

PHIL 4603: Metaphysics
Prof. Funkhouser
Lewis, “Counterparts or Double Lives?”

1.
 - The ‘Problem of Trans-World Identity’ is not a problem about *identity*.

Identity is utterly simple and unproblematic. Everything is identical to itself; nothing is ever identical to anything else except itself. There is never any problem about what makes something identical to itself; nothing can ever fail to be. (154)

- Some good questions:
Do two worlds ever have a common part?
Does anything ever overlap two worlds?
Does anything ever exist “according to” two worlds?

But the really good question is:
“What is representation *de re*? How does a world, genuine or ersatz, represent, concerning Humphrey, that he exists?” (155)

genuine modal realism: Other possible worlds exist as concrete things, with the same ontological standing as the actual world.

ersatzism: Other possible worlds exist, but not as concrete things. Instead, they are abstract entities of some kind.

- The most straightforward answer (to this “really good question”) is that a world represents Humphrey’s existence by having him exist in that world. Then, if multiple worlds represent Humphrey’s existence, Humphrey exists in multiple worlds. But Lewis rejects this answer, instead opting for *counterparts* to do this representing.

Another world can do better still: it can have as part a Humphrey of its own, a flesh-and-blood counterpart of our Humphrey, a man very like Humphrey in his origins, in his intrinsic character, or in his historical role. By having such a part, a world represents *de re*, concerning Humphrey — that is, the Humphrey of our world,

whom we as his worldmates may call simply Humphrey — that he exists and does thus-and-so. (155)

- A linguistic ersatz world might represent *de re* by including a sentence that states ‘Humphrey exists’.
- Kripke’s big objection to counterpart theory: the Humphrey objection.

But Lewis questions:

... Kripke’s point seems to be that we are supposed to respect Humphrey’s intuition that it is *he himself* who would have been victorious in another world, and we are supposed to do this by declining to think of that other world as the sort of thing that he himself could even be part of! What is going on? (156)

The idea: For Lewis, a different concrete particular (Humphrey’s counterpart) grounds modal truths about our Humphrey. For Kripke, some abstract entity grounds modal truths about our Humphrey. In either case, it’s some other thing, not Humphrey himself, that is grounding the modal truths.

Make sure you understand Lewis’ complaint that the Humphrey objection would have force were it coming from a modal realist who admitted overlap.

- The question of haecceitism:

Or does what a world represents concerning matters of qualitative character determine what that world represents *de re* (157)

2.

- Lewis tells us what *real* trans-world identity would be — Humphrey leads “a double life, in two worlds at once.” (157) But who believes this??

- Lewis thinks that such trans-world identity leads to contradictions. One and the same thing cannot *have* both (only) 5 fingers and 6 fingers.

But, does clarifying that these different numbers of fingers are had at different worlds help? Lewis considers, and rejects, three ways this clarification could be developed (pp. 158–159). It is important that we’re dealing with intrinsic properties here. This is called *the problem of accidental intrinsics*.

Lewis concludes:

If indeed Humphrey — he himself, the whole of him — is to lead a double life as part of two different worlds, there is no intelligible way for his intrinsic properties to differ from one world to the other. (159)

◦ Lewis compares this problem to the problem of temporary intrinsics. He also introduces the following special vocabulary: *persists*, *perdures* (and the related concept of a *temporal part*), and *endures*.

Endurance through time is analogous to the alleged trans-world identity of common parts of overlapping worlds; perdurance through time is analogous to the ‘trans-world identity’, if we may call it that, of a trans-world individual composed of distinct parts in non-overlapping worlds. Perdurance, which I favour for the temporal case, is closer to the counterpart theory which I favour for the modal case; the difference is that counterpart theory concentrates on the parts and ignores the trans-world individual composed of them. (160)

Note the 3 proposed solutions to the problem of temporary intrinsics, pp. 160–161.

◦ Universals might be an acceptable exception to the no-overlap claim.

◦ Note Lewis’ distinction between *branching* and *diverging* worlds. (162)

3.

• Temporal parts as analogous to spatial parts — The Hume Highway.

◦ Lewis holds that we are the sum of our temporal parts. So, we exist at different times. But, we, and other ordinary objects, are not the sum of trans-world modal parts. We exist in one world only.

• Lewis’ argument for unrestricted mereological composition is given on p. 165:

P1. “It is a vague matter whether a given class satisfies our intuitive *desiderata* for composition . . . To restrict composition in accordance with our intuitions would require a vague restriction.”

P2. But, it cannot be a vague matter whether or not composition occurs. (“There is such a thing as the sum, or there isn’t.”)

C. “So no restriction on composition can serve the intuitions that motivate it. So restriction would be gratuitous. Composition is unrestricted, and so there are trans-world individuals.”

• On pp. 166–167 Lewis translates his counterpart theory into vocabulary covering trans-world individuals.

• Lewis thinks that there are strong analogies between space, time, and modality. But if he thinks that objects are space-time worms that are not

wholly present at any one time, why doesn't he take a similar attitude with regard to modality? Why aren't we trans-world worms that are not wholly present in any one world? Lewis gives 3 responses against this suggested conclusion for the modal realist (inspired by Quine):

1. Temporal parts are causally related, but individuals across worlds are not causally related.
2. What is important for identity through time is that *nearby* temporal parts be similar, but no such similarity is needed for distant stages of the same space-time worm. However, there is not an analogue in modality to this "nearness" of temporal parts.
3. Cases of fission, fusion and the like are rare for identity through time, but would be ubiquitous if people and other ordinary objects were trans-world worms.

◦ Lewis also gives a response that is specific to this suggestion's application to people — a response based on *concern* for other stages. Finally, Lewis claims that the trans-world worm view goes against common opinion, and this is a reason against it. (But isn't that an odd point for *him* to emphasize?)