

# What universals essentially are

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Philipp Keller\*

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**Idea:** properties have their exemplifications essentially, while kinds have their instances accidentally. Kinds *have* roles, while properties *are* roles.

**Aims:** to spell this out without presupposing that essences may be contingent; to make it plausible, both within and without a modal realist framework; to sketch some consequences.

**A first stab using generic essence:** It is true in virtue of what the property of being a man is that every man exemplifies it. It is true in virtue of what  $F$  is that is exemplified by all and only the  $F$ s. If  $y =$  to be  $F$ , then we have

(NP)  $\Box_F \forall x (x \text{ has } y \leftrightarrow x \text{ is } F)$

but we do not (necessarily) have

(TP)  $\Box_{\{x: Fx\}} \forall x (x \text{ has } y \leftrightarrow x \text{ is } F)$ ,

which I here understand distributively, as implying, for every  $z$  that is  $F$ , that  $\Box_z (a \text{ has } y \leftrightarrow x \text{ is } F)$ . Here we have a notion of *generic* essence which, some have argued (Fabrice Correia, "Generic Essence, Objectual Essence, and Modality", *Noûs*, forthcoming), is not reducible to objectual essence. Contrary to Fabrice, I distinguish this notion of generic essence from what is involved in locutions such as "all men, as such, are essentially mortal" (these I understand as non-distributive collective essences), and I do not think it is independent of the notion of objectual essence: rather than there being two notions of essence, the differences between the generic and the objectual come from the different kinds of entities involved.

**Thesis:** In a formulation that presupposes either a 'counterparthood is not identity' solution to the problem of accidental intrinsics or contingent essence: If  $a$  exemplifies  $F$ ,  $a$  exemplifies the property (of) *having  $F$  as a property* and  $F$  exemplifies the property (of) *being a property of  $a$* . While the first is essential to  $a$  iff  $F$  is, the latter is always essential to  $F$ .

**A worry:** Is this possible? It better had be: (i) Aquinas; it is essential to the world to have been created by God, but it is not essential to God to have created the world. (ii) Kripke: it is essential to me to have the parents I have, but it is not essential to my parents to have begotten me. (iii) Fine: it is essential to the set  $\{a, b\}$  that  $a$  is a member of it, but it is not essential to  $a$  to be a member of the set.

**In terms of possible worlds:** The counterpart relation for properties is strict numerical identity. (Heller 1998 defines counterpart relations for properties in terms of similarities of their roles, but has to take these similarities as primitive. But similarities between the roles of properties does not make for similarity of properties. The fact that two properties are the philosophers' favourite property in their respective world does not make them similar, for the philosophers in question may be different.)

More generally: we cannot have primitive transworld-identity between particulars because they may

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\*University of Geneva, Switzerland, philipp.keller@lettres.unige.ch.

differ in accidental intrinsics: the same particular cannot be straight and bent. This presupposes primitive transworld-identity for properties: it is the *same* property that cannot be had by one and lacked by the other. And: properties do not have accidental intrinsics. A modal-realist argument for primitive transworld-identity of properties:

- i (Some) properties make for similarity across possibilia (in different worlds).
- ii If some possibilia are similar, they (literally) share a property.
- iii So (some) properties are strictly identical across possible worlds.
- iv So they cannot differ in properties which are not implicitly relational.
- v The property of being exemplified by *a* is not implicitly relational.
- vi So if it is had in some world by some of these properties, it is had in all in which it exists.

**Fregean thoughts:** It's not a change in the thought that I'm thinking it now and then I am not. This can be read omnitemporally or atemporally: omnitemporally, the thought stays at it is; it is unaffected by my thinking or not-thinking it; atemporally: the thought is not the kind of thing that takes temporal qualifications.

**Haecceities and quiddities:** Haecceities are what distinguish indiscernibles in different worlds. If counterparthood is a matter of similarity and perfect similarity across worlds is possible, haecceities are needed to falsify the identity of indiscernibles.

The quiddity of a property would be its individual essence, as opposed to its role, something over and above what it bestows on the particulars exemplifying it. Quiddities are needed to make sense of scenarios of role swap, e.g. the possibility of a world with the same exemplification pattern than ours except that one of the quark colours has been swapped for one of the flavours (Lewis 1986: 162). But quiddities do not exist: it does not make sense to say that the colour *being red* could fail to be exemplified by something that is (actually) red or could be exemplified by something that (actually) has a different colour.

**Two readings of “*F* is (identical to) *G*”:** as an identity-claim about kinds, it is either necessary or contingent:

- (1) Red is George's favourite colour.

But there is also what I call a 'what it takes' reading: If what it takes to be red is what it takes for that thing to be of George's favourite colour, we have

- (2) The property of being red is the property of being of George's favourite colour.

These, I submit, are always necessary. The identity conditions of properties are exhausted by a specification of what it takes to have them – they are nothing but their roles.

**Cash-value:**

1. As Lewis himself noticed, property swapping leads to 'Ramseyan humility' (Lewis 2006) and (a sort of) Kantianism.
2. We solve Ramsey's problem.
3. We handle indiscernibles better.