

course no question that scientific evidence can be relevant to evaluating philosophical theories, but its indispensability is another matter. He poses a level-headed challenge to naturalists, to provide an example in which empirical evidence is both scientific and indispensable for evaluating philosophical theories.

In his concluding chapter, Daly sketches a defence of the view that philosophical theories are justified (or not) on the basis of how well they balance costs and benefits. He notes that many worries about the cost-benefit method are misplaced. It might appear that the method is at root pragmatist, because it might seem to require us to prefer theories which are simpler or more fruitful, etc. But in fact the method itself contains no presupposition that simplicity or fruitfulness are legitimate theoretical benefits, or that they have more weight than, say, some deeply entrenched intuition. Or one might think the method has a suspicious record. Is it not used to justify concrete possible worlds? Here again the quarrel is not with the method but with particular weightings of putative costs and benefits. The method itself by no means commits one to modal realism. There is no pretence that following this method will somehow make philosophical theory selection a simple matter. But that at least stays true to actual practice. It would be naive to think that finding the answers would be easy if only we were doing philosophy right.

Daly's book is full of good philosophical judgement. Whatever the criteria for good philosophy are, there is no doubt Daly has met them. His book is an excellent starting place for both students interested in philosophy and professionals interested in philosophical methodology.

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*Familiar Objects and Their Shadows.* BY CRAWFORD L. ELDER. (Cambridge UP, 2011. Pp. xi + 210. Price £50.00, \$85.00 h/b.)

In this new book, Elder moves against the prevailing ontological wind, defending familiar object realism – the thesis that many of the objects recognised by common sense are mind-independently real. This is a daunting task, but Elder has risen to the challenge here: this is an impressively articulated counter-offensive against positions which reject realist, ‘common-sense’ ontology.

Elder first focuses upon two ‘false friends’, positions which appear conducive to familiar object realism but are secretly opposed. He first attacks ‘modal conventionalism’ – according to which kind-sameness and persistence judgements are true because they are analytic – and explosivism – according to which every way of carving up the world tracks real persistence and kind-sameness. Elder argues (ch. 1) that real kind-sameness and persistence judgments are Millikan-style pushmipullyu representations and therefore they essentially involve imperative and indicative aspects, which explosivism and modal conventionalism respectively fail to account for.

A subsequent target is ontological relativism, according to which our ontological judgments are true in virtue of our conceptual scheme. Finding it unfavourable to familiar object realism, Elder argues (ch. 2) that the properties which

nonstandard, alternative conceptual schemes rely upon do not fall into contrary ranges, which prevents those who employ them from successfully tracking causation. As such, alternative conceptual schemes cannot be as empirically successful as schemes which are realist and focus upon familiar objects – a happy result for Elder’s brand of realism.

Elder proceeds (ch. 3) to show that his empirically adequate familiar object realism requires commitment to the idea that the natural kind an object instantiates determines the persistence conditions of the object. He blocks apparent examples of objects surviving changing their kind by ingeniously distinguishing between genuine and ‘imposter’ natural kinds via their essential properties: the properties essential to genuine natural kinds causally control other properties had by the object, unlike for imposters.

Having secured a foundation for familiar object realism, the next four chapters target realist ontologies which ‘explain away’ the familiar. The first is exdurantism, which reduces enduring familiar objects to sequences of instantaneous temporal stages linked by temporal-counterpart relations. Elder argues that if exdurantism isn’t going to collapse into explosivism it must explain why we privilege those collections of temporal stages which ‘common sense and empirical science attribute to familiar objects’ (p. 81). The only viable exdurantist explanation – postulating ‘non-supervenient’ relations – is less theoretically virtuous than postulating enduring, familiar objects.

The second of the attempts to ‘explain away’ the familiar are causal exclusion arguments (ch. 5). Causation at the familiar, macro-level is in competition with causation at the micro-level. To avoid over-determination, we deny macro causation; via Alexander’s dictum we thereby deny existence to the macro.

Elder argues there is a causal connection between two events iff there is an invariance – a function such that, by varying the value of the cause variable  $V_c$ , one can manipulate the effect variable  $V_e$ . According to Elder, a necessary condition for there being an invariance between two events is that there is a context-invariant similarity ordering for the variants of the events involved. However, because there is ‘systematic interference’ among the various dimensions of difference along which micro-level events can vary, there cannot be such an ordering. There is therefore no micro-level causal relation, no over-determination, and no exclusion.

While it would be nice to have a good response to causal exclusion, Elder’s argument is too strong. Take the causal relation between the events my watching *Casablanca* and my being emotional. There are many ways we could vary the former: colourise the film, dub the dialogue, add subtitles, double the viewing screen, remove some popcorn, etc. No context-invariant similarity ordering holds across all these dimensions of difference. Therefore there is no causal link here – so much for heart-wrenching movies (or macro-causation in general). One could, to block this objection, contextualise similarity along some specifiable dimension of difference, but only at the cost of blocking Elder’s argument too. Thus Elder

seems stuck: demand context-invariant similarity and lose macro causation or contextualise similarity and lose the objection to exclusion.

The third way of explaining away familiar objects is to reduce them to complex arrangements of mereological simples – e.g. replace Fido with simples arranged dog-wise. After arguing that it is impossible to specify which simples are included in the dog-wise arrangements without appealing to the ontological ‘shadows’ of the emerging familiar objects themselves (ch. 6), Elder attempts to dismiss causal competition arguments in favour of mereological reduction. He offers a modified version of his objection to causal exclusion arguments; a suitably modified version of my above counter applies here as well.

Rounding off the attempts at explaining the familiar away and returning to the theme of false-friends (ch. 7), Elder proceeds to universal mereological composition (UMC), according to which familiar objects exist due to the mere existence of their parts – Fido is, in effect, an ontological ‘free lunch’, emerging from the existence and arrangement of all the ‘Fido parts’. Elder argues the ‘structural’ properties which characterise typical UMC objects are not genuine properties. Genuine properties essentially contrast, ‘sharply or mildly, with certain other properties’ (p. 154). Further, ‘contrariety obtains only where a property differs from other properties to greater and lesser, but commensurable degrees: there must be a well-defined phenomenon of “more or less different from”’ (p.159). UMC structural properties fail to satisfy this condition.

If this condition held, every property would have to be scalar instead of binary — i.e. like *being 6' tall* instead of *being a duck*. This just isn't the case. In particular, natural kind properties don't appear to have ranges of properties which they contrast with to greater or lesser degrees. Given Elder's condition, they therefore aren't genuine properties. How do we square this with the result that an empirically adequate realism about familiar objects requires natural kind properties for determining persistence conditions? Again, Elder seems stuck.

The final chapter is a Hegelian argument for the contrariety condition for genuine properties. The central claim is that, ‘to assert that red obtains is meaningful just because that assertion rules out an occurrence of brown or of green; an assertion that cold obtains rules out an occurrence of hot and of tepid.’ (p. 171) So, as with *cold* and *red* (both fundamentally phenomenal properties), so for *duck* and *dog*. The problem with such a conclusion is that ducks, unlike degrees, aren't additive. It does not make sense to say that Donald is three times more ducky than Bullwinkle, though it does to say that Bullwinkle is 20° cooler. To hold that all properties must be fundamentally scalar seems to impoverish the ontology of properties to a degree that renders the notion useless.

A brief but compelling appendix detailing the possibility of mutually interfering dimensions of difference concludes the book.

Despite the worries that I have expressed here, this is an interesting, argument-filled book. Anyone interested in ontology, and in particular the ontology of the familiar, would do well to read it.

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