankfurt admits that he has not always been clear that this is the point at issue [344, n2]. What is most important is not whether an FSC really is an IRR situation, or even if such situations are possible; rather, Frankfurt thinks, the crucial issue is only how the action came to be performed.

Of course, many incompatibilists agree with the claim that the actual sequence is what matters for attributions of moral responsibility. Where these incompatibilists disagree with Frankfurt is that they also believe that indeterminism must be part of the actual history that led to the action if the agent is to be morally responsible for it. For this reason, the debate between incompatibilists and compatibilists will continue despite the present volume. Nevertheless, Moral Responsibility and Alternative Possibilities is a welcome contribution to this debate and will be of interest to those concerned with issues surrounding free will and moral responsibility.

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Tabensky, Pedro Alexis, Happiness: Personhood, Community, Purpose, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003, pp. 236, £45 (cloth).

Tabensky’s book is an investigation, inspired by Aristotelian ethics, into the nature of happiness. Drawing on Donald Davidson’s work, it argues that there is a close connection between personhood, rationality, and happiness, and that the full achievement of rationality, and hence personhood, is only achievable within a society which is pluralistic and welcomes difference among its membership.
The general course of the argument is along the following lines. Happiness, in the Aristotelian sense of *eudaimonia*, is the *telos* or goal of persons. Upon investigation, it is concluded that ‘to be a person just is to have a psychological life as understood here—a rational life’ [89]. Accordingly, our existence and *eudaimonia* as persons are dependent on our living a rational life. This rational life is maintained only in a society that allows different points of view on the world to flourish in free, non-manipulative relationships. Even such a brief account of the main features of the argument suggests an Aristotelian theory that has moved far from its roots. The emphasis on rationality and certainly the introduction of the term ‘persons’ I would take to be highly un-Aristotelian. And the sort of society that it is argued must exist in order for persons to flourish is far from the city-states that Aristotle considers in his *Politics*. But while the surface implausibility of linking such views with Aristotle should give pause for thought, the use of Aristotelian themes in a broadly liberal political and ethical project is not original to Tabensky and it is accordingly to the substance of some of his arguments that I now turn.

One problem for any modern philosopher in using Aristotle’s ethics lies in his teleology. The difficulty is broadly that Aristotle regards the world as being understandable scientifically—from the outside, as it were—as being teleological: that substances have to be understood in terms of their *tele* or goals. (It is perhaps appropriate here to make the nitpicking point that someone, at some stage in the editorial process, should have noticed that plural of *telos* which appears regularly throughout the book is not *teloi*.) Such a viewpoint is, as many philosophers have pointed out, not unproblematically available to us today. If it were, then the gap between what we are and what we (ethically) ought to become might be more easily bridged. Given all that, Tabensky’s treatment of this central issue seems rather odd. In contrast to most of the book, where Tabensky is clear that he is not engaged in a scholarly investigation of the Aristotelian corpus, in Chapter 3 he does devote considerable space to a detailed discussion of Aristotle’s views on teleology. But in doing so, he rather seems to lose sight of what he is going to do with the results of his investigation. If he thinks that Aristotle’s teleology can be unproblematically used as a basis of ethics today, then there is too little argument given to support such a view. If, on the other hand, there is a genuine desire to explore some of the detail of Aristotle’s position, why is very little said about the ethical use Aristotle himself makes of his teleology in, for example, the *ergon* or function argument in the *Nicomachean Ethics*? I suspect that the reason for the latter omission is connected with the failure to engage with the interpretative problem in the *Ethics* as to whether *eudaimonia* is to be understood as consisting in one, dominant end (that of the exercise of theoretical reason in contemplation of divine things) or as an inclusive end embodying a much wider range of values. Although Tabensky does touch on this issue in a footnote [48, n34], a deeper investigation of either reading might have rendered more problematic the claim that ‘the happy life just is the rational one’ [44] in the way that he wishes to take it.

In taking happiness as rationality, Tabensky is moving in a direction suggestive of Kantianism. The Kantian flavour of this is perhaps echoed in the sort of individualistic society that Tabensky envisages as being necessary for the existence of such rationality. Moreover, the explicit moving away from Aristotle’s view of human beings as members of a natural kind, to the view of them as persons
constituted by their rationality [e.g., 7, n6] also sounds Kantian. Simply sticking the Kantian label on these views is, of course, not an argument against them. But it does suggest what might be lost in the relatively superficial engagement with Aristotle here: the possibility of achieving an ethics that takes account of the full range of human nature as a rational animal.

In fleshing out his account of rationality, Tabensky moves away from Aristotle towards modern thinkers, particularly Davidson. He builds on Davidson’s claims about the inherent sociality of thought to argue that, beyond the minimum conditions set by Davidson for the existence of thought (i.e., broadly, that thought needs the existence of more than one person), complete rationality, complete personhood, and thus perfect happiness require a pluralistic society. What is lacking here is any real acknowledgment as to how problematic rationality is as a concept. Tabensky talks of rationality as being ‘compositional’: that just as an artist composes an artwork, so the rational person composes her life [43 – 4]. But, for example, although Alasdair MacIntyre’s claim that lives have a narrative form is relied on in Chapter 7, there is no mention of MacIntyre’s querying of the notion of there being one, tradition-free understanding of what is rational, what is a successful narrative. In any case, whether one starts from modern philosophers in this area, or from Aristotle, it is clear that the move from rationality as being essential to human beings to the claim that rationality is best embodied in (something like) a Western liberal society is one that needs a great deal of argumentative support.

Tabensky would undoubtedly reject my suggestion that he is simply endorsing modern Western liberal society (albeit in an idealized form), and he does indeed have strong (and often helpful) things to say about the errors in thinking ‘that the happiness of a given individual is something that has little or nothing to do with the happiness of the community within which that individual lives’ [201]. But what is to replace this? Not so much a shared, rich, substantive view of the world, such as might be found in the sort of communities envisaged by Aristotle or MacIntyre, but rather a ‘caring’ for others ‘in relationships in which one considers the needs and wants of others, in the light of an understanding of the basic needs persons generally have, and on the particular needs “this” particular individual has in “this” particular situation’ [202]. To flesh out this ideal, Tabensky gives the example of Neil Alcock, a white South African farmer who devoted his life to improving the living conditions of Zulus until his murder in 1983. Tabensky uses the example of Alcock and his wife Creina to illustrate his idea of ‘radical interconnectedness’, ‘of how their unique individuality is tied up with the lives of others’ [194]. The problem with this example is not the virtuousness of the Alcocks—which is apparent—but, among other issues, how radical interconnectedness applies in less dramatic conditions. For example, when one considers the lives of rich, comfortable Westerners (and I find myself here irresistibly drawn to consider US TV sitcoms such as Friends or Sex and the City) is it clear that Tabensky’s ideal has the resources to enable people to move beyond the ‘if it feels right for you, it must be right—and I’ll stand by you’ sort of attitude which remains a variety of individualism, albeit one where the individual has the benefit of company?

In sum, the problem with this book is not so much in the general line of argument, which might well be successfully developed, but rather in a lack of depth and detail. Tabensky himself acknowledges that he is only providing ‘the fundamental structure
of an ethical outlook’ [2]. I am not sure that, in the hardly unploughed field of modern, neo-Aristotelian ethics, this is quite enough.

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Plumwood, Val, *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason*, London: Routledge, 2002, pp. 304, £60 (cloth), £16.99 (paper).

In this, her most recent book, Val Plumwood sets aside some of the conventional terminology and associated puzzles that frequently arise in environmental ethics debates. To some extent she sidelines the classical environmental ethics project of distinguishing between anthropocentric and biocentric moral attitudes towards nature. Plumwood suggests that prudential maintenance of the non-human world overlaps and merges with selfless care for the non-human world, and does not dwell on how these moral motivations can or should be differentiated. In the feminist tradition, she is wary of this kind of dualistic logic—the practice whereby concepts are paired and narrowly defined in opposition to one another. Indeed, this is Plumwood’s critical focus in her assessment of both the causes of, and responses to, the ‘ecological crisis of reason’. Her analysis is both extensive and insightful; it moves beyond stifling meta-ethical debates about the sources of value in nature, and considers what characterizes ethical attitudes, and how such attitudes should direct all spheres of human activity, from political processes to scientific investigation. While at times she employs opaque language, and in some cases participates in the very dualisms that she attacks, I think Plumwood successfully demonstrates her claim that environmental philosophy can learn much from aspects of feminist and other anti-oppression political/philosophical approaches.

Plumwood initially attacks the conceptual separation and privileging of reason over nature. This is a point that unites many environmental philosophers. The idea that rationality or consciousness elevates humans above the rest of the natural world, such that we have the capacity to dictate natural order according to our own terms, is widely criticized as being delusory. Ecological scientists warn that nature is not merely formless material awaiting human manipulation; it consists, rather, of biological networks having particular structures that enable diverse forms of life. Plumwood uses more emotive (but not unreasonable) language in her portrayal of ecosystems—she describes them as accommodating multiple, interdependent sources of agency and teleological activity. Consistent with this emphasis on nature’s purpose, she later (in Chapter 8) asserts that we should understand human rationality not as a radically separate phenomenon, but as existing within a rich spectrum of differing types of agency or ‘mindfulness’. This depiction provides compelling reason to employ the language of relationships to refer to the interactions between humans and non-humans. It gives Plumwood the basis for elaborating an environmental ‘ethics of care’. Such a moral framework makes the overlap between prudential and ethical treatment of non-humans straightforward—both attitudes amount to establishing respectful, supportive relationships with those whom we interact with and depend upon.

In keeping with an ethics of care, Plumwood does not formalize respectful relationships with non-humans into a system of ‘rights’ that encompasses all of
nature. (I would argue that those who have attempted this project have failed.) She focuses instead (in Chapters 1 and 2) on how our political and scientific institutions are modelled according to a rationale that retards positive relationships amongst humans, and between humans and non-humans. To this end Plumwood draws on feminist criticism of the reason/emotion and public/private dualisms that pervade Western culture. In distinguishing between the private, domestic sphere of caring and emotional attachment, and the public sphere of self-interested rationality, Plumwood claims that modern society subordinates ethics, and allows our cultural practices and relationships to be dominated by self-interest. Her project is not to extend the disinterested rights-oriented approach, but rather to assert the need for an ethics of care as central to all our activities and interactions, whether within the private, public, or broader ecosystem sphere. According to this understanding of ethics, fair and reasonable economic transactions would necessarily involve sensitivity and active responsibility towards all stakeholders. Plumwood extends her criticism to modern scientific culture, which she claims reinforces the prevailing ‘ethics-free’ market economy. In presenting the generation of knowledge as rational and objective only insofar as it detaches itself from power agendas and end-use, she argues that science allows its work to lend authority to, and be subsumed by, self-interested market ideals.

While an ethics of care essentially concerns local, particular relationships, and resists definition in terms of an abstract formula, Plumwood shows that its recommendations are far-reaching when extended to the public sphere. As discussed, she critiques the market economy, as well as the institution of science. Plumwood considers ethical responsibility to be a community issue, by virtue of the fact that social conditions fundamentally impact upon the ability of individuals to engage with others in a positive manner. In Chapter 4, she broadly envisages communities in which power differentials (economic or otherwise) are minimal, such that all participants are able to participate in decision-making and cultural initiatives—she refers to such a political structure as a ‘deep democracy’. Within Plumwood’s deep democracy, human participants have the additional responsibility of representing the needs of non-humans with whom they interact. This kind of ethical community would strive to make diverse, collaborative relationships characteristic of all aspects of living.

While Plumwood’s caring democracy may begin to sound like an unreachable utopia, in Chapters 3 and 4, she argues that creating such a society is not simply an ethical issue but is also a matter of prudence. Assuming that the promotion of human flourishing is a shared and overriding goal, Plumwood is correct to point out that there is nothing rational about an ‘economic rationality’ that compromises long-term health and survival for short-term gains. She advocates alternative, more sensible concepts of ‘ecological rationality’, one possible definition being ‘the capacity to correct tendencies to damage or reduce life-support systems’ [68]. While this principle expresses prudence, Plumwood argues that it further supports her vision of a caring democracy. She provides a convincing account of why a community structure involving all affected participants in decision processes is necessary for monitoring and maintaining ecosystems that support human life. It certainly seems plausible that the ability of those with market power to redistribute harmful ecological effects to the silenced poor contributes to current denial that our well-being depends on the health of broader ecosystems. Plumwood experiments with the idea of a green
dictatorship to further illustrate her point that democracy is essential for ecosystem resilience and diversity.

In elaborating her ecologically sensitive democracy, Plumwood is aware of the problems associated with drawing a contrast between respect for non-humans versus treating non-humans as resources. In fact, Chapter 7 criticizes what can be labelled the use/respect dualism that is apparent in many environmental ethics theories. Plumwood argues that this distinction results in our ethical discourse problematizing, or even disregarding, the many life forms that we use in the interests of human survival and flourishing. I consider this to be an important point, so I was disappointed to find that Plumwood herself occasionally participates in this use/respect dualism. A notable example is her opinion regarding biotechnology; Plumwood does not engage in a critical analysis of the technology to determine its potential benefits and/or harms, or how it compares with other agricultural/medicinal practices. She asserts that the technology is wrong because it is a ‘tightening of control over nature’ [238], but this does not seem consistent with her argument that we may both use and respect other life forms. Perhaps Plumwood’s opinion is that although use and respect are not polar opposites, some forms of use are incompatible with respect. I think it detracts from the consistency of her ideas, however, that she neither makes this point clearly, nor demonstrates why it specifically applies to some technologies rather than others.

For the most part, Plumwood is non-specific in her portrayal of caring attitudes and relationships. This seems appropriate, since her ethics of care does not revolve around obedience to steadfast rules. Given this lack of finer detail, however, I would argue that Plumwood should be more cautious with her sweeping criticisms. Her remarks about biotechnology are one example. Another aspect of the work that I found unsatisfying was her poorly explained attacks on the uses of abstract, mathematical techniques in scientific method and decision-making. In her critique of dominant understandings of science and ethics, Plumwood (particularly in Chapter 7) seems to reject quantitative approaches wholesale, which is hardly a plausible position. A more constructive approach might be to give better context to these methods. For example, within a decision process that respects all affected community members, determining a suitable collective strategy can remain a complex task, and it is plausible to think that expected utility or other types of abstract calculations would be useful tools in such situations.

Although she embellishes her analysis with some unconvincing generalizations, Plumwood presents a largely consistent and engaging ethical account. She dismantles many of the dualisms that commonly trouble environmental ethicists—distinctions such as prudence versus ethics (to describe moral motivation), or use versus respect (to prescribe treatment of non-humans). Plumwood focuses rather on how acknowledging ourselves to be members of interdependent ecological communities exposes the overlaps between these moral characterizations. She advocates an ‘ethics of care’, which is not only appealing for its personal, emotion-based qualities, but also for its political relevance; with this interpretation of ethics, Plumwood provides an ‘ecologically rational’ integration of the domestic, public, and wider ecosystem spheres of human activity and moral sensibility.

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