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### Book Reviews

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## BOOK REVIEWS

Ryckman, Thomas, *The Reign of Relativity: Philosophy in Physics 1915–1925*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, pp. xi + 317, US\$65.

Notoriously General Relativity got off at a snail's pace as practical, experimental physics. Its observational base was sparse, its predictions striking but few, its mathematics unwieldy to a degree, and its conceptual novelty pretty much equally bewildering and exciting. Einstein opened with some very bold claims for its metaphysical impact: that motion was truly relative at last and that space had lost the last vestiges of its reality with the advent of general covariance.

Kantians of one or another stamp took up these themes, seeing in the theory either a vindication of transcendental idealism or good reason to adopt a quite different stance towards its metaphysical foundations. Ryckman looks at the work of Cassirer, Weyl, Eddington, Meyerson, and the renegades Schlick and (in the end) Reichenbach. The book is both a history of the theory's first decade and an unobtrusive but perceptible apologetic for some form of transcendental idealism. There is a sort of thorough bass pervading the book and harmonizing with these themes—hostility to realism, although Ryckman does not argue a case directly.

These are interesting themes and Ryckman makes a deep and absorbing book out of them. The writing is dense and learned both in its philosophy and its grasp of the theory and its maths. There is no thicket of formulas in these pages, but the reader who is not already rather a sophisticate will find much that is impenetrable. It is a book for the specialist and none the worse for that. Ryckman's style is not always easy, but I found myself rereading and rethinking rather a lot and well repaid for it. Let no one take this for an easy book but it is a rewarding one.

The lion's share of attention is given to Hermann Weyl and rightly so. Einstein merely assumed that rods and clocks (whatever they are exactly) give an acceptable basis for the metric of spacetime both as to its foundation and as to our epistemic access to it. It was not an assumption that contented Einstein, but it got the theory off the ground. Weyl's infinitesimal geometry aimed at a deeper foundation for the metric without calling on any objects alien to the foundations of the theory. Ryckman gives an intelligible account of the main course of Weyl's thinking which has been obscured by some unlucky technical jargon and, for Anglophone readers, by a very bad translation. Some metaphysical jargon seeps in through Weyl's transcendental-phenomenological idealism (the last phrase being among the more digestible mouthfuls) that Weyl owed to Husserl, his metaphysical mentor. Weyl was a devoted acolyte. He thought that Husserl and Einstein were made for each other.

Ryckman's discussion covers a sort of generalized idealism, about what *constitutes* the object of empirical investigation as intelligible, perceptual, and objective.

Some variations on Kant ride on the back of this theme. For the book's purposes 'the core constituent . . . concerns the "transcendental constitution of objectivity" . . . affirming that "[a] nature is not thinkable apart from the coexistent subjects capable of experiencing that nature"' [6]—the final quote is an unpublished remark of Husserl's.

Unless, as I assume, Husserl didn't mean merely that there have to be thinkers to think about nature, this strikes me as an enormous claim. *Coexistent* subjects—really? Here's another version: 'The existence of a Nature *cannot* be the condition of the existence of consciousness, since Nature turns out to be a correlate of consciousness: Nature is only as being constituted in regular concatenations of consciousness' [124, quoting Husserl again, his italics]. There's also Eddington's notorious version, at the very end of *Space, Time and Gravitation*, that science's long search discovers merely its own footprint. All of this, familiar theme of idealism though it be, would be profoundly disappointing if true. Surely we hope to talk about the world, not invariably of ourselves. More of this anon.

Ryckman's interest in Weyl is at least as much in his idealism as in his infinitesimal geometry. Weyl's wife, a student of Husserl, converted Weyl to transcendental phenomenological idealism. It was to be the conversion of an enthusiast. Weyl wrote to Husserl in some detail about his examination of general relativity and his work is laced with comments on the metaphysical advantages in Husserl's philosophy. Ryckman offers us a brief, avowedly modest, account of Husserl that will be useful to many of his Anglophone readers with an analytical or realist background. But many may find, as I did, that the story of Weyl's mathematical ideas, the creation of his infinitesimal geometry for spacetime, is more absorbing.

Weyl proposed conformal structure and gauge invariance as the most modest and suitable structure additional to the bare differential manifold from which general relativity is obliged to begin. Leaping ahead, this poses the problem how to ensure that affine and metric geodesics will coincide, a fundamental requirement for any sort of physical spacetime. He saw that this could be solved by the addition of a pseudovector field. Differentiate that in an obvious way and you find the form of the Maxwell tensor. Amazing, brilliant stuff! It was the first and simplest example of gauge theory.

Einstein and Pauli objected to this on observational grounds. Weyl had an exciting reply that got swallowed up by the discovery that quantum theory will do the relevant job more directly. It remains fascinating that Weyl clung to this—in theory, as it were—believing that it would have yielded a satisfactory invariance without the need for a quantum solution.

Ryckman's next most interesting figure (interesting to him and perhaps to his readers) is Eddington. I am not a student of Eddington, for the same reason, I suppose, that most modern readers aren't. He seems extravagant, paradoxical, his wonderful gift for aphorism runs away with him. Enthusiasm for his mathematical ideas was widespread in high places when he first published them, as this book makes clear. He followed Weyl's lead to no small extent, not only mathematically but also in respect of his injecting subjectivity always into foundational ideas. I didn't find myself liking the claim that science discovers only its own footprint any better than I did before. I never get past Eddington's insistence that relativity is all about the viewpoints of observers. But special relativity is about descriptions of the world *with respect to inertial frames*. Unlike observers' viewpoints, frame descriptions

allow *complete* accounts of the world, they imply nothing about subjects, are not given from *points* of view although, one might say, they are geometrically skewed. So relativity does not really aim to describe ‘from the point of view of no one in particular’ although this seems to be somewhere close to the heart of Eddington’s story of it all. Relativity has nothing to do with the subjectivity of observers.

Stones are thrown, from time to time in these pages, at realism. It is not clear what Ryckman thinks it is. No one is a realist about everything; everyone is a realist about something (Husserl a realist about subjects, quite emphatically). If you don’t reparse what you say about something, so as to make it really about something else, then you are a realist about it. Realism is not an epistemology. A realist has every reason for caution, for nursing a healthy scepticism toward what he says about the something. You need not think your reasons for realism remotely approach a priority. Indeed one main worry about idealism is that we are frighteningly apt to delusion in our statements about our own subjectivities. Confabulation about our experience and its structures is as common as can be.

But the book is a history, not a polemic against empiricism or whatever else happens to form its occasional target. These brief grumbles about idealism must not be allowed to mask the book’s main virtues. Thorough, insightful, learned, acute, it has a lot going for it.

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Darwall, Stephen, *The Second-Person Standpoint: Morality, Respect, and Accountability*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006, pp. xii + 348, US\$49.95 (cloth).

In this ambitious and intricately-argued book, Darwall focuses on an aspect of our everyday moral practice, namely that we make claims and demands on one another. You might, for example, demand to someone stepping on your foot that he get off of it. In making this demand, you purport to give him a ‘second-personal reason’ for doing so, namely a normative reason that is ‘grounded in (*de jure*) authority relations’ [4] that you take to hold between you and him. Let us assume that, as he realizes, his getting off your foot would relieve pain and even result in a net decline of suffering in the world. He might as a result have a reason to do so. But in making your demand and, in Darwall’s idiom, thereby addressing a second-personal reason to him [4, n.], you would not be appealing to that (agent-neutral) sort of reason for him to act. You would instead be appealing to your authority to demand that he do so.

From the seemingly modest starting point of this aspect of our moral practice, Darwall works toward some dramatic conclusions. The making of a claim or demand on another is subject to ‘normative felicity conditions’. When we look carefully, and our vision has been enhanced by ‘points’ made by Fichte, Pufendorf, and Strawson among others, we see that no such claim or demand can be valid unless we presuppose a certain moral view, namely what Darwall calls ‘morality as equal accountability’. According to it, ‘moral norms regulate a community of equal, mutually accountable, free and rational agents as such’; these norms are “‘laws” for

a “kingdom of ends,” which structure and define the equal dignity of persons as beings who may not be treated in some ways and must be treated in others and who have equal standing to demand this second-personally of one another’ [101]. If we take ourselves to make any valid second-personal claims or demands on one another, then we are, rationally speaking, committed to a Kantian view of morality. This is Darwall’s first main conclusion. Accepting it is consistent with embracing the possibility that we need never take ourselves to make ‘valid’ second-personal claims or the possibility that whenever we believe ourselves to have done so we are misguided. His second main conclusion, which he defends far more briefly and schematically than the first, is that we have good reasons for rejecting these possibilities. He tries to ‘vindicate the authority of moral obligation’ [x].

This latter project is necessary, argues Darwall, in light of Kant and contemporary Kantians’ failure to demonstrate the validity of the Categorical Imperative. Darwall claims that Kant’s attempt to do so in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Section III, as well as Christine Korsgaard’s efforts to establish the Formula of Humanity with materials gleaned from *Groundwork* II, are doomed because they ‘aim to derive the moral law from presuppositions of a (first-person) deliberative standpoint alone’ [214]. It is only once we recognize the fundamentally second-personal nature of moral obligation that we are able to vindicate it.

It is not part of Darwall’s project to specify the particular normative implications of morality as equal accountability [300]. He does not try to pinpoint the ways persons must or must not be treated, according to this conception. But he does claim that his vision of morality is well-suited to serve as a foundation for contractualism, for example, for T. M. Scanlon’s account of what we owe to each other.

In his effort to establish the book’s main conclusions, Darwall appeals to a remarkable range of contemporary and historical work. He seems to be equally at home with Pufendorf or Fichte as he is with Gibbard or Rawls. His arguments are complex, and the dialectic is sometimes hard to navigate. (Referring to a conclusion he has just reached, Darwall writes: ‘This is Pufendorf’s Point from the addresser’s perspective projected through Fichte’s Analysis into the second-person framework in general’ [261].) So I am not sure I appreciate the full force of Darwall’s defence of his conclusions.

Part of the difficulty for me lies in discerning where historical interpretation (or reconstruction) ends and philosophical argument begins. For example, one of the claims Darwall affirms along the way to his first main conclusion is the following: if you take yourself to make any valid second-personal demand of another, you must hold that the other is capable of complying with the demand solely on the basis of its (in her view) being authoritative [76, 248]. Darwall invokes this claim in his attempt to show that addressing second-personal reasons always presupposes the dignity of persons [269–76], a key element in morality as equal accountability.

The truth of this claim is far from obvious. If you demand that someone get off your foot, you might (rationally speaking) presuppose that she can do so. But why would you presuppose that she has the ability to do so on the basis of your demand alone, instead, say, on the basis of it as well as her desires that you not be in pain and that she avoid an unpleasant altercation, or even on the basis of such desires alone? That in making your demand you are appealing to your authority does not obviously entail that in making it you must assume that your addressee can act solely on that

authority. Darwall suggests that the Cambridge Platonist Cudworth affirms the claim [77–78], and near the end of a ‘second-personal interpretation’ of Kant’s ‘fact of reason’ he contends that Kant is committed to it as well [241]. But I am left unsure why we, who do not necessarily share their elaborate philosophical frameworks, should join them.

A second important claim Darwall makes along the way to the conclusion that our believing that we make any valid second-personal demands commits us to a Kantian vision of morality is that act-consequentialist justifications of moral obligation are bound to fail. If I understand his argument for this claim, then it also seems questionable. The argument seems to unfold as follows. We cannot justify the notion that it would be wrong for an agent to do something unless we justify what is built into the very idea that it would be wrong. The idea that an agent is morally accountable for doing something is built into the idea that his doing it is wrong [92–4, 99]. But, as Strawson’s work on reactive attitudes has shown us, moral accountability necessarily involves second-personal demands, for example, ‘You owe me an apology’ [70–4]. So we cannot justify the notion that it would be wrong for an agent to do something unless we justify the (legitimate) second-personal claims against the person that necessarily go along with his action’s being wrong. But now suppose we hold the act-consequentialist view that the wrongness of an agent’s action is just a function of its failing to promote good states of affairs. This proposed justification for the wrongness of the agent’s action would fail to justify the (legitimate) second-personal claims someone (perhaps even the agent himself) would make against him. It offers a reason of the wrong kind for such claims [91, 103]. For example, an agent owes you an apology for stomping on your foot not on the grounds that doing so failed to maximize the good, but rather on (something like) the grounds that his doing so amounted to a failure to respect you. So, ends the argument, the act-consequentialist view cannot justify the notion that it would be wrong for an agent to do something.

To mention one possible criticism of this argument, it is unclear why we need to endorse the second premise, namely the view that moral accountability or responsibility is conceptually tied to moral wrongness. Darwall suggests that, upon reflection, we do not hold people responsible unless ‘they had it within them to act as they should, not just in the sense that . . . they weren’t physically prevented, but that there was a process of reasoning they could have engaged in by which they could have . . . determined themselves to act as they should’ [241]. Suppose we accept this condition. It does not seem to be self-contradictory or conceptually incoherent for us to claim that someone who fails to fulfill it has nevertheless acted wrongly. A 16th-century Aztec might not have had a deliberative route available to him that would have led to his treating captive enemy soldiers decently. But it does not seem to be conceptually confused to say that his torturing them was wrong.

In any case, Darwall’s book is interesting, sophisticated, and provocative. He has advanced the debate on the foundations of ethics by underscoring the importance of second-personal reasons. Philosophers will engage with the ideas he foregrounds for many years to come.

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Feldman, Fred, *Pleasure and the Good Life: Concerning the Nature, Varieties and Plausibility of Hedonism*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004, pp. xi + 221, £25 (cloth).

This book is a stimulating addition to the extant literature on the good life and should be read by both fans and foes of hedonism. However, its value is to be found in the questions it asks (and inadvertently raises) just as much as in the answers it struggles to provide. Feldman's main aim for this book is to defend hedonism as a plausible theory of the good life. His secondary aim is to demonstrate the 'plasticity' [4] of hedonism. In the process of pursuing these aims, Feldman introduces several remarkable variants of hedonism and shows how, between them, they can counter many traditional anti-hedonistic objections. The success of this defence of hedonism hinges on hedonism being flexible *enough* to allow Feldman's novel theories of the good life to qualify as valid forms of hedonism. This brief review summarizes the chapters, presents and refutes Feldman's two most important versions of hedonism, reveals an important methodological oversight, and suggests where the juiciest fruit currently lie for views about pleasure and the good life.

The book begins by identifying several meanings of the question, what is the good life?, and convincingly explains why 'the life that is good in itself for the one who lives it' [12] is the most appropriate answer. In Chapter 2, Feldman points out the problems with some popular definitions of hedonism and outlines 'Default Hedonism' [27], a precise characterization of the folk notion of hedonism, as the view that the life full of sensory pleasures and devoid of sensory pains is the good life. Chapter 3 details some prominent objections to hedonism and notes that most of them were formulated to discredit something like Default Hedonism. In Chapter 4, Feldman introduces 'Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism' [66] and demonstrates how it can avoid objections that Default Hedonism cannot. Chapters 5, 6, and 9 show how more objections can be dealt with by tweaking Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism. In Chapter 7, Feldman attempts to exhibit the flexibility of hedonism by converting G. E. Moore's 'allegedly' [142] non-hedonistic view of the good life into a form of Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism. Chapter 8 is dedicated to convincing readers that the novel forms of hedonism discussed in this book are indeed valid versions of hedonism. Chapter 10 reminds the reader of the main themes, sums up Feldman's position, and briefly mentions some 'puzzles' [205] that could have been addressed but were not. This book also contains several appendices that are somewhat laboriously sprinkled throughout the chapters and range from the very important (Appendix B) to the interesting (Appendix C) to the fastidious (Appendices A and D).

Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism is Feldman's best attempt at a plausible new version of hedonism. The view entails that the value of a life (in itself for the one that lives it) is wholly determined by the intrinsic value of episodes of intrinsic attitudinal pleasure and pain experienced within that life. According to Feldman, attitudinal pleasures are mental states just like sensory pleasures. However, sensory pleasures are the pleasant feelings induced by certain excitations of the senses, whereas attitudinal pleasures are experienced when one is pleased about a certain state of affairs. To clarify the distinction, it might feel pleasurable to be massaged (sensory pleasure), I might be pleased that I am feeling the pleasant sensations involved in being massaged (attitudinal pleasure about a state of affairs involving sensory

pleasure), or I might be pleased that I live in a world with many opportunities (attitudinal pleasure about a state of affairs that does not involve sensory pleasure). Attitudinal pleasures are described as intrinsic if they are pleasurable for their own sake (and not because they instrumentally lead to any other pleasures).

Perhaps spurred by an aversion to the profligate images sometimes attributed to sensory hedonism, Feldman insists that only attitudinal pleasures are intrinsically valuable, and so only they contribute to a life being good in itself for the one who lives it. Importantly, Feldman also claims that, while sensory and attitudinal pleasures are closely interwoven, they can and do unravel to distinct phenomena under closer inspection. He provides the following example. Imagine that a motorcyclist has survived a terrible accident but is severely injured. The doctors have given him so much anaesthetic that he is completely numb and cannot feel any sensory pleasure. Feldman suggests that the motorcyclist might be very pleased to be alive, and from this, concludes that he is experiencing attitudinal pleasure while feeling no sensory pleasure whatsoever. Despite its compelling façade, this thought experiment does more to illuminate a major problem with Feldman's view than to support it. It is quite unclear what it would be like to be pleased about something without any of the pleasant sensations that normally go with it. Indeed, to *think* that one is pleased about some state of affairs without *feeling* pleased about it seems to indicate that one is merely having neutral thoughts about that state of affairs. Even if it were possible to be pleased about something without any pleasure, one's attitude would only contain a nominal pleasure that would have no reason in itself to be desirable or to be a valid form of hedonism. Thus, Feldman's attempt to totally separate sensory and attitudinal pleasure makes his account of Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism either dubious or unhelpful for defending hedonism.

Using Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism as a base, Feldman attempts to invent many new versions of hedonism to show how plastic the theory is and that this flexibility allows it to overcome the classic anti-hedonistic objections. Although he stops just short of saying as much, it is clear that Feldman's favourite twist on Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism is 'Desert-Adjusted Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism' [120]. Similarly to Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism, Desert-Adjusted Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism entails that the value of a life is wholly determined by the intrinsic value of episodes of intrinsic attitudinal pleasure and pain experienced within that life. However, Desert-Adjusted Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism dictates that the episodes of intrinsic attitudinal pleasure and pain have their intrinsic value adjusted according to the degree that the relevant state of affairs is worthy of attitudinal pleasure or pain.

Feldman's main task for Desert-Adjusted Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism is to reply to the objection that hedonism could make a life filled with bestiality and mud-wallowing a very good life. Indeed, if Porky (as Feldman dubs this interesting character) were to be often pleased and seldom pained about the vast amounts of sensory pleasure that he receives from his lifestyle, then both Default and Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism would classify his as a good life. However, by making engaging in bestiality an unworthy state of affairs, Desert-Adjusted Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism deems the intrinsic attitudinal pleasure experienced during bestiality as of very low intrinsic value to Porky's life. The upshot of Desert-Adjusted Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism is that it satisfies our intuition that we lovers of wisdom are leading a far better life than lovers of swinishness. Unfortunately, when

put in the wrong hands (Porky's for example), we might find that Desert-Adjusted Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism deems devotion to pleasures of the mind not nearly as worthy pleasures of the porcine flesh. Not only is Desert-Adjusted Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism desperately question-begging (how do we know which states of affairs are worthy?), it is clearly not a form of hedonism. Feldman insists that because Desert-Adjusted Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism uses attitudinal pleasure (pleasure about a state of affairs) certain qualities of that state of affairs are also qualities of the episode of intrinsic pleasure caused by that state of affairs. This unobvious attempt to smuggle desert into attitudinal pleasure disqualifies Desert-Adjusted Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism as a form of hedonism, even when gauged by Feldman's own criteria. Valid forms of hedonism are monist; the only good they consider is pleasure. Desert-Adjusted Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism is pluralist; it considers more than one good (pleasure and the pleasure-worthiness of states of affairs). To tell Porky that even the theory that only values pleasure as the good can be used to show the worthlessness of his very pleasurable life seems utterly implausible. Since Feldman's account of Desert-Adjusted Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism is incomplete and patently not a form of hedonism, it cannot assist in hedonism's defence.

Not only are some of Feldman's new formulations of hedonism clearly not helpful in redeeming it as a plausible view of the good life, his general approach to defending hedonism is also not as useful as it could be. Feldman uses too much of this short book to demonstrate the plasticity of hedonism to the detriment of his main aim—defending hedonism. In answer to each anti-hedonistic objection Feldman offers a new twist on Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism, even when Default or Intrinsic Attitudinal Hedonism might have easily replied to that objection. By producing ever more radical theories, Feldman fails to properly respond to some of the objections because his later replies fail to use forms of hedonism in its own defence. Furthermore, even if Feldman's theories prove to be within the boundaries of hedonism, he will have replied to the objections but he will not have defended hedonism. In order to defend hedonism as a plausible view of the good life, Feldman needs to show that one or more versions of hedonism could reply to *all* of the objections.

Although this book introduced some novel conceptions of hedonism and some other interesting theories of the good life, it could have benefited from a more in-depth analysis of the relationship between sensory and attitudinal pleasure. This analysis could have been informed by the cognitive sciences and used to produce a much more defensible version of hedonism. Indeed, despite not really achieving its goal of defending hedonism, this book may have set the stage for further work on a form of hedonism that can answer all of the classic objections. Perhaps some well-informed and highly sophisticated hybrid of sensory and attitudinal pleasure will soon return hedonism to the forefront in the philosophical quest for the good life.

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