Metaphysics: Study of Categories as Manners of Existence

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# Introduction

* Peter van Inwagen: “I do not understand the sense of ‘structure’ in which they claim to be investigating the structures of objects.” (2001, 2)
* van Inwagen: “they” refers to “B-ontologists”, who are for example realists and nominalists about the problem of universals
* He is speaking about “ontological” or “categorial” structure
* Today, I will explain (e.g. to van Inwagen) what categorial structure is
* Where am I coming from?
	+ The tradition of Barry Smith & Kevin Mulligan (1983), Smith & Pierre Grenon (2004) Peter Simons (1998, 2012) and E.J. Lowe (2006) who see the categorial structure of being as *the ontological form of being* (🡨 Husserl)
	+ However, no satisfactory explication of “ontological form” and its relation to “ontological content” or “matter” has been brought forward by these philosophers
	+ In this talk, I shall also supply this deficiency
* Metametaphysical work in progress, applications in metaphysical explanation & fund.

**Plan**:

1. Ontological content vs. ontological form
2. Topic of metaphysics: categories and categorial structure
3. Sub-fields of metaphysics
4. Does it follow that being has modes?

# Ontological Content vs. Ontological Form

* Explication of this distinction and the concepts involved in it.

**Thesis 1.1** Ontological content is delineated by the concepts of *existence* and *nature*, whereas ontological form is delineated by the concept of *manner of existence*.

## Ontological Content

* Today, I simply assume that
	+ *existence or being is a simple primitive univocal concept*, which cannot be described or even elucidated in any manner (cf. sensible qualities such as colours)
	+ “existence”, “being” and their cognates are interchangeable
	+ “existence” and “being” and their cognates apply only to everything.
	+ So “entity” and “being” apply to any thing that exists.
* I also assume that
	+ *nature is non-relational character of entities* (e.g. Campbell 1990, 6)
	+ its paradigmatic examples: the non-relational properties of entities in metaphysical theories that are committed to the existence of these properties
		- these properties may be essential or contingent
		- so “nature” does not equate with “essence”.
	+ Natures can be described by monadic predicates (e.g. “is –e charge”) and
		- partly by those *internally relational predicates* that *tell us* something about the non-relational character of their relata (e.g. “is exactly resembling”).
		- Work hypothesis about internally relational predicates:
			* The corresponding relations hold in virtue of the natures or the existence of the relata (Mulligan 1998, 344; Keinänen et. al. ms.)
			* Internal relations are not entities in addition to their relata
			* Yet they do *hold of* their relata if the corresponding internally relational predication is true
			* The term for these and possible external relations: “ontological relation” (“OR” for short)
* Ontological content consists of entities
	+ *plus* the nature of entities in ontologies that are committed to natures in one way or another.
	+ Note that if there are external relations (e.g. spatio-temporal), then they are entities and part of the ontological content.

## Ontological Form

* Arguably, there are also *internally relational predicates* that as such do *not* tell us *anything* about the *non-relational* character, that is, nature
	+ - * + E.g. “is numerically distinct”, “ontologically depends”, “instantiates” (in realism)

ontological dependence: e.g. existential dependence and identity dependence (Tahko & Lowe 2015, Keinänen 2011)

* + - * + That *x* and *y* are numerically distinct does not describe, as such, the non-relational character of *x* and *y*.
				+ Equally, that *x* ontologically depends on *y* or that *y* instantiates *x* does not describe, as such, the non-relational character of *x* and *y*.
				+ These predicates tell us something *only about* the relational character of *x* and *y*:

they are distinct or that ontological dependence or instantiation holds of them

*x* is not distinct if it is not *distinct from* something

*x* does not ontologically depend if it is not *dependent on* something

*y* does not instantiate if it does not *instantiate something*.

* Let us follow the clue provided by these *paradigms* (explication, not conceptual analysis).
* Rather than describing the nature of entities, they describe *how* *entities actually and possibly exist* as distinct, ontologically dependent or as instantiating.
* Therefore a general concept that covers these three predicates is *manner of existence*.
* “Manner” in the sense of “form”
* So the manner of existence of an entity is its form of existence: its *ontological form*
	+ - * The ontological form of being (totality of entities) consists of the manners of existence of entities
				+ *all* *manners of existence are or can be construed as internally relational*

whose predicates do not describe natures.

* + - * + Other plausible candidates: *numerical identity*, *unity (being one), parthood, characterization* (in Lowe’s four-category ontology)
* This type of internal relations may be called “formal ontological relations” (“FORs” for short)
* The ontological form of being, in which the ontological content is embedded, consists of the holding FORs.
* The ontological form of an entity may be complex: to consist of many FORs holding of it/manners of existence (e.g. being a perdurant).
* Therefore the ontological form of being is the onto-structure of being.

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| **Ontological content** | **Ontological form** |
| *Existence or being*: entities or beings |  |
| *Nature*:* non-relational character of entities
* may be partly described by certain type of internally relational predicates (internal ORs)
 | *Manners of existence*:* internally relational: formal ontological relations (“FORs”)
* may be described by internally relational predicates that tell us nothing about natures but how entities exist
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# Topic of Metaphysics: Categories and Categorial Structure

**Thesis 2.1** Categorial structure consists of FORs, which determine categories.

* Arguably, categories are highly general manners of existence (e.g. processes and events).
* Therefore the *categorial structure* of being equals to the ontological form of being.
* So the categorial structure of being consists of FORs holding between entities.
* Therefore FORs, that is, manners of existence also fully determine categories:
	+ *entities standing in the same FORs in the same manner belong to the same category*.
	+ E.g. particulars (in realism): entities instantiating universals.
* Metaphysical theories assume different categorial structures
* So they involve different views about the actually holding FORs.
	+ “Basic” FORs in particular: primitive formal ontological predicates of the theory.

**Thesis 2.2** Metaphysics or ontology studies the categorial structure of being.

* Today, I assume a broadly Aristotelian view:
	+ *metaphysical study is directed at finding out what the categories of being are*.
* So metaphysical theories are competing descriptions of what the categorial structure of being actually is.
* Therefore metaphysics can also be called “ontology”: study of the categorial structure of being (Greek “ontos”: being).
	+ Vs. Quinean “ontology”: study of existence questions (e.g. are there numbers?).
	+ Existence questions, which no doubt are metaphysical/ontological, are embedded in the question about actual categories.
		- The latter involves the question which categories have members (“are occupied”).
		- The members of the occupied categories constitute the totality of what exists.

# Sub-Fields of Metaphysics

**Thesis 3** Metaphysics divides into *formal ontology*, *regional ontology* and *metaontology* at least.

* It is possible that categories form a hierarchy from the most general to the specific
* Therefore two branches of metaphysics may be distinguished, borrowing terms from Husserl (Simons 1998, 380):
	+ metaphysics that focuses on the most general categories is *formal ontology*
	+ *regional ontology* studies what more specific categories are and how they relate to the most general by FORs.
		- It may be divided into different regional ontologies, for instance metaphysics of science (natural beings), metaphysics of biology (living beings) and social ontology (social entities).
* *Metaontology* is a further sub-field of metaphysics whose topic is close to the topic of metaphysics but different from it:
	+ metaontology studies *conceivable* categories and the FORs between them.
	+ The task of metaontology, as I understand it, is to map out the logical space about categories and to provide common set up for different metaphysical theories about the *actual* categorial structure.
	+ E.g. “being a universal is to be understood as being an instantiable entity.”
	+ Given that all metaphysical theories are conceivable, a metaontological view is presupposed by every metaphysical theory.

# Does it Follow that Being Has Modes?

**Thesis 4** Modes of being are explained away by means of FORs.

* Kris McDaniel (2009, 2013) and William Vallicella (2014) have proposed:
	+ there are “modes of being or existence”, literal modifications of existence
	+ e.g. concrete being (McDaniel), necessary existence (Vallicella).
* This has roots in an older view that being has modes, held in the German tradition by Heidegger and Roman Ingarden, among others.
* It seems necessary for me that I give an account of modes of being *without equivocating “being” or “existence”*.
	+ The manner of existence of an entity appears to be its mode of being.
* I can explain modes of being away as FORs while sticking to the crystal clear view that being or existence is what it is univocally:
	+ *a mode of being is reduced to being in a FOR or FORs to something*.
	+ E.g. in realism, to be in the mode of a particular is to instantiate something.
	+ So FORs can account for modes of being without equivocating “being” or existence being literally modified.
	+ My terminological choice of “manner of existence” instead of “mode of being” is motivated by distancing myself from the different mode of being views, which raise the worry that “being” is equivocated after all because being has modifications.

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