
INTRODUCTION

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Its detractors often characterize analytical philosophy as anti-metaphysical. After all, we are told, it was born at the hands of Moore and Russell, who were reacting against the metaphysical systems of idealists like Bosanquet and Bradley; and subsequent movements in the analytic tradition—logical positivism and ordinary language philosophy—made the elimination of metaphysics the cornerstone of their respective philosophical agendas. The characterization is not, however, completely accurate. For one thing, the earliest movement in the tradition—the logical atomism of Russell and the early Wittgenstein—was thoroughly metaphysical in its orientation. To be sure, the metaphysics at work there was conservative, lacking the speculative excesses and obscurantist jargon of the idealists; but no less than the idealists, the logical atomists were concerned to provide a comprehensive account of the ontological structure of reality. For another, while card-carrying positivists and ordinary language philosophers were officially committed to the view that the claims of the traditional metaphysician are somehow problematic (perhaps meaningless; perhaps, just confused), the fact is that philosophers from both movements continued to deal with the problems confronting traditional metaphysics. Of course, they were anxious to conceal this fact, parading their work as talk about logical syntax or as conceptual analysis; but no one was fooled; and in any case, their attacks on metaphysics were themselves anchored in theses (typically theses expressing a radical form of anti-realism) that were no less metaphysical than the views they sought to undermine.

Still, it remains true that for much of its early history analytic philosophy was inhospitable to traditional metaphysics; and it cannot be denied that in the heyday of logical positivism in the 1930s and 1940s or in the post-war period when the ordinary language philosophy of the later Wittgenstein was most influential, it was not fashionable to bill oneself as a metaphysician. But by the early 1960s prejudices against metaphysics were beginning to soften. This change in attitude was due to the work of philosophers who were willing to address metaphysical questions in spite of the long-standing prejudices. Philosophers like Arthur Prior, Roderick Chisholm, and Wilfrid Sellars come to mind here; but two philosophers were especially influential in the rehabilitation of metaphysics—W. V. O. Quine and P. F. Strawson. They had their roots in the anti-metaphysical traditions they helped undermine. Quine came out of the tradition of logical positivism, and Strawson was originally a representative of the ordinary language tradition. Both attempted to show that there is a project in metaphysics responsible philosophers can in good conscience undertake. For Strawson, the project was what he called ‘descriptive metaphysics’. According to Strawson, the aim of descriptive metaphysics is the systematic characterization of the most general categorial or structural features of the conceptual scheme in terms of which we talk and think about the world. Quine, by contrast, focused on the ontological commitments associated with accepting a body of discourse. His famous slogan ‘To be is to be the value of a bound variable’ was supposed to provide a criterion by which the metaphysician can determine just which kinds of entities we commit ourselves to by endorsing a given body of statements. Both philosophers were highly influential, each on his respective side of the Atlantic. Strawson’s conception of descriptive metaphysics was attractive to philosophers—typically British philosophers—who grew up in the tradition of conceptual analysis; whereas Quine’s notion of ontological commitment appealed to philosophers—typically American philosophers—schooled in the more formal logistic approaches characteristic of the logical positivist tradition.

The upshot was that philosophers no longer felt the need to conceal their interest in metaphysical issues, and there was something like a revival of traditional metaphysics. In Britain the revival had a distinctively Kantian flavour. Philosophers posed metaphysical questions by asking about the presuppositions of this or that conceptual practice—our identification and reidentification of particulars, our ascription of spatio-temporal location, our use of the classificatory concepts at work in predication. Questions about the objectivity of the concepts structuring those practices were central here, and those questions naturally unfolded into more general questions about the nature of realism and the possibility of anti-realist theories of meaning and truth.

In the United States the revival of interest in metaphysics was expressed in the more self-consciously ontological idiom of categories. Initially, philosophers followed Quine’s lead in asking whether our beliefs (either those expressed in our best scientific theories or those at work in our day-to-day confrontation with the world)

commit us to the existence of abstract entities. And if they do, are those abstract entities things like sets whose identity conditions can be given in straightforwardly extensional terms, or are we committed to things like properties and propositions? And these questions led to others. Those who endorsed the existence of properties faced questions about individuation. If there are such things as properties, how are they related to familiar concrete particulars? Are the latter just bundles of properties, or do particulars constitute an irreducible ontological category? And since propositions are the sorts of things that are said to be necessary, possible, contingent, and impossible, those who endorsed the existence of propositions found themselves forced to confront questions about modality. Do we need to follow Leibniz and appeal to a special category of objects—possible worlds—to explain how modal claims can be true or false? And if so, how do particulars figure in the story? Are they the sorts of things that can exist in different possible worlds? And what does that tell us about their ontological structure? The range of legitimate metaphysical questions kept expanding, and soon philosophers in this tradition were asking all the old questions. What is the nature of time? What is it for an ordinary object to persist through time? What is the nature of space? Do events constitute an irreducibly basic kind of object? If so, what are they like and what are their identity conditions? What is causation? Are there any uncaused events?

In both Britain and the United States the revival of metaphysics was gradual. At first, there was a piecemeal character to work in the field. With rare exceptions, philosophers were wary of large-scale metaphysical theories—the construction of comprehensive ontological schemes, theories about the nature of and relations among the most abstract categories under which absolutely *everything* falls, and the use of this ontological machinery to settle issues about mind–body relations, causation, philosophy of religion, and so on. Comprehensive, ontology-driven metaphysics was associated with the names of the idealists whom Russell and Moore had effectively defeated—McTaggart, Bosanquet, Bradley, Royce, Joachim. The systematic *realist* metaphysics of Russell and Moore themselves (the Moore of *Some Main Problems of Philosophy*), and of other realists like Samuel Alexander, Roy Wood Sellars, H. H. Price, D. C. Williams, and C. D. Broad, had been made to seem misguided and outdated first by the arguments of the logical empiricists, then by the harangues of Wittgensteinians and other ordinary language philosophers; and so an impressive body of non-idealist systematic metaphysics was ignored and then forgotten.

We suspect that, past mid-century, few philosophers really believed that the standard verificationist arguments against the meaningfulness of metaphysical claims were any good. Nevertheless, systematic metaphysics continued to languish. It was typical of those who began to raise the old metaphysical questions during the 1960s and 1970s to proceed cautiously, addressing now this metaphysical problem, now that. Their caution was understandable; after the idealists were routed, the most prominent builders of metaphysical systems were Whitehead, Bergson,

and Paul Weiss. Despite their evident genius, whatever insights they had into metaphysical problems were invisible to analytic philosophers. Indeed, they seemed to many to serve as an object lesson: This is what happens when you try to do metaphysics in the grand manner. They and their admirers produced bodies of work that followed the same recipe used by the nineteenth-century idealists: (i) set forth your own baroque ontological scheme in a new, peculiar jargon; (ii) claim that it is radically opposed to all preceding metaphysical systems; and (iii) explain its intricacies in a series of ever longer books, introducing as many undefined technical terms as possible.

By the mid-1980s a new generation of philosophers was coming to the study of metaphysics. These philosophers had no first-hand knowledge of the positivist or ordinary language attacks on metaphysics. For them, the attacks were quaint episodes from a distant past rather than serious theoretical challenges. Accordingly, they were not in the least apologetic about doing metaphysics, nor were they content with a piecemeal approach to metaphysics. Unlike many of their predecessors, they were willing to attempt the construction of comprehensive ontological theories, building upon the work of such trailblazers in the rehabilitation of systematic metaphysics as Roderick Chisholm, David Armstrong, and David Lewis.

Quine's criterion of ontological commitment was very important to philosophers like Chisholm and Lewis. Both are rightly regarded as champions of a chastened approach to metaphysics, one that neither shies away from the traditional problems of ontology, nor falls back into the arcane, untethered system-building that had given metaphysics a bad name; and both regarded Quine's criterion as an antidote to the besetting sins of traditional metaphysicians.

The approach to questions of ontological commitment defended by Quine in 'On What There Is' (1948) was already in place by 1939, when Chisholm and Quine overlapped at Harvard (Chisholm a graduate student, Quine a young professor). In the hands of Chisholm, Lewis, and their heirs, Quine's criterion of ontological commitment is understood to be something like this: If one affirms a statement using a name or other singular term, or an initial phrase of 'existential quantification', like 'There are some so-and-sos', then one must either (1) admit that one is committed to the existence of things answering to the singular term or satisfying the description, or (2) provide a 'paraphrase' of the statement that eschews singular terms and quantification over so-and-sos. So interpreted, Quine's criterion can be seen as a logical development of the methods of Russell and Moore, who assumed that one must accept the existence of entities corresponding to the singular terms used in statements one accepts, unless and until one finds systematic methods of paraphrase that eliminate these terms.

The metaphysics of Chisholm and, later, Lewis look nothing like Quine's, however. For Quine, it is the deliverances of science alone that should determine our ontological commitments. As Chisholm saw it, this was the decisive point at which he departed from Quine and took inspiration from Moore: Why not assume, in the

seminar room, the same things we take ourselves to know in everyday life? Why are we suddenly not entitled to them? Lewis, and the younger generation of metaphysicians who came into their own in the 1980s, by and large side with Chisholm and Moore. Once all our ordinary convictions are taken into account, the traditional problems of metaphysics return with a vengeance, as they do not for Quine. As a result, ontology must be responsive to other areas of philosophy; a particular ontological scheme shows its adequacy by its usefulness in the resolution of problems elsewhere. Desiderata for an ontological scheme include both simplicity (a point about which Quine would agree) and scope. One metaphysical system is superior to another in scope in so far as it allows for the statement of satisfactory philosophical theories on more subjects—theories that preserve, in the face of puzzle and apparent contradiction, most of what we take ourselves to know.

One presupposition of the version of Quineanism invoked by Chisholm and Lewis is that the nature of the ontological categories is somewhat opaque to us. There is still hope for ontology, however, since our fallible intuitions about the subject can be tethered in this way to success elsewhere, in the resolution of philosophical problems concerning better-known matters.

The differences between Quine's starting point and that of Chisholm, Lewis, and the rest lead to greater differences down the line. With only (a small subset of) the sciences yielding truths for the ontologist to consider, Quine can rest content with an austere naturalism: although one cannot accept the mathematics needed for science without set theory, no further 'queer entities' need be recognized; there is only space-time and its particular contents, and sets of such things. Chisholm, Lewis, and company have many more truths to consider, and more apparent paradoxes to resolve. They have generally found it very difficult to arrive at metaphysical theories satisfying both desiderata of simplicity and scope without giving up Quine's insistence upon a purely extensional language and logic. Lewis was able to retain extensionality, but at great cost—the positing of an extravagant ontology of concrete, spatio-temporally disconnected universes, which he defended by an explicit appeal to Quinean principles of ontological commitment. His attitude toward the contents of *our* world, however, remained staunchly materialist, and not substantially different from that of Quine. Chisholm, unlike Lewis, rejects Quine's logical scruples, taking at least one intentional (mental) and intensional (non-extensional) notion as a primitive. He also concludes that the only way to retain most of what we think we know about persons is to admit that they are very special: they have causal powers unlike those found elsewhere in nature, they can 'grasp' or conceive of abstract objects, and their persistence conditions are mysteriously different from those of ordinary physical objects. Such conclusions make his metaphysics unacceptable to Quine and other naturalistically inclined philosophers. Although there is much in the metaphysics of both Chisholm and Lewis that their critics find mysterious or unbelievable, both systems include solutions to a host of philosophical puzzles, and stand as a challenge to be met by anyone

who would defend metaphysical naturalism and nominalism while rejecting Lewis's vastly enlarged physical ontology.

Most philosophers today who identify themselves as metaphysicians are in basic agreement with the Quinean approach to systematic metaphysics exemplified in the work of Chisholm and Lewis. Indeed, it is probably not much of an exaggeration to say that today's crop of metaphysicians can be divided fairly exhaustively into those most influenced by the one or the other. That division is reflected in the debates discussed in the chapters that follow. Those chapters approach the field topically. Each focuses on a fundamental metaphysical issue; the aim is to provide an account of the nature and structure of the debate over the issue. But the chapters are not merely *about* metaphysics; they are also exercises *in* metaphysics with authors attempting to advance the debate over the relevant issues. The first three focus on the traditional dichotomy of universal and particular. Zoltán Szabó discusses nominalistic accounts of the phenomena central to the debate over universals; whereas Joshua Hoffman and Gary Rosenkrantz focus on Platonistic accounts of universals. E. J. Lowe closes Part I by discussing problems surrounding the individuation of particulars. Next, there follows a pair of chapters on very general ontological issues. John Hawthorne deals with the concept of identity, and Peter van Inwagen discusses the phenomenon of ontological commitment and attempts to show how the case of fictional discourse is to be accommodated.

Modal issues have been pivotal in recent analytic metaphysics. Here, the central debate has been between those endorsing non-reductive theories of modality and those insisting on reductive accounts of modal phenomena. In his contribution Kit Fine deals with approaches of the first sort; whereas Ted Sider examines approaches of the second sort. In addition, discussion of non-reductive theories can be found in Hoffman and Rosenkrantz's chapter on Platonistic theories of universals.

Part IV focuses on issues bearing on the metaphysics of time and space. One important debate on the nature of time pits what are called presentists against those who construe time as a fourth dimension on a par with the three spatial dimensions. Thomas Crisp examines presentist theorists; whereas Michael Rea discusses four-dimensionalism. In his chapter, Graham Nerlich discusses issues bearing on the debate over the status of space-time. Finally, Sally Haslanger discusses the different approaches to questions about persistence through time and their theoretical roots in the metaphysics of time.

Part V deals with a series of interrelated issues about events, causation, and physical theory. In the first chapter Peter Simons discusses recent debates about the existence and nature of events. Michael Tooley and Hartry Field each contribute a chapter on causation. Tooley focuses on broader issues about the analysis of our concept of causation; whereas Field examines the more particular case of causation in physical theory. Finally, we have a chapter by Tim Maudlin on the metaphysical implications of quantum mechanics.

The next three chapters focus on questions about the metaphysics of persons and the mental. Dean Zimmerman examines materialist accounts of persons. His chapter is followed by two more general discussions of the metaphysical status of the mental. The first, by Howard Robinson, focuses on general ontological questions about the nature and structure of perceptual and conceptual episodes. The second, by Jaegwon Kim, considers the way questions about supervenience and reduction have come together in recent attempts at providing materialist accounts of intentional phenomena. Then we have two chapters on the problem of freedom of the will. Carl Ginet examines libertarian approaches; whereas Ted Warfield discusses compatibilist accounts of freedom.

Part VII bears broadly on realism and attempts to delineate alternatives to realism. Michael Loux discusses the very influential debates over realism and anti-realism that originated with Michael Dummett and dominated the British philosophical scene in the 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s. Ernest Sosa considers approaches to questions about realism that have their origin in facts bearing on ontological relativity. Finally, Timothy Williamson attempts to lay out the central features of metaphysical debates over the nature of vagueness.