

Philosophy 125 — Day 2: Overview

- Administrative Stuff
 - Attendance is being taken today (last time) — please sign the roster
 - If you weren't here last time, see the website — especially the syllabus:
<http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~fitelson/125/syllabus.html>
 - Sections begin next week. Rosters are now posted on the sections page. Sections meet in 301 Moses next week only (permanent locations t.b.a.).
 - New Wednesday Office Hours for me (2–3:30). Josh's Hours: Friday, 3–5.
 - Anyone unable to get on the waitlist? See me. Those of you on the waitlist will know by Tuesday's class (9/2) about your status (hang in there).
- Wrapping-up Introductory material from last time
- Unit #1: The Problem of Universals & Metaphysical Realism
 - The Problem, and its Historical Origins & Motivation
 - Metaphysical Realism (*i.e.*, A Realist solution, with Applications)



"What is Metaphysics?" V — Metaphysics as Category Theory 1

- A contemporary gloss on the Aristotelian conception of Metaphysics as the science of being *qua* being: Metaphysics is in the business of identifying the most basic categories or kinds of beings (Question Form: "Are there Xs?")
- This is a more restricted view of Metaphysics than one sees in many modern texts (which often include questions about God, mind/body, free will, *etc.*)
- In this course, we will focus on just a few instances of the Question Form:
 - Are there properties (or universals)? Are there relations?
 - Are there substances (*i.e.*, Are there various sorts of particulars)?
 - Are there possible worlds?
 - Are there propositions? Are there events? Are there states of affairs?
 - Are there causes and effects (*i.e.*, Are there causal relations)?
- Metaphysics is also interested in the *nature* of Xs (if there are any).



"What is Metaphysics?" V — Metaphysics as Category Theory 2

- There are many questions of the form "Are there Xs (and if so, what is there nature)?". Are all such questions to be classified as Metaphysical questions?
- We can imagine the following "debate" on "Are there summersaults?":

Realist: Yes, there are summersaults. We see people do them all the time!

Non-Realist: I agree that sentences like "John did a summersault" can be true. But, this doesn't imply that there are summersaults. There are persons with bodies that move in various ways, and that's all.

Realist: So, you agree that there are summersaults.

Non-Realist: If you're asking whether there are people turning over their bodies, then yes. But, summersaults do not exist *independently of* (or *separate from*) persons, bodies, and movement.
- What's going on here? The Non-Realist is arguing that talk of "summersaults" can be eliminated in favor of talk about persons, bodies, and movement.
- The Non-Realist is arguing that "summersault" is not a **primitive** category.



"What is Metaphysics?" V — Metaphysics as Category Theory 3

- Realists and Non-Realists disagree about which categories should be included in our basic stock of fundamental (or primitive – see S.Q. #3) categories (from which other categories may be derived). This is about our **Ontology**.
- Questions about categories that are clearly non-fundamental (*e.g.*, "Are there Deputy Assistant Directors?") are usually not taken to be Metaphysical *per se*. However, we can engage in Metaphysical inquiry into such categories.
- Analogy: Scientists often posit categories. Physicists often postulate fundamental or primitive natural kinds (*e.g.*, Quark). Some (nominalist?) naturalists would say that these are also the primitive Metaphysical categories.
- However, Metaphysicians (in the traditional sense) are primarily interested in (*prima facie*) non-material categories (*e.g.*, Universal, Proposition, *etc.*).
- Mostly, we will focus on the traditional Metaphysical questions listed above. We will have one unit on causation (which is also of interest to scientists).



“What is Metaphysics?” VI — Sidebar: Scientific Realism

- In the contemporary analytic philosophy literature, there is another important kind of realism/non-realism debate concerning *scientific* realism.
- As we have been discussing, traditional metaphysical realism usually has to do with categories like Universal, Proposition, and the like, which are (at least, on their face) non-material (or non-physical) categories.
- Scientific realism is concerned with theoretical (physical) categories introduced by scientific theories (e.g., Quark, Electron, Muon).
- Scientific realism is the view that the theoretical categories (and, more generally, theoretical terms) of our best scientific theories are non-empty.
- E.g., scientific realists believe that there are such things as quarks, electrons, *etc.*, which are posited by modern physics (but are not directly observable). Scientific empiricists do not include such things in their (physical) ontology.
- In Unit #1, I have included several “further readings” on scientific realism.



“What is Metaphysics?” VII — Methodological Remarks

- A distinguishing feature of *philosophical* metaphysics (of any variety) is the emphasis it places on *arguments* and *reasoning* in its methodology.
- As far as I am concerned, the most important thing you can take away from this course is a better understanding of the arguments (or argumentative strategies) that we find in the readings (not the *positions*, but the *reasoning*).
- As such, the main focus of the course will be on careful reconstruction and analysis of arguments in the readings. Here, a few things are important:
 - Charity: assume there is a decent (non-silly) argument in the passage
 - Logic: try to characterize the logical structure of the arguments
 - Truth of Premises: use examples, thought experiments, *etc.* to analyze and assess. Here, I recommend Pryor's discussions of arguments & analyses at:

<http://www.princeton.edu/~jimpryor/general/vocab/argument.html>

<http://www.princeton.edu/~jimpryor/general/vocab/analyses.html>



The Problem Universals I — What's The Problem?

- It is a prephilosophical truism (datum) that some things agree in (or are similar with respect to) some attributes. E.g., all the authors we're reading are white.
- Philosophers have (forever) wondered whether (in Loux's words) there is “some fact more basic or fundamental such that it is because and only because the more fundamental fact holds of these things that they are all white”
- ! This is **not** a demand for a sociological, biological, or physical explanation [e.g., sexism, genetic/environmental factors, reflectance properties of skin].
- Terminological Interlude: Explanations consist of an *explanandum* (thing to be explained) and some *explanans* (thing(s) to do the explaining)
- Our *explanandum* is that several objects $a \dots n$ agree in some attribute. What we seek are *metaphysical explanans* for this prephilosophical *explanandum*.
- Paper Topic: What is being assumed here about metaphysical explanation (*i.e.*, what *is it* to demand a metaphysical explanation)? See P.T. page.



The Problem Universals II — Plato's Realist Solution

- At *Parmenides* 130^e–131^a, we find our protagonist Socrates suggesting that:

... there exist certain Forms of which these other things come to partake and so to be called after their names; by coming to partake of Likeness or Largeness or Beauty or Justice, they become like or large or beautiful or just.
- What's being suggested here is the following general explanatory scheme:

(†) Where a number of objects, $a \dots n$, agree in attribute, there is a thing, ϕ , and a relation, R , such that each of $a \dots n$ bears R to ϕ , and it is in virtue of standing in R to ϕ that $a \dots n$ agree in attribute (by being all beautiful or just or white, *etc.*)
- In our example, we would instantiate Plato's (†) as follows: $a \dots n$ = our authors, ϕ = the Form Whiteness, and R = the relation of partaking. The explanandum is that $a \dots n$ are all white, and the explanans offered by (†) is that each of $a \dots n$ bears R to ϕ (each author partakes of the Form Whiteness).
- Some Realists prefer to talk about exemplification rather than partaking, and properties rather than Forms. But, (†) captures the basic Realist strategy.



The Problem Universals III — The Ontology of Metaphysical Realism 1

- Realists think that an adequate (general) metaphysical explanation of attribute agreement requires an ontology containing (at least) two basic (primitive) categories (or kinds of objects): Particular and Universal.
 - Some aspects of particulars:
 - Include “ordinary things” (concrete objects *e.g.* persons, plants, *etc.*)
 - Each occupies a single region of space at a given time (“nonrepeatable”)
 - Some aspects of universals:
 - Do **not** include concrete objects (*viz.*, “ordinary things”)
 - Each may be exhibited or exemplified by several different and spatially discontinuous particulars at the same time (“repeatable”)
- Another way of expressing the (†) idea:

There are nonrepeatable entities (particulars) that stand in a special relation (exemplification) to repeatable entities (universals), and this fact is what grounds attribute agreement among the familiar objects of the everyday world.



The Problem Universals IV — The Ontology of Metaphysical Realism 2

- According to realists, there are many kinds of universals. So far, we have been talking about universals (Justice, Whiteness, *etc.*) that are exemplified individually or one by one. These are called *one-place* or *monadic* universals.
- There are also *relations*, which are exemplified by several individuals. *E.g.*, *being a mile apart* is a spatial relation exemplified by pairs (2-tuples) of objects $\langle a, b \rangle$. Such relations are called *two-place* or *dyadic* or *binary*.
- In general, there 2-place, 3-place, ..., and n -place relations, for any integer $n > 0$, and these relations are exemplified by n -tuples of objects $\langle a, \dots, n \rangle$.
- Some Realists call all monadic universals “Properties”. Some distinguish properties (*e.g.*, colors, which merely *characterize* particulars) from “Kinds” (*e.g.*, biological species/genera, which *constitute* particulars as *what they are*).
- Realists also claim that attribute agreement comes in degrees, owing to the degree of generality of the universals exemplified by particulars (*e.g.*, dogs agree more strongly in attribute than dogs and cats do — in a hierarchy).



The Problem Universals IV — The Ontology of Metaphysical Realism 3

- So, realists say that Particulars exemplify different sorts of universals of varying degrees of generality. But, they say the same thing about universals.
- E.g.*, the properties whiteness, redness, *etc.* all belong to the (second order) kind “Color”. And, they can exemplify relations like *being lighter than*, *etc.*
- So, we have particulars (Unit #2 is about these) and n -tuples of particulars that exemplify various types of universals: properties, kinds, and relations (which can come in varying degrees of generality). And, these universals, in turn, can themselves exemplify further universals, and so on ... *ad infinitum*.
- What began as a rather innocent postulation in (†) for the purposes of explaining everyday cases of attribute agreement has blossomed into a full-blown metaphysical theory, which seems a long way from common sense.
- What’s the cash value of this very complex set of ontological commitments? What kind of philosophical work can it do (aside from †), and is it indispensable for doing such work? We’ll now turn to two applications.



Application #1 of Realist Metaphysics: Predication 1

- Consider the following example of subject-predicate discourse:

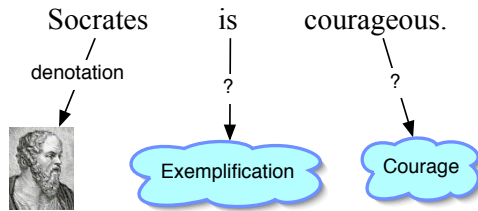
(1) Socrates is courageous.
- (1) picks out a particular (Socrates), and characterizes it (as courageous). Clearly, “Socrates” *refers* (or *denotes*) here. What about “courageous”?
- Intuitively, the truth of (1) depends on two things: (i) what (1) says (*i.e.*, the thought or proposition expressed by sentence (1) — Unit 2.2), and (ii) the way the world is (*i.e.*, the way the world is, independently of language or thought^a)
- According to the realist, what (1) says (*viz.*, (i)) is determined by its linguistic structure (what its elements are, and the order in which they are placed). And, (ii) is determined by the objective structure of the salient sector of the world.
- Now, realists insist that (1) is true iff there is *correspondence* between the linguistic structure underlying (i) and non-linguistic structure underlying (ii).

^aAll realists and some nominalists accept this assumption about truth. Anti-realists do not — Unit 5.



Application #1 of Realist Metaphysics: Predication 2

- Here's a naïve picture of the Realist's correspondence account of predication:



- Naïvely, “Socrates” corresponds to the particular Socrates *via denotation*; “is” corresponds to the 2-place universal (*viz.*, relation) Exemplification *via* a yet t.b.d. mode of correspondence; and “courageous” corresponds to the monadic universal (*viz.*, property) Courage *via* a yet t.b.d. mode of correspondence.
- We have yet to fill-in the missing “?”s in our naïve map. While it is clear (intuitively) that “Socrates” denotes the particular (man) Socrates, the other two correspondences (\rightarrow s) in the above diagram are more problematic.

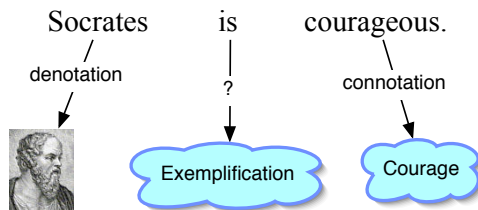


Application #1 of Realist Metaphysics: Predication 3

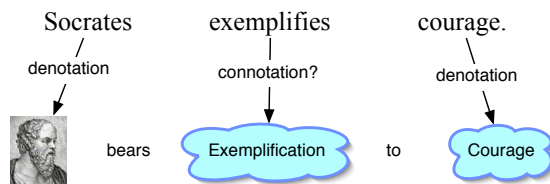
- The first (most naïve) thing we might try is to insist that the modes of correspondence are *the same* for “Socrates”, “is”, and “courageous”. That would make them all cases of *denotation*. This strategy has problems.
- First, the predicate “courageous” is not a singular term, it is a general term. Predicates can be *true of* (or *satisfied by*) various individuals, but they do not seem to *denote* (at least, not in the same way that proper names do).
- Realists are aware of this problem, but, they insist there is still some kind of referring going here. They say that “courageous” *connotes* Courage.
- To wit, Realists claim that (1) can be ‘paraphrased’ as follows (or (1) *implies*):
(1') Socrates exemplifies courage.
- That does seem to undergird a *partial* completion of the naïve map, by filling-in the missing mode of correspondence between “courageous” and Courage. But, what about the “?” between “is” and Exemplification?



Application #1 of Realist Metaphysics: Predication 4



- Grammatically, it seems strange to say that “is” (which is neither a noun phrase nor an adjectival) can *refer* (either by denoting or connoting).
- Here, it helps to work directly with the paraphrase (1'):



Application #1 of Realist Metaphysics: Predication 5

- Putting aside worries about “is” and Exemplification for the moment (see below), the realist's picture has some *prima facie* explanatory power.
- Realist: Whenever we say “*a* is *F*” (or “*a* . . . *n* are *R*”), we are referring not only to the object(s) denoted by “*a*” (or “*a* . . . *n*”), but also to the universal connoted by *F* (or *R*). And, it is in virtue of the fact that *a* exemplifies *F* (or *a* . . . *n* exemplify *R*) that “*a* is *F*” (or “*a* . . . *n* are *R*”) is true.
- Moreover (the realist continues), the universals connoted by predications are *the very same* universals invoked in our account (†) of attribute agreement.
- Study Question: How, precisely, do “is” and Exemplification correspond in the realist's account of predication. How does this compare to the sense in which “courageous” corresponds with Courage, or the way in which “Socrates” corresponds with Socrates? Does the realist maneuver of ‘paraphrasing’ amount to *cheating*, on this score? I.e., is the correspondence between “exemplifies” and “exemplification” more straightforward (more like connotation?) than the relation between “is” and Exemplification?



Application #2 of Realist Metaphysics: Abstract Reference 1

- We have already seen *abstract singular terms* in our discussion of predication. In the realist's 'paraphrase' (1') of (1), the term "courage" appears. This is an abstract singular term, which can play the rôle of subject:
(2) Courage is a virtue.
- Compare (2) with the following, which has a concrete (non-abstract) subject:
(3) Socrates is a man.
- According to the realist, there is only one way to have an adequate, unified account of the semantics of such statements: we must suppose that singular terms (generally) *denote*. Only realists, it seems, can do this across the board.
- What makes (3) true (if it is) is that *there exists a particular* (named "Socrates"), and that particular is a man. Realists insist we say the same about (2). And, this commits us to the existence of a universal called "Courage". Else, how can we have a unified account of the truth of such statements?



Application #2 of Realist Metaphysics: Abstract Reference 2

- It isn't just statements containing abstract singular terms that (at least, to realist eyes) appear to involve reference to universals. Consider the following:
(4) John's eyes are the same color as his hair.
(5) That shape does not occur in nature.
- Intuitively, both (4) and (5) are about universals (some color and some shape), even though neither contains a singular term that names a universal.
- The realist account of the truth of (4) and (5) will postulate the existence of universals in each case. The question is: can a non-realist (i.e., a nominalist) provide an adequate *alternative* account of the truth of claims like (2)–(5)?
- Perhaps the best way to think of the realist's discussions of predication, abstract reference, and attribute agreement is as a *challenge* to the nominalist to provide accounts which are at least as adequate as their own.
- Nominalists have taken up this challenge, as we shall see in part 2 of Unit I.



Restrictions on Realism I: Exemplification 1

- Realists disagree about the generality of their accounts of attribute agreement, predication, and abstract reference. Most realists place some restrictions on these theories. Different restrictions have led to different flavors of realism.
- As it turns out, some restriction on the scope of the realist's theory of predication is *required* in order to preserve its logical consistency.
- Consider the general (adjectival) term "does not exemplify itself". This term plays the rôle of predicate in true subject-predicate sentences. For instance:
(6) The number two does not exemplify itself.
(7) It is not the case that incorporeality does not exemplify itself.
- If we apply the realist account of predication to (6) or (7), we will posit the existence of a universal (*viz.*, a property) connoted by "does not exemplify itself" (let's call this property "non-selfexemplification", or \mathcal{N} for short). Either \mathcal{N} exemplifies itself, or it does not. Either way: contradiction!

