*Content and Modality: Themes from the Philosophy of Robert Stalnaker*, edited by Judith Thomson and Alex Byrne. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006. Pp. viii + 304. H/b £40.00.

The eleven original essays in this collection competently cover a wide range of Robert Stalnaker's philosophical work, and Stalnaker's replies to them are clear, well-thought out, and informative. Anyone interested in Stalnaker's philosophy or the areas covered in this volume is well advised to read it.

1. Daniel Stoljar ('Actors and Zombies') considers Stalnaker's response to the conceivability argument for dualism. The crux of the response is that a world in which my c-fibers are firing but I am not in pain should be distinguished from a dualist world considered as actual in which my c-fibers are firing but I am not in pain (Robert Stalnaker, 'What Is it Like to Be a Zombie?', in J. Hawthorne and T. S. Gendler (eds), *Conceivability and Possibility*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, pp. 385–400). Stoljar argues that this response is too strong, for a parallel response would undermine Putnam's perfect actor argument against behaviourism. Stalnaker replies that the a posteriori physicalist's rebuttal of the conceivability argument is to accept the truth of the conceivability in question, which the a priori physicalist will not, but deny the validity of the argument, while construing conceivability as conceptual coherence. The conceivability relevant to Putnam's argument, Stalnaker continues, is envision-ability of a possible situation, which assures validity. Stalnaker's construal of Putnam's argument seems to me forced, for it is legitimate to challenge the argument's validity by using the notion of conceivability as conceptual coherence.

2. Sydney Shoemaker ('The Frege-Schlick View') argues against the Frege-Schlick view, which Stalnaker supports. The Frege-Schlick view is that qualitative similarity and difference relations are well defined only for experiences of the same subject. Shoemaker argues that the view should be resisted because the experiences of different subjects with the same physical and functional properties will be qualitatively similar. The version of the view which says that qualia are determined by properties that can be instantiated only in the experiences of a single person, is incompatible with physicalism, and the version which says that qualia are relational is incompatible with functionalism. To this, Stalnaker says that an analogy with the relational theory of space clarifies the sense in which two experiences bearing the same relations to the other experiences may exhibit qualitative difference, and that representationism about qualia should allow experience to represent features of oneself, so the Frege-Schlick view is not clearly less friendly to representationism than Shoemaker's view.

3. Paul M. Pietroski ('Character Before Content') argues for semantic internalism. According to him, since human natural languages are innately determined by human biology, they are unlikely to pair sentences with truth conditions. Stalnaker responds by saying that we have no need for concepts as detached from truth conditions, that innate determination by biology does not

rule out truth conditions (cf. face-recognition capacity), and that it is at best compositional semantic rules, not lexical semantics, that can be formulated internalistically. Pietroski's arguments seem to me less than convincing and Stalnaker responds to them in exactly the right way.

4. Richard G. Heck, Jr. ('Idiolects') argues that common language has no explanatory power for explaining communication and that idiolects are sufficient. But contrary to what Noam Chomsky says, the need for conformity with the others' uses of expressions is not purely pragmatically driven but competence-driven. Stalnaker's response is that communication is not to be explained either by common language or by idiolects but by reference to what the audience takes the speaker, rather than the speaker's words, to mean. Tyler Burge's arthritis example illuminates the nature of the content of thought, not just the meanings of words. Heck's attempt to defend the primacy of idiolects seems to me to be hampered by his desire to avoid Chomsky's way. Staknaker argues against Heck effectively.

5. Vann McGee ('There Are Many Things') endeavors to sketch an ambitious ersatzist theory of possible worlds. He claims that mathematical models can perform the role of logically possible worlds and that metaphysically possible worlds are those logically possible worlds in which metaphysical necessities hold. In response, Stalnaker says that the fact that 'Socrates is human' is false in a mathematical model in which 'Socrates' refers to G. W. Bush and 'human' means *philosopher* shows nothing about whether what 'Socrates is human' *actually* says is possibly false. I find Stalnaker's response convincing. I have two further comments. First, the same kind of epistemic consideration McGee uses against a theory embracing only metaphysically possible worlds works against a theory, like his own, which includes only logically possible worlds, for our epistemic (or doxastic) states are not closed under logical entailment. Second, McGee uses as an example to illustrate the need for impossible worlds 'If Bruce Wayne were different from Batman, we would see them together sometimes' and says that we may conclude that Bruce Wayne is Batman on the evidence that we don't see them together anytime. But we *always* see Bruce Wayne and Batman together!

6. Timothy Williamson ('Stalnaker on the Interaction of Modality with Quantification and Identity') gives a technical discussion of the metaphysical implications of the logical results in (Robert Stalnaker, 'The Interaction of Modality with Quantification and Identity', in W. Sinnott-Armstrong, D. Raffman, and N. Asher (eds), *Modality, Morality, and Belief*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, pp. 12–28). Stalnaker responds by disclaiming commitment to a sharp or deep line between metaphysical and logical principles.

7. William G. Lycan ('Conditional-Assertion Theories of Conditionals') criticizes both the conditional-assertion view that an utterance of an indicative conditional is an assertion of the consequent contingent on the truth of the antecedent, and the view that indicative conditionals lack truth-conditions

and truth-values. Contrary to Lycan, Stalnaker says that the dentist's sentence, 'If you don't undergo this treatment, you'll lose all your teeth', is true if the patient does not undergo the treatment but loses all his teeth in an automobile accident. Stalnaker finds Lycan's embedding arguments the most direct and convincing for his (Lycan's) propositional account. He also finds Lycan's arguments involving conditionals embedded within factive attitude verb-clauses (being sad, happy, embarrassed, ashamed, etc.) strong. Stalnaker, however, takes issue with Lycan's claim that the fact that Chapel Hill is in North Carolina entails that if Jones lives in Chapel Hill, then he lives in North Carolina. Stalnaker tentatively suggests that an indicative conditional is used to express a proposition that is in part about the speaker's epistemic situation, and says the following about Lycan's example: suppose Nancy knows that Jones lives in Greensboro, North Carolina, or somewhere in Virginia and that Chapel Hill is not Greensboro, but does not know where Chapel Hill is. Then she knows that if Jones lives in Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill must be in Virginia, so she can say truthfully, 'If Jones lives in Chapel Hill, he does not live in North Carolina'. This seems to me to be clearly wrong. The conditional, 'If Jones lives in Chapel Hill, then he does not live in North Carolina', as uttered by Nancy under the imagined circumstances will not be true, if it expresses a proposition. She will have grounds for believing it true but be in fact wrong.

8. Stephen Yablo ('Non-Catastrophic Presupposition Failure') offers a general theory of the distinction between a failure of presupposition resulting in a non-truth-evaluable utterance and a failure of presupposition resulting in a truth-evaluable utterance. 'The king of France is bald' and 'The king of France is sitting in this chair' both presuppose that France has a unique king, but the falsity of this presupposition affects the two sentences differently; the first sentence says nothing true or false, whereas the second sentence says something false. This difference is explained as follows: the first sentence implies 'France has a king', which is false but could not be false for the same reason if the presupposition were true (i.e. France had a unique king), whereas the second sentence implies 'This chair is occupied', which is false and could still be false for the same reason even if France had a unique king. Stalnaker points out that the aim of the pragmatic conception of presupposition is to separate questions of truth values from questions of presupposition, so naturally many cases of presupposition failure involve truth-evaluable assertions. Stalnaker also points out that some of the examples Yablo uses are cases in which a speaker fails to say what he means to say and for which Yablo assesses the truth value of what the speaker means to say, and not what the speaker says. Let me comment on the nominalistic agenda of Yablo's program. According to Yablo, 'The number of cats (in the yard) is 2' counts as true because of the yard's material contents and this has nothing to do with numbers, just as 'The king of France is sitting in this chair' counts as false because of the chair's material contents and this has nothing to do with French royalty. But this seems to me unsatisfactory. The two sentences are not syntactically similar. 'The number of cats is 2'

involves the identity predicate 'is' and should be compared with, say, 'The king of France is Louis XVI'. 'The number of cats is 2' may be paraphrased as 'There are two cats'. This frees nominalists from the commitment to the existence of a number by eliminating the numeral '2'. The parallel paraphrase of 'The king of France is Louis XVI' will be something like 'Louis XVI rules France as a unique king'. This does not eliminate 'Louis XVI', hence it does not free us from the commitment to the existence of Louis XVI.

9. Frank Jackson ('The Story of "Fred"') rehearses the case for his theory of A-intensions, using the example of an artificial predicate, 'fred', which is to be rigid and whose actual extension is fixed by the stipulation that it is true of x if and only if x has the shape of the smallest homogeneous object (sho). Stalnaker agrees with Jackson's main claim about the content of thought expressed by the stipulators' assertion 'The table is fred', but, unlike Jackson, Stalnaker endorses the claim conditionally on the assumption that the language including 'fred' is one that the stipulators of the word can use. Jackson and Stalnaker both push their internalism with respect to thought and assertive content, but those who are externalistically inclined will find little that will move them. Jackson says that the stipulators of 'fred' use 'fred' 'to say that something is the same shape as the sho. They do not use it to say that something is round despite the fact that … $x$ is sho iff $x$ is round' (p. 194). It is not obvious to me that they do not use it to say that something is round. They may not realize fully what they are doing when they use it. Using a sentence to say that P does not entail knowing that the sentence means that P. This conception of 'use' seems intuitive and coherent (although not all externalists would endorse it). For the same reason, many externalists will remain unconvinced by Stalnaker's claim that if the stipulated language is usable by the stipulators, then the assertive content of 'fred' is 'the actual shape of the sho' and not 'is round'. Jackson also urges 'that "fred" should be thought of as equivalent to "the *actual* shape of the sho"' (p. 196). But this goes against the supposed initial stipulation that 'fred' is 'name-like and rigid' (p. 193), externalists may say. After expressing an opinion suggestive of the view that we, users of ordinary names, lack the cognitive capacity to speak the language containing them, Stalnaker quickly retreats to the position that knowledge of who or what an individual is is context-dependent, and so is semantic competence. This is a tantalizing suggestion in desperate need of elaboration.

10. John Perry ('Stalnaker and Indexical Belief') elaborates on his own proposal concerning indexical belief, distinguishing between what is believed and how it is believed, and compares it with Stalnaker's proposal of diagonal propositions. Stalnaker concedes to Perry that diagonalization does not solve the problem of self-locating belief by itself but insists that the difference between a self-locating belief and a non-self-locating belief is a difference in the content believed rather than in the manner of believing it.

11. Scott Soames ('Understanding Assertion') agrees with Stalnaker's claim that what is asserted may be very different from what the uttered sentence

semantically encodes. Soames's main disagreement with Stalnaker concerns Stalnaker's reliance on metaphysically possible worlds, propositions construed as functions from such worlds to truth values, and propositional concepts. Soames argues that considerations of belief *de re* show the need for metaphysically impossible worlds. Suppose one thinks of a wooden paperweight that it might be plastic. Then the paperweight is made of plastic, not wood, in some world that is epistemically possible to one. But, assuming necessity of constitution, such a world is metaphysically impossible. Stalnaker concedes, 'that for some purposes it is useful to take epistemic possibilities at face value without worrying about how to construe them as metaphysically possible' (p. 290), but this concession is outweighed by his insistence on the well-known views he holds: (1) 'One can explain some features of what is going on in [mathematical] discourses without worrying about what they are ultimately about' (p. 290). (2) His deflationary understanding of belief about possible worlds and propositions is the right way. (3) What an attribution of belief *de re* requires is not 'some intimate acquaintance relation, but only that there be a unique candidate. In the standard puzzle cases, there may be no fact of the matter about which of two distinct individuals in the world according to the believer is identical to a given individual in the actual world, or at least no fact of the matter that is independent of the context of attribution' (p. 293). This shows Stalnaker's commitment to internalism. He drives the same point home by representing the epistemic possibility concerning the paperweight by a metaphysically possible world in which some plastic paperweight appears indistinguishable from how Soames's paperweight appears in the actual world. This resort to an epistemic counterpart of the *res* clearly shows that Stalnaker is simply rejecting Soames's externalist stance. Stalnaker's internalism here and also in his response to Jackson is not incompatible with his semantic externalism in his response to Pietrosky, but further elaborations on how they are supposed to dovetail together might be illuminating.

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