Philosophy 125 — Day 3: Overview

- Administrative Stuff
  - Final rosters for sections have been determined. Please check the sections page asap, and check for your name (and for accuracy of information). My apologies to those not on the list (overwhelming numbers this term!).
  - Sections meet in 301 Moses this week only (permanent locations t.b.a.).
  - The textbook will be on reserve in Howison Library (3rd floor Moses Hall)
  - Branden will not hold office hours Wednesday (moving tomorrow)
- Remaining Agenda for Unit 1, Part 1 (Realism and the Problem of Universals)
  - Brief review of Realist metaphysics
  - Application to Predication (Cont'd)
  - Application to Abstract Reference
  - Restrictions on Exemplification
  - Three Regresses

In Memoriam: Donald Herbert Davidson (1917–2003)

Born on March 6, 1917, in Springfield, Mass., Donald Herbert Davidson completed his undergraduate studies at Harvard in 1939. His early interests were in literature and classics and, as an undergraduate, he was strongly influenced by A.N. Whitehead. After starting graduate work in classical philosophy (M.A., 1941), his studies were interrupted by WWII service with the U.S. Navy in the Mediterranean from 1942–45. He continued work in classical philosophy after the war, graduating from Harvard in 1949 with a dissertation on Plato's *Philebus*. By this time, the direction of his thinking had, under Quine's influence, changed dramatically and he had begun to move away from the literary and historical concerns that had preoccupied him as an undergraduate towards a more strongly analytical approach. He spent most of his early career (1951–1967) at Stanford, where he was largely responsible for building up Stanford's philosophy department into one of the world's best. He then taught at Princeton (1967–1970), Rockefeller (1970–1976), and Chicago (1976–1981) before coming to Berkeley in 1981. Davidson had been the recipient of numerous awards and fellowships (as well as a volume in Schilpp's *LLP*) and had been a visitor at many universities around the world. He had been married, since 1984, to Marcia Cavell (who survives him).

Review: The Ontology of Metaphysical Realism

- According to Realists, there are (at least) two primitive Categories
  - Particular
    - ∗ Includes "ordinary things" (concrete objects *e.g.* persons, plants, *etc.*)
    - ∗ Each occupies a single region of space at a given time ("nonrepeatable")
  - Universal
    - ∗ Does **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")
    - ∗ (At least) three varieties of universals: properties, kinds, relations. Properties and kinds are 1-place universals, relations are many-place.
    - ∗ Come in varying degrees of generality (*e.g.*, man, mammal, animal, *etc.*)
- Both particulars and universals can exemplify universals (*e.g.*, "Whiteness is a color"). This leads to 2nd-order (and higher) universals — a rich ontology.

Application #1 of Realist Metaphysics: Predication (Review 1)

- In virtue of what are statements like the following true?
  - (1) Socrates is courageous.
- Realist: (1) is true in virtue of a correspondence between the linguistic structure of (1), and the objective structure of the salient sector of the world.
- "Socrates" corresponds to Socrates (particular); "is" corresponds to Exemplification (relation); "courageous" corresponds to Courage (property).
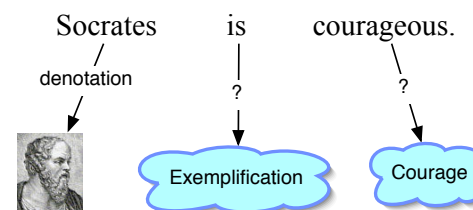

- The denotation here is clear. But, what are the "?" modes of correspondence?

Application #1 of Realist Metaphysics: (Review 2)

- Problem: "courageous" cannot denote, since it is a general (not singular) term. Realist: *some* kind of referring to the property Courage is going on here. If we 'paraphrase' (1), as follows, we can see this referring more clearly:

  (1′) Socrates exemplifies courage.

- Now, we have a singular term in the predicate position, which (arguably) *denotes* the property Courage. Realist: this shows that we were really referring to ('connoting') Courage all along (without knowing it?).

  Socrates   exemplifies   courage.
      /   \
  denotation   connotation?   denotation

        bears   (Exemplification)   to   (Courage)
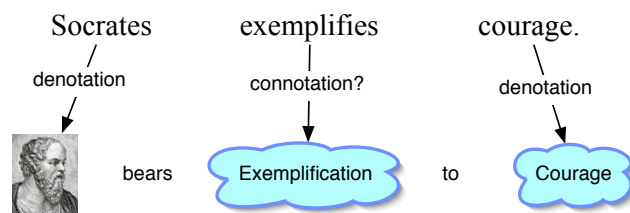
Application #1 of Realist Metaphysics: (Review 3)

- Some remarks on the realist account of predication (for pondering):
  - There seems to be a puzzling dilemma here (thanks Josh and Ali!): EITHER
    * (1′) is not equivalent to (1). In other words, (1′) and (1) have different meanings (*viz.*, different *truth conditions*). In this case, how could an account of the truth of (1′) give us an account of the truth of (1)? OR
    * (1′) is equivalent to (1). If this is the case, then why is it that (1′) and (1) seem to entail different existential claims? (1′) seems to entail that there exists a universal called "Courage," but (1) does not. How can this be?
  - Another puzzle: what is the mode of correspondence between "is" and Exemplification in (1) and/or "exemplifies" and Exemplification in (1′)?
  - As we will see below, there are further problems with Exemplification (and I think those problems will dovetail with our present worries).

Application #2 of Realist Metaphysics: Abstract Reference 1

- We have already seen *asbstract 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 the 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.

- Plausibly, 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: A Russellian Paradox 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). However, the assumption that $\mathcal{N}$ exists seems to lead to (Russellian) paradox.

Restrictions on Realism II: A Russellian Paradox 2

- Reflexive exemplification relations involving $\mathcal{N}$ (and itself) lead to paradox:

  EITHER

  – $\mathcal{N}$ exemplifies $\mathcal{N}$. By the definition of $\mathcal{N}$ (and the realist paraphrase), this implies that $\mathcal{N}$ is non-selfexemplifying. But, this implies that $\mathcal{N}$ does not exemplify itself. So, if $\mathcal{N}$ exemplifies $\mathcal{N}$, then $\mathcal{N}$ does not exemplify $\mathcal{N}$.

  OR

  – $\mathcal{N}$ does not exemplify $\mathcal{N}$. By the definition of $\mathcal{N}$ (+ realist paraphrase), this implies that $\mathcal{N}$ is not non-selfexemplifying, *i.e.*, that $\mathcal{N}$ *is* selfexemplifying. So, if $\mathcal{N}$ does not exemplify $\mathcal{N}$, then $\mathcal{N}$ does exemplify $\mathcal{N}$.

  – $\therefore$ $\mathcal{N}$ exemplifies $\mathcal{N}$ if and only if $\mathcal{N}$ does not exemplify $\mathcal{N}$ (absurd).

- Loux concludes (page 36) that "To avoid the paradox, we have no option but to deny that there is a universal associated with the general term 'does not exemplify itself'." Do you think Loux's conclusion is correct here (S.Q.)?

Restrictions on Realism III: Parmenidean Regress #1

  (†) Where a number of objects, $a \ldots n$, agree in attribute, there is a thing, ϕ, and a relation, R, such that each of $a \ldots n$ bears R to ϕ, and it is in virtue of standing in R to ϕ that $a \ldots n$ agree in attribute (by being all beautiful or just or white, *etc.*)

- So, in order to explain a case of attribute agreement, *e.g.*, the *explanandum*

  (8) $a \ldots n$ are all white.

  the realist postulates the existence of a universal (whiteness) and a relation (exemplification), such that the following (*explanans*) obtains:

  (8′) Each of $a \ldots n$ exemplifies whiteness.

- Parmenidean: this just introduces a *new* case of attribute agreement:

  (8″) $a \ldots n$ all exemplify whiteness.

- And, to explain *this* case of attribute agreement, we'll need to apply (†) *again*:

  (8‴) Each of $a \ldots n$ exemplifies the exemplification of whiteness.

- And so on, *ad infinitum* — the promised explanation can't be completed.

Restrictions on Realism IV: Parmenidean Regress #2

- A Parmenidean regress also seems to plague the realist account of predication.

- The realist account of the truth of subject-predicate claims of the form:

  (9) a is F.

  postulates the existence of a universal (F-ness) and a relation (exemplification), such that the following obtains:

  (9′) a exemplifies F-ness.

- Parmenidean: this just introduces a *new* predicate ('exemplifies F-ness'). And, to account for the truth *this* case of predication, we'll need to appeal to:

  (9″) a exemplifies the exemplification of F-ness.

  which introduces *another* predicate ('exemplifies the exemplification of F-ness')

  (9‴) a exemplifies the exemplification of the exemplification of F-ness.

- And so on, *ad infinitum* — the promised account can't be completed.

Restrictions on Realism V: Three Realist Responses to the Parmenidean Regresses

- #1 (real, vicious): Restrict the scope of (†) & theory of predication. Say that *only some* distinct forms of attribute agreement involve distinct universals (*only some* semantically distinct general terms express distinct universals).
  - Seems *ad hoc*. Do we have a *principled way* of setting such restrictions (aside from 'restrict so as to avoid objections')? Loux rejects this response.
- #2 (real, not vicious): Reject demand for 'deeper' explanations. Once you explain that (9) is true because (9′) is true, insist that (9′) explains (9) *completely*, and that no further explanations of (9′), *etc.* are needed.
  - Loux is sympathetic. He argues that *any* account which does not *eliminate* subject-predicate discourse will fall prey to this regress (and should not view it as vicious). S.Q.: carefully reconstruct Loux's argument here.
- #3 (not real, not vicious): Deny there is a regress. Insist that 'is *F*' in (9) and 'exemplifies *F*-ness' in (9′) (and so on) are (all) *semantically equivalent*.
  - But, don't they have different ontological implications? This harkens back to horn 2 of our dilemma about the realist 'paraphrase' of "*a* is *F*" into "*a* exemplifies *F*".

Restrictions on Realism VI: Bradley's Regress

- According to the realist account of predication, "*a* is *F*" is true only if:
  - (i) the particular *a* exists
  - (ii) the universal (property) *F*-ness exists
  - (iii) "*a* exemplifies$_1$ *F*-ness" is true
- But, the relational claim (iii) "*a* exemplifies$_1$ *F*-ness" is true only if:
  - (i′) the ⟨particular, property⟩ pair ⟨*a*, *F*-ness⟩ exists
  - (ii′) the universal (relation) Exemplification$_1$ exists
  - (iii′) "⟨*a*, *F*-ness⟩ exemplifies$_2$ Exemplification$_1$" is true
- But the relational claim (iii′) "⟨*a*, *F*-ness⟩ exemplifies$_2$ Exemplification$_1$" is true only if
  - (i″) the ⟨⟨particular, property⟩, relation⟩ pair ⟨⟨*a*, *F*-ness⟩, Exemplification$_1$⟩ exists
  - (ii″) the universal (relation) Exemplification$_2$ exists
  - (iii″) "⟨⟨*a*, *F*-ness⟩, Exemplification$_1$⟩ exemplifies$_3$ Exemplification$_2$" is true
- *ad infinitum* — the realist account of the truth of "*a* is *F*" can't be completed

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Restrictions on Realism VII: Realist Responses to Bradley's Regresses

- #1 (real, vicious): Restrict the scope of the theory of predication. Deny that the realist account of predication applies to Exemplification itself.
  - Many realists say Exemplification is not a relation but a 'tie' or 'nexus', which 'links objects into relational facts without the mediation of any further links'. Bonus: can help avoid the Russellian paradox too. How?
- #2 (real, not vicious): Reject demand for 'deeper' explanations. Once you explain that "*a* is *F*" is true because (i)–(iii) are true, insist that they explain the truth of "*a* is *F*" *completely*, and that no explanation of (iii) is needed.
  - Loux is sympathetic (again). But, he does not repeat his argument that *any* (non-eliminative) account of predication will fall prey to regress. Why not? Isn't this just another example of his '*C*-argument' schema (p. 39)?
- #3 (not real, not vicious): Deny there is a regress. How might this be done?
  - Note: Loux does not even *consider* this type of response to Bradley's regress. And, as far as I know, nobody else does either. Why not? What would be the analogous strategy, as compared to reply #3 to Parmenides?

Restrictions on Realism VIII: Primitive *versus* Defined Predicates 1

- Consider the predicate "bachelor". Does "bachelor" connote a distinct universal? Or, are there only universals (say) corresponding to "male", "human", and "married" (in terms of which "bachelor" can be *defined*)?
- We saw a similar question in the Introduction, where there was a debate over whether "summersault" picked out a distinct universal (or was merely defined in terms of more primitive predicates like "human", "body", "movement").
- Some realists have argued that we should restrict the scope of realist theory to (metaphysically) ground only predicates which make 'direct contact' with universals. Such predicates are called *primitive* (as opposed to *defined*).
- The problem with this distinction has mainly to do with its *arbitrariness*. We do not want our choice of primitive predicates to be a purely conventional matter of 'language chopping'. We want to 'carve the world at its joints'.
- Various proposals have been made concerning primitive predicates . . .

Restrictions on Realism IX: Primitive *versus* Defined Predicates 2

- Some have proposed epistemic criteria for the choice of primitive predicates. Typically, this involves taking predicates that are basic, from some epistemological stance. An empiricist stance might suggest taking certain sensory predicates (colors, sounds, smells, simple shapes, etc.) as primitive.
  - Problem: relatively few (*e.g.*, scientific) predicates have been definable purely in terms of empirical or sensory predicates.
- Wittgenstein (and now many others) was skeptical about the possibility of reducing one set of universals (or predicates) to basic, primitive, or otherwise privileged set of universals. Such skeptics are sometimes called *holists*.
- Non-holist realists often accuse holists of *apriorism*, since they seem happy to use armchair speculation on the strucuture of language as a guide to 'what universals there are'. Such non-holists often insist that question of which universals there are (or which are primitive) is a *scientific* question.
- Here, our best scientific (usually, physical) theories are often taken as a guide. Defined predicates are either *eliminable* or *supervene* on physical primitives.