Qua qua qua

"How things are", handout for May 11, 2010

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The plan

Solving problems by inflating ontology:

– that it is useful to postulate the existence of a certain kind of objects may be a reason to believe that these objects exist
– this does not make these objects any less real
– all the better if their existence is not as weird as it might seem

Steps:

– what qua objects are
– why they are useful
– why they won't go away
– two conceptions of qua objects
– how qua objects might exist

What qua objects are

Our starting point:
Kit Fine,"Acts, Events and Things" (1982): A qua object is a special kind of entity, consisting of a particular, say a (its 'basis'), together with a property, say F (its 'gloss'), and denoted by "a qua F".

Fine's conditions on qua objects:

- **Existence** a qua F exists at t in w iff a is F at t in w
- **Identity** (i) a qua F = b qua G iff $a = b \wedge F = G$; (ii) $a \neq a$ qua F
- **Inheritance** If a qua F exists at t in w and G is normal, a qua F is G iff a is G

a qua F is a certain "amalgam" of a and F and it contains a as a proper part.

> "The acts, as qua objects, are in an obvious sense artificial and derivative. They are not genuinely 'out there' in the world, but are formed from what is out there by means of an alliance with a purely intensional element. (It is tempting to say that they are partly formed in our own minds, but this would be too psychologistic)." (Fine 1982, 103)

David Lewis,"Things qua truthmakers" (2003): Long qua black is "none other than Long himself" and "differs from him in essence":

> "...[Long] has different essences under different counterpart relations. The name 'Long' evokes one counterpart relation; the (novel) name "Long qua black" evokes another. The counterparts of Long qua black / Long under the second counterpart relation are just those of his counterparts under the first counterpart relation that are black." (Lewis 2003, 31)

Lewis's conditions on qua objects:

- **Existence** a qua F exists at t in w iff F is an intrinsic property of a at t in w
- **Identity** a qua F = a
- **Inheritance** the counterparts of a qua F are the counterparts of a that are F

Some intuitions:

- A qua object has one or several *privileged* properties, properties which must be mentioned to give a full account of what that object is.

- A qua object is, compared with its base, *impoverished* in its properties.
- Qua objects are, in sone sense, description-relative.
- a qua F depends existentially on a's being F.

Properties of qua objects:

- a qua F is *essentially* F.
- a qua F and a qua G (for $F \neq G$), as well as a qua F and its base a, exhibit different temporal and modal behaviours: their inter- and intra-world persistence conditions differ.
- a qua F exists only if a is F.

Why qua objects are useful:

- mathematics
- material constitution
- modes of presentation
- substitutivity failures
- quotation
- diagonal intensions
- essences
- truthmakers
- ontology

Why qua objects won't go away

(1) a qua F is G $\iff$ a is G because a is F

But the variable positions in "Fx because Gy" are referentially transparent, while x in "x qua F is G" is not.

Two conceptions

1. **Objects under descriptions**:

> "An especially important class of cases are those in which the principle of embodiment is a property P rather than a polyadic relation R. The rigid embodiment is then of the form "a/P" and may be read as "a qua F" or as "a under the description P." An airline passenger, for example, is not the same as the person who is the passenger since, in counting the passengers who pass through an airport on a given weekend, we may legitimately count the same person several times. This therefore suggests that we should take an airline passenger to be someone under the description of being flown on such and such a flight. And similarly for mayors and judges and other "personages" of this sort." (Fine 1999, 67-68)

- **Identity** The rigid embodiments $a, b, c \ldots /R$ and $a', b', c' \ldots /R'$ are the same iff the state of $a, b, c \ldots$ standing in the relation R is the same as the state of $a', b', c' \ldots$ standing in the relation R.

- **Parthood**: The objects $a, b, c, \ldots$ and the relation R are (timeless) parts of $a, b, c/R$.

2. **Contextual essences**:

b in a possible world v is a counterpart of a in w iff a would be b if w turned out to be v.

Different counterpart relations are distinguished by the fact that they place more relative importance on some of the properties of one and the same thing.

(ess) A property F is essential to a iff a and a qua F have the same counterparts.

> "Is it a counterpart of Lumpl/Goliath? Yes and no. It is a counterpart under the counterpart relation that is called to mind when we describe Lumpl/Goliath as a lump, but not under the different counterpart relation that is called to mind when we describe the very same thing as a statue. [...] Thanks to the multiplicity of counterpart relations, we have no need to multiply entities. [...] One identical thing can have different potentialities and different essences if it has them relative to different counterpart relations." (Lewis 2003, 28)
> "...counterpart relations are a matter of over-all resemblance in a variety of respects. If we vary the relative importances of different respects of similarity and dissimilarity, we will get different counterpart relations. Two respects of similarity and dissimilarity among enduring things are, first, personhood and personal traits, and, second, bodyhood and bodily traits. If we assign great weight to the former, we get the *personal counterpart* relation. Only a person, or something very like a person, can resemble a person in respect of personhood and personal traits enough to be his personal counterpart. But if we assign great weight to the latter, we get the *bodily counterpart* relation. Only a body, or something very like a body, can resemble a body in respect to bodyhood and bodily traits enough to be its bodily counterpart." (Lewis 1971, 51)

It does no longer hold that "the counterpart relation serves as a substitute for identity between things in different worlds." (Lewis 1971, 50)

> "My real essence consists of the properties common to all my counterparts. [...] My nominal essence under the description 'person' consists of the properties common to all possible persons. My intermediate essence under the description 'person' consists of the properties common to all my personal counterparts." (Lewis 1971, 54)

That there might be basic

The state of affairs of a's being F is nothing but the qua object a qua F.

The trope involved, a's particular F-ness, is what, if added to a, gives us the new object a qua F.

F is what a qua F and b qua F and ... have in common.

a is what a qua F and a qua G and ... have in common.

a is a qua its intrinsic nature.

How qua objects might exist

Some fancy metaphysics:

- Qua objects are parts of ordinary objects.
- Qua objects are modal continuants.

Parts of ordinary objects

A property F of an object a is *intrinsic to* a iff a's being F is only a matter of how a is and not at all how other objects are, a property a could have if it were the only existing thing.

Exemplification of intrinsic properties is ordinary parthood.

a qua F, for any property F intrinsic to a, is the mereological fusion of a's spatio-temporal parts with F.

Modal occurrents

Modal continuants are trans-world individuals which have their worldy parts as modal stages in much the same way than perduring things have and consist of temporal stages.

These trans-world individuals are qua objects.