Chisholm, Roderick M. *A Realistic Theory of Categories: An Essay on Ontology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. x + 146 pp. Cloth, ???; paper, $14.95 -- This is less a book than a sketch of a book, an outline of how a comprehensive non-Aristotelian theory of categories might look. Chisholm's approach is characteristically concise, but often to a fault. There are ideas aplenty here, but they are often left unmotivated and undefended, as if Chisholm were satisfied simply to point in the direction that a fully-articulated theory might go. He has given us the bones, but often left it to others to supply the flesh. Philosophers looking for ideas that they might develop themselves will find this book extremely worthwhile. Anyone that simply wants to learn something about ontology should look elsewhere.

The proposed ontology consists of three fundamental kinds of entities: individuals, states, and attributes (or properties). Individuals may be either substances or boundaries (i.e., points, lines, and surfaces). Boundaries are thought of as constituents of substances; among substances are ordinary material objects. Chisholm does not attempt to define states (although he defines events in terms of states), but he explicates the concept of a state in terms of the concept of an attribute. Consider this example:

Suppose that you are reading. Then the following entities are involved: (1) the *contingent substance* that is yourself; (2) the *noncontingent thing* that is *the property of reading*; and (3) the contingent *state* that is *you reading* (72).

As this example suggests, Chisholm makes a fundamental distinction between contingent and noncontingent (or necessary) entities. States and substances may be either contingent or necessary, and the last chapter of the book considers how the ontology can allow for the existence of a necessary substance. All attributes, including attributes such as being a round square, are necessary entities.

This last claim, which Chisholm refers to as Platonism and extreme realism, is perhaps the boldest and most controversial claim of the book. Chisholm says disappointingly little in defense of it, however. That defense comes in Chapter 3, and occupies only three pages. The chapter's crucial assertion is that there are statements about attributes that we have good reason to believe are true, and that cannot be paraphrased without "ostensible reference to properties or attributes" (21). Here is a representative example:

There are types of automobiles that are not exemplified.

Rather than explaining why he doubts that any attribute-free paraphrase is possible, Chisholm merely concludes that "I recommend that the reader try to construct such a paraphrase" (21). Well, how about these?

I can imagine autos differing in style from any that exist.

The autos existing at present do not exhaust all the stylistic possibilities.

One could make a car unlike any existing car.

Perhaps these are all unsatisfactory as paraphrases. But, then again, perhaps Chisholm's sample sentence is not literally true.

The book offers no further guidance at this point.

One further way in which Chisholm defends his Platonism is by remarking that "our apparent extravagance here enables us to achieve a compensating parsimony elsewhere" (11). Some of the most developed, hence strongest, parts of the book are the places where Chisholm shows how his ontology can do without types of entities, including propositions (Ch.4), times (Ch.9), and places (Ch.11). Chisholm also finds room —— although never very much room —— to say something about relations, persons, appearances, intentional objects, and fictitious objects. It is noteworthy that Chisholm explicitly rejects the adverbial account with which he is associated, in favor of treating appearances as individual things (141). No argument against the adverbial theory is given, but Chisholm does in this context offer a distinction between sensation and perception, allowing that we sense appearances, but maintaining that we perceive substances. The account Chisholm gives requires him to hold that one cannot perceive a person in a mirror —— a result he labels "innocuous" (111). Yet this account seems to have the further unnoticed result that there is *nothing* one perceives in these indirect cases. That result seems unacceptable.

In working my way through the book I frequently had worries of the kind just described. Was there something obvious that Chisholm missed, or was there something that I was missing? The brevity of the discussion made it difficult to decide. More generally, the book suffers from a lack of editorial attention. Among the most serious: At one point Chisholm says he will do x

and then y, and immediately proceeds to do y alone (118). Also, at p.14 (9 lines up) I'm fairly sure that one should add the word `not'. Such mistakes are especially discouraging in a book where the reader is expected to fill so many of the gaps. -- Robert Pasnau, St. Joseph's University