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Paweł Rojek's *Tropy i uniwersalia* – review

Paweł Rojek, *Tropy i uniwersalia. Badania ontologiczne*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Semper, Warszawa 2019

Paweł Rojek's book *Tropy i uniwersalia. Badania ontologiczne* (*Tropes and Universals. Ontological Investigations*) gives a very detailed conceptual analysis. It contains six chapters from which three are devoted to notions of trope and universal and the rest to the interpretations of theories proposed by Roman Ingarden, St Thomas Aquinas, G.W.F. Hegel, and G.F. Stout. The Author's goal is to show that the category of tropes can be adopted by realists. The first part of the book argues that theories combining tropes and universals are consistent and historical investigations show that such theories have been postulated.

After some terminological remarks in the introduction, the first chapter discusses the problem of universals. As Rojek notices, it is important to distinguish it from two related issues: (a) the problem of the existence of non-spatiotemporal entities and (b) the problem of the meaning of general terms. Lack of these distinctions led great philosophers down a blind alley, among them is, for example, Stanisław Leśniewski and his eccentric definition of universals.

Firstly, the problem of universals is distinct from (a) because one can be an Armstrong-style realist and maintain that universals are spatiotemporal: that they exist exactly in those places

and times in which the proper individuals exist. Secondly, it is distinct from (b) because (1) some universals may not have corresponding predicates in language and some predicates may not correspond to any universals (for example a predicate *being such that a bear exists*) and (2) the reference of general terms can be an abstract particular. This shows that (b) is rather a semantical problem than metaphysical.

So, how should one understand the problem of universals? Rojek suggests that as the problem of unity in differences. In such a case, realists say that unity is grounded by common properties of things. If one states the problem of universals in such a way, then an interesting claim may follow: that Plato was in fact a nominalist. The truth of this statement rests on the assumption that the relation between individuals and platonic forms is entirely external. The Author is aware that this thesis may shock, so he invokes a lot of literature discussing nominalistic character of transcendental realism.

In the second chapter, Rojek analyses three types of universals: abstract, determinable, and concrete. To start with, abstract universals should be understood as common properties. It is a widely discussed category in analytical philosophy. Inherence – the relation between abstract universals and individuals – is grounded in two other relations: mereological relation *being part of* and the relation of existential dependency.

The next is the category of determinable aspects. Determinable universals are indeterminate entities, which are determinated by tropes (or things). For example, particular redness and particular yellowness are both determinations of the same indeterminate aspect – colorness. The relation of determination, as the relation of inherence, is based on some kind of dependency – in this case on qualitative dependency.

The last one, the category of concrete universals (formulated by Hegel) is probably the most controversial. Rojek characterizes concrete universals as – in contrast to common properties – common wholes. In this case, again, we have to do with an

inherence relation, but this time, the direction of the relation is reversed. So, things are dependent on their concrete wholes, as abstract properties are dependent on their things.

In light of Rojek's definitions, it can be doubtful if concrete universals are genuine universals: they do not form unity in differences. So it may seem that if a concrete universals are classified as genuine universals, then some functional universals (i.e. such entities which provide an account of unity in differences, but they do not form it) – sets or mereological sums – should be too. Rojek is aware of this and argues that what is important in this case, is that concrete universals are terms of the relation of inherence, while other functional universals are not. Relation of inherence, if involved, makes functional universals genuine universals.

It is worth mentioning that the second chapter contains some formal analysis of ontological notions. I would like to discuss a few of the ambiguities.

On p. 75 Rojek introduces the universe U, but he doesn't give any definition of U, so it is not clear what are elements of it. It seems that U is the set of all actual entities. If U would be the set of all possible entities, then modal operators in definitions (D8) and (D12) could be abandoned. So, it is not fully clear how to treat modal operators in Rojek's formalization. Most likely, we have in fact not one universe U, but for each possible world universe U_w of all entities belonged to w.

Also on p. 75, Rojek notices that in the structure $\langle U, \leftarrow \rangle$ we can have more then one minimal element or exactly one (which would also be the least element). It is true only if we have some additional assumptions, for example that U is finite, or simply that we cannot have infinite chains.

A bizarre result from Rojek's formalization is that every trope which belongs to a chain with more than two elements is an abstract universal.

For the sake of argument, let be a trope in the sense of (D30), which belongs to a chain with at least three elements. It follows

that there exist a, b ($a \neq b$, $b \neq c$, $c \neq a$) such that $a \leftarrow b$ and $b \leftarrow c$ and by (A2) we have $a \leftarrow c$. To see that is satisfied, it is enough to prove that there exist y, z such that

$$y \leftarrow c \wedge z \leftarrow c \wedge z \neq y \wedge z \neq c \wedge y \neq c$$

Taking y = a, z = b we are done. So is both abstract universal and trope. In my opinion, it is an undesirable conclusion.

To block this argument one has two ways: (a) argue that the existence of chains with at least three elements and at least one trope is impossible or (b) replace (D8) with (D8 $*$):

$$AU(x) \equiv \Diamond \exists_y \exists_z (y \leftarrow x \wedge z \leftarrow x \wedge \neg(z \leftarrow y) \wedge \neg(y \leftarrow z) \wedge x \neq y \wedge x \neq z)$$

which includes transitivity of ←. Analogically, one may argue that definition (D25) should include transitivity of ← and be replaced by (D25) in the same manner.

The definitions (D19) and (D19') seem not to be complete. By (A5), relation is reflexive, so (D19) should be replaced by

$$(D19*)\ DU(x) \equiv \Diamond \exists_y \exists_z (y \downarrow x \wedge z \downarrow x \wedge z \neq y \wedge x \neq y \wedge x \neq z)$$

and consequently (D19') by (D19' $*$):

$$DU(x) \equiv \Diamond \exists_y \exists_z (y \downarrow x \wedge z \downarrow x \wedge \neg(z \leftarrow y) \wedge \neg(y \leftarrow z) \wedge x \neq y \wedge x \neq z).$$

Finally, conditions imposed on both relations ← and ↓ are very general. In fact, there are more than two partially-orderings, so it is not clear what distinguishes these two from the others, and

what is even worse, it is not clear what distinguishes ← from ↓. Note that if ← ≡ ↓, then the rule (A4) is also satisfied.

Being precise in formal matters is important, especially if one has a goal similar to Rojek's. Nonetheless, I am aware that all of these ambiguities can be quite easily clarified.

The third chapter introduces the notion of trope. Concepts of tropes can differ in virtue of having different natures. What is common for all concepts is that tropes are abstract particulars. Rojek shows that the assumption that all properties are particular does not imply that universals don't exist. To be specific, one can have ontology with particular properties and (a) determinable universals or (b) concrete universals.

The rest chapters interpret theories formulated by Roman Ingarden, St Thomas Aquinas, G.W.F. Hegel, and G.F. Stout. It turns out that Roman Ingarden's theory of universals is – since it postulates existence of transcendental platonic forms – hidden nominalism. St Thomas Aquinas's theory of universals is an example of the theory which combines tropes with determinable universals. The last chapter shows that even in Hegel's theory there is room for tropes. Hegel might not have believed in tropes, but Rojek argues that the theory of G.F. Stout can be interpreted as realistic trope theory, which includes both tropes and concrete universals. If Rojek is right, then analytical metaphysics has some untrivial connections with Hegelianism.

Rojek's book is unarguably a significant contribution to Polish philosophical literature. It is well-written and reaches the stated goals. The bibliography is very impressive since it combines current metaphysical debates with phenomenological and scholastic traditions. I think that the book is a valuable position for all people interested in analytical metaphysics.

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