zation of truth-predicates to languages represents well Simmons' basic contention that truth-predicates are context-sensitive.

This book attests to a growing interests in the Liar paradox. It is interesting to note that recently there have appeared two other very interesting books related to the Liar: A. Gupta and N. Belnap, *The Revision Theory of Truth* (Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, 1993, and E. Brendel, *Wahrheit über der Lügner* (Berlin, Gruyter, 1992).

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C. J. F. Williams, *Being, Identity, and Truth.* Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1992. xi + 213 pp.

Reviewed by

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Are we to believe that broad philosophical questions such as 'What is being?' or 'What is identity?' or 'What is truth?' have no answers outside of considerations of how logic works in language? This seems to be what C. J. F. Williams argues in his book *Being, Identity, and Truth.* We are to think of 'being'as no more than a name for the job done by the existential quantifier and the words which act as its proxies in English. 'Identity' is only a name for what happens when the variable bound by such a quantifier is repeated, and 'truth' is merely a name for what happens in certain contexts when this variable stands for a proposition. The reader of Williams' book will find not bold and profound answers to big questions, but big questions reinterpreted and answered as less ambitious ones about logic and language.

Being, Identity, and Truth is a summary of the arguments for the main results in Williams' trilogy *What Is Truth?* (Wil76), *What Is Existence?* (Wil81), and *What Is Identity?* (Wil89). In his preface, Williams explains that he wrote the book in response to critics of his earlier works who felt that he demanded of his readers too great a facility with the technical notions and notation of modern logic. The book under review not only avoids logical symbolism altogether, but also

makes very few explicit references to the work of other philosophers and logicians. Potential readers may need to be forewarned that what Williams offers here is a condensed, plain language version of the trilogy. If they believe that the use of logical symbolism provides a necessary precision which plain language cannot supply, or if they seek specific references and a more comprehensive bibliography, they will need to refer to the previous volumes.

It is probably accurate to say that for Williams, being, identity and truth are not philosophical concepts at all. They are linguistic ones: roles played within language by certain groups of words. Williams' analysis of the logical structure of ordinary sentences aims to reveal a "deep grammar" of truly basic concepts which do not necessarily coincide with those traditionally considered of fundamental importance to philosophers. "What is required for a proper understanding of concepts like being, identity, and truth is an appreciation of the syntactical categories to which the words which express them properly belong" (Wil89, p. vii). Eventually Williams is led to draw the categorical boundary lines so that these three concepts are reduced to just two: what he calls "somehood" (the essence of being) and "sameness" (the essence of both identity and truth). But since this new categorization is introduced explicitly only in the last few pages of *Being, Identity, and Truth*, it is still appropriate to discuss the contents of the book under the eponymous headings.

Being

The correspondence between words and their roles in language is, of course, far from one-to-one. This is true even when (perhaps especially when) one of the roles is as basic as that of asserting existence. The word 'are' does this job in the sentence 'There are red roses', while in 'Paul's Scarlet Climbers are red' it acts instead as a copulative, joining subject and predicate. And clearly the same job can be done by more than one word. 'Exist' could take the place of 'are' in the first example, and in the equivalent statement 'Some roses are red' the word 'some' obviously plays a fundamental role in asserting existence, since removing it would turn a true existential statement into a false predicative one.

Philosophers have sometimes wanted to treat existence itself as though it were a first-level predicate, a property individual things can have, even though this idea inevitably leads to the so-called Paradox of Existence. If existence is a property of individual objects, what infor-

mation is conveyed by the statement 'Red roses exist'? The sentence must mean that each red rose possesses the property of existence, yet supposedly there must *be* red roses before a property can be attributed to any of them. Similarly 'Blue roses do not exist' presupposes that there are identifiable things called 'blue roses' each of which fails to possess the property of existence, clearly a contradiction. One way out of this impasse is to recognize, for example, that the sentence 'Red roses exist' can be restated as 'Some roses are red', or as 'Something is a rose and is red'. Frege explained the Paradox of Existence by distinguishing first-level predicates such as '---- are red', which form propositions when the blank is filled by a name (for example, 'Paul's Scarlet Climbers'), from second-level predicates such as 'some roses----', which form propositions when the blank is filled by a first-level predicate (for example, '---- are red'). Similarly, '---- is a rose and is red' is a first-level predicate, while 'something ---' is a second-level predicate.

Thus also '----exist' is a second-level predicate. The words 'red roses' in 'Red roses exist' do not name anything; what they do is to describe a concept, namely that of a rose which is red. They form a noun phrase standing in for the first-level predicate '---- is a rose and is red'. To say 'Red roses exist' is to say 'Something is a rose and is red', and this in turn is simply to attribute to the concept 'red rose' the property that at least one object falls under it. As Frege put it more generally in a famous passage, "Affirmation of existence is in fact nothing but denial of the number nought" [*Grundlagen*, § 53]. Attributing to a concept the property that at least one object falls under it is what the existential quantifier does, and for Williams this is all that there is to *existence*.

Nevertheless, it is in the nature of many languages, including English, to make existence seem like a property of objects by giving its assertion the form of a subject connected to a predicate. As a result, even the greatest of philosophers have been misled into thinking that existence *is* a property of objects. Anselm and Descartes come to mind, with their 'ontological' proofs for the existence of God. Modern philosophers have by no means been exempt from this error, and so Williams, having laid the foundation with an analysis of existence which follows Frege's very closely, launches into a critical examination of much of contemporary philosophy.

For example, in his concluding chapter "Being, Ontology, and Reality", Williams takes aim at the title of W. V. Quine's widely influential essay introducing the doctrine of 'ontological commitment':

> The phrase 'On What There Is' does not indicate an area of important philosophical debate. It does not even make sense. It can only be interpreted as heralding an enquiry into the question '*What things*

> *exist*?' But the only way of construing that question is by interpreting 'exist' as a first-level predicable. There is no need to repeat earlier arguments for the incoherence of such an interpretation. If ontology purports to be the science of things that exist, in the way that psychology is the science of things that think, it is a fraud. An interest in *existence* is a suitable thing for a philosopher to have, but it is an interest in a particular concept, not in a particular class of objects, nor even in the universal class, which is said to include everything that *exists*. The person who is interested in *existence* is not necessarily interested in everything: there may *be* many things which do not interest him in the least. (p. 202)

Williams admits that there is another common use of the word 'ontological', namely to refer to what *is* the case in contrast to what is known to be the case (a matter of epistemology) or what can be stated to be the case without contradiction (a matter of logic). But according to Williams, this use of 'ontological' does not at all describe an independent field of philosophical interest, but only reveals what its user is *not interested in*: not in what can be known to be the case, nor in whether it is possible logically for something to be the case, nor in what *ought* to be the case, but in the fact that it *is* the case. To claim a purely ontological interest is merely to "disclaim a specialized interest," and the interest disclaimed must be made explicit before the claim is intelligible. "An 'ontological' interest in this sense is the zero case of a particular interest" (p. 205).

Identity

Just as there is a paradox of existence resulting from the mistaken notion that existence is a first-level predicate, there is a paradox of identity which results from mistaking identity for a first-level relation. A typical proposition asserting identity uses the words 'is the same as'. If the relation allegedly expressed by these words holds between an object and itself, the proposition is tautological. But if it holds between one object and another object distinct from the first, then the proposition is necessarily false. Plato, Aristotle, Hume, and Frege all struggled with this paradox before Russell, in his Theory of Descriptions, made the first real progress towards resolving it by pointing out, as Frege had with regard to existence, that in effect the problem stems from confusing a second-level predicate for a first-level predicate. Williams' example is 'My [driving test] examiner was the same as my son-in-law', which he plausibly maintains is equivalent to 'Someone examined me and he also

married my daughter'. The predicate 'Someone ----- and he also -----' clearly takes first-level predicates as arguments and is therefore a second-level predicate. It seems we are now forced to conclude that '----- is the same as -----' is also a second-level predicate. As Russell pointed out, this predicate makes no more sense when the blanks are filled by names than does '----- exists' when its blank is filled by a name, at least not as long as both names are being *used* as names and not simply mentioned. 'Samuel Clemens is the same as Mark Twain' either tautologically asserts that Samuel Clemens is the same as Samuel Clemens, or it does not assert identity at all but instead says, for example, that Samuel Clemens is also called 'Mark Twain'. In any event, the phrase 'is the same as' is redundant in English. A sentence using it to assert identity can always be restated in a form which not only omits the phrase but also displays more perspicuously the fact that, if anything, it is predicates, not objects, which are being 'related'.

For Williams, identity is characterized by the role played by 'he also' (or just 'he') in 'Someone examined me and he also married my daughter', which is that of repeating the element represented by 'someone'. This proposition is an existential generalization of statements containing repeated names such as 'Peter examined me and Peter married my daughter'. With the help of a very little bit of logical notation, it can be rephrased 'For some x, x examined me and x married my daughter', and it is for this reason that Williams in his previous book concluded that identity is fully characterized by repetition of a variable bound by an existential quantifier. In *Being, Identity, and Truth*, the conclusion is essentially the same, but of course there is no mention of variables or quantifiers.

A few readers may be disappointed to find that there is little mention of sources or historical background either. Williams' analysis of identity starts from Wittgenstein's, and he made this explicit in *What Is Identity?* But almost all of the references to Wittgenstein in the index of the book under review refer to a whimsical use of the philosopher's name in one of Williams' examples, a sentence about someone looking for a nonexistent detective story written by Ludwig Wittgenstein. The example is not even part of Williams' discussion of identity. This is not a criticism so much as a warning to readers who might not be prepared for such informality!

Wittgenstein's assertion about identity is well-known: "Identity of object I express by identity of sign, and not by using a sign for identity. Difference of objects I express by difference of signs" (Wit66, 5.53). Williams devoted a major part of *What Is Identity?* to showing that Wittgenstein was wrong in thinking that a sign for identity could always

be dispensed with. But when Williams looks at what happens in English, he naturally finds that there is no one device which plays the role of a sign for identity. In 'Someone examined me and he also married my daughter' it is done by the words 'he also'. In 'Someone hurt himself' it is done by 'himself''. There appear to be many signs for identity in English. What they all have in common is that they do the indispensable job of repeating a 'variable' in an existential generalization.

Williams' analysis of the concept of identity leads him to take up the related topic of *personal identity*. John Locke was evidently the first to wonder what sort of criteria might be needed in order to establish that two propositions predicated things of one and the same person [*Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book II, Ch. 27]. Locke favored psychological criteria, while philosophers such as Bishop J. Butler and T. Reid have advanced the theory that biological criteria are sufficient. At least one philosopher (R. G. Swinburne) has attempted to characterize personal identity by employing both kinds of criteria. But Williams, through a consideration of how a person uses language to talk about herself, claims to have shown that *no* theory which reduces personal identity to the satisfaction of a set of criteria can provide "a full account of the concept of personal identity." For when someone says of herself both that she feels tired and that she has a headache, she is stating two different things about one and the same person and therefore making use of the concept of personal identity, but she is certainly not employing any criteria for determining whether or not the same person is involved in each statement. Hence theories which characterize personal identity by means of some set of criteria "have left out of consideration the view that a person has of her own identity" (p. 84).

In a chapter entitled "Pains and Brains", Williams also applies his analysis to what may be a more controversial question, namely the debate over the relation between psychological events such as thoughts and feelings, and neurophysiological events such as electrical activity in the cerebral cortex. Mind-Brain Identity Theorists claim that the relation is one of identity: the pain I feel in hitting my thumb with a hammer *is the same as* the firing of certain nerve fibres in my brain at that precise moment. But if it is correct that identity is not a relation between first-level objects (including such things as events), this claim falls to the ground, and more elaborate criticisms of the Mind-Brain Identity Theory, such as the argument Saul Kripke bases on his notion of 'rigid designators', appear to be neatly superseded. Williams maintains that by ignoring considerations of the actual role in language of phrases like 'is the same as', proponents of the Mind-Brain Identity Theory simply sidestep analysis of the two events (or properties, or activities) as-

serted to be identical, conveniently avoiding crucial issues of meaning and causality.

Truth

By now it should come as no surprise to the reader that Williams confronts the question 'What is truth?' by questioning the popular notion that truth is a first-level predicate, a property in this case of statements or propositions (and possibly also of beliefs, judgments, and thoughts). As usual, what he is really interested in obtaining is "an understanding of the way in which the word 'true' works in English" (p. 89). But he believes that such an understanding tells us what in fact truth essentially *is*.

The nature of identity was clarified by analyzing an existential generalization of the sentence 'Peter examined me and Peter married my daughter'. Perhaps the nature of truth can be clarified by using a similar tactic, say by looking at an existential generalization of 'Eric said that war had broken out and war *had* broken out' (to borrow another of Williams' examples). Williams, wishing to find something more illuminating for this purpose than the usual generalization 'What Eric said was true', suggests the odd sentence 'Eric said that somewhether and thether', where the neologisms are inventions of Arthur Prior and are meant to be replaced by propositions (such as 'war had broken out') in the same way that 'somewhere' and 'there', for example, are meant to be replaced by adverbial phrases of location in the sentence 'You can buy gasoline somewhere and you can get a map there'. 'Truth' for Williams seems to be nothing more than a name for the job these two (albeit fictional) words do, which is to generalize the repetition of a proposition. In other words, truth is merely the repetition of a 'variable', just as identity is repetition of a variable, only in this case the variablr ranges over propositions and occurs once following a verb of stating (or judging, believing, or thinking) and once by itself. The two occurrences establish a correspondence between the thing said (or judged, believed, or thought) and what is in fact the case: they are identical. This, according to Williams, is the only legitimate Correspondence Theory of truth. The concept of correspondence "is, simply, the concept of identity" (p. 108). For example, in thinking that something is true, "there are not two things which need to be compared with one another, what is thought to be the case and what is the case. When thinking goes right, what is thought to be the case *is* the case" (p. 207).

Perhaps many readers will think this is too simple. Are decades of debate over the Correspondence Theory dismissed so easily? In *What Is Truth?* Williams admits that his theory is in fact meant to be a radical clearing of the ground:

> Like Ramsey's so-called 'Redundancy Theory', of which it may be regarded as a development, mine is a theory which aims at making many of the traditional problems about Truth disappear. Truth ... is more simple than has been thought. But philosophers often have to work quite hard merely to undo the damage that has been caused by their predecessors. (p. xv)

One source of much damage, in Williams' eyes, is the notion that there are 'bearers of truth'. His attempt to repair this damage starts with the observation that, as with the concepts of being and identity, the concept of truth is clarified by examining ways in which we can do without the word in English, or at least, and most perspicuously, in English slightly and not unreasonably augmented by such words as 'somewhether' and 'thether'. In fact, from Williams' point of view, it appears that we might never have had the words 'true' and 'truth' at all if English had originally come equipped with "prosentences" such as 'somewhether' and 'thether', words which in any context can be replaced by a sentence, just as the more familiar pronoun 'it' can be replaced by a noun. The word which normal unaugmented English uses to do the job of 'thether' is 'true'. With the help of 'is' or 'was', the word 'true' converts the pronoun 'it' into a phrase which can serve as a prosentence, as in 'Eric said that war had broken out and it was true'. If the pronoun 'it' could by itself also serve as a prosentence, we would be able to say equivalently 'Eric said that war had broken out and it' (period). Carrying this a little further, one can imagine a form of English in which even the phrase `What Eric said' could be interpreted as a complete sentence, equivalent to 'What Eric said was true'. "The word 'true' then has the job, in a language, for example English, which lacks purpose-built prosentences, of creating *ad hoc* prosentences ('it is true') out of pronouns ('it'); and it has the further job of satisfying the need of bogus subject-expressions ('What Eric said') for a bogus predicate" (p. 96). In other words, contrary to a popular belief, phrases such as 'what Eric said' or 'Eric's statement' do not refer to an object (are "bogus subject-expressions"), and therefore all questions about the 'bearers of truth' (do they include beliefs? judgment? thoughts?) are misguided. 'What Eric said was true' is just another way of saying 'Eric said that somewhether and thether'. Nothing is being predicated of an object in

either sentence. Nor does the word 'aid' have any more privileged a role here than would 'believed' or 'judged' or 'thought'.

A consequence of this analysis of truth, by no means new to modern logic, is that facts are fictions. Just as 'is true' is needed in English to make a complete sentence out of 'What Eric said', so also we need the phrase 'the facts', or something similar ('the state of affairs' is popular among philosophers), to create a complete sentence out of 'What Eric said corresponded to'. (The reader may need to work a little harder to imagine how 'What Eric said corresponded to' might be interpreted as a complete sentence in itself!) But the same thought that is expressed by the sentence 'What Eric said corresponded to the facts' can be expressed "much less misleadingly" by the sentence 'Eric said that somewhether and thether', which makes no mention of facts. "*Truth* and *states of affairs* are, if we are willing to use Bertrand Russell's forthright terminology, logical fictions: but they are grammatical realities, and indeed necessities of idiom" (p. 111).

One might say that the theme of Williams' entire book is the view that philosophers have succumbed to a great many such fictions, "the result of an inadequate appreciation of the way in which 'be', 'true', and 'same' work."

> It is not, of course, a new view. Already in the eighteenth century Kant located the flaw in the so-called Ontological Argument for the Existence of God ... in its assumption that '`being is a real predicate'. What is not clear from Kant's discussion is precisely what a predicate is, and when a predicate is or is not a real one. Clarity on these matters came with the mathematician Frege, whose investigations into the foundations of arithmetic laid the foundation of all modern logic and philosophy of language. And where Frege improved our understanding of predicates, Russell followed with an invaluable insight about subjects. Many expressions which even Frege had taken to be names of objects Russell showed not to be names at all, and the objects they purported to name he rejected as 'logical fictions'. (p. ix)

Williams goes on to describe a large part of his own work as an effort to identify many more such logical fictions and thus begin to reverse some of the damage they have caused in philosophy. He believes he has "extended and applied" Russell's theory "to a wide range of expressions which have been thought to stand for problematic entities — 'kooky objects', as Gareth Matthews has called them. Beliefs, propositions, events, places, times, and so-called 'intentional objects' all fall under this head." We have seen how Williams deals with the category of

'kooky objects' known as 'bearers of truth'. If this review has hardly mentioned any of the other targets of his effort to effect some measure of philosophical damage control, at least it may have given the reader an idea of Williams' general *modus operandi.*

Is *Being, Identity, and Truth* an improvement over the preceding volumes in terms of accessibility and clarity of presentation? Although Williams' reliance on logical symbolism in the trilogy was certainly not unrestrained, the first two volumes did perhaps suffer from the use of reverse Polish notation, which in lengthy statements can try the patience even of readers who are fairly comfortable with mathematical logic. The criticism all three books evidently received may simply have been testimony to Williams' having both sought and found, if not a large readership, at least one spanning a wide range of backgrounds and interests. The titles alone could not have been chosen to be much more widely provocative. The new summary of the trilogy is every bit as clearly and carefully written as a reasonably receptive reader could desire. It is to be hoped that it will succeed in capturing a larger and more appreciative audience.

Has Williams said all that needs to be said about being, identity, and truth? Few readers will probably think so. But whatever lasting influence Williams' arguments may have on how most of us think about these things, *Being, Identity, and Truth* nevertheless remains a very entertaining and thought-provoking book.

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This is a biography of Jean van Heijenoort — the well-known logician and historian of modern logic but also a full-time, professional revolutionary — written by Anita Burdman Feferman. The author is a free-lance writer who has written short stories, articles and profiles. The book under review is her first full-length biography.

The book grew out of, as the author says, "what I had thought would be an interview or two with van Heijenoort. That was like thinking I could eat two peanuts; once I got started it was almost impossible to stop." She met van Heijenoort for the first time in Paris in 1970. Then in 1982, when he came to Stanford to begin work on the *Collected Works of Kurt Gödel* with the author's husband Professor Solomon Feferman and others, the meetings and contacts were more frequent.

The book is based on a series of interview with Jean van Heijenoort taken from 1983. This is the main source. But the author also has inter-

* Editor's note: Anita Feferman's biography of van Heijenoort was originally published by Jones and Bartlett, but only in a very small edition before the title was acquired by the new publishing company A.K. Peters.