



DISCOVERY SERIES-SIX

General Ontology

In the historic annals of Philosophy, a number of thinkers have held that there are three categories of being: property, relation, and substance. We want to explore substance and property now.

1. PROPERTY

(As an example, we will use the color “red”)

A. Concrete Particulars – Particular individual things that seem to have properties that are the same (quality agreement). How does one account for quality agreement? Three broad answers have been proposed.

1. Extreme Nominalism – Properties do not exist at all. Instead, the only things that exist are concrete particulars (individual real things) and “property words.” (e.g. the word red) that may be true of them.
2. Nominalism – Accept the existence of properties but believe they are particular, individualized qualities called abstract particulars that cannot be possessed by more than one concrete particular. (Each red is an individual red).
3. Realism – Properties are ones-in-many; they can be possessed by many concrete particulars at the same time (Two things can both be red).

The debate about properties relates to the debate about naturalism. Naturalists believe only in that which exists and is in some way accessible to the senses and scientific investigation.

-Extreme Nominalists and Nominalists are naturalists. They deny that properties are universals.

-Realists agree that properties can be exemplified by many things at once. There are three main ways that realists have understood this:

(1) Mold-Copy view. According to this, properties like “redness” are abstract entities that exist outside space and time. Redness itself stays entirely outside of space and time and outside of things that possess copies of it.

(2) Impure Realists – All entities are inside space and time. Universal properties like redness are at different locations at the same time.

(3) Pure-Realists. Redness is “in” something in the sense that the entity has or exemplifies redness within its being. But neither redness nor the exemplification relation is itself confined to space/time.

2. SUBSTANCE

The most central idea of substance is the one which takes living organisms as the clearest examples to explain what appear to be things we know about those substances. Properties do not show up all by themselves (you don’t find red just appearing at your door all by itself). Properties have owners, and a substance is the owner of the property.

PROPERTY

Requires to categories to classify it

Derives its unity from: (1) an external principle in the mind of a designer artificially imposed from the outside on a set of parts to form the object or (2) Contingently entering into a set of external relations to form a whole

Parts are metaphysically prior to the whole. the existence and nature of the whole depends on the parts.

Parts are related to each other by external Relationships. Parts are the same inside or Outside of the whole and thus are indifferent To these wholes

SUBSTANCE

requires one category

Derives its unity from its own internal essence or nature which serves as a principle of unity from within the substance.

The whole is prior to its parts. The parts are what they are in virtue of their function In the whole that informs and employs them

Parts are related to each other by internal relationships. Parts lose identity when severed from the whole and thus are dependent on those wholes

Wholes have no new properties not in parts
Except new utility for human purpose and
New shape, dimensions, and spatial order.

Wholes have new kinds of properties
not in parts grounded in the essence
Of the substance as a whole unit.

No absolute sameness and strict identity
Through change (through loss of old parts
And gain of new ones)

Maintains absolute sameness and strict
identity through change (through loss of
old parts and gain of new ones).

CONCLUSION: If we assume the truth of the realist view of properties and a traditional view of substance then two things follow: First, the idea that knowledge and justified belief operating only within the boundaries of the five senses is false because many properties are not knowable within these bounds. Second, physicalist forms of naturalism are false as well because neither properties, nor the individuated essences that constitute substances are material beings. Design becomes important in substance and property as well.