

Book Reviews

Dodd, Julian, *Being True to Works of Music*.
Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020, pp. viii + 194.

The notion of authenticity in musical performance has been discussed extensively in musicology throughout the past century. The story is well-known to those in the music business. Starting from the early 1920s, an ever-growing number of musical historians and practitioners began to engage in the study of pre-classical music, preparing performing editions of ancient works and recreating period instruments. By the 1950s, this new interest consolidated around what is usually referred to as the “Early Music Movement”, which contributed significantly to the popularization of the notion of authenticity in the musical field.¹ During the 1980s, however, interest in “authentic performances” began to crack. Musicologists increasingly mistrusted authenticity for being a naïve concept, a misleading ideal, and one giving rise to a series of cold and mechanical performances.² In the 1990s, scepticism became so widespread that music scholars gave up talk of “authenticity” altogether.³

What makes this story particularly interesting, however, is that right when the Early Music Movement was being administered the final *coup de grâce* by musicologist Richard Taruskin,⁴ debates on musical authenticity started to bloom in English-speaking philosophical circles. Burst into the flames of musicology, authenticity—like the legendary phoenix—was born again from its own ashes in the cradle of analytic aesthetics. Since the late 1990s’, the release of several important essays by Stephen Davies, Peter Kivy, Roger Scruton, Jerrold Levinson, and many others⁵—all concerned with examining various aspects of performance authenticity and all making explicit usage of the term—marked indeed the emergence of a thriving research field in the philosophy of music, whose ramifications extend to the present day.

There was, in fact, a major twist in the way philosophers of music, as opposed to musicologists, addressed the topic. As Kivy made clear in his seminal volume *Authenticities*,⁶ authenticity is not a singular notion, but rather a *plural* one. A context-dependent concept, authenticity remains blurry until we clarify

¹ For a collection of views on the subject of early music see Kenyon, N. (ed.) 1988, *Authenticity and Early Music: A Symposium*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

² See, for example, Taruskin, R. 1984, “The Authenticity Movement Can Become a Positivistic Purgatory, Literalistic and Dehumanizing”, *Early Music*, 12, 3-12, “The Pastness of the Present and the Presence of the Past”, in Kenyon, N. (ed.), *Authenticity and Early Music*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1988, 137-210; Dreyfus, L. 1992, “Early Music and the Suppression of the Sublime”, *Journal of Musicology*, 10, 114-19.

³ So much so that it has become usual nowadays to talk about “historically informed” musical performances. See, e.g., Fabian, D. 2001, “The Meaning of Authenticity and The Early Music Movement: A Historical Review”, *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music*, 32, 2, 153-67.

⁴ Taruskin, R. 1995, *Text and Act: Essays on Music and Performance*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 90-154.

⁵ See Davies, S. 2001, *Musical Works and Performances: A Philosophical Exploration*, Oxford: Clarendon Press; Kivy, P. 1995, *Authenticities: Philosophical Reflections on Musical Performance*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press; Scruton, R. 1997, *The Aesthetics of Music*, Oxford: Oxford University Press; Levinson, J. 1990, *Music, Art, and Metaphysics*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

⁶ Kivy 1995.

the background against which the term is spelled out, so that there may be not just one but many different *authenticities* in musical performance, all related to, yet all potentially conflicting with one another.

Julian Dodd's latest book *Being True to Works of Music*, published by Oxford University Press in 2020, marks a decisive step forward in the philosophical exploration of the different varieties of authenticity and their consequences on musical practice, as restricted to Western instrumental music. Written in the crystal-clear style of the best analytic philosophy, the author presents readers with a thoroughly-argued examination of the complexities of this controversial notion. Dodd's book, however, offers more than a mere review of the subject. With remarkable insightfulness, it draws an outline of what we might call a "deontology" for music performers, i.e., a sketch of a duty-based approach to decision-making in the field of classical music performance practice. Adopting the ethically-informed vocabulary of obligations, values, conventions, ideals, and norms, Dodd unearths the normative layout and the different value implications underlying musical practice, where "practice" is meant, in a Wittgensteinian framework, as a form of life constituted by a set of specific rules and praxes. While similar normative approaches have already captured attention in other domains of philosophical inquiry—I am referring particularly to recent debates concerning the ethics of reconstructions, restorations,⁷ and archaeology⁷—this is still uncharted territory in music. We can only hope, thus, that Dodd's book will be the forerunner of a new season of discussions in this area.

What is it like to be *true* to a work of music? Dodd's provocative title makes us wonder.⁸ The answer emerges throughout the six chapters of the book from the close, critical dialogue the author establishes with the major protagonists of this thirty-year debate, and especially Kivy and Davies. Their alternative understandings of authenticity represent the poles against which Dodd elaborates his own proposal. Through a subtle exercise in analysis, Dodd aims to establish an alternative path between the Scylla of Davies' historicist account of authenticity and the Charybdis of Kivy's personalistic approach. As we shall see momentarily, this third path is driven by what Dodd calls "interpretive authenticity", a notion whose articulation constitutes the author's original most contribution to recent debates on the topic.

Chapter 1 of Dodd's book is aimed at providing a theoretical outline of our practice of classical music within which discourses on performance authenticities can be found meaningful. According to Dodd, the most crucial character of our musical practice is that it is intrinsically work-focused, meaning that its artistic endpoint is not to be found in musical performances *simpliciter*, but in how performances are able to present works. An important issue, however, is that scores do not fully determine the sound of accurate performances: they are "gappy" (6). Score translation into sound medium, Dodd argues, "invites interpretation by performers" (5), and as a consequence, the resulting performances

⁷ Consider for example Scarre, C. and Scarre, G. 2006, *The Ethics of Archaeology: Philosophical Perspectives on Archaeological Practice*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Bicknell, J., Judkins, J., and Korsmeyer, C. 2019, *Philosophical Perspectives on Ruins, Monuments, and Memorials*, New York: Routledge.

⁸ The title is obviously reminiscent of the original meaning of the German term *Werk-treue*. For a similar use in the philosophical debate see also Goehr, L. 1989, "Being True to the Work", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 47, 1, 1989, 55-67.

can differ even radically from one another, though performers may all be seeking to be faithful to the work. While proving that there can be a plurality of “authenticities”, this also means that performers are often left to decide *which* of these versions of “work-faithfulness” deserves priority. The score, as Dodd puts it, can be seen in this sense as a “site of negotiation between composer and performing artist” (155), which implies that conflicts are very likely to arise between the two of them. Most of the text is thus devoted to exploring the possible strategies to resolve these conflicts by scrutinizing and weighing up the normative obligations of each different version of authenticity.

The first form of authenticity Dodd addresses in Chapter 2 is compliance with the composer’s written instructions as encoded in the score. Score compliance authenticity (SCA), in Dodd’s terms, subtends the idea that performers have a fundamental obligation to maximise *accuracy* when performing musical works. One first problem in this regard is determining whether SCA is a value in our performance practice, i.e., a good-making feature of performance (22). Is playing works just as they were written able to make a performance *ceteris paribus* more aesthetically satisfying than another one? Parting from Davies (2001), who considers SCA as a purely ontological requirement, Dodd offers a positive answer to this question. That SCA is a performance value is demonstrated, he contends, by the fact that listeners *do* believe a performance of a work superior for being more accurate, other things being equal. Accuracy, however, is not just an interpretative option; rather, it is a primary or fundamental goal of our work-focused practice, something that, as he claims, has “final value”, meaning that it is valued for its own sake (12).

But what exactly does SCA consist of? Since, as we know already, scores do not completely dictate the sound of any accurate performance, the indications they provide always require interpretation, i.e., need to be disambiguated against the background of some appropriate performance conventions. Which conventions we should adopt to interpret a score becomes thus a substantial question if we aim to achieve accuracy (20). In the philosophical literature, this question has been prevalently treated historically. To comply with the score, it has been argued, performers should read it in light of the musical practices extant at the time of composition, including, but not limited to, the use of period instruments.⁹ As Dodd notices, this historicist bent transforms SCA into a form of “historical authenticity” (HA), a notion he addresses in Chapter 3 of the book.

By deploying a vast array of arguments, Dodd’s first step is to offer a clearinghouse of all objections that have been raised both in the musicological and in the philosophical domain against HA. He convincingly demonstrates that the problem with HA is not or not so much that it is an unattainable goal, a conceptual naivety, or an indefensible ideal (51). Rather, the problem is that HA does not or cannot do the *normative job* its advocates would like it to do. In other words, while there is a “pro tanto obligation” for performers to respect the score, this does not imply, Dodd argues, that there exists a similar obligation for

⁹ Davies, S. 2001, *Musical Works and Performances*, ch. 5; Levinson, J. 1990, *Music, Art, and Metaphysics*; Sharpe, R.A. 1991, “Authenticity Again”, *British Journal of Aesthetics* 31, 163-6; Thom, P. 2007, *The Musician as Interpreter*, University Park: Pennsylvania State University.

them to do so by historicist lights. SCA is a final value in our performance practice; HA is not.

How, then, can we articulate SCA so as to escape the historicist lure? Dodd's proposal is that we base score compliance on a more flexible notion of respect for *tradition*, where tradition is understood, in strict opposition to historicism, as a dynamic principle subject to continuous evolution in time with "accumulated wisdom, changing tastes" (63), and new technical developments. On this model, it is the sum of musical practices of the *performer's* time, rather than of the *composer's* (71), that determine the genuine standards of SCA. Although this solution may appear unconvincing to the Early Music nostalgics, it has, it seems to me, the merit of promoting a critical, rather than an antiquarian, view of music history, one in which performers are seen as rooted in a practice that extends back into the past but still admits of innovation; a view where the dead "do not bury the living", to paraphrase Nietzsche.¹⁰

Having thus rearticulated SCA as a tradition-based norm, Dodd's next move is to confront the major competitor of SCA in musical performance: what Kivy famously calls "personal authenticity" (PA). Chapter 4 of the book is entirely dedicated to the critical investigation of this notion. Following Kivy,¹¹ Dodd characterises PA as an attempt of the performer to be true to her own *artistic personality* while playing, where "artistic personality" is meant as the sum of the performer's musical tastes, values, commitments, and intuitions. A performance is faithful to the performer's artistic personality in this sense if it bears "the *special stamp*" or is "a *direct extension*" of it (92). These personal marks or imprints, according to Kivy, translate into the way the performance sounds and impinge on its style.¹²

But can PA be also considered a performance value in itself, one resulting in an obligation for performers to shape their performances so that they express their artistic personalities (89)? Guiding the reader through a meticulous dissection of Kivy's thesis, Dodd provides some persuasive arguments against this idea. In Dodd's reconstruction, PA's status as a performance value is grounded in the fact that Kivy considers performances of works as "arrangements" or "versions", thus akin in themselves to "artworks". Since artworks have admittedly greater artistic value the more "personally authentic" they are; and since performances, qua versions, are (akin to) artworks, it follows for Kivy that PA is also a value of performances. Having resumed Kivy's argument in this way, it becomes child game for Dodd to dispute the soundness of the conclusion by denying the second premise. Differently from arrangers, work performers do not seek to produce any new artistic content; therefore, their performances cannot be regarded as artworks (98). This, Dodd clarifies, does not mean that personal style, originality, and creativity do not count as valuable features of a performance, but that such features acquire their value only inasmuch as they contribute to making sense of the work they interpret. Bluntly stated, the fundamental purpose of classical music practice is not that performers express their personality through performance, but that they focus on the work, with an aim to present it to the audience in the most insightful way.

¹⁰ Nietzsche, F. 1983, "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life", in *Untimely Meditations*, Translated by R.J. Hollingdale, New York: Cambridge University Press, 72.

¹¹ Kivy 1995: 108-42.

¹² Kivy 1995: 123.

This leads us to the last form of authenticity Dodd discusses in the book, which represents, he believes, the most basic norm of performance. The norm is named “interpretive authenticity” (IA) and its analysis is carried out in Chapters 5 and 6 of the book. According to Dodd, IA corresponds to a kind of faithfulness to the work that is associated with, yet distinguished from score compliance. Rather than merely requiring the performer to comply with the composers’ written prescriptions, the goal of IA is interrogating the score for the work’s meaning, trying to evince the deeper musical content that is embodied in the notes. IA’s status as a fundamental performance value, Dodd contends, arises from the fact that works in Western classical music are composed for the sake of being understood, where “understanding” involves grasping their *point* or *integrity* (110) or figuring out their *why* (113). Performers have an obligation to evince and facilitate the audience’s understanding of the works they perform. In this sense, complying with the composer’s written indications, although necessary, is not sufficient to achieve the subtle understanding of the work’s musical meaning that is the aim of musical performance. *Interpretation* is thus essential to present the works insightfully.

In normative terms, this implies that IA, just like SCA, has for Dodd final value, i.e., cannot be traded off for other performance qualities as interestingness, originality, liveliness, and so on. The two authenticities, however, are not on par. Unlike SCA, IA qualifies as the “constitutive norm” of our actual practice of classical music, something arising out of what Christine Korsgaard calls the practice’s *teleology*,¹³ “the *raison d’être*” (162) of performance practice being to recover the musical meaning expressed in the notes. SCA, by contrast, has its status only as “a conduit to insightful convincing performances” (115). It follows, according to Dodd, that when normative conflicts occur between IA and SCA, our practice approves of the performer’s decision to prefer the former to the latter. In other words, disobeying the score’s written instructions for the sake of evincing further understanding on the work performed is for Dodd admissible, when done “with appropriately serious-minded and work-focused spirit” (155). Decisions of parting from the score, however, can only be taken according to a conception of what is the right way to present the work and not, *pace* Kivy, for the sake of what “sounds better” (39). The work-focusedness of Western classical music is such that our evaluation of a performance depends on the convincingness of its interpretation of the work. The primary duty of performers is thus to display the work’s musical meaning at its best.

It will not escape the reader’s notice that Dodd’s central argument in support of IA, thus described, rests entirely on a substantive conception of musical meaning in which music is seen as signifying much more than only the notes; an old idea¹⁴ that Dodd, in Chapter 5 of the text, unpacks by adopting Michael Morris’ account on the topic.¹⁵ But what that ‘much more’ stands for is exactly the heart of the issue and represents the Achilles heel of Dodd’s thesis. On the

¹³ Korsgaard, C. 2008, *The Constitution of Agency: Essays on Practical Reason and Moral Psychology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press; Korsgaard, C. 2009, *Self-Constitution: Agency, Identity, and Integrity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

¹⁴ The *locus classicus* of this idea is Hanslick, E. 1854, *On the Musically Beautiful*, Translated by L. Rothfarb and C. Landerer, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

¹⁵ Morris, M. 2008, “How Can There Be Works of Art?”, *Postgraduate Journal of Aesthetics* 5, 1-18, and Morris, M. 2012, “The Meaning of Music”, *The Monist*, 95, 556-86.

one hand, Dodd may be right to insist that musical meaning is never given *a priori* but only revealed by insightful interpretation (129); that it is non-semantic (79), limitless, and resistant to paraphrase (116); and that it is thereby configured, to use Susanne Langer's famous phrasing, as "an unconsummated symbol".¹⁶ On the other hand, however, his argument leaves eventually undecided what this musical meaning is and what it coincides with—whether it is a matter of the pleasantness of the performed sounds, their specific expressive or emotional content, their harmonic structure, or rather the compositional intentions and surrounding cultural and social context of a piece.

Somewhat ecumenically, Dodd's notion of musical meaning holds together all these aspects, leaving a great deal of freedom to both philosophers and performers of music to decide which aspect to privilege and which to sacrifice. While this solution may be accused of circularity, Dodd's insistence on the value of interpretation, it seems to me, has the virtue of reminding us that our musical practice, like all other human practices, is a living thing, always open to revision, and ultimately rooted in the dialectical and stipulative agreement among practitioners.

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¹⁶ Langer, S. 1954 (1941), *Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art*, New York: The New American Library, 195.

Earp, Brian D. and Savulescu, Julian, *Love Drugs: The Chemical Future of Relationships*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020, pp. 280.

In their book, Brian Earp and Julian Savulescu propose a revolution in our way of understanding, living and conceptualizing our love lives: chemistry could be the answer to—many of—our emotional problems, when it comes to falling in and out of love.

Should we take a pill that could ease up our break-up from a toxic—perhaps abusive—relationship? Alternatively, should we not allow for a "chemical boost" in our marriage so to fall again in love with our partner with whom we became unable to communicate after years together?

These are some of the questions that are raised in this unique book. Unique for the angle given to the numerous discussions on love and unique for the academic rigor kept throughout the monograph without losing sight of an accessible and enjoyable prose. The book develops its message through twelve intense chapters that meticulously engage with the main issues at stake when discussing the possibility of "medicalizing love"—from authenticity and social pressure to stigma and mental health.

Concerning the scientific findings in our hands, the book also covers all the available information we currently have on the way our body (and mind?) responds to biochemical inputs from within our body or from outside.

The main thesis of the book is quite simple: we have always (since Romanticism in fact, but we often forget that) described "true love" as one of the highest "goals" we can hope to achieve—hence implicitly depicting it as an unquestionably positive variable in our lives—but that might be misplaced. First of all,

love relationships can be extremely unhealthy for us, both physically and psychologically. From toxic and violent relationships to anxiety related to a rejection, many are the instances in which love is *not* the answer. Secondly, from a neurochemical perspective, the very experience of “being in love” has more than one overlapping with situations of addictions to substances such as drugs, alcohol and so on. When in love, we can experience dependency, euphoria and cravings typical of situations of addiction because the dopamine reward system in our brain is activated by our engagement with a romantic partner.

Another “myth” that we tend to associate love with, is that it is “natural”—hence perfect in itself and unchallengeable by definition. The authors want us to rethink this axiom, suggesting that if we were to safely target the neurochemical processes behind romantic attachment that could allow us to help some individuals suffering from different forms of love (lost, rejected, finished), we should—just as we do with other addictions.

Even if all chapters provide plenty of material for discussion and deserve a careful read, possibly the most innovative part of the book (that builds on extensive previous research on the topic by the Earp, Savulescu and colleagues) is the one that focuses on “Ecstasy as Therapy” (Ch. 6), where they put forward a very powerful argument.

Looking into some studies focused on the successful use of MDMA (referred to as “ecstasy” in the street jargon) in cases of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Earp and Savulescu challenge us to question some of our *a priori* bias in assessing the medical, social and moral legitimacy of (certain) drugs. If MDMA helps a couple regaining their authentic love through the disempowerment of the defense mechanisms developed by a war veteran when back home to his/her family—that unhealthily damages the possibility to express their true feelings, why should we not use it? People with PTSD might struggle to communicate their love to their partners, resulting closed and unreachable, creating, in time, the conditions for a break-up that would not have taken place had s/he been not blocked in their expressive capacities. MDMA (paralleled with some therapy) might help overcome this block and, in time, dilute it. Using these drugs, the patients (war veterans or otherwise) will be able to lower their guard and let the love of their partners enter their relationship again. The studies are still very limited, but nonetheless deserve a careful evaluation that might shake some of our certainties.

Earp and Savulescu are aware, and make clear, that the chemical dimension of love is not the only factor to be taken into account in the love equation:

Tinkering with biology, then, is not the only way to modify love: its psychological aspects can be tinkered with as well. At a societal level, people might try to challenge existing narratives about love, including dominant norms on how love should manifest in different relationships. Should love require sex and passion, for example, to count as truly romantic? Or is romantic love more about loyalty and working through difficult problems? Different societies, or the same society over time, might emphasize different factors (22).

This awareness could lead us to very different conclusions—we will not dwell into those here—but what is unquestionably pointed out by the authors is the importance of societal values (that in turn will likely shape our own self-perception) in characterizing and defining our conception of love, but also the

way we should relate to it. In other words: why should we have prejudice over the possibility of *preserving* our relationships through the use of some biochemical remodulation?

They write:

Some people might be concerned that swallowing a pill to achieve insights into one's relationship would be in some sense too easy. The sort of thing that, quickly attained, could just as quickly be lost. But thinking of the pill as an adjunct to relationship therapy should help alleviate this concern. It leaves plenty of room for active, nonsuperficial engagement and intentional learning about oneself and one's partner. As Carol describes the wrap-up to her sessions, the question is, "How are they going to follow up on these insights? They make decisions right there" (90).

Hence, it would appear as if our authenticity would not be undermined by "love drugs" after all, quite the opposite.

Surely Earp and Savulescu's approach to love (and its relationship with more or less legitimate drugs) can be challenged—and it has been done so by a number of authors in a recent special issue of *Philosophy and Public Issues* dedicated to their book.¹ Another criticism that could be moved towards the underlining Posthumanist message that might be extracted (though the authors never frame their argument in those terms)—and structurally rejected²—from an embracement of "love enhancing biotechnologies" is that hype for technology that many consider illusionary and promising of too much, unachievable "perfection".³ Yet, it remains clear that the effort made by the authors in enriching the discussion on this very sensitive (and culturally charged) topic is something to be praised no matter how much we might see it as an "attempted murder" of romantic love.

In conclusion, this is a brave and solid book, written with respect for science and individuals, providing the reader with some innovative ways of looking at and relate to love. Earp and Savulescu's arguments do not need to go unchallenged of course, but engaging with the new, relevant findings that the authors carefully sketch out for us, is something that anyone interested in the topic should really wrestle with—even if critically.

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¹ Garasic, M.D. (ed.) 2020, "Enhancing Love? Symposium on Brian Earp and Julian Savulescu's book *Love Drugs*", *Philosophy and Public Issues*, 10, 3.

² Levin, S.B. 2021, *Posthuman Bliss? The Failed Promise of Transhumanism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

³ Sandel, M. 2009, *The Case Against Perfection: Ethics in the Age of Genetic Engineering*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Edwards, Douglas, *The Metaphysics of Truth*.
Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018, pp. x + 198.

One of the main challenges posed by an inquiry into the nature of truth is its apparent connections with several other central and difficult philosophical issues. In recent years, however, the deflationary strand brought promise to dissipate

such intricacies and make the notion of truth treatable. Edwards' *The Metaphysics of Truth* is a strong and systematic reaction to this deflationary turn. As Edwards explicitly claims from the beginning, the book has two main purposes. One is that of countering the deflationary and anti-metaphysical approaches to truth; the other is offering a positive, metaphysically loaded conception of what truth is and how it connects to reality. The proposal ultimately consists in a complex form of truth and ontological pluralism. Before entering the book in more detail, it should be remarked that Edwards is a prominent scholar in the field of truth studies, where he distinguished himself as one of the most active and clearest thinkers in the camp of truth pluralism. Indeed, many of the ideas found in the book are already presented and discussed in several published papers. The book is not, however, just the collection of those papers, since Edwards adds many new ideas and combines the various parts in a strong way, from which a well articulated system emerges. The book can be divided into two main parts. The first part includes the first three chapters, and mostly addresses deflationism. From Chapter 4 to 10 Edwards extends the treatment and slowly builds his positive view, with the last two chapters focusing on truth-making theory, and its relations with the pluralist account favoured by Edwards. Let's review the chapters more carefully.

Chapter 1 addresses the question of whether truth should be considered a property or not. Although a positive answer may be considered the most natural and the default option, some philosophers have held different views. On the one hand, there is what Edwards calls the "ultra-deflationist" conception, according to which truth does not define an extension, since it is not expressed by an authentic predicate in the language. On the other hand, truth might be considered an object or an event, rather than a property. The chapter nicely summarizes the main reasons why it is now generally accepted that truth is a property, in at least the basic sense that the truth predicate semantically works as a predicate with an associate extension. The chapter ends with comments on the distinction between concept and property, and on the problem of truth bearers. Willing to avoid endless complications raised by propositions, Edwards adopts sentences as primary truth bearers.

If the truth predicate defines an extension, and, in this sense, it stands for a property, how can deflationists rival traditional conceptions of truth? The standard move is that of pointing out that although it is a property, truth is a very special one. In particular, and against traditional views, deflationists hold that truth is an insubstantial property. But what does this mean? Edwards critically discusses the main options and puts them aside. A widely discussed option, but completely neglected in this book, however, is the clarification of insubstantiality in terms of conservativity. A proposal that sparked a live debate among those working on truth from a formal perspective. Although the metaphysical approach favoured by Edwards is clearly different and distant from a formal perspective, recognition, if not engagement with this other side of the field would have been highly appreciated. In any case, Edwards eventually settles on his own proposal based on Lewis' distinction between sparse and abundant properties. According to him the insubstantiality of deflationary truth is to be understood in terms of abundance. The distinction is one of the key passages in Edwards' strategy and it is crucial in many parts of the book. Roughly, the idea is to distinguish between sparse properties—corresponding to objective similarity and grounding causal-explanatory power—and the abundant ones, which mere-

ly correspond to the extension of predicates. Deflationary truth would be an example of the latter, since the truth predicate would define an extension—as the criticisms of ultra-deflationism have shown—but it does not capture an objective feature, as it does not carve reality at any joints.

Once well characterized, a critical discussion of deflationism is offered in Chapter 3. Edwards argues that none of the basic features of the deflationist conception of truth (basicness of Tarskian biconditionals, completeness, purity, insubstantiality) is tenable. Take basicness, which is the feature whose discussion occupies more space. Edwards shows that, far from being basic, as deflationists claim, Tarskian biconditionals can actually be derived and explained in various ways, as done by Tarski, Ramsey, Lynch and Wright. In particular, connections with reference and assertion play a role in deriving disquotational principles, which are thus shown not to be fundamental. Indeed, such connections undermine the other features and put the very insubstantiality of deflationary truth at risk as well. To avoid a complete loss, deflationists must show that such connections do not make truth substantial because also the notions to which truth is connected are not substantial. What emerges is a global deflationism involving a plethora of deflated semantic notions beside truth. This is remarkable. Although deflating other notions usually come natural to proponents of truth deflationism, it goes against the commonly accepted assumption according to which one can be a deflationist about truth without having to be a deflationist about everything else. Also, it is sometimes held that one could easily deflate one notion at the cost of inflating others. By contrast, Edwards' argument shows that a deflationary view only comes as a global package, forcing a deflationary stand over several issues. A consequence of this is that the idea of a "methodological deflationism" is misleading. It relies on the claim that truth deflationism is a neutral, minimally committing view that, as such, should be adopted as the default option and abandoned only if necessary. Deflationism, however, involves highly committing views and is not as innocent as is usually taken to be. If global deflationism is not to be privileged and must defend itself as any other view, then we can have a fresh start and look for a better treatment of semantic notions. This is what Edwards does in the second part of the book, where his positive conception is built.

In Chapter 4 Edwards puts truth aside for a moment. Instead, he investigates how language and the world are connected, focusing in particular on the relation between predicates and properties. By concentrating on the roles that different predicates play, Edwards proposes that predicates come in different kinds. Accordingly, he develops two different models of the relationship between predicates and properties: a responsive model, and a generative model. Roughly speaking, the responsive model corresponds to a realist approach. The idea is that there are sparse properties out there corresponding to objective similarities and causal-explanatory roles, and some predicates just track them. In this sense some predicates respond to sparse properties, namely to mind-independent features of the world. The situation is reversed in the generative model. Edwards argues that some predicates work in an anti-realist way. They do not respond to independent properties, but generate those properties. In this case there are no pre-existing properties that predicates track. Rather, that a certain predicate is satisfied by a certain object is what determines the corresponding property. As a consequence, such a property must be a merely abundant property and not a sparse one. The direction of explanation is now reversed: if

“is g” is a generative predicate, an object *t* has the abundant property generated by “is g” *because* the predicate “is g” is satisfied by *t*. Having laid down the models, Edwards discusses some examples. While some of these are not surprising—yet useful to see the approach at work—Edwards interestingly applies the model to institutional, race, and gender predicates. He argues that all such predicates better fit the generative model, and shows how this can help illuminate various philosophical issues. This part is particularly significant for two reasons. One is that thanks to these specific examples, and Edwards’ remarkable clarity, good cases for the anti-realist, generative model are offered. This is not obvious, given that the principle “‘p’ is true *because* p”—rejected in the generative model—is often considered hardly dismissible even by deflationists and anti-realists, unless they are open to embrace an idealistic metaphysics. Secondly, the cases show interesting and new applications of truth theories that are potentially illuminating and important to deal with problems on which traditional debates might appear to have a weaker grip. Note that these merits go beyond the actual correctness of the treatment of the discussed predicates. It does not really matter if Edwards discusses the right conceptions of race and genders predicates in this book. What matters is the kind of role his models play in such contexts.

The chapter just described is key to Edwards’ project, since the entire following discussion relies on the distinction between responsive and generative domains. Chapter 5 explicitly extends it to truth. Here the author offers a new argument for a pluralist conception of truth. This is interesting given that truth pluralism is often motivated just by reference to the so-called “scope problem”—according to which traditional conceptions of truth work well in one domain but become problematic when extended to all. The new argument is natural at this point. Edwards shows how the responsive and the generative models involve different forms of truth: a representational (realist) truth and a non representational (anti-realist) truth. By subscribing to the plurality (or at least the duality) of semantic models, one automatically subscribes to pluralism about truth. This chapter also includes an interesting discussion of rival forms of monism. In particular, here Edwards completes his attack against deflationism, showing that (global) deflationism is incoherent. The key step is showing that a deflationary view holding that any property is abundant is incoherent, because abundance requires at least a sparse property of truth. In the next Chapter, 6, an important ingredient is added by extending the pluralist conception to the notion of being. To do so Edwards distinguishes between sparse and abundant objects, where a singular term refers to a sparse object because it exists, and, by contrast, an abundant object exists because its term occurs in a true sentence. Once truth and ontological pluralism are taken on board and combined in a well integrated package, one could wonder how such pluralisms should be understood. The task is completed in the next two chapters, 7 and 8, where the author proposes his version of truth and ontological pluralism respectively. For truth the move is not new, since Edwards rehearses his favourite version of truth pluralism, already defended in other places. Basically, Edwards opts for a moderate form of truth pluralism, according to which there is a single generic truth property, characterized by the usual set of truisms, and a plurality of truth-determining properties, like correspondence and super-assertability. The main idea here is the analogy with the notion of winning a game, which, while general and common to all games, is determined in different ways by different games. The proposal is certainly elegant and clear and Edwards extends it also to existence. An interesting

claim of these two chapters is that both truth and existence escape the distinction between sparse and abundant properties. For truth the reason becomes apparent in truth attributions. Consider the sentence “‘p’ is true”. If *p* belongs to a generative domain, where truth is determined by super-assertability, then, the attribution implies: “‘p’ is superassertible. Since super-assertability is not an abundant property, then “‘p’ is true *because* the sentence to which “‘p’ refers has the sparse property “is true” (the situation is similar for the responsive domain). So, to make sense of truth attributions, truth should apparently be sparse. However, it is typical of abundant properties to be determined by truth, rather than reality. Hence, Edwards concludes that the abundant/sparse distinction does not apply to truth itself.

In Chapters 9 and 10, Edwards discusses the relations between truth-making and truth pluralism. In Chapter 9, the author focuses on an argument (devised by Merricks) for truth primitivism that could be extracted by the claim that some truths do not have a truth maker. Edwards escapes Merricks’ argument by leveraging on his pluralism: some truths are not explained in terms of independently existing facts, but they still have a truth maker provided by—the anti-realist notion of—super-assertability. In Chapter 10, the author discusses the argument according to which truth-making theory would make theories of the nature of truth obsolete. Edwards undercuts this strategy by arguing that we cannot understand truth-making without a prior understanding of truth.

Let me now point out some basic objections that could be moved against the strategy presented in the book, before offering a final assessment. For matter of space, I limit myself to two related problems. A first worrying aspect of Edwards’ view is the idea that truth escapes the sparse/abundant distinction. This is problematic not just because it is disputable (as I argue next), but because it seems to undermine the very structure of Edwards’ maneuver. From the beginning we are told that domains can be classified in different areas, characterized by predicates that stand for either sparse or abundant properties. On this basic distinction both the attack to deflationism and truth pluralism have been motivated. But then we discover that the distinction is not exhaustive: some properties are neither sparse nor abundant. So, what are they? How do the corresponding domains work? And what difference does this make for the attack against deflationism? Can deflationists use that new option? These questions are both crucial and quite natural, but nothing is said in reply. Secondly, one might also propose to read Edwards’ arguments for the exceptionality of truth as showing that truth is sparse after all, and thus embracing sparse monism. Indeed, Edwards has not shown that sparse monism is absurd as global deflationism is. Edwards might be dragged to sparse monism also by the treatment of thick predicates (namely moral predicates that have a descriptive content beside an expressive one), offered in Chapter 4. Edwards eventually shows sympathy for the view that all predicates are descriptive and thick to some degrees, even if they are moral predicates. If so, however, a sparse property of truth might be needed to account for the thick ingredient, making the moral domain not merely abundant.

Such objections and potential worries should not prevent us from appreciating the work done. The book is rich with new ideas and applications, and each chapter expands new issues without just repeating itself. The style is very clear and a pleasure to read, the work well structured, comprehensive, and filled with interesting and clever arguments. Such features make it not only an ideal text-

book for a graduate course, but also a likely cornerstone of the truth debate to come.

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