

relations. If the transtemporal relations are reduced to causal relations, says the author, then the ersatz presentist has the resources to employ any of a host of theories of causation—for example, Hume’s regularity theory, Lewis’s counterfactual theory, and Mellor’s probability-raising theory.

The author makes a strong case for an important position in the philosophy of time. Metaphysicians concerned with the nature of time should make room for this book on their shelves.

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*How Things Might Have Been: Individuals, Kinds, and Essential Properties*

By PENELOPE MACKIE

Clarendon Press, 2006. xii + 212 pp. £35.00

Mackie thinks that puzzles about *de re* modality force us to choose among four options: (1) abandon transworld identity; (2) accept non-trivial individual essences; (3) accept bare transworld identities ungrounded in any properties; (4) allow that transworld identity can be extrinsically determined (p. 39). She proposes to reject options (1), (2) and (4), leaving only (3) standing. Additionally, she maintains (Ch. 10) that Putnam’s and Kripke’s semantic arguments do not by themselves entail essentialism about natural kinds.

Chapter 3 argues, against (2), that origins cannot ground individual essences—“set[s] of properties, that [are] necessarily both necessary and sufficient for being” particular individuals (p. 19). According to the “recycling problem” (p. 57), one being’s propagule may comprise material that can be recycled to produce another being’s propagule. According to the “tolerance problem” (p. 59), if we tolerate any variation in a thing’s counterfactual properties (such as being composed of most but not all of its actual original matter, for example), then we must conclude that another thing might have originated from most of the actual thing’s original matter.

Chapter 4 shows that whether a given oak could have grown from a given acorn cannot be determined by the presence or absence of some similar oak nearby. Such extrinsic determination (4) grounds transworld identity in irrelevant features (pp. 72–75). Moreover, to avoid contradictions about transworld identity, the advocate of extrinsic determination must place restrictions on accessibility-relations across possible worlds, and this allows qualitatively identical worlds distinguishable only by positing bare identities and differences.

Adopting Lewis’s counterpart theory (1) might seem avoid the problems because the counterpart relation, unlike identity, need not be transitive. However, counterpart theory, Mackie shows in Chapter 5, is itself committed to bare identities and differences. I could have been either of two identical twins, but if so, what distinguishes a world in which one of them is my counterpart from a world in which the other is (pp. 84–90)?

In Chapter 6 Mackie insightfully argues that we are tempted to think that origins are essential because we think of *de re* possibilities as branching from a fixed past. But such branching possibilities seem to open up alternative pasts, as well, and, if *de re* possibilities can branch into the past and the future,

then we cannot retain any form of the “overlap requirement” (p. 108) on *de re* modality. We can, for example, consider how an individual’s future might have been different had its past also been different (p. 112), without supposing any overlap in the actual and counterfactual properties it possesses. I suspect that either confusion about rigid designation or a commitment to descriptivism about proper names is also at work, for part of Kripke’s story about rigid designators was that a name’s reference may be fixed even by a false description.

Chapters 7 and 8 criticize the sortal essentialisms of Brody and Wiggins respectively. Brody’s view relies on the overlap requirement rejected in Chapter 6, while Wiggins does not tell us how to individuate the principles of individuation that sortal concepts allegedly supply—principles that ostensibly make a thing essentially the kind of thing that it is.

Mackie’s alternative view (3) entails that origins are “tenacious” (pp. 116–117) but not essential and that individuals may well have “quasi-essential properties” (pp. 155–156). If bare differences and identities seem unpalatable, Mackie reminds us that there are differences (a) between how a thing could have been and how it might become (p. 156), (b) between how it could have been and how it would have been in particular circumstances (p. 158) and (c) between how it could have been and how it could have been with its causal powers unchanged (p. 159). We are usually interested in the second term of each contrast, and in such cases we rightly ignore bare identities and differences as irrelevant to evaluating counterfactual claims. But this, she observes in Chapter 9, is compatible with allowing that there are no real individual essences.

Mackie’s anti-essentialist arguments convince me, but do they entail bare identities and differences? I think that bizarre puzzle cases show only that our concepts are not prepared in advance to deal with every remote contingency. So nothing is entailed one way or another about whether I might have been a poached egg. In such uncharted territory we must decide what is to count as the same individual and what is not, and our decisions must turn on pragmatic criteria of a sort that metaphysicians cannot merely invent or anticipate. If the question becomes important, then real candidates will emerge for us to discuss (much as we might discuss why analytical metaphysics still treats ‘man’ as coextensive with ‘human being’, a type-identity that Mackie squints at in passing (pp. 118f.)). However, it might be said in response that Mackie’s “Extreme Haecceitism as Minimalist Essentialism” (p. 165) does not differ pragmatically from this view, however much it might differ doctrinally.

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## PHILOSOPHY OF MIND

*Cognition and the Brain: The Philosophy and Neuroscience Movement*

Edited by ANDREW BROOK and KATHLEEN AKINS

Cambridge University Press, 2005. x + 430 pp. £50.00

This volume is a collection of essays, almost all of them written by philosophers who are also trained in neuroscience, and many of which derive from a

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