

Topics in Metaphysics: Theories of Hylomorphism

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What is Metaphysics? What is its object?

Good question. . .

- Aristotle: the science of being *qua* being
- Kant: general metaphysics (ontology; being) vs. specific metaphysics (God, soul, freedom)
- Norris Clarke (20th c.): philosophy's innermost ground
- Ted Sider: it's about structure.
- Alyssa Ney: it studies something that's the most general
- Carnap: it's meaningless/nonsense

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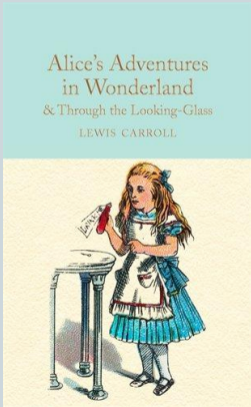
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Methodology?

So Metaphysics seems to be about some very basic things.
But how do we discover such things?



- Cheshire cat – a grin without a cat?
- Tea-party – can time go faster than it does?
- Can a baby turn into a pig (in principle)?
- etc. etc.; **thought experiments** are important in metaphysics!

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Hylomorphism: What?

What is the fundamental structure of the world then? Or what are the most basic things that there are?

- **physicalism**: whatever the physicists tell us (quarks, etc.)
- **dualism**: extended stuff (body) + thinking stuff (mind)
- **idealism**: the mental stuff is the basic, the rest is reducible to it
- **hylomorphism**: the world contains substances as its most basic constituents, which consist of matter + form.

Hylomorphism

things = substances + accidents

substance = matter (υλη) + form (μορφη)

E.g: statues, cats, etc.

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Hylomorphism: Why?

- Aristotle: cf. next time
- perhaps you don't want to accept any of the alternatives
- it can give pretty good answers to a lot of classical problems (ship of Theseus, personal identity; problem of composition; mind and body; vagueness)

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The Devil is in the Details

Some questions to consider:

- What is matter and form, exactly?
- What do/can we know about matter? Is there such a thing as prime (first) matter? What is it like?
- How many substantial form(s) does a thing have?
- What about accidents? How do they inhere? Can they exist on their own?
- How does all this apply to human beings?
- Actually, *what* is the theory supposed to apply to?
- What are some basic criticisms of the theory?

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Cast of Characters

Parmenides of Elea (6th c. BC)

Aristotle (384–322 BC)

Gregory of Nyssa (ca. 335–395)

Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274)

John Duns Scotus (1265–1308)

Peter Auriol (1280–1322)

Nicholas of Autrecourt (1299–1369)

Francisco Suárez (1548–1617)

René Descartes (1596–1650)

John Locke (1632–1704)

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716)

Karen Bennett, Kathrin Koslicki

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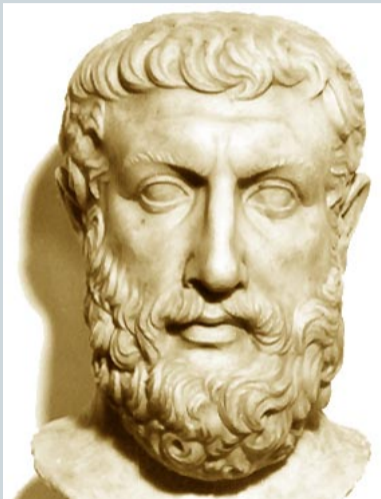
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- born around 515 BC (“Pre-Socratic”)
- It’s perhaps the first surviving written argument in the West!
- “Parmenides’s Poem”
 - 1 introduction (“Prooemium”)
 - 2 “way of the truth”
 - 3 “way of opinion (*doxa*)”

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B8

“Is it or is it not ? . . . How, then, can what is be going to be in the future? Or how could it come into being? If it came into being, it is not; nor is it if it is going to be in the future. Thus is becoming extinguished and passing away not to be heard of. Nor is it divisible, since it is all alike, and there is no more of it in one place than in another, to hinder it from holding together, nor less of it, but everything is full of what is. . . . Moreover, it is immovable in the bonds of mighty chains, without beginning and without end; since coming into being and passing away have been driven afar, and true belief has cast them away. It is the same, and it rests in the self-same place, abiding in itself.”

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What is...

... is ungenerated and imperishable, single kind, unshaken, complete, exists all together (perfect).

In other words, no change!

Parmenides's argument against change:

P_1 Non-being cannot exist.

P_2 Generation is only possible if there is non-being.

C_1 Thus, generation is not possible. [MT: P_1, P_2]

P_4 Change is only possible if generation is possible.

\therefore Therefore, change is impossible. [MT, C_1, P_4]

- The argument is valid.
- Justification for the premises:

P_1 : Self-evident; if something exists, it is not a non-being.

P_2 : Generation = coming to be *from non-being*.

P_4 : Change is a kind of generation.

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So...?

Next time!

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