

Asymmetrical and Symmetrical Dependency: A Particular Problem

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“All right,” said the Cat; and this time it vanished quite slowly, beginning with the end of the tail, and ending with the grin, which remained some time after the rest had gone.

“Well! I’ve often seen a cat without a grin,” thought Alice; “but a grin without a cat!” It’s the most curious thing I ever saw in all my life!”

—*Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*

WE can have butter without buttering anything, but problems arise when we attempt a buttering without butter. Intuitions such as these have created widespread sympathy with the view that while events are dependent upon objects, the opposite is open to debate. Though questions concerning priority and dependency between objects and events have been on the table for some time, little agreement has been reached. Such debate is commonplace since one may find something to disagree with at almost every turn of the issue: the weakness or strength of ontological dependencies, the existence of basic particulars, and the types of dependencies that may exist between objects and events, to name a few.¹ I will attempt to draw some conclusions concerning the symmetrical and asymmetrical dependencies to which objects and events subject each other. I will first discuss what I call “weak dependencies,” or “weak priorities” depending on the context, and the reason why

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¹I believe P. F. Strawson’s *Individuals* really brought the debate concerning the ontological commitments between events and objects into full swing. This will be my earliest reference concerning the issue.

these are, I believe, of little interest to the philosophical community. From here I will commence a discussion of basic particulars which closely follows P. F. Strawson's work in chapter one of *Individuals*. I will then consider J. M. E. Moravcsik's criticism of Strawson's conception of basic particulars and follow this by my critique of both positions. My critique, primarily of Moravcsik, will rest upon a subtle distinction that both Strawson and Moravcsik fail to draw. Finally, this distinction will lead us into a discussion of two issues: the type of "strong" dependencies that objects have over events and events over objects, and the symmetrical and asymmetrical relations which hold between them.

Weak Dependency

It is necessary, first and foremost, to construct a framework in which we may consider issues of dependency and priority between events and objects.² In "Events, Ontology, and Grammar," P. M. S. Hacker poses the basic question: "Are objects ontologically prior to events, or are events ontologically prior to objects, or are both categories equally 'basic' or 'primitive'?" (479).³ The first type of dependence I would like to define is what I call weak ontological dependence.⁴ The

²While there is much controversy as to what events are, I find the case against the existence of events to be fairly weak. Hacker appropriately responds: "The *esse* of events is to take place, happen or occur, but not to exist. . . . At worst the question of whether events exist should be answered in the negative, not because events do not exist (like unicorns), but because it is senseless to say of events either that they exist or that they do not" (479). One could think of asking whether or not objects occur as a similar question. Nevertheless, charity will allow us to construe events as existing for sake of the discussion.

³Ontological priority is the idea that one thing must exist, in the strong sense such as tables and chairs (as opposed to existing in the weak sense such as, perhaps, shadows) in order for another thing to exist. This is the first type of priority we will look at.

⁴The term "weak" is a bit misleading. I consider these ontological dependencies to be foundational. Nevertheless, I consider these dependencies to be of little philosophical interest, and, therefore, lacking the strength of what I will later call *strong* ontological dependencies.

most basic of these can be discovered, as Hacker shows, through the metaphysical conjuring of two worlds. Thus, let us first imagine a world without events.⁵ Hacker points out that “an eventless world is a world without change. A world without change is a world without time. Such a world is not an object of possible experience, since experience and self-consciousness are essentially temporal” (479). According to Hacker, this world is not an option. A world without time is neither inhabitable nor observable. Hacker’s belief that “a world without change is a world without time” can be challenged. While we could not take part in it, nor could any other being, we can imagine a static world in which nothing changes or occurs and nothing *observes*. However, though Hacker’s argument is unconvincing, one can still argue that objects depend on events. One such defense claims that a world is temporal and time continues regardless of the change present in our monitoring of it; hence, all objects have a temporal as well as a spatial location. If we wish to hold to Hacker’s view, we notice that the importance he places on observing the world—observation having a temporal quality—suggests a strange sort of low-level epistemological criterion: it is not that we have to observe the world, but that observation has to be possible. It is this belief, which may not have any place in positing such possible worlds, that allows Hacker a more substantial notion of time existing through change. In any event, from this discussion we see how, in what I term a *weak* sense, objects are ontologically dependent on events.

Again following Hacker’s model, let us now imagine a world without objects. A world without objects is a world without space, a purely temporal world. In such a world of time, we can have no change other than the continuation of time. The ability to monitor time would at least have to depend on, to use Hacker’s and Descartes’s subject, “a *res cogitans* dwelling in it” (480).⁶ Hacker’s nonspatial world can be challenged as well. We may imagine a spatial world with objects. If all the objects were to vanish, this would not vanquish space from existence. Hacker is

⁵I will take events to be Events with a capital “E,” to include processes and states as well as events. Hacker might disagree with my inclusion of states as Events.

⁶Of course a *res cogitans* couldn’t dwell “in” anything since it isn’t subject to space.

once again employing some strange sort of epistemological criterion in which a world without objects, that is, observable objects, implies that the world is nonspatial. Once again, if we grant Hacker his position and admit that a world has to be observable, then we may ascend to the belief that a world without objects is a world without space. Hacker continues by emphasizing that if a creature dwelling within this world were possible, in the Cartesian tradition, then all its thoughts of the world would have to depend on analogues of a spatial world (480). Just as experience is essentially temporal, our thoughts of the world, even hallucinations, are at least analogues of a spatial world. Thus, events are ontologically dependent on objects, in this weak sense.

Whether one chooses to accept Hacker's metaphysical world examples isn't of great importance. Hacker states, "To the extent that such a world is thinkable by such creatures as we, the thought of it can have little interest for us and even less relevance to the philosophical clarification of the ways in which we think about the spatio-temporal world we inhabit and experience" (479–80). Although I do not think that Hacker's notions of observability have any place in such metaphysical posits, they will play an important role in more concrete examples.

We may pose Hacker's two questions again under more concrete circumstances; nevertheless, the answers will be similar. First, do objects presuppose the existence of events?⁷ To grant Hacker's position, just as we cannot imagine, in any strong sense, a metaphysical world without events, we cannot imagine objects without the succession of time, and therefore without events. Furthermore, objects are locatable by where they are at certain times and it would be difficult to imagine objects not occupying a certain time, or amount of time. Objects, in this weak sense, depend on events. Second, do events presuppose the existence of

⁷At this point, the notion of observability has a stronger position than in the metaphysical examples, but not as strong as many may think it has at this rudimentary level of concrete world-analysis. When discussing our world, we may now allow the fact that in our world we do measure time by change and space by objects. We know this through our observations, but that is not to say that observations, not to be confused with observability, play a role in our discussion at this moment.

objects? Every notion of an event presupposes that it happens at some time. When something happens at some time, according to Hacker, this time is distinguishable from other times through change. This change is observable in material objects. Moreover, events are locatable by where they are in space, and it would be difficult to imagine events not occupying space, however gerrymandered that space may be. We now see that this weak ontological priority is symmetrical: objects are ontologically dependent on events, and events are ontologically dependent on objects.

While this notion of weak ontological priority is a necessary building block for more subtle notions of priority and dependence, I will argue that it is nevertheless not an interesting notion. Both the conclusions drawn from the preceding examples are fairly obvious, and I suspect that few would disagree on this point, with the possible exception of Quineans who wouldn't ask such questions since they consider objects and events to be the same thing. Another type of weak dependence, which I will call *historically-regressive* dependence, deals primarily with the fact that our observations of the world require the existence of an observer.⁸ When we are considering questions of priorities and dependencies, these foundational concepts of observation and the observing/observer relation are fairly clear and not of great philosophical interest. This historically-regressive dependency may also apply to objects that are being observed. This is a weak dependency, as will be explained in detail, because things like a cow's parents, if the cow is the object of observation, are not important to the observation at hand. The main point of historically-regressive dependency is that it brings in events and objects that are not part of the description of an event or object at the present time. A far more interesting philosophical question can be raised by considering an event (an event with a capital "E") and the objects involved, or an object and the events involved if you please, and asking if either the object or the event is a basic particular, necessary for the existence of the other? By granting these weak and symmetrical

⁸This tracing of observations to observers, which are people, back to births, and further back to parents is the type of switch-off between objects and events that presents an infinite regress, which isn't very interesting to say the least.

ontological dependencies as foundational,⁹ and looking towards stronger, and yet more subtle, dependencies to define basic particulars, we up the stakes significantly. The job of the next section will be to address this question.

The Basics: Strawson's Basic Particulars and Asymmetrical Dependencies

In part three, chapter one of *Individuals*, Strawson suggests the need to define the framework that we use in our identification of particulars in common discourse.

We can make it clear to each other what or which particular things our discourse is about because we can fit together each other's reports and stories into a single picture of the world; and the framework of that picture is a unitary spatio-temporal framework, of one temporal and three spatial dimensions.¹⁰ Hence, as things are, particular-identification in general rests ultimately on the possibility of locating the particular things we speak of in a single unified spatio-temporal system. (38)

This need to define the framework leads Strawson to posing the following questions:

First, is there a class or category of particulars such that, as things are, it would not be possible to make all the identifying references which we do make to particulars of other classes, unless we made

⁹These weak dependencies are (1) spatial and temporal dependencies as described in the metaphysical and concrete world examples, and (2) historically-regressive dependencies. While the first type of dependencies are clearly symmetrical, I have doubts as to whether we can call historically-regressive dependencies fully symmetrical due to the infinite regress.

¹⁰This is an innocent usage of three-dimensionality and should not be looked upon as excluding events from the running for basic particulars. Three-dimensional space is merely the space part of the spatio-temporal framework Strawson plans to explore.

identifying references to particulars of that class, whereas it would be possible to make all the identifying references we do make to particulars of that class without making identifying reference to particulars of the other classes? Second, can we argue to an affirmative answer to this question from the general character of the conceptual scheme I have described? (38–39)

We see here that Strawson explicitly foreshadows the asymmetrical dependence he plans to uncover. Strawson answers the second question first in order to create specific arguments to answer the first question. The type of basic particulars that are to constitute this framework¹¹ must be those “which can confer upon it its own fundamental characteristics” (39). That is, the particulars that constitute this framework must have the same properties that the framework is to have. As Strawson states earlier, these properties are those which constitute a spatio-temporal framework, that is, a framework with “one temporal and three spatial dimensions” (38). Thus, the particulars which are to constitute this framework must be three-dimensional and endure through time.¹² And as one might assume, these particulars also have to be observable if they are to constitute our framework. Strawson concludes that “of the categories of objects which we recognize, only those satisfy these requirements which are, or possess, material bodies—in a broad sense of the expression. Material bodies constitute the framework” (39).

After establishing that material bodies constitute this framework and are therefore the basic particulars, Strawson addresses the issue that in order for the framework to be continuously usable, we must be able to *reidentify* the basic particulars that constitute the framework.¹³ Strawson argues that material objects are the only type of particulars that we are

¹¹Strawson’s framework is not a conceptual structure containing different particulars, but a framework composed of basic particulars.

¹²I think Strawson may be sympathetic with the idea that basic particulars merely have to exist at some time and not necessarily endure *through* time.

¹³Strawson makes many arguments, which are too numerous to mention here, defending his view that material bodies are basic particulars (39–54). I will, nevertheless, invoke some of them later in light of Moravcsik’s criticisms.

able to reidentify without reference to other particulars. In order for us to reidentify particulars, they must exist through time, and this requires that they exist through space. Thus, the same criteria that material objects fulfilled in establishing themselves as constituents of the framework, and hence as basic particulars, has allowed them the reidentifiability necessary to uphold the framework.

To ground this argument, for the sake of concreteness and clarification, Strawson creates a series of specific arguments, two of which I will examine. First, I will consider one of Strawson's more controversial examples concerning identifiability-dependence. Strawson provides us with the examples of a strike and a lockout. Strawson explicates, "The possession of the concepts under which such particulars fall all too evidently presupposes the possession of other concepts under which fall particulars of wholly different and far less sophisticated types" (44). Thus, our concept of a strike relies on the concepts of tools, men and women, and perhaps a factory. Strawson believes that the general identifiability-dependence of more sophisticated particulars relies upon the identifiability of more specific particulars "of *wholly different* and far less sophisticated types" (44, italics added). These sophisticated particulars, for example an event, rely upon *basic* particulars. This, of course, is not to say that in every occasion of discussing more sophisticated particulars, for example a football game, we must refer to the less sophisticated *basic* particulars. We may talk of a football game without ever mentioning the football.

The second argument Strawson puts forth, which will attempt to answer his original question concerning asymmetry, is of a more theoretical nature. Many believe that the majority of, if not all, events, states, and processes have to be events, states, and processes of something or some things. Furthermore, this thing or these things must not be events, states, or processes, but basic particulars. Strawson elaborates:

It might be thought that from this fact alone it could be argued directly that the identification of most events, states or processes must proceed *via* the identification of those particulars of other types to the history of which they belonged; that e.g. where a particular event was of a kind such that all events of this kind necessarily happen to things of another type, then the identification of

the particular event necessarily involved the identification of the particular thing to which it happened. (50)

So if this type of argument works, it is impossible to make reference to an event without at least implicitly making reference to the object(s) of the event. For instance, if I am to talk of a birth, under this position, then I must be talking about the birth of something, the birth of *this*. Talking of a birth would entail talking about the birth of this creature. Strawson feels this position is unacceptable and necessarily flawed: “the original argument errs in trying to infer from a conceptual dependence too direct a kind of identifiability-dependence of particulars” (51). Strawson provides us with the example of a scream and a screamer. It is quite possible to make reference to a scream without mentioning the screamer. This is not to say, however, that the scream isn’t dependent on the screamer, just that it can be identified independently of it. A weaker proposal is necessary. Strawson suggests:

Suppose that β s are necessarily β s of α s (e.g. that births are necessarily births of animals). Then, though on a particular occasion I may identify a particular β without identifying the α it is of, yet it would not in general be possible to identify β s unless it were in general possible to identify β s. For we could not speak of β s as we do speak of them, or have the concept we do have of β s, unless we spoke of α s; and we could not speak of α s unless it were in principle possible to identify an α . So, in a general sense, β s show identifiability-dependence on α s. (51)

Strawson is worried, and rightfully so, that at first glance his weakened form of the theoretical argument may be taken to show a symmetrical relation between objects and events. For instance, to use Strawson’s example, if we hold that the concept we have of a birth entails the concept we have of an animal, then the concept we have of an animal must entail the concept we have of a birth. Consider the following example:

- (1) This is a birth.
- entails
- (2) There is some animal of which this is the birth.
- and

(3) This is an animal.

entails

(4) There is some birth which is the birth of this animal.

While this relation seems to be symmetrical, Strawson asks us to press on and find suitable paraphrases of the two entailments. While (3) and (4) can be paraphrased as follows:

(3') This is an animal.

entails

(4') This was born.

there is no suitable paraphrase for (1)'s entailment of (2). Why is this? Strawson holds that while in our discourse our conception of an animal requires that it be *born*, it does not necessitate that "we must *also* find a place in our discourse for the idea of a certain range of particulars, viz. births" (52). Since I have difficulty in properly explaining this argument, I will quote Strawson's defense of it:

The admission into our discourse of the range of particulars, *births*, conceived of as we conceive of them, does require the admission into our discourse of the range of particulars, *animals*; but the admission into our discourse of the range of particulars, *animals*, conceived of as we conceive of them, does not require the admission into our discourse of the range of particulars, *births*. (52)

Moravcsik's Critique: Asymmetry Lost?

As Moravcsik allows in part three of his essay "Strawson and Ontological Priority," "Let us assume that the notion of particular-identification is at least intuitively clear. . . . Can we accept Strawson's claim that among these types [particulars], with respect to the relation specified, material bodies are prior to all other types?" (114). As we shall see, Moravcsik's criticism of Strawson will have two purposes: first, to challenge the claim that material objects are basic particulars, and second, to verify that no other particulars enjoy an equal or a more basic status. Moravcsik elaborates:

In other words, Strawson has to show not only that there is no asymmetrical dependency which shows material bodies to be posterior, but also that there is no other type which has a mutual,

symmetrical dependency relation with material bodies. . . . I shall argue that such a symmetrical relationship does hold between material bodies and types of event, actions, and process. (114)¹⁴

I will first give an exposition of Moravcsik's critique of two of Strawson's general arguments followed by his critique of two of Strawson's specific arguments.

Moravcsik first attacks the criterion Strawson holds as necessary for particulars to possess in order to constitute his framework and thus be considered basic. As we can recall, Strawson believes that basic particulars must be located in space and time and must endure through time. Furthermore, Strawson says that these particulars must be locatable in our four-dimensional framework, consisting of three spatial dimensions and one temporal dimension. Moravcsik protests the need to have three dimensions as part of the criterion for identifiability: "Once . . . the condition of three-dimensionality is dropped, events, actions and processes become as good candidates for basicness as are material bodies" (115). Moravcsik proceeds by asserting that "some events, actions and processes have as much stability in space and time as any material body has, even though the question of dimensionality does not arise in connection with them" (115). Moravcsik provides no support for this position, nor does he suggest how many dimensions he thinks are necessary as a criterion of identifying events or objects. However, Moravcsik admits that this is a negative argument and by itself will not persuade us to consider events as basic particulars.

Strawson's other criterion for basic particulars, namely endurance through time, is the subject of Moravcsik's second attack. Strawson states:

a condition, in turn, of the possession of a single, continuously usable framework of this kind, was the ability to reidentify at least some elements of the framework in spite of discontinuities

¹⁴Two clarifications must be added. First, Moravcsik will be continuing the theme I have been using by talking about events with a capital "E" as including states and processes as well. Second, I will present Moravcsik's criticisms of Strawson in the same order that Strawson's arguments were presented.

of observation: that is to say, one must be able to identify some particular things as *the same again* as those encountered on a previous occasion. (55)

This is to say that we must be able to identify an entity E at time t and at a later time t'. Strawson goes on to say that as far as particulars are concerned, material objects are the only type of particular which we can identify in this fashion without reference to other types of particulars. Moravcsik attempts to prove that the reidentification of material objects requires reference to events, and granting that the opposite is true, that their identification dependency, and hence ontological priority, is symmetrical.¹⁵ Moravcsik first argues that if we need to reidentify material objects, we will have to locate two different times that the body inhabits, and reference to times involves a reference to events.¹⁶ This argument is elaborated by identifying these events as observations. In order to reidentify, we would need to observe something twice. For example, I might say, "This lamp looks like the one I saw yesterday." Such a statement would suggest that I performed an observation of the lamp yesterday, that is, an event, and performed a second observation of the lamp right now. Moravcsik concludes:

Thus the re-identification of material bodies depends on reference to events, and even though the identification of these may depend in some ways on the identification of material bodies, this latter dependency makes the relation simply a symmetrical one, rather than something asymmetrical. (116)

Moravcsik finds the same fundamental flaw in Strawson's arguments dealing with specific types. We can take the example used earlier in which Strawson holds that "sophisticated" particulars like strikes or lockouts require the existence of smaller, basic particulars, such as

¹⁵ Moravcsik holds earlier in this article that "[Strawson's] formula ties ontological priority to dependence with respect to identifiability" (108).

¹⁶ We can recall and rework Hacker's arguments to show this. A reference to time is possible because there is a change, for that is how we know time progresses. Such a change would be an event.

material objects. Strawson asserts that it is hard to imagine a strike without imagining workers, tools, and a factory. Moravcsik replies to this assertion that it can be said that we could not have our workers, tools, and a factory without the concepts of production and manufacturing. Someone may counter this by saying, "Yes, but those particulars of production and manufacturing aren't necessary for us to identify the tools and factory, whereas if we didn't have the basic particulars of the tools, factory, and workers, we couldn't identify the strike at all." Moravcsik would counter this counterattack by referring us back to his previous argument that links identifying with observing, producing a symmetrical ontological relationship.

Moravcsik's final criticism of Strawson concerns his entailment argument concerning births and animals. I believe Moravcsik rightfully points out that "Strawson's . . . argument involving specific types seems to rest on drawing illegitimate conclusions from what are contingent features of the English language" (117). If we were to assume that Strawson's argument worked according to his defense of it, then only material objects would hold an ontological priority over events and asymmetry would be upheld. Moravcsik offers an analogous argument to point out the absurdity of Strawson's argument:

(5) This is an occasion of eating.

entails

(6) There is an animal which eats on this occasion.

and

(7) This is an animal.

entails

(8) There are occasions on which this animal eats.

Moravcsik says that Strawson would have to hold that we can paraphrase (7)'s entailment of (8) as:

(7') This is an animal.

entails

(8') This animal is an eater.

without admitting to the existence of an occasion of eating. Moravcsik concludes, "Frankly, I can make no sense out of the concept of an eater which does not involve occasions of eating, and thus I fail to see how the alleged asymmetry would hold" (118). Moravcsik's example reveals the fact that it is merely a feature of the English language that allows Strawson to complete his example concerning "a birth" and "an animal

being born.” While I agree with Moravcsik that Strawson’s example is bad, I agree only with the fact that it is a bad example. Most of Strawson’s argument, however, can be salvaged after a necessary distinction is made.

A Distinction

While I have only alluded to certain distinctions concerning weak dependencies, a line has to be drawn between weak and strong dependencies. All of Moravcsik’s objections to Strawson’s position on events are solid objections; however, they fail to recognize a subtle distinction that will have the result of putting most of Moravcsik’s objections in the arena of weak dependence. The distinction I will make is between *what is involved in the identification of particulars* and *what is involved in the identification process*. As mentioned earlier, the foundational dependencies I placed under the title of weak dependencies were not of great importance in the relationship between the event and object at hand. In other words, we are interested in the individuation criterion we need to identify events and objects and not the events and objects involved in identifying and individuating these events, that is, the observations and observers. The dependency relations between objects and events we are concerned with are *strong* dependencies. Strong dependency is the dependence that the objects and events *at hand* exert over each other, regardless of historical relations, or our observation of them. Strong dependency can be additionally, and more rigidly, defined as such: an object or event is dependent in a strong sense on an event or object, respectively, when the disappearance of the latter would eliminate the former *at some level*. The levels I will be concerned with in my later discussion of Strawson will be ontological and conceptual.

By examining Moravcsik’s four arguments in light of this distinction, we may properly categorize his objections into our weak or strong categories of dependence. Moravcsik’s first argument is not significant, since he provides no support of its claim that the framework’s criterion does not need to be three-dimensional. Moravcsik’s second argument succumbs to the overlooked distinction. Moravcsik states, “For in order to raise questions about the reidentification of any material body, we have to locate two segments of time which the body allegedly occupied and occupies” (116). While this is true, he has collapsed the distinction

concerning the criterion which makes possible both the identification of the objects and *our* identification of them. This is not to deny the importance of our identification process, but it is, nevertheless, accounted for and would not create what we call a strong dependence. What we are concerned with in the reidentification of objects is their properties, that is, their shape, three-dimensionality, and so forth, that allow them to be reidentified. In short, we are concerned with what is necessary to be *able* to identify and reidentify objects and not the identifying and reidentifying of them itself.

This same critique follows for the first of Moravcsik's two specific arguments against specific types. The history of the objects in the strike and the events involved in manufacturing them is accounted for within the weak dependency category, and is not, as Moravcsik foresees that Strawson might claim, necessary to the identification of sophisticated particulars. Since Moravcsik's defense of this position is the same as the one for his previous argument, supposedly forcing symmetry, we may look to the argument just stated above to answer this.

It is necessary to point out the flaw in Moravcsik's claim that historically-regressive dependency creates a symmetrical dependence with material objects, denying them the status of basic particulars. Historically-regressive dependence has been shown to be a weak dependency because the events and objects involved in historically-regressive dependence are not immediately involved in the event. In fact, historically-regressive dependencies are involved in their own events in which it would not be problematic if the object of observation played a small role. This is, nevertheless, irrelevant. Things like a smiler smiling do not rely in any *strong* way on things like my observing the smile or, for the smiler, the smiler's mother and father. What Moravcsik is trying to do is create a *cross-categorical symmetrical dependence* between things that are involved in strong dependency relationships and things that are involved in weak dependency relationships.

The final argument to which Moravcsik replies is a strange one. While I am sympathetic and in agreement with his analysis of Strawson's entailment argument, that does not end the issue. I believe Strawson's argument is faulty and even under the assumption that the argument is correct, it would do nothing more than prove an asymmetrical dependence between animals and births in the English language. Furthermore, we can see here that Strawson falls into the

same trap as Moravcsik by mistakenly trying to maintain and equate a cross-categorical dependency with a strong dependency. Strawson's motivation behind the argument, however, is quite solid and still open for debate.

Asymmetry Regained

Strawson is on the mark in exploring the issue of asymmetry he felt existed between the basic particulars, that is, material objects and events. Strawson continues in his critique that the general argument is too strong in creating a symmetrical dependence (50). Recall, "the original argument errs in trying to infer from conceptual dependence too direct a kind of identifiability-dependence of particulars" (51). We may continue from here with an example that leaves out the history of a certain class of material objects, for example, the births of creatures.¹⁷ Let us imagine an example that does not explicitly entertain weak dependencies:

(9) The smile had a smiler.

and

(10) The smiler had a smile.¹⁸

To draw out the inherent qualities of these examples, we may restate (9) and (10) in the following fashion:

(9') The event had an object.

and

(10') The object had an event.

Thus, in (10) and (10') if we were to eliminate the object, in an ontological way, that is, if the object disappeared, we would eliminate the event. Therefore, there cannot be a smile without a smiler. However, if we look at (9) and (9') and choose to eliminate the event in the same ontological way, that is, the event disappears, the smiler nevertheless seems to leave an object, let's say Jones, which still exists. When we eliminate the smile, we eliminate the smiler, but not the individual.

¹⁷I am not altogether sure that Strawson was overtly aware of the distinction I drew above. Nevertheless, the birth and animal argument is the only place he seems to skew this issue.

¹⁸Thanks to Achille Varzi for the example.

From this we might say that in a strong sense events are *ontologically* dependent on objects, whereas objects are only *conceptually* dependent on events. To explain this further, when we describe objects in terms of an event associated with them, a smile and a smiler or a scream and a screamer, the description of the individual as a smiler or screamer is dependent on the circumstance that the individual performs the event required of his or her description, that is, smiling or screaming. If the individual does not perform the required event, setting aside gray areas, then that description no longer applies. The description of a smiler or screamer is dependent on the concept, and event, of smiling or screaming. Therefore, the relation between events and objects is asymmetrical: a strong ontological dependence of events on objects, and a strong conceptual dependence of objects on events.

The arguments between Strawson and Moravcsik have allowed us to discover and identify different categories of dependency as well as categorize the role they play in event-object relations. These clarifications have, for the most part, provided support for Strawson's view on asymmetrical dependency between events and objects. While I am not committing myself to Strawson's views concerning objects, the purpose of this discussion was to show that they stand up to Moravcsik's criticism.

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