

Philosophy of Mind
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Part 2

Lowe's *An Introduction to Philosophy of Mind* and some Commentary

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Split into groups of three, appoint one writer for your group and answer these questions (open-book). We will spend 15 minutes answering each question.

- Why can philosophy tell us about minds that psychology cannot? (Lowe 2,3) Is Lowe underestimating psychology? Are there some questions that a psychologist simply cannot ask while remaining a psychologist?
- What does Lowe mean when he says that metaphysics is unavoidable? What would Wittgenstein say about this kind of claim? Who do you agree with?
- Why does Lowe reject the conceivability argument? Do you think he has reasons which would convince Descartes? How would Descartes respond?
- Are we simple substances? Why/Why not?
- Can non-local causation save dualism?
- What do you make of the claim that we should rule out causal overdetermination in our explanations of mental life? What supports this kind of principle?

Notes on Lowe *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Mind*

- Lowe objects to the idea of reifying minds and suggests what he calls “a more circumspect way of saying that people ‘have minds’” namely that they are *minded* or *mindful*. He suggests the term ‘subjects of experience’ for those objects which can be minded.

The role of philosophy in the investigation of mind.

- According to Lowe, metaphysics is necessary to science in order to provide a “coherent general conception of the whole of reality” without which we are unable to make the different science compatible.
- Metaphysics is inevitable for the rational inquirer, Lowe argues. Why is that?

Notes on Lowe *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Mind*

Lowe characterizes substance in terms of persistence and the capacity to undergo changes in properties through time (p.9)

Let's consider the two parts of this account.

(a) persistence

– what about a *perdurantist* view?

(b) change in properties.

- can we imagine a substance whose properties do not change?

Notes on Lowe *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Mind*

Conceivability:

What is the a priori argument for the 'real distinction' between mind and body?

If it is possible for me to exist without a body, then can we claim that I am identical with my body?

Descartes claims that he can clearly and distinctly perceive that the mind can exist without the body.

Trenton Merricks has argued that this assumes that it is an essential property of a body that it is a body... that body B would not have existed if it had not been a body. (1994) He argues that this is mistaken. Why would that make a difference?

Why does Lowe reject Descartes' version of the conceivability argument? (11-12)

Notes on Lowe *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Mind*

Divisibility (13-15):

I persist through time and am indivisible.

I have no parts.

My body has parts.

Therefore they cannot be the same thing.

What is the proper response to this kind of argument?

Elizabeth Anscombe suggests that 'I' no more picks out an object than 'it' picks out an object in the sentence 'it is raining'

Lowe rejects this, insisting on the reality of 'subjects of experience' and the claim that 'I' should be understood as picking out such subjects.

What about the idea of a subconscious self, doesn't this seem to involve some notion of parts of a self?

Notes on Lowe *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Mind*

Another kind of dualism based on persistence conditions:

I persist through time according to conditions that don't apply to my body.
I could, in principle, swap my brain for a hard-drive or another brain/body

Mightn't I replace each of my neurons with a very sophisticated electronic switch, one by one, in a slow process?

This puts us in a version of the statues and lumps problem which we will discuss soon.

The critical task at this stage is to clarify what we mean by persistence conditions and to determine whether they are related to identity in any significant way.

Identity

Identity is understood to be a relation. While most relations hold between distinguishable things, identity holds between a thing and itself.

Whatever is true of a thing is true of anything identical with that thing (THIS IS THE INDISCERNIBILITY OF IDENTICALS)

According to Kripke, this relation has two other basic features.

It never holds between two things and if it holds, it always holds of necessity. (it is the case across all possible worlds)

Identity of indiscernibles

If a and b have all properties in common then entities a and b are identical (they are the same entity), in second-order logic (with identity):

$$\forall\phi ((\phi x \leftrightarrow \phi y) \rightarrow x=y)$$

Notice how this differs from the indiscernibility of identicals:

$$x=y \rightarrow \forall\phi (\phi x \leftrightarrow \phi y)$$

- Max Black has us imagine a possible world in which the only things that exist are two exactly identical spheres. They are both made of chemically pure iron, have the same diameter, the same temperature, etc. Also, both spheres have the relational characteristic of being two miles from the center of a sphere which is one mile in diameter.

A comment on the primacy of numerical identity

Qualitative identity can be reduced to numerical identity

When we say that something is no longer qualitatively identical to itself our claim is properly parsed as: the thing has numerically different qualities at numerically different times.

The Transitivity of Identity

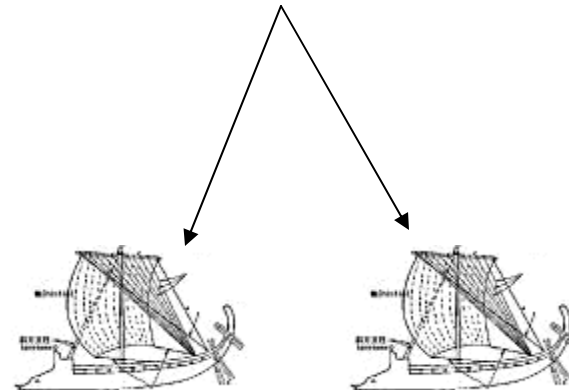
$$[(a=b) \ \& \ (b=c)] \supset (a=c)$$

The ship of Theseus example shows some of the paradoxical conclusions that we derive if we accept the transitivity of identity in combination with some intuitive generalizations concerning the identity of composite objects.

The renovated ship and the completely reconstructed ship both have a claim on being identical with the original ship

this is unacceptably paradoxical given our commitment to identity only holding between a thing and itself.

Original ship



Reconstruction vs Renovation

Solutions to the Theseus paradox

Option 1:

Neither of the two ships are identical to the original

Option 2:

Both are identical

Option 3:

Problems with “the puzzle case”

Assume: “Once the original parts of the ship have been appropriated by another ship, they cease to be part of that original ship”

However, in “the puzzle case”

“The parts have been appropriated by another, distinct ship – namely the reconstructed ship – but that these later parts become, once again, parts of the original ship”

From Lowe *An overview of metaphysics* p.31

What do you make of this answer?

Perdurance versus Endurance

- Perdurance theorists (like Lewis) contend that objects exist through time in virtue of the existence of successive temporal parts.
- The whole object is a space-time worm
- The temporal parts of objects taken as a whole are constitutive of the object. You never get to see the whole object at any

Temporal Parts (see especially David Lewis 'Survival and Identity')

$a - at - t'$ is our way of referring to a temporal part

Consider the following:

One of my cuter temporal parts is a promising child

This sounds strange, but does it make sense?

What about events/processes? Can we talk about their parts? Clearly that's ok. The early part of my life, the middle part of my life etc. But does this way of partitioning events apply to things?

The life of a tree is not the same kind of thing as the tree. It makes sense to say that the same tree could have lives of different length
Is it simply a mistake to think that an object is a still 4-d worm in space-time rather than a 3-d object moving through space-time?

Substantial Change

- Not the kind of change that happens in or to an object- it is the kind of change that happens when an object begins or ceases to exist.
- The statue is created at some point in time
- It is created “out of” the bronze
- Is the statue identical to the lump?
 - The lump of bronze and the statue are numerically different (they have different starting points in time)
 - They have different persistence conditions
 - The lump is still the lump under certain transformations which destroy the statue

Statues and Lumps

- The statue and the lump, if they are different, are, for a time exactly coinciding objects.
- The objects have different modal and historical properties.
- While they coincide, they have the same non-modal and non-historical properties.

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Is Identity Relative or Absolute?

- '*F*' and '*G*' are sortal terms: picking out different kinds/sorts of substances. 'tree' 'tiger' 'statue' etc.
- Normally we say that if *a* and *b* are numerically the same *F* and are also both *G*, then they are both numerically the same *G*.
- Geach claims that this commonsense principle is not necessarily correct
- Instead, he contends that we cannot identify *a* and *b* simpliciter without identifying the respect in which they are identical.
- Identity and distinctness are not absolute, according to Geach
- The statue and the lump of bronze are one and the same *lump* without being one and the same *statue*. The same lump could be different statues.
- Are the two statues the same? (remember the transitivity of identity)
- Is the statue the same as any of the myriad statues that the lump could become?

Statues and lumps for absolutists.

- Temporal-parts approaches can play a role here.
- How do you think you could begin to solve this problem?

My changes and I

- Is it true that John might have become a baker? What are we saying is true here?
- Am I the same person that I was ten years ago? What remains the same through changes?
- We can't seem to understand change without some notion of persistence. But how can we know that there is some thing that persists through change?
- Notice that there are two kinds of change under consideration, modal changes and temporal changes.

What's the matter with anti-essentialism?

- If there are no intrinsic properties then nothing is connected to anything else in a way which is distinctive or specific to it.
- On such a view no relation can be singled out as THE relation between x and y.
- If we cannot single out a relation which fixes intended reference, then do we even have grounds to claim relative identity?

Mental States

- Lowe claims that if we are realists about mental states, we can ask and answer all kinds of interesting questions about mental states without having to worry about the mind's relation to the body.
- How do we evaluate this kind of claim?
- Is there really meaningful work to be done in the analysis of mental states if, for instance the mind is identical with the body? Shouldn't it all boil down to neuroscience and the like?

Mental States

- How do we characterize/classify the various kinds of mental states?
 - Propositional attitudes
 - Undirected or non-propositional states of mind
- Contrast behaviorist and functionalist accounts of mental states.
 - Does the defeasability argument against behavioral definitions also apply to functional accounts of mental states? Why / why not?

Eliminativism

- Consciousness and the challenge of eliminative materialism.
- What would it mean to defend what Lowe calls *full-blown eliminativism*?
- Could any philosopher seriously advocate full-blown eliminativism given the objections stated by Lowe?
- Points to consider:
 - What do we mean by materialism in this context?
 - Is there a sense in which the commonsense account of mind can be accepted as something like ‘a manner of speaking’ or “an essentially dramatic idiom”?
 - Your answer to this question will depend on what you take the explanatory role of mental states talk to be.

Why argue that there is something ontologically special about phenomenal experience?

- Many philosophers are convinced of the ontological peculiarity of phenomenal experience because of what they take to be the impossibility of **necessary a posteriori identity statements** linking minds and bodies. Saul Kripke provided the crucial argument. (1980, 148-155)
- According to Kripke, we have access to the essence of qualitative experience in phenomenal judgment - his example is pain and its essentially painful nature. This special epistemic relationship to pain is such that we know one property which the qualitative experience can't do without. In addition to this special epistemic property, philosophers claim to be able to imagine the existence of a qualitative state existing apart from any accompanying physical state. We claim, for instance, to be able to imagine a being without physical properties suffering or enjoying some qualitative state. Given our special epistemic access to qualia and their conceivable separability from the body then pain cannot be identical to a physical state. Given the legitimacy of our imagined possibility of disembodied qualia, then they are only contingently related to some physical process or structure. This is because, if identity holds, it does so of necessity.

- By contrast, in cases where we discover necessary a posteriori identities scientifically, for example, where we discover that lightning is identical to massive electrical discharge, our discovery depends on our prior ignorance of the relevant essential properties of lightning. Unlike heat or lightning, pain is something whose essence has always been available to us by virtue of what pain is. Kripke asks: “Can any case of essence be more obvious than the fact that *being a pain* is a necessary property of each pain?” (1980, 46)

- Contrary to what Kripke calls the *intuitive view* (1980, 155) there are reasons to believe, for instance that epistemic subjects like you and I do not have phenomenological or epistemic access to the essence of our pain. Timothy Williamson points out, for instance that epistemic transparency cannot be assumed to hold for all mental states. I need not always know that I am in pain when I am in pain. For example, an overabundance of self-pity will lead me to judge my itch to be a pain and an insufficient level of self-pity will lead me to judge my pain an itch.
(CITE)