The Soul

A Principle of Privileged Ontology

What *really* is?

- ❖ 'So, you mean what is true is what really is?' (*Sophist*, 240b3)

- ❖ Ἆρα τὸ ἀληθινὸν ὄντως ὂν λέγων;

One Easy Answer

❖ Quine: 'A curious thing about the ontological problem is its simplicity. It can be put in three Anglo-Saxon monosyllables: "What is there?" It can be answered, moreover, in a word— "Everything"—and everyone will accept this answer as true.' (1948, 21)

❖ Yet, as he fairly observes: 'However, this is merely to say that there is what there is. There remains room for disagreement over cases; and so the issue has stayed alive down the centuries.' (1948, 21).

So, for instance. . .

❖ A question we as metaphysicians might wish to ask: when do two things compose a third thing?

  ❖ That is, slightly more formally, for any two things x and y, when and under what conditions should we say that they jointly constitute a third thing, z?

    ❖ What exists, *really*?

One Obvious Answer

- It's obvious: sometimes they do, and sometimes they don't.

    - Your legs, arms, torso, and head jointly compose something distinct from them all: you.

    - Your legs, my arms, Professor Kraus's head, and Father Jenkins's torso compose no entity at all.

        - There is, we may rest assured, no such monstrosity.

            - Well, anyway, not *really*.

A Champion of the Obvious

❖ The obvious answer, though the right answer, turns out to be less easy to sustain than one might have thought.

❖ It requires two things:

    ❖ moderation

    ❖ a commitment to privileged ontology

Flat vs. Privileged Ontology

❖ A flat ontology

  ❖ accepts being as binary and non-scalar

  ❖ draws no MLI-categorial distinctions at the general level of being

    ❖ As an example: universal mereological aggregation coupled with identity by aggregation

❖ A privileged ontology

  ❖ may or may not accept the scalarity of being

  ❖ accepts MLI-categorial distinctions at the level of being

    ❖ As an example: Aristotle's categorialism

Flat Ontology

❖ Basically Quinean in temperament:

    ❖ The ontologist is a humble listkeeper of being.

    ❖ The first and last question of ontology for the flat ontologist is refreshingly brief and direct: what exists?

    ❖ The answer, to the delight of Quine, the maximal proponent of his own temperament, is briefer and more direct still: 'Everything.'

        ❖ A corollary: Ontological Humility

            ❖ What makes it onto the big list of everything?

            ❖ That is not for the flat ontologist to say.

                ❖ The listkeeper may venture that to be is to be the value of a bound variable, but must then apply to the nearest natural scientist to assemble her list.

                    ❖ The binders are given by the terms of our best theory, and our best theory is given by our best natural science.

                        ❖ There is really no more for the ontologist to do.

Privileged Ontology I

❖   Basically Aristotelian in temperament:

❖ Offers the ontologist a far wider remit.

❖ If not the first, then the dominant question for the privileged ontologist is neither brief nor immediately refreshing: which kinds of things are basic relative to other kinds of things—because there are kinds of of things and of some of them are basic relative to others—and wherein does their basicness reside?

❖ Already the privileged ontologist is engaged in a much more complex and multifarious task than the flat ontologist.

❖ She is implicated in addressing a question whose answer demands high-level taxonomizing.

❖ Plainly, in any event, her question will not admit of the Anglo-Saxon brevity so prized by Quine.

Privileged Ontology II

❖ Scalar Version: Some things exist more—or more fully—than other things.

  ❖ E.g. The *ens perfectissimum* exists more—or more fully—than you or me or some pond scum.

  ❖ E.g. Atoms, or the fundamental particles or posits of physics exist more—or more fully—than clouds and congregations.

❖ Binary Version: Being is binary, but some beings are categorially primary relative other beings.

  ❖ Some beings metaphysically depend upon other beings, where this dependence may, crucially, be non-causal (or, non H-causal):

    ❖ Existential: y depends existentially on x =$_{df}$ (i) necessarily, if x did not exist y would not exist and (ii) possibly, x exists and y does not exist

    ❖ Essential or Definitional: y depends essentially or definitionally on x =$_{df}$ (i) necessarily, any essence-specifying definition of y makes reference to the essence of x; and (ii) possibly, an essence-specifying definition x makes no reference to the essence of y

      ❖ Note this second from of dependence is more fine-grained than the first and may obtain even when necessarily, (x exists iff y exists).

Two Forms of Dependence

- Aristotle adverts to dependency relations in two very different ways: (i) categorialism and (ii) hylomorphism:

    - Categorialism: Some kinds of things are basic beings; non-basic beings depend upon basic beings for their existence and natures.

    - Hylomorphism: Ordinary objects are composed of matter and form.

        - Two Questions:

            - What is the notion of composition here? Is it, for instance, in line with CEM?

            - What are the dependency relations obtaining between three oft-mentioned items, namely matter, forms, and compounds of matter and form?

An Odd Sort of Contention

'Of things said without combination, each signifies either: (i) a substance (*ousia*); (ii) a quantity; (iii) a quality; (iv) a relative; (v) a where; (vi) a when; (vii) being in a position; (viii) having; (ix) acting upon; or (x) a being affected' (*Cat*. 1b25-27).

Said without combination?

❖ Consider: 'Man runs.'

❖ The expression 'man' signifies something said without combination.

❖ The expression 'runs' signifies something said without combination.

❖ Aristotle evidently presumes that there are semantic and metaphysical *basic units*.

    ❖ On the semantic side, they are below the level of the truth-evaluable.

    ❖ On the metaphysical side, they are below the level of facticity, or of truth-makers.

    ❖ N.b. that 'basic' does not mean absolutely simple.

The Ten Categories of Being

The Categories:

Category	Example
Substance	man, horse
Quantity	two-feet long
Quality	white, grammatical
Relative	double, slave
Place	in the Lyceum
Time	yesterday
Position	lying, sitting
Having	has shoes on
Acting upon	cutting,
Being	being cut or burnt

Whence the categories?

❖ A reasonable complaint from Kant (*Critique of Pure Reason*, A81/B107)

❖ 'Aristotle's search for these fundamental concepts was an effort worthy of an acute man. But since he had no principle [of generation for them], he gathered them up as he stumbled upon them, and first got up a list of ten of them, which he called **categories** (predicaments). Subsequently he believed that he had found five more of them, which he added under the name of post-predicaments. But his table still had holes.'

The Primacy of Primary Substance

❖ N.b.: a primary substance is a primary *being* (*protê ousia*)

❖ Primacy:

  ❖ Every primary substance signifies 'some this' (a *tode ti*), that is, a particular of some sort (*Cat*. 3b10-23).

  ❖ Substances have nothing contrary to them (*Cat*. 3b24-32).

  ❖ Substances do not admit of a more or less (*Cat*. 3b33-4b9).

  ❖ It is most distinctive of substance that it remains numerically one and the same while receiving contraries (*Cat*. 4b10-21).

Most Importantly

'All other things are either *said-of* primary substances, which are their subjects, or are *in* them as subjects. Hence, if there were no primary substances, it would be impossible for anything else to exist' (*Cat*. 2b5-6).

The Argument

(1) If all things other than primary substances are either said-of or in primary substances, then if there were no primary substances, nothing else could exist.

(2) All other things are either said-of or in primary substance.

(3) Hence, if there were no primary substances, nothing else could exist.

(4) If (3), then primary substances are, well, primary.

(5) So, primary substances are primary.

A Quaint but Antiquated Way of Thinking?

- Six traditional characteristics of substance, highlighted by Simons:

    - Independence

    - Ultimate Subjecthood

    - Individuality

    - Persistence (through change, while remaining numerically one and the same)

    - Referential Salience

    - Unity and Integrity

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A Simple Observation

❖ The word 'subject' is used in unhelpfully ambiguous ways in philosophy.

    ❖ Logical Subject: x is a logical subject iff x is a bearer of properties.

        ❖ Evidently everything is a logical subject

    ❖ Metaphysical Subject: x is a metaphysical subject iff x is a persisting, reidentifiable being, capable of gaining and losing properties while remaining numerically one and the same

        ❖ Nancy Pelosi, the Speaker of the House, is a metaphysical subject, and so is a 1964 Jaguar.

    ❖ Psychological Subject: x is a psychological subject iff x is a persisting, reidentifiable being, a thinker-feeler-doer, capable of gaining and losing properties, including mental properties, while remaining numerically one and the same

        ❖ Nancy Pelosi, the Speaker of the House, is a psychological subject, but a 1964 Jaguar is not.

A Simple (Unduly Simple?) Suggestion

❖ Moving down this list each is a special case of the item preceding:

   ❖ Thus, every metaphysical subject is a logical subject. . .

      ❖ . . .and every psychological subject is a metaphysical subject, and so also a logical subject.

A Further Discrimination?

- Perhaps the notion of a psychological subject is already complex in ways we do not readily notice.

  - Embedded in every psychological subject, there is, so to speak, a metaphysical psychological subject, the psychological subject evacuated of all its local psychological content.

    - 'I am n' seems to refer to this metaphysical psychological subject—but this subject seems the same for us all, such that, on the assumption that this metaphysical psychological subject is the referent of 'I', something is left out, something is incomplete, when this sentence of uttered.

Evacuation?

❖ For any proposition of the form 'I am φ' I might entertain, possibly I might not have been φ.

❖ So, one might argue: (i) for any personal property φ I have, I might not have been φ; (ii) if (i), I cannot be more than a shell of consciousness; (iii) so, I cannot be more than a shell of consciousness.

❖ The shell self, though, is not unique: 'The objective self that I find the world viewing through TN is not unique: each of you has one' —Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere*, 63).

And the soul?

- Aristotle's talk of primary substances *Categories* is conspicuous for one salient lack: it never mentions matter or form.

  - Primary substances are not characterized as metaphysical composites: they are simply trotted out as basic relative to other categories of being.

    - The introduction of hylomorphism evidently upsets the applecart; in particular, given the argument of *Categories* 5, suddenly a disquieting question arises: amongst matter, form, the compound of form and matter, which is primary?

A Problem with the Easy Solution

❖ Regarding that which is compounded out of something so that the whole is one—not like a heap, but like a syllable: the syllable is not its elements, for *ba* is not the same as *b* and *a*. . .The syllable is, then, not only its elements, but something else. . .If that something were an element (*stoicheion*), the same argument would apply. . .This is not an element, but a principle (*archê*), an element (*stoicheion*) being that into which a thing is divided and which is present in it as matter (*Met*. Z 17, 1041b11-33).

Aristotle's Insistence on Hylomorphic Plurality

（1） Possibly (e_1. . .e_n are the elements of o at t_1, and at t_2 e_1. . .e_n exist while o does not).

（2） (1) only if at t_1 there exists some x whose presence unifies e_1. . .e_n in such a way that o exists.

（3） If x is another element of o on ontological par with e_1. . .e_n , then the same argument will apply.

（4） Hence, at t_1 there exists some x which is not an element, but a principle (*archê*) in virtue of whose presence o is a unified whole.

（5） Further, if this principle (*archê*) is complex, then there will be a further question *ad infinitum* as to the principle in virtue of which it serves as the principle (as well as it and e_1. . .e_n form) a synchronic or diachronic unity.

（6） Hence, this principle (*archê*) is not complex, but simple.

Some Observations about this Argument

- It requires the existence of two kinds of entities pertinent to hylomorphic compounds:

  - elements (which are 'like matter')

  - 'Something else', something which is not an element, but a principle.

    - One obvious question: what is a principle?

      - Aristotle's non-obvious answer: a form

      - Aristotle's non-obvious special case of a form: a soul

  - A surprising claim about the soul: it is a substance (an a *protê ousia,* a basic being).

A Map of Privilege

❖ Unrestricted Mereological Composition/Mereological Nihilism

  ❖ Restricted Mereological Composition

    ❖ Brute

    ❖ Principled

      ❖ Intention-dependent

      ❖ Non-intention-dependent

The Basic Claim

- The soul is a non-intention-dependent principle of unity for living hylomorphic compounds; but not every compound is ensouled.
    - This carries the following commitments:
        - There are living hylomorphic compounds.
            - So, there are compounds; so, there are non-simples.
                - As principled, this fact is not a brute fact.
                - As non-intention-dependent, the explanation of this fact cannot be given in terms of the operation of the mind. (So, Hume is wrong.)
            - Not every collection of elements is on par with every other: some are mere aggregates and some are *highly unified.*
        - Mereological nihilism is false.
        - Unrestricted mereological aggregation is false.
        - It seems to follow that some version of privileged ontology is correct.