

METAMETAPHYSICS

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Metaphysical Structure

Metametaphysics is inquiry into the status of metaphysical disputes. On my view, a metaphysical dispute is substantive (deep, etc.) depending on whether it is phrased in joint-carving terms.

1. Personal identity, causation

2. Reference magnetism and metametaphysics

Given reference magnetism, there's a way to argue that in substantive debates, the crucial expression *E* is semantically univocal and determinate. But this argument needn't succeed (maybe the magnetism doesn't trump a bad fit with use); and anyway isn't required since we can always rephrase the dispute in new terms *stipulated* to carve at the joints.

3. Relative structure

1. Is there any single best way to measure “length”?
2. All properties and relations requiring (the same size of) infinite definitions come out equally natural

Responses:

1. Lewis was more “physics-first” than one would need to be.
2. Don't get your hopes up about “metaphysical analysis” in general.
3. Higher-order definitions needn't be infinite.

4. Conceptual versus metaphysical depth

5. A test case: extended simples

Extended simples: spatially extended objects without proper parts

Occupation and quantification picture:

- i) Quantification and parthood carve at the joints
- ii) Substantivalism about space is true (there exists, in the most fundamental sense of ‘exists’, a manifold of points of space)
- iii) Supersubstantivalism is false: objects *in* space (“inhabitants”) are not identical to points or regions of space
- iv) Spatial facts about inhabitants emerge from the holding of a perfectly natural relation of *occupation*, which relates inhabitants to space

Yes Something lacks proper parts but occupies more than one point of space

No Nothing lacks proper parts but occupies more than one point of space

So, if you want to complain about the debate, what are your options?

Epistemic complaint The considerations offered by the enthusiasts are inadequate to resolve the issue

Modal complaint Whether extended simples *actually* exist may be substantive, but the question of whether they are *possible* isn’t because modal notions don’t carve at the joints.

Rejecting occupation-and-quantification picture E.g. ontological deflationism.

Principled stands E.g., reject “spanners” (McDaniel, 2003)—objects that directly occupy extended regions—because of micro-reductionism: all natural properties and relations relate mereologically simple entities.

In every case, the criticism is a bit of substantive metaphysics. This point generalizes (and often deprives critics of metaphysics of the epistemic high ground.)

References

McDaniel, Kris (2003). “Against MaxCon Simples.” *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 81: 265–75.