

**Linguistic Research Institute**

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**What There is, How Things Are**

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Ontology, according to the New Heritage Dictionary, is "the branch of philosophy that deals with being." The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy defines it as "the branch of metaphysics that concerns itself with what exists." I take it that there is no substantial disagreement here.

No doubt the existence of Ontology reflects a general and pre-philosophical concern with the difference between what is real and what is not. The latter includes such things as illusions, hallucinations, fictions, myths, and, in general, things which reflect ways of talking which seem to refer to something (real), but are merely ways of talking.

I am not alone in being struck, from time to time, with the signal lack of success of Ontology either as an intellectual enterprise or as a topic of systematic study. Indeed, if it had not been preempted by Economics, the appellation "the dismal science" would surely have application here. To be sure, this judgment reflects a primarily scientific perspective rather than a philosophical one.

The Oxford Dictionary comments that "Philosophers characteristically charge each other with reifying things improperly, and in the history of philosophy every kind of thing will at one time or another have been thought to be the fictitious result of an ontological mistake." This suggests a kind of musical chairs anarchy. And it calls to mind the maxim that "In a mature intellectual ecology, every niche is occupied." Without denying that aspect of the matter, one can also discern a kind of regularity in ontological thinking which reflects how we talk in ordinary discourse. In the present context, that regularity amounts to a systematic bias with decidedly counterproductive consequences.

History shows that if we raise the question of what the world (the universe) is composed of, we find four dominant and plausible answers:

The first answer is "objects." Obviously, the world can be considered to be a single, all-encompassing object which is composed of other, smaller objects (not necessarily spatially contiguous) any of which may be composed of still smaller objects and so on.

The second answer is "processes." Obviously, the past-present-future history of the world can be considered to be a single, all-encompassing process which is made up of more limited processes any of which may be made up of still more limited processes, and so on.

The third answer is "events." Obviously, the past-present-future history of the world can be considered to be a single, all-encompassing event which is made up of more limited events any of which may be made up of still more limited events, and so on.

The fourth answer is "states of affairs." Obviously, the world can be considered to be a single, all-encompassing state of affairs which comprises more limited states of affairs any of which may be composed of still more limited states of affairs, and so on.

Traditionally it has been a case of "you pays your money and you takes your choice" among the different answers to "what there is." There is also a tradition of equating "What there is" to "What exists." It is perhaps here that the bias is most visible.

From the point of view of ordinary discourse, consider the following.

(a) In their native hue, only objects straightforwardly "exist" or "are real." Processes and events "occur" and states of affairs "obtain" or "are the case."

To be sure, one can say that processes, events, and states of affairs "are real" or that they "exist", but then one is doing ontology. Only for objects do the native hue and the ontological hue coincide; for processes, events, and states of affairs they are different. Thus, to ask, "What exists?" is more than just to bias the answer in favor of objects. It amounts to hardly more than asking of everything "How object-like is it?" And, while there is nothing wrong with asking that, it seems unlikely to contribute appreciably to our understanding of things.

(b) Let us move from the general categories of "Object", "Process", "Event", and "State of Affairs" to particulars of these four kinds.

- (a) This telephone on my desk.
- (b) Raindrops are falling.
- (c) That raindrop hit the window.
- (d) The cat is on the mat.

I can say with no strain whatever, "This telephone exists." And I can say "This telephone on my desk is real." But there is no way to use "is real" or "exists" directly with (b), (c) and (d).

I can nominalize (b), (c) and (d), thereby making them thing-like and therefore more object-like:

- (b) the falling of the raindrops
- (c) that raindrop's hitting the window
- (d) the cat's being on the mat

Now I can say "is real". "The falling of the raindrops is real;" and "that raindrop's hitting the window is real;" and "the cat's being on the mat is real." But I still can't say "exists." "The falling of the raindrops 'exists' " will not fly, though it may flutter weakly in academic settings. Likewise, neither the raindrop's hitting the window nor the cat's being on the mat is something that "exists".

Nor is the difference between (a) on the one hand and (b), (c) and (d) on the other hand merely an artifact of a subject-predicate grammar. If what is at issue is the difference between what is real and what is fictitious, illusory, etc. there are straightforward ways of dealing with (b), (c) and (d):

- (b1) Raindrops really are falling.
- (b2) It really is the case that raindrops are falling.
- (c1) That raindrop really hit the window.
- (c2) It really is the case that that raindrop hit the window.
- (d1) The cat really is on the mat.
- (d2) It really is the case that the cat is on the mat.

From this examination of particular cases, it is clear that "exists" is far from neutral in regard to its applicability to particular objects, processes, events and states of affairs. Rather, it is strongly associated with objects, with what is object-like, and what is thing-like. Thus, we can sometimes bring it into play where it would otherwise not come into play by nominalizing whatever we want to talk about, but even that has its limits.

In this connection, we may note that the category terms "process", "event" and "state of affairs" represent a nominalization (they are, after all, nouns). Thus, I can readily say "processes exist"; "events exist"; and "states of affairs exist". But that raises the question, "What does it mean to say that the process of the raindrops falling exists?" And what does it mean to say that events, which have no duration, exist? Here we are forced back on "The raindrops really are falling" and "That raindrop really hit the window" or "Some events really do occur." Note that saying "objects exist" or "This telephone exists" do not raise any corresponding question of "What do you mean?" To be sure, I can say, "There really are objects", but that says no more than "objects exist".

Since one can give an account of everything there is in terms of either objects or processes or events or states of affairs, it would be possible to define different philosophical disciplines or topics in terms of (a) what there is, (b) what goes on, and (c) how things are. The corresponding fundamental concepts would be (a) objects, (b) processes or events, and (c) states of affairs, respectively.

Only the first of these three opportunities has been exploited. There is a branch of philosophy, or metaphysics, that is concerned with what exists. There is not a corresponding branch of philosophy that is concerned with what occurs, nor is there a branch of metaphysics that is concerned with how things are.

Perhaps the fact that philosophers have undertaken only the first of these disciplines, under the name of Ontology, is merely a historical accident, possibly reflecting a long-standing preoccupation with the notion of substance. However, before pursuing any such line of thought, let us return to the idea that what is at issue is an interest in the nature of the real world and specifically in what is real as against what is illusory, fictional, merely imaginary, merely a reification, etc.

"Object", "Process", "Event" and "State of Affairs" are not primarily metaphysical or philosophical concepts. Rather, they are observation concepts. They are the general categories for what we observe. Whatever I observe is ultimately either an object or a process or an event or a state of affairs.

For example, I observe an object when I see an automobile, smell a lemon, hear a bell, touch a porcupine, or taste an Idaho potato. I observe a process when I see them dance the minuet, or when I feel the snake wiggle or hear the music rising to a climax. I observe an event when I hear the motor stop, feel the wire snap, or see a flash in the sky. I observe a state of affairs when I hear that the guitar is off key, feel that the coat is threadbare, taste the difference between Tang and fresh orange juice, or see that they are dismayed or that the respiration rate has increased or that the cat is on the mat, etc.

"The real world is what you see when you look around you." When I look around me as I walk by the office park, I see a building with a large parking lot in front. There are various automobiles in the parking lot. One of the automobiles pulls out of the parking space it has occupied, exits the parking lot, and proceeds down the street.

This brief episode is the stuff of which the real world is composed. Note that all four of the basic reality concepts are involved here. The automobile, the building, and the terrain are objects. There being automobiles in the parking lot is a state of affairs, so also is there being a building and a parking lot there. That that automobile exits is a state of affairs. When the automobile begins to move, that is an event. The automobile's leaving the lot and proceeding down the street is a process, as are the arm motions and the steering wheel movements involved in the driving. The beginning and end of each movement is an event. And so on. (If we were to get involved with what goes on in the driver or under the hood of the automobile that would merely be more of the same.)

Two kinds of comment are in order here. First, the picture we get is a far cry from any notion either (a) that objects, processes, events, and states of affairs are separate pieces into which the world divides, or (b) that they are merely different views of the same thing. Rather, it appears that not only the whole world, but just about any piece of it of whatever size involves objects, processes, events and states of affairs. No part of the world does, and no world could involve only one of these four.



Second, it is well nigh inconceivable that the notions of object, process, event, and state of affairs could be as intertwined in fact as they are in the brief episode described above without there being any logical connections among them.

And, of course, there are logical connections among them. These can be brought out by a formal system such as the one shown in Table 1. In this table "is the same thing as" designates a categorical identity relation (see below on the categorical use of "is"), and the Transition Rules could be understood on the model of re-write rules.

Some orienting comments are in order here in connection with the SA system (the Transition Rules given in Table 1).

A. The SA system, like the rest of the Person Concept in Descriptive Psychology, is not, per se, a description of the world or any kind of statement about it. Rather, it is a conceptual structure (hence lacking any possible truth value) which could be used (acted on) by a person (an individual who exemplifies a certain part of that structure). (See the "cognitive" parameter of behavior in Table 2, below, for an elaboration of the notion of acting on concepts.) However, one possible use would be in giving general or particular descriptions of the world, and it is easy to see what such descriptions would, paradigmatically, be like. The Transition Rules would operate, roughly, as axiomatic.

B. The formulation shown in Table 1 is subject to a constraint that we do not ordinarily introduce in connection with such matters. That constraint is developmental plausibility. The system needed to be simple enough for a child roughly 2-5 years old to master sufficiently (in practice only, of course, as with natural language) to use it to construct a real world of the general kind that is normative for us. (And, of course, that would also explain how as both children and adults we are able to construct theoretical, imaginary, or hypothetical (etc.) worlds, and, by extension, why it would be so easy to "reify" successful practice involving these and why there would be disputes about that.) It might well be that dropping that constraint would lead to a neater or more sophisticated or more complete formulation. However, I doubt that it would be substantially different.

**Table 1. The State of Affairs System: Transition Rules**

1. A state of affairs is the same thing as a totality of related objects and/or processes and/or events and/or states of affairs.
2. A process (or object or event or state of affairs) is the same thing as a state of affairs which is a constituent of some other state of affairs.
3. An object is the same thing as a state of affairs having other, related objects as immediate constituents. (An object divides into related, smaller objects.)
4. A process is the same thing as a sequential change from one state of affairs to another.
5. A process is the same thing as a state of affairs having other, related processes as immediate constituents. (A process divides into related, smaller processes.)
6. An event is the same thing as a direct change from one state of affairs to another.
7. An event is the same thing as a state of affairs having two states of affairs (i.e., "before" and "after") as constituents.
8. That a given state of affairs has a given relationship (e.g., succession, incompatibility, inclusion, common constituents, etc.) to a second state of affairs is the same thing as a state of affairs.
9. That a given object or process or event has a given relationship to another object or process or event is the same thing as a state of affairs.
10. That a given object, process, event, or state of affairs is of a given kind is the same thing as a state of affairs.
11. That an object or process begins is the same thing as an event and that it ends is the same thing as a different event.
12. There being or not being an object or a process or an event or a state of affairs is a state of affairs.

C. To construct a world using the SA system requires the introduction of a limiting case, and different sorts of worlds result from different limiting cases. (The introduction of limiting cases is not part of the SA system. It is done 'arbitrarily' by persons.) Two such cases are of interest. The first is a kind of object that doesn't divide any further (see Rule 3) and is therefore an ultimate kind of object upon which the rest of a world can be constructed. That is a familiar atomistic picture. The second is a state of affairs which includes all other states of affairs (see Rule 2). This corresponds to the real world of common sense. (If one interprets "facts" as "states of affairs" (but see end note 1), one could say here that Wittgenstein was right — to a point. The world is everything that is the case. The world divides into facts, not things. The world is determined by the facts and by these not being all the facts. The mistake was to suppose that "all the facts" refers to a certain determinate set of facts or even a determinable set.)

D. The Transition Rules are complemented by a set of "Descriptive Formats" which are based on parametric analyses of objects, processes, events, and states of affairs, respectively. These provide placeholders for the information needed to distinguish and describe particular objects, processes, events, and states of affairs, as such, or particular kinds of objects, processes, etc.

With this understanding of the SA system, let us return to its implications. The fact that there are such logical relations among the four reality concepts makes it clear that to understand the real world requires not merely the concept of "object" or of "process" or of "event" or of "state of affairs," but rather all of them. And it requires not merely all of them, but rather an understanding of the formal relations among them, and the conceptual structure in which they are mutually defined.

From this standpoint, we get a clearer view of why Ontology would be an ill-fated enterprise. To take one term out of a conceptual structure and use it as the privileged basis for addressing the field of application of the whole structure can be expected to result in characteristic

difficulties including, for example, the creation of a variety of bizarre characteristics and peculiar and mysterious statuses.

For example:

Q: Do processes exist?

A: Yes, but only because they have objects as Elements and objects really exist.

Q: Does that mean that processes don't really exist?

Then what kind of existence do they have?

A: Well, ...

Here, it doesn't matter whether one says "Yes" or "No". Either way will have to be explained, and it is unlikely that the explanation would be satisfactory, since a second class existence for processes would be mysterious and existence in the way that objects exist would be, if anything, even more mysterious.

In a similar vein, one can imagine selecting the number 17 as the privileged term for understanding arithmetic. We would then characterize other numbers as being real only to the extent that they are characterized by seventeenishness. We would then become involved, e.g., in specifying what kind of relationships could hold between items having a second class existence and what kind could hold between the number 17 and any of the other items. It is unlikely that we would generate anything illuminating about the number system and the functions and operations of arithmetic. It's not so much that one couldn't possibly succeed at something here in some fashion or another, but rather that there's no excuse for going about it in that way.

Or, suppose that, instead of "object", we picked "process" as the privileged term and, instead of pursuing Ontology, we defined "Evolution" as the discipline that studies how things evolve through time.

Q: Do processes demonstrate evolution?

A: Of course! A process is an evolution.

Q: Do objects demonstrate evolution?

A: Well, yes.

Q: How is that?

A: You have to think of an object as a degenerate case of a process. It has a temporal duration like a process, but it doesn't really evolve -- it just, well, persists.

A good example of the bias under discussion may be found in the conclusion that what is real but does not exist (i.e., properties and relations) is real only in connection with what does exist (there are no free-standing properties or relations). This makes what exists, i.e., objects, the fundamental reality because everything else that's real depends on what exists. This is a clear case of privileging one of the four reality concepts.

Is the privilege warranted? Apparently not, for there is not a simple asymmetry here. Rather, there are a number of interesting symmetries.

For example, if it is not incorrect to say that what is real and does not exist is real only in connection with what does exist, then the converse holds as well. What exists exists only in connection with what is real and does not exist. Just as there are no free-standing properties and relations, there are no bare particulars, either.

It is informative to try to imagine a world that has only objects and lacks processes, events, and states of affairs. It would have to be a world in which nothing ever happened, for then there would be processes and/or events. And there would have to be only one object, otherwise there would be relations among the various objects and so there would be states of affairs. Likewise, the object would have to be indivisible or there would be relations among the parts. Finally, it would have to be a bare particular, for its having any properties would be a state of affairs. Have we succeeded? No, for a bare particular is an impossibility, and even if we could countenance such a thing, the existence of such a thing would be a state of affairs. That world would be that way rather than some other way. That is how it would be in that world.

Thus, we arrive at the same conclusion as above. Nothing exists except in connection with something (real) that doesn't exist.

Moving from this exercise back to the real world, we may note another kind of symmetry.

The description, above, of the episode involving the automobile leaving the parking lot could be taken as a case of giving an account of an object, e.g., the automobile. It could instead be taken as giving an account of a process, e.g., the automobile's moving out of the parking lot. Or it could be taken as giving an account of an event, e.g., the automobile leaving the parking space after having been parked there. And it could be taken as giving an account of a state of affairs, e.g., the automobile's leaving the parking lot in front of the building and proceeding down the street.

There are these various possibilities because in general one object is differentiated from another by reference to the objects and/or processes and/or events and/or states of affairs that it involves or is involved in. Likewise, one process is differentiated from another, one event is differentiated from another, and one state of affairs is differentiated from another, by reference to the objects and/or processes and/or events and/or states of affairs that it involves or is involved in.

Thus, because of the interrelationships among the four concepts, if we tell the whole story about the objects in the world we will also have told the complete story about the processes, events, and states of affairs. If we tell the whole story about the processes in the world we will thereby have told the complete story about the objects, events, and states of affairs. Likewise, if we tell the complete story about the events we will also have told the complete story about the objects, processes, and states of affairs. And, finally, if we tell the complete story about the states of affairs we will also have told the complete story about the objects, processes, and events.

This is why we can give an account of the whole world in terms of objects or processes or events or states of affairs. Each can be treated as the primary category but each implicates all the others. This is also why we can talk as though everything else depended on the objects. But we can also talk as though everything else depended on the processes or as though everything else depended on the events or as though everything else depended on the states of affairs. There are no grounds for privilege here.

Let us move to an additional set of considerations, and let us begin with the notion of a constitutive conceptual framework.

A constitutive framework for a given phenomenon is one whose applicability to the phenomenon is a logical requirement without which the phenomenon would not be the phenomenon it is. Alternatively put, in order for the phenomenon to be the phenomenon it is, the constitutive framework must be applicable to it. For example, consider the phenomenon of a baseball game. The rules of baseball, collectively, are the constitutive framework for this phenomenon. The applicability of these rules is what makes the phenomenon a baseball game. If a phenomenon is one to which these rules do not apply then that phenomenon is not and could not be a baseball game. (The constitutive framework for real world phenomena, including human phenomena, is found in ordinary language and is approximated by the Person Concept, which is the primary conceptual structure in Descriptive Psychology. The SA system is part of the Person Concept.)

Now let me enter a stipulation or hypothesis (whichever disclaimer is preferable): Within its constitutive framework any given phenomenon is non-problematical.

For example, within the framework of baseball there is no real question of why it is three strikes and you're out rather than four strikes or two or some other number. If someone should ask, the relevant reply, which is a rejection of the question rather than an answer to it, is, "Hey — we're talking about baseball." Note that it's not that there are no questions one could ask. For example, one might ask, is there a way of pitching the ball that would give an average pitcher a strikeout rate of 80 percent or higher? Here, we are missing some facts, but there is no mystery, no perplexity, no puzzlement, no paradox, etc. This is the sense in which baseball, in all its aspects, as such, is non-problematical within its constitutive framework.

There is no mystery about why a phenomenon would be non-problematic in its constitutive framework. The latter is the vehicle for introducing the phenomenon into discourse and into our structure of social practices. We are willing to have our phenomenon be problematical in certain ways, but only after we introduce it in a non-problematical way. That way at least we know what we're talking about. If a phenomenon were problematical from the outset, it would leave us wondering "What are we talking about?" or "Is there really anything we're talking about here?"

The next step is obvious: The way to make a phenomenon problematic is to map it onto a conceptual framework other than its constitutive framework. Here it is strictly a case of caveat emptor. In this situation many things can happen, and all but one of them are bad.

For example, suppose we mapped the phenomenon of a baseball game onto the conceptual framework that is constitutive of football. We would then ask the kind of question that is intelligible in the latter framework — questions such as "What's the position of the ball on the field?", "Will they punt the ball?", or "Which down is it?", and so on. The result would be simple nonsense because the phenomenon of the baseball game is just too different from the phenomenon of football, and it just doesn't fit that framework.

In contrast, if we map the baseball game onto the conceptual framework of biology we will find a limited applicability of the latter. We already know that we can apply it to human beings, and as long as the baseball players are human beings, we will not necessarily be talking nonsense. If we ask, "What are its nutrient requirements?" there will be some answers if we are talking about a player, but not if we are talking about second base.

Or, again, if we map the baseball game onto the conceptual framework of economics or accounting that will be vacuous for sandlot baseball but not for a professional baseball game.

Clearly, there are many possibilities when it comes to mapping from one conceptual framework to another. The moral to be drawn is that there is no apriori or methodological presumption that anything but nonsense will result; there is no presumption that any of the questions we then ask have any answers, or that if there are answers, they will be informative, or that if we cannot answer a given such question then we're missing something. (This is the risk we face when we map the phenomenon of the real world onto the theoretical frameworks, e.g., of physics, or of psychology, economics, etc. But, of course, we have prior experience to go by and so we're mostly not just guessing and hoping.)

These conclusions are of interest in part because there is a special case that is of interest here, namely the case where we map a phenomenon onto some limited part of its constitutive



framework. In the present context, some part of the constitutive framework is simply another framework.

Think, for example, of mapping a baseball game onto a conceptual framework consisting of those rules of baseball which deal with teams, positions, bases and umpires, but omitting the rules that deal with strikes, balls, hits and innings.

Or, think of trying to deal with the phenomenon of doing arithmetic within a conceptual framework consisting of the positive integers and the single operation of division. Could it be done? Even if it could in some fashion, it would be unlikely to contribute significantly to our understanding of such matters.

The selection of "being" or "existence" as the privileged term for formulating what is real is closely analogous to these truncated approaches to arithmetic and baseball, since it is another case of trying to make one part of a conceptual framework do the job of the entire framework. It is hardly plausible that it can be done at all and even less likely that if done, it would be illuminating.

In sum, the difficulties that characterize Ontology are not peculiar to Ontology. They are predictable because in the main they are methodological difficulties.

The issues concerning Ontology are closely related to the questions of "What sort of thing is a person?" and "What sort of thing is human behavior?" as they arise in Descriptive Psychology. Let us focus primarily on the first of these, since the treatment of the second is entirely parallel.

Given a system of reality concepts with "Object", "Process", "Event", and "State of Affairs" as the key concepts, there are two simple and obvious answers to the question of what sort of thing a person is and what sort of thing human behavior is, namely, "A person is a kind of object" and "Human behavior ('Deliberate Action'—see below) is a kind of process." These answers are widely accepted.

One, familiar, way to try to make these answers viable is to say, "Yes, a person is a kind of object, but not a (mere) material object." A variety of familiar difficulties ensues.

Another approach is to say "No, a person is not a kind of object. Rather, a person has object aspects (or an object aspect)." In the Descriptive Psychology formulation the object aspects are values of the Embodiment parameter of persons (see below).

To clarify what is at issue here, let us briefly review the difference between the predicative use of "is" and the categorical use. These are illustrated, respectively, by the following.

- (a) The rose is red
- (b) The rose is a certain kind of flower

The first of these names a characteristic, or attribute that the rose has. That is the predicative use. The second names a more general category of things that the rose falls under — there is a genus-species relationship here. That is the categorical use.

Thus, the rose is red, but being a rose is not the same thing as being red. In contrast, the rose is a certain kind of flower, and being a rose is the same thing as being [a specimen of ] that certain kind of flower.

Then, to say that a person is not a kind of object, but rather, has an object aspect, is to say that "A person is a kind of object" is correct only in the predicative sense of "is" (the rose is red), but not in the categorical sense (the rose is a certain kind of flower). Being a person is not the same thing as being a certain kind of object. Being a particular person is not the same thing as being a particular object of some kind.

Here, it may be appropriate to pause and note that the idea that a person is not a kind of object is not new:

- (a) From antiquity, persons have been designated as spirits or souls. Whatever else these might be, they are not objects, though they have a suggestively thing-like character.
- (b) George Santayana, circa 1930: "Man has no essence. What he has is -- a history."
- (c) Existentialists, ca 1950: "Existence comes before essence."
- (d) P.F. Strawson, ca 1960: A person is the kind of individual to which both mental predicates and physical predicates are applicable

(e) Descriptive Psychology, ca 1970: "A person is an individual whose history is, paradigmatically, a history of Deliberate Action"

If it is clear what is meant by denying that a person is a kind of object, there will be little difficulty with the corresponding affirmations with respect to processes and events. A person is not a kind of process or a kind of event.

That leaves states of affairs. Is a person the same thing as a state of affairs? That would seem to be the right answer, but it's not a good answer, and that's bad.

It's not a good answer because it's grammatically off key, because it's not immediately illuminating, and because it raises the question, "What could it mean to say that a person is a state of affairs?" Let us address these.

To begin with, there is some grammatical cleaning up to do here. Consider the following.

A: A person is a [certain kind of ] state of affairs

B: There being a person is a state of affairs

We want to say A, because that is how we talk about individuals (we predicate things of them), but our paradigm cases of individuals are objects (see below) and we are rejecting the notion that persons are objects. We don't want to say A because we would rather say B, because that is how we talk about states of affairs, but it is equivocal. Under one reading it says no more than that there is a person, and we could say that even if persons were objects. Under the other reading it says that what a person is is a state of affairs, which is what we want to say.

There is some virtue in the following paraphrase.

C: There is a kind of state of affairs, call it M-kind, such that its being the case that there is an individual of the kind that a person is is the same thing as its being the case that there is a state of affairs which is a specimen of M-kind.

The virtue of C is that it is directly comparable to the following.

D: There is a kind of state of affairs, call it O-kind, such that its being the case that there is an individual of the kind that an object is is the same thing as its being the case that there is a state of affairs which is a specimen of O-kind.

O-kind is defined by the right side of Transition Rule 3, i.e., it is a state of affairs which has related objects as immediate constituents. And of course, there is a parallel formulation of P-kind states of affairs for processes (defined by Rule 5) and E-kind states of affairs for events (defined by Rule 7).

The point of emphasizing the parallels is to make clear, in the context of the State of Affairs system, how, in the end, persons are straightforwardly part of the furniture of the world just as objects, processes, and events are even though (a) a person isn't an object, process, or event and (b) persons are not mentioned at all in the State of Affairs system. To say that a person is not an object or process or event is simply to say that M-kind is not the same thing as O-kind or P-kind or E-kind.

To make further progress we shall need to review the notion of a historical individual and we shall need to address the substantive question of what kind of state of affairs is M-kind.

A primary reason why it is not immediately illuminating to say that a person is a state of affairs is that we take persons to be individuals and there is a conceptual gap between individuals and states of affairs.

Consider the following maxims.

- A. For a given person the real world is the one that includes him as an Actor, Observer, and Critic.
- B. The real world is what you see when you look around you.

For us, the archetype of a historical particular is an individual that is uniquely located in our chronology and on our geography and has enough of a history to be identified and re-identified. Most of the things we commonly classify as objects fit this model readily -- telephones, houses, rocks, automobiles, elephants, etc. So do persons.

The kinds of things we call heaps, piles, groups, collections, herds, flocks, et cetera are often less precisely locatable, but their status as historical particulars is not noticeably more precarious than that of their members or components.. So also with terrain features -- swamps,

oceans, mountains, meadows, cities, roads, et cetera. These are often characterized by indefinite, arbitrary, or context dependent spatial and temporal boundaries, but their status as historical particulars is hardly in question.

There are other historical particulars, which are processes or have process aspects, which we do not consider to be individuals. These include the War of 1812, the expulsion of the Moors from Spain, the settlement of the Nile delta, the episode of the automobile pulling out of the parking lot, the life of George Santayana, my journey to Salamanca, and Superbowl XXV. Like historical individuals, these are uniquely located in space and time. Like terrain features, they are often characterized by indefinite, arbitrary, or context dependent spatial and/or temporal boundaries, and for the same reason, i.e., they represent more or less "natural" demarcations within what is essentially a seamless whole. Likewise, their status as real is no more open to question than is the status of objects.

If we look for distinguishing characteristics, there are two that come to mind immediately. First, an individual is completely present (that is, the entire individual is present) at a given time and place. Second, the entire individual is present at a later time and place and similarly at all times in between. (A corollary is that an individual can change from one time to another while remaining the same individual.)

These conditions are not met by historical particulars which are processes. A process is never completely present at a given time, since at any given time all or most of the process will be in the past or in the future. A process is not the process it is until it is complete. (My trip to Salamanca is not my trip to Salamanca until and unless I reach Salamanca. If I have an accident on the way and return to Madrid, what occurred was a process, all right, and a complete one at that, but the process was not my trip to Salamanca. Though the vernacular might allow us to call it that, it also allows us to distinguish between that process and a real trip to Salamanca.) And the moment it is complete, it ceases to be -- it is no longer occurring. And because the entire process is never present at a given time, there is no question of its being entirely present at a later time either.

Clearly, then, we should want to say that persons are historical individuals and not merely historical particulars. Their lives are historical particulars.

Historical individuals (and historical particulars generally) are unique because each one has a unique place in a unique scheme of things, i.e., the real world. In principle, each individual can be distinguished from any other individual. Paradigmatically, each one is actually distinguished from any other.

With objects, we commonly do this by observation, and there seems to be nothing less open to question than this. And since we can individuate objects directly, we can also individuate anything that has a suitable one to one relation to an identified object. Thus, we commonly have no problem distinguishing one person from another because we have no problem distinguishing their bodily aspects from each other.

Still, one might question why we need a second individual, the person, in the picture when we already have something, the person's body, which, taken on its own, would also qualify as an individual. Are we back to positing a ghost inside the machine? Well, is the rose a ghost inside something more real called "redness?" Aspects are only aspects; they are not containers.

Let us begin with the standard DP definition of a person as "An individual whose history is, paradigmatically, a history of Deliberate Action." This is merely a minimum requirement and might be considered defective or misleading as a definition because of that. (The definition occurs within a conceptual structure, and other parts of the structure also come into play in giving a true to life portrayal of persons as we know them.) For the fact is that not just any old history of Deliberate Action will do. Rather, the series of Deliberate Actions must have a certain kind of continuity and coherence.

What kind? A human kind, a dramaturgical kind. If the coherence is defective in certain ways we speak of identity problems. If it is defective in certain other ways we speak of distortions of reality and psychopathology. If it is defective in other, more serious, ways we speak of insanity or grave disability and we take such persons into protective custody. And at that level of seriousness we also begin to question whether the behavior is genuine Deliberate Action.

Accordingly, for present purposes we might want to amend the definition to "A person is an individual whose history is, paradigmatically, a history of Deliberate Action in a dramaturgical pattern."

Thus, unlike an object, a person is never this thing here. Rather, a person is always the person who ..... This is the person who has this embodiment now. This is the person who lives life as this character in this human drama.

There are different approaches one could take here.

A. One could approach the issue as a purely practical matter and say merely that the coherence of a person's life history is the justification for the logical construction of an individual, the person whose life history it is. That would justify our talking as we do and leave open the question of whether anything more than a logical construction is involved.

B. If leaving the matter open were unsatisfactory, one could theorize / speculate / philosophize in various ways here.

1. We could say, immediately, as materialists are prone to, that persons are merely logical constructions and what is real is bodies. This is a promissory note that can be extended indefinitely and is therefore not a genuine promissory note, but rather a verbal posture.

But we could adopt that posture.

2. We could say, as a phenomenologist might, that this shows that intentionality, or something slightly more generic, is a two way street. Just as experience "points to" something ('outward') beyond itself, i.e., what it is the experience of, so does an action "point to" something ('inward') beyond itself, i.e., the person whom it is the action of. And we might go further and say that if we are in the world as states of affairs, not things, that just goes to show that earlier generations were basically correct (though they may have handled it poorly) in calling persons souls or spirits who are efficacious agents in the world.

3. We could say, in line with some New Age thinking, that persons are the connecting link between the realm of possibility and the realm of actuality (the image of a white hole in

space comes to mind as an analogy) and that the function of persons is to make actual, via human behavior, what was previously only potential (and potential only because there are persons).

4. And so on. And on.

C. We could approach the issue as a methodological one and say that since any question about the nature of persons could be raised only by a person as a person and for persons, there is no possibility of arriving at the conclusion that persons are not real, hence no need to entertain the possibility that persons are mere logical constructions or mere objects or mere anything other than persons. As Wittgenstein might have said, a person is not a something, but one is not a nothing, either.

This is the approach taken here. Persons are not objects, but they are not non-objects, either.

Some systematic underpinnings for this approach are given by a pair of existing parametric analyses. (To give a parametric analysis of a given domain is to specify the ways in which one Element in that domain can, as such, be the same as another Element in that domain or different from it.) The first is a parametric analysis of behavior, shown in Table 2; the second is a parametric analysis of persons.

The concept of behavior as Intentional Action reflected by the parametric analysis shown in Table 2 is conventionally expressed by the following formula.

$$\langle B \rangle = \langle I, W, K, KH, P, A, PC, S \rangle$$

The values of each of the eight parameters are states of affairs. Thus, the occurrence of an Intentional Action,  $\langle B \rangle$ , is a complex state of affairs which has as components at least eight different states of affairs any of which may be complex, i.e., have other states of affairs as components, and they usually are.

Deliberate Action is a special case of Intentional Action, one in which  $\langle B \rangle$  is part of the value of the Know parameter and also part of the value of the Want parameter. (The concept of Intentional Action is both recursive and reflexive.) This represents the case where the person both



**Table 2. Parameters of Intentional Action**

**<B> = < I, W, K, KH, P, A, PC, S >**

1. Identity: Every behavior is someone's behavior, and this parameter provides a place to specify whose behavior it is.
2. Want: The "motivation" aspect of behavior. Behavior is directed toward an outcome which is a wanted state of affairs. The value of this parameter for a given behavior is the wanted state of affairs.
3. Know: This is the "cognitive" aspect of behavior. Here, we specify which distinctions (concepts) are being acted on.
4. Know How: This is the "competence" aspect of behavior, which, in turn, reflects a learning history. The behavior's competence rules out the possibility that the occurrence of the behavior is simply a matter of luck, chance, accident, or coincidence.
5. Performance: This is the process, or procedural, aspect of behavior. Process aspects include (a) having a beginning, end, and duration, (b) occurring in some specific context of time and place, (c) being interruptable, and (d) starting with one state of affairs and ending with another.
6. Achievement: This is the outcome aspect. It includes whatever is different in the world by virtue of the occurrence of the behavior. A behavior, being historically unique, always makes some kind of difference, though it may be trivial.
7. Person Characteristics: Every behavior is an expression of some of the characteristics of the behavior. The values of this parameter specify which person characteristics the behavior is an expression of.
8. Significance: This parameter codifies the "meaningful" and the "ulterior" aspects of behavior. In general, behavior has a multi-level structure which involves, at a minimum, (a) the behavior which is "what the person is really doing" and (b) one or more "implementation" behaviors which are context dependent and are what observation reports usually describe. Since Deliberate Action is always a participation in one or more social practices, the specification of those practices is part of the value of the significance parameter.

distinguishes and chooses the behavior being engaged in. In the vernacular we say, "She knew what she was doing and she did it on purpose."

Note that only one of the parameters, the Performance parameter, normally requires any reference to the person's body. The other seven, one might say, are what is left over from the fact that I raise my arm if we subtract out the fact that my arm goes up.

Turning to persons: given the definition of a Person by reference to a history of Deliberate Action, we can consider the domain of such histories and ask "How can one of these histories, as such, be the same as another such history or different from it?"

There are at least four ways. The histories can differ in regard to:

- A. The types of behavior that occur in the history
- B. The pattern of occurrence of a given type of behavior
- C. The types of dramaturgical patterns (heterogeneous sets of behaviors) that occur in the history
- D. The pattern of occurrence of dramaturgical patterns

The first and second of these allow us to generate the traditional categories of "personality variables" or "individual differences" and somewhat more besides. These "Person Characteristic" categories serve, for many purposes, in place of a complete parametric analysis. They are as follows.

Dispositions: Traits, Attitudes, Interests, Styles

Powers: Abilities, Knowledge, Values

Derivatives: States, Capacities, Embodiment

Only the last of these ten necessarily involves any reference to a person's body.

The third and fourth of the four parameters allow us to generate dramaturgical units of behavior as well as the historical particulars which are lives of persons or episodes therein.

Thus, if we subtract out the fact that this body exists from the fact that this person lives, what is left over is -- almost everything.

Note that, given the parametric analyses of behavior and of persons and the definition of a Person, a person is literally a special case of a state of affairs as given by Transition Rule 1, "A state of affairs is a totality of related objects and/or processes and/or events and/or states of affairs." In this sense, "A person is a state of affairs" is, categorically, straightforward.

The preceding is, of course, considerably condensed. The aim here is merely to indicate that there is a systematic and technical (in the sense of supporting a variety of practical applications) formulation which is summarized by saying "There's more to behavior than movement. There's more to persons than bodies." This formulation does not involve an ontology of mental entities such as desires, beliefs, thoughts, impulses or intentions. It does represent a way of addressing substantively the question of what kind of state of affairs is M-kind, the kind that a person is.

The difficulty we have with the idea that a person is a state of affairs results from the bias represented by the existence of Ontology, i.e., the notion, seldom propounded explicitly or accepted baldly, that to be real (to be really real) is to exist in the way that objects exist. If we would want to say that a given individual exists, which we do with persons, that pushes us toward equating the individual with an object of some sort. But then we are in trouble if the individual is not an object, because "exists" is, paradigmatically, reserved for talking about objects. And so we find ourselves qualifying. "Persons exist, but ....." And then we are in trouble again.

This logical dynamic is found, for example in connection with individual selves or persons. Philosophers have argued that selves don't exist because, in one way or another, they aren't objects. (Others argue that persons do exist because, in one way or another, they are objects.) Buddhists have argued that selves don't exist because they are not phenomenological objects. (Persons, selves, self concepts, and self perceptions are often conflated in these various discussions.)

And note the parallel here to current philosophical arguments to the effect that states of affairs don't exist because they can't be located in space and time the way objects can (see end note 1). This has about the same force as saying that objects are not real because they don't occur, and

on top of that, they are never the case. (Or saying that addition is not a real part of arithmetic, because it doesn't have any seventeenishness at all.)

The difficulty we have with the idea that a person is a state of affairs reflects, in a second way, the bias represented by the existence of Ontology, i.e., the notion that to be real (to be really real) is to exist. Here, the difficulty is that when we arrive at the conclusion that a person is a state of affairs, there seems to be something missing. Somehow we miss the comfortable closure that would be provided by, for example, "Yes, persons are objects."

What we yearn for, and use as a standard, is a neat account which starts with the determinate existence of a determinate set of objects and goes on from there. First there are the things that exist and then the rest is history. This is the clockwork model of the world, which is part of our intellectual and scientific tradition. But it has failed in physics and it fails in psychology. It fails in both in the same way, namely, if we approach either science as fundamental and therefore do not permit ourselves the indulgence of throwing our deepest problems over the wall for a "more fundamental" discipline to deal with, we find that, as far as we can tell, the world simply isn't that neat.

Or rather, the world isn't neat in that particular way. One way to explain the failure is by reference to the notion of world construction. Recall that the use of the SA system to construct a world requires the introduction of a limiting case somewhere. We noted that one kind of limiting case results in a set of ultimate objects. That is what the traditional, and failed, clockwork model of the world requires. A different limiting case gives us a world consisting of an indeterminate totality of states of affairs. The real world of persons and common sense is that kind of world. In that kind of world the 'paradoxes' of quantum physics (duality, interaction, discontinuity, indeterminacy, nonlocality, etc.) are not paradoxical. They are simply how things are in that domain — surprising, perhaps, but not paradoxical. Similarly, in that kind of world persons, as individuals and states of affairs and not objects, are not paradoxical.

There is an obvious connection to be made between (a) a metaphysics in which first there are the things that exist and then the rest is (merely) their histories and (b) Ontology as the

discipline that "deals with being" and "is concerned with what exists." Without the former, Ontology would stand forth as merely an intellectual crotchet in our cultural history — pinched, parochial, and just plain peculiar.

One of the more telling symptoms of the limitations of Ontology is how little interest it holds for practicing scientists. Though Ontology-oriented philosophers of science may not like it, scientific work is almost wholly concerned with what is the case, with how things are in the domain under study. From data to experimental design to theories to confirmation, the abiding interest is in what is the case. There is essentially zero concern with questions about existence *per se* or about what exists in the domain. Those come out in the wash.

What we count as a description or an explanation is a specification of how things are. Given the scientific interest in how things are, it is not an accident that science is commonly characterized as "a search for truth." I have argued elsewhere that that misses the mark, but it isn't just wrongheaded, either. And when our explanations come to an end, as they always must, we say, "That's just how it is! That's just how things are."

Thus, if we want to affirm the reality of persons, we need to do it in the ways that are appropriate to states of affairs, not objects. And so we will say, "Yes, Virginia, there really are persons. (And persons really do think about various topics, including ethics, science, public policy, politics, etc.) That's what it would mean to say that persons 'exist'. That's how things are."

## End Note

### 1. (A Wil and Gil dialogue)

Wil: Look, you've made the following statements.

(a) A historical individual is unique because it has a unique place in a unique scheme of things, i.e., the real world.

(b) A person is a historical individual.

(c) A person is a state of affairs.

How can that be, since states of affairs have no location? And how could they be uniquely located, since states of affairs may overlap. For example, if a ball is spinning and it is getting hotter, those are two different states of affairs (and they are two different processes), but if they're located anywhere, they're both located where the ball is, so what's unique?

Gil: We need to pick up several threads here.

A. "Uniquely located" is subject to at least two different readings, and there may be a better way of presenting the one I had in mind. On one reading, "uniquely located" implies that locations are preempted, so that you can't have more than one (of whatever is in question, in this case, states of affairs) at a given location. Presumably, this notion comes from our experience with objects. This is not the reading I had in mind.

On the other reading, "uniquely located" perhaps means no more than "located" since it only implies a restriction on where the thing in question could be said to be. That is, some location descriptions would be correct and others would be incorrect; the thing will be at some given place rather than some other place. That makes the given place unique (among places).

Let me say, however, that although I only intended the weaker of the two readings, I believe the stronger reading is also correct. We shall see.

B. You have to remember that the basic question is how the world is, how things are in the world. State of affairs concepts are our vehicle for specifying that, and they have their own peculiarities. For example, one can assimilate states of affairs to facts, and for many purposes that works and is informative, because we're all familiar with facts. In the present case it doesn't work. I presume that it's this assimilation that is responsible for the conclusion that states of affairs have no location.

One can assimilate states of affairs to situations, and that should work just about all the time subject to a minor connotative caveat. Notice that we don't have trouble with the notion that situations are located. If we did, it wouldn't make any sense to ask such questions as "What's the situation at the office today?" or "What's the state of affairs in Rwanda this morning?" We also say that situations "exist", though it's not a common way of talking.

C. It isn't that states of affairs are not locatable. It isn't even that they can't be located in the same way that objects or collections of objects can be located. It's just that in fact we don't deal with objects and states of affairs in the same way in this regard. For example, although we often ask about the locations of objects or collections of objects ("They're in the warehouse," "It's on my desk") we never (that's only a very slight exaggeration) outside of philosophical discussions ask about the locations of states of affairs. With the latter the focus is on what we're talking about and what there is to say about it, not where it is. Saying where it is is just a special case; it's being where it is is a state of affairs. (We don't need to ask where a state of affairs is (a) if we already know or could find out where its constituents are or (b) if what we say about the constituents doesn't depend on where they are. One or both of these conditions is almost always present.)

D. Talking about the locations of things brings into play the logic of parts and wholes. There is a familiar example which brings out many of the relevant considerations. This is the case of touching a building.

Imagine that I'm standing next to the north wall of a rectangular building and I reach out and touch the lower right hand corner of a window with my fingertip.

What did I touch?

- (a) The lower right hand corner of the window
- (b) The window
- (c) The north wall of the building

- (d) The building
- (e) The north half (or 1/3 or 9/10 etc.) of the building
- (f) The whole world

What did I not touch?

- (a) The south wall
- (b) The other windows
- (c) The roof, the east and west walls
- (d) In general anything, including any part of the building, that doesn't include the spot where I touched the window

In general, the location of something works like a set of Chinese boxes, one inside the other. The most restrictive specification of the location is the innermost box and the world is the outermost box.

In this connection, I believe that one thing that creates a lot of mischief is the model of a location as something given by three spatial coordinates and the use of that model as a standard for all questions about location. Keep in mind that all that gives you is a point in space, and there's damned few things in the real world that are located at a point in space. For example, I am not located at a point in space, and you'd have an extraordinarily difficult time using a coordinate system to define a three dimensional volume that includes only me and nothing else (and then there are such questions as whether my nasal passages and the space between the hairs on my head should be included in that volume). If you move to "Where is that flock of birds located now?" you face the question of whether the flock is located at the fifty separate locations where the individual birds are, or is it located within some volume that includes all of them (and is there a minimum volume of this sort and if so is that where the flock really is located?). And if you have a team with three members currently in Madrid and the other seven in Singapore or Jakarta, where is the team located? In a minimum volume? In Madrid, Singapore, and Jakarta? In the ten places where the individual members are? Or what?

And yet, is there any doubt that the team is located exactly where it is and not somewhere else? The point is to narrow the location specification down to a point where it's useful to know, not to push it to some illusory minimum. The complications we encounter in connection with the locations of states of affairs are essentially the problems we encounter in connection with the location of anything, including objects, processes, or events. (If unemployment in Europe is increasing or if global cooling is occurring, where are those processes located?)

Given these preliminaries, let's address the question, keeping in mind that the basic notion is how things are, how the world is. Notice that one can provide information about how the world is (a) by saying how the whole world is in some respect or (b) (in keeping with the Chinese box arrangement) by saying how some part of it is, how it is in some particular place or places. Either will serve to locate the state of affairs in question. Indeed, we have a whole range of locutions that do no more than specify such locations. Thus, we have "The state of the nation," "The situation on the stock market," "The state of affairs in Rwanda this morning," "Her financial condition," "The way things were back home," "What it's like to be a bat," "Under the aspect of eternity," and so on.

As I said, we don't have trouble with the idea that situations are located. But notice the details. Suppose that the cat is on the mat in the corner of the room.

Where is that situation, that state of affairs, located?

- (a) In the corner of the room
- (b) In the room

- (c) In the building
- (d) In the city
- (e) In the world

Where is that situation not located?

- (a) In the next room
- (b) outside the building
- (c) In another city
- (d) In general, any place that doesn't include the cat and the mat

Wil: Wait a minute. The cat is one thing; the mat is another, and I can understand both of them being in the corner of the room. But the cat's being on the mat is something different. It's a relation between the cat and the mat, and relations don't have locations.

Gil: No. The cat's being on the mat is not a relation. It's a state of affairs which involves the cat in relation to the mat. The relation is "on". By talking about there being a relation, you've now introduced a third something where before there were only two. A third something would presumably have to compete for space with the cat and the mat, and since it doesn't, you conclude that it has no location.

Keep in mind that "cat" and "mat" are abstractions no less than "relation" or "on" is. Cats don't first exist and then somewhere along the line acquire a location. What there is in the real world is not "cat", but rather "cat there now." Cat's don't exist apart from being somewhere, so the cat's being where it is not a completely separate chunk of the real world from the cat's existing. In terms of states of affairs, it's like the next larger Chinese box.

The situation in question is cat-on-mat (that's the innermost Chinese box) and, further, cat-on-mat-in-corner, and so on. The situation, cat-on-mat, is the situation in the corner of the room. That's how the world is there. That's how things are there.

When I say "The cat is on the mat" I'm not talking about something that was long ago, and in another country. And it's not located in a Platonic realm of abstractions, either.

Wil: OK, but what about general statements like " $2 + 2 = 4$ " or "All swans are white?"

Gil: General statements are the prime candidates for being direct specifications of how the whole world is. Your two examples are clearly understandable in this way. To be sure, that doesn't exhaust the possibilities. One could, for example, say that those are elliptical and that the unelliptical forms are "Whenever and wherever there are two of something and two more of the same thing then there are four of those things" and "Whenever and wherever there is a swan, that swan is white." (Notice that we don't have to know the locations of these things in order to say what we say.) But I doubt that this technique is always available. For example, "The world is fifteen billion years old" doesn't seem to lend itself to this treatment.

Wil: All right, but let's consider a different kind of example, namely "I own the cat." That's not a spatial relation, so you can't handle that situation on the model of touching a building.

Gil: On the contrary, using the building example as a model, it's easy to see that the state of affairs "I own the cat" is located spatially at any place that includes both me and the cat. Temporally, it's located within the overlap between the cat's lifetime and my lifetime, and that's a pretty strong restriction in a 15 billion year old universe.

Wil: But how can that be, since ownership is not a spatial relationship?



Gil: For a general approach to all of this, keep in mind that the real world has many more dimensions than the spatiotemporal ones. Personal, interpersonal, and social phenomena require many additional conceptual dimensions in order to delineate the various phenomena adequately. We live in the real world, not an abstract world of time and space. All these additional dimensions are implicated in the reference to having a unique place in a unique scheme of things.

Coming back to the example, my owning the cat is located within the organized set of social practices that constitute the institution of property/ownership. Only within this institution is there such a relationship as "A owns B," just as only in baseball is there such a relationship as "A has walked B twice." And of course, that institution is an integral part of the culture, which includes multiple and interlocking institutions and social practices. So my owning the cat is located within the culture and, beyond that, is located within the real world.

Notice the resemblance to touching the building. My owning the cat is not located within the institution of manufacturing or of national defense or of psychotherapy, though under special conditions it might. Nor is it located within some other culture that knows nothing about us. (It is, however, also located within the institution of speaking English.)

And this may be the time to cash in the IOU with respect to the issue of unique locations for states of affairs. The two you mentioned, i.e., The ball spinning and the ball getting hotter, coincide only in the four spatio-temporal dimensions. As soon as you map them into our social practices and institutions you'll find that they have quite different places in the scheme of things, i.e., the real world. In this context, it would seem to be a tautology that if two states of affairs are located in the same place they are the same state of affairs, because if we had a way of distinguishing them then ipso facto they wouldn't have the same place in our scheme of things.

