

Glossary

Abstract: a classification of entities, examples include properties or mathematical objects.

Abstraction: 1. a psychological process of considering an object while ignoring some of its features; for example ignoring all other features of a table (its color, material, texture) to just consider its size; 2. the metaphysical relation of one entity being an abstraction from another, an entity just like the latter except lacking some of its features.

Abundant ontology: an ontology that posits a relatively large number of types of entities.

Abundant theory of universals (or properties): a version of realism about universals (or properties) that posits a relatively large number of distinct universals (or properties); in the extreme case, a universal (or property) corresponding to any term that is applied to a multiplicity of entities.

Actualism: the view that everything that exists actually exists, nothing is merely possible.

A-features: tensed features of events such as their happening in the past, present, or future.

Agent causal libertarianism: see **agent causation**

Agent causation: the view that human agents are sometimes causes.

Alexander's dictum: the entities that exist are all and only those that possess causal powers.

Analytic: see **analytic/synthetic distinction**

Analytic account: an account of what we mean.

The **analytic/synthetic distinction:** the distinction between analytic (or logical) methods and synthetic (or empirical methods) for verifying a statement.

A posteriori method: an empirical way of knowing a fact or proposition, one that involves observation or sensory experience.

A priori method: a way of knowing a fact or proposition that does not involve observation or sensory experience.

Argument: a series of statements in which someone is presenting reasons in defense of some claim.

A-series: an ordering of events in terms of their being past (or more past), present, or future (or more future).

Atheism: the thesis that God does not exist.

A-theory of time: the view that the A-facts are not reducible to the B-facts.

B-features: tenseless yet temporal features of events, e.g. one event's happening five years before or after another.

Biological realism about race: racial categories are biological categories.

Block universe view: the combination of the B-theory of time and eternalism.

Bound variable: a variable that is within the **scope** of some quantifier phrase.

Brutal composition: the view that there is no true, interesting, and finite answer to the **Special Composition Question**.

B-series: an ordering of events in terms of their dates and times and permanent relations of being earlier than, later than, and simultaneous with each other.

B-theory of time: the view that the A-facts of time are reducible to the B-facts.

Categorical features: features that just concern what an object is like actually in itself at a certain time.

Cladistics: an approach to classification in contemporary biology, which carves up categories based on the shared evolutionary histories and (resultant) common genetic profiles of individuals.

Class nominalism: the view that properties are to be identified with the classes of objects that instantiate them.

Compatibilism: the view that free will is compatible with determinism.

Conceptualism: the view that universals exist, however they are entities that depend on our mind's grasp of them.

Conclusion: the part of an argument that is being argued for, for which reasons are being offered.

Concrete: a classification of entities that is not abstract, examples include material objects like tables, planets, and rocks.

Contingent: what is neither necessary nor impossible.

Contingent a priori: truths that are neither necessary nor impossible and yet discoverable merely by reflection on the meanings of the terms or concepts involved in them.

Contradiction: any sentence or statement of the form P and not- P .

Conventionalism: a position that seeks to reduce modal claims to facts about what follows or does not follow from the conventions of our language.

Counterexample: an example that shows an argument is invalid, by providing a way in which the premises of the argument could be true while a conclusion is false; or an example that shows a statement is false, by providing a way in which it could be false.

Counterfactual: a conditional asserting what would have been the case had things gone differently than how we suppose they actually go.

Counterfactual theory of causation: a theory that reduces facts about causation to facts about what would have happened in various counterfactual circumstances.

Counterpart: a counterpart of one entity x is an entity that bears some salient similarity and causal relations to x .

De dicto modality: concerns the modal status of propositions (or dictums), whether they are possible, necessary, or contingent.

Deductively invalid: an argument is deductively invalid when it is possible for the premises of the argument to all be true while its conclusion is false.

Deductively valid: an argument is deductively valid when there is no possible way for the premises of the argument to all be true while its conclusion is false. The premises of the argument logically imply its conclusion.

De re modality: concerns the modal status of features of individuals, such as whether a certain feature of an individual is essential or contingent.

Determinism: the position that the laws are such that given any state of the universe, one can use them to predict with certainty what the state of the universe will be at any other time.

Diachronic identity: identity over time.

Dilemma: a choice between two options, each of which yields unattractive consequences.

Dispositional features: features about how an object might behave in various situations.

Domain of quantification: the set of objects over which the quantifiers range in a given context, the set of possible values the variables can take.

Efficient cause: what brings an object or event into being.

Empiricism: the view that our knowledge and understanding of our world comes entirely from experience.

Endurantism: the view that what persistence amounts to is strict numerical identity over time.

Enthymeme: an argument that is incomplete as stated and invalid, although it is easy to supply the missing premises that the argument would need to be valid. In the case of an enthymeme, the author left out the missing premises for fear of boring the reader or insulting his or her intelligence.

Epiphenomenon: an event that is the result of another event but that has no effects of its own.

Epistemicism: the view that vagueness is ignorance; it is not a matter of fundamental indeterminacy in the world or indeterminacy in what our words or concepts apply to, but our ignorance about what our words or concepts apply to.

Epistemic possibility: something that is compatible with everything that one knows.

Epistemological: relating to what we can know or be justified in believing.

Epistemology: the theory of knowledge and justification.

Equivalence relation: a relation that is reflexive, symmetric, and transitive.

Ersatz modal realism: the view that there are possible worlds (worlds that can play a similar role to the concrete worlds of the modal realist), but that these are not additional universes in the same sense as our universe.

Essentialism: the view that objects themselves, independently of any ways we may categorize them, have certain properties necessarily.

Essential properties (essences): properties that hold of an individual by necessity that make them the kinds of things they are.

Eternalism: the view that past, present, and future objects and events are equally real.

Exdurantism (the stage view): identifies the familiar material objects we ordinarily think of as persisting with temporary stages.

Existentialism: the view that it is the kind of things we do that determines our essences, the kind of people we are. We do not possess innate essences that determine who we are and what we will do.

Existential quantifier: \exists , a symbol of first-order predicate logic. When combined with a **variable**, it can be used to represent a statement to the effect that something exists that is a certain way.

External question: see **internal/external distinction**

External statement: see **internal/external distinction**

External time: distinguished from personal time in David Lewis's account of time travel, it is time itself.

Fictionalism: what is required for the truth of sentences in a given domain is to be understood by analogy with truths of fiction.

Final cause: the purpose or goal for which an object exists or why it is the way it is at a given time.

Forms: the universals that constitute the fundamental entities of Plato's ontology.

Four dimensionalism: the doctrine of temporal parts, the view that in addition to spatial parts, objects have temporal parts.

Framework (Carnapian): a linguistic system including rules of grammar and meaning.

Frankfurt case: a case in which intuitively one acts freely and so is morally responsible for an action, and yet one did not have the ability to do otherwise.

Fundamental metaphysical theory: a theory that aims at completeness in the sense that every fact about the world is either a part of that theory or it can be given an explanation completely in terms of that theory.

Fusion: see **mereological sum**

Grounding: the relation that one set of facts bears to another set of facts when the one metaphysically explains the other.

Growing block theory: the view that past and present objects and events are real; future objects and events are not.

Hard determinism: the view that free will is incompatible with determinism and so human beings lack free will.

Hard incompatibilism: the view that free will is incompatible with both determinism and indeterminism and so free will is impossible.

Humeanism about laws: the view that the facts about the laws of nature are reducible to facts about regularities in what happens in our universe.

Hylomorphism: the Aristotelian view that substances are complex objects made of both matter (*hylē*) and form (*morphē*).

Idealization: a false assumption introduced into a theory in order to make it simpler to use.

Identity of Indiscernibles: a metaphysical principle stating that necessarily, if any objects are qualitative duplicates, then they are identical.

Immanent: an entity that is located in space and time, where it is instantiated.

Incompatibilism: the view that free will is incompatible with determinism.

Indeterminism: the denial of **determinism**.

Indiscernibility of Identicals: see **Leibniz's law**

Indispensability argument: an argument for realism (Platonism) about mathematical entities from the premises that (1) we should be committed

to all and only the entities that are indispensable to our best scientific theories, and (2) the claim that mathematical entities are indispensable to our best scientific theories.

Instantiation: the relation between a property and an entity that has that property.

Internal question: see **internal/external distinction**

Internal statement: see **internal/external distinction**

The **internal/external distinction:** the distinction between questions or statements that are evaluated from within a linguistic framework and those that are evaluated from outside the framework, that may be about the framework itself.

Intrinsic properties: properties objects have just in virtue of how they are in themselves, not how they are in relation to other things.

Invalid: see **deductively invalid**

Leibniz's law: the metaphysical principle that necessarily, if a and b are identical, then they must share all of the same properties.

Libertarianism: the view that free will is incompatible with determinism and so determinism is false.

Linguistic ersatzism: a form of ersatz modal realism that interprets possible worlds to be sentences or other linguistic entities.

Linguistic (or semantic) vagueness: vagueness that is the result of semantic indecision; there not being facts to determine precisely in all cases what our terms apply to.

Logical connectives: symbols used to build complex propositions out of simpler ones.

Logical positivism: a movement in philosophy originating in Austria and Germany in the 1920s; a movement critical of metaphysics, arguing that all knowledge of the world must originate in sense experience and logic.

Logical possibility: what does not entail any contradiction.

Logicism: the view that mathematics is reducible to logic.

Major conclusion: the final conclusion of an argument.

Maximal property: a property F is maximal if large parts of an F are not themselves Fs.

Mereological atom: an object lacking any proper parts.

Mereological nihilism: the view that there are no mereologically complex objects, only simples.

Mereological relations: part/whole relations.

Mereological sum: the mereological sum of some objects x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n is the object that contains x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n as parts.

Mereological universalism: the view that composition occurs for any spatially disjoint objects whatsoever.

Meta-ontology: the study of what one is doing, or what one should be doing, when one is engaged in an ontological debate.

Metaphysical explanation: see **grounding**

Metaphysical vagueness: vagueness that results from how the world is objectively, not how we think or talk about it; fundamental indeterminacy in what exists or what features things have.

Mind-body dualism: the view that there are two kinds of substances, minds (mental substances) and bodies (material substances).

Minor conclusion: a statement that is argued for on the way to arguing for an argument's major conclusion.

Modal claims: those that express facts about what is possible, impossible, necessary, or contingent.

Modal logic: the branch of logic that represents modal claims.

Modal properties: properties having to do with what is possible, impossible, necessary, or contingent.

Modal realism: the view that in addition to the actual world, there exist other alternative universes, possible worlds, just as real as our own; and that it is in virtue of the nature of these universes that our modal claims are true or false.

Model: a theoretical structure involving a basic set of representational devices accounting for a set of data.

Modus ponens: the logical form:

If A, then B
A
Therefore,
B,

where A and B are any propositions.

Moving spotlight view: a view that combines eternalism with the A-theory of time.

Naturalism: the view that it is within science itself that reality is to be identified and described.

Natural kind: a group of objects in which each member of the group shares some objective, mind-independent similarity.

Necessary a posteriori: truths that are necessary and yet known on the basis of empirical observation.

Nominalism: 1. the view that there are no such things as abstract entities; 2. the view that there are no such things as universals; 3. the view that there are no such things as mathematical entities.

Nomological possibility or necessity: possibility or necessity according to the laws of nature.

Numbered premise form: a way of stating arguments so that each premise as well as the conclusion are given a number and presented each on their own line.

Numerical identity (or identity in the strict sense): oneness, the sense of 'a is identical to b' meaning that a and b are the same object, that they are one.

Objection from Coextension: an argument against class nominalism that there are more properties than those that may be recognized by the class nominalist, since two predicates may have the same extension and yet refer to two distinct properties.

Objective: not depending on any individual's perspective, absolute.

Ockham's Razor: the principle that one should not multiply one's ontological commitments beyond necessity.

One Over Many: an argument for realism about universals that starts from a premise about some similarities between a group of objects and concludes that there is a universal (a one) that runs through these individual objects (the many).

Ontological commitments: the types of entities one ought to believe in, given the sentences he or she accepts.

Ontological dependence: when one entity depends on another for its continued existence.

Ontology: 1. the study of what there is; 2. a particular theory about the types of entities there are.

Openness of the future: the view that there are not any determinate facts about the future.

Origins essentialism: the view that the origins of material objects and organisms are essential to them.

Ostrich nominalism: a version of nominalism that denies the existence of properties and refuses to answer the question of what it is in virtue of which objects are similar or appear to have certain features.

Particular: any entity that may not be multiply instantiated.

Perdurantism (the worm view): the view that material objects persist by having temporal parts at different times.

Personal time: distinguished from external time in David Lewis's account of time travel, elapsed time as measured by the normal behavior of physical objects: ticks of a watch, aging processes of human beings, etc.

Physicalism: the view that physics alone can provide a complete description of what there is in our world and what it is like.

Platonism: 1. the view that there are such things as the Platonic **Forms**; 2. the view that there are such things as abstract, mathematical entities.

Possibilism: the view that at least some entities are not actual, but merely possible.

Possible worlds analysis of modality: an analysis of claims about possibility and necessity in terms of what is true at various possible worlds (including the actual world).

Predicate nominalism: a view denying the existence of properties. Predicates may be satisfied or not satisfied by objects, but there need be no property that exists to explain this fact.

Premise: a statement offered as part of an argument as a reason for accepting a certain claim.

Presentism: the view that only presently existing objects and events are real.

Primitivist theory of causation: a theory according to which causal facts are not reducible to any noncausal facts, including facts about regularities, laws, counterfactuals, or probabilities.

Principle of charity: a convention of philosophical debate to, when reasonable, try to interpret one's opponent's claims as true and her arguments as valid.

Principle of naturalistic closure: the principle that any metaphysical claim to be taken seriously at a time should be motivated by the service it would perform in showing how two or more scientific hypotheses, at least one of which is drawn from fundamental physics, jointly explain more than what is explained by the hypotheses taken separately.

Problem of temporary intrinsics: a problem raised for endurantism by David Lewis, who argued that the endurantist cannot account for change in an object's intrinsic properties.

Problem of the Many: a philosophical problem about the existence and identity of material objects introduced by the philosopher Peter Unger in 1980. The problem stems from the fact that ordinary material objects (like persons, rocks, tables, and stars) seem not to have well-defined physical boundaries. There are several precisely defined objects with determinate boundaries that may be associated with any ordinary material object. This raises the question of which if any of these precisely defined objects it is identical to.

Proper part: x is a proper part of y just in case x is a part of y and x is not identical to y .

Protocol statement: a statement that may be directly verified by sense experience.

Qualitative identity: the sense of 'a is identical to b' meaning that a and b share all of the same qualities (the same color, same shape, same size, etc.).

Racialism: the view that there are heritable characteristics possessed by members of our species which permit a division into a small set of races.

Realism about universals: the view that universals exist and they are mind-independent entities.

Realization: one object or objects realize another when the former plays the role of implementing the latter, e.g. when some hardware components implement a particular program.

Reductio ad absurdum: the method of proving a claim by arguing that the negation of that claim would entail a contradiction (an absurdity).

Reference class problem: this is the problem that the probability we assign to an event seems to depend on our way of conceptualizing it (placing it against a reference class) on a given occasion. This may vary depending on the context making it difficult to say what is *the* probability of the event.

Regimentation: the procedure of representing statements in symbolic logic to make it as clear as possible what follows from those statements.

Regularity theory of causation: a theory of causation that explains causal relations in terms of the regular occurrence of patterns of events.

Scope (of a quantifier): the part of the sentence containing the variables the quantifier is binding. In symbolic logic, the scope of a quantifier is either the part of the sentence immediately after the quantifier phrase (in a simple sentence like $\exists xFx$), or the part of the sentence contained in the parentheses that immediately follow the quantifier phrase. (For example, in $\exists x(Fx \wedge Gx) \wedge Hx$, the x s in 'Fx' and 'Gx' are contained in the scope of the quantifier. The x in 'Hx' is not.)

Self-forming actions: important actions in the life of a person that decide the kind of person he or she will be.

Semantic ascent: when, in order to address a question, a philosopher "ascends to the semantic plane," addressing first a question about the meaning of certain key terms in the original question.

Semantic theory: an account of a proposition's or set of propositions' meanings and truth conditions.

Sentential operator: a bit of logical notation acting on sentences or propositions to form more complex sentences or propositions.

Set nominalism: see **class nominalism**

Shrinking block theory: the view that present and future objects and events are real; past objects and events are not.

Simple: see **mereological atom**

Social construction: a classification whose members constitute a social kind.

Social kind: a group of objects in which each member of the group shares some similarity based in existing social practices, institutions, or conventions.

Soft determinism: the view that determinism is true and it is compatible with the existence of free will.

Sortal essentialism: the view that it is essential to objects what kinds of things they are.

Sortal predicate: a predicate that classifies an object as a member of a certain sort (or kind).

Sound: an argument is sound just in case it has all true premises and is deductively valid.

Sparse ontology: an ontology that posits a relatively small number of types of entities.

Sparse theory of universals (or properties): a version of realism about universals (or properties) that posits a relatively small number of distinct universals (or properties); in the extreme case, there are only universals (or properties) corresponding to types recognized by our fundamental physical theories.

Special Composition Question: the question for any x s, when is it the case that there is a y such that the x s compose y .

Surface freedom: being able to act in such a way that one's desires are satisfied.

Supervenience: one set of facts about a class of entities (the A s) supervenes on another set of facts about a class of entities (the B s) when there can be no change in the A -facts without a corresponding change in the B -facts.

Synchronic identity: identity at a time.

Synthetic: see **analytic/synthetic distinction**

Teleological cause: see final cause

Theism: the thesis that God exists.

Theory of abstract particulars: see trope theory

Thought experiment: a fictional case used in order to draw out consequences of use to the building of a scientific or philosophical theory.

Three dimensionalism: the view that although objects may have spatial parts, they never have temporal parts.

Transcendent: a transcendent entity is one that is not located in space or time.

Trope: an abstract particular, e.g. the shape of the Empire State Building.

Trope theory: the theory that properties are tropes, or abstract particulars.

Truthmaker theory: the theory that truths have truthmakers, some entities or sets of entities that make them true.

Two Object View: the view that material objects are numerically distinct from the matter of which they are made.

Ultimate freedom of the will: having the ability to satisfy one's desires and being the ultimate source of those desires.

Universal: a type of entity that is repeatable, that may be instantiated at multiple locations at once by distinct entities.

Universal quantifier: \forall , a symbol of first-order predicate logic. When combined with a **variable**, it can be used to represent a statement to the effect that everything is a certain way.

Use/mention distinction: a distinction between two ways in which a word or phrase may appear in a sentence. A sentence may use the linguistic item so that it plays its typical semantic role (naming some object if it is a name, modifying some object if it is an adjective, and so on). Or, a sentence may mention the linguistic item, using it to refer to itself. In cases where a linguistic item is being mentioned rather than used, a philosophical convention is to place the relevant word or phrase in single quotes.

Valid: see **deductively valid**

Variables: symbols like x , y , z , etc. used to stand in for other things in a sentence, called the values of the variable.

Verificationist theory of meaning: the meaning of a statement is given by its conditions of verification.

Verificationist theory of truth: a sentence is only capable of truth or falsity if it is capable of being verified or falsified.

To be **wholly present** at a time: to have all of one's parts exist at that time.

World-line: the path of any object through space-time.