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Persons and Other Things

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In the large recent literature on the nature of human persons, persons are usually studied in isolation from the world in which they live. What persons are most fundamentally, philosophers say, are human animals, or brains, or perhaps souls—without any consideration of the social and physical environments without which persons would not exist. I confess that I, too, have been guilty at times of focusing narrowly on persons without regard to the world in which they live.

In this article, I want to compensate for overly narrow focus in the past. Instead of beginning with the nature of persons cut off from any environment, I shall begin with metaphysical consideration of the world of which persons are a part.[1] I shall then briefly describe my view of persons, according to which persons are material objects like other concrete things in the world, but are unique in their first-person perspectives. Finally, I shall consider some of the special relations that persons, and only persons, have to other things in the world.

The World of Encounter

First, what can we say about the world that contains persons? Persons inhabit what I'll call 'the world of encounter.' Let me specify what I mean by 'the world of encounter.' Suppose that we took a survey of everyone in the world and listed widely used common nouns for ordinary things (like chair, flower, person, cow, university, credit card, greenhouse, laboratory, and so on). Suppose that we also listed common activities (like cooking meals, going to work, meeting friends, obeying authorities, sending emails, paying taxes, and so on). Also we should list social and political items (like bureaucrat, police

officer, taxi driver) and institutional activities (like conferring honorary degrees, issuing search warrants, being inaugurated), and so on. Let us instruct the respondents in our survey to indicate, with respect to each kind of item that they recognize, whether or not anyone has encountered items of that kind. For any kind of item that the respondent has never heard of, let him so indicate. (Some respondents may not have heard of cell phones; some may not have heard of emails.)

The items said to exist or occur by most people in the survey provide a basis for what is included in the world of encounter.[2] We do not have to actually carry out the survey; nor must we be certain about each of the items and activities that populate it.[3] The point is that what I am calling 'the world of encounter' is common currency. The world in which we engage our friends, family and colleagues, the world that all human persons interact with—particle physicists as well as people with no formal schooling—is what I am calling 'the world of encounter'. The items that we encounter everyday are things whose existence we cannot, in good faith, deny.

One noticeable feature of the world of encounter is that it is populated by things—such as pianos, pacemakers, and paychecks—whose existence depends on there being persons with propositional attitudes. Let me introduce a term to apply to any phenomenon that either is a propositional-attitude property (like believing, desiring or intending) or is one whose existence or occurrence presupposes that there are beings with beliefs, desires and/or intentions. Call any such phenomenon an 'intention-dependent' phenomenon—or ID phenomenon for short.[4] ID objects that we are familiar with include emails, elevators, kitchen utensils, Ferris wheels, thermometers, and so on. Many ID objects depend on conventions or other forms of collective intentionality.[5] There are ID properties that stand in contrast to nonID properties—for example, being a promise as opposed to being an audible emission, being a signature as opposed to being a mark on paper, being a dance step as opposed to being a bodily motion.

Different communities may be familiar with different kinds of ID objects; but all communities recognize many kinds of ID objects—as well as other ID phenomena like

conventions, obligations, and so on. All artifacts and artworks, and most human activities (getting a job, going out to dinner, etc.), are ID phenomena: They could not exist or occur in a world in the absence of beings with beliefs, desires, and intentions. The importance of ID phenomena has been systematically overlooked by philosophers.

However, not all things in the world of encounter depend on intentionality. For example, satellites and dinosaurs could—and did—exist in a world without beliefs, desires and intentions. In the world of encounter, whether an object is an ID object or not is often insignificant: The ball is an ID object whether it is constituted by a piece of natural rubber or synthetic rubber, and, indeed, the difference between a ball constituted by a piece of natural rubber and a ball constituted by a piece of synthetic rubber is usually not a salient difference. My conception of the world of encounter allows for the distinction between ID objects and objects that are not intention-dependent, but does not take that distinction to be fundamental.

The world of encounter is, I am convinced, as real as the world of electrons and quarks is: we cannot make good sense of a supposition that the world of encounter is a vast mirage. (All of our evidence for electrons and quarks crucially depends on precision instruments, medium-sized objects in the world of encounter. So, we could not call into question the reality of the world of encounter without calling into question all the evidence that there are electrons and quarks.)[6] A complete and correct inventory of what there is, I believe, must include ordinary medium-sized objects—including persons, artifacts, artworks, economic items like bonds, legal documents like passports.

In short: Reality includes not only nonintentional items from molecules to mountains, but also all the ID objects that I described—your credit cards, the wallet that you carry them in, the knife, fork and spoon that you eat with, and other things that could not exist in the absence of beings with beliefs, desires and intentions. Now let me sketch out a metaphysics for the world of encounter.

Constitution as a Unity-Relation

At the heart of my view is a single comprehensive metaphysical relation that unites items at different levels of reality into the objects that we experience in everyday life: the trees, the automobiles, the credit cards. I use the word 'constitution' to refer to this relation. For example, a ball may be constituted by a piece of synthetic rubber. A constituted object exists at a higher level of reality than its constituter.

Constitution, unlike identity, is a temporally limited relation: x may constitute y at one time but not at another. For example, a human body may constitute a person at one time, but not at a later time (after the person has died, say). Reality is hierarchical: Subatomic particles are on an ontologically lower level than the macroscopic objects that they make up. Ordinary material objects are constituted-at-t by other "lower-level" things. My socks, which can survive repair of the cloth by adding new threads, are constituted by different pieces of cloth at different times. The constituting pieces of cloth in turn are constituted by molecules, and so on down to subatomic particles.

My thesis is this: All macrophysical concrete objects found in the world of encounter are constituted objects.[7] Sometimes an ordinary object is constituted by another ordinary object—as when a landscape painting is constituted by a piece of canvass with paint on it—but ultimately all ordinary material objects are constituted by aggregates of subatomic particles. As I construe it, constitution is not a part/whole relation: If x constitutes y at t, x is not part of y at t.[8] The identity of a constituted object is independent of the identity of its parts, which may change. Nor are the persistence conditions of a constituted object given by the persistence conditions of its parts. Constituted objects have different essential properties (and different persistence conditions and different causal powers) from their lower-level constituters. E.g., my socks and the pieces of cloth that constitute them have different persistence conditions: The piece of cloth could survive being cut into a flat piece; my socks could not.

On the constitution view, reality comes in fundamentally different kinds. Each thing is of some primary kind essentially. There is no "mere thing" behind or underlying the instance of a primary kind. Objects related by constitution are of different primary

kinds. Objects of different primary kinds may have different persistence conditions. (Famously, the lump of clay has different persistence conditions from the statue.) For primary-kinds F and G—when an F (say, a lump of clay) is in certain circumstances—G-favorable circumstances (say, statue-favorable circumstances)—a new thing of a different kind, a G (say, a statue), comes into existence.[9] The distinction between ID objects and nonID objects may lie in the sort of circumstances a potential constituter must be in to constitute an object of a certain kind. For instance, statue-favorable circumstances are intentional: they include, e.g., artists with certain intentions. By contrast, satellite-favorable circumstances are not intentional: they include, e.g., a certain mass of material revolving around another celestial body. But both statues and satellites are constituted objects, and both have relational properties essentially.

Every object has its primary kind essentially, but not every kind is a primary kind. E.g., *teacher* is not a primary kind; nor is *puppy*. Teachers may cease to be teachers without ceasing to exist (e.g., they may retire); so may puppies cease to be puppies without ceasing to exist (e.g., they may grow up). A person may acquire the property of being a teacher; but a person does not constitute a teacher since *teacher* is not a primary kind. The relation between the person and the teacher cannot be constitution since constitution is a relation between things of different primary kinds, and the person and the teacher have the same primary kind: *person*.

Alas, I do not have a theory of primary kinds, nor even an exhaustive list. Indeed, there could not be a complete list of primary kinds until the end of the world. New inventions create new primary kinds. When Gutenberg invented the printing press, he created a new primary kind—a kind that changed the course of history. Even without a theory of primary kinds, however, I do have a test for a primary kind: x is of primary kind K only if: x is of kind K every moment of its existence and could not fail to be of kind K and continue to exist. If K is x's primary kind, then for x to lose the property of being a K is for x to go out of existence altogether. Printing presses go out of existence when barbarians smash them to bits; they do not just lose the property of being printing presses, and become something else: they go out of existence altogether.[10]

Constitution brings into being new objects of higher-level primary kinds than what was there before. To take another example, when a certain combination of chemicals is in a certain environment, a thing of a new kind comes into existence: an organism. That particular combination of chemicals constitutes (not causes) at t that particular organism. A world with the same kinds of chemicals but a different environment may lack organisms, and a world without organisms is ontologically different from a world with organisms. So, constitution makes an ontological difference (See Baker (2000) and Baker (2002)).

The combination of chemicals that in a certain environment constitutes an organism is itself constituted by a (mere) aggregate of chemicals.[11] When an aggregate of chemicals comes together in a certain way (by bonding), chemicals of new kinds come into existence. Indeed, if we descend down any chain of constitution relations, sooner or later we will come to aggregates as constituters.

For example, a river at any moment is constituted by an aggregate of water molecules. But the river is not identical to any aggregate of water molecules that constitutes it at a moment. Since that very river is constituted by different aggregates of molecules at different times, the river is not identical to any of the aggregates of water molecules that make it up. Moreover, if the water molecules in the aggregate that constitutes the river at some given time had been scattered all over the universe, the aggregate would still exist but (in the absence of another suitably located aggregate) the river would not still exist. So, although the aggregate of water molecules constitutes the river at t, constitution is not identity.[12] Another way to see that constitution is not identity is to notice that even if an aggregate of molecules, A_1, actually constitutes a river, R at t_1, R might have been constituted by a different aggregate of molecules, A_2, at t_1. (For example, a dog might have removed some of the molecules in the aggregate at t_1 by drinking from the river just before t_1.) So, constitution is a unity relation that is in some ways similar to identity, but is not actually identity.

Although constitution is not identity, constitution is a unity-making relation: The one-Euro coin is constituted by a piece of metal, which in turn is constituted by an

aggregate of molecules; nevertheless, it is a single coin. Things that stand in the relation of constitution have properties nonderivatively or derivatively. The coin has the property of being worth one Euro nonderivatively—i.e., what makes it worth one Euro has nothing to do with what constitutes it or what it's made of. By contrast, the constituting piece of metal has the property of being worth one Euro derivatively—in virtue of constituting something that has the property of being worth one Euro independently of what constitutes it . The one-Euro coin tapped on a glass has the property of silencing the room derivatively—in virtue of being constituted by a piece of metal. So, the unity produced by constitution allows two-way borrowing of properties—from constituted to constituter, and from constituter to constituted—and the borrowed property is had derivatively. There is a single instance of a property that is shared by both constituter and constituted. It is because constitution is a relation of unity (though not identity) that many properties are shared by both constituter and constituted.[13]

Whether we are talking about rivers, human persons, statues or other sorts of constituted things, the basic idea is this: When certain things of certain kinds (e.g., aggregates of water molecules, human organisms) are in certain circumstances (different ones for different kinds of things), then new entities of different kinds come into existence. The circumstances in which an aggregate of water molecules comes to constitute a river have to do with the relation of the water molecules to each other; they form a flowing stream. The circumstances in which a piece of paper comes to constitute a U.S. dollar bill have to do with the paper's being printed in a certain way under a certain authority. In each case, new things of new kinds—rivers, dollar bills—come into being. Rivers and dollar bills have quite different kinds of causal powers from aggregates of molecules and pieces of paper. And they have different persistence conditions from their constituters. For example, a single aggregate of molecules may persist over a period of time during which it constitutes a river at one time and is scattered all around, constituting nothing at all, at another time. Since constitution is the vehicle, so to speak, by which new kinds of things come into existence in the natural world, it is obvious that constitution is not identity. Indeed, this conception is relentlessly anti-reductive.

To summarize this discussion of the idea of constitution: Constitution is a very general relation throughout the natural order. Although it is a relation of real unity, constitution falls short of identity. (Identity is necessary; constitution is contingent.) Constitution is a relation that accounts for the appearance of genuinely new kinds of things with new kinds of causal powers. If, say, pieces of marble constitute statues, then an inventory of the contents of the world that includes pieces of marble but leaves out statues is incomplete.[14] Statues are not reducible to pieces of marble; nor are persons reducible to human bodies. No constituted thing is reducible to what constitutes it. This is a perfectly general claim of pluralism that applies to all macrophysical objects. Constitution is not so-called "property dualism."

The Constitution View of Human Persons

All concrete objects in the world of encounter, I claimed, are constituted objects, and human persons are no exception. Human persons are constituted by bodies (i.e., human animals) with which they are not identical. Here is an analogy; later will come an explanation: According to the Constitution View of human persons, the relation between a human person and her body (the relation that I am calling 'constitution') is exactly the same kind of relation as the relation between a statue and the piece of marble that makes it up. When a piece of marble is suitably related to an artworld, a new thing—a statue—comes into existence. When a human body develops a first-person perspective, a new thing—a person—comes into existence. The human body does not thereby go out of existence—any more than the piece of marble goes out of existence when it comes to constitute a statue. Moreover, a human person is as material as Michelangelo's *David* is. When a human body comes to constitute a person, the human body has the property of being a person derivatively (in virtue of constituting something that is a person nonderivatively); and the person has the property of being a human body derivatively (in virtue of being constituted by something that is a human body nonderivatively).

As I've emphasized, a person is not identical to her body. But to say that a person is not identical to her body does not mean that the person is identical to the body-plus-some-

other-thing (like a soul).[15] Michelangelo's *David* is not identical to a piece-of-marble-plus-some-other-thing. If x constitutes y and x is wholly material, then y is wholly material. (Baker (2000), Ch. 2). The human body (which I take to be identical to a human organism) is wholly material and the human body constitutes the human person. Therefore, the human person is wholly material. A human person is as material as Michelangelo's *David* is.

With respect to being constituted, human persons are just like every other kind of thing in the world of encounter. If human persons are constituted by human organisms, however, then human persons are of a different primary kind from human organisms. What could make that difference? Human organisms have different persistence conditions from human persons. Human organisms have third-personal persistence conditions: whether an animal continues to exist depends on continued biological functioning. Persons have first-personal persistence conditions: whether a person continues to exist depends on its having a first-person perspective. Before explaining what a first-person perspective is, let me illustrate it with a true story:

When one of my nieces was two years old, she had a birthday party to which her many cousins were invited. One of her cousins (his name was Donald) went into her bedroom and began systematically taking toys out of my niece's toybox. When my niece saw what was happening, she was outraged. She cried out, "Dammit, Donald, mine!" Her parents were appalled: Where, they wondered with embarrassment, had she learned the profanity 'dammit'? What interested me, however, was not her saying 'dammit,' but her competent use of the word 'mine'. She had a first-personal concept of herself: She knew that she—she herself—was the rightful owner of the toys, and that her permission was required for anyone else to play with her toys. This little story illustrates, I think, what is unique about human persons. As far as we know, of all the beings in the world, we alone have a first-personal concept of ourselves.[16] We alone understand ourselves from "within," so to speak; we can think of ourselves without the need to identify ourselves by means of any description, name, or other third-person referring device.

So, what is a first-person perspective? A first-person perspective is a very peculiar ability that all and only persons have. It is the ability to conceive of oneself as oneself, from the inside, as it were. Linguistic evidence of a robust first-person perspective comes from use of first-person pronouns embedded in sentences with linguistic or psychological verbs—e.g., "I wonder how I will die," or "I promise that I will stay with you."[17] If I wonder how I will die, or I promise that I'll stay with you, then I am thinking of myself as myself; I am not thinking of myself in any third-person way (e.g., not as Lynne Baker, nor as the person who is thinking a certain thought, nor as the only person in the room who is standing) at all. Anything that can wonder how it will die ipso facto has a first-person perspective and thus is a person.

What one thinks from a first-person perspective cannot be adequately translated into third-person terms.[18] To wonder how I will die is not the same as wondering how Lynne Baker will die, even though I am Lynne Baker. This is so, because I could wonder how I will die even if I had amnesia and didn't know who I was. A being with a first-person perspective not only can have thoughts about herself, but she can also conceive of herself as the subject of such thoughts. I not only wonder how I'll die, but I realize that I am having that thought. A first-person perspective cannot be duplicated. There cannot be two persons both with your first-person perspective. A molecular duplicate of me would have a qualitatively indistinguishable first-person perspective, but <u>not</u> my first-person perspective. She would not <u>be</u> me. See Baker (2000).

A being may be conscious without having a first-person perspective. Nonhuman primates and other higher animals are conscious, and they have psychological states like believing, fearing and desiring. They have points of view (e.g., "danger in that direction"), but they cannot conceive of themselves as the subjects of such thoughts. They can not *conceive of* themselves from the first-person. (We have every reason to think that they do not wonder how they will die.) So, having psychological states like beliefs and desires, and having a point of view, are necessary but not sufficient conditions for being a person. A sufficient condition for being a person—whether human, divine, ape, or silicon-based—is having a first-person perspective.[19] So, what makes something a person is not the "stuff"

that it is made of. It does not matter whether something is made of DNA or silicon or, in the case of God, no material "stuff" at all. If a being has a first-person perspective, it is a person.

From the standpoint of evolution, first-person perspectives may have been "selected for" by natural selection. Alternatively, first-person perspectives (like the architectural example of spandrels) may have been a by-product of some other change. My interest in the first-person perspective is not in its origin, but in its status. First-person perspectives do not appear to be biologically significant; but whether they are biologically significant or not, first-person perspectives are ontologically significant. Only beings with inner lives are persons, and a world populated with beings with inner lives is ontologically richer than a world populated with no beings with inner lives.

What I have been describing is a *robust* first-person perspective, a sophisticated in-hand capacity that can be exercised at will—the capacity to think of oneself in the peculiar first-personal way. Robust first-person perspectives are connected with use of a natural language, which is inherently social. But persons come into being before they have mastered the first-person pronoun. An organism comes to constitute a person by developing a *rudimentary* first-person perspective, which may be understood as follows:

> (Rudimentary FPP) A being has a rudimentary first-person perspective iff (i) it is conscious, a sentient being, and (ii) it has a capacity to imitate; (iii) engages in behavior that is explainable only by attribution of beliefs, desires and intentions.[20]

A human organism is in person-favorable circumstances when it comes to have a rudimentary first-person perspective. There is a good deal of evidence from developmental psychology that at or near birth human organisms are sentient, have a capacity to imitate, and engage in behavior explainable only by attribution of beliefs, desires and intentions.[21]

There seems to be general agreement among psychologists that developmentally there is a symmetry of self and other, that humans (as well as other higher nonhuman

mammals) are social creatures. Ulric Neisser puts the "interpersonal self" in which the "individual engaged in social interaction with another person" at 8 weeks (Neisser (1995)). Philippe Rochat flatly asserts that the developmental origins of self-awareness are primarily social (Rochat, (1995)). The idea of a first-person perspective is not Cartesian or Leibnizian: we are not monads that unfold according to an internal plan unaffected by our surroundings.

(HP) x constitutes a human person at t if and only if x is a human organism at t and x has a rudimentary or robust first-person perspective at t,

where we take 'x constitutes a human person at t' as shorthand for 'x constitutes a person at t & x is a (nonderivative) human organism.'[22] (HP) gives only a necessary and sufficient condition for there being a <u>human</u> person.[23] There may be other kinds of persons: silicon-persons (consitituted by aggregates of silicon items) and God (not constituted by anything). (HP) is silent about other kinds of persons.

In sum: There are two important aspects of the Constitution View of human persons: On the one hand, a human person has unique first-personal persistence conditions. I continue to exist as long as my first-person perspective is exemplified; if something has my first-person perspective, then that being is a person and that person is me. The conditions for the persistence of persons are absolutely unique: they are first-personal conditions that elude third-personal formulation. On the other hand, a human person is essentially embodied: I am a wholly material being, constituted by, but not identical to, my body.

So, the Constitution View of human persons satisfies two desiderata that may initially appear to conflict. First, it shows how human persons are wholly part of the natural world—as much a part of the natural world as stars, trees, nonhuman animals. And yet, second, it shows how persons are ontologically unique: They alone have first-personal persistence conditions. Let us turn now to the relations that persons have to other things in the world.

Relations of Persons to Nonpersons

Some relations that persons bear to each other and to nonpersons are such that nonpersons also bear them to each other. Here are some examples of relations that are not unique to persons: (1) Constitution relations: Nonpersons, as well as persons, are constituted by other things: For example, a painting is constituted by a piece of canvass. (2) Spatiotemporal relations: A person may be three feet from the wall, and a desk also may be three feet from the wall. (3) Causal relations: A person may push, or be pushed by, an automatic door; so may a dog or a run-away golf cart. Constitution relations, spatiotemporal relations, and causal relations are ubiquitous: everything in the world—persons and nonpersons—has these relations to other things. But there are also kinds of relations that *only* persons have to other things in the world. These are relations that are made possible by first-person perspectives, and it is on these that I want to focus.[24] I want to discuss three of these kinds of relations—which I shall call 'moral relations', 'interpretive relations', and 'productive relations', respectively.

A. Moral Relations. One kind of relation that persons have to each other and to nonpersons comprises moral relations. Having first-person perspectives allows persons to be, among other things, moral agents—to acknowledge themselves as causing things to happen and to take responsibility for what they do.[25] Only persons have moral responsibilities. And they have moral responsibilities toward nonpersons as well as toward persons. For instance, persons have moral duties with respect to animals—e.g., the duty not to cause gratuitous suffering. (Cats do not have moral duties toward the mice that they play with before killing.) And persons have moral duties with respect to the biological environment—e.g., the duty not to make the Earth uninhabitable. Volcanoes do not have moral duties toward the land that their lava covers. But we may have certain moral duties both to mice and to land. Persons are uniquely related to each other and to certain nonpersons by having moral duties toward them.

B. Interpretive Relations. Persons are interpreters of reality. Let me say what I mean by 'interpretation.' Interpretation is a linguistic affair. Nonverbal interpretations—

such as a cellist's interpretation of a Bach cello suite or a student's interpretation of a professor's raised eyebrow—are, I think, parasitic on natural language. In the first instance, an interpretation is of something that has an already-accepted description in a context. The context is crucial. A single description may be an interpretation in one context and not in another. Think of two contexts in which aspects of Picasso's painting *Guernica* is interpreted. In the first context, an art teacher points out features of the painting to young schoolchildren, showing them how to interpret a region of line and color as a bull. In the second context, a modern history teacher points out to high-school students that the bull represents the forces of brutality. In the first context, the description 'the bull' is an interpretation (of a region of line and color); in the second context, the description 'the bull' is not an interpretation at all, but rather is what gets interpreted (as representing brutality).

Relative to a context, an interpretation is a redescription of something with the aim of showing it in a certain light. There is no redescription without a prior description. An interpretation, then, has three features: a context, a prior description, and a redescription. The context, which contains the relevant parties and their beliefs and interests, is the source of the prior description. An interpreter must intend the redescription to denote the same thing as the prior description. What an interpretation is an interpretation <u>of</u> is what is denoted by a description (the prior description) in a context.[26] For a redescription to be an interpretation, it must cast new light on what was denoted by the prior description (as in the case of a Freudian interpretation of someone's dream). So, interpretation does not bring in a new object, but a new way of looking at a given object.

Since replacement of a prior description by another description is an intentional activity, there is no interpretation in the absence of intentionality. Some philosophers, however, take intentionality itself to be a matter of interpretation (Dennett (1987)). That is, they hold that what is described literally, without interpretation, presupposes no intentionality, and that intentionality arises only by interpretation—by replacing a prior literal, nonintentional description with an intentional description. This view is incorrect for two reasons: In the first place, as I just mentioned, interpretation presupposes

intentionality, and hence cannot account for it. In the second place, intentional descriptions that apply to ID phenomena often are themselves literal, uninterpreted descriptions. That is, there are intentional descriptions that do not depend on interpretation. Consider the sentence, 'The check is in the mail,' used on an occasion to report that the check is in the mail. Both the descriptions 'the check' and 'the mail' are intentional descriptions that apply to ID phenomena (the check and the mail are both ID phenomena), and yet the descriptions ('the check' and 'the mail') are not interpretations of anything nonintentional. There is no prior nonintentional description to be replaced by 'the check'; the description 'the check' is as literal and as uninterpreted as any.

So, there are intentional descriptions that are not themselves products of interpretation. Moreover, intentional descriptions are themselves subject to interpretation. For example, suppose that the police interview a witness to a crime. The police want a bare-bones description of what happened without interpretation. In this context, the witness's report that, from across the room, she saw the suspect writing something on a yellow pad would count as a report of an uninterpreted fact. If the witness, who was across the room from the suspect, had said that she saw him writing a ransom note, she would be adding an interpretation. In this context, the prior description was 'writing on a yellow pad,' said of the suspect; the interpretation would be 'writing a ransom note.' Note, however, that 'writing on a yellow pad' is itself an ID phenomenon, an action. The bottom-level bare-bones description is thus intentional. Hardly ever would a witness be expected to give a nonintentional or purely "physical" description. ("There was a long, thin rod-like thing in his hand, which was moving back and forth slightly above a flat surface." --Really, would you say that to a police officer?) In an eye-witness account, 'just the facts'—the items to be subject to interpretation—are already ID phenomena. The witness would probably be considered uncooperative if she gave an account of the suspect's bodily motions. The lawyers will no doubt interpret the eye-witness account, but the eye-witness account that they will interpret, although literal, is by no means nonintentional.

In sum: On the one hand, ID phenomena—as reported by 'The check is in the mail'—do not themselves depend on interpretation. On the other hand, uninterpreted ID

phenomena to which intentional descriptions apply (e.g., the suspect's writing something on a yellow pad) may themselves be subject to interpretation (as his writing a ransom note).

This independence of ID phenomena from interpretation points to an important fact: Constitution must be distinguished from interpretation. The existence of ID phenomena, like the existence of nonID phenomena, depends on constitution, and constitution itself is not a matter of interpretation.[27] For example, the spoon that you eat your soup with is constituted by a piece of metal, but to call something a 'spoon' is not ordinarily to interpret anything. Furthermore, ID objects (e.g., a pencil) are not just "natural" (intention-independent) objects plus a socially conferred status. (Thus I differ from Searle (1995).) An ID object like a mammogram may receive an interpretation by a radiologist, say, but the mammogram's being a mammogram does not itself depend on interpretation, but on constitution. Constitution differs from interpretation in several ways, the most important of which is this: Constitution introduces a new object; interpretation does not.[28] Constitution adds to what exists; interpretation aims at understanding what exists apart from the interpretation.[29]

The point of this discussion of interpretation has been to show that persons are uniquely related to the world of encounter by means of interpretation. Along the way, I sketched a view of interpretation that shows how interpretation is related to (but <u>not</u> the source of) intentionality and that distinguishes interpretation from constitution. This sketch makes it easy to see how persons and <u>only</u> persons are bearers of interpretive relations—to themselves, to other persons and to nonpersons.[30] Now let's turn to a third kind of relation that persons, and only persons, have to nonpersons.

C. Productive Relations. By 'productive,' I mean <u>ontologically</u> productive. What I want to suggest is that persons make an ontological contribution to reality by creating novel kinds of things. Persons are producers of ontological novelty. One noticeable feature of the world of encounter that I mentioned is that it is populated by what I called ID objects: things—things like elevators and computers—whose existence depends on there being persons with propositional attitudes. The dependence is not just causal; it is

ontological: Something is an elevator or a computer, not in virtue of the arrangement of particles that makes it up, but in virtue of its intended relations to other things in the world. No arrangement of particles that spontaneously coalesced in outer space would be an elevator. An artifact has its function essentially, and its function depends on what its designer or producer intends. An elevator is a device whose intended function is essential to its being the thing that it is; and its intended function (to transport people and things vertically through space) itself crucially depends on the intentions of its designer—intentions that only persons can have. The designer must be able to assess her design. She must be able to ask: Will a machine of this design perform the function that I intend? In order even to consider such a question, one must be a person. One must be aware that one has a certain intention. The existence of elevators and other artifacts ontologically depends on there being persons with beliefs, desires and intentions. It is a conceptual truth that something is an artifact only if it is intended to serve a certain purpose. It follows that there would be no elevators if there were no persons with beliefs, desires and intentions.

So, some things in the world are ontologically dependent on the existence of persons. ID objects, so prominent in the world of encounter, are such objects. Persons are responsible for the intentions, practices and conventions, that make many kinds of ID objects possible. Their existence depends on the intentional activity of persons—again, not just causally but ontologically. The intended functions of artifacts are essential to their being the objects that they are. For example, having the intended function of reproducing texts mechanically was essential to the object that Gutenberg famously made. Having the intended function of making distant objects appear closer was essential to the object that Galileo famously made. When Gutenberg invented the printing press with movable type, and when Galileo invented the telescope, new kinds of objects came into existence—objects with new kinds of causal powers and with new persistence conditions.

So, the productive relations of persons to artifacts and other ID objects make persons, unlike nonpersons, ontological contributors to reality. The world of encounter is filled with ID objects—objects whose very existence ontologically depends on intentional activity—and these are objects to which persons have productive relations. There are

primary kinds exemplified in the world of encounter today that did not exist eons ago. The world that we encounter today—with its telecommunications satellites and electron microscopes—is ontologically richer than the world when the dinosaurs inhabited it. So, the third way that persons are uniquely related to nonpersons in the world is by means of what I've called their 'productive relations': persons in their unique relations to ID objects, are ontological contributors to what is in the world.

Several critics have objected strenuously to my claim that the existence of some material objects ontologically depends upon intentional activity. One critic went so far as to say, "Baker thinks we sometimes bring things into existence by thinking about them" (Zimmerman, 2002). As an example, he cites a piece of driftwood that "becomes a coffee table by being brushed off and brought into the house." I reply that most artifacts like coffee tables require manufacture and manipulation of materials. The driftwood example is a limiting case. Even in this limiting case, however, the piece of driftwood comes to constitute a table only in table-favorable circumstances, which include more than "being brushed off and brought into the house." The piece of driftwood comes to constitute a table in part by coming to be used in a certain already-established way. Our practices and conventions, as well as our intentions, are what make one piece of driftwood constitute a table, and another piece of driftwood constitute nothing at all.

The world of encounter is filled with ID objects like credit cards, dishwashers, computers, automobiles, portraits—objects that could not exist in the absence of persons with intentions and other propositional attiudes. If we want to make sense of the world of encounter—our world—then we cannot ignore this huge category of material objects. The Constitution View, and only the Constitution View as far as I know, takes this category of ID objects seriously. Artifacts and artworks—which exist only because of our productive relations to the world—are paradigm cases of ID objects and are as much part of reality in their own right (*as* artifacts and artworks) as are rocks and trees. Persons play an ontological role in the existence of artifacts and artworks. Anyone who respects the world of encounter must take artifacts and artworks and other ID objects seriously; and anyone

who takes such objects seriously, I believe, must recognize that persons make an ontological contribution to what there is.

In sum, there are at least three important ways in which persons are uniquely related to other things in the world: by moral relations, by interpretive relations and by productive relations. The most controversial of these are what I've called 'productive relations.' Productive relations make persons ontological contributors to reality.

Conclusion

The Constitution View provides a nonreductive account of the whole world of encounter that includes us persons. The world contains a plurality of primary kinds, and yet is an intelligible whole: All macroscopic objects—inanimate natural objects, animals, artifacts, artworks, persons—are constituted ultimately by aggregates of subatomic particles, without being reducible to the aggregates of particles that constitute them. In this unified world, however, persons have a unique role. Not only do persons have unique moral relations and interpretive relations to other things, but, most signficantly, persons have productive relations to certain material objects—material objects (like artifacts and artworks) that could not exist in the absence of the intentional activity of persons.

The received view in metaphysics is that there is a sharp distinction between what is in the world independently of our concepts and practices and what depends on our concepts and practices—a distinction sometimes formulated as a distinction between what is mind-independent and what is mind-dependent. What are ontologically significant are thought to be molecules, pieces of wood, and other mind-independent items. On the received view, artifacts and artworks, and ID objects generally, are understood in terms of our applying our concepts to aggregates of molecules, pieces of wood, etc., and such application adds

nothing to reality. I challenge this received view, and take the example of artifacts to show that a strict segregation of what really exists from what depends on persons is untenable.

In short, the Constitution View locates persons wholly within a unified material world, and yet accords persons a unique role in reality. I know of no other metaphysical view that makes better sense of the twin features of the unity of the natural world and the uniqueness of human persons.[31]

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Notes

[1] Human persons are material beings. On my view, material beings could not have first-person perspectives in the absence of a world.

[2] This is just a rough-and-ready test, not a criterion. I am simply pointing to a part of reality that we all take for granted. We could not survive if we didn't take medium-sized things for granted. In Baker(forthcoming), I argue for the (irreducible) reality of ordinary things.

[3] I hesitate to call the concepts used for the survey 'folk concepts,' because the term 'folk' has derogatory connotations. A folk theory is just a temporary expedient of the ignorant "folk"; it will be replaced by a true theory as soon as more sophisticated investigators get on the case. To avoid association of what "the folk" say with false theories, I'll avoid the term.

[4] In other places, I've used the expression 'intentional object' to refer to ID objects. Although I characterized what I meant by 'intentional object' carefully, I am now resorting to the technical term 'ID object' in order to avoid confusion with uses of 'intentional object' associated with Brentano and Meinong.

[5] There are interesting comparisons and contrasts between my view of ID objects (e.g., artworks and artefacts) and Searle's notion of an institutional fact determined by the constitutive rule, "X counts as Y in circumstances C." One similarity between Searle and me is that an artwork or artefact cannot be reduced to the "sheer physical features" of its constituter (in my vocabulary). One difference is that for Searle the "counts as" locution "names a feature of the imposition of a status to which a function is attached by way of collective intentionality;" whereas for me, the constituted object is metaphysically distinct from the constituting object. A statue is not just a piece of marble that has had a status imposed on it or that has been assigned a function. I heartily agree with Searle that there is much that we cannot adequately describe in physical-chemical terms. See Searle (1995).

[6] It is not novel to suppose that the knowledge gained by use of a particle-accelerator, say, depends on theories governing the particle-accelerator. If those theories were to come into question, so would the putative knowledge gained from the use of particle-accelerators.

[7] This view of reality stands in stark contrast to eliminative and reductive views. For a detailed defense of my view, see Baker (2007a). Moreover, my view is not confined to macrophysical concrete objects. To be a macrophysical concrete object is a sufficient, not a necessary, condition for falling under my view.

[8] So, 'constitutes' is not a synonym of 'composes' as mereologists use it.

[9] G-favorable circumstances are external to the constituting Fs. The terms 'external' and 'relational' are themselves relative terms. Relative to an atom of sodium and an atom of chlorine, chemical bonding is an external circumstance (a salt-favorable circumstance); but relative to a salt molecule, chemical bonding is an intrinsic property.

[10] I do not think that mere malfunction makes an artifact go out of existence. See Baker (2004).

[11] An aggregate of chemicals becomes a combination when there is bonding. An aggregate of H_2 and O_2 molecules is one and the same aggregate whether the H_2 and O_2 molecules are bonded or not. If they are, then the aggregate constitutes an aggregate of H_2O_2 molecules, and the H_2 and O_2 molecules then exist in combination.

[12] I am assuming here the classical conception of identity, according to which if a = b, then necessarily, a = b.

[13] Not all properties may be had derivatively. Excluded are (a) properties expressed in English by locutions using 'essentially,' 'necessarily,' 'possibly', 'primary kind' and the like; (b) identity/constitution/existence properties; (c) properties rooted outside the times at which they are had; and (d) hybrid properties. For details, Baker (2000), Ch. 2.

[14] There is much more to be said about the idea of constitution. See Baker (2000), especially Ch. 2. I also discuss constitution in Baker (1997), Baker (1999), Baker (2002), Baker(forthcoming).

[15]

Someone may ask: If a human person is not identical to a body or to a soul or to a body-plus-a-soul, what is she identical to? This question is a red herring. A person is identical to herself and not another thing.

[16] As I said in Baker (2000), if computers or other beings have first-personal concepts, they too are persons.

[17]

Hector-Neri Castañeda developed this idea in several papers. See Castañeda (1966) and Castañeda (1967).

[18]

I have defended this claim in Baker (1998), Baker (2000), and Baker (2007b). Evidence from developmental psychology indicates that we do <u>not</u> begin from a third-person point of view, with ourselves as an indistinguishable part of a collectivity.

[19]

Gallup's experiments with chimpanzees suggest the possibility of a kind of intermediate stage between dogs (that have intentional states but no first-person perspectives) and human persons (that have first-person perspectives). In my opinion—for details see Baker (2000), pp. 62-4—Gallup's chimpanzees fall short of full-blown first-person perspectives. See Gallup (1977).

[20]

For details, see Baker (2005). Other primates have rudimentary first-person perspectives, but human organisms are unique in that only in human organisms are rudimentary first-person perspectives a developmental preliminary

[21]

See, for example, Gopnik and Meltzoff (1994), Neisser (1995), and Kagan (1989). I do not expect the developmental psychologists to share my metaphysical view of constitution; I look to their work only to show at what stages during development certain features appear.

[22]

This latter detail is a needed technicality since, on the Constitution View, <u>person</u> is a primary kind, and there may be nonhuman persons. 'Human person' refers to a person constituted by a human organism.

[23]

Assuming that there is no afterlife, a person goes out of existence when she permanently ceases to have a first-person perspective. Of some patients in comas, we may not know whether the patient is still a person, or just a human organism. For details, see Baker(forthcoming).

[24]

Having a first-person perspective is <u>sine qua non</u> for being a person; the three kinds of relations that I shall discuss depend on first-person perspectives but are not themselves necessary conditions for being a person.

[25] Although I do think that there is agent causality, I differ from the standard views in two ways: (i) Agent causality is not sui generis: an agent causes A in virtue of certain mental and physical events. (ii) My agent causality is compatible with whatever laws govern the world, whether deterministic or indeterministic.

[26]

Interpretation is intensional (with an 's'); that is, interpretation is a relation between the F and the G, where the descriptions are essential to the interpretive relation.

[27] I am not ruling out the possibility that there may be some occasions on which an interpretation may be (or contribute to) an instance of constitution. For example, a judge's interpretation may contribute to the constitution of a new entity. Or a musical performance of a pre-existing piece of music may be an interpretation that is also a new entity. Thanks to an anonymous referee for these examples.

[28]

Constitution is distinguished from interpretation in other ways as well. Interpretation as a relation is language-dependent; constitution is not. Interpretation is normative (there are better and worse interpretations); constitution is not.

[29]

The suspect's writing a ransom note is constituted by the suspect's hand's moving in a certain way in certain circumstances; it is not constituted by his writing something. The suspect's writing a ransom note entails the suspect's writing something. But if x's being F constitutes x's being G, then it is not the case that x's being G logically entails x's being F.

[30]

Since interpretation depends on prior description, our interpretive relations (to both persons and nonpersons) are not basic. But interpretations are significant in human life. Anything that can be described can be interpreted.

[31]

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