

## **Abstract: Aggregates and their role in the problem of coincident objects**

The problem of coincident objects concerns the relation between distinct composite objects that (seemingly) coincide. Take, for example, Theseus's ship. This composite object can stay the same while changing some of its planks. Besides the ship, the planks seem to compose another object, *viz.* the aggregate of the ship's planks. Contrary to the ship, the aggregate of the ship's planks *cannot* survive the replacement of any of the planks but has all of the planks essentially. The question then arises: if the ship completely coincides with its aggregate of planks while being numerically distinct, then how are they related?

The problem of coincident objects crucially depends on the distinction between a real whole or unity and the mere aggregate of its parts. The existence of aggregates is not often disputed. If there are some objects then it seems that there is also ("automatically") an aggregate consisting of exactly those objects. In this talk I challenge this idea. I show that aggregates are similar to sets and mereological fusions but cannot be identified with either of them. We should thus either accept them as *bona fide* entities irreducible to anything else, or instead look for suitable paraphrases so that we can eliminate them from our theory of the world. I explain how plural quantification provides a satisfactory paraphrase and how this also dissolves the problem of coincident objects.