

PHIL 4603: Metaphysics
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Background Terminology and Distinctions

a priori: knowledge acquired through pure reason

a posteriori: knowledge acquired through experience (typically, via the 5 senses)

Empiricism: the epistemological theory that all knowledge, with the possible exceptions of mathematics and logic, is acquired *a posteriori*

Rationalism: the epistemological theory that some substantive knowledge about the world (i.e., knowledge extending beyond mathematics and logic) can be acquired *a priori*

qualitative identity: exact resemblance or similarity

numerical identity: being one and the same; strict identity

**Note: When I use the word 'identity' without qualification, I intend it in the sense of numerical identity.

Indiscernibility of Identicals: If object x is identical to object y , then there is no property had by x but not had by y (and *vice versa*).

Identity of Indiscernibles (Leibniz's Law): If object x and object y share all and only the same properties, then object x is identical to object y .

substance: that which is capable of independent existence; things such as people, rocks, buildings, etc.

bare substance or substratum: that which underlies a thing's properties and preserves the identity of that thing through change

type: a kind or category

token: an instance of a type

Example: The word 'cheese' contains 4 letter types, but 6 letter tokens.

property: a qualitative or dispositional feature of a substance

universal: that which is capable of being wholly present at multiple locations (e.g., in space-time)

particular: that which is incapable of being wholly present at multiple locations (e.g., in space-time)

nominalism: the view that only particulars exist

Aristotelian universals: properties-as-universals, wholly present in each of their instances

tropes: properties-as-particulars, incapable of multiple location

bundle theory: the view that substances are nothing more than bundles of properties suitably related (denies bare substance or substratum)

modality: the study of possibility and necessity, and related concepts

possible world: a complete way a world (universe, etc.) could be

necessity: something that is the case in all possible worlds

possibility: something that is the case in some possible world

contingent truth: something that is true in the actual world, but not in all possible worlds

essential property: a property a thing has in every possible world in which that thing exists

accidental property: a property a thing has in some, but not all, possible worlds in which that thing exists

essence: the essential properties of a thing that are distinctive of it