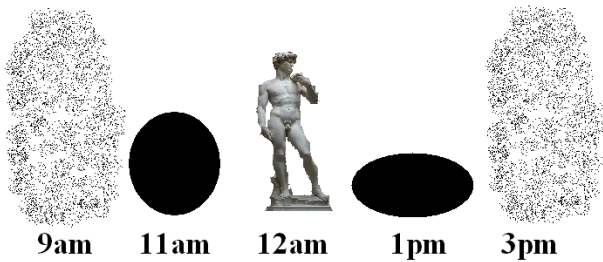


Knowledge and Reality B: Lecture Six

1. Statues and Lumps



If the lump exists during one interval, and the statue during another, then they *can't* be the same thing! They have different properties! *How can they be the same thing?!* This is called the Indiscernability of Identicals.

(1) There cannot be two objects in the same place at the same time. [Premise]

(2) The lump of clay exists from 11am to 3pm. [Premise]

(3) The statue exists from 12am to 1pm. [Premise]

(4) The properties of the lump and statue are different

i.e. they are not *qualitatively* identical [from (2) and (3)]

(5) The statue is not the lump [from (4) and the indiscernibility of Identicals]

(6) The statue and the lump are in the same place at the same time [Premise]

(7) There are two objects in the same place at the same time [from (5) and (6)]

Contradiction! [from (1) and (7)]

Have a think for a second, and see what your intuitions say. Now, hold that thought in mind as we go through possible options. Maybe, just maybe, you're thinking of something along the lines of:

- It's all to do with language – a statue is just what we *call* a lump of clay.
- It doesn't work because statues are mind-dependent objects.
etc.

These sorts of objections *might* be misguided. They might be spot on. The problem is that adding these statements alone doesn't solve the paradox.

This is because logic is *monotonic* (if you have a set of premises that lead to a conclusion adding in *extra* premises can never prevent you from getting to that conclusion). So *no matter what happens* you **must** end up denying one of the premises from the argument in order to avoid contradiction. Merely saying it has something to do with language etc. doesn't help *unless* you think this justifies denying a premise.

Let's look at some sample responses.

2. Just-Matter Theory

This theory says that there's *just* matter. So the lump of clay exists, but the statue isn't something *over and above* it. There's two ways of reading that, either the statue just is the lump of clay, or it doesn't exist at all. Look at the first one.

Imagine a kitten. It grows old, and is now a cat. You call it a cat, and it's *wrong* to call it a kitten. But there's still *one* object involved, not two. The word 'kitten' is what's called a *phase sortal*. It's a word that applies to objects, telling you what *sort of* object they are, during certain *phases* of their existence. Maybe 'statue' works exactly the same. So the statue *is* the lump of clay. But it's just a certain *phase* of the lump's existence – in the same way that a 'kitten' is just a phase of a cat's existence.

So we deny premise (3). In the same way that a kitten doesn't *cease to exist* when it grows old, the statue doesn't cease to exist when crushed. So we escape the paradox. But what are the ramifications?

Problem one: Now it's just *false* to say that sculptors make statues. They don't *make* anything; they don't *create* a new object at all.

Problem two: Surely the statue *is* destroyed when I crush it.

Example: The insurance agency that hired a Just-Matter theorist.

Example: Me, a baseball bat and your Xbox.

Problem three: Similarly, surely the statue *doesn't* exist when the lump of clay does. We can run statue/lump problems with all kinds of things – *including you!* You appear to be in the same place as some matter. But that matter may well have existed since the Big Bang. Does that make you 15 billion years old? Does that mean that when you die you'll still exist? The *matter* will still be there!

3. Nihilism

What if we take the other reading. The statue doesn't exist *at all*. This is the position of the nihilists. But generally, the nihilists also think *the lump* doesn't exist either. So they deny premises (2), (3) and (6).

Why do they deny these things exist? Nihilists generally think that all that really exists are tiny little sub-atomic particles that scientists pick out. Nothing exists other than those things – that's just you foolishly being misled by your senses. There's no statue at all, just lots of quarks and electrons arranged to make it *look* as if there's a statue.

Problem one: Still dubious! Surely statues exist!

Problem two: Again, you're just like the statue. If all that exists are quarks and electrons and *you're* not a quark or an electron *Then you don't exist!*

Problem three: What if there are no quarks or electrons? The nihilist thinks that the smallest sub-atomic particles are what exists and nothing else. But what if there *aren't* any such things? If the sub-atomic stuff *just kept going* then there *wouldn't* be any smallest things. And who are we to say physicists won't find out that it is that way? Can we *really* prove that it 'bottoms out' just by sitting here and thinking about statues and lumps of clay?

4. The Standard Account

The 'Standard Account' is so named because it *used to be* the standard answer to this problem. It states that there *can* be two objects in the same place at the same time. The objects *cohabit* the same place.

So premise (1) is false on this score. They say that you only think that there can't be two such objects when you're thinking of things like tables (or mountains, or goats etc.) interpenetrating one another. Once I explain to you that the two objects are a statue and a lump of clay, it might not seem so strange to say (1) is false. They generally endorse *Locke's Principle*: It's impossible for two objects of the same kind to be in the same place at the same time.

One of the problems with the Standard Account is what's called *the Standard Objection*. Note that the statue and the lump have all of the same parts as one another: they're composed of *exactly* the same atoms. This causes problems. When we crush the lump we destroy the statue but not the lump. So statues are more delicate than lumps. But *why* are they more delicate? You would've thought that what determined the properties of the statue is what it's made up of. For instance

- It's a certain *height* because of the make-up and arrangement of the particles composing it.
- It's a certain *weight* because of the make-up and arrangement of the particles composing it.
- It's got certain *aesthetic* properties because of the make-up and arrangement of the particles composing it.

You might think *all* of its properties are thus determined. But the lump has *exactly* the same particles, arranged in the same way. So if the properties of something are determined by the make-up and arrangement of its parts (and the lump and statue both have the same make-up and arrangement of parts) then *how* could the statue and the lump differ with regard to how 'delicate' they are, and what conditions destroys one but not the other?

5. More options?

There are more options (such as four-dimensionalism) and we've only just skimmed the surface. Each option comes with pretty odd consequences. But you have to select *some* option to avoid the contradiction. When looking at this, or indeed any, philosophical problem, bear two things in mind. Firstly, don't just accept the first answer that happens to gel with your initial intuitions. Instead *weigh up* the pros and cons of each position. Secondly, bear in mind that no matter what you say, you have to say which premise you think is wrong and why. (Or, perhaps, why the contradiction doesn't follow, but that's much harder in this case) If you forget to do *that* you haven't really solved anything, and instead just rambled on with little care in the world to what the problem is.