

**D.M. Armstrong, C.B. Martin and
U.T. Place**

Dispositions: A Debate. Ed. Tim Crane.
New York: Routledge 1996. Pp. viii + 197.
Cdn\$90.95/US\$65.00. ISBN 0-415-14432-9.

Dispositional properties are those properties 'whose instantiation entails that the thing which has the property would change, or bring about some change, under certain conditions' (1). That an object has a certain dispositional property entails certain counterfactuals. For example, that a substance has solubility entails that it would dissolve if put in water.

Categorical properties, on the other hand, are intrinsic properties instantiated in the object — properties such as molecular structure. That, at least, is one traditional way the distinction has been made.

The three authors advocate different positions on the relationship between categorical and dispositional properties. Armstrong believes that dispositional properties of an object reduce to its categorical properties. While Place agrees with Armstrong that the ultimate truthmaker both for counterfactual claims and ascriptions of dispositions is the categorical properties of the object, Place does not believe that dispositions actually reduce to the categorical. The fragility of a glass, for Place, depends 'in a causal sense' (29) on the glass' microstructure; the categorical properties of an object cause it to have certain dispositional properties. Place holds with Hume that cause and effect cannot be numerically identical. So the dispositional cannot reduce to the categorical. Martin holds a third view. No property, he claims, can be sensibly described as purely categorical or purely dispositional. Every property is both dispositional and categorical. It makes no sense to speak of reducing the purely dispositional to the purely qualitative, much as it makes no sense to talk of the world as 'really' only being constituted by the purely categorical. In this, Martin seems to somewhat agree with Place. But, since Place reserves a place in the world for purely dispositional (and categorical) properties, Martin parts with him as well.

The book is set up as two separate debates — one between Armstrong and Place, the other including Martin. The authors succeed in each of their capacities — critical (of the others' positions) and defensive (of their own). However, there are a few recurring problems.

Armstrong: How are categorical properties the truthmakers for causal counterfactuals? The first step is to view properties as universals. The second is to invoke laws of nature. Laws of nature, for Armstrong, are relations between universals and not mere regularities. That is, the laws must 'entail corresponding regularities without reducing to such regularities' (17). That a categorical property (say, a certain microphysical structure) is instantiated (as in a glass), given the existing laws of nature entails that a second universal will be instantiated (the glass will shatter).

A large chunk of the book is given over to Armstrong's theory of universals. One problem, however, seems most pressing. Armstrong disavows Plato-

nism. There is no Realm of Universals, and no universals would exist if not instantiated in particulars. Each universal fully exists in every particular in which it is instantiated. Here is Martin's objection to Armstrong's position. 'In theology, the Trinity, Three in One, is allowed to be a mystery, impenetrable to the finite mind. Armstrong's view of a universal as existing only in its instantiations takes a kind of "theological" twist. A specific universal exists as numerically identical and "fully" in "each" of the non-identical spatially and temporally distinct instantiations. ... For all the world this appears to be a "divided object" ' (179-80). Armstrong is well aware of the problem, but he never quite kills it. Martin seems to have the last word (at least in this book).

Place: Place's position is that the categorical properties of an object cause its dispositional properties. On that basis he determines that dispositional properties cannot reduce to categorical properties. He makes this argument throughout the book (on pp. 29-30, 108, 115, and 153, among others). It is essential to his position (it is his argument), but neither Armstrong nor Martin seem to question it explicitly. Even granting the Humean assumption that the cause must be distinct from its effect, why suppose that an object's categorical properties cause its dispositional properties? After all, another Humean assumption is that a cause must precede its effect. There is no mention by Place of the instantiation of categorical properties preceding the instantiation of dispositional properties. It seems like an odd sort of claim to make. Place might or might not object to the second Humean assumption. This would involve a lengthy discussion of what Martin calls 'old conundrums. If the cause is *prior* to and not contemporaneous with the effect then it is "too early" ... If the cause is at any stage *contemporaneous* with the effect then ... the cause is "too late" because at that stage the effect is already happening' (136).

Martin: Despite some convoluted writing, Martin's contributions seem generally the most sophisticated and thought-provoking of the three authors. However, there are problems with any double-aspect theory like the one he presents. Martin is no conceptualist (one who sees universals and kinds as mind-generated instead of really existing entities — see pp. 140-6 for his discussion of conceptualism and a criticism of Place; see pp. 157-60 for Place's replies), so he must be making a claim about the world when he says that every property has both a categorical and a dispositional aspect. Now, what is an aspect, except perhaps a second order property (a property of a property)? He presumably would not say that every first order property has both a categorical and a dispositional aspect, but second order properties are purely one or purely the other. He is not allowed to say merely that we view properties categorically or dispositionally — that they are not really one or the other. He is, as mentioned, a staunch anti-conceptualist. And the regress option doesn't seem very palatable. It is unclear what options are left.

Despite these few problems, the book as a whole is tight and well-edited (Crane's introduction can stand on its own in introductory courses). It is impossible to provide an unproblematic sophisticated treatment of disposi-

tions. The topic is so difficult that even the most cautious claims bring a flood of deeper questions. The authors handle this problem admirably. You will have very few objections to one chapter that are not addressed in subsequent chapters.

Jeremy Fantl
Brown University

**Andrzej Ceynowa, Bohdan Dziemidok and
Marek Janiak, eds.**
*Problematyka wartosciowania w amerykanskich
filozofii i estetyce XX wieku. (The question of
valuation in American twentieth-century
philosophy and aesthetics.)*
Gdansk: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu
Gdanskiego 1995. Pp. 145. np.
ISBN 83-7017-561-9.

The question of valuation in American twentieth-century philosophy and aesthetics is a collection of nine essays reflecting the research activity of the Department of Philosophy and Sociology of the University of Gdansk, Poland. Chaired by Bohdan Dziemidok, the department has an established reputation in Poland as a leading centre for studies in aesthetics and axiology. The editors of the book, Andrzej Ceynowa, Bohdan Dziemidok and Marek Janiak, as well as all other Polish contributors (Romuald Piekarski, Barbara Mazur, Barbara Smoczynska and Krzysztof Polit) have either worked at Gdansk or completed their Ph.D's under Dziemidok's supervision. The remaining two authors are Roger A. Shiner of the University of Alberta and Arnold Berleant of Long Island University who visited Gdansk and presented papers to the department's faculty.

The question of valuation is the Gdansk philosophers' first book foray into the field of American aesthetics, preceded only by Ceynowa's post-doctoral thesis on Black Theatre. Yet the editors hope it will be just one in a planned series of studies on American culture. The book's nine articles are divided into two parts; the first three papers deal with issues in general axiology whereas the second part is composed of six articles on specific problems of valuation in American aesthetics. The first part opens with Roger Shiner's 'Valuation and feeling', followed by Bohdan Dziemidok's 'Naturalist Perspective in American axiology. Two versions of the "interest theory": D.W. Prall