

Birkbeck Philosophy, MA Logic & Metaphysics 2001–2002, Term 1, Weeks 6–10

Substance, Identity, Material Objects and Co-Location

Lecturer: Barry Lee

Time: Thursdays, 2 – 3pm Location: B29, North Block, Senate House.

Context for this series of lectures:

This series of lectures investigates a range of interconnected philosophical questions concerning the nature of the material world. This investigation serves as an introduction to the *metaphysical* component of the Logic and Metaphysics course. The material introduced in this series will be built on next term when we look at events and causation.

Sketch of the General Subject Area Metaphysics concerns the basic contents and fundamental structure of the world—*what there is*, in the sense of what fundamental kinds of things there are, and *how things of these fundamental kinds connect together* to make a world. The potentially fundamental kinds of content include: substances (roughly, particular individual things); events; facts; universals (roughly, entities like *blueness* and *loyalty*); propositions. The structural features include identity, essence, time, space and causation. A large part of the business of metaphysics is the construction and evaluation of ontologies. Ontologies are accounts of the range of fundamental categories of things, including details of the nature of each kind. Ontologies are evaluated in terms of their economy, their explanatory power and their ability to deal with puzzles.

The study of ontology is a matter of uncovering broad patterns in nature. This can be difficult work but, like uncovering patterns on a smaller scale, it has its own fascination and beauty. The understanding of the structure of the world developed also forms the background for understanding of other important issues, such as the nature of the mind and its relation to the material world.

Sketch of this series:

The philosophical notion of *substance* has a long history. It is a technical notion, but in spite of that differing accounts are given of it. *Very* roughly we can understand it as the notion of a particular thing which survives change. Material objects are plausibly substances. (Note that the sense of “substance” involved here isn’t the everyday one of “kind of stuff”.)

Material objects (including rocks, tigers and tables) seem to comprise a class of things which forms at least an interesting sub-class of a genuine metaphysical category of things. And material objects seem to be *typical* of this possibly more inclusive category. We easily take ourselves to have clear insight into the nature of this subclass—very often, in doing metaphysics, we *begin* with such material objects, and try to understand items of another category by comparison with them. However, when we try to form a clear understanding of material objects, and order our intuitions about them, we face a number of difficult philosophical puzzles. In this course we will look at some of these

puzzles and try to present satisfying solutions to them.

Aims of series:

- to acquaint students with some important issues in metaphysical debates concerning substance, identity and material objects
- to provide students with the opportunity to develop their own investigations of these issues
- to develop students' awareness and understanding of the nature of metaphysical investigation, especially in relation to ontology

Objectives of series:

Students who satisfactorily complete the course will:

- have an appreciation of the nature of metaphysical debate
- have developed their abilities to evaluate ontologies as tools for systematic understanding of the world
- have an understanding of the bundle vs substratum debate concerning substances
- have an understanding of the puzzles raised by the appearance of co-location and the plausibility of microphysical supervenience
- have a critical understanding of the key principles and terminology involved in the debates: Leibniz law, and the notions of *substance*, *numerical identity*, *metaphysical necessity*, *essence*, *co-location*, *constitution*, *sort*, *supervenience*, *microphysical supervenience*, *dominant sortal*, *persistence*, *endurance* and *perdurant* (these two in the special senses used by Lewis—see below), *temporal parts*, and *overdetermination*;

Series Format

The series contains five one-and-a-half hour sessions. Each session will involve a formal lecture, but half an hour will be set aside for clarification and discussion.

Course Work and Participation

Each student is required to prepare and submit two tutorial essays for the Logic and Metaphysics course. (It is not a requirement that you write an essay on *this* series.)

Students are expected to take an active role in the series: attending lectures; studying

readings; engaging positively in group discussions. You are also encouraged to provide feedback on the lectures and sessions, formally—via termly questionnaires—and informally at any time.

Readings

Suggested readings for each topic are given below.

Primary readings are marked as follows: ***Primary***.

Where a book is held in the BBK short-loan collection it is marked as follows

BBKslB. The Birkbeck Library sheflmark is given in square brackets following this marker.

Anthologies:

K&S: Jaegwon Kim & Ernest Sosa, eds: *Metaphysics: An Anthology*. (Blackwell, 1999.) ***BBKslB* [100 Met]**

L&M: Stephen Laurence & Cynthia MacDonald, eds: *Contemporary Readings in the Foundations of Metaphysics*. ***BBKslB* [110 Con]**

The Topics

Topic 1: The Notion of Substance

Under this heading we look at the notion of substance, and ask if and how substances might be made up from more basic components.

Substance and change

Bundle vs Substratum—are substances merely bundles of characteristics, or do they contain additional elements?

Aristotelian substances—are substances themselves basic items of ontology, not reducible to more basic items?

Loux, Michael J., 1998a: *Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction* (London: Routledge), *Ch. 3*, “Concrete Particulars I: Substrata, Bundles and Substances”. ***Primary* *BBKslB* [110 Lou]**.

Loux, Michael J., 1998b: “Beyond Substrata and Bundles” (a quicker, but more detailed and more technical run through the material found in his 1998a), L&M. Wiggins, David, 1995: “Substance”, in A.C. Grayling, ed., *Philosophy: A Guide Through the Subject* (OUP), pp. 214–249.

Aristotle, 1974: *Categories*, chs. 1–5, edited by J. L. Ackrill (OUP).
See also readings in Section IV of L&M.

Topic 2: Identity and Necessity, and the Notion of Co-Location

Here we'll look at the key role played by the notion of identity (being one-and-the-same-thing as) in discussions of substance. The puzzling phenomenon of co-location is introduced as the focus for our discussion.

- **Leibniz' Law**—the claim that “two” things which are in fact one and the same cannot differ in their characteristics
- **Co-Location**—two material objects being in the same place at the same time
- **Leibniz' Law applied**—arguing that common sense is committed to co-location
- **The Range of Apparent Cases of Co-Location**
- **An Unacceptable Conclusion? Reasons to be Concerned About the Appearance of Co-Location**

Wiggins, David, 1980: *Sameness and Substance*. Oxford: Blackwell. Ch. 1, esp. §§1 and 2. ***Primary*** ***BBKslB*** [AHB (Wig)]

Wiggins, David, 1968: “On Being in the Same Place at the Same Time”, *Philosophical Review*, 77, pp. 90–95. ***Primary*** (Reprinted in Rea 1997b.)

Baker, Lynne R., 1997: “Why Constitution is Not Identity”, *Journal of Philosophy* 94, pp. 599–621. ***Primary***

Sainsbury, Mark, 1995: “Identity”, in A.C. Grayling, ed., *Philosophy: A Guide Through the Subject* (OUP), pp. 91–95.

Kripke, Saul, 1971: “Identity and Necessity” in Milton K. Munitz, ed., *Identity and Individuation*, reprinted in K&S.

Della Rocca, Michael, 1996: “Essentialists and Essentialisms”, *Journal of Philosophy*, 93, pp. 186–202.

Locke, John, 1689/1975: Bk. II, Ch. xxvii, §§1–8 of *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. (1975 OUP edition, edited with an introduction by Peter H. Nidditch.)

Gibbard, Allan, 1975: “Contingent Identity”, *Journal of Philosophical Logic*, reprinted in K&S.

Topic 3: Sortalism, and The Basic Problem for Co-Location

Sortalism—the thesis each particular object is fundamentally an object of a particular sort—is introduced and considered as a way of understanding co-location. (Examples of sorts: tiger, chair, lump.) A deep problem is raised for co-location, which threatens the proposal. This problem will be our focus for the rest of the course.

- **Sortalism**
- **The Large and the Small, and “The Basic Problem”**

We think that the characteristics of the large are *determined* by the characteristics of the small, and this seems to rule out co-location

Sortalism:

Wiggins, David, 1980: *Sameness and Substance*. Oxford: Blackwell. Ch. 2, esp. §1. ***Primary* *BBKslB* [AHB (Wig)]**

Lowe, E. J., 1989: Ch 2 of his *Kinds of Being*. Oxford: Blackwell. (See also ch. 3.) ***BBKslB* [AHB (Low)]**

Feldman, Fred, 1973: “Sortal Predicates”, *Noûs* 7, pp. 268–82.

Doepke, Frederick, 1982: “Spatially Coinciding Objects”, *Ratio* 24, pp. 45–60. (Reprinted in Rea 1997b.)

Ayers, Michael, 1974: “Individuals Without Sortals”, *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 4, pp. 113–148.

The Basic Problem:

Zimmerman, Dean W., 1995: “Theories of Masses and Problems of Constitution”, *Philosophical Review* 104. *Note: You only need to look at pp. 87–90 of this paper. The rest of the paper is difficult, and there’s a lot of it—pp. 53–110. *Primary* (NB: excerpt only)*

Rea, Michael C., 1997a: “Supervenience and Co-Location”, *American Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 34, no. 3, pp. 367–375.

Burke, Michael, 1992: “Copper Statues and Pieces of Copper: A Challenge to the Standard Account”, *Analysis* 52, 12–17.

Lewis, David 1993: “Many, but Almost One” in John Bacon, Keith Campbell and Lloyd Reinhardt, eds, *Ontology, Causality and Mind: Essays in Honour of D. M. Armstrong*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp. 23–38. Also reprinted in Lewis’s *Papers in Metaphysics and Epistemology*.

Either Noonan, Harold, 1999a: “Identity, Constitution and Microphysical Supervenience”, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, vol. 99, #3, pp. 273–288

or Noonan, Harold, 1999b: “Microphysical Supervenience and Consciousness”, *Mind*, 108, pp. 755–759.

Topic 4: Some Alternatives to Positing Co-Location

With the deep puzzle of co-location in view, we investigate potential solutions which involve explaining away the appearance of co-location.

- **The Range of Alternatives**

- **One Alternative: Dominant Sortal Theory**

The proposal here is that something being of a particular sort doesn't always mean it will have the abilities-to-survive normally associated with things of that sort

- **Another Alternative: Temporal Parts Theory**

Events (things that happen) exist at particular times by having parts which exist (occur) at those times. “This lecture is *part* of the conference.” Can we avoid the problems of co-location by saying that this is how objects relate to time also?

The Range of Alternatives:

Simons, Peter, 1987: *Parts: A Study in Ontology* (Clarendon, Oxford), see pp. 117–121.

Dominant Sortal Theory:

Burke, Michael, 1994b: Preserving the Principle of One Object to a Place: A Novel Account of the Relations Among Objects, Sorts, Sortals, and Persistence Conditions”, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 54, pp. 591–624.

Primary

Lowe, E. J., 1995a: “Coinciding Objects: in defence of the ‘standard account’”, *Analysis* 55.3, pp. 171–178.

Temporal Parts Theory:

Lewis, David, 1986: *On the Plurality of Worlds*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell), pp. 202–204 *only*. ***Primary*** (See also §4.1, which is also excerpted in Rea 1997b.)

Rea, Michael C., 1998: “Temporal Parts Unmotivated”, *Philosophical Review* 107, pp. 225–260. ***Primary***

Loux, Michael J., 1998: *Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction* (London: Routledge). *Note: Read only Ch. 6 for this topic.* ***BBKslB* [110 Lou]**

Haslanger, Sally, 1989b: “Endurance and Temporary Intrinsic”, *Analysis* 49,

pp. 119–125.

Johnston, Mark, 1987: “Is There a Problem About Persistence?”, *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume* 61, pp. 107–135.

Shoemaker, S. “Identity, Properties and Causality”, in his *Identity, Cause and Mind* (CUP, 1984).

Lewis, David, 1971: “Counterparts of Persons and Their Bodies”, *Journal of Philosophy* 68, pp. 203–211.

Topic 5: Can We Solve the Problem by Refining Our Understanding the Determination of the Large by the Small

Having investigated the prospects for denying co-location, we turn to potential solutions which involve more careful spelling-out of the notion of determination. The technical notion of supervenience is introduced as a tool. A solution is proposed and a key objection to it considered. Ramifications of the debate are considered.

- **Introducing Supervenience**—Core notion: B supervenes on C if and only if there cannot be variation in B without variation in C
- **The Varieties of Microphysical Supervenience**
We can fill out the core notion of supervenience in various ways—some are *compatible* with co-location
- **A Threat to the Solution: Overdetermination Arguments**
- **What does this discussion teach us?**

Rea, Michael C., 1997a: [details above] ***Primary***

Stalnaker, Robert, 1996: “Varieties of Supervenience”, *Philosophical Perspectives* 10, pp. 221–241. ***Primary*** (**NB:** *excerpt only, pp. 221–230*)

Either Sturgeon, Scott 1998: “Physicalism and Overdetermination”, *Mind* 104, pp. 411–432. ***Primary***

or Sturgeon, Scott 2000: “Physicalism and Overdetermination”, *ch. 6* of his *Matters of Mind: Consciousness, Reason and Nature*, (read only §§1–7).

Baker, Lynne R., 1999: “Unity Without Identity: A New Look at Material Constitution”, *New Directions in Philosophy: Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, Volume 23, Howard Wettstein (ed.). (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers).

NB: *You only need to look at pp. 144–151 of this paper.*

McLaughlin, Brian P.: “Varieties of Supervenience”, in Elias E. Savellos and Yalçın, Ü. D., eds, *Supervenience: New Essays* (CUP), pp. 16–59. [You only

need to read: pp. 16–19; pp. 24–5 (finishing with the paragraph which ends “...in A-respects across them”); and §3 (p. 30) to p. 33. It is probably best not to read any more of the paper, as it raises a lot of complex material not relevant to our concerns.]

Barry Lee, 26th October 2001