Long abstract of "Relations Intrinsèques"

Informally, we can characterize intrinsic properties are those whose exemplification or lack thereof by an individual only depends on how things are with respect to that individual, and not on the rest of the world. Correspondingly, then, intrinsic binary relations are those whose exemplification or lack thereof by a couple only depends on how things are with respect to that couple, and not the rest on the rest of the world. We can easily extend these elucidations to relations of more than two argument places. But in the case of relations, unlike the case of properties, very little attention has been given to improving on the above initial characterization, and on the metaphysical significance of the contrast between intrinsicality and extrinsicality.

It is important to distinguish the contrast between intrinsic and extrinsic relation with another one that has historically received a great deal of attention, namely between internal and external relations. In David Lewis' influential classification, intrinsic relations divide into internal and external ones, while extrinsic relations are those that are not intrinsic. Lewis then proceeds to analyse internality and externality. For him, a relation is internal iff it supervenes on the natures of the relata, and "external iff it does not supervene on the natures of the relata taken separately, but it does supervene on the nature of the composite of the relata taken together" (*On the Plurality of Worlds*, p. 62). By the 'nature' of a thing, Lewis here means the class of intrinsic properties

it exemplifies. Intrinsicality for relations is thus defined in terms of intrinsicality for properties.

As it stands, Lewis' analysis entails that intrinsic relations are internal or symmetrical. For the composite or mereological fusion of x and y is the same as the fusion of y and x, and hence nothing about the nature of that fusion could introduce an asymmetry between x and y. On the face of it, though, some intrinsic relations seem to neither internal nor asymmetric. For a contrived example, consider *taller than and 2 metres apart*. Its first conjunct guarantees its asymmetry, and its second conjunct prevents it from being internal. For a less contrived but more controversial example, consider the asymmetric relation of temporal precedence. On some views about temporal geometry, this relation counts as intrinsic.

This objection is analogous to one Russell made against what he called the "monistic" view of relations. Presumably, Lewis' analysis ought to be amended to say (and is tacitly so amended in Philip Bricker's "The Fabric of Space") that a relation is intrinsic iff it supervenes on the natures of the relata as well as any fusions of the relata. I shall give a precise statement of this amended analysis in my paper.

Even though the amended analysis does not entail that all intrinsic relations are symmetrical (or more generally, permutation-invariant), it faces a variant of the same problem: it entails that all intrinsic relations are symmetrical among duplicates. For any sequences drawn from a domain of duplicates will be sequence-duplicates. This consequence is still problematic. While *taller than and 2 metres apart* is not a counterexample - it is symmetrical among duplicates, since it never relates duplicates - temporal precedence still seems to be one. After all, it may asymmetrically relate two duplicate epochs in a world of (finite or infinite) recurrence, or duplicate spacetime points in a world without global recurrence.

A variant of this argument abstracts away from the particular example of precedence, and appeals to the notion of a fundamental attribute, where an attribute is either

a property or relation. It is an attractive principle that all fundamental attributes are intrinsic. In the case of properties, this principle arguably follows from a number of extant accounts of intrinsicality. Further, it is a widely held principle that fundamental attributes obey certain recombinatorial principles - roughly, their patterns of instantiation are independent of each other. Coupled with these two principles, Lewis' analysis yields the consequence that all fundamental relations are symmetrical. This, however, is a very substantive metaphysical commitment, which ought not to follow from an analysis of intrinsicality. Lewis' analysis of intrinsic relations ought to be rejected even in its amended form, I shall conclude. How else we can analyze them, if at all, I do not know. But I shall argue that the contrast between intrinsic and extrinsic relations - whether analyzable or not - is philosophically significant. I shall illustrate this with two examples.

There has been a fairly extensive debate about how to analyze intrinsicality for properties, and one prominent approach - explored by Brian Weatherson ("Intrinsic properties and combinatorial principles") and David Lewis ("Redefining intrinsic"), inter alia - appeals to combinatorial conditions. However, such approaches are subject to a counterexample due to John Hawthorne. Hawthorne considers a fundamental intentional relation, attends to, which recombines freely with intrinsic properties. The corresponding relational property attending to something gets misclassified as intrinsic by Weatherson's and Lewis' combinatorial accounts. I shall argue that a combinatorial approach can avoid Hawthorne's counterexample if it aims to capture the class of intrinsic properties and intrinsic relations together, rather than just the class of intrinsic.

The second illustrative example is more speculative, and of wider potential significance. Only the barest sketch can be given here. There is a famous line of argument that tries to establish our ignorance of intrinsic properties of things, on the grounds that we can only know things in so far as we are related to them. If I am right, then

many philosophers are drawing the wrong lessons from the argument. It does not show anything about the respective knowability of monadic properties and non-monadic relations, but about the respective knowability of intrinsic and non-intrinsic attributes. My claim is this: if the argument succeeds for the case of intrinsic properties, it also succeeds for the case of intrinsic relations. The relevant contrast is between intrinsic and extrinsic attributes, not between monadic properties and relations.