

Introduction

Philosophers often have tried to either reduce “disagreeable” entities or concepts to (more) acceptable entities or concepts, or to eliminate the former altogether. Reducing a class of entities to another one is regarded attractive by those who subscribe to an ideal of ontological parsimony. For instance, nominalism is concerned with denying the existence of universals; modern versions of nominalism object to abstract entities altogether; as a consequence, nominalists have to show how reference to abstract entities in mathematics, in the sciences and in philosophy can be eliminated or is merely apparent. *Reduction* and elimination very often have to do with the question of “What is really there?”, and thus these notions belong to the most fundamental ones in philosophy. But the topic is not just restricted to traditional metaphysics or ontology. In the philosophy of mathematics, logicism aimed at deriving every true mathematical statement from purely logical truths by reducing all mathematical concepts to logical ones. In the last twenty years, (neo-)logicism has experienced an amazing revival. *Abstraction* principles, such as Hume’s principle, have been suggested to support a “quasi-logicist” reconstruction of mathematics in view of their quasi-analytical status. In the philosophy of language and the philosophy of science, the logical *analysis* of language has long been regarded to be the dominating paradigm. Although the importance of projects such as Russell’s paraphrasis of definite descriptions and Carnap’s logical reconstruction and explicatory definition of empirical concepts is still acknowledged, many philosophers now doubt the viability of the programme of logical analysis as it was originally conceived. At the same time, liberalized projects of logical analysis remain to be driving forces of modern philosophy.

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