

# A Hylomorphic Theory of Artefacts

Non-living Somethings

# Today's Artefact



# A (Metaphysical) Query

Is this fountain. . .



... the same  
fountain as this  
fountain?



# Just the (Empirical) Facts

- Built in a Coalbrookdale Iron Works in Shropshire England
- Shipped in pieces to Christchurch, N. Z.
- Erected in 1911, by the members of the Christchurch Beautifying Society
- Disassembled and put into storage in 1949
- Rebuilt in the same botanic gardens, in a new location, in 1996
- Of the 309 cast iron pieces, many were lost or destroyed; 158 had to be recast.

# If so, then. . .

- ✦ . . .the fountains in the pictures exist.
- ✦ Further, the existing fountains are numerically one and the same.
- ✦ In this case, there is some criterion of identity, given both synchronically and diachronically.

# A Question or a Pseudo-Question?

- Well, it depends upon what you mean by the 'exist'.
  - Okay, what I mean by saying that something 'exists' is that that something is actual; and by saying it is 'actual', I mean that it exists.
- Perhaps, one may say that this answer tells us precious little.
  - And so it does, until we begin to ask uncomfortable questions.

# Like, for instance. . . .

- ✦ The Special Composition Question:
  - ✦ For any  $x$ s, when do the  $x$ s compose an object  $O$ ?
    - ✦ Always?
    - ✦ Never?
    - ✦ Well, sometimes yes, sometimes no.



# One Form of Moderation

- I propose the following answer to SCQ: things compose a thing if and only if their collective activity constitutes a life. A life is a special kind of self-maintaining event into which particles of matter are constantly being drawn, and from which, normally after a fairly short period of participating in the life, they are expelled. Thus, the only composite objects are living organisms. Moreover, if the activity of certain things at  $t_1$  constitutes a life and the activity of certain things at  $t_2$  constitutes a life, then the object that the former things compose at  $t_1$  is identical with the object that the latter things compose at  $t_2$  if and only if the life that the activity of the former constitutes at  $t_1$  is the same event as the life that the activity of the latter constitutes at  $t_2$ .

# Accordingly

- According to this proposed answer, 'therefore, there are no 'substances existing by art,' such as tables and chairs, and there are no 'substances existing by chance,' such as stones and bits of stick.
  - That is to say, then, that there are no artefacts. . .
  - . . .and there are no natural substances, like rocks or (non-simple) complexes, like molecules.
- Care is required here: we need not think (as PVI evidently does) that material being = material substance.

# The Evidence

- According to this answer proposed, therefore, there are no 'substances existing by art,' such as tables and chairs, and there are no "substances existing by chance," such as stones and bits of stick. Nevertheless, sentences like 'Some of her chairs are very good nineteenth-century copies of Chippendales' can, when uttered in the course of the ordinary business of life, express truths. These words should be understood as strictly parallel to the following words, which we imagine spoken by Copernicus: 'According to my theory, the sun does not move. Nevertheless, sentences like 'It was cooler in the garden after the sun had moved behind the elms' can, when uttered in the course of the ordinary business of life, express truths.'

# Paraphrase Strategies

- A paraphrase strategy: 'The sun moved behind the elms.' is true because: (i) it admits of a paraphrase; and (ii) the paraphrase has a truth maker.
  - The paraphrase: 'The earth's rotation relative to the sun brought it about that the elm cast a shadow in the garden.'
  - The truth-maker: the earth's rotating to an angle whereby the elm blocked the sun's light from the garden.
- An analogous paraphrase strategy: 'Some of her chairs are very good nineteenth-century copies of Chippendales.' is true because (i) it admits of a paraphrase; and (ii) the paraphrase has a truth-maker.
  - The paraphrase: 'Some particles arranged chairwise in the nineteenth-century are owned by her, and some of them are good copies of other particles arranged chairwise at some earlier time in the style illustrated in *The Gentleman and Cabinet Maker's Director*, by Thomas Chippendale in London in 1754.'
  - The truth-maker: the complex fact of some particles arranged chairwise in the nineteenth century, which she owns, and which were well arranged in a manner consonant with the style of *The Gentleman and Cabinet Maker's Director*, by Thomas Chippendale in London in 1754.

# More Simply

- 'This chair exists' is true, despite the fact that *there are no chairs*, because: (i) it admits of a paraphrase; and (ii) there exists a truth-maker for that paraphrase.
  - The paraphrase: 'Some particles are arranged chairwise.'
  - The truth-maker: some particles arranged-chairwise.
  - So, yes, 'There is a fountain in the botanic gardens in Christchurch' is true.
  - This is only because there are some simples arranged fount wise there.
  - There is, all the same, no fountain.

A Chippendale Chair  
Or, some particles  
arranged Chippendale-  
chairwise?



A fountain?

Or some particles  
arranged fountainwise?



# Some Worries

- ✦ Has difficulty with intentional objects
- ✦ Permissible paraphrase requires more than possible paraphrase
  - ✦ Should we say, e.g. that 'Rebecca doubts that Santa Claus exists' is true because it means that Rebecca doubts that there are any particles arranged Santa-Clauswise?



# Some Desiderata

- As according to Preston (2018)
- We might suppose that an artefact *a* exists only if:
  - *a* is a product of intentional design
    - rules out organisms and by-products of design
  - *a* is some manner of modified matter
    - rules out found artefacts
  - the intentional design of *a* is purpose-ascribing
    - rules out things caused intentionally but, so to speak, idly.

# Our framework

- ✦ C is a material hylomorphic compound =<sub>df</sub> (i) there is some matter *m* and some office  $\phi$ ; and (ii) *m* occupies  $\phi$ 
  - ✦ One crucial claim: when one says that ‘*m* is a  $\phi$ ’ (e.g. ‘the lump of bronze is a statue’) the *is* in question is neither the *is* of identity nor the *is* of predication.
    - ✦ It is, rather, the *is* of occupancy.
      - ✦ The *is* of occupancy is neither symmetrical nor transitive.
        - ✦ It therefore does not behave like the *is* of identity.

# Four Office Problems

- ✦ Offices and Intentions
- ✦ Offices and Individuals
- ✦ Offices and Essences
- ✦ Multiple Offices

# Offices and Intentions

- ✦ C is a material hylomorphic compound =<sub>df</sub> (i) there is some matter *m* and some office  $\phi$ ; and (ii) *m* occupies  $\phi$
- ✦ In the case of artefacts, we will normally expect the office to be intentionally constituted.
- ✦ These offices are, however, constitutive dependent.

# Constitutive Dependent?

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

# One Step Further

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

# Taking that together

- C is an artefactual material hylomorphic compound =<sub>df</sub>  
(i) there is some matter  $m$  and some office  $\phi$ ; and (ii)  $m$  occupies  $\phi$ , where that office such that (a) its essence is  $\phi$ ; (b) there exists some  $\psi$  which partially constitutes  $\phi$ , where  $\psi$  partly constitutes  $\phi$  only if an essence-specifying account of  $\phi$  makes ineliminable reference to  $\psi$ ; and (c)  $\psi$  is an affective/intentional/responsive property (AIR)

# Offices and Individuals

- ✦ An office  $\phi$  might be individual in one of two ways:
  - ✦  $\phi$  is a impure office
  - ✦  $\phi$  is the  $\phi$ , which is to say that it is a Fregean individual concept
    - ✦ which is to say that if occupied it has at most one occupant



# Multiple Offices

- One individual can occupy as many offices as you like, provided that it has the requisites for each.

# Today's Artefact Understood

