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existence might be a concept except, though, if this were true, there would have to be something more basic than existence, the reality that such a concepts maps.

One might think that what it is to exist is just to have a place in some system, so that Hamlet exists in Shakespeare's play, the number two exists in the system of integers, and lions exist in the animal kingdom are all sensible assertions. This seems, though, to imply that existence is what Vallicella calls a 'domain' or a set of 'domains'. If one holds a domain theory then, again, there is some category, more basic to which all these 'domains' belong, and Vallicella says there are 'dubious monistic consequences' to domain theories (127). He thinks such theories would make the ontological argument valid (128), though why this is bad is less clear.

Rejecting domains as the basis of existence has consequences which sound puzzling, though: If existence is most basic, then in some way existence itself exists or nothing exists. And so Vallicella moves to what he calls a 'paradigm theory'. What Vallicella means by a paradigm which is an instance of itself is really, I think, that there must be nothing more basic than existence combined with the property of being an instance. The 'existence' of existence is a model for all other cases.

The concept of instantiation or of being an instance is therefore central and there is a long discussion (15-22) of Quentin Gibson's *The Existence Principle* (Dordrecht: Kluwer 1998). The issue resurfaces in many forms, but Vallicella insists that existence is not *merely* instantiation, though instantiation is central and crucial to it, and there are no degrees of instantiation (19). That is, he would not disagree with Quine that 'to be is to be the value of a bound variable', but this is not enough, for it does not tell us what distinguishes those values that exist from those that don't, and Vallicella insists that there are no non-existent objects.

In its rigour, its systematic development, its constant inventiveness, and its insistence on the primacy of 'existence', the argument reminds us of McTaggart who is, indeed, mentioned (209, 210). Vallicella's conclusions, too, would help sustain a central part of McTaggart's vision. But perhaps, like McTaggart, Vallicella has narrowed his vision more than he needs to. Neither ever wavers from his focus on 'existence'. But in some of our everyday talk and very much of our philosophical discourse there are other important notions constantly in play. There are places where some additional ontological concept or concepts would help us to make better sense of various theories Vallicella rejects.

Things, events, persons, mathematical entities and so forth are sometimes said to 'exist' (or not to exist). But they are also said to be 'real' or 'unreal', to have 'being', or to lack it or just to be subject matters for discourse, or to fail to make it into the groups we recognise in our communities of meaning.

The word 'existence' has its roots in a Latin expression meaning 'to stand out', and 'real' derives from 'res', a thing. It is true that what stands out in the sense of being able to be picked out in discourse as a discrete entity has the property that Vallicella talks about — the characteristic being a certain

kind of unity of ontological components. But we also need something like 'thing'. The Anglo-Saxon 'Allthing' was a parliament and 'things' were what could be talked about in the sense of being the objects of laws and rules. A great many strange entities would fit Vallicella's definition of existence. Perhaps we need the word 'entity', even on his view, to do duty for his class of 'existents' together with their ontological components. The mediaeval 'ens' was just 'being' but the mediaeval hunt was for the *ens realissimum*. And at a deeper level we need to ask what really 'has being' in the sense of possessing whatever it is that explains the rest. This is what Vallicella's 'Onto-Theology Vindicated' seems to suggest.

Nevertheless, most metaphysicians would have been glad to have written this book.

### Leslie Armour

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### Bas Van Fraassen

*The Empirical Stance.*

New Haven, CT: Yale University Press 2002.

Pp. xv + 282.

US\$30.00. ISBN 0-300-08874-4.

*The Empirical Stance* consists of five lectures originally delivered at Yale University as part of the Terry Foundation Lectures on Religion in the Light of Science and Philosophy, together with three appendices on Scientific Cosmology, the history of the name 'Empiricism', and Bultmann's Theology. The lectures cover a wide range of topics in epistemology, philosophy of science, and metaphysics. As befits a lecture series, the book displays a light stylistic touch that carries the reader along. At times the reader might wish for more detail and feel unconvinced as a result, but no philosophical reader will fail to be engaged throughout. There is less discussion of religion — fundamentalism in one chapter and secularism and the encounter with the divine in the last chapter — than the title of the lecture series might lead one to expect. The core instead is an extended essay for a voluntarist epistemology of science according to which rationality is a matter of deciding what to value rather than conforming to independent normative constraints, as well as for a novel reconstrual of philosophy itself. Philosophers deceive themselves when they think of philosophical views such as empiricism, rationalism, and materialism as theses or doctrines rather than as stances they decide to adopt.

In the first chapter, van Fraassen rejects the post-positivist revival of ontology and traditional metaphysics in analytic philosophy. Taking the question whether the world exists as an example, he notes that answers always depend on logically contingent postulates such as that if a collection has a certain specified character, then its sum exists. These postulates may be consistent but that only makes the metaphysical views of which they are a part consistent, not true. The post-Quinean may respond that metaphysical views aren't just consistent but part of the most overall explanatory account available, and as such, are continuous with natural science. The demand for explanation thus drives contemporary metaphysics as much as medieval. However, van Fraassen objects that scientific explanation faces harsher criteria than metaphysical, namely natural selection by empirical evidence. The stakes in theory choice in the natural sciences are great—safety, shelter, communication, etc.—but those in metaphysics are just truth or error from the God's eye point of view. In metaphysics merely the form of theory choice is rational, and the answers it provides are simply abstract simulacra of what matters to us in our lives, the God of the philosophers substituting for the God of our forefathers, the 'world' of mereology for worlds which cannot be counted, and for which 'part of' is not transitive. The modern metaphysician, however, may protest that the regimentation of discourse is part of science and that the test of science cannot be separated from the testing of that which makes best sense of it.

The chief targets of empiricist critique over the ages, van Fraassen rightly argues in the second chapter, are the demands for an explanation for everything and satisfaction with explanations postulating entities not evident in experience. However, the rejection of these demands cannot be based on any factual thesis E+ about our cognitive situation, e.g., that our only access to information about the world is ultimately through the senses. No such thesis can itself be immune to empiricist critique or be used as a basis for ruling out rivals. (But why isn't it enough to think them unlikely rather than ruling them out?) So empiricism cannot be understood as a set of theses, a priori or empirical, but as a stance, based in part on something besides factual theses, namely attitudes, commitments, values, goals that may survive any particular beliefs about our cognitive condition. Materialism likewise is best seen as a stance rather than a set of factual claims, one of deference to the content of the empirical sciences, in contrast to empiricism's deference to the methods of the sciences. The new task for philosophy becomes that of identifying the true empiricist stance or the true materialist stance. Why then shouldn't we go for the rationalist metaphysical stance? Van Fraassen's answer seems to be that rationalism unlike empiricism cannot do without false consciousness.

The task for the next two chapters is to construct an empiricism that is adequate to scientific revolution and cognitive conversion. Van Fraassen rejects 'objectifying' epistemologies that focus on the construction of scientific or metaphysical theories of the process of cognition and of the knower. They can't allow that we might come to think of rejecting the theory as rational

since anyone who does so is thereby 'imagining the falsity of that theory and is concurrently classified by that theory as someone whose opinion is either incorrect or incomplete' (81). But all this amounts to is the claim that if the theory were to be true, as we tentatively think it is, then it would be irrational to reject it, not that we cannot rationally think that there might be situations that would lead us to reject it, even if we cannot now rationally envisage any one in particular. Van Fraassen's alternative is a voluntarist epistemology that sees epistemic agents as engaged in an enterprise of making epistemic decisions and evaluating epistemic goals rather than conforming to pre-ordained patterns. He rejects Sellars for having one cognitive goal—explanatory coherence—and praises William James for recognizing that there are multiple cognitive goals the balance among which we must decide for ourselves. (Yet explanatory coherence surely involves weighing explanatory power against economy?) In any case ordinary epistemic decisions for van Fraassen are rationally permitted, never rationally mandated. Scientific revolutions pose a problem because posterior views make no sense from the anterior point of view, no matter how much anomalies and difficulties increase in number and blatancy. Van Fraassen appeals to Sartre's account of emotion as a change in view that transforms our subjective situation to make it bearable to illuminate scientific revolution. The posterior view brings a clear understanding of the prior by unpacking and reinterpreting ambiguities that made the posterior unintelligible to the prior. So scientific revolution becomes royal succession of older successful theories by new rivals that do not only what the older theories did well but what they didn't do, exposing in the former vagueness, ambiguity and incompleteness, interpretative elements and assumptions going beyond experience. The empiricist rule that experience is the ultimate source of information about the world allows normal science to rule out crackpot theories unsupported by new experimental findings and yet also sanctions and supports revolutionary changes that expose unwarranted interpretations that go beyond experience as well as those experience does warrant. What is incompatible with cognitive conversion is only a 'fundamentalist' empiricism that fails to recognize that our understanding of what experience is, the distinction between experience and interpretation, and what we can infer from experience isn't simply given but subject to change.

In the final chapter, van Fraassen argues that science is characteristically an objectifying inquiry in which we not only distance ourselves from and neutralize the objects of inquiry, but delimit the relevant parameters for describing and explaining them. Even scientific revolutions aim at creating objectifying inquiry. The secularizing relegation of religion to subjectivity and illusion, reducing God to a hypothesis, likewise exemplifies this objectifying process, but is neither necessary for science nor a necessary consequence of science. What distinguishes the secular from the religious isn't a set of doctrines or a theory, but again a stance or attitude with which we approach the world and relate to our own experience and others. Encountering the divine like acknowledging persons generally for van Fraassen isn't a

matter of discovering an entity with certain features of personhood but a matter of decision and choice of how to live and interact with them. No objectifying inquiry can decide that and, though religious beliefs may be modified through the development of science and other human activities, the religious stance isn't incompatible with or undermined by science. At the same time, van Fraassen argues that persons aren't created by our decisions since our decisions are subject to revision and so may be in error, and coming to accept someone as a person implies (thinking) that they were persons all along, not just that they just became persons. The argument needs more work to be fully convincing, but like the rest of the book, is certainly thought provoking.

**Bruce Hunter**  
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