

In Defense of *de re* Identity: Kripke's Revival of Aristotelian Essence

Sagarika Datta

Department of Philosophy, University of Delhi, Delhi, India

Email address:

Sagarika-phil@yahoo.com

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Abstract: As we know, metaphysics deals with the identity of things, what they are. Here I am in search of that identity which makes the thing what it is, by which we can single out or pick out an object and distinguish the object from other possible objects. There are two types of identity, self-identity i.e. trivial and contingent identity. We know, every object is necessarily self-identical. Contingent identity is that essential property of an object that an object must have if it lacks this property it could not be what it is. Whereas there are some other properties called accidental properties that an object just happens to have. Socrates has self-identity essentially but is accidentally snubnosed. Because he could not have been self-diverse but he could have been non-snubnosed. Here I am in search of that essence that is very stable, basic, unique, and intrinsic to that object and the object cannot lack that property. That is *de re* identity. In Kripke's theory *de re* essential properties are not required to be analytic, i.e., they do not require to be conceptually connected with each other. They are meaningful, not by virtue of their conceptual content; they are meaningful in so far as they underlie the varying properties of an object in different conceivable universes. The natural extension of the possible worlds interpretation to *de re* is known as 'identity across possible world' or 'trans-world identity'. For Kripke *de re* modality comprises essentialism by introducing the concept of trans-world identity. As already noted, Kripke holds that proper names refer rigidly and non-descriptively to the same object in all possible worlds; so proper names are 'rigid designators'. According to him, even if the object does not exist in the actual world, that particular object, if there be any, will designate the same object in all other possible world and not via any properties. Thus Kripke made a wide range of utilization of the idea of a possible world in defending the eloquence of modality - both *de re* and *de dicto*.

Keywords: *de re*, *de dicto*, Referential Opacity, Rigid, Non-Rigid Designators, Transworld Identity

1. Introduction

To understand contingent identity statement we need to understand the difference between essential property and accidental property of an object. We always have a tendency to hold on something which is very stable, basic, unique, intrinsic, fundamental and discarding that is unstable or contingent. That means, there is a neat dichotomy between core vs periphery, central vs margin, permanent vs temporary, necessity vs possibility. That indicates that there is always a contrast in our mind between a name and what it stands for. A term is so bound up with its meaning that we often mean by 'term' the 'objects of thought' which has both subject and predicate where subject is a concrete individual and predicate is only the detail of the subject or its essential or constitutive

being. Even according to Aristotle, essence is a fundamental subject of predication which implies an entity which has no properties in itself. But is the bearer of the other varying properties of the object itself. They are impredicable in nature. However, this primary substances are not bare particulars i.e. without qualifications. The primary substances are qualified by predicates that are called secondary substances that can alternatively be termed as species and genera i.e. kinds. Primary beings are individuals like Russell, Socrates, Plato. Secondary beings are the category into which something falls or they are the kinds of these individuals like man, rose, gold etc. each individual member of a given species has its own unique essential property. In *Metaphysics*, Aristotle relates essence with the kind of a thing and it is expressed by its meaning or definition where the parts of

definition are genus and differentia. [1]

Man is a Rational Animal

Here 'rationality' is the differentia and animality is the genus. That means rationality is involved in meaning or the definition of the word 'man'. So meaning is when it is divorced from the object of reference and wedded to the word. It is fixed by the conventions for the use of expressions that we learn when we learn a language.

The simplest way to characterize essences is to say that it makes a thing what it is. And an object must have something very basic, unique, and intrinsic and more fundamental by which we can identify an object as it is. So some properties of an object are essential for it and some other accidental.

1.1. Individual Essence vs Class Essence

Now, question arises whether this basic property belongs to a particular individual or to a group. Is it unique to just one thing or these are mere concepts or ideas that are sharable or communicable or repetitive properties, or that is logically instantiable in a plurality of individuals. An individual unlike a class is spatio-temporally cohesive, it forms a unified singular unit; and hence the way in which an essence can be said to bring the spatio-temporally scattered individuals under a fixed and unitary enclosure cannot meaningfully be applied to an individual itself. And yet the individual in spite of its apparently compact unity throws up a tension between its essence and accidents. With inanimate objects the shape, size and colour may change, leaving the constituent matter intact. Question arises whether it is a bare particular that persists and underlies through the change [2] Or whether it is a composite of all qualities, combination of all properties like both essential and accidental.

Some philosophers will say we do not require any properties to identify the object in the actual world as well as in the possible world. Object itself directly enters into our identification in the actual world as well as in the possible world via properties. But some will say essence is commonly shareable property, we find essence in some fixed suchness. On the other hand, some of them tried to emphasize on the internal structure of language which is related to the reality of the world. By analyzing the ordinary language we can reduce it into its constituting parts and ultimately we arrive at an ideal language that cannot be further analyzed, they are atomic in nature, there is a one to one relation between the name and the object in reality So keeping all these issues in mind here I have discussed about a very controversial issue Whether there is some definite description for every proper name or proper names are mere rigid designators, whether description is taken to be synonymous with the name or the description determines its reference only.

1.2. Notion of *de re* Modality

What we can commonly appreciate as an issue whether the essence belongs to a thing only relatively or whether it belongs to it absolutely or really - has earned a full-mouthed

technical terminology in philosophical literature. If essence belong to objects really or inalienably - irrespective of any mode of conception - it would be termed as *de re*, whereas if essence belongs to an object only in so far as the object is conceived in a proposition the essence will be termed as *de dicto*. Thus when adverbs like essentially or necessarily is coupled to a noun - say Paul or table, they (i.e. these adverbs) do not touch the extension (real referents) of Paul or table - they only pertain to an intension or mode of conceiving Paul and the tables. Speaking in philosophical terminology, the anti-essentialists would hold the adverbs like essentially or necessarily as being referentially opaque, as these adverbs actually refer to the mode of conceptions that come as intermediary screens between the real object on the one hand and the subject on the other. An upholder of *de re* essence will hold these adverbs to be referentially transparent.

2. Quine's Attack on *de re* Identity

Quine developed his view on the modalities since the early 1940's ('Whitehead and the Rise of Modern Logic') to 1961 (the second edition of *From a Logical Point of View*). What Quine calls 'essentialism' as a target of his critique is shaped in the backdrop of his critique of modalities and a new treatment of reference inevitably emerged from this critique. He criticized the conjoining of modality and quantification. In 'Intention Revisited' Quine addressed and discussed these issues at length. Here Quine has shown the misgivings about the intelligibility of essentialism.

For Quine, admitting quantification in modal context is possible only if we admit the possibility of *de re* necessity. Quine attacked the possibility of 'necessity' on open context. Quine rejected the possibility of *de dicto* necessity as it violates the principle of extensionality whereas necessity as expressed by a semantical predicate applicable on names of statement does not hold principle of substitutivity, it induce referential opacity. For Quine, meaning or synonymy is ultimately determined by the particular scheme of beliefs imposed on a barrage of sensory stimulations. As our given sense-data do not have any meaning of their own and are dependent on some suitable description themselves, so for Quine, neither *de dicto* nor *de re* essence (based on the real nature of things) is possible Necessity resides in the way we talk about the thing not in the thing itself. [15]

W. V. O. Quine in his famous work *Pursuit of Truth* observes:

'Words owe their meaning to their role in sentences, rather than having meaning independently.' The fundamental relation between language and the world is not a referential relation between sentence, complete utterances and sensory stimulations'. Quine argued against essences by saying that what make something necessary are not some features of the object but rather some feature of *the way we describe the object*. It is usually claimed that the meaning of a predicate determines its extension, in the sense that any two expressions with the same meaning must have the same

extension. But Quine denies that our language contains expressions that refer to the world; actually what he denies is that reference is fundamental. His semantic thesis asserts that reference is pure in so far as it does not characterize the referent while meaning is not a property of expression, it is fixed by the conventions for the use of expressions. Meaning is what is associated with the rules of languages, like 'Copper is metal', 'Wood is not a metal'. These conventions determine the meaning of the word 'copper', 'metal' or 'wood'. What Quine adds is that there is nothing intrinsic to a term 'wood' or 'copper' which automatically makes it a name or renders its occurrence referential – ensuring its sticking on to a supposedly corresponding piece of reality. Now we shall see the heart of Quine's philosophical position lies on his attack on Reference and Meaning.

The referentialists think that names and indexicals refer unfailingly to unique objects and statements containing them express singular propositions. John Stuart Mill was one of the earliest advocates of a direct reference theory,[13] while the Descriptive theorists of proper names like Frege, Russell, and Strawson had the other opinion. For both Frege and Russell names were something like hidden definite descriptions; for Frege, every singular term has in addition to its denotation, or the object denoted by the term, a *sinn* or sense which is the manner in which the term presents its denotation to the listener or reader. For him, pairs of co-referential items i.e. terms having the same denotation may present their denotation in different ways.

Quine does not limit himself within the scope of reference and its modes. His semantic thesis asserts that reference is pure in so far as it does not characterize the referent. Quine is not just concerned with reference and its modes. His semantic thesis is that reference is pure only when the referring expression does not characterize the referent. Quine pursues the program of limiting reference to pure reference, which would mean that referents cannot be touched by language—not by the standard linguistic tool of proper names. When we try to refer to an object with the singular terms like a, b, c etc., such terms do not touch reality by virtue of their putative status as predicateless proper names – but by virtue of falling under a concept. Linguistically speaking, we can say that the apparent singular terms are not singular terms, they actually are bound variables. The result is a language expressing only general statements. Thus a theory regimented along Quinean lines contains no singular terms. Quine eliminated singular terms, functional expressions, and definite descriptions. It is true that singular terms are used for the purpose of referring; all expressions are ultimately dependent on the reference made with singular terms. 'Man' refers to men only because 'Ram' refers to Ram and 'Shyam' refers to Shyam. But there are singular terms that lack reference. So once we eliminate singular terms we do not have to face the question of those terms that lack reference. Basically Quine was in favour of eliminating singular terms. Ordinary language contains definite descriptions and definite descriptions are referring expressions and are used to make singular reference as in the

instance of 'the author of *Gitanjali*'. If the predicate 'wrote *Gitanjali*' is true of exactly one object then we can use the definite description to say something about the object, for instance, 'the author of *Gitanjali* was a great poet'. But what if there is no object of which the predicate is true or if it is true of more than one object? In such cases, it has been argued by some philosophers like Strawson, that the question of the truth of a statement in which the phrase occurs as a singular term does not arise, and the sentence is neither true nor false. Quine does not limit himself within the scope of reference and its modes. His semantic thesis asserts that reference is pure in so far as it does not characterize the referent. For Quine, the terms that appear to be singular one are not at all singular terms, they actually are bound variables. As a result, any language expresses only general statements as in Quinean theory of Logic and language are not singular terms. So singular terms, functional expressions and definite descriptions are all eliminated by Quine. It is true that, the task of referring is ultimately dependent on using some singular terms roughly exemplifying 'Men in general refers to man' only because to exemplify 'Socrates' refers to the individual known as Socrates and 'Plato' refers to the man called Plato. But the problem is: there are singular terms having no reference. So to solve the problem Quine favours the elimination of singular terms in large.

2.1. Quine's Attack on QML

Quine claims that once we interpret QML (Quantified Modal Logic), we have to tie essence to the things, i.e. land on *de re* essence. In other words, QML is committed to essentialism. Quine rejects the idea of *de re* necessity, hence also the legitimacy of quantification into modal contexts, as QML requires. [1]

For Quine, non-extensional contexts for singular terms are 'referentially opaque'; others he calls 'referentially transparent' or 'purely referential'. If what we are saying is simply true or false of the object then it should hold true however that object is referred to. A singular term in a sentence would be referential, if and only if the singular term is interchangeable with all its co-referential terms. The proposition expressed by a sentence should remain the same no matter what name of the object it uses.

However this will not be true if the names are 'mentioned' rather than used. If we were really saying that Quine, the man, rhymes with 'twine' then we would equally be saying that the well-known author of *Word and Object* rhymes with 'twine', for they are one and the same. But clearly what is being said is not about the man; it is about the name. The sentence, however, contains a singular term naming the man and is to that extent misleading. Its wording suggests that it is about one thing, the man Quine, but is in fact about something else, the name 'Quine'. Canonical notation, designed to maximize clarity and to facilitate inference, will not regiment a singular term in such a position (viz. the position of naming a name or of mentioning) as referring to the object which we take to be designated by that term in ordinary cases. [5] Quine objects to quantification in contexts of propositional attitudes like 'x

knows or believes or doubts or wishes that...'

So we have seen most of Quine's efforts here deal with what he, following Russell, calls propositional attitudes.[14] Propositional attitudes are mental states like a belief for hope or expectation that can be attributed to someone using a 'that'-clause. One believes or thinks that it will not rain on that day of picnic, or fears that it will, or hopes that it won't, or doubts that the sun will shine, and so on. As we see, Quine takes it that a very wide range of ascriptions of mental states can be fitted into this category – those including contexts that involve knowledge, belief and epistemic modalities. Someone can be said to believe that a given proposition is true, or hope that it is true, or wonder whether it is true, and so on. But Quine, of course, does not accept this because for him, quantification with respect to a variable occurring in a context is possible only if the context is referentially transparent that means the singular term that is used in a statement can be replaced *salva-veritate*. But as singular terms in a modal context cannot be replaced this use will not be purely referential. So he needs to put forward another way of understanding statements of propositional attitude. Propositional attitudes are of two distinct kinds, *de re* and *de dicto*. As our given sense-data do not have any meaning of their own and dependent on some suitable description itself, so for Quine, neither *de dicto* nor *de re* essence is possible. Objects do not possess property necessarily, these features are not the intrinsic feature of the object itself, for them necessity was specific to a particular conceptual scheme, it is ultimately determined by the particular scheme of beliefs imposed on a barrage of sensory stimulations. Necessity resides in the way we talk about the thing not in the thing itself.

2.2. Quine's Argument Against Essence

Quine has cast doubt on the notion of *de re* modality. According to Quine essentialism is the doctrine that some of the attributes of a thing may be essential to the thing and others accidental. Quine invites us to imagine a person who is both a mathematician and a cyclist. [13]

Quine has shown the contradiction in the following passage:

1. All mathematicians are necessarily rational but not necessarily two-legged.
2. All (well-formed) cyclists are necessarily two-legged but not necessarily rational.

Now, if the person Paul is both a mathematician and a cyclist we may infer the following:

3. Paul is necessarily rational but not necessarily two-legged.
4. Paul is necessarily two-legged but not necessarily rational.

From 3 & 4 we get two contradictory statements:

5. Paul is necessarily rational & not necessarily rational.
6. Paul is necessarily two-legged & not necessarily two-legged.

Therefore essentialism which leads to this type of contradiction is a philosophically unacceptable view. W.V.O.

Quine argued against essences contending that what makes something necessary is not some feature of the object concerned but rather some feature of the way we describe the object. This is the essential point of Quine's semantic primacy of sentences as opposed to the semantic primacy of the modal operators contained in the sentences.

In Aristotle's view we have seen there is a claim that the definition of human beings as rational animals gets at the essence of what it is to be human, while defining the species as featherless bipeds does not. But Quine holds that question about which traits are essential and which accidental are barely intelligible and wholly pointless. Quine's main argument against essentialism is

- 1) QML is committed to essentialism (Quine has abbreviated Quantified Modal Logic as QML)
- 2) QML is untenable and incoherent
- 3) Therefore, essentialism is untenable and incoherent.

Quine rejects the idea of *de re* necessity, hence also the legitimacy of quantification into modal contexts, as QML requires. To repeat this point more strongly – he holds that question about which traits are essential and which accidental are barely intelligible.

3. Saul Kripke Revived Essence

However, Quine's challenge was met in the fifties and early sixties by some modal logicians like Saul Kripke and Hilary Putnam. They found fault with Quine and strongly asserted that science in fact used natural kind terms that have modal implications and that the methodology of science demonstrated natural kinds are having modal implications by demonstrating how particulars fall under modal terms. Further, Saul Kripke, Keith Donnellan, Hilary Putnam, Jacco Hintikka and Richard Montague accept the very Leibnizian idea that if a proposition is necessarily true, it is true in all possible worlds and provides proofs of completeness for all non-equivalent modal logic. They strongly upheld the view that if necessity-and possibility-operators are applicable to propositions - which is another name for *de dicto* modality - then these operators are also applicable to quantification over possible worlds. That means if I say that a proposition P is necessary it simply means for every possible world W, P is true in W and to say that P is impossible simply means that P is false in all possible worlds. In case of *de dicto* modality we are required just to consider how far an attribute in question has been realized or exemplified by the object.

Kripke answered the antiessentialists with his newly coined concept 'possible world semantics' which is otherwise called 'relational semantics'. This is a variety of formal semantics as a substitute for languages with intensional operators \Box and \Diamond consecutively for necessity and possibility.

Kripke uses the common term 'designator' which is applicable to both proper names and definite descriptions. Proper names are no more than 'empty tags' which directly label objects but do not connect to the referent in virtue of certain conceptual associations, they do not require any

cognitive fix to get hooked into the reality.

In Kripke's theory *de re* essential properties are not required to be analytic, i.e., they do not require to be conceptually connected with each other. They are meaningful, not by virtue of their conceptual content; they are meaningful in so far as they underlie the varying properties of an object in different conceivable universes. The natural extension of the possible-worlds interpretation to *de re* is known as 'identity across possible world' or 'trans-world identity'. For Kripke *de re* modality comprises essentialism by introducing the concept of trans-world identity. As already noted, Kripke holds that proper names refer rigidly and non-descriptively to the same object in all possible worlds; so proper names are 'rigid designators'. According to him, even if the object does not exist in the actual world, that particular object, if there be any, will designate the same object in all other possible world and not via any properties. Thus Kripke made a wide range of utilization of the idea of a possible world in defending the eloquence of modality - both *de re* and *de dicto*. Though Kripke did not answer directly to Quine's anti-essentialism - not at least in his *Naming and Necessity* - we can develop his theory of possible worlds and rigid designation to construct a plausible refutation of Quine's pointed arguments against *de re* modality. The terms 'rigid designator' and 'non-rigid designator' and their corresponding notions as introduced by Kripke are markedly technical, and are sufficient to combat Frege-Russell model of semantics. [5] Kripke denied Frege-Russell theory and claimed that proper names cannot be reduced into definite descriptions. Nor are there any extra-ordinary or logically proper names (as in the scheme of Russell) standing for bare individuals. So by holding that proper names refer rigidly and non-descriptively to the same object in all possible worlds Kripke revived *de re* essences on the one hand, and got rid of bare particulars on the other by bringing back names to their original non-descriptional status. To repeat, names for him do not refer to bare particulars, they are rather non-descriptional or non-qualitative - in so far as they are not available for use in an analytic proposition.

So the principal idea of Kripke was that if something is necessarily such and such in this actual world, then we must designate the same object in all conceivable world in which it exists. Kripke extended the idea of essence beyond individuals to kinds of things such as gold and water. For Kripke it is not just a law or regularity that water is H₂O but rather the essence of the natural kind. These ideas were already there in Aristotelian Essentialism.

The dominant status of essence for Kripke consists in its persisting beyond all attempts of conceiving a thing in a different way, all attempts of thinking it to have different properties - for all such attempts of de-essentialising an objects ironically feed on its essential identity. And this essence is constituted by its non-qualitative identity - its origin or its atomic structure. And Kripke has pursued the main line of his contention consistently till the extreme point. He insists that all apparent possibility that a thing may be exactly alike in its observable properties and yet come out of

a different material origin in a different world is not a genuine possibility. Such seeming disruption of an object's essence is actually a counterfactual on the actual world and not a counterfactual on the origin or the atomic structure of the object. What such de-essentialising moves actually propose is that - our actual world might have contained an exact facsimile of this object where the facsimile has a different origin or a different atomic structure. Similarly if one proposes that a thing may undergo complete metamorphosis in its atomic structure, Kripke will still insist that such a possibility is a possibility about the actual universe - *that the universe may be such that it changes the nature of objects through the passage of time. For Kripke such a counter-factual does not affect the non-temporal essence of the objects.*

3.1. Kripke-Frege-Russell

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Morning Star is identical with evening star is contingent. Similarly the property of being a cyclist and that of being a biped get necessarily instantiated in the same set of individuals is unwarranted i.e. all cyclist is biped is wrong.

In modern times Kripke and Putnam come forward with the programme of supplying a better theory of essences - that would avoid the rift between the bare quantity and bare quality. However their theories have to retain a gap between an underlying essence and its variant modes of representation. The crux of their theories rests on the insistence that the fact that we talk meaningfully of the variant modes of representation of an object shows not only that we have to talk meaningfully of an underlying essence, but that there is a real essence, which is not a bare quantity, but can always elude qualitative representation. To take the three kinds of examples that we have already mentioned –

- a) that we talk of a wooden piece of furniture being conceivable under various aspects (a desk or a dwarf's bed) shows that our talk is geared to real invariable entity that spills over all differences of representation or conceptualisation. This real identity is the material origin of the table – the singular hunk of wood or the multiple pieces of wood from which the table has been constructed.
- b) Paul may be both rational under a particular aspect of being a mathematician and not rational under the aspect of being a cyclist, but to float these aspectual differences, the speaker has to be non-conceptually (causally) related to the essential identity of Paul. This essential identity according to Kripke is constituted by the material origin, i.e., the gametes from which Paul is born. However much one may try to de-essentialise an object or a person - by activating its different aspects, one cannot get past these pre-aspectual essences that are the pre-conditions of a thing being put under various aspects or modes of conception.
- c) A number – say nine - may be put under various modes of conception, like being the number of planets, sum of three and six drops of water, each of which may be alienated from nine – by a thought-experiment; but we cannot alienate number nine from an essential reality (say of $8+1$) by any effort of aspectualisation or conceptualisation. To insist on $8+1$ as being a dispensable aspect of 9 is to be ontologically affixed to the essence of $8+1$ itself. To think of the length of the one meter scale is varying under different changes of pressure and temperature is to be referring to the irrevocable identity of one meter itself – an identity beyond all imaginations and thought-experiments.

Besides one can appreciate in a different way that any exercise to discard essences by relativising it to a mode of conception will itself presume essences that are inadmissible even for the essentialists. To insist that A is an essential property of x only in so far as x has the property B is virtually to turn B into an essence of A. For instance to insist that Paul has the property of bipedness only in so far as he has the property of being a cyclist is to essentialise the notion

of a cyclist – for one can very well say that it is only well-formed cyclists, i.e. cyclists under a mode of conception, who are bipeds. Similar contentions can be urged in favour of the property of fourleggedness belonging to an object in relation to its being a table, or ovaries belonging to a human in relation to her womanhood.

In the light of the above discussion our common sense can train itself to get a smooth entry-point into the patently pedantic and technical discourse on Essentialism. The first step to appreciate a distinction between essence and accident is to reckon that when essence is seen through observable properties – these properties may turn contingent, whereby the essence itself has a tendency to become non-qualitative. To take familiar examples given by Kripke, the essence of heat turns non-qualitative, for the felt quality of burning, or the feeling of molecular rapidity turns out to be contingent – in so far as there may be subjects with a different kind of physiological constitution who *feel* heat as cold, or as molecular slowness, though heat itself is molecular rapidity. Kripke has also spoken about mass-illusions whereby certain reptiles in a locality are perceived as having the external appearance of lions or tigers. This for Kripke only shows that reptiles may be falsely perceived under the quality of mammals – a possibility that only highlights the rift between essences and observable qualities. [6]

Secondly essences also take up a tendency to become individual as contrasted with a general essence or class-property, perhaps because being non-qualitative, the structure of general repeatable feature vs non-repeatable individual (i.e. the structure that is present in a general essence) is no longer available if the essence becomes non-qualitative. If essence of one meter or number nine becomes independent of all observable properties (of the meter scale kept in Paris, or the properties of the cluster of planets), if the essence of water as H_2O breaks free from its observational properties (i.e. H_2O images seen under a microscope) then this non-qualitative essence comes to lack the relational structure of a general vs a particular. In other words such an essence cannot be given the status of a general essence.

Another interesting issue comes up along with the question of essence vs accident, or the question of the essence itself as being conceivable in different ways. Put in a different way – this becomes an engagement with *what if it were otherwise* - i.e., it becomes a popular appeal to tampering with the object in our imagination, entertaining different counterfactuals or making thought-experiment, or operating in a subjunctive mood. In philosophical parlance this is the issue of possible worlds, and with the different approaches to essence different theories of possible worlds, and different answers to the question of a retaining the same identity across possible worlds also come up. That is, when essence is claimed to be something that is indispensable – the issue of recurrability of that self-identical essence across its different configurations or combinations also come up. This is the issue of possible worlds that takes the shape of a philosophical problem - viz. whether a thing can retain its identity across possible worlds i.e. in spite of having different properties. Leibnitz will not

admit it to be so – for him if the so-called same thing has different properties in another world the thing itself will be different. This is the view that all properties are instantiated in a unique way, so that there cannot be any general essences. Plantinga on the other hand will say that to think of a thing as having different properties in different possible worlds is to commit oneself to the thing being so enmeshed with its properties that whenever it is conceived as having different properties in different worlds this thing that is recurring is already enmeshed with its original world-specific properties.

3.2. Kripke's Transworld Identity

Further when the transworld essence comes up as non-qualitative the issues of space and time also come up inevitably. To be non-qualitative, does it mean that it is a bare space-time boundary having no qualitative content? Neither Kripke for whom the essence is non-qualitative nor Leibniz for whom essence is always qualitative would space have the ontology of a bare container. For Leibniz space is relational, i.e. by which he means that it is not an abstract structure in which different things can be put, the relational structure changes with its so-called content. This gets further revealed when Leibniz demonstrates that however much we try to retain two things as qualitatively identical, but dispersed in different space and /or times; i.e., however much we try to make them numerically distinct but qualitatively indiscernible – their spatio-temporal differences will amount to two different sets of relational properties, making them qualitatively different. Thus space-time cannot serve as a bare container amounting to the non-qualitative transworld essence.

From this insight another vital conclusion emerges – when we try to retain the same thing across possible worlds we should not end up conceiving the same thing being in a different spatial or temporal position *within the same space-time coordinate*. If we do so then we end up in conceiving two instances of the same concept and not the same thing in two possible worlds. For Leibniz it will not be the *same* thing in two worlds because their being in different spatial positions within the same space-time coordinate defines them with different qualities –or different degrees of appetition – thus two different things altogether. For Kripke they will not be the same thing in two different worlds, rather it is a question whether the same space-time expanse that this actual world is can two exact facsimiles. The situation does not offer a transworld variation of the same thing, but a transworld variation of the same space-time expanse. [6]

This tussle about essence as a transworld identity includes two crucial but negative demands. As already noted the first demands that the world -differences are not differences between qualitatively indiscernible objects situated in different space-time positions. Secondly the world-differences cannot be different frameworks of space-time – say between linear and non-linear time or that between Euclidean and non-Euclidean space – for then we cannot legitimately speak of the same individual recurring along these different space-time frameworks.

Positively speaking, this individual identity ultimately

becomes not non-qualitative, but primitive, that which becomes the ground of its spatio-temporal identity in the same world, and also perhaps the ground of its identity across different possible worlds. It is also claimed to explain why an individual comes to be subsumed under certain broad categories – say a human person, and not a football game or a dream. However if this identity is non-qualitative then one cannot demonstrate the connexion between this identity and the possession of certain properties (and not others) conceptually in the shape of analytic propositions.

4. Conclusion

Philosophers have tried to treat the issue of essence from the point of view of language and meaning as well. For instance early Wittgenstein had sought to show how language with a determinate sense must be geared to absolute simples in reality – the nature of which is fixed through a determinate range of combination in logical space. We have also noted how neo-essentialists like Kripke and Putnam worked their way to real essences from the nature of counter-factual statements and the special inflexible nature of certain linguistic expressions. Quine's refutation of essences also took off from the issue of meaning and synonymy, and the nature of the modal adverb 'necessarily'. And we shall see that later Wittgenstein's radical attack on essences was primarily motivated to show that language is not based on any foundation and meaning is indeterminate and incomplete. So the principal idea of Kripke was that if something is necessarily such and such in this actual world, then we must designate the same object in all conceivable world in which it exists. Kripke extended the idea of essence beyond individuals to kinds of things such as gold and water. For Kripke it is not just a law or regularity that water is H₂O but rather the essence of the natural kind. These ideas were already there in Aristotelian Essentialism or *de re* identity.

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