

Qua qua qua

Philipp Keller*

Abstract for ECAP 4, Lund June 14-18, metaphysics section

December 1, 2001

I will try to convince my audience that qua objects exist, or, at least, that qua objects, if they existed, would solve a broad range of problems.

Though they date at least as far back as to Aristotle, I will discuss their credentials under the form they got in Kit Fine's 1982 note "Acts, Events and Things": A qua object, according to Fine, is an entity consisting of a particular, say a (its 'basis'), together with a property, say F (its 'gloss'), and denoted by " a qua F ". a qua F is *essentially* F , supervenes on the state of affairs of a 's being F and has different modal and temporal persistence condition than its base, a , or any other qua object a qua G .

I will show how qua objects naturally arise in natural deduction, and how powerful a tool they are to explain all kinds of substitutivity failures and associated puzzles in the debates on material constitution, modes of presentation, belief ascription, action theory and quotation. They allow for example for an uniform treatment of so-called "simple sentences" with ordinary belief ascriptions (improving on Moore's "aspect"-theory) and shed new light on diagonal intensions. They clear the way for a beautiful and economical, "reist", ontology.

Having made a *prima facie* case for the existence of qua objects, I will criticize the only Ersatzist construal I know of, which is to construe " a qua F is G " as " a is G because a is F ". The main problem with this proposal, I think, that it construes the position of the variable " x " in " Fx because Gy " as referentially transparent: if Superman is successful with women because of his fancy dress, so is Clark Kent. SM/CK qua Superman and SM/CK qua Clark Kent, on the other hand, are different objects and what is true of one may well be false of the other.

Even if qua objects are useful, philosophers will be reluctant to admit their existence as long as they lack a precise idea how such presumably bizarre entities might be part of the furniture of the world. This is why I will try to sketch some ways in which qua objects might be given a place within one's favourite ontological picture, not offending our taste for desert landscapes. The most straightforward way, which I prefer, is to make them *parts* of ordinary objects, in the ordinary sense of "part". Another is to have actual objects entering into different counterpart relations. a qua F , then, is a -under-a-description-which-picks-out-an- F -privileging-counterpart-relation. A third route, which might combine the advantages of the two other, will lead us into the theory of modal continuants, i.e. trans-world individuals which have modal stages at worlds in much the same way that enduring things have temporal stages at instants. Such modal continuants, if one allows for multiple counterpart relations, can be plausibly taken to be qua objects.

Time will not permit even the sketch of a general and unified theory of everything qua objects are good for. I hope to show, however, that undertaking this work is to pursue a promising route.

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