

UNIVERSALS



SOME EXISTENCE ARGUMENTS

A PLATONIC HABIT

- ❖ ‘We are in the habit of postulating one unique Form for each plurality of objects to which we apply a common name’ (*Republic* x 596A)
- ❖ Our question:
 - ❖ Is this a bad habit or a good habit?

A PLATONIST THOUGHT

- ❖ In addition to *particulars*, there are *universals*. The world contains not one or the other exclusively, but both kinds of beings.
- ❖ Particulars are, as a first approximation, spatio-temporally bounded material beings, familiar referents of singular terms, objects present to sense perception whose existence needs no special pleading.
 - ❖ e.g. the queen's crown; a Roman coin; an Olympic medal
- ❖ Universals, by contrast, are properties or qualities or characteristics, entities whose existence, in contrast, evidently requires some manner of argumentation.
 - ❖ e.g. being golden, being round, being valuable

A LEERY EYE

- ❖ Antisthenes: ‘A horse I see, Plato—but horseness I do not see.’
- ❖ Plato: ‘No, for though you have the eye with which a horse is seen, you have not yet acquired the eye to see horseness.’ (Simp. *in Cat.* 208, 28; cf. Ammon. *In Porph. Isag.* 40, 6)

PRELIMINARIES

- ❖ Let us say that ϕ is a universal only if:
 - ❖ ϕ is an abstract, mind- and language-independent entity which has all of its intrinsic properties essentially (AMLIE).

- ❖ Let us say that ϕ is a universal if:
 - ❖ ϕ is multiply *exemplifiable* or *instantiable* or *predicable*

 - ❖ If ϕ is able to be spatially located at all, then ϕ is able to be fully present in more than one spatial location concurrently

TYPES AND TOKENS

❖ Consider the following sentences:

(1) The two ladies arrived at the opera wearing the same scarf.

(2) When they discovered that they shared not only the same kind of scarf but also the same boyfriend, the two ladies were observed wearing the same quizzical grin.

❖ (1) *might* be true, when said of the same token; (2) can only be true when said of distinct tokens of the same type.

THE IDENTITY OF TYPES

- ❖ Consider the following minimalist poem by Aram Saroyan:

Silence

Silence

- ❖ Query: how many words are there in this poem?

HOW MANY?

- ❖ Two answers seem possible: one or two.
- ❖ Deflationary: There is no single answer to this question. It depends on whether you mean *types* or *tokens*; here we have one type twice betokened.
- ❖ What, though, is the *one* type twice betokened?
- ❖ A crucial question: what is to for two or more tokens to be instances of the *same* type?

A FIRST APPROACH

- (1) The type SILENCE is either nowhere or wholly present in more than one place at one time.
- (2) If it is nowhere, then it is an abstract entity, and in fact an AMLIE.
- (3) If it is wholly present in more than one place at one time, then the type SILENCE is not a material particular.
- (4) If it is not a material particular, then the type SILENCE is an abstract entity, and in fact an AMLIE.
- (5) If it is an AMLIE and not a particular, then the type SILENCE is a universal.
- (6) So, there are universals.

PREDICATION AND UNIVERSALS

- ❖ Consider a simple singular predication:
 - (1) Socrates is courageous.
- ❖ 'Socrates' is a singular term
- ❖ '. . .is courageous' is a predicate.
- ❖ Suppose (1) is true. What makes it so?
- ❖ On natural thought: such sentences are made true by certain states of affairs in the world, certain truth-makers.
- ❖ Such truth-makers seem, however, to involve two components, a material particular and a quality; (1) is true when and only when the quality *being courageous* is *in* (in some sense) Socrates.

AN ARGUMENT FROM PREDICATION

- (1) The queen's crown (*a*) is circular (is golden . . .)
- (2) This Olympic medal (*b*) is circular (is golden . . .).
- (3) So, there is something, circularity (ϕ) (or being golden (ψ)), which is in both *a* and *b*.
- (4) The ϕ (ψ) in *a* and *b* is either the same or different.
- (5) It's not different.
- (6) So, the ϕ (ψ) in *a* and *b* is the same in both.
- (7) No particular can be in more than one place at one time.
- (8) So, the ϕ (ψ) in *a* and *b* is not a particular.
- (9) Everything which exists is either particular or universal.
- (10) So, ϕ (ψ) in *a* and *b* is a universal.

DYADIC PREDICATES

- (1) Edinburgh is to the north of London.
- (2) Berlin is to the north of Munich.
- (3) So, there is some relation R , *being to the north of*, which is realized in Germany and in England.
- (4) This R is either the same or different.
- (5) It is not different.
- (6) So, it is the same relation.
- (7) If R is the same, it is either a particular or a universal.
- (8) R is not a particular.
- (9) So, R is a universal.

RESEMBLANCE AND PREDICATION

- ❖ Basic subject-predicate discourse may seem to implicate us in universals:
 1. The Queen's crown is gold.
 2. This Roman coin is gold.
 3. This Olympic medal is gold.
- ❖ The predicate '...is gold' seems to predicate the same quality to diverse subjects.
- ❖ Two hypotheses:
 - ❖ The predicate '...is gold' predicates a quality, the universal, being gold, of various particulars.
 - ❖ The predicate '...is gold' merely indicates that the subjects (1), (2), and (3) *resemble* one another in respect of being gold.
 - ❖ Yet *resemblance* itself seems to be a dyadic relation: the Queen's crown resembles (i.e. stands in the resemblance relation) to this Roman coin in respect of being gold.

ABSTRACT REFERENCE

- ❖ In simple singular predictions, the subject term *names* a subject, whereas the predicate is a general term, which expresses but does not name a quality.
 - ❖ So: 'Socrates is courageous.'
- ❖ Still, predicate expressions can be and often are nominalized.
 - ❖ So: 'Courage is a virtue.'
- ❖ A metaphysical realist has an easy story to tell: in cases of abstract singular reference, an AMLIE, a universal, and is named by the singular term just as Socrates is named by 'Socrates'.
- ❖ Her detractor? $(x)(Cx \rightarrow Vx)$
 - ❖ Is this adequate?
 - ❖ It seems not: someone could be courageous but otherwise rotten.

PARAPHRASE FAILURES

- ❖ Consider: ‘Gold resembles orange more than it resembles purple.’
- ❖ One paraphrase strategy to avoid any commitment to universals:
 - ❖ ‘For all particulars x , y , and z , if x is gold, and y is orange, and z is purple, then x resembles y more than it resembles z .’
 - ❖ Here, however, there are counterexamples aplenty. If x is the Queen’s robe and z the King’s robe, whereas y is a fizzy drink, then x resembles z more than it resembles y .
 - ❖ This only serves to remind us that we were talking about the qualities in question and not their instances.

AN ARGUMENT FROM ABSTRACT REFERENCE

- (1) Sentences with abstract singular terms in the subject position implicate us in the existence of universals unless there exist adequate (= truth and meaning preserving) paraphrases of them which make no reference to universals.
- (2) There are no such paraphrases.
- (3) So, sentences with abstract singular terms in the subject position implicate us in the existence of universals.
- (4) So, there are universals.

THESE ARGUMENTS. . .

◆ . . .are all, then, eyes for Antisthenes.