

## *Recent Texts in Metaphysics*

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Teachers of analytic metaphysics face a bewildering array of textbook and anthology options. What's to choose? This depends, of course, on one's course and goals as instructor. This comparative book review will survey several options — both longstanding and recent to press — from a pedagogical perspective. The options are not exclusive. Many are natural complements and would work nicely other collections or single-author texts. I shall focus my attention here on six texts (in this order): two textbooks, one by Peter van Inwagen and one by Michael Jubien, two anthologies of previously published papers (one edited by van Inwagen and Dean Zimmerman, another by Michael Loux), a collection of new paired “pro-and-con” essays assembled by Ted Sider, John Hawthorne, and Dean Zimmerman, and finally a hybrid text/anthology by Helen Beebe and Julian Dodd.

### *Metaphysics*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, Peter van Inwagen, Boulder: Westview Press, 2009

Van Inwagen's text, first published in 1993, is a lively, accessible, and engaging introduction to metaphysics. *Metaphysics* is rich in careful and detailed arguments, objections, and replies — both van Inwagen's take on historical arguments and his own novel arguments). Van Inwagen scrupulously avoids unnecessary formalism; what few key philosophical terms and concepts are not introduced can easily be glossed by the instructor. Yet the arguments are quite rich and amenable to unpacking and discussion. It could easily be used as a standalone text for an introductory course in metaphysics (or indeed for an introduction to philosophy if suitably supplemented). Many instructors (and students) will no doubt find themselves disagreeing with van Inwagen. But this is good. Careful philosophical debate is thus both modeled *within* the book and made possible in the classroom *by* the book. *Metaphysics* could also be easily paired with further articles (with a course-pack, anthology, or reserve material, for example) or a standalone, topical book if an instructor wished to supplement breadth with depth.

The text is divided into parts on three broad topics: 1. *The Way the World Is*, 2. *Why the World Is*, and 3. *The Inhabitants of the World*. Prior to this division, a substantial introduction clears the ground for the study of metaphysics by distinguishing between appearance and reality, suggesting that metaphysics is the study of “ultimate reality” — the way things are when we get behind appearances — and noting how the nature of this subject matter compels a different sort of text from those students of, say, tax law or geology or music theory are used to. Van Inwagen wrote the book as an *opinionated* introduction — “the only way of writing a book [he is] capable of” (17) — yet he reminds students that “neither the author of this book nor your instructor . . . is in a position in relation to you that is like the position of the author of your text (or your instructor) in geology or tax law or music theory” (15). This advice resonates with the generally tentative presentation of the arguments, which are often put in the mouths of various characters who respond to each other. The student is in effect invited to be a participant in the discussion, weighing the merits of the various arguments and positions, rather than a sponge for received knowledge.

These commendable features make it easy to recommend *Metaphysics* for certain kinds of introductory metaphysics courses. Many, however, will be wish for more early coverage of debates in ontology (concerning the existence of composite objects, universals, abstracta, and so on). The absence of significant discussions of the puzzles of ordinary objects present is particularly surprising, given van Inwagen's seminal work on mereology in *Material Beings* (Cornell University Press, 1990). (Perhaps van Inwagen simply decided that he had already said everything that he wanted, or was able, to say.) Likewise, there is no sustained discussion of modality, causation, dispositions, laws, or allied topics. The third edition adds a “Coda” on “Being” at the end of the book which tackles ontology via the problem of universals and non-existent objects. But this placement will frustrate those instructors

who wish to introduce metaphysics by starting with the Logical Positivist's *anti-metaphysical* stance followed by a double dose of Quine as "antidote" (that is, with "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" and its oft-partnered classic "On What There Is"). The first chapter on "Individuality" grazes these issues, taking on the question of whether Monism or Nihilism is true — a rather difficult question for many uninitiated undergraduates to conjure interest in right off the bat. (Granted, starting a course with the meaningfulness of propositions, the analytic-synthetic distinction, holism about testing, and the notion of ontological commitment can be just as tough going, but in my view there are good reasons for laying this kind of foundation.)

Van Inwagen's short fourth chapter on "Temporality" might have been a better departure point than either of these options. It is not at all difficult to motivate a serious metaphysical puzzlement about time — students nod in enthusiastic agreement with Augustine's famous outcry of "familiar yet perplexing" and rightly brace themselves for more of the same. Here van Inwagen is at his best, laying out a careful version of McTaggart's argument for the unreality of time — a position van Inwagen notes early on "has been historically important but seems [to him] simply wrong" (81) — and patiently showing where it goes wrong. Students could be reminded here that it is possible (and advisable!) to construct detailed arguments for positions that they think are incorrect. The only problem with this chapter is that there is too little of it and it is over a hundred pages away from a discussion of persistence through time — and there only addressed in the context of the chapter on "Dualism and Personal Identity" (where van Inwagen dubs "Four-Dimensionalism" a "strange assumption" (240) that defenders of certain positions might be forced to make).

A more amorphous worry underlies these topical quibbles. Much of the book reads (to me, anyway) as dedicated to vindicating (or at least clearing away room for) a comprehensive theistic vision of the world. Van Inwagen is upfront about his Christian convictions in the introduction, first sketching a position "most widely accepted in the Middle Ages" in answer to the three questions corresponding to *Metaphysics*'s three parts: roughly, that the universe was designed for us by a perfect, benevolent, necessarily existing, omnipotent, mereologically-simple, immaterial God who we are to worship forever (5). He later embraces this set of claims as expressing his beliefs "concerning the ultimate truth about everything", beliefs which he takes to be of "the utmost importance" (17). Not surprisingly, then, God is a recurring character the text, star of the second part on "Why the World Is" (which addresses various arguments for the existence of god and the question why there is something rather than nothing), and a significant contributor to Chapter 8 on rational beings and Chapter 9 on "their place in the world".

These topics are rather far down the list of what I think of when I think about metaphysics. That is not to say that they are not interesting in their own right or that they do not play well in the classroom (though I confess that I feel about the ontological argument rather like van Inwagen apparently feels about McTaggart's argument). But it strikes me that their omission would have left room for more comprehensive coverage of topics in contemporary metaphysics that would serve students well in more advanced courses. If you are like me in having no desire to engage with such topics as purpose of life, the existence of god or for that matter the world (as potentially drawing the discussion into muddy debates in theology), then you may want to skip a large portion of the text. If so, it's unclear whether its many merits sufficiently justify its use.

***Contemporary Metaphysics*, Michael Jubien. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1997.**

Like van Inwagen, Jubien has an axe to grind in his textbook — Platonism — but he manages to weave its defense into a clear and surprisingly wide-ranging survey of several traditional (and some non-traditional) topics in metaphysics. He begins with a methodological description of metaphysics that places conceptual analysis (of "being" and the like) at its center, rigorously defending the view that the *a priori* investigation of concepts can issue in "objective truth", properly understood. The

discussion would be a useful prelude to almost any philosophy course in which the specter of “subjectivity” (in contrast to the so-called “hard sciences”) tends to arise.

The defense of Platonism begins strategically with numbers (Chapter 2), rather than properties, whose existence many students seem to feel quite comfortable rejecting. Jubien’s discussion of the difficulties and unanswered questions facing Nominalist and Platonist alike nicely sets up many of the issues that occupy the remainder of the book. Having greased the wheels with numbers, Chapter 3 lays out the general case for a very profligate Platonism indeed — one in which *being a person who has been thought about on a February 29<sup>th</sup> by someone who has set foot on all five continents and whose favorite color is orange* counts as a “complicated property” (37). While there are more moderate versions of Platonism available (and there is more to say in defense of Nominalism), there is something appealing about Jubien’s “take-no-prisoners” approach. It provides students with a fine example of an extended argument for a relatively radical position and, as with van Inwagen’s text, offers ample material for discussion.

Later chapters on a variety of topics incorporate this background in similarly rich and clear discussions. Chapter 4 on “Identity” focuses on Leibniz’s Law and its *prima facie* difficulties (the case of Superman and Clark Kent looms large here). Jubien’s presentation is more standard here and provides students with conceptual resources that will serve them well in the remainder of the book and in future philosophy courses. A short chapter on “Is Truth ‘Relative?’” follows, dividing relativism about truth into self-defeating metaphysical claims and a more plausible epistemic claim — “The Doctrine of Free Belief” — which Jubien supposes is what most people have in mind when they express allegiance to “Relativism”. Chapter 7 covers both fatalism and the debate about the compatibility of freedom with determinism. Chapter 8 on Modality surveys the various approaches to possibility and necessity, tentatively settling on a Platonistic “Property-Theoretic” response. Chapter 9 (“Things on Their Parts”) runs through a number of familiar puzzles (mereological essentialism, the Ship of Theseus, vagueness, and so on). Chapter 10 addresses the question of whether there is truth in fiction, and finally, Chapter 11 takes on “Cosmology” in the form of the questions about God and the origin of the universe. Each of these chapters could be extended with further readings according to the instructor’s aims. One could, as Jubien recommends in the preface, quickly cover Chapters 1–4 and then engage in a more extended discussion of a subset of the rest. In general, earlier chapters are more accessible than later chapters and thus the book could easily be adapted to both introductory and advanced survey courses in metaphysics.

Another boon to the instructor: Jubien sprinkles a handful of [bracketed and boldfaced] exercises of widely varying difficulty in each chapter. My only quibble about these is that they are not numbered and so not as easily assigned on a selective basis (though I don’t believe that there are ever two on a page). *Contemporary Metaphysics* would be my choice for a standalone text. While perhaps not as cleverly written as van Inwagen’s text (a feature that sometimes encourages students to mimic it, with bad results), Jubien has produced a clear and engaging survey text that is both more standard and useful than van Inwagen’s and also innovative (in its inclusion of numbers and color). Let us turn now to some possible supplements.

***Metaphysics: The Big Questions*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Peter van Inwagen and Dean Zimmerman (Eds.), Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008.**

One might expect that the same topical misgivings I broached with van Inwagen’s *Metaphysics* (“the text”) might translate to *Metaphysics: The Big Questions* (“the anthology”). Not so. To my mind, this is far and away the best standard anthology available in metaphysics. Like the text, the anthology is divided into parts, which are further divided into sections containing anywhere between five and more than a dozen papers. Unlike the text, Part I of the anthology (“What are the Most General Features of the World?”) contains nine papers on ontology and universals, both classic and more recent (future classics no doubt, some of which were original to the first edition). The section on

Time and Space directly precedes that on Persistence. In all of these cases, its papers are ordered by thematic rather than temporal concerns. Lewis and Lewis on “Holes” precedes Quine’s “On What There Is”; Olson’s “The Paradox of Increase” comes before “Identity, Ostension, and Hypostasis”. Part I closes with a section on causation, with papers or excerpts from Hume, Reid, Russell, Stebbing, and Anscombe. I might have chosen others — Mackie, for instance, or Lewis — but these can be shuffled in through electronic reserve. Note: rather than recapitulate the entire contents, sixty-five papers in this case, I shall leave it to the reader to consult the anthology’s contents on the publisher’s web site (as with the others).

Part II: “What is Our Place in the World” takes on the mind-body problem and freedom of the will. The latter section includes two excellent pieces by van Inwagen: “The Mystery of Metaphysical Freedom” (new to the first edition) and “The Consequence Argument”, specifically written (by popular request, no less!) for inclusion in the second edition as a more “user-friendly” version of the argument van Inwagen gave in *An Essay on Free Will*. O’Connor’s paper “The Agent as Cause” (also new to the first edition) directly engages with “Mystery” paper, again illustrating for students the virtues of productive philosophical conversation. The section on freedom of the will is rounded out by two influential papers by Frankfurt.

Part III, lumps together papers on modality and conceptual relativity (as it bears on ontology) under the somewhat awkward heading “Are There Many Worlds?”, a title that will confuse many students (did every part of the volume really need to have the word ‘World’ in it?). Here, as elsewhere in the volume, van Inwagen and Zimmerman wisely choose to pare down longer papers to a core argument. The section on modality begins with bits of Lewis’s *On the Plurality of Worlds* (§§1.1, 1.2, and 1.9); Putnam’s “Truth and Convention” is immediately followed by a eight page section of Sosa’s “Putnam’s Pragmatic Realism” with a specially-written addendum of objections and replies.

Finally, Part IV: “Why is There a World?” includes seven short and nicely balanced readings (in just over sixty pages total) on the ontological and cosmological arguments. William James introduces the question “How comes the world to be here at all instead of the nonentity which might be imagined in its place?” and evokes its difficulty (573). Derek Parfit considers some answers which Richard Swinburne dutifully shoots down in a brief reply (also written for the volume). Classic readings from Clarke and Anselm follow. If an instructor had assigned the whole of van Inwagen’s text, this part would make a good complement, as the text surveys this very territory in some detail.

Each part and section of *Metaphysics* (the anthology) comes with a few page introduction to the topic and its significance with suggestions for further reading. These are uniformly excellent — students will learn roughly what position different authors take on the issues before they set out to the readings — but depending on the course may need to be supplemented by notes or lecture from the instructor. Unlike van Inwagen’s text, the anthology would be difficult to read without the guidance of an instructor. This minimalist approach offers a great deal of flexibility, however. There is too much here for a one semester course, allowing instructors to pick and choose a path through the readings as befits that course’s specific goals. Van Inwagen and Zimmerman make a number of suggestions in the preface for different pairings to other anthologies and texts, including of course both their own and Jubien’s. The only chapters of the latter it would leave unadorned are those on Numbers and Color. Most of the anthology’s different parts could be assigned out of order without much difficulty (cross-references to earlier papers is kept to a minimum: e.g., the section on conceptual relativity about ontology would likely succeed that on ontology). With the appropriate supplement and support, this anthology could support a wide range of survey courses in metaphysics — from entry- to graduate-level. Before considering two different sorts of anthologies, I shall compare another candidate for this office.

*Metaphysics: Contemporary Readings*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Michael J. Loux (Ed.). New York: Routledge, 2008.

Michael Loux's leading principle in assembling this collection is to select only readings written after 1900, a principle he only broke once in adding Hume on causation to the second edition. (Van Inwagen and Zimmerman cleave to no such principle, but the result is rather similar.) This anthology is divided into seven parts (with no further subdivisions) as follows: Universals, Particulars, Possible Worlds, Causation, Time, Persistence Through Time, and Realism and Anti-Realism. There is, unsurprisingly, quite a bit of overlap between Loux's anthology and Inwagen and Zimmerman's (henceforth 'MTBQ' for *Metaphysics: the Big Questions*). Each paper from Part I on Universals is included in MTBQ, as are half the sections on time and modality.

Part II on Particulars leads off with Max Black's classic paper on the "Identity of Indiscernibles" (also in MTBQ) and three well-chosen and nicely integrated papers on bare particulars and the bundle theory. As Loux's anthology (henceforth 'MCR') is specially designed to be pored with his textbook on metaphysics (*Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, New York: Routledge, 2002), these parts play very nicely with the excellent chapters on universals and particular in that text (four in all, a substantial portion of the book).

The readings on modality, though somewhat few and confined to discussion of possible worlds, are well-chosen. I also like the Loux's selection of readings on causation somewhat more than those in MTBQ (Loux includes the essays by Mackie and Lewis which I wished were in MTBQ). Likewise, I tend to like his selection of papers on Persistence Through Time a bit more. More friendly toward four-dimensionalism ("perdurantism" in his idiolect), Loux includes readings by Heller, Merricks, Parfit, Lewis ("Survival and Identity"), and Swinburne, all of which I would readily assign. The final part on Realism and Anti-Realism, though wholly distinct from MTBQ, is just as good (and includes a chapter from van Inwagen's *Metaphysics* on "Objectivity"). These evaluations are once again reports of personal preference. Both MCR and MTBQ are well-assembled collections with excellent introductory material — Loux's introductions are somewhat more involved than those in MTBQ, though there are fewer of them, since there are fewer sections.

This brings me to my main reason for preferring MTBQ to MCR: the number of topics and readings. MCR contains roughly half as many readings (thirty-three) as MTBQ. This is initially surprising, given that MCR has more pages (646 versus 633, though MTBQ's pages are slightly bigger). It has to do with an editorial decision that will probably divide readers: van Inwagen and Zimmerman are willing to excerpt readings, sometimes at initially awkward-seeming spots. Their selection from Russell on universals, for example, begins not with Chapter IX of *The Problems of Philosophy* ("The World of Universals"), but in the middle of Chapter VIII on "How *a priori* Knowledge is Possible" — for Chapter IX begins by looking back at the preceding chapter. Loux's selection, on the other hand, just begins with "At the end of the preceding chapter we saw that such entities as relations appear to have a being which is in some way different from that of physical objects..." (14). Loux reprints the entire chapter from Armstrong's *Universals: an Opinionated Introduction* on "Universals as Attributes" whereas van Inwagen and Zimmerman give us just sections I–III and VIII. Ellipses are common in their collection —and to my mind *welcome*. They are practically non-existent in Loux's.

The flexibility this allows users of MTBQ is, I find, more desirable than the editorial restraint Loux exercises in MCR. Others will disagree. Graduate students and professionals would probably not turn to MTBQ as a scholarly source, for instance (though it is *much* easier to find original source citations than it is in MCR). Having students read influential papers in their entirety (warts, difficult stretches, and all) might be reckoned as more important in upper-level and graduate courses. These are probably more appropriate contexts for MCR in any case, particularly if one wished to design a course around the bulk of the topics it covers. Moreover, the tight integration between the papers in MCR and Loux's companion text *Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction*

(also published by Routledge, and also well worth considering) make MCR quite appealing to those who might wish to provide their students with more guidance (or even use the text to guide their own presentation of the material). Even so, I would probably reach for MTBQ four times out of five for an introductory-intermediate course, as there is just more variety. It would allow serial metaphysics instructors to vary their curriculum from year to year without reinventing the wheel each time with a brand new textbook.

Another anthology deserving of consideration is *Metaphysics: an Anthology* (edited by Jaegwon Kim and Ernest Sosa, Blackwell Publishing, 1999). While I cannot review this volume here, I will suggest that for courses involving a heavy dose of persistence through time (including personal identity), it would be hard to do better. Though it too lacks material on free will, it includes an excellent section on emergence, reduction, and supervenience. I encourage readers to look up its table of contents at Blackwell's site.

I turn now to two new options for teaching metaphysics

*Contemporary Debates in Metaphysics*, Theodore Sider, John Hawthorne, Dean W. Zimmerman (Eds.), Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008.

Blackwell's *Contemporary Debates* series publishes collections of new state-of-the-art essays commissioned from leading scholars in their fields. These essays are arranged pairwise in rough opposition. The *Metaphysics* volume includes eighteen essays on nine topics, as follows: abstract entities, causation and laws of nature, modality and possible worlds, personal identity, time, persistence, free will, mereology, and metaontology. These essays vary quite a bit in their tenor and opposition to their chapter-mate. Chris Swoyer's paper on "Abstract Entities", for example, rather tentatively concludes that there are such "things" as numbers, sets, properties, and propositions on the grounds that they offer good "ontological explanations" of truths everyone accepts at acceptable epistemic cost. Cian Dorr's essay, "There Are No Abstract Objects", on the other hand, presents a more trenchant, hard-line nominalism.

These essays are far more than summaries of previous work and previous arguments, though they do a lot of this and are thus useful for introducing a topic. They are each, in my view, serious contributions which scholars in their particular fields ignore at their cost. The chapter on causation and laws of nature centers on the debate between the Humean (reductionistic) and anti-Humean positions about natural laws. Engaging in extremely recent literature, John Carroll argues against reductionist accounts of laws — again, not by simply rehearsing old arguments against reductionism, but in responding to recent trenchant challenges to anti-reductionism (e.g., that due to Earman and Roberts).

Chapter after chapter feature leading figures in their respective debates offering new insights and clearer presentations of old ones. Judith Jarvis Thompson and Derek Parfit enter into debate about personal identity, Zimmerman and J.J.C. Smart take on tensed versus tenseless theories of time, and so on. For students who have already read classic works by these authors, reading these recent contributions to these debates can be exhilarating. But despite the clarity with which most of the authors write, I would not (in most cases) assign these essays to undergraduates. They are state of the art in the sense that they assume a decent bit of background knowledge on the topics and provide relatively little motivation or introduction on the topic. Philip Bricker's essay on "Concrete Possible Worlds" begins: "Open a book or article of contemporary analytic philosophy, and you are likely to find talk of possible worlds therein" (111). If the student has not already done so, they are unlikely to appreciate Bricker's contribution. Other essays are similarly brisk in introducing their topics. Graduate students (or advanced and highly competent or motivated undergraduates) already familiar with a large part of the metaphysics "canon" (as furnished by any of the anthologies cited above) are the ideal audience for these essays.

Interestingly, Sider's introductory essay is a model of accessible motivation for interest in the topics addressed in *Contemporary Debates*. I have already directed novice philosophy students in my Metaphysics and Epistemology course to the electronic version on his website for a compelling summary of what metaphysics is. The editors provide very short (paragraph length) sketches of the positions the contributors take to their topics, but otherwise there is not much textual guidance provided. But if employed in the kind of advanced courses to which I imagine it was designed, this is as it should be.

*Reading Metaphysics*, Helen Beebe and Julian Dodd (Eds.), Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007. One of the most innovative options for teaching metaphysics is the Blackwell's "Reading ..." series (where the '...' is filled in with different subfields in philosophy. So far, there is a *Reading Philosophy*, *Reading Philosophy of Language*, *Reading Aesthetics and Philosophy of Art*, *Reading Epistemology*, and a *Reading Metaphysics*. The model here is aptly described by their subtitles: "Selected Texts with Interactive Commentary". Interactive *how*, exactly? (These are *books*, after all!) Well, the idea — as the editors persistently drive home explicitly in the introduction and implicitly throughout — is that reading philosophy *is* (or *ought to be*) an interactive pursuit. This is a fact that many introductory philosophy students do not generally appreciate. The book encourages them to interact with the text by placing marginal graphics (boxed letters and arrows) at key places in the essay that refer to a substantial appended commentary. The commentary in turn directs the students *back* to the text by not directly quoting or summarizing what is happening at that point, but by asking the students to re-read that bit of text in attempting to make sense of a certain argument, dialectical move, claim, or what have you.

This is a great idea and it is well executed here. As with *Contemporary Debates in Metaphysics*, the selected essays (presenting divergent views) are generally paired up into chapters on a handful of topics. *Reading Metaphysics* has just six of these: on Personal Identity, Free Will, Realism and Anti-Realism, Realism and Nominalism, Possible Worlds, and Persistence over Time. Each of these chapters leads off with an admirably clear and accessible introductory essay (most running a few pages) that motivates the chapter's main questions. Most of the readings are *deeply influential* papers, each receiving its own detailed commentary. Sections on Further Reading and Essay Questions are further aids to the student and instructor alike.

The commentaries are clearly the most impressive feature of *Reading Metaphysics*. There may even be as much commentary as there is anthologized text. They strike a balance between explaining what it is that the authors are up to at different points of the text (again, using the boxed letters) and asking students to determine what is going on and to evaluate it. Study questions are sprinkled throughout, set off by grey backgrounds. Some are expository; others are evaluative; each come in varying difficulties. One question in the commentary following a selection from Kripke's *Naming and Necessity* simply asks students to "State, as succinctly as you can, Kripke's reasons for holding that the third response is preferable to either of the other responses" (203). The student may groan at having to go back to the text to remind him or herself what the "third response" refers to, but hopefully they will appreciate the deeper comprehension of the texts that such questions engender. The immediately following question is more open-ended and could easily be employed as an essay prompt: "Thinking about why Lewis introduced counterpart theory in the first place, do you think Kripke is right to think that there is no genuine problem of transworld identity?" (203). This is a difficult question! Off the top of my head, I'd have to say "I'm not sure!"

This question's difficulty raises an important question about the book: *who was it written for?* I confess that I am not entirely sure. The selected papers, while influential, are not typically easy going. In this sense, they are appropriate choices for the "Reading ..." model. I wonder if their difficulty was part of the reason for including them. This is not clearly an unreasonable motivation. After all, a clear aim of the book is to help students become better readers of philosophy — even

difficult philosophy — and how could one achieve that end without having students read some difficult philosophy. It also strikes me as a missed opportunity not to include more marginal explication of technical terms. The first section of van Inwagen's paper "The Incompatibility of Free Will and Determinism" begins: "In defining 'determinism', I shall take for granted the notion of a proposition (that is, of a non-linguistic bearer of truth-value), together with certain allied notions such as denial, conjunction, and entailment" (63). This is a daunting sentence to parse and *Reading Metaphysics* offers little help, where help could be provided without much difficulty.

Thus, when I think about assigning this text for an introductory course in metaphysics (or pairing it with other material in a general Introduction to Philosophy course), I get nervous — rather as if stared down by Dirty Harry. ("Feeling lucky, punk?") The thing is, if one *got* lucky with a class of introductory students up to a challenge, one could do very well indeed, especially if those students were likely to return for further courses with a sound training in reading philosophy. But while the chances for success improve with the experience and capabilities of one's students, the potential impact of using the text declines. The relatively sparseness of *Reading Metaphysics* (thirteen essays) also gives me some pause. The text could, of course, be supplemented with a thicker anthology or coursepack, but I suspect that moving back and forth from the "Reading ..." model to a more traditional source might be jarring for the students. "Where's the commentary?!" they might ask.

Despite these worries, I think that I will employ *Reading Metaphysics* in my next intermediate-level metaphysics course, making it the text central and tailoring the syllabus to fit. There is much to gain by asking students to engage with these uniformly great essays — in many ways models for what their own essays should look like — and only some flexibility to lose.