

Daniel Rabinoff

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Education

- PhD Philosophy, University of Toronto, current.

Anticipated Defense Date: March 2018

Supervised by Jessica Wilson

Readers: Benj Hellie and Bernard Katz

Thesis Title: Making Sense of Relativised Identity

My dissertation is a defense of Relative Identity, the thesis that identity facts are relative to *kinds*. For example, the statue David might be the same lump of clay as the statue Goliath (if one was reshaped into the other), but nevertheless be different statues. I defend Relative Identity by measuring it against what we commonly take to be characteristic of the identity relation: that it is an equivalence relation, it is used for counting, it is used in cross-temporal explanation, that it validates the *Substitutivity of Identicals* etc. The first and second chapters set out these desiderata. The third examines the history and metaphysical import of Leibniz's Law, and its relation to Relative Identity. The fourth chapter argues that relative identity relations are not merely ersatz identity, and that they are not necessarily reducible to absolute identity. The remaining chapters apply my considered view against both classical and recent metaphysical issues.

- M.A. Philosophy, University of Manitoba, 2010.

Supervised by Chris Tillman

No thesis

- B.A. Philosophy, University of Manitoba, 2008.

- Certificate Ontology and Meta-Ontology, Central European University, 2015

Two-week Summer School Certificate Program in Budapest, Hungary

Competitive acceptance

Area of Specialization: Metaphysics

Areas of Competence: Logic , Epistemology, Philosophy of Religion , Early Analytic Philosophy , Normative/Medical/Environmental Ethics

Publications

- Relative Identity, Absolute Generality, and Propositions (forthcoming) *Routledge Handbook of Propositions*.
- Aspectual Relative Identity (submitted 8500 words)

Works in Progress

- Identity Through Gunky Time
- How Should Formal Logic Individuate Propositions?

Presentations

- Relative Identity and Absolute Generality *Canadian Philosophical Association* (2016)
- How Identity Became Trivial (and How to Get it Back) *University of Minnesota Duluth Philosophy Department Colloquium*(2015)
- Incoherence in an Ageing Universe *Western Canadian Philosophical Association* (2013)
- Reality in Fragments *Society for Exact Philosophy* (2011)
- Object Theory and AR *American Philosophical Association Pacific Division* (2010)

Teaching Experience

Instructorships

Modern Symbolic Logic (2016,2017) *University of Toronto*
Introduction to Philosophy (2017) *University of Toronto*
Critical Reasoning (2015) *University of Toronto*
Critical Thinking (2011,2012,2013,2014) *University of Manitoba*

Tutorial Leadership

Introduction to Philosophy (2016) *University of Toronto*
Knowledge and Reality (2014) *University of Toronto*
Philosophy of Religion (2011, 2013) *University of Toronto*
Puzzles and Paradoxes (2012) *University of Toronto*
Reason and Truth (2012) *University of Toronto*
Environmental Ethics (2011) *University of Toronto*
Medical Ethics (2008, 2009) *University of Manitoba*

Awards

Ontario Graduate Scholarship (2011-2014): \$45,000

- Province-Wide
- Competitive

University of Toronto Stipend (2010): \$15,000

Catherine Mary Cartwright Scholarship (2008-2009): \$1000

- Department Scholarship
- Merit-Based

University of Manitoba Graduate Fellowship: (2008-2009): \$24,000

- University-Wide
- Competitive

Service

President of the University of Toronto Graduate Philosophy Student Union (2015-2016)

Referee for the University of Toronto Graduate Conference (2012)

President of the University of Toronto Philosophy Club (2009-2010)

References

Jessica Wilson
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Supervisor

Benj Hellie
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Reader

Bernard Katz
Professor
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Reader

Chris Tillman
Assistant Professor
University of Manitoba
chris.tillman@gmail.com
Former Supervisor

Dissertation Abstract

The thesis of Relative Identity is that a statement of identity may be true relative to one sortal term (perhaps 'statue'), but false relative to another (perhaps 'clay'). If, for instance, a statue is chipped, losing a small but insignificant portion of the clay that makes it up, the Relative Identity theorist may say that it remains the same statue, but is now a distinct portion of clay. The opponent of Relative Identity, the Absolute Identity theorist, does not admit that an identity claim may be true relative to one sortal and false relative to another.

Typical defenses of relative identity have been along the following lines: (i) Absolute Identity cannot be non-circularly defined, and (ii) there are prima-facie cases of relative identity in the world. Both defenses are sorely lacking. In my thesis, I provide a better

defence of Relative Identity. The Absolute Identity theorist's response to (i) is to note that some of our concepts are basic; they are not definable in other terms. I admit that identity cannot be defined, but it is subject to scrutiny. I examine the relation of identity by considering its place in contemporary metaphysics. I note that, either explicitly or implicitly, there are many truths about identity that play a central role in our argumentation and theorizing: that it is an equivalence relation, it is used for counting, it is used in cross-temporal explanation, that it validates the *Substitutivity of Identicals* etc. These theses are strongly supported in metaphysical argumentation, and go well beyond the typical logical attempts at defining identity. I analyze Relative Identity and Absolute Identity using the above theses as constraints that a theory of identity must meet.

I argue that Relative Identity best fits these theses. Relative Identity is often taken to violate the logical restrictions on identity, but I argue that every objection along those lines involves implicit appeal to a notion of Absolute Identity that the Relative Identity theorist ought to reject. On the other hand, Absolute Identity theorists must reject at least one of these theses, though which one depends on one's overall metaphysical views. I finish my thesis with a discussion of the ontological ramifications of Relative Identity. I take two angles. I show that Relative Identity offers steps toward resolving bizarre paradoxes in set theory and logic that step from our notions of absolute generality, all inclusive sets, universal quantification etc. Secondly, I show how Relative Identity offers resources for scientific interpretation that allows a simpler and more strait-forward ontology for scientific realists.