

Notes on Books

Manuel Bremer, *Conceptual Atomist and Justificationist Semantics*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang Internationale Verlag der Wissenschaften 2008, pp. 141, ISBN 978-3-631-57876-6, SFR 36.

The author tries to reconcile two things, namely conceptual atomism (CA) and justificationist semantics (JS). This task is realized in the following sections: 1. Whither semantics?; 2. Justificationist semantics; 3. Conceptual atomism; 4. Model theory, internal semantics and semantic rules; 5. Limited decompositions and analytic dependencies; 6. Tracing and evaluating content; 7. Semantics, pragmatics, and epistemology; 8. Further relations to cognitive science; 9. Further relations to linguistics; 10. Further relations to philosophy; 11. Open questions; Appendix A: Usage and basic ontology; Appendix B: A solution of the rule-following regress; Appendix C: A defense of the *Church-Turing Thesis*. Particular sections are rather short and their size varies from 2 to 13 pages. Unfortunately, there is no index in the reviewed book.

The two basic concepts, that is, conceptual atomist and justificationist semantics are understood as follows. The former claims that there are some concepts which “cannot be decomposed into a set of conceptual parts or features” (p. 11) and the latter claims “that – at some level of description – the meaning of a declarative sentence is a rule which governs and justifies the usage of the sentence in making a statement in a given situation.” Unfortunately, Bremer does not provide any closer characterization of both principal categories of his considerations. For example, we do not know whether CA assumes that there are absolutely atomic concepts or that atoms are related to conceptual schemes or theories. For example, the concept of an atom is perhaps atomic in contemporary chemistry but not in contemporary physics. Although the author illustrates JS by several examples (verificationism of the Vienna Circle, Hintikka’s game-theoretic semantics, Tennant’s anti-realistic semantics or radical holism), this does not illuminate what is common to these various proposals, because the concept of “a rule which governs and justifies the usage” remains vague. My main objection to Bremer’s treatment of JS consists in the observation that no general logic is offered in his book. In fact, tradi-

tional verificationism was based on classical logic, Tennant builds his semantics on constructive logic, and Hintikka's logic is different still. Thus, even if we restrict JS to pure logic, it is not clear which logical system is sufficient or necessary in order to generate rules in question. Of course, the situation becomes much more complicated in the case of natural language, because we have fairly partial and informal rules governing and justifying the usages.

The noted lack of clarity in Bremer's treatment of his two basic categories leads to difficulties in understanding Bremer's general claims. He begins with the remark that CA is at odds with "other semantic approaches" (p. 11) and that "This holds foremost for those approaches which in one form or the other work with the ideas of definitions and constitutive truth conditions or constitutive semantic rules." (p. 11) According to Bremer, CA and JS can be made mutually coherent by developing an "epistemological approach to semantic questions" within JS. However, CA and JS operate on different levels, because the former concerns concepts, but the latter applies to sentences (statements, propositions). Now, if one seriously takes Frege's context principle, then any semantics of sentences is prior to semantics of concepts, independently of whether the former is justificationist or model-theoretic. Hence, many of Bremer's further conclusions seem to me dubious, for example, his access to internalism. In my opinion, the book presents rather a project for further investigations than a complete account, even if completeness is understood very liberally.

On the other hand, some parts of Bremer's book are very interesting. This evaluation concerns mostly formal matters. The author shows (pp. 79-90) the power of the concept of rejection and offers a very convincing criticism of Frege's view that rejection of A is equivalent to assertion of not- A . Perhaps one should remark that Frege considered logical assertion, but not in the pragmatic understanding. Also, it seems that Bremer is probably unaware that various systems of rejection logic were developed in Poland (Jan Łukasiewicz, Jerzy Śłupecki and his students, Ryszard Wójcicki). Appendix C provides a very elegant defense of the Church-Turing Thesis. Bremer argues that super-computation does not falsify this thesis, because it is not algorithmic. Both of these passages show that there is still a very considerable difference between hard logic and "soft" philosophical logic. One might argue that this difference will remain forever.

Chase B. Wrenn (ed.), *Naturalism, Reference, and Ontology. Essays in Honor of Roger F. Gibson*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang Internationale Verlag der Wissenschaften 2008, pp. 260 ISBN 978-1-4331-0229-5, SFR 73.

Roger F. Gibson is an American philosopher, professor at Washington University of St. Louis. He is famous as one of the leading experts in Quine's philosophy. Gibson published two books on Quine (*The Philosophy of W. V. Quine: An Expository Essay*, University Presses of Florida, Tampa 1982, *Enlightened Empiricism: An Examination of W. V. Quine's Theory of Knowledge*, University Presses of South Florida, Gainesville 1988). He also edited two collections about Quine and one volume of Quine's essays. Thus it's no surprise that the essays included in the reviewed volume mostly touch upon various points of Quine's philosophy. The book begins with Wrenn's introductory essay. Part I contains papers devoted to epistemology: R. Creath, "The Apparent A Priori and Four Things to do About It"; L. Bergström, "A Defense of Quinean Naturalism"; D. Henderson and T. Horgan, "Would You Really Rather be Lucky than Good?"; Ch. Wrenn, "Naturalism and Belief-centered Epistemology"; J. Toribo, "Intuitional Content, Nonconceptual Content and Perceptual Justification." Part II focuses on ontology, language and arts, and contains the following papers: J. R. Thompson, "Defending Quine's Naturalistic Ontology"; K. Shockley, "Charity, Humanity, Empathy: What Room for Value?"; R. B. Barrett, Jr., "Logic Beyond the Legacy"; A. Orenstein, "Quine versus Quine"; E. Lepore and F. J. Pelletier, "Linguistics and Philosophy"; J. S. Ullian, "Baseball and Arts"; P. Mandik and J. Weisberg, "Type Q-Materialism." The book ends with Gibson's selected bibliography, information on contributors and an index.

Independently of the division of the reviewed collection into two official parts, we can also introduce another classification. The papers by Creath, Barrett, Orenstein, and Lepore and Pelletier form the first group, namely of essays related to semantics, logic and linguistics. Creath tries to combine Quine's and Carnap's approach to the problem of a priori, although he favors the view of the latter. Papers by Barrett and Orenstein concern logic. Barrett's essay proposes to supplement logic with pragmatics. The author demonstrates his point by considering the problem of fallacies. He argues that purely formal logic cannot treat fallacies in a satisfactory way. This point is correct, but logic can only illuminate formal fallacies. In fact, the traditional distinction between formal and material correctness of inferences allows us to include pragmatic aspects of passing from premises and conclusions. Unfortunately, Barrett makes a very serious mistake in his analysis. He says that the pattern "if A , then B , and B , therefore A " is sometimes valid, but sometimes not. In fact, this pattern is simply invalid, because it admits true premises and a false conclusion. The distinction between both kinds of correctness sufficiently illuminates this point. Orenstein discusses Quine's two different views about restricted quantification as applied to traditional logic of categorical sentences. This is a very nice paper with interesting formal proposals on how to resolve

the question of existential import. Lepore and Pelletier investigate inferences from language to the world and insist that empirical matters are important in this respect.

Gibson himself not only elaborates Quine's philosophy, but also defends it against various objections. In particular, Gibson devotes his writings to defending naturalism (ontological as well as epistemological) and empiricism, two distinguished philosophical ingredients in Quine's thought. The same stance is taken by the rest of the contributors participating in the reviewed volume. They either defend Quine's empiricism, naturalism and materialism or apply these views to various problems of philosophy, theoretical as well as practical. Let me add one remark. Many critics of Quine's naturalized epistemology claim that naturalism is at odds with normativity. However, one argument defending Quine is usually overlooked. Hume observed that normative statements are non-derivable from non-normative ones. If so, critics say, epistemic norms, whatever they are, cannot be obtained from descriptions of facts. Now, in order to reply to this argument, it is enough to remark that norms are facts. It is quite sufficient to assume that norms exist without attempting to derive them from facts.

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