Chapter V. The Necessity of Natures

An “essence” of an individual (language apparently introduced by Kaplan in “Transworld Heir Lines”). By “essence”, Plantinga means what both earlier and later philosophers have meant by “haecceity” or “thisness”. (70)

Traditionally, the essence of an individual is it’s quiddity, the best answer to the question, “What (kind of thing) is it?”

(1) $E$ is an essence of Socrates iff $E$ is essential to Socrates and everything distinct from him has the complement of $E$ essentially.

Why is this not strong enough? Can you give an example of something that satisfies (1) but is not really an essence? (Being Socrates or being something
that doesn’t exist in $\alpha$) (Meets (1), yet would be satisfied by anything that existed in a world, but doesn’t exist in $\alpha$.)

(2) $E$ is an essence of Socrates iff $E$ is essential to Socrates and there is no possible world in which there exists an object distinct from Socrates that has $E$.

Is this perhaps too strong? Suppose fission is possible. Then there could exist things that share Socrates’ essence – at least one of which must be distinct from Socrates (they can’t both be identical to him, on pain of contradiction), although there may be no determinate answer as to which of the two is distinct.

We can say $\Diamond \exists x \exists y (x \neq y \& \Diamond x = s \& \Diamond y = s)$.

Suppose that fusion were possible, $\Diamond (\text{Socrates} = \text{Plato})$. In this case, Plato, an entity distinct from Socrates, has Socrates’ essence in this possible world. However, although Plato is distinct from Plato, he isn’t necessarily distinct from him (and, in particular, he isn’t distinct from Socrates in that world).

Suppose too that Salmon is right about Woody the table. We can say: $\Diamond \exists x (x = w \& \Diamond x \neq w)$. This seems compatible with Plantinga’s definition: Woody has $E$, an essence that determines that it exists in worlds 0 to $n$, but not in world $n + 1$, and nothing distinct from Woody has this essence in any world, although Woody lacks that essence in worlds other than world 0.

To deal with the fission fusion cases, we could define essence as:

$$(2^*) E$$ is an essence of Socrates iff $E$ is essential to Socrates and
there is no possible world in which there exists an object necessarily
distinct from Socrates that has \( E \).

Too weak? If Socrates can be fused with Plato, then a property shared by Plato
and Socrates might count as an essence of Socrates.

\[
(2\#) \text{ } \text{ } E \text{ is an essence of Socrates iff } E \text{ is essential to Socrates and there}
\text{ is no possible world in which there exists an object determinately}
distinct from Socrates in that world that has } E \text{ determinately (in}
\text{ that world).}
\]

\( (2\#) \) is problematic - too weak, since it fails to take into account correlated
indeterminacies. In cases of possible fission, we don’t want to associate distinct
essences with Socrates, one corresponding to being the northmost (and the other
the southmost) counterpart of Socrates in the fission world. Even better:

\[
(2\%) \text{ } E \text{ is an essence of Socrates iff } E \text{ is essential to Socrates and}
\text{ there is no possibility } \langle W, f \rangle \text{ (where } f \text{ is a function that assigns, in}
\text{ cases of fission, one of the two fission products as the referent of}
\text{ “Socrates”) in which there is an object distinct from Socrates that}
\text{ has } E \text{ (according to that possibility). \text{ [Whether something has an}
\text{ essence in a world – depends on which possibility related to that}
\text{ world we are considering.]}
\]

If fission and fusion impossible, then \((2), (2^*), (2\#) \text{ and } (2\%) \) are equivalent.
Plantinga’s attempted proof of (4)

(4) Necessarily, for any objects $x$ and $y$, if there is a possible world in which $x$ and $y$ are distinct, then there is no world in which $x$ is identical to $y$.

This rules out fusion (explicitly) and fission (when necessitated). It also rules out Woody the table, since Woody and Piney are distinct in the actual world, but identical in world 1.

1. For reductio, assume $x \neq y$ in $W$, $x = y$ in $W^*$.

2. In $W^*$, $x$ has the property of being identical to $x$.

3. In fact, in $W^*$, $x$ has the property of being necessarily identical to $x$.

4. By Leibniz’s law (applied to the identity that holds in $W^*$), $y$ has the property of being necessarily identical to $x$.

5. So, in $W$, $y$ has the property of being identical to $x$. So, $y = x$, contradiction.

What is the crucial step? What step would Salmon reject? A defender of fission/fusion?

Does $x$ have the property of being necessarily identical to $x$ in world $W^*$?

Does Woody have the property of being necessarily identical to Woody in the actual world? (Yes)
What about step 5? Can we assume that $W$ is a possible world, relative to $W^*$? (No - since in $W^*$, $x$ and $y$ are the very same thing – everything has self-identity essentially, so it makes no sense to suppose that $x$ and $y$ might have been distinct. Here is a place for relative possibility.)

Page 80: “Misleading to say that a proper name 'denotes the same object in every world.' ”

Plantinga’s first argument is confused – he points out that Socrates need not have been named ‘Socrates’, not that ‘Socrates’ need not have named Socrates.

Why is this misleading? Is Plantinga disagreeing substantively with Kripke, or only accusing him of inviting certain misunderstandings?

Better to say that proper names express individual essences (haecceities, thisnesses). A property $P$ that is instantiated by the same object in every world.

Why is this better?

Suppose we have an uninstantiated essence $E$. Could we introduce a proper name into English (in the actual world) that expresses $E$? Why or why not?

Some descriptions do express essences – e.g., rigidified descriptions. p. 81.

Page 82: can we discover necessary truths a priori?

Yes – $\alpha$-indexed properties.

In $\alpha$, Pico was born in 1463.

Could it have been discovered that Hesperus $\neq$ Phosphorus? [No]

There is at least a verbal disagreement here with Kripke - who says that it
“could have turned out that Hesperus ≠ Phosphorus”. What’s going on here? Is this a real disagreement? If not, how can the two statements be reconciled?

Page 84: $H = P$ and $H = H$ express the very same proposition.

How does Plantinga know this? Since $H$ has many, distinct essences, couldn’t two proper names express different essences?

Page 85: What exactly were the Babylonians ignorant of?

That the sentences “$H = H$” and “$H = P$” express the same proposition.

What if we suppose that the names “$H$” and “$P$” necessarily signify Venus. Would it follow that “‘$H$’ and ‘$H$’ name the same planet” and “‘$H$’ and ‘$P$’ name the same planet” also express the same proposition? Why or why not?

[Yes – they are still distinct names, even if they necessarily denote the same planet.]

What if ‘London’ and ‘Londres’ are in fact the same name of London, simply spelled and pronounced differently? Will this create an insuperable problem for Plantinga?

2 Chapter VI. Transworld Identity

Theory of Worldbound Individuals (TWI): each individual is confined to only one world.

Variety of views:

• Leibniz
• Idealists

• Modern theories: Kaplan, Chisholm, David Lewis

Fallacious argument:

Socrates in $\alpha$ and Socrates in WA are distinct because discernible (one is snub-nosed and the other isn’t).

Who is this Socrates in $\alpha$? in W?

Presumably, Socrates in $W$ denotes the thing that would have been Socrates had $W$ been actual. This is none other than Socrates himself.

What properties does Socrates in $\alpha$ and Socrates in $W$ have? Socrates in $\alpha$ has the property of being snub-nosed in $\alpha$ (and, if $\alpha$ is actual, of being snub-nosed simpliciter). Socrates in $W$ has the property of being snub-nosed in $W$. There is no contradiction (p. 92).

Socrates in $W$ would have been snub-nosed if $W$ had been actual.

2.1 The Problem of Transworld Identity

There is no criterion. Misleading picture – Jules-Verne-o-scope. (p. 94)

Temporal analogy: Brentano at 20, at 70.

Page 98: agrees that there must be some property that Socrates and only Socrates has in every world.

The Thesis of Worldbound Individuals is not neutral about essences: every property is essential to each thing.
[Distinguish between two kinds of worldbound individual theories: those that embrace the all-actual-properties-are-essential conclusion, and those that do not. Do the latter confuse individuals with world-slices of individuals? Salmon.]

Ramsification p. 99.