

NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

THE ONTOLOGY OF UNIVERSALS:
IMPLICATIONS OF EXISTENCE

PRESENTED TO TOMIS KAPITAN, Ph.D.
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR PHIL 612: METAPHYSICS
THE DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

BY
PATRICK CAMPBELL

DEKALB, IL
8 DECEMBER 2009

THE ONTOLOGY OF UNIVERSALS:

IMPLICATIONS OF EXISTENCE

Introduction

The debate over the ontological status of universals is in large part perpetuated by vagaries surrounding the concept of a thing's existence. In the article "Conceptualism," Reinhardt Grossman characterizes the three representative programs in the debate (realism, nominalism, and conceptualism) in terms of differences in their respective ontological priorities. Specifically, Grossman argues that, (a) all three positions are committed to the recognition of two distinct ontological modes (i.e. existents and subsistents); and (b) that this distinction is necessitated by their acceptance of one of several ontological criteria, naming, independence, or localization, as the most significant criterion of existence.

In his work, *Mind and the World Order*, C.I. Lewis argues that the term *exist* is "systematically ambiguous" and always requires the further supplementation of such ontological qualifiers to be rendered intelligible.¹ In the beginning sections of this paper, I will argue along the lines of Lewis that the existence/subsistence distinction is not substantively meaningful (i.e. lacks clear content) and should be dispensed with in favor

¹ Examples of such qualifiers could be reference to any particular feature of the entity conventionally determined to be ontologically relevant (e.g., physicality, temporal extension, the capacity to be named, etc.).

of a more comprehensive set of ontological criteria similar to those proposed by Grossman. I will support this argument by demonstrating that an ontological model which features only these two ontological modes fails to accommodate certain ontologically relevant features of concepts which distinguish them from abstract entities like properties.² Finally, I will argue from one particular account of these ontological modes that the mode *subsistent* reduces to an ontological criterion that no entity could fail to satisfy without thereby barring from our knowledge all its theoretically relevant features (namely, a criterion of temporal dimensionality).³

In later sections of this paper, I attempt to draw the relevant connections between my theses and their implications in the larger debate concerning the nature of universals. Here I will argue that the conceptualist's primary motivation in identifying universals with concepts is the general difficulties realists have in fixing their relevant features. Such ontological instability, conceptualists argue, is a characteristic feature of concepts, but is inappropriate for genuinely objective realities such as universals are claimed to be. I will defend the conceptualist's concerns by demonstrating the potential dangers of ontological miscategorization, drawing reference to the relationship between an entity's ontological status and its enjoyment of certain theoretical powers and privileges. In my conclusion, I will offer suggestions as to how the realist can strengthen his position by accommodating the conceptualist's concerns without thereby having to relinquish any

² It is precisely reference to these features that make an ontological category metaphysically useful, for only these are relevant to the theoretical powers of its members. No entity garners theoretical powers solely in virtue of belonging to a particular ontological category (which may or may not represent legitimate entities, i.e. may completely lack membership). Rather, the ontological features of entities determine the boundaries of their theoretical applicability, and ontological categories are delineated in large part for the purpose of regulating against the illicit application of certain theoretical powers to entities from ineligible classes.

³ I will term *illicit* any entity whose ontological features are such as to render their theoretically relevant features inscrutable.

ontologically relevant features of universals. I will maintain, however, that for the realist to preserve the *theoretical* utility of these entities, he must provide an account of those relevant features which enable them for these tasks.

Disclaimer

In light of the great divergence even *within* each respective program concerning the relevant features of postulated entities (universals, concepts, concrete particulars), I will aim to remain consistent with Grossman's characterization to the extent that it is provided. In such instances that I must refer to some particular issue in the debate which Grossman's account neglects, or if I otherwise deem it necessary to diverge from his account to support some peculiarity of my argument, I will preface the relevant portions of my discussion with the appropriate context. Finally, unless otherwise stated, I will use the term 'realism' to denote a generic form of Platonic property realism.

What is it to Exist?

Existence and Subsistence

Grossman suggests that the primary differences between realists, nominalists, and conceptualists derive from their different priorities regarding three proposed ontological criteria: naming, localization, and independence. According to the naming-criterion, what exists is what can be named. According to the independence-criterion, what exists is what can be presented in perception independently of other things. Finally, the localization-criterion states that what exists is what is localized in space and time. According to an abbreviated version of Grossman's characterization, then, realists, accepting the naming-

criterion, hold that properties exist, while both nominalists and conceptualists, guided by the independence-criterion, hold that they merely subsist. Conversely, the realist holds that bare individuals (e.g., substrata or the ‘compresence relations’ of bundle theorists) exist, while the nominalist denies these wholesale, whether as existents *or* subsistents.

At the end of his paper, Grossman proposes a new ontological criterion, an adaptation of the independence-criterion which he thinks will be useful to the conceptualist in helping him explicate the ontological status of concepts. This new criterion, which we will call independence-criterion₂, is meant to replace the former independence-criterion and states that what exists is what can be presented *either* in perception *or in thought* independently of other things. A final point of interest, then, in Grossman’s account is his characterization of the ontological commitments of conceptualism regarding concepts. In brief, Grossman suggests that conceptualists have several options: first, they could adopt either the naming-criterion or independence criterion₂ and claim that concepts exist; or, two, they could adopt the localization-criterion and claim that concepts merely subsist. Without being explicit, Grossman suggests that the conceptualist will be more inclined to take the latter course and hold that concepts, like properties, merely subsist.⁴

Grossman’s method of characterization demonstrates the potential usefulness of a discrete set of satisfiable criteria, each corresponding to some ontologically relevant feature of the entity in question, in determining that entity’s proper ontological category. This method seems ideally suited to what Lewis considers the proper goal of metaphysics, as he explains:

⁴ Grossman, Reinhardt. “Conceptualism”. *The Review of Metaphysics*. Vol. 14, No. 2 (Dec. 1960), p. 253.

[The] adjective ‘real’ is systematically ambiguous and can have a single meaning only in a special sense. The ascription of reality to the content of any particular experience is always elliptical: some qualification – material reality, psychic reality, mathematical reality – is always understood. And whatever is real in one such sense will be unreal in others. Conversely, every given content of experience is a reality of some sort or other; so that the problem of distinguishing real from unreal, the principles of which metaphysics seeks to formulate, is always a problem of right understanding, of referring the given experience to its proper category...The content of every experience is real when it is correctly understood, and is that kind of reality which it is then interpreted to be. Metaphysics is concerned to reveal just that set of major classifications of phenomena, and just those precise criteria of valid understanding, by which the whole array of given experience may be set in order and each item (ideally) assigned its intelligible and unambiguous place.⁵

Taking Lewis’ insights back to Grossman’s account, however, we find ourselves confronted with several concerns. These primarily concern his application of the existence/subsistence distinction. First of all, it is not at all clear to what particular features of a given entity these two ‘ontological modes’ are meant to correspond. Rather, Grossman’s characterization represents each respective program as applying the terms independently of any common standard, simply to accommodate their own entity’s peculiar features. The result is that the satisfaction of a single ontological criterion, e.g., the capacity to be named, might potentially garner *either* ontological designation for a particular entity dependent on what program you happen to side with.

Secondly, but equally problematic, is that even within the methodological context of a *single* metaphysical program, the existence/subsistence model fails to take account of certain important ontological data. Recall from Grossman’s characterization that conceptualists tended to class both properties and concepts alike under the ontological mode *subsistent*, although each possessed some ontological feature that the other lacked. Perhaps the most apparent difference between the two posited entities considered here is

⁵ Lewis, 1929. pp. 11-12.

that properties are conceived by the realist to be mind-independent while concepts are mind-dependent.⁶ This difference alone seems sufficient by Lewis' standard to warrant distinct ontological characterization, and yet the existence/subsistence model is inadequate to accommodate it.

As long as our ontological model features only the two ontological modes of existence and subsistents, we are unable to accommodate the peculiar ontological features of concepts that distinguish them from the abstract entities of the realist (e.g., properties). The full consequences of this ambiguity within our ontological model will be explicated in later sections of this paper. For the present, let us turn to a slightly more technical account of the existence/subsistence distinction and see if we can extract from it any definite criteria that could be useful to our enterprise. Regarding this distinction, Bertrand Russell writes:

We shall find it convenient only to speak of things *existing* when they are in time, that is to say, when we can point to some time *at* which they exist (not excluding the possibility of their existing at all times). Thus thoughts and feelings, minds and physical objects *exist*. But universals do not exist in this sense; we shall say that they *subsist* or *have being*, where 'being' is opposed to 'existence' as being timeless.⁷

In relating the term *existence* exclusively to temporally located entities (e.g., thoughts and feelings, minds and physical objects), Russell appears to be recognizing some significance in the temporal features of entities *independently* of their spatial features. Hence, we might feel compelled to argue for the adoption of new ontological criteria, a sort of parsing out of Grossman's localization-criterion into its two simpler

⁶ "[Universals] or abstract entities have being independently of the mind; the mind may discover them but cannot create them." Quine, W.V.O. "On What There Is". *The Review of Metaphysics*. Vol. 2, No. 5 (Sept. 1948), p. 33.

⁷ Russell, Bertrand. *The Problems of Philosophy*. (New York: Oxford University Press), 1976. pp. 99-100.

components – temporal location and spatial location. But we must be careful here. Certainly temporality is a distinct feature from spatiality, and both are ontologically significant in their own right.⁸ But built into Russell's qualification is further presupposition with high metaphysical cost – i.e. that we can have knowledge of entities which fail to satisfy a temporal criterion (or that we could ever hope to populate such a category with its proper members).

Being cautious not to stray into epistemological concerns from what was intended to be a metaphysical inquiry, let us examine the purely metaphysical concerns of positing non-phenomenal entities, i.e. entities which do not conform to the conditions of possible experience (namely, space or time). The two with which we will primarily concern ourselves here are those that most strongly motivate the conceptualist agenda. These are: (1) the tendency of realists to acquire their entities through the hypostatization of conceptual realities; and (2) the realist's presumption to 'ground' phenomena in the physical realm by invoking such entities in absentia of any reference to those particular features that might render them potent for such tasks.

What are the Implications of Existence?

Powers and Privileges: A Reductio

As we saw above, an ontological model which features only two modes of being (i.e. existence and subsistence) fails to accommodate certain ontologically relevant features of concepts which distinguish them from abstract entities like properties. This ontological conflation of concepts with properties (i.e. the subsumption of both concepts

⁸ i.e. every spatially-located entity will also have temporal dimensionality; but there are temporally-located entities that seemingly lack spatial dimensionality (e.g., mental entities like thoughts, feelings, and concepts).

and properties under the same ontological category of *subsistents*) often results in the illicit application of certain theoretical powers and privileges – as would perhaps be appropriate to *legitimate* members of abstracta (granting there were such things) - to merely provisional entities like concepts. Conceptualism, therefore, should largely be understood as, one, an attempt to defend against the theoretical consequences of this illicit sharing of privileges between members of distinct ontological categories; and, two, the illicit application of theoretical powers to entities which have not independently been shown to possess the requisite feature).

The conceptualist could argue in either of two directions here. First, he could argue that the epistemological barriers barring us from a substantive knowledge of abstract entities inevitably frustrate any would-be attempt to use those entities' features for explanatory purposes. According to this familiar line of argument, the realist's invocation of abstract entities to explain these problematic issues is no more helpful than the hypothetical physician who attributes the potency of a sleeping medicine to its 'dormative properties'. Such replies establish the nature of a thing as identical with its causal powers (however loosely embodied), and the latter follow vacuously from the concept of its nature.⁹ This first line of argument, then, essentially claims that the theoretical powers traditionally ascribed to abstract entities are claimed for them *illicitly*.

The second line of argument available to the conceptualist would be to press the realist on his method of populating his ontological category *abstracta* with the members appropriate to it. That the realist faces unique difficulties in performing this task with regard to abstract entities is evidenced by his patent failure, historically speaking, to

⁹ Abelson, Raziel. "Causing, Perceiving and Believing: An Examination of the Philosophy of C. J. Ducasse (Review)". *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (Oct. 1977), p. 497.

distinguish the ‘realities’ from merely provisional forms (those entities traditionally identified as concepts).¹⁰ Let’s take, for example, the concepts *man* and *woman*. Prior to modern science, the differentiation of the sexes perhaps seemed principled: two fundamental constituents of the bedrock of reality. From many repeated encounters with this general pattern arose the concepts *man* and *woman*. These soon became fixed as pillars in man’s understanding of the world, not least of all in his religious traditions.¹¹ Today, however, we recognize nature to be much more heterogeneous, producing not *men* and *women* as such, but many unique *individuals* representing nearly every degree of masculinity and femininity imaginable (i.e. according to the prior standard of each respective qualification). Indeed, modern gender models often assume the form of a continuum, recognizing the sex of an individual to be a complex function of several, sometimes discordant, genetic and physiological determinants.¹² Many of these individuals would have been judged as deviants, or *hiccups*, relative to our initial iconic conceptions.

¹⁰ The underlying concern here is what are perceived as the potential dangers of ascribing to mere concepts (which are characteristically *provisional* entities, and therefore susceptible to change as new data are taken into account) the same ontological features which abstract entities are claimed to possess (e.g., fixedness, eternity, self-subsistence, etc.). This is particularly evident in the religious and moral spheres as the emergence of nihilism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries bears witness. As one comes to rely on the particular content of a concept (for instance, God) at one stage in its historical development as something fixed and essential to it, and as one assumes a posture toward reality that reflects this particular understanding, ordering his commitments thereby, a disruption in the integrity of that concept via the integration of new experiential data not previously accommodated by it affects a subsequent disruption in the practical life of that individual. This disruption of his practical life can be a slight jolt, or it can be devastating. The ‘God of the gaps’ phenomenon that has been playing out in the Christian community for as long the divine nature has been a topic of scholarly discourse clearly demonstrates the potential theoretical dangers of treating the merely provisional as fixed and ultimate.

¹¹ e.g., “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” Gen. 1:27 (N.I.V.)

¹² Such determinants include chromosomal sex (XY and XX; but also XXY, etc.), gonadal sex (presence of testes or ovaries), hormonal sex (presence of testosterone, estrogen, etc.); and anatomical sex (appearance of external genitalia).

Confronted with the defiance of reality to conform to our conceptual impositions, how are we to respond? Certainly no realist would suggest we maintain our icons when our phenomenal reality no longer supports the shape we've formed for them: to do so would demonstrate a blatant (not to mention foolish) disregard for the only source of theoretical accountability available to us. Fortunately, the role of phenomenal reality in the correction of our conceptual frameworks is often countenanced among realists to a similar degree as that exhibited by the more strongly empiricist traditions, nominalism and conceptualism. But the mere willingness of realists to adapt, refine, and eliminate outmoded entities within their ontology does not quite attain to settling our apprehensions about their general method, which unless finds a means by which to distinguish the 'genuine' from the merely provisional entity, seems fated only to lead them back into error.

The general inability of realists to accurately discern when they've apprehended a genuine member of abstracta alongside the merely conceptual entities which populate their imaginations has led the conceptualist to denounce all such posits as simply hypostatized concepts. Lewis reflects on the practice in the context of the theoretical difficulty which precipitates it. As he writes,

If there is nothing objective about propositions and concepts then there is no such thing as truth and there can be no serious purpose in reflection or discussion...One may follow Plato and cut the Gordian knot by removing these precise and [logical] meanings beyond our earthly sphere and establishing them as transcendental ideas or eternal objects. This reflects a judgment of their value but leaves our commerce with them a miracle; it substitutes adoration of a mystery for explanation of a fact. A similar remark would apply to any doctrine like that of the new realism, so far as this doctrine hypostatizes conceptual realities, such as those of mathematics, setting them up as objective realities without further ado and then explaining them as coincidences of mind and object. One does not answer the numerous objections which the nominalists and conceptualists in logic have urged – and very plausibly urged – by first setting up what they claim can

exist only in a mind as something outside it and then offering coincidence of mind and object as explanation of the fact that these conceptual objects are also *in* minds.¹³

This last objection finds its target in the following definition of universals (conceived as abstract entities). According to this account, universals are “a class of mind-independent entities, usually contrasted with individuals (or so called ‘particulars’), postulated to ground and explain relations of qualitative identity and resemblance among individuals.”¹⁴ To counter the realist’s bid on behalf of abstracta to fill these grounding and explanatory roles, and to block the anticipated theoretical backlash of admitting non-phenomenal entities into their ontology, conceptualism argues that mere concepts are sufficient to satisfy all these theoretical functions.

The primary thesis of conceptualism is that *perception* only presents us with the particular; it is *thought* that presents us with the general. Predication, accordingly, is treated by the conceptualist as a function of thought, not of perception. As Grossman writes, “To predicate a universal of something is to transcend whatever is presented in perception, letting the mind go to work on what is so presented. Or, to say the same thing more precisely, in predication the mind ‘subsumes’ a *this* under a *concept*.”¹⁵ These tenets of conceptualism should perhaps be understood as concessions to phenomenal reality, which has time and time again defied man’s attempts to supplant her with his logically precise conceptual systematizations. It is a sober recognition that, as truly as nature *corrects* our conceptual frameworks (and thereby, also, the peculiar forms realist’s

¹³ Lewis, 1929. pp. 70.

¹⁴ MacLeod, Mary C.; Rubenstein, Eric M. “Universals”. *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Last updated on Dec. 9, 2005. See also Russell, 1976, p. 97.

¹⁵ Grossman, 1960. p. 250-51.

assume for the entities they represent), so also does nature *supply* those concepts - not by revelation of that which stands behind and supports its reality, but as a primitive datum which more or less accommodates our practical interest in drawing generalizations over its content.

But where nature sets limits on our practico-theoretical enterprise, conceptualism finds itself poised to adapt; while realism, on the other hand, is left gathering the pieces of shattered icons. It may, then, seem an adequate response to these objections simply to adopt a more conservative realism, perhaps a form of *scientific realism* which bases its ontology around the best physical account of what there is (indicating thereby that leanest possible set of abstract entities still required to ground these realities).¹⁶ But such a move seems to reflect the same backwards attitude concerning the theoretical priority of abstract entities relative to the phenomenal exhibited by its naïve counterparts. For in the event that our conceptual systems come to perfectly correspond to phenomenal reality, we will have only achieved a sufficiently diluted rationalism as to make us virtually indistinguishable from empiricists. What use will we have for an abstract realm once it has assumed the same general shape and character as the empirical? Such a realm would be as multifarious and laden with peculiarities as phenomenal reality itself, for we would require just as many abstract entities as there were phenomenal entities with some qualitative uniqueness - that is to say, *all of them*. And in this case, it would be just as well to ground the qualitative similarities among abstract entities in their phenomenal instances as the other way around. Better, maintain conceptualists, just to dispense with the superfluous class.

¹⁶ Loux, 2006. p. 39.

Conclusion

The crux of the debate over universals is the content of the term *exist* and the theoretical implications of bearing that term. The proper goal of metaphysics, therefore, is “to reveal just that set of major classifications of phenomena, and just those precise criteria of valid understanding, by which the whole array of given experience may be set in order and each item (ideally) assigned its intelligible and unambiguous place.”¹⁷ This enterprise has had a long and rich history, one marked with some significant advances, but also a good deal of setbacks.

The most theoretically consequential move thus far in the delineation of these ontological classifications was the realist’s postulation of non-phenomenal entities - i.e. entities that do not conform to the conditions of possible experience (namely, space and time) - to ground and explain relations of qualitative identity and resemblance among individuals (among other things). Such a move, I suspect, underlies the initial postulation of the two distinct ‘modes of being’, *existence* and *subsistence*. Insofar as these categories are liable to ambiguous application, however, they should be replaced with those ontological criteria they seem to presuppose.

Even after eliminating the ontological modes of existence and subsistence, however, we are still left with the theoretical difficulties of classifying the non-phenomenal posits of realists (now handled according to the specific ontological features that are peculiar to them). Such ontological features as abstracta are claimed to possess render their *theoretically* relevant features inscrutable. This peculiarity of abstract entities gives rise to several conceptualist objections. Firstly, the conceptualist argues, any claim

¹⁷ Lewis, 1929. pp. 11-12.

by the realist to ground or explain *anything* within the phenomenal realm by the mere invocation of abstract entities is mere pretense, since no subsequent account of their theoretically relevant features can be provided. Such ‘explanations’ are vacuous, and their application toward theoretical problems illicit. Secondly, the conceptualist objects to the realist’s method (or lack thereof) of populating their ontological category *abstracta*. By what criteria, the conceptualist asks, are realists to draw the necessary distinctions between ‘genuine’ members of abstracta and mind-dependent entities like concepts so as to avoid the pitfalls of ontological miscategorization? In the absence of formal criteria, conceptualists argue that there is nothing to regulate against the hypostatization of mere concepts - a practice which, conceptualists demonstrate, can lead to significant and undesirable consequences in the practical realm.

Conceptualism, then, is motivated largely by the recognition that an entity’s supposed ontological status tends to afford them certain theoretical utility – utility which may or may not be established in the features they actually possess; and that realism, perhaps more than any other program, often fails to show proper regard for the potential dangers of mixing up entities from distinct ontological categories. When all the ontological privileges traditionally claimed for abstract entities are illicitly applied to purely provisional entities like concepts, we commit ourselves to absurd consequences. It is these absurd consequences which conceptualists hope to defend against, and they do this by bringing concepts to the forefront of our discussions concerning universals.

The worry over the practical implications of hypostatizing conceptual realities, setting them up outside and independent of the mind, perhaps represents the strongest motivation toward the establishment of more precise criteria to regulate the classification

of posited entities into appropriate ontological categories. It was therefore suggested that the realist might potentially strengthen his position in the eyes of the conceptualist by adopting a more conservative realism, perhaps a form of scientific realism which bases its ontology around the best physical account of what there is. It remains unclear, however, how such a move could benefit the realist in the long run since it seems likely only to transition into empiricism: a model of the substructure of phenomenal reality which, featuring no less particularity than that reality itself, serves rather to recapitulate the problem of qualitative similarity among individuals than resolve it.

Reflecting on this last point, many conceptualists have been led to deny that our systematization of phenomenal reality really has much to do with accurately representing its underlying nature (or at least that this is its exclusive aim). William James once contested that such systematizations of reality represent “far less an account of this actual world than a clear addition built upon it, a classic sanctuary in which the rationalist fancy may take refuge from the intolerably confused and gothic character which mere facts present. It is no *explanation* of our concrete universe, it is another thing altogether, a substitute for it, a remedy, a way of escape.”¹⁸ Lewis provides a similar commentary on this practice, although in slightly toned down language. He writes,

[Abstractness] and systematic precision go together, and...exact deductive procedures may give rise to no corresponding certainty about empirical nature. Logical integrity and concrete applicability are quite separate matters...[The] analytic character and abstractness of exact systems, which assure to them that kind of certainty which they have, tend to divorce them from that empirical truth which is the object of natural science and the content of our possible knowledge of nature...It is not too much to say, I think, that it becomes a matter of doubt whether the structure science builds is solidly based upon the earth, or is a mansion in some Platonic heaven, or is only a kind of castle in the air. At least it appears that we must accept a kind of double-truth: there are the certainties, such

¹⁸ James, 2003. p. 10.

as those of mathematics, which concern directly only what is abstract; and there are the presentations of our sense-experience to which we seek to apply them, but with a resultant empirical truth which may be no more than probable.¹⁹

Such reflections emphasize the disparity between the content of our conceptual systems and that of phenomenal reality which supplies them, and reminds us of the importance of preserving a humble accountability to the latter in the generalizations we draw over it. The many and undesirable consequences of positing provisional realities as fixed and ultimate place a heavy burden on realists to practice discretion in their ontological characterizations. In the absence of formal criteria, however, to guide them in their proper classification; and due to those peculiar ontological features which render all other distinguishing features inscrutable, universals continue to prove themselves in every way uniquely ill-suited for genuinely constructive metaphysics.

¹⁹ Lewis, 1929. pp. viii-ix.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abelson, Raziell. "Causing, Perceiving and Believing: An Examination of the Philosophy of C. J. Ducasse (Review)". *Journal of the History of Philosophy*. Vol. 15, No. 4 (Oct. 1977), pp. 497-99.
- Grossman, Reinhardt. "Conceptualism". *The Review of Metaphysics*. Vol. 14, No. 2 (Dec. 1960), pp. 243-54.
- James, William. *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking*. New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 2003.
- Lewis, Clarence Irving. *Mind and the World Order: Outline of a Theory of Knowledge*. New York: Dover Publications, 1929.
- Loux, Michael. *Metaphysics: a contemporary introduction*. 3rd edition. New York: Routledge, 2006.
- MacLeod, Mary C.; Rubenstein, Eric M. "Universals". *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Last updated on Dec. 9, 2005.
- Quine, W.V.O. "On What There Is". *The Review of Metaphysics*. Vol. 2, No. 5 (Sept. 1948), pp. 21-38.
- Russell, Bertrand. *The Problems of Philosophy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1976.