

Maps of the Shared World. From Descriptive Metaphysics to New Realism

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This paper has two sections. The first characterizes Strawson's descriptive metaphysics as a realist ontology. The second section characterizes New Realism as a metaphilosophical project that argues for the primacy of an ontological approach whose paradigm is descriptive metaphysics.

I.1 Descriptive metaphysics

Strawson's *Individuals* (1959) is an attempt to discover the structure of the world starting by analyzing how our language works. What Strawson calls "the world" is our shared version of the world, that is, what beings like us ordinarily experience as *our* world. From this perspective, Strawson individuates the ordinary use of language as "the best, and indeed the only sure, way in philosophy" (1959, p. 9). He labels his metaphysics as "descriptive" since he aims to *describe* what the world is for beings provided with perceptual, cognitive and linguistic systems like ours, instead of forcing us to conceive of the world by revising

our basic ways of experiencing it, as a "revisionary" metaphysics would do.

Strawson, unlike Dummett (1991), is not arguing that a close examination of the actual use of words is the best, and indeed the only sure, *philosophy*. He does not try to reduce ontology to semantics. He just argues that semantics is our best *way to philosophy*, thereby leaving room for the possibility that an ontological investigation revises the semantic insights with which it started.

I.2 Primary particulars: bodies and persons

Strawson's main linguistic way to ontology is the subject-predicate structure. He characterizes this structure as a sentence constituted by two linguistic expressions (S, P) that introduce two non-linguistic terms (S*, P*) into a proposition (which attributes P* to S*). He observes that in language there are special kinds of non-predicable expressions that normally work only as subjects, not as predicates (cf. 1959, p. 174). The basic non-predicable expressions are demonstratives and proper names. They introduces *particulars*, that is, entities that we can localize in the shared unified spatiotemporal framework of our experience: "particulars have their place in the spatio-temporal system, or, if they have no place of their own there, are identified by reference to other particulars which do have such a place" (1959, p. 233).

According to Strawson, the basic particulars are bodies and persons. *Bodies* are

“three-dimensional objects with some endurance through time” (1959, p. 39). *Persons* are special bodies to which we attribute not only spatiotemporal locations (and physical or phenomenal properties), but also experiences and mental states. In Strawson’s terms, what is in fact ascribed to persons consists of “actions and intentions (I am doing, did, shall do this); sensations (I am warm, in pain); thoughts and feelings (I think, wonder, want this, am angry, disappointed, contented); perceptions and memories (I see this, hear the other, remember that)” (1959, p. 89).

1.3 The Framework and the Picture

According to Strawson, particulars are what primarily exists, and they exist into our “single picture of the world”:

We can make it clear to each other what or which particular things our discourse is about because we can fit together each other’s reports and stories into *a single picture of the world*; and the *framework* of that *picture* is a unitary spatio-temporal framework, of one temporal and three spatial dimensions. Hence, as things are, particular-identification in general rests ultimately on the possibility of locating the particular things we speak of in a single unified spatio-temporal system. (1959, p. 38, my emphases)

I call ‘Picture’ what Strawson characterizes as our shared single picture of the world, and ‘Framework’ what he calls the unitary spatiotemporal framework of that picture. Particulars exist into the Picture and

within the Framework. Through the Framework we can know what there is into the Picture:

It cannot be denied that each of us is, at any moment, in possession of such a framework – a unified framework of knowledge of particulars, in which we ourselves and, usually, our immediate surroundings have their place, and of which each element is uniquely related to every other and hence to ourselves and our surroundings. It cannot be denied that this framework of knowledge supplies a uniquely efficient means of adding identified particulars to our stock. This framework we use for this purpose: not just occasionally and adventitiously, but always and essentially. (1959, pp. 38-39)

The Framework is the basic condition of the experience of the world on the part of a person. What makes a person a particular of a different kind with respect to mere bodies is having a perspective on the Picture from within the Framework. In other words, a body functioning as a perspective on the Picture from within the Framework is a person – or, at least, what Tim Crane calls “a minded creature.”

Among all the living things there are, we distinguish between those which are merely alive and those which have minds – thinking or conscious beings. A daffodil is merely an organic thing; a person has consciousness and the ability to think. What is the basis behind this distinction? What does it consist in? I shall claim that, in its broadest outline, the answer to the question is simple; the hard part is saying precisely what this answer amounts to. What the daffodil lacks and the ‘minded’ creature has is a *point of view on things* or (as I shall mostly say) a *perspective*. The minded creature is one *for which* things are a certain way: the way they are from that creature’s perspective. A lump of rock has no such per-

spective, the daffodil has no such perspective. We might express this by saying that a minded creature is *one which has a world*: its world. Its having a perspective consists in its having a world. Having a world is something different from there simply being a world. It is true of the rock or the daffodil that it is part of the world; but it is not true that they have a world. A creature with a perspective has a world. But to say that a creature with a perspective *has* a world is not to say that each creature with a perspective has a different world. Perspectives can be perspectives on one and the same world. (2001, p. 4)

Different persons have different perspectives on the same Picture through the same Framework. Although the Framework is the condition of the experience of a certain person, this Framework is not a private fact. The Framework is a unitary spatiotemporal structure that a person shares with all the other persons. Persons can share a single picture of the world, namely the Picture, since they share the Framework from within which, and through which, they have a perspective on what there is into the Picture. What is private is just the person's perspective on the Picture from within the Framework, not the Framework itself, let alone the Picture.

In this sense Strawson criticizes those philosophers who think that each person has her own private spatiotemporal system without acknowledging that all these allegedly private systems are nothing but perspectives on a "public point of reference", that is, the Framework as a shared spatiotemporal system:

A different, but not unrelated, error is made by those who, very well aware that here-and-now provides a point of reference, yet suppose that 'here' and 'now' and 'this' and all such utterance-centred words refer to something private and personal to each individual user of them. They see how for each person at any moment there is on this basis a single spatio-temporal network; but see also that, on this basis, there are as many networks, as many worlds, as there are persons. Such philosophers deprive themselves of a *public point of reference* by making the point of reference private. They are unable to admit that we are in the system because they think that the system is within us; or, rather, that each has his own system within him. This is not to say that the schemes they construct may not help us to understand our own. But it is with our own that we are concerned. So we shall not give up the platitude that 'here' and 'now' and 'this' and 'I' and 'you' are words of our common language, which each can use to indicate, or help to indicate, to another, who is with him, what he is talking about (1959, p. 30, my emphasis).

In a similar vein, Evans argues that the person has the general capacity of imposing a conception of public space, that is, a shared spatiotemporal system, upon her egocentric perspective: "A thought about a position in *egocentric* space (including the utterly non specific *here*) concerns a point or region of *public* space in virtue of the existence of certain indissolubly connected dispositions, on the part of the subject, [...] in virtue of his general capacity to impose a conception of public space upon egocentric space." (1980, p. 168)

Since persons are first of all bodies that have a place into the Picture and within the Framework, the perspective of a person on the Picture is a perspective not only through

the Framework but especially from within the Framework. A person does not experience the Picture through the Framework from outside, as a spectator can experience a real landscape through a window, or a painted landscape through the frame of a picture, or a filmed landscape through the screen. As Crane points out, the perspective “is a view from a certain place and certain time.” (2001, p. 6). The person experiences the Picture through the Framework because this very person is into the Picture and within the Framework. The perspective that constitutes a body as a person is essentially a perspective from inside.

1.4 Secondary particulars: events and higher order particulars

Events in turn are particulars, but they sharply differ from bodies with respect to their identification, that is, the epistemic state whereby a person experiences an entity as the entity it is. A person can wholly identify a body just by experiencing its *spatial parts or properties*, whereas the whole identification of an event also requires the experience of its *temporal parts or properties*. In other words, a body can be instantaneously experienced as a whole, whereas the experience of an event as a whole necessarily unfolds in time. For example the difference between a particular body like a tiger and a particular event like a flood is that “the flood is not wholly present throughout each moment of its existence – at each moment only a part of the flood is pre-

sent, not the whole flood – whereas the whole tiger is” (Crane 2001, p. 36).

According to Strawson, events are ontologically less basic than bodies since we can identify whatever body without referring to any event, whereas most events can be identified only by referring to the bodies involved in them. For example, “a death is necessarily the death of some creature” (1959, p. 46). Still, in some exceptional cases, the identification of events does not depend on the identification of bodies. Consider for example purely sensory events like flashes or noises: “That a flash or a bang occurred does not entail that anything flashed or banged. ‘Let there be light’ does not mean ‘Let something shine’” (1959, p. 46). But these are precisely exceptions. Whatever body can be identified without referring to events, whereas some (indeed, most) events need to be identified by referring to bodies. From Strawson’s perspective, this asymmetry seems sufficient to state the ontological primacy of bodies.

Besides bodies, persons, and events, there are *higher order particulars* as for example families, teams, and armies. Such things are not events or persons, neither are they material things like bodies because “one of the requirements for the identity of a material thing is that its existence, as well as being continuous in time, should be continuous in space” (1959, p. 37). Yet, in spite of lacking spatial continuity, things like families or teams are particulars since, at any moment of their existence, they can be singularly identified by making reference to more basic particulars whose existence is continuous in

both space and time. For example, a family can be identified by making reference to its members, a team by making reference to its players.

I.5 Properties

All particulars share the feature of being introduced into ordinary subject-predicate propositions by expressions (e.g. demonstratives, proper names, definite descriptions) that can only be used as subjects, not as predicates. We cannot say ‘X is Socrates’ unless X is another expression referring to Socrates; yet, in the latter case, we have no longer an ordinary subject-predicate proposition but an identity statement. An expression introducing a particular can, at most, contribute to the constitution of a predicate, but it cannot be a predicate on its own. For example, ‘X is older than Socrates’ is an ordinary subject-predicate proposition in which the expression ‘Socrates’ contributes to the constitution of the predicate (‘is older than Socrates’) that is attributed to that particular X. By contrast, ‘X is Socrates’ may only be a statement of identity in which the expression X introduces the same particular introduced by ‘Socrates’.

Subject-predicate propositions normally needs genuine predicates, that is, expressions introducing *properties*. An expression introducing a certain property P allows us to construct several subject-predicate propositions sharing the form ‘ x is P’, in which the values

of the variable x introduce different particulars (e.g., ‘Socrates is a philosopher,’ ‘Kant is a philosopher,’ ‘Wittgenstein is a philosopher’).

Strawson conceives of the property as a *universal*, that is, “a principle of collection of like things” (1959, p. 226). In the domain of properties, philosophers usually distinguish between *monadic* (or intrinsic) properties, which are possessed by a certain entity on its own, and *relational* properties, which are possessed by a certain entity in virtue of its relations to other entities. Still, Strawson focuses on another distinction, that between *sortal* and *characterizing* properties (which can be traced back to Aristotle’s distinction between secondary substances and mere properties). A *sortal* property provides us with a principle of collection of like particulars whereby we can identify a particular of this sort, whereas a *characterizing* property provides us with a principle of collection that only applies to already-identified particulars: “roughly, and with reservations, certain common nouns for particulars introduce sortal universals, while verbs and adjectives applicable to particulars introduce characterizing universals” (Strawson 1959, p. 168). For example, ‘being yellow’ is a characterizing property since we can group two yellow particulars only if we already know that they are two different particulars (and not, for example, two parts of the same particular). On the other hand, the sortal property ‘being a star’ not only enables us to group two particular stars but also helps us to identify each of them as the star it is.

I.6 Individuals

In ordinary subject-predicate propositions, the subject introduces a particular and the predicate introduces a property, that is, a universal. More generally, Strawson calls *individuals* the entities that are introduced by subjects into genuine subject-predicate propositions. He treats individuals as the entities that genuinely exist in our world, since he considers the linguistic functioning of subjects as a clue of the existence of what they introduce. The subject is, indeed, a linguistic expression that has a certain degree of completeness. By introducing a term, the subject implicitly suggests the existence of such a term. By contrast, the predicate introduces a term without suggesting any existence at all. For example, in the sentence ‘The Sun is yellow,’ the subject ‘The Sun’ suggests that there is something identifiable as the Sun regardless of the following predicate, whilst the predicate ‘is yellow’ does not suggest any existence unless it is paired with a subject. The subject commits on its own to the existence of a certain entity, whilst the predicate commits to existence only if it specifies a feature of an entity whose existence has already been suggested by a subject. From this perspective, the subject has a semantic privilege, which Strawson traces back to an ontological privilege of the term, namely the *individual*, that the subject introduces into a proposition.

Since particulars play a key subject role in our subject-predicate propositions, they can be treated as the basic individuals of our world. Yet, in our language, also expressions

introducing universals can play the subject role. For example, we can say “red is my favorite color”, and we can even use the derived word “redness” so as to emphasize the fact that an expression introducing a property can play the subject role. Thus, universals seem to be in turn individuals, to the extent that they are introduced by expressions that can play the subject role in a subject-predicate proposition.

Still, Strawson doubts that universals are genuine individuals. Although the use of language is our best way to ontology, some linguistic expression can be ontologically misleading. Indeed, individuals are not only introduced by subjects, but also introduced within sentences *that cannot be satisfactorily paraphrased into sentences about particulars*. For example the putative individual introduced by the expression ‘anger’ does not seem to be a genuine individual, since a proposition that has ‘anger’ as subject can normally be satisfactorily paraphrased. As Strawson puts it: “the paraphrase of, say, ‘Anger impairs the judgment’ into ‘People are generally less capable of arriving at sound judgments when they are angry than when they are not’ seems natural and satisfying” (1959, p. 231).

As principles of collections of like things, universals are helpful cognitive devices that we share whereby linguistic predicates. Yet universals, unlike particulars, are not genuine individuals. In this sense, Strawson’s distinction between individuals and universals can ultimately be related to the Aristotelian distinction between substance and accidents (cf. Wiggins 2001). What substantially exists in our shared world are individuals. Particular

objects and particular events are individuals, whereas properties are just universals. Likewise facts or states, understood as connections in the space-time between individuals and properties (cf. Crane 2001, p. 39), are just ways in which we characterize the individuals that inhabit our world.

I.7 Types

Strawson treats nominalism and platonism as opposing ontological exaggerations with respect to the issue of paraphrase. On the one hand, nominalism tries to paraphrase all sentences in sentences about particulars so as to show that particulars are the sole genuine individuals. On the other hand, platonism argues that sentences about universals cannot be paraphrased so as to show that universals are genuine individuals. So understood, nominalism and platonism are both wrong. Nominalism is wrong because there are genuine individuals, as for example words, that are not particulars. Platonism is wrong because those non-particular individuals are not universals. Rather, following Peirce (1931-1958, IV, § 537), Strawson characterizes them as *types*:

The suggestion that, for instance, sentences about words or sentences should be paraphrased into sentences about 'inscriptions', is apt, except in the bosom of the really fanatical nominalist, to produce nothing but nausea. In brief, some kinds of non-particulars seem better entrenched as individuals than others. Qualities (e.g. bravery), relations (e.g. fatherhood), states (e.g. anger), processes or activities (e.g. swimming), even species (e.g. man) seem relatively poorly

entrenched. Sentence-types and word-types seem well entrenched." (1959, p. 231)

Furthermore, Strawson acknowledges that the domain of types does not reduce to the paradigmatic cases of words and sentences:

The general title of 'types', often, though rather waveringly, confined to words and sentences, may well be extended. I have in mind, for example: works of art, such as musical and literary compositions, and even, in a certain sense, paintings and works of sculpture; makes of thing, e.g. makes of motor-car, such as the 1957 Cadillac, of which there are many particular instances but which is itself a non-particular; and more generally other things of which the instances are made or produced to a certain design, and which, or some of which, bear what one is strongly inclined to call a proper name, e.g. flags such as the Union Jack. (1959, p. 231)

Types are not particulars, since they lack a distinctive spatiotemporal location, but, unlike universals, they tend to behave like particulars, especially under two decisive respects. First, in subject-predicate sentences types are normally introduced by subjects rather than by predicates. Second, types often have a proper name (in the case of artworks, a sort of proper name is supplied by titles, in the case of sentences by quotations). While universals are essentially principles of *collection* of like particulars, types are first of all principles of *construction* of like particulars called 'tokens.' The type can work as principle of collection only in virtue of its working as principle of construction of the collected things, namely its tokens. Furthermore, the type can work as a principle of construction in virtue of its being linked to a special particular, namely a model, which

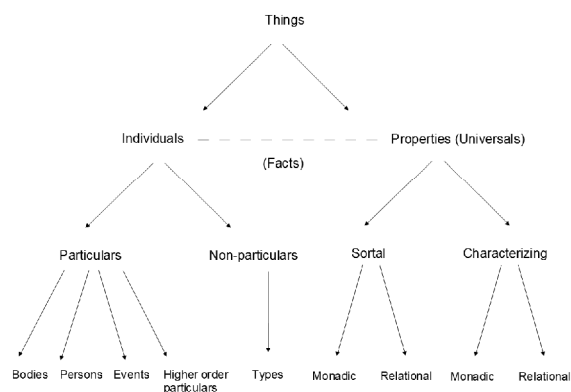
initiates a causal chain allowing for the construction of any other token. In Strawson's terms:

Indeed one might say that an appropriate model for non-particulars of these kinds is that of a *model particular* – a kind of prototype, or ideal example, itself particular, which serves as a rule or standard for the production of others. The Platonic model for non-particulars in general – an ideal form of which the instances are more or less exact or imperfect copies – is, in these cases, an appropriate model, though it becomes absurdly inappropriate if generalized to cover non-particulars at large. The non-particulars here in question are all such that their instances are artefacts. But the concepts concerned are not just rather broadly functional, like those of other artefacts such as tables and beds. Rather, to produce an instance, one must conform more or less closely to more or less exact specifications. Fully to describe a non-particular of this kind is to *specify* a particular, with a high degree of precision and internal elaboration. (1959, pp. 232–233)

In this sense, the type introduced, for example, by the film title *Wild Strawberries* ontologically differs from the sortal universal introduced by a word like “table”. All tokens of *Wild Strawberries* are causally linked to the first particular through which the type was created as a principle of token construction. By contrast, a variety of particular tables can be grouped under the sortal universal introduced by the word “table” even if those tables have unrelated histories of making. If we visited an alien planet where we discovered a particular X that looks like a table and is used by the aliens as we use our own tables, we would be inclined to say that X is a table. But if we found a particular Y that is indistinguishable from a screening of *Wild Strawberries*, and is used by the aliens as

we use our own screenings, we would not be inclined to say that Y is a screening of *Wild Strawberries*, since it does not derive from the same model. We would only acknowledge that Y is a screening, not a screening of *Wild Strawberries*. We would just admit that Y is the screening of an alien movie surprisingly similar to our *Wild Strawberries*. Ultimately, a type allows us to group only those particulars that were constructed by means of this very type. All particulars counting as tokens of a given type thus belong to the causal chain that originates from the particular through which the type itself was created. A type is a non-particular that is created by means of a particular, and that allows us not only to *group* particulars but first of all to *construct* them. In this sense the type plays not only an *epistemic* role but also an *ontological* one. That is why we treat types as genuine individuals.

II.1 New Realism as a Metaphilosophy



Descriptive metaphysics describes the world that we share through our perceptual experience and that we express by means of our language. The in-

dividuals who primarily inhabit this world are the most relevant for our lives. At this point, one could argue that this world is just a shared appearance, maybe a shared illusion, and that we have to investigate what there is beyond such a shared appearance. Natural sciences do this sort of investigation. Yet, according to Strawson, natural sciences do not give us access to more fundamental individuals, but rather to “theoretical constructs” that allow us to better explain and understand what there is in our shared world.

This is the class of particulars which might be called ‘theoretical constructs’. Certain particles of physics might provide one set of examples. These are not in any sense private objects; but they are unobservable objects. We must regard it as in principle possible to make identifying references to such particulars, if not individually, at least in groups or collections; otherwise they forfeit their status as admitted particulars. Perhaps we do not often make such references in fact. These items play a role of their own in our intellectual economy, which it is not my concern to describe. But it is clear enough that in so far as we do make identifying references to particulars of this sort, we must ultimately identify them, or groups of them, by identifying reference to those grosser, observable bodies of which perhaps, like Locke, we think of them as the minute, unobservable constituents. (1959, p. 44)

Our world is not inhabited by such theoretical constructs. They just help us to better understand our world by suggesting what could be its “minute, unobservable constituents”. Nevertheless, our world remains a world of middle-sized individuals. There is no primacy of the components with respect to the composed wholes – thus, there is no

primacy of what Sellars (1963) calls “The scientific image of man-in-the-world” with respect to what he calls “The manifest image of man-in-the-world”. What matters for us is primarily what we share in our experience, and what we share in our experience are basically composed individuals. From this perspective, the physicist claim that reality is not the way in which it appears to us (cf. Rovelli 2014) can be rephrased as follows: the theoretical constructs of slightly weakened physics reveal that the minute, unobservable constituents of our *reality* have a distinctive structure that is not the same as the ontological structure of our *reality*.

II.2 The philosopher as a cartographer

I see New Realism as a way of developing Strawson’s point by arguing that philosophy should not produce “theoretical constructs” about “minute, unobservable constituents” but rather appropriate descriptions and classifications of middle-sized individuals. In this sense New Realism introduces a sharp distinction between natural sciences and philosophy. They are both investigations, but they have different methods and different domains.

According to New Realism (Cf. Ferraris 2012), philosophy is not a research of what there is beyond the world that we experience, but rather a clarification of this very world. In this sense New Realism differs from those analytic metaphysics that follows natural sciences in the attempt to find the ul-

timate constituents of reality. Still, New Realism also differs from those continental or postmodernist accounts that deny the existence of a shared reality, or at least its relevance for philosophy, which according to them should rather concern more fundamental layers of being. Unlike these accounts, New Realism does not require that philosophy goes beyond the world that we share through our experience. Instead, philosophy should investigate precisely this world by providing us with categories that allow us to classify precisely what there is in this world.

To sum up, philosophy should look neither for minute constituents of middle-sized individuals nor for what stays beyond such individuals, but rather for insightful ways of categorizing and describing those very individuals. According to New Realism, this is the core task of philosophy, and its specificity with respect to other kinds of investigations that concern minute constituents or transcendent forms of being. Philosophy basically is an art of describing and classifying. A helpful insight in order to understand what philosophers do is the metaphor of the cartographer. Philosophers make maps of what there is. There are different levels of detail at which maps can be made, but even a very detailed map should be related to more general maps.

In this sense New Realism conceives of philosophy as an intrinsically systematic enterprise. Jaakko Hintikka (1987) claims that being systematic in contemporary philosophy is nothing but wishful thinking, but this claim seems to rely on a misunderstanding of what a systematic philosophy is. Being sys-

tematic does not mean that the philosopher should know anything about any domain. If you are constructing a map of a small village, you are not forced to know any map of any village. Yet you should know at least the maps of the region and the country within which this village is located. Symmetrically, if you aim at making maps of wide areas, of even of an entire planet, you are not forced to know any small area in this planet. In this sense it is false that being systematic requires the knowledge of any detail. It just requires the capacity of adopting the right point of view.

II.3 A fifth way of doing philosophy

According to Diego Marconi (2014), in the contemporary debate there are four main ways of doing philosophy: 1) *traditionalism*, which tries to develop past philosophical theories; 2) *historiography*, which limits itself to investigate past philosophical theories; 3) *hermeneutics*, which focuses on the genealogy of ideas; 4) *analytic philosophy*, which focuses on problem solving and arguments. New Realism can be seen as the proposal of a fifth way of doing philosophy, which consists in providing good descriptions or maps of what there is. New Realism differs from analytic philosophy strictly understood since it aims not simply at solving problems by means of arguments. In order to make a map you do not necessarily need an argument.

The criteria whereby a philosophical work is assessed are, according to New Re-

alism, basically external criteria. As a map is assessed with respect to its capacity to provide us with an accurate and useful description of a certain area, so the philosophical work is assessed with respect to how our shared world is, and therefore with respect to our shared intuitions about it. By contrast, analytic philosophy mainly uses internal criteria, so that a good argument leads to a good philosophical work even if the conclusion does not comply with our shared experience of the world.

From the analytical perspective, what matters is primarily the argument. Intuitions only play a role in strengthening the premises of the argument. On the other hand, from the perspective of New Realism, what matters is primarily the perspicuity of the description; arguments are among the various tools that can be used in order to provide a perspicuous description. A cartographer is not interested in demonstrating that the region that she is mapping does not exist, or in showing that it just a collective illusion, or in finding an argument that proves that this region is made of more basic unobservable constituents. She just wants to make a good map of this region.

In conceiving of philosophy basically as an art of making maps of our shared world, New Realism makes room for disagreement. There can be clashes of intuitions with respect to what there is in our shared world, and especially with respect to which is the better way of describing and classifying what there is. In this sense arguments can play a crucial role also in the New Realist conception of philosophy, if they are under-

stood as technical tools in a broader frame of conceptual negotiation, which is aimed at solving possible clashes of intuitions (cf. Casati 2011).

II.4 The primacy of ontology

If philosophy basically is making maps of what there is, then there can be both philosophers who try to make maps of the entire world and philosophers who focus on specific regions of the world. In this sense, classic philosophy seems more inclined to produce maps of the entire world whereas contemporary philosophy often prefers to focus on maps of some regions. Yet the two kinds of investigation are intertwined. In making a map of a region we should work, more or less implicitly, within a certain framework set by a certain map of the world. On the other hand, we could discover that in order to take this region into account the general map to which we are referring should be amended or revised.

There can be progresses both in the construction of general maps and in that of regional maps. For example, Strawson's metaphysics provides us with a better general map than Aristotle's metaphysics by taking into account Newton's and Kant's point that space and time are not categories among others but the framework that grounds our shared experience of the world. Another relevant improvement in the philosophical mapping of our shared world is due to Roman Ingarden's ontological development of Husserl's phenomenology (cf. Thomasson

2005). Ingarden acknowledges that our shared world is made not only of natural objects and persons, but also of social objects that are created and kept into existence by practices involving persons themselves. While natural objects exist independently of persons, social objects depend on persons' intentions, interactions and norms. Nevertheless, also social objects have an objective existence since practices involves objective regularities.

Artifacts are a basic example of social objects, to the extent that, with respect to natural objects, things such as flags and churches have "different existence conditions (flags and churches depend for their existence on certain intentional acts; the purely physical arrangements of molecules making up cloth and buildings do not) and different essential properties (e.g. flags and churches have essential functional and normative properties governing their role in our cultural lives that their physical bases need not have)" (Thomasson 2005, p. 127). Still, in the social portion of our shared world there are not only concrete artifacts but also more abstract social objects as for example words, sentences, roles, laws, symphonies, algorithms, and fictional entities. As we have seen above, in Strawson's descriptive metaphysics such entities, which Ingarden conceives of as cultural or social object are classified as either higher level particulars or as types.

Classic philosophy made great efforts in order to describe and classify natural objects, but a lot of work is still to be done in order to describe and classify social objects, and also to put them into a general map of the

world, and to possibly modify this map in order to better fit them into it. According to New Realism the ontological mapping of the social realm is one of the main tasks for contemporary philosophy. The achievements of the so-called applied ontologies show that information technologies need philosophy rather than natural sciences in order to perform such mapping tasks (cf. Guarino 1995, Smith 2004). Furthermore, the ontological mapping of the social realm confers philosophy a distinctive public role to the extent that philosophers can provide a community with helpful maps of the social space in which this very community is grounded.

In that characterizing philosophy basically as a way of describing what there is, New Realism gives ontology a primacy with respect to other philosophical fields. Yet New Realism does not reduce philosophy to ontology. The idea is rather that a philosophical investigation in a certain field (e.g. ethics, aesthetics, mind, language, science) requires a preliminary ontological account of the relevant entities in that field, and a localization of these entities in the general map of our shared world. In this sense, New Realism conceives of philosophy as a basically unitary and systematic enterprise, in spite of the variety of fields in which the philosophical research is articulated – today more than ever. From the New Realist perspective, we can still see philosophy as a whole in spite of its multifarious fields of research.

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