

DISPENSING WITH PARSIMONY

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Plan

- Parsimony
- Quantity and/or Quality
- Ontology and/or Ideology
- Modal realism
- Roles/Role-fillers
- Does Ontological Parsimony Matter?

For/Against Parsimony

- Occam razor: “Do not multiply entities beyond necessity”!
- I subscribe to the general view that qualitative parsimony is good in a philosophical or empirical hypothesis; but I recognize no presumption whatever in favour of quantitative parsimony
- There is a tendency...for us to take simplicity...as a guide to metaphysical truth. Perhaps this tendency derives from earlier theological notions: we expect God to have created a beautiful universe
- The legitimacy of parsimony stands or falls, in a particular research context, on subject matter specific (and a posteriori) considerations. [...] What makes parsimony reasonable in one context may have nothing in common with why it matters in another (Sober 1994).

Ontology and/or Ideology

- Given a theory, one philosophically interesting aspect of it into which we can inquire is its ontology: what entities are the variables of quantification to range over if the theory is to hold true? Another no less important aspect into which we can inquire is its ideology (this seems the inevitable word, despite unwanted connotations): what ideas can be expressed in it? ... It is clearer, I think, to recognize in ontology and ideology two distinct domains of inquiry

Ontology and/or Ideology

- (O-Parsimony) Ontological parsimony, which concerns the minimizing of ontological commitments, is an epistemic virtue.
- (I-Parsimony) Ideological parsimony, which concerns the minimizing of ideological commitments, is an epistemic virtue.
- we need both

Quantity and/or Quality

- (Quantitative Parsimony) Parsimony concerns the number of commitments.
- (Qualitative Parsimony) Parsimony concerns the number of kinds of commitments.

All Combined?

- (NO-Parsimony) Quantitative ontological parsimony, which concerns the number of ontological commitments, is an epistemic virtue
- (KO-Parsimony) Qualitative ontological parsimony, which concerns the number of kinds of ontological commitments, is an epistemic virtue.
- (KI-Parsimony) Qualitative ideological parsimony, which concerns the number of kinds of ideological commitments, is a theoretical virtue
- (NI-Parsimony) Quantitative ideological parsimony, which concerns the number of ideological commitments, is a theoretical virtue.

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Against (NI-Parsimony)

- box and diamond
- existential and universal quantifier
- intrinsicity and duplication

Modal Realism

- Individuals are concrete entities
- Some individuals are worlds.
- An individual x is a world iff any parts of x are spatiotemporally related to each other, and anything spatiotemporally related to any part of x is itself a part of x .
- Every individual that is a part of a world is a part of exactly one world. (O11) α is the world of which we are parts.
- For any individuals x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n there is a world containing any number of duplicates of each, if there is a spacetime big enough to hold them all, and such that for any spatiotemporal relation, the duplicates in question stand in that relation.

Roles and Role fillers

- theoretical role we usually understand a concept that helps to explain certain phenomena. By role-fillers, on the other hand, we usually understand entities that fill in the roles on the 'metaphysical level
- To deserve the name of 'property' is to be suited to play the right theoretical role; or better, to be one of a class of entities which together are suited to play the right role collectively. But it is wrong to speak of the role associated with the word 'property', as if it were fully and uncontroversially settled. The conception is in considerable disarray. It comes in many versions, differing in a number of ways. The question worth asking is: which entities, if any, among those we should believe in, can occupy which versions of the property role?

Two Cases

- Trans-world individuals and world-bound individuals
 - “If unrestricted composition is granted, I can reformulate counterpart theory in terms of trans-world individuals”
 - one and the same entity may exist according to many worlds, for that entity may bear the exists-at relation to more than one world.
- Impossible Individuals vs. Impossible Individuals*
 - extended modal realism
 - one and the same entity may exist according to many worlds, for that entity may bear the exists-at relation to more than one world.

Conclusion

- we should follow Ideological parsimony
- we should follow qualitative ideological parsimony
- it is the number of theoretical roles that matters

- we should not care about the number of ontological commitments
- what now?

THANKS!