

Kinds of Kinds

Found and Constructed Kinds

Some Contrasts Offered

- * Living v. Non-living
- * Animal v. Non-animal
- * Female v. Male
- * Trans Women v. Cis Women
- * Liberals v. Conservatives
- * Lovers v. Haters

What are these divisions dividing?

- * This question makes sense only against the backdrop of an articulated category theory.
 - * That is, if some kinds of beings are ϕ and others not- ϕ , then beings as a class divide into two *kinds* or *categories*, namely the ϕ -beings and the non- ϕ beings
 - * Further, unless our sorting practices are primitive, there must be some principle or principles of division in virtue of which these kinds are sorted.
 - * The principles of sorting is the question of category theory.

Two Approaches

- * Realism (broadly Aristotelian): a system of categories specifies the highest, irreducible kinds of beings there are—these beings populate an objective, mind-independent reality.
- * Conceptualism (broadly Kantian): a system of categories specifies those features of our conceptual scheme which are *a priori* necessary for the possibility of any cognition of objects—these objects are partly constituted by our own rational psychologies or deep conceptual schemes.

Conceptualism vs. Realism

- * 'It was an enterprise worthy of an acute thinker like Aristotle to search for these fundamental concepts. But as he did so on no principle, he merely picked them up as they came his way, and at first he produced ten of them, which he called categories (predicaments). Afterwards he believed that he had discovered five others, which he added under the name of post-predicaments. But his table still remained defective' (*Critique of Pure Reason* A81/B107).
- * 'Kant, it is well known, did not put himself to much trouble in discovering the categories' (Hegel, *Logic* §42).

Let's Be Realistic

- * Realistic Category Theory seeks to transcend the bounds of experience, yielding unverifiable, even unintelligible taxonomies of reality.

- * A Bad, if Seductive Argument
 1. Our thought about the world is always and of necessity mediated by our own conceptual scheme.
 2. If (1), then all objects of study are at least partly constituted by features of our own conceptual scheme.
 3. If (2), then realistic category theory—an attempt to characterize the structure of the world as it is in itself and outside of our own conceptual scheme—is doomed to failure.
 4. So, any enterprise in realistic category theory is doomed to failure.

Natural and Non-natural Kinds

- * A crucial thought of realistic category theory: are some divisions natural and/or objective, whereas as others are non-natural and/or subjective?
 - * N.b. It is not necessary all categories are either natural or not, objective or not deep or not.
- * Non-natural kinds may be as real as natural kinds .
 - * Indeed, on the (often disputed) assumption that everything that exists is as real as everything else that exists, then all kind divisions will be as real as all other kind divisions.
 - * It does not follow that all kind divisions are as deep or explanatory or justified as all others.
 - * Already in antiquity we find Plato speaking of the program of ‘carving reality at the joints’ (*Phaedrus* 265e).
- * Should we think that the natural kinds are the objective kinds?

Or. . .

- * The only alternative to these unsatisfactory moves is to resist the voracity of the objective appetite, and stop assuming that understanding of the world and our position in it can always be advanced by detaching from that position and subsuming whatever appears from there under a single more comprehensive conception. Perhaps the best or truest view is not obtained by transcending oneself as far as possible. Perhaps reality should not be identified with objective reality. —Nagel (1979, 212)

Now, what is anti-realism?

- * Or, more precisely, what is the denial of objective truth?
- * *Not* a modest form of anti-dogmatism:
 - * An affirmation of objective truth is, if anything, the more modest posture.
- * *Not* an acknowledgement that some words/concepts/objects are vague:
 - * On any account, the realist can affirm the existence of vagueness.

A Peritrope?

* AR = Objective truth and falsity do not exist.

* A table-turning argument from Van Inwagen?

1. If AR, then AR itself is either objectively true or not objectively true.
2. If AR is objectively true, then there are objective truths and AR is false.
3. If AR is not objectively true, then if it is to be accepted, this can only be because it is experience-cohering.
4. If it is experience cohering, then it coheres either with *our* experience or *your* (*scil.* individual) experience.
5. It does not cohere with *our* experience.
6. Hence, if it is experience-cohering, then it coheres with *your* experience.
7. If AR holds only that it coheres with *your* experience, then: (a) it is absurdly solipsistic and (b) it is in fact incapable of being articulated so as to frame a disagreement.
8. If (7a) and (7b), then AR is effectively self-refuting or otherwise self-undermining.

Our Distinction Repeated

- * A property Φ is subjective =_{df} Φ is constitutively depends on the psychological attitudes or responses an observer has to some phenomenon.
- * A property Φ is objective =_{df} Φ is not subjective.

Our Distinction Further Expected

- * This cries out for clarification:
 - * To begin, non-causally
 - * or, if you prefer, non-efficient causally
 - * One step further: ϕ partially constitutes ψ only if an essence-specifying account of being- ψ makes ineliminable reference to being- ϕ .

A First Approximation

- * ϕ is subjective feature of $x =_{df}$ (i) ϕx ; (ii) there exists some ψ which partially constitutes ϕ , where ψ partly constitutes ϕ only if an essence-specifying account of ϕ makes ineliminable reference to ψ ; and (iii) ψ is an affective/intentional/responsive property (AIR).
- * ϕ is an objective feature of $x =_{df}$ (i) ϕx ; and (ii) ϕ is not an subjective feature of x .