Wang's "Fundamentality and Modal Freedom"

Preview: Wang addresses the motivations for the principle "FEMF" or "Fundamentality Entails Modal Freedom". First, Wang clarifies the thesis. Then she denies that there is strong (independent) positive motivation for FEMF.

1 Fundamentality

Ground Version: A fundamental entity is an ungrounded entity: one that does not ontologically depend on anything else.

Truthmaker Version:fundamental entities are those that jointly comprise the truthmakers for all truths that have truthmakers.

Naturalness Version: the fundamental entities just are the perfectly natural or structural entities.

Primitivist Version: Which entities are fundamental is primitive

2 Modal Freedom

(First Pass): Say that an entity x is absolutely existentially modally free iff it is not the case that there is some distinct entity y such that necessarily, if y exists then x exists, or necessarily, if x exists, then y exists.

Schaffer-freedom: Two concrete objects are Schaffer-free if any way that one can be and any way the other can be is a way for them to jointly be, (i) barring co-location, and (ii) leaving the rest of the world the way it is.

2.1 Extending Modal Freedom Principles to Different Ontological Categories?

Concrete Object Modal Freedom: Γ is modally free iff for any ways that any objects in Γ can be, they may respectively be those ways.[1]

Recall that "on what 'any way that one can be' means, Schaffer writes (2010a: 352): '[C]onsider all of the intrinsic natures that a given actual concrete object can have, together with all of the spatiotemporal locations that it can occupy. These are the ways that this can be. Also add in the one way that it can fail to be. The result will be a list covering the how, where, and whether possibilities for this thing."'

Properties/Relations Modal Freedom: Γ is modally free iff for any ways that any properties or relations in Γ may be, they may respectively be those ways.

"On this formulation, what matters are intrinsic properties of properties or relations, or their existence or nonexistence. But it is not clear that there are interesting contingent intrinsic properties of properties or relations; necessary intrinsic properties, such as being a property or being a relation, must be instantiated. It may be that some properties only exist contingently, but this is a substantive and controversial philosophical thesis."

Properties/Relations Modal Freedom 2: Γ is modally free iff any pattern of instantiation of the properties or relations in Γ is possible.

[1] We need to extend this to relations of other acidity.

3 Direct Routes to FEMF

3.1 Fundamentality and "Self-Sufficiency"

"Many theorists seem to endorse FEMF on the basis of the intuition that whatever is fundamental is 'self-sufficient', or 'need not look outside itself'."

But this is bad if we already are adopting a category-neutral conception of modal freedom:

> The restriction in the characterization of modal freedom to different categories of entity is already a constraint. If fundamental properties and relations need not look outside themselves, and fundamental objects need not look outside themselves, then they should be free to coexist with each other in any combination. But this is not the case. Objects can only instantiate properties and relations, and indeed cannot exist without instantiating properties or relations. Likewise, properties and relations can only be instantiated by objects.

Entities of different ontological categories (objects, properties/relations, states of affairs (SOFAS)) are not "self-sufficient". So, if self-sufficiency truly is the motivation for FEMF, then the FEMF theorist should say that there is at most one category of fundamental entities. (we'll see someone who does this (Dasgupta) next week though not for these reasons).

3.2 Fundamentality and Explanatory Independence

Fundamentality is a sort of explanatory independence. So if x is fundamental, then the explanation for its existence must not require anything extrinsic to x.

When we say that the explanation of xs existence does not require anything extrinsic to x, we are merely saying that nothing outside of x contributes to the metaphysical explanation of its existence. This does not entail that xs existence does not necessitate the existence of anything else, nor that nothing else necessitates xs existence.

4 Indirect Routes to FEMF

4.1 Hume's Dictum

Hume's Dictum: There are no necessary connections between distinct existents.

"If there are no necessary connections between distinct existents, then any way an existent can be is (with minor qualifications) compossible with any way a distinct existent can be."

4.1.1 What is meant by "existent"?

4.1.2 What is meant by "necessary connection"?

Trivial vs. Substantive Necessary Connections.

"Many accept the necessity of identity and distinctness, which state, respectively, that any object is necessarily identical to itself (so any two objects are necessarily such that each is self- identical), and any two distinct objects are necessarily non-identical.DeRosset (2009) suggests that we distinguish between necessary relations like these, and necessary connections, though he does not offer a criterion whereby to distinguish them."

"it seems sensible to stipulate that objects x and y are necessarily connected if some intrinsic property that one instantiates has modal implications for the intrinsic properties that the other instantiates."

4.1.3 What is meant by distinct?

Numerically distinct?

Grounding Distinct: two entities x and y are grounding distinct iff it is not the case that (i) x (partially) grounds y, (ii) y (partially) grounds x, or (iii) x and y share a common (partial) ground.

Spatiotemporal distinctness: Entities are wholly distinct just in case they do not spatiotemporally overlap.

Mereological distinctness: Entities are wholly distinct just in case they do not share a mereological part.

Constitutional distinctness: Entities are wholly distinct just in case they do not stand in constitutional relations to each other.

For each candidate interpretation of distinctness, there are two questions to consider: (1) are the fundamental objects and properties/relations distinct in this sense?; and (2) is the resulting interpretation of Humes dictum independently motivated?

For grounding distinctness, (1 is clear but not 2)
For mereological distinctness (1 is not so clear, 2 is not so clear–also not clear how to extend this to properties/relations)
For spatiotemporal distinctness (1 is not so clear, 2 is not so clear–also 1 should be rejected for properties and relations)
For constitutional distinctness (inherits the problems above)

4.2 Humean Supervenience

Here is another route to FEMF. One might be motivated by a desire to reduce the world to its intrinsic properties:

> Humean supervenience is named in honor of the greater denier of necessary connections. It is the doctrine that all there is to the world is a vast mosaic of local matters of particular fact, just one little thing after another... We have geometry: a system of external relations of spatiotemporal distance between points. Maybe points of spacetime itself, maybe point-sized bits of matter or aether or fields, maybe both. And at those points we have local qualities: perfectly natural intrinsic properties which need nothing bigger than a point at which to be instantiated. For short: we have an arrangement of qualities. And that is all. There is no difference without difference in the arrangement of qualities. All else supervenes on that."

all fundamental properties are intrinsic
Any pattern of instantiation of the fundamental properties and relations is possible.