Meinongian Logic: The Semantics of Existence and Nonexistence, by Dale Jacquette. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1996. Pp. xiii + 297. Cloth DM 198-.

Jacquette's book—the eleventh in the De Gruyter series Perspectives in Analytical Philosophy—is about the logic, semantics and metaphysics of Meinong's theory of objects. As Jacquette notes, the book does not attempt to provide a comprehensive historical treatment of Meinong's philosophy (p.2); in particular, it has nothing to say about Meinong's epistemology, theory of perception or theory of value (p.3). However, there is a clear sense in which the logic, semantics and metaphysics of object theory are the most fundamental aspects of Meinong's thought—and this justifies making them the focus of more careful preliminary investigation (p.3).

The book is in three parts. The first part—"Meinong's Theory of Objects"—provides a very brief outline of the elements of Meinong's object theory, followed by a discussion of some important topics in the development of that theory, viz: the treatment of apparent semantic paradoxes in Meinong's object theory; Meinong's theory of defective objects; intentional object theory treatments of ontological commitment; mind-independent Meinongian objects; and Meinong's doctrine of the modal moment. The second part—"Object Theory O"— provides a formalisation of an object theory logic and semantics, and includes treatment of definite descriptions, lambda abstraction, alethic modality, mathematics, metamathematics, and logical metatheory (including soundness, completeness and compactness—for propositional object theory, predicate object theory and modal object theory—with respect to appropriate classes of models). The third part—"Philosophical Problems and Applications"— provides a discussion of the application of the formal theory developed in the second part to a range of philosophical issues, viz: Twardowski's account of content and object;

Wittgenstein's discussion of private language and private mental objects; Meinongian ontological arguments for the existence of deities; Meinongian models of scientific laws; Meinongian accounts of fiction; and the paradox of analysis.

While the second part of the book—the development of the formal theory—has a clearly discernible unity of structure, the first and third parts are really just the stringing together of bits and pieces that Jacquette has published elsewhere. (Of the 350 or so articles mentioned in the Bibliography, 36 are by Jacquette. In the Preface, 16 different editors are thanked for permitting reprinting of portions of previously published or forthcoming essays.) One consequence of this fact is that Jacquette's book is not the *first* book to which those seeking an introduction to Meinong's theory of objects ought to turn—there are well-known books by Findlay, Parsons, Sylvan (under the name 'Routley'), Grossman, and Lambert which play this introductory role much better. Even so, in my view, there is now a need for an introductory work which surveys the various different approaches which can be taken in the development of object theory; I suspect that Jacquette would have been able to make a good fist of this task.

The formal theory which Jacquette develops is but one amongst many possible developments of object theory. In recent times, there have been two major distinct categories of formalisations of object theories: (1) those—following Castañeda, Rapaport and Zalta— which distinguish between two different copules or between two distinct modes of predication; and (2) those—following Parsons and Sylvan—which distinguish between two different kinds of properties (nuclear and extra-nuclear, or assumptible and non-assumptible, or characterising and non-characterising). Jacquette is a proponent of the second of these two lines of approach—and he uses the distinction between nuclear and extra-nuclear properties

at numerous points in the development of the formal theory, and in the application of the theory to philosophical problems. Moreover, he argues that there are problems and object theory paradoxes which can only be satisfactorily resolved by appeal to a distinction between two kinds of properties (pp.17ff.). Other noteworthy features of Jacquette's formal system include: the incorporation of Lukasiewicz's trivalent system of truth-values (pp.101ff.); the introduction of a non-standard version of Zermelo–Frankel set-theory (pp.105ff.); the drawing of a distinction between three different kinds of identity (such that objects which are both extensionally and referentially identical may fail to be intensionally identical—e.g. Cicero and Tully) (pp.118ff.); the development of a non-Russellian account of definite descriptions based on the referential identity relation (rather than on the extensional identity relation of Russell's theory) (pp.140ff.); the demonstration that Meinongian logic and mathematics with classical transfinite subtheory is so non-classically defined that it does not support the classical limiting metaproofs of incompleteness, undecidability, and unprovability of consistency for sufficiently rich systems (pp.164ff.).

Clearly, by classical standards, the formal theory is quite bizarre. Consider, for example, the distinction between three kinds of identity. Given that there is a sense in which Cicero and Tully are distinct, there is a sense in which there were a lot more people making speeches in the Senate than we might ordinarily have been disposed to think! I suspect that, in this sense, the number of speech-makers must be infinite—though the exact cardinality is not something at which I am prepared to guess. Perhaps there are ways of counting—other than by identity—which can resolve this difficulty; if not, then we do seem to have a counter-intuitive consequence of the theory here (it is a pre-theoretical datum that there is no natural sense in which there are infinitely many people making speeches in the Senate). Given this kind of

worry—and there seem to be many such worries to be found—the natural question to ask is: What kinds of reasons can be given for accepting the theory which Jacquette proposes?

Jacquette offers two arguments. First: "If there is anything of philosophical significance to be taken at face value in ordinary thought and language, it is the reference and attribution of properties to existent and nonexistent objects. ... A semantic theory adequate and requiring minimal departure from or reinterpretative violence to this pretheoretical data must be intensional rather than extensional, and permit the reference and predication of constitutive properties to existent and nonexistent intentional objects." (p.7) Second: "The inadequacies of extensionalist theories of ontological commitment and definite descriptions, hallmarks of the Russell–Quine axis in recent analytic philosophy, justify an alternative intentional Meinongian object theory." (p.2—see also pp.56–69, pp.140–147).

It isn't clear to me that a semantic theory adequate to, and requiring minimal departure from or reinterpretative violence to, pretheoretical data *must* permit reference to, and predication of constitutive properties to, nonexistent intentional objects. The question here is about the best overall theory of semantics and pragmatics. Jacquette's Meinongian claims that there is a decisive advantage in counting sentences like 'Santa Claus is fat' as straightforwardly true, rather than in appealing to pragmatics to explain how it is that the true "According to the Santa Claus story, Santa Claus is fat" comes to be expressed by the false (or gappy) "Santa Claus is fat". (The classical theorist has other options here, of course—e.g., it might be better to treat the utterance of 'Santa Claus is fat' as a *pretend* assertion. However, I shall ignore these other options in the interests of brevity.) But, because of the role of the distinction between nuclear and extra-nuclear properties, Jacquette's Meinongian is forced to say that "The necessarily existent God is necessarily existent" is false—because "the necessarily

existent God" refers to the non-existent God (or to nothing)—even though the sentence

"According to some theists, the necessarily existent God is necessarily existent" expresses a

relevant truth. The upshot seems to be that the classical theorist has no need of the distinction

between nuclear and extra-nuclear properties—a reduction of ideological commitment—but

is required to apply a common pragmatic principle of interpretation much more widely. It is

tempting to conclude that the issue will at best simply be a matter of spoils to the victor—i.e.

that there is certainly no decisive argument in favour of Meinongianism here.

It also is not clear to me that non-Meinongian accounts of ontological commitment and

definite descriptions are inadequate in the ways that Jacquette supposes. On the one hand, it

seems that Jacquette supposes that ontological commitment is some kind of *relation* which

holds between theories, etc. and items to which those theories are committed (pp.56–69, esp.

p.68 ".. the commitment relation .."). But the non-Meinongian can insist that the proper form

of expression of ontological commitments is something like: "According to theory T, there

are ...", where the embedded quantifier carries no commitment to the existence of what the

theory says there is—the effect of prophylactic operators like "according to theory T" being

precisely to provide protection against the incurring of unwanted commitments. Perhaps it

might be that these expressions must ultimately be given a relational, indeed Meinongian,

analysis—but this is far from obvious, and certainly not something which is established by

the kinds of arguments which Jacquette gives. On the other hand, it isn't clear that non-

Meinongian analyses of "The winged horse is mythological" must go wrong in the way that

Jacquette supposes (namely: (i) by declaring that an intuitively true proposition is false; and

(ii) by declaring that an intuitively contingent and a posteriori question is actually necessary

and a priori (pp.145–7)). For a non-Meinongian can insist that it is vitally important to

distinguish between the sentence "The winged horse is mythological" and the sentence "It is

only according to certain mythologies that there is a winged horse"—it is the latter which expresses the intuitively true proposition, and it does not obviously require commitment to Meinongian objects in order to be given a correct analysis. Again, it might be that a proper analysis of the genuinely true sentence will ultimately commit us to Meinongian objects—but this is far from obvious, and certainly not something which is established by the kinds of arguments that Jacquette gives.

Even though there are reasons to be sceptical about the strength of the arguments in favour of Meinongian object theory, it seems to me that such theories are worth exploring. Perhaps—though I must admit to thinking it unlikely—at the end of the day, it might be that some version of object theory yields the best over–all theory, rated in terms of simplicity, explanatory power, explanatory breadth, etc. Jacquette's book is a worthy contribution to the literature on object theory. It is mostly reasonably well–written and well–edited—though I admit to being annoyed by the frequent use of the ".. is different than ..." construction—and contains lots of interesting material. To those who have some interest in this area, and who are not already familiar with Jacquette's published corpus, I recommend more than a casual perusal of this book.

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