

### Lecture 3

#### Transworld Identity v. Counterparts

##### 1. Review

##### 2. Setting up the Question

Intuitively, the following are true *de re*.

- (1) I could have been an astronaut.
- (2) I could have been two inches taller.
- (3) I might not have been born in Canada.

**Question:** What relation do I have to other possible worlds such that (1)-(3) are true of me?

Answer 1: Transworld Identity Theory (TWI) – We (at least in part) exist at other possible worlds.

Answer 2: Counterpart Theory (CT) – There are individuals at other worlds that stand in for me in some way.

**NOTE:** These two different accounts **do not entail**, and **are not entailed by**, one of either concrete modal realism or abstract modal realism!

##### 3. Transworld Identity Theory

TWI is the view that we, or par of us, exist at other worlds, and it is in virtue of this that we modal claims about us are true.

Consider:

- (C) Clara Schumann could have had only nine fingers.

According to TWI, (C) is true because, there is some world (call it  $w_1$ ) where Clara Schumann herself exists (or existed) and has only nine fingers rather than ten.

PROBLEM: Inconsistent properties

##### Modal Stages

On this view, individuals do not wholly exist at any one world; they are made up of different parts or 'stages' that exist at different worlds.

Compare (by way of analogy): there is no problem with ascribing inconsistent properties to different **spatial parts** of me. (E.g. my forearm part is 30cm long and my thumb part is 5cm long)

Compare (by way of analogy): **perdurance** view of our persistence over time on which we do not exist wholly at any one time, but rather have different temporal parts.

##### World-Indexed Properties

Individuals exist wholly at each world where they exist, but have **world-indexed properties**.

Compare again the spatial case: this would be analogous to saying that I have the property of *being-30cm-long-in-the-forearm* and of *being-5cm-long-in-the-thumb*.

Compare the temporal case: this is analogous to the **endurance** view of our persistence over time on which we wholly exist at each moment in time.

##### 4. Problems for TWI

###### The Problem of Accidental Intrinsic

- Some properties are "**accidental**" properties. (This is after the Aristotelian distinction between essential and accidental properties; a distinction later adopted by Scholastic thinkers.)

- Some properties are **intrinsic** properties—i.e. they are properties their bearers possess in virtue of features internal to that bearer.

Consider (C) again. The property of having a certain number of fingers looks like just such an **accidental intrinsic property**.

The trouble is, the property of having-ten-fingers-at- $w@$  is a **relational** property—an **extrinsic** property.

Indeed, it is going to turn out that *all accidental properties are relational* on this version of TWI. How come? Consider the following:

- P1. On TWI, for any object O that has any accidental intrinsic property P, there is some world  $w_1$  where O has P and some world  $w_2$  where O does not have P. (By the definition of an accidental intrinsic property, and TWI)
- P2. On the world-indexed properties view, P1 entails that O has the property P-at- $w_1$ . (By the world-indexed property view of TWI)
- P3. But P-at- $w_1$  is a relational property holding between its bearer, P, and  $w_1$ . (By any plausible understanding of relational properties)
- C. Therefore, all (intuitively) accidental intrinsic properties are relational properties on the world-indexed property view of TWI.

### Chisolm's Paradox

Take two distinct people: Elsa and Anna.

Suppose Elsa at the actual world has the properties of being heir to the throne, having blonde hair, and having magic powers.

Suppose Anna at the actual world has the properties of being second in line to the throne, having red hair, and having a preference for building snowmen.

There will be a series of worlds where, at each subsequent world, Anna and Elsa swap one more of their accidental properties. Eventually, there will be a world where, intuitively Anna will be in the Elsa-role; she will be heir to the throne, have blonde hair, and have magic powers (among other properties Elsa has at the actual world). And Elsa will be in the Anna-role; she will be second in line to the throne, have red hair, and have a preference for building snowmen (among other properties Anna has at the actual world).

**But this is just to say that Anna could have been Elsa and vice versa.**

At this point, TWI theorists have two options.

**ONE:** say that we each have essential properties—i.e. that it is not the case that all of our properties are accidental. E.g. an **individual essence**.

**TWO:** accept that there is something like **bare identity** (identity independent of properties) across possible worlds in virtue of which Anna is the one in the Elsa-role at  $w_n$ .

Two worries:

- Ad hoc—it is an entity posited just in order to avoid role-switching cases, and has no further justification.
- Allows for the possibility that there is a world that is exactly like the actual world, except the individual essences have been shuffled around.

## 5. Counterpart Theory

On Lewis' view, **counterparthood** is a (non-spatiotemporal!) similarity relation between objects at different worlds.

$X$  is a **counterpart** of  $Y$  iff  $X$  is sufficiently similar to  $Y$ .

Let's return to the example from earlier:

(C) Clara Schumann could have had only nine fingers.

On CT, this is true just in case there is some individual  $C^*$  that is non-identical to Clara Schumann at another possible world,  $C^*$  is sufficiently similar to Schumann, and  $C^*$  has only nine fingers.

## 6. Objections to Counterpart Theory

There are several different objections to CT. Here we'll consider three.

### **"The Humphrey Objection" (Kripke 1980)**

Hubert Humphrey lost the 1968 US election to Richard Nixon. We can imagine that Humphrey might ruefully think "I could have won the election":

(H) Humphrey could have won the election.

Why should Humphrey care about a counterpart of his?

Lewis' response to this objection is that it simply misunderstands the nature of CT. CT does not deny that (H) is about Humphrey. Here is Lewis in his own words:

Counterpart theory [says] that someone else - the victorious counterpart - enters into the story of how it is that another world represents Humphrey as winning, and thereby enters into the story of how it is that Humphrey might have won. Insofar as the intuitive complaint is that someone else gets into the act, the point is rightly taken. But **I do not see why that is any objection**, any more than it would be an objection against ersatzism that some abstract whatnot gets into the act. What matters is that the someone else, or the abstract whatnot, should not crowd out Humphrey himself. And there all is well. **Thanks to the victorious counterpart, Humphrey himself has the requisite modal property:** we can truly say that *he* might have won. (196, original italics, my bolding)

### **Self-Identity**

Consider the proposition:

(F) Necessarily, Rosalind Franklin is identical to Rosalind Franklin.

This is ambiguous between two different propositions, corresponding to the *de re* and *de dicto* readings of the proposition:

(F-*de re*) Rosalind Franklin is necessarily identical to Rosalind Franklin.

(F-*de dicto*) Necessarily, Rosalind Franklin is identical to Rosalind Franklin.

On CT, these two propositions are equivalent to:

(F-*de re*-CT) RF is identical to her counterparts at all possible worlds.

(F-*de dicto*-CT) At all possible worlds, if there is a counterpart of RF then that counterpart is identical to itself.

### Essential Properties

According to Plantinga, it follows from CT that, for instance:

(S) If I had had one more hair on my head, I would not have existed.

More generally:

For every property P that any object O actually has, necessarily O has the property of having P or of being a different object to O. And so, O has all of its properties *essentially*.

Response from the CT theorist: (S) is ambiguous between the following:

(S\*) If I had had one more hair on my head, I would have popped out of existence.

(S\*\*) The individual at the actual world with n-1 hairs and the individual at  $w_1$  with n hairs are not identical.