Review of Cynthia Macdonald, *Varieties of Things: Foundations of Contemporary Metaphysics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005. Pp. x + 278).

Cynthia Macdonald's book is a metaphysics textbook best used for beginning graduate students and especially talented undergraduates. I think it was intended for advanced undergraduates, as it assumes that the reader has little if any introduction to either Aristotle or Kant for instance. However, I thought the difficulty of the book, coupled with its limited focus, made it more appropriate for graduate students. Indeed, the thoroughness of the investigation, and the amount of original argumentation, makes it the kind of book that even experts in metaphysics can read with real profit concerning their own research topics; it's not just for students.

The book has three general topics: the nature, function, and tools of metaphysics (Part I); particulars (Part II); and universals (Part III). The first topic occupies about 80 pages, the second uses about 140 pages, and the last takes up about 40 pages. The first part attempts to tell us what metaphysics is and how to profitably go about engaging in it; the second and third parts take up the methodological recommendations of Part I with respect to the topics of particulars and universals. She covers familiar ground as well as articulating and defending her own theories on each of the three topics. A contemporary philosopher who wants to "do" some metaphysics will not be wasting her time reading the more expository parts.

Clearly, her book has a pretty limited scope for a textbook on metaphysics. As Macdonald notes herself, "a book on metaphysics can cover any number of topics, from free will and determinism, to causality, arguments for the existence of God, the problem of evil, why there is something rather than nothing, personal identity, the nature of space and time, propositions, and possible worlds and possibilia, to name just a few" (vii). Macdonald's limited focus is a result of her conviction that one can best investigate those other metaphysical topics only if one is thoroughly familiar with the topics in her book. Her book is best thought of as a book on ontology, and not metaphysics in general; it's on the *foundations* of metaphysics, as its subtitle indicates. Its guiding question is, "what are the most fundamental kinds of things that exist?" (vii), although it also investigates some metametaphysics in Part I.

The first two chapters discuss the first topic: the nature, function, and tools of metaphysics. Here we get, in order, a brief outline of Aristotle's conception of metaphysics, an equally brief outline of Kant's, and then a much longer description of Macdonald's, which feeds off a presentation of Susan Haack's ideas on the aims and claims of metaphysics. That's chapter 1. Chapter 2 is devoted to what she holds to be the two primary tools of metaphysics: criteria of ontological commitment, and principles and criteria of identity. The figures examined are Strawson and Quine; she favors Quine to Strawson and argues to that effect. As you would guess, and Macdonald anticipates, this is difficult material for anyone who hasn't already done some advanced first-order metaphysics. She recommends that one go through it once before wading into the subsequent chapters (since those chapters take up the methodological advice of chapter 2) and then one will profit from a return to chapter 2.

Part II, on particulars, uses Quine's criterion of ontological commitment and principles and criteria of identity as tools for investigating material substances, persons, and events (three chapters). Regarding material substances, Macdonald treats and finds wanting the bundle theory and the bare substratum theory. She then formulates and defends her own, essentialist, theory. She favors a kind of anti-reductionist Aristotelian view of substances. She holds that there are substantial properties, which are essential, and mere characterizing properties, which do not characterize the nature of the thing. Regarding persons, she favors an Aristotelian view that combines psychological and material aspects of continuity. Persons are an ontological kind distinct from material substances. Regarding events: they exist, many have events as parts, they are yet another non-reducible kind of thing (in addition to persons and substances), and we would do best to think of them as Lawrence Lombard does, with some modifications to Jaegwon Kim's view of events.

In Part III she criticizes various nominalist views and comes down in favor of universals. Somewhat surprisingly, she endorses a Platonic view of universals—surprising since she is often Aristotelian on many other ontological matters. She doesn't like the Aristotelian view that says universals are spatiotemporal because, in part, it violates principles regarding the existence of scattered objects.

Overall, the book is first-rate and anyone can learn a great deal in studying it. I'll make just one criticism, one that concerns the whole project.

I think Macdonald is too quick to endorse commonsensical views in ontology, especially regarding material substances. More to the point, in my view she gives the reader the mistaken impression that we can sit with commonsensical ontology, with regard to both material substances and persons, because there is little pressure to significantly revise it. The literature in the philosophy of time (e.g., endurantism and perdurantism) and physics (special relativity) and materiality in general (composition, parthood, and vagueness) suggest otherwise. In addition, virtually every well-developed ontological view endorsed today that deals with *all* the ontological puzzle cases (e.g., statue-clay, tibbles the cat, Parfit's fusion and fission cases, vagueness about identity over time) ends up rejecting some prominent feature of commonsensical ontology (it is *much* easier to stick with common sense if one doesn't adopt a comprehensive approach). She is of course aware of this literature and she is willing to revise commonsensical ontology if the arguments go that way; Macdonald is a first-rate metaphysician. However, it would have been very profitable for the reader to see a detailed evaluation on her part of, say, the arguments for the four-dimensionalist view endorsed by Quine and David Lewis, and most thoroughly developed by Ted Sider (concerning these issues she refers the reader to Michael Loux's *Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction*, Routledge 2002). It is easy to criticize books, especially textbooks, with book review statements that begin, 'The author's book would have been much improved if it included a discussion of'. But in this case I think that by omission Macdonald misleads the reader as to the current state of argument in contemporary ontology.

I think this defect regarding the position of commonsensical ontology makes her discussion of the nature and tools of metaphysics, in Part I, a bit misleading as well, although this defect was

almost unavoidable. Recently there has been a great deal of sophisticated discussion, by ontologists, on the issue of whether ontological disputes in philosophy are "substantive"; thus, this issue is directly relevant to the methodology and nature of metaphysics. This literature is inspired, in part, by competing theories that appear radically different from one another, and, usually, from common sense. (For the most recent discussion see Chalmers, Manley, and Wasserman, eds. *Metametaphysics*, Oxford 2007.) Because she doesn't pay much attention to those theories and their supporting arguments, Macdonald's book contains no reflection of that debate. However, this might be less a criticism of Macdonald than a comment of how fast "meta" issues in metaphysics are progressing.

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