Causation and Identification
Study on Strawson's Descriptive and Connective Investigations

by

Fumiya Nachigami

Submitted to

Central European University

Department of Philosophy

In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy

Supervisor: Professor Hanoch Ben-Yami

Vienna, Austria

2023

Abstract

This thesis endeavours to locate the concept of causation in the framework of our experience limned by P. F. Strawson (1959). In Chapter 1, I will begin by introducing descriptive metaphysics and connective analysis. Then I will present the general picture of the conceptual framework by examining its basic concepts, namely, those of Space and Time, material bodies, and persons. In Chapter 2, I will argue that the conceptual framework should include the concept of causation to connect other basic concepts, and ultimately to secure the possibility of experience. I will also discuss the location of the concept of causation in the framework, as causation is thought by Strawson to belong only to our explanatory vocabulary, that is, causation is thought to hold between facts, not between events in nature. I will argue that the concept of causation must be in the framework as its essential component; even though causation plays a distinctive role in explanation, it is also what the possibility of identification of a particular and thus the whole conceptual framework hinge on. Chapter 3 focuses on the way in which the concept of causation contributes to identification of a particular. First, I will discuss what we take as identifying features of a particular and how causal relations between objects operate on it. It will turn out that admitting causal elements in identification generates a tension between universals and particulars. The last section of Chapter 3 is dedicated to resolving this tension.

Acknowledgements

Words are not enough to express my gratitude to my family, my parents, sisters, and grandparents, especially my late grandmother, who taught me as a child how to read and think. I am and will remain very thankful to my supervisor, Hanoch Ben-Yami. He has been supportive, patient and has given me so many insightful comments throughout the writing process. I would also like to thank my colleagues at CEU, my roommates, Conor and Samuel, and so many others who have seen me through. Many, many thanks to you all.

Table of Contents

— Did you also ask for that teaching whereby what has not been heard of becomes heard of, what has not been thought of becomes thought of, what has not been understood becomes understood? … Just as, my dear, by one nail-scissors everything made of iron may be known — *the modification is merely a verbal distinction, a name*; the reality is just 'iron' — so, my dear, is that teaching. —

Chāndogya Upanishad Sixth Prapāthaka

(translated by R. E. Hume (1921), p.241)

Introduction

The question of what kinds of objects we take to be basic in our experience of the world can be addressed from two different aspects: first, it can be done by asking a question like what the necessary and sufficient conditions of perceiving the world are; second, it leads us to inquire how we make things that we perceive intelligible to ourselves. The first question concerns the conceptual framework that is given to us for perceiving objects, and the second, the linguistic and logical apparatus we employ when describing our experience. Each of these questions I just invoked stands out independently concerning the respective area of philosophy, yet they are closely intertwined, as an answer to any one of them would give partial answers to the others. Questions concerning the fundamental structure of the world we perceive, mirror the close connections and interdependence between ontology, epistemology, and logico-linguistics.

P. F. Strawson recognised this connection and developed his view on it, first in *Individuals*(1959). There, Strawson draws a distinction between *revisionary* metaphysics and *descriptive* metaphysics; the former aims at providing a better theory about the structure that lies beyond our ordinary experience of the world, while the latter is 'content to describe the actual structure of our thought about the world' (1959, p.9). I will introduce descriptive metaphysics more properly in the following chapter, but in short, the aim of descriptive metaphysics is to 'lay bare the most general features of our conceptual structure' by 'a close examination of the actual use of words' (Strawson, 1959, p.9).

In *Analysis and Metaphysics*, Strawson draws another distinction between two conceptions of 'analysis', namely, between an atomistic or reductive model, and a connective model. While the former consists in dismantling a complex concept into simpler concepts, the latter model, in contrast, enables us to reveal 'an elaborate network, a system, of connected

items, concepts, such that the function of each item, each concept, could [...] be properly understood only by grasping its connections with the others' (1992a, p.19).

What descriptive metaphysics is getting at are the concepts of greater generality that we effortlessly employ in perceiving the world. That is to say, they are the concepts that connective analysis[1] is best suited for analysing. Strawson says:

> [T]here is a massive central core of human thinking which has no history—or none recorded in histories of thought; there are categories and concepts which, in their most fundamental character, change not at all. (1959, p.10)

Reductively analysing concepts of this kind most certainly will run into circularity, as they are not the results of our constructing a worldview, rather they are given as we start perceiving the world. In other words, concepts of this kind are deeply embedded and intertwined in our conceptual framework which is necessary for us to make sense of our experience, in the way that each concept or the function of it should be described in relation to the other concepts. Connective analysis enables us to see the illuminating connections between the fundamental concepts and thereby it also casts light on the connections between ontology, epistemology and logico-linguistics.

Strawson's project of descriptive metaphysics has been discussed, for its potential to bring back metaphysics to its legitimate place in philosophy, although it may not be in the same form as it was conceived by revisionary metaphysicians. This is because of its purported end to describe the integrated picture of our conceptual framework. Yet, it still is a debatable matter what a complete description of the framework must look like; Strawson in *Individuals* enumerates Space, Time, material bodies, and persons as the basic concepts in the

---

[1] Strawson did not use the expression 'Connective Analysis' in *Analysis and Metaphysics* (1992a), although it was first introduced in *Skepticism and Naturalism: Some Varieties* (1985, p.25). But, as the expression is now more prevalent in the literature than 'the connective model' and for its elegance, I will henceforth use 'Connective Analysis' to designate the connective model of analysis.

framework. I suspect the description of the framework there is yet to be completed, because I think there must be another indispensable component to the framework, namely, the concept of *causation*.[2]

In this thesis, I will endeavour to describe the concept of causation as one of the basic concepts of the framework. I will argue that the concept of causation should be analysed connectively according to Strawson's approach because, like the other concepts he discusses, the concept of causation is, I think, deeply embedded in our way of perceiving and describing the world.

First, I will illustrate what Strawson tries to show by descriptive metaphysics and connective analysis. In general, the two projects put together are supposed to describe the necessary and sufficient conditions for us to have the experience of the world, on the one hand, and for us to make the experience intelligible to ourselves, on the other. I will present the description of the conceptual framework to make clear the connections between its basic concepts and thereby to see that the framework must include the concept of causation.

In Chapter 2, I will move on to argue for the concept of causation in the conceptual framework from the description presented in Chapter 1. I will also mention another distinction Strawson makes between descriptive and explanatory metaphysics, which will illustrate two sides of the same coin, as it were, that is, the distinction and the relation between causation as a natural relation and explanation as a rational relation. This leads us to investigate the connections between explanation and other linguistic/conceptual functions like individuation and identification of objects. The conclusion of this chapter will be, in short, that the concept of causation is not merely an explanatory notion but it is an essential component of the framework.

---

[2] I take Strawson's view in *Individuals* (1959) and that in his later works as, if not completely coherent, by and large compatible.

Finally, I will discuss the way in which the concept of causation contributes to individuation and identification. Then, I will go on to elucidate the implications of my argument as to the relationship between general concepts and particulars.

1. The Conceptual Framework

1. 1 Introduction to Descriptive Metaphysics

Strawson initiates the project of descriptive metaphysics in *Individuals*. As was mentioned in Introduction, descriptive metaphysics aims at describing the actual structure of our conceptual framework. In contrast, the aim of revisionary metaphysics is rather to go beyond what we actually perceive by asserting that there is something going wrong in our ordinary experience and also by providing an allegedly correct theory of the fundamental structure of the world. For its limited but aspiring scope, Strawson admits, revisionary metaphysics is 'intrinsically admirable and of enduring philosophical utility', yet it is 'at the service of descriptive metaphysics' (1959, p.9). By this, he means to draw a contrast between them in terms of how each of the two gains a justification in putting forward an account of a worldview. He suggests that revisionary metaphysics is 'charitably interpreted' as the view of what the world actually is on a different conceptual scheme 'as opposed to how [it] delusively seems to us to be' (Strawson, 1992b, p.318).[3] In other words, revisionary metaphysicians need to take for granted what the world seems to us because that is what revisionary metaphysicians ultimately try to revise, meanwhile, descriptive metaphysics arises 'within the *same* context of justification' (Bird, 2003, pp.68-69). To what extent this justification 'within the *same* context' can prevail should be examined further, yet I think it is safe to say that regardless of whether our experience of the world will ultimately be proven delusive, descriptive metaphysics should be regarded as capable of accounting for its structure.

Strawson (1992a) draws two analogies: one is between the work of a type of therapist and that of philosophers; the other between the work of a certain type of grammarian and that of philosophers. The former underlines a negative aspect of the work of philosophers. That is,

---

[3] See also Hacker, 2003, pp.51-52.

as a therapist diagnoses and cures the illness, one of many tasks of philosophers is to cure an intellectual illness, or philosophical confusion by investigating where this arises (1992a, p.3). Confusion arises when our concepts and our ideas are not 'at work', that is, when 'we allow the concepts or the words to become detached from their actual use' (1992a, p.4). What Strawson has in mind here is Wittgenstein's suggestion on a way of treating philosophical problems. In *Philosophical Investigations* (1953), he writes, 'philosophical problems arise when language *goes on holiday*' and what we should seek is to give philosophy peace (§38 & §133).

The latter analogy goes as follows. The grammar of a given language is of no use to those who already mastered the language, even though it should be thought to have been mastered implicitly by them because they can follow it effortlessly. The task of the grammarian is to spell out the rules of the grammar we tacitly follow. But the philosophical articulation of the rules goes beyond the talk about the language itself, that is, it goes on to illuminate a set of concepts, like 'sameness' or 'existence' that must have been mastered along the way of mastering the use of the language, regardless of whether the language is used in the most rudimentary or most sophisticated way. Another task of philosophy is to account for concepts of this kind, namely, the kind of concepts that are necessary for us to talk and thus think in language (Strawson, 1992a, pp.5-7).[4]

These two analogies and the contrast between revisionary and descriptive metaphysics suggest that the project of descriptive metaphysics should lie in accounting for the conceptual apparatus we tacitly accept, or more precisely, the apparatus we are given on perceiving and also thinking about the world, as grammarians of the aforementioned kind are supposed to do. Thus concepts that we should be after on descriptive metaphysics lie in the 'massive central core of human thinking which has no history' and which 'in their most fundamental

---

[4] See also Brown, 2006, pp.169-170.

character, change not at all'. Descriptive metaphysics accomplishes this task by examining the actual use of words, because those concepts are 'submerged' beneath 'the surface of language' at a deeper level (Strawson, 1959, pp.9–10; Glock, 2012, p.394). At the same time, it aims at 'curing' philosophical confusion in revisionary metaphysics which arises when we try to go beyond the actual use of words.

It should be noted that while descriptive metaphysics starts from our actual use of language and describes our actual conceptual framework, what is to be accomplished through the investigations should not be regarded as merely subjective. It is indeed true that the conceptual framework is contingent upon the use we happen to employ, that is, it might have been different depending on what integral functions are in a given language.[5] Yet, we do not use words to describe the world within each of us, but rather to describe the world or the framework that 'we are in' (Strawson, 1959, p.30).

Descriptive metaphysics illustrates the features of the framework and concepts embedded in it, yet it does so without rendering necessary the features and the concepts. We must be regarded as being in the conceptual framework as long as we use language in the way we actually do. That is to say, we have this framework not with necessity, yet we should accept it as a 'very fundamental fact' (Strawson, 1959, p. 62).[6]

1. 2 Introduction to Connective Analysis

As was briefly mentioned in Introduction, Strawson presents two models of analysis, reductive or atomistic, and connective. The reductive model operates on dismantling a complex concept into simpler constitutive concepts. Since the aim is to explain or define a complex concept with simpler ones, it stops its procedure only when it comes upon the simplest concept that cannot be explained in terms of other concepts. It should be noted that

---

[5] See for example Strawson,1989, p.70.
[6] See also Strawson, 1989, p.70.

the reductive model undoubtedly plays a non-trivial role in philosophical analysis. I think Strawson would admit to this point because when the target concept obviously has simpler constitutive parts, reducing it into its parts would lead to another perspective on the concept.

What Strawson would find implausible is the alleged end of the reductive model that it should dismantle a complex concept into the *simplest* constitutive ones which have no further dismantleable parts. If we take the end of this project seriously, then we have every right to accuse the reductive analysis of being circular when what should be reduced recurs in what it should be reduced to. As Strawson states:

> [T]he formula 'Your analysis is circular, it suffers from circularity' really is damaging, indeed fatally damaging, to the pretended analysis if we are thinking in terms of that model of analysis which represents it as a kind of dismantling of a complex structure into simpler elements, a process which terminates only when you reach pieces which cannot be further dismantled; for this process has not even begun if one of the alleged pieces turns out to be, or to contain, the very thing, the very concept, that was to be dismantled. (1992a, p.19)

At this point, we should admit the reductive model is inexecutable to its ideal end and abandon the idea of the simplest constitutive concepts. As opposed to the reductive model, Strawson presents *Connective Analysis*[7], by which we aim to reveal illuminating complex networks and connections among concepts that cannot be dismantled without running into circularity. That is to say, not only does connective analysis escape the accusation of circularity, but also it can rather embrace circularity in explaining concepts, as *very fundamental facts* about the concepts in question.

---

[7] Strawson admits that it would be better to use the word 'elucidation' rather than 'analysis' as the latter has some lingering impression from the reductive, dismantling analysis. But he continues to use 'analysis' for its consecrated usage and the range of meaning it should cover (See Strawson, 1992a, p.19).

Again, I think what Strawson means to analyse by connective analysis are categories and concepts that have 'no history' and 'change not at all'. So it can be said that connective analysis is capable of describing an integrated picture of connections and relationships among concepts that stand intertwined and interdependent with each other.

Then, what kind of concepts are suitable for connective analysis? This question is partly answered by the answer to what descriptive metaphysics aims at describing. That is to say, connective analysis should analyse concepts that we employ effortlessly in order to have the experience of the world and also in order to talk about it. Those concepts are fundamental in the sense that they are embedded in the conceptual apparatus of our ordinary discourse no matter how rudimentary or sophisticated it is. And for this reason, they are not to be seen as constructs of elemental concepts; they have no history. But there must be concepts fundamental and intertwined with each other so that we can perceive and think about the world.

1. 3 The Conceptual Framework

In Strawson's initial investigation on descriptive metaphysics in *Individuals*, he investigates the conceptual framework of our experience. In sum, the framework has mainly three distinctive features: first, it contains the concept of Space and Time as its basic concepts; second, in this framework with spatiotemporality, material bodies should figure as basic particulars; and third, persons also have to be included in the basic particulars of the framework. This chapter presents these basic elements and examines the argument for each. I hope this can show the comprehensive picture of descriptive metaphysics and also why these basic concepts should be analysed connectively. Also, I will try to show a gap in the framework that will be the focal point of the following chapter.

Before we embark on the examination of the arguments, it would be helpful to have a grasp of Strawson's core concern in his works. As many scholars of Strawson recognise it,

his main philosophical concern revolves around the distinction between two essential linguistic functions, namely, *Reference* and *Predication*.[8] In 'On Referring'(1950), he inquires how we uniquely refer to particulars by elucidating what should be presupposed for a speaker and a hearer to individuate the particulars referred to. The inquiry into how we refer to an object consists mainly in the inquiry into our linguistic practices. Yet, it certainly has some implications for ontological questions, as Strawson writes:

> Suppose we are talking in all seriousness about the world, about reality as we conceive it. Suppose further that we employ a definite singular substantive with the intention of referring thereby to a particular individual object or person and attributing to it or him some property. Then what we say can be true, or even a candidate for truth, only on condition that such an object or person exists in fact. (1992a, p.42)

In other words, the question of how we refer necessarily leads us to the question of what we refer to, and further, what we need in order for us to individuate and identify the object, to which we intend to refer. On the other hand, it has come to be slightly clearer at this point that in order to give a complete account of reference, it is needed to give an account of the relationships between reference and predication, namely, as to whether or not a reference to a particular object can be accomplished by providing a description merely in general terms. These are some of the focal questions in his writings, which should be kept in mind to understand the essence of his project in *Individuals*.

1. 3. 1 Space and Time

The investigation starts in *Individuals* by asking the question of how identification of particulars is secured. Since whether a speaker can succeed in identifying a particular does not hinge on whether a hearer can succeed in identifying the referent of the speaker's

---

[8] See, for example, Brown, 2006, pp.51-52.

identifying expression, i.e., a speaker alone can individuate the particular he intends to talk about in his thought, we have to distinguish two senses of 'identify', namely, that of the speaker and of the hearer (Strawson, 1959, p.16). One obvious instance of successful identification in both senses is accomplished by the use of demonstratives in the presence of the object a speaker intends to refer to, in cases such as where one sees a dog and refers to it by expressions such as '*this* dog is such and such'. As opposed to cases like this, Strawson raises a case of what he calls a *story-relative* identification, where identification is secured within the context of the story told by a speaker (1959, p.18). Yet, these types of identification lack the generality we should be after since we want an account of how identification of particulars *in general*, is secured. Yet, the contrast between these two types of identification illustrates one of the interesting features of identification: identification of a particular requires a certain framework of reference, which is satisfied, in cases of demonstratives, by both a speaker and a hearer being situated in a place where the referent is present and, in the story-relative cases, by a speaker's providing the picture of the frame where particulars referred to are situated.

Then, it is natural for one to raise the question of what if there is no frame of reference provided by demonstratives or a speaker's story. This question concerns the general requirements of identification of a particular. One plausible answer is that the successful identification of a particular, in general, is secured by names or descriptions in general terms. Yet, these cannot provide a sufficient condition of identification because names are worthless without the support of descriptions which instruct the application or the use of a name, in terms of which object is referred to by it (Strawson, 1959, p.20). As for descriptions, Strawson considers the possibility of descriptions free of any demonstrative and story-relative element, what he calls, *pure individuating descriptions* (1959, p.26).[9] They should *not* contain

---

[9] See Strawson, 1959, pp.26-27.

any reference to particular objects and places, so only descriptions like 'the first dog to be born at sea' are included. Evidently, as the description contains only general terms, it has no instruction as to where to apply this. A description may fail to individuate a particular when there is no object that can satisfy the description or when there are more than one objects that can satisfy it. Then, it is implausible that only pure identifying descriptions can provide for the sufficient condition of identification of a particular, because the speaker and the hearer *cannot* ultimately ascertain that they both identified the same object, or even that they identified an object at all; they know nothing about how the to-be-identified object stands to other objects, and thus know nothing about how to relate the object to the other objects in the picture of discourse. To narrow down where to apply a pure individuating description, one can elaborate it by adding other descriptions in general terms so that only one object uniquely satisfies it. But then it raises the possibility of it not having a referent at all.

Evidently, it is not true that the speaker uses a description to refer to a random object in the universe, nor that the hearer singles out a random object upon hearing the description uttered by the speaker. What is missing here in the condition is that we should know what 'sector of the universe' we are occupying, that is, we know where we are, as well as, where to look for the referent of a given description. That is to say, the possibility of identifying a particular ultimately rests on the notions of Space and Time.[10]

After all, the argument elaborated above implies that identifying particular objects, in general, is secured by what Strawson calls a *demonstrative force*:

> [I]dentifying reference to particulars rests ultimately on the use of expressions which, directly or indirectly, embody a demonstrative force; or, to put it in terms of thought rather than of language, that identifying thought about particulars necessarily incorporates a demonstrative element. (Strawson, 1959, p.119)

---

[10] See Strawson, 1959, p.29, and 1992a, pp.55-56

That is to say, every identifying expression and thought presupposes that an object of reference should be present in the speaker's sight or at least in the speaker's thought, directly or indirectly. A non-demonstrative identifying expression can depend indirectly on the demonstrative force by having implicit reference to the objects which are present to the identifying subject.

Moreover, the improbability of pure individuating descriptions attests that in order for the speaker and the hearer to be sure that they refer to the same object, the point of reference, spatially and temporally extended, needs to be unified and shared by both.

> By means of identifying references, we fit other people's reports and stories, along with our own, into the single story about empirical reality; and this fitting together, this connexion, rests ultimately on relating the particulars which figure in the stories in the single spatio-temporal system which we ourselves occupy. (Strawson, 1959, p.29)

So, essentially, the possibility of successful identification of particular objects depends on the unified framework equipped with or incorporating the notions of Space and Time, where both the speaker and the hearer can situate the object referred to, in relation to other objects.

When talking about the demonstrative force which confers the referring function on expressions, Strawson in many places uses the word 'thought' belonging to the identifying subject. Again, he talks about 'thought' because it does not imply that the identification can be regarded as successful only when the hearer as well as the speaker can successfully single out the object referred to. But at this level where the framework is proved to be unified and shared by participants of the conversation, we should take this talk of thought with caution. Two things should be noted. First, there should be much closer and more interwoven connections between judgement, concepts, and experience. That is, it is not that our concepts, or components of thought, get their meaning through the experience of the world, or the

objective reality, but rather 'it is that the very concepts in terms of which we form our primitive or fundamental or least theoretical beliefs get their sense for us precisely as concepts which we should judge to apply in possible experience situations' (Strawson, 1992a, pp.52-53). Experience is not merely the bridge between subjective and objective; it is the very thing in virtue of which concepts we do employ have their meaning. But now, as Strawson recognises, there arises the risk that the notion of objective reality gets entirely 'engulfed' or 'swallowed up' in the notion of experience (1992, p.53).

That said, second, as the passage quoted above indicates, not only the objects of reference and identification but also the identifying and referring subjects should be situated in the framework. So Strawson would here again remind us that the framework is not something 'within us', but rather it is the system which 'we are in' (Strawson, 1959, p.30). More interestingly, this suggests that the objectivity of the framework is not to be proved by the phenomenological features of our experience, but can be derived by the fact that we can successfully individuate and refer to particular objects.

1. 3. 2 Material Bodies

We have seen how our framework of experience incorporates and necessitates the notions of Space and Time, for identification of particular objects to be successful or even to be possible at all. As was mentioned in the last section, reference to objects by non-demonstrative expressions ultimately depends on that by demonstrative expressions. This is mainly because of the demonstrative force to specify the setting of the discourse, more precisely, the capability of narrowing down the range of places where an expression can apply.

That said, it is yet to be investigated what kind of objects can be candidates of referents of demonstrative expressions. Or to put it another way, what kind of objects can, in

the framework, figure as basic particulars, basic in the sense that the identifiability of objects of any other categories depends on the identifiability of objects of one category, but not vice versa? And what are the relationships between these basic particulars and the framework?

Now recall the argument from the improbability of pure individuating descriptions. The conclusion is summarised as follows: 'particular-identification in general rests ultimately on the possibility of locating the particular things we speak of in a single unified spatio-temporal system' (Strawson, 1959, p.38). From this, it follows that the basic particulars we are after should enable us to identify the spatiotemporal location of the object referred to, in order for us to specify 'the sector of the universe' where a referring expression can apply. This is exactly why pure individuating descriptions must be regarded as improbable and also why expressions with the demonstrative force must be regarded as preeminent in the sense other non-demonstrative expressions should directly or indirectly incorporate reference to objects demonstratively referred to.

Then, it follows that the basic particulars should be something that can constitute the spatiotemporality of the framework. That is to say, 'they must be three-dimensional objects with some endurance through time' (Strawson, 1959, p.39). Strawson categorises objects of this kind as *material bodies*. Further, he explains that they 'should tend to exhibit some felt resistance to touch; or, perhaps more generally, that [they] should possess some qualities of the tactual range' (1959, p.39). This is indeed a more stringent condition as it cannot allow for a purely visual occupant of a space. Such an object would not be regarded as 'material' if there were one, yet Strawson suggests that a purely visual object could also be included in 'material bodies' in a weaker sense as long as it could fulfil the requirements for being basic in the aforementioned sense.

Here his conception of individuals and that of particulars can be seen to mesh with the conceptual framework. According to the former, not only particulars but also anything that

15

can be introduced by identifying expressions into discourse, such as qualities and characters, is an individual, as it can figure in as a logical subject.[11] But according to the latter, particulars are more complete in the sense that they 'unfold into a fact', whereas non-particulars such as qualities lack this completeness.[12] So long as an object referred to has this completeness, and so long as it can be located in the spatiotemporal framework, it should be regarded as included in material bodies.

In the previous section, we have seen how the identifiability of a particular depends on the identification of the spatiotemporal location of the particular. But upon the conception of particulars, locations in terms of Space and Time should also be particulars, as they can also be identifyingly referred to. That is to say, it is not only that the identifiability of particulars depends on the spatiotemporality of the framework, but also the spatiotemporality should depend on material bodies; otherwise, they are not basic in the required sense.

After all, it should be the case that reference to objects of other categories be dependent on reference to material bodies. As it was implied that pure individuating descriptions are improbable, descriptions and names which incorporate the demonstrative force ultimately have reference to things we can directly observe or at least we can situate in a known place in the framework. Places should be defined by the relations between material bodies: processes should be defined in terms of the material bodies involved, and/or in terms of the location of a process, which again depends on the material bodies.[13]

Before we move on, it should be mentioned that the conclusion that material bodies figure in as basic particulars should not be regarded as, in any sense, a revision of our conceptual apparatus. One may be confused, as the investigation seems to suggest, that the status of basic particulars should be conferred upon material bodies because, otherwise, we

---

[11] See Strawson, 1959, p.137, also Brown, 2006, p.51.
[12] See Strawson, 1959, p.212.
[13] See Strawson, 1959, p.55.

cannot derive the identifiability of particulars. But, as Strawson highlights again, material bodies being basic particulars in the framework is rather a fundamental fact about the way we talk about and thereby make sense of the experience of the world. He writes:

> It is not that on the one hand we have a conceptual scheme which presents us with a certain problem of particular-identification; while on the other hand there exist material objects in sufficient richness and strength to make possible the solution of such problems. It is only because the solution is possible that the problem exists. (1959, p. 40)

It is a contingent matter how we experience the world as we actually do and how we use language accordingly. But recall the close connections between judgement, concepts, and experience. Descriptive metaphysics aims at 'laying bare' these connections, but not revising them in order to give solutions to problems. Problems exist only when 'language goes on *holiday*'.[14]

1. 3. 3 Persons

The last basic component of the framework Strawson enumerates is the concept of person. Interesting and illuminating as his argument for the concept and its implications may be, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to fully investigate the concept of person. So I will try to briefly reconstruct his argument from what we have already seen in the previous sections and try to illustrate the connections with the conceptual framework and its other basic concepts.

At the end of the first chapter of *Individuals*, Strawson sums up the arguments and writes:

---

[14]See, Wittgenstein, 1953, §38.

Demonstratives or quasi-demonstratives apart, it is proper names which tend to be the resting-places of reference to particulars, the points on which the descriptive phrases pivot. Now, among particulars, the bearers *par excellence* of proper names are persons and places. It is a conceptual truth [...] that places are defined by the relations of material bodies; and it is also a conceptual truth [...] that *persons* have material bodies. (1959, p. 58; italics added)

Philosophers have been trying to reduce the concept of person into those of body and mind, and quite frequently even tried to eliminate one in favour of another.

Recall Strawson's conception of individuals and particulars. Persons can be identifyingly referred to and persons have the completeness of material bodies as they surely have bodies. Then persons have a legitimate place as a subject of discourse. Yet this is not to say, only a mind or body of a person has this distinctive character of basic particulars, as we predicate not only bodily features like height, weight, and position but also states of consciousness, like visual experience, of the same individual, namely a person. This is because a body of a person plays a special role to his states of consciousness: a body is an occupant of space, and bodily conditions affect the manner of experience, in a sense, one's states of consciousness are causally dependent on his bodily situations and characteristics. This can explain why we predicate bodily features and conscious states of the very same thing. Yet a question remains: why are conscious states to be predicated of anything at all?

After all, it is also linguistic confusion that there seem to be two distinct entities in one single person, namely, his body and mind, in accordance with the distinction between attributes that can be predicated of a body and those that can be predicated of a seemingly non-bodily entity. Once this reduction of the concept of person into the two concepts is made, we will lose the grasp of the concept of person altogether, as a person would come to seem

18

'animated body' or 'embodied soul'.[15] Then, it all becomes inexplicable why we ascribe conscious states as well as bodily qualities to the very same thing, and why conscious states are to be ascribed to anything at all.

It seems to be that persons, bodies, and minds can be identifyingly referred to, by proper names, specified locations, and pronouns like 'I'. But this is not to say that they are all basic in the sense specified in the last section. Of course, human bodies should be basic as they also comprise the spatiotemporal framework. But we should note that we do not refer to a person by referring neither to her body nor to the location of it. Strawson points out that this shows that persons should also figure in the framework as basic particulars and that the concept of person should be 'primitive' in relation to the concepts of body and mind.[16] Again, this is not suggested as a solution to the mind-body problem, it is rather a fundamental fact that persons are basic and primitive in the framework: the problem exists because 'the solution is possible'.

Due to the linguistic and thus conceptual confusion, philosophers have been overlooking the fact that the concept of person has a distinctive place in the framework. It affords us the ground where we distinguish what is experiencing and what is experienced, that is, a subject and objects of experience. Without this primitive concept of person, we would lack a general way of identifying particulars. The spatiotemporality, material bodies, and persons are closely and necessarily connected in the way they give rise to the possibility of experience.

1. 4 Concluding Remarks

The essence of connective analysis is also present in the analysis of this framework. First, Strawson starts descriptive metaphysics by investigating what is necessary for us to

---

[15] See Strawson, 1959, p.103.
[16] See Strawson, 1959, pp.101-102.

identify objects by identifying expressions and thereby to talk about the objects in our experience. He maintains that material bodies have a special status in the conceptual framework as basic particulars because the identification of events and objects of other categories ultimately depends on the identification of material bodies involved (1959, p.46). While material bodies are regarded as basic particulars, they necessitate an enduring and spatial framework. But, in turn, the spatiotemporality of the framework is not conceivable without material bodies enduring in it. As is suggested by connective analysis, this should not be regarded as circular, because both the particulars and the framework are not such that we constructed them out of elemental concepts and can exhaust the meaning of them by just reducing them to simpler parts.

Connective analysis illuminates the connections among concepts that should be presupposed for us to have an experience of the world. As was shown in this chapter, descriptive metaphysics provides a spatiotemporal conceptual framework which is comprised of basic particulars, namely, material bodies and persons, for their being the primary source of identification and reidentification. One of the reasons Strawson enumerates persons as basic particulars is that personhood provides the particular point of view from which both identification and reidentification become possible.

As I have indicated in Introduction, I think Strawson was highly aware of the connections among ontology, epistemology, and logico-linguistics in the investigation of *Individuals*. He starts from the examination of the basic linguistic functions so as to account for the conceptual framework we are given to perceive the world. Indeed, it should not be regarded as missing the epistemological aspect. Although it was not explicitly investigated there, Strawson pays significant attention to the connection between perception and identification. This is more evident not only when he talks about the 'causal sources' of sounds, in re/identifying sounds, but also when he looks for the necessary condition for there

to be the distinction between a subject and an object in the pure auditory world in Chapter 2 of *Individuals*.[17]

The bridge between identification and perception must, I think, be the concept of *causation*. I will argue in the following chapter that the concept of causation should be placed in the framework for identifying expressions to single out their referents, and for us to have perceptions of material bodies. The focal questions are as follows. First, what do we need to individuate and identify particulars in the framework? My answer will be, in short, the causal connection among basic particulars such as material bodies and persons. Second, where should we place the concept of causation according to Strawson? I will introduce another distinction Strawson makes between descriptive and explanatory metaphysics. This will help to specify what aspects of the concept are necessitated in identification of particulars.

---

[17] See Strawson, 1959, p.67 and p.83.

2. Causation and the Framework

So far I have presented the general picture of descriptive metaphysics in *Individuals*. In sum, it describes, as our conceptual framework of experience, a spatial and temporal conceptual structure with material bodies and persons as its basic particulars. The key notions of the arguments are individuation and identification. While for identification of particulars in general to be secured, it should be the case that we have the concepts of Space and Time, the spatiotemporality of the framework is secured only when we have material bodies and persons, which can provide the points of reference, by being identified through demonstrative expressions. It is worth repeating that in Strawson's formulation, the demonstrative force of expressions is the point where talking about anything at all becomes possible.

As I have mentioned, Strawson certainly might have been aware of the need to fill a gap between ontology and logic-linguistics in descriptive metaphysics, by explaining the epistemological aspect of the identification. This is so for the following reasons. First, when accounting for the possibility of identification ultimately by the demonstrative force of expressions, it should be assumed that there is a connection between epistemology and linguistics that can account for the fact that participants of a discourse who directly perceive objects can successfully identify and thereby refer to them.

Second, in Chapter 2 of *Individuals* in the argument for the spatial nature of the framework by probing the pure auditory world, Strawson writes:

> Suppose, that is to say, that the being whose experience is purely auditory sometimes just suffers change of position—change just occurs—and sometimes initiates it. [...] It might seem that the introduction into our universe of this distinction—the distinction, roughly speaking, between changes that are brought about, and changes that merely occur—would necessitate the introduction of the idea of that which brings about the

22

deliberate changes, and hence of the idea of the distinction between oneself and what

is not oneself. (1959, p.83)

It should be possible that we can distinguish between changes in the sound we bring about and changes that simply happen independently of our agency in order to distinguish a subject from objects of experience.

At this point, it has become clear that the concept of causation plays a significant role or roles in explaining the connections among the framework, basic particulars and the possibility of identification. This chapter investigates the concept of causation and its roles in the framework of descriptive metaphysics. First, I will argue that the concept of causation must be embedded in the framework for the identification of particulars. I will illustrate the connections between the concept of causation and the other basic concepts in the framework. Then, I will examine the relationships between causation and explanation, which will cast light on Strawson's distinction between descriptive and explanatory metaphysics.

2. 1 The Argument for the Concept of Causation

It is rather obvious that the use of demonstrative expressions in identifying objects highly depends on whether or not it is possible to, directly or indirectly, perceive the objects in question. When using an expression like 'this man', it must be assumed that the person referred to is present to the speaker, or is present at least in the story told by the speaker like in the case of the story-relative identification. Yet, this is merely the condition of a speaker's properly using demonstrative expressions. For demonstrative identification to be successful between a speaker and a hearer, it should also be required that the fact that they perceive one and the same object, is *causally* dependent on the presence of the object. Although it should be noted that we use demonstratives in various ways, not limited to cases where the object demonstratively referred to is present to the speaker at the moment of the utterance, like 'you

know, there is *this* guy…', but it is plausible to say that even in cases like this, the object demonstratively referred to should be present in the story, which, in turn, ideally should be based on the fact the speaker has perceived the person in question.

The causal dependence of demonstratives on the presence of objects seems to me a rather evident fact. When a speaker uses an expression, 'this guy' or 'that guy', not only for the speaker but also for the hearer should it be possible to locate the referent of the expression in the framework (maybe it does not have to be locatable *both* spatially and temporally). In cases of demonstrative reference in a strict sense, namely, where the object of reference is present to the participants of discourse, demonstratives prevail as the way of specifying the setting of discourse, without mediating details about the spatiotemporal location of the object. But this special status of demonstratives should be dependent on the presupposition that the object they both can identifyingly refer to is present to them and causally related to them.

Strawson makes a similar point from a different perspective in *Individuals*. When delving into how identification of a sound-particular can be successful between two agents in the pure auditory world, he imagines a case where they hear the same chord simultaneously but in distinct halls and he remarks:

> But though in one sense the sound they hear is the same—it is the same chord for each—in another sense, the sense we are concerned with, the sounds they hear are distinct. They hear different sound-particulars: for the condition of particular-identity of surroundings, and the condition of particular-identity of causal sources, are not fulfilled. (1959, p.67)

What he thinks is missing to secure the identification is the causal connection involved in the perception of a sound-particular: the fact that they have roughly the same auditory experience should be accounted for by the same *cause* of the sound.

It is not merely that it is required, for demonstrative identification to be possible, that the object of identification should, at least conceptually, be present to the speaker and the hearer, but also that identification of particulars *in general* requires the notion of causation, or the causal connections between a subject and an object of identification. At the same time, the possibility of the distinction between a subject and an object hinges on the notion of causation. Again, Strawson writes:

> It might seem that the introduction into our universe of this distinction—the distinction, roughly speaking, between changes that are brought about, and changes that merely occur—would necessitate the introduction of the idea of that which brings about the deliberate changes, and hence of the idea of the distinction between oneself and what is not oneself. (1959, p.83)

As we have seen in the last chapter, the concept of person is basic in the framework and primitive in relation to the concepts of body and mind. So on the one hand, we have the distinction between changes deliberately brought about and changes that merely occur, and this distinction gives rise to the distinction between a subject and an object of changes. On the other hand, the concept of person should be embedded in the framework so as to explain why bodily situations, including movements, what potentially brings about changes, and the conscious states, including perception and deliberation, belong to the same individual. This interrelationship between changes, the subject and the object of changes and perception attests that the concept of causation is an integral component of the conceptual framework.

Furthermore, the reason that pure individuating descriptions should be regarded as improbable is that they lack, unlike demonstrative expressions, the element that enables us to specify the sector of the universe. This is to say, for individuation of a particular in usual cases to be secured, it should be possible that a particular is *spatiotemporally* relatable to participants of discourse so they can locate it in the conceptual framework. After all, the one

25

obvious and most certain way to explain this relatability is by causality between a subject and objects, and also *among* objects. Pure individuating descriptions need to be supplemented with the details about the referent in terms, again possibly not both, of its spatial and temporal location. Besides, the spatiotemporality is secured by material objects that comprise the framework, by most certainly *causally* relating to each other. Therefore, the way we in fact individuate and refer to objects, *in general*, necessitates the concept of causation in the framework.

2. 2 Causation and Explanation

So far I have examined the relationships between causation and other essential features of the framework of descriptive metaphysics. Now I would like to draw attention to the connection between causation and explanation. As Strawson remarks in *Analysis and Metaphysics*, they are tied together in our practical vocabulary, so closely that they are not usually distinguished. When explaining an event in terms of another preceding event, one would use such an expression as 'due to' and 'because of' to reflect the *natural* relation between events. Yet, in so much as it is an explanation, the relation *described* is regarded as holding not between the two events in the world, but between facts that describe the events: it should be regarded as a *rational* relation, as opposed to natural (Strawson, 1992a, pp.109-110).

I have been talking about the concept of causation and its distinctive roles within the conceptual framework. The relation and distinction between causation and explanation lead us to question the location of the concept of causation, which I have been taking to be within the framework. It should be noted that Strawson, again, draws another distinction between descriptive and explanatory metaphysics. Glock summarises this distinction:

> Explanatory metaphysics investigates the "natural foundations" of our "conceptual apparatus in the way things happen in the world, and in our own natures." [...] Descriptive metaphysics, on the other hand, seeks not to provide a (presumably causal and empirical) explanation of how our conceptual scheme depends on contingent background conditions, but rather to describe the various interconnections between the fundamental concepts that constitute the scheme. (2012, p.395)

This highlights the close connections between concepts and experience but at the same time the distinction between what in nature causes our experience or our concepts, and what we experience by employing concepts; the natural foundation that exists by itself, provides the conceptual apparatus, such as the notion of causation and explanation, which operates only within the framework and does not belong to the natural, objective world. According to this picture, in contrast to the other basic concepts which comprise the structure of the experience, the concept of causation seems to be not merely the tool to describe the structure, but also the bridge between the natural world and our conceptual world. Now it has become unclear whether we should treat the concept of causation as basic in the same sense that Space and Time are basic.

Besides, Strawson admits that the concept of causation, when taken as the relation between particular events and circumstances, has 'no footing' in reality. He writes:

> It is true that there is no single natural relation which is detectable as such in the particular case, which holds between distinct events or conditions and which is identifiable as the causal relation. (1992a, p.114)

He draws an analogy between the concept of individual substance, that is, material bodies, and the concept of causation. Even though they are highly abstract and general notions, the former has a footing, or a certain application in the vocabulary of particular observation. That is, the concept of material bodies is to be detected, as it were, through particular instances of

the concept. Yet, the concept of causation lacks this footing in observation of particular events:

> [T]he notion of cause, understood as a relation between distinct *particular* events or circumstances, finds, in the observation vocabulary, no footing which exactly parallels that which I have just illustrated in the case of the notion of substance, yet the notion of causation *in general* does find a footing or, rather, a foundation, and a secure foundation, in the observation vocabulary. (Strawson, 1992a, p.115; italics added.)

It is true that even when we identify a particular sequence of events as a case of causation, the causal relation taken to hold between particular events does not lose its generality. This is presupposed in what Strawson calls 'the accepted view', according to which we acquire the concept of causation through observation of regularly repeated sequences of events.[18]

This argument so far suggests that the concept of causation belongs, not to the objective world, where actual events hold, but to the storage of our conceptual apparatus where facts hold, and where the concept is regarded as a mere byproduct of observation on the world. Then, the question is: does this prevent the concept of causation from being basic in the framework? I think not.

It seems that the argument has been overlooking the causal element in perception and observation. As we have seen, taking demonstratives as the paradigm of the way of individuation and reference, we cannot forgo the causal connections between a subject and an object, and among objects. It is true that the concept of causation *in general* should be acquired through observation of regularly connected events. That is one way experience provides 'the footing' in the world for the concept of causation. There should be another way through which the concept acquires the footing, maybe of a different sort, that is, by experience *per se*.

---

[18] See Strawson, 1992a, p.114.

Recall the close connections between judgement, concepts, and experience mentioned in Section 1. 3. 1. Concepts gain their meaning by virtue of experience, and, in turn, concepts are required to have their meaning in order for us to make sense of experience. Granted the primacy of demonstrative identification as the starting point of talking about the world, the whole conceptual framework hinges on a perceptible, observational, thus *causal*, touch between a subject and an object. Again, even this distinction between a subject and an object should be dependent on the concept of causation.

No doubt Strawson recognises the significant status of the concept of causation and tries to explicate how it is possible at all that we come to form the concept of causation through observing regularities. And he seems to find the root in the other basic concepts of the framework:

> [T]hough we do indeed learn much about the operation of causality in the world through the observation of regularities of succession, we do so only because the general notion of causal efficacy and causal response, of effects being brought about in a variety of specific ways, is already lodged with us, is already implicit in a wide range of concepts of thing, quality, action, and reaction which belong to our basic stock of concepts of the observable. (1992a, p.123)

From the argument made in the previous section, it follows that the concept of causation should already be embedded in other basic concepts and particular objects to which they can be applied. But on the other hand, this is because the observability, and therefore the demonstrative identifiability necessitate facts and the conceptual framework to be *causally* dependent on the objective world.

Therefore, the concept of causation should not be regarded as merely a conceptual explanatory apparatus of the framework of experience. But, like the notions of Space and Time, material bodies, and persons, it should be basic in the sense that it is essential to the

framework as a whole, or in other words, it is necessary for us to have experience of the world as we actually do now.

2. 3 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has examined the role of causation within the framework of descriptive metaphysics. It has been argued that causation is a fundamental concept that plays a significant role in the identification of particulars and the overall structure of the framework. The successful use of demonstrative expressions for identification relies on the causal connections between a perceiving subject and to-be-identified objects. Furthermore, the distinction between the subject and the object of experience, as well as the ability to individuate and refer to objects, necessitate the concept of causation. The concept of causation is embedded in the framework and provides the basis for the spatial and temporal connections among the basic particulars.

The chapter has also explored the relationships between causation and explanation. It has been shown that causation and explanation are closely intertwined in our practical vocabulary, although they represent distinct types of relations: natural and rational, respectively. The distinction between descriptive and explanatory metaphysics highlights the distinction between what comprises the conceptual framework and the conceptual apparatus with which to talk about the framework. After all, the distinction between descriptive and explanatory is not clear-cut. Strawson himself writes:

> For fully to understand our conceptual equipment, it is not enough to know, to be able to say, how it works. We want to know also why it works as it does. *To ask this is to ask to be shown how the nature of our thinking is rooted in the nature of the world and in our own natures.* (1956, p.107; italics added.)

Again, as Strawson notes, the fact we employ the framework we have been concerned with is a contingent fact; it depends on our manners and modes of perceiving, conceptualizing and thus talking about the world. Yet, as long as we follow such manners and modes, it is a fundamental fact that we employ the conceptual framework presented in the first chapter. For this reason, the explanation of why it works as it does, should, at least partially, be implied in the explanation of how it works.

In considering our ways of perceiving and observing the world, it is inevitable to acknowledge their causal element. The connections and distinction between a subject and objects and the connections among objects, rely on causal relations. While the concept of causation may be acquired through the observation of regularities, it also provides a basis for experience and serves as a crucial aspect of demonstrative identification. Thus, causation should be considered a basic and essential concept within the framework, alongside the concepts, such as of Space, Time, material bodies, and persons. It is not merely an explanatory apparatus, but a necessary component of the framework of experience.

3. Causation and Identification

So far, I have presented Strawson's general conceptual structure of the world. Then, considering the special role that demonstrative identification plays in referring to particulars, and also the causal elements in perceiving and observing the world, I have argued that the conceptual framework we employ must include the concept of causation alongside with its other basic concepts. That is to say, not only is the concept of causation intertwined with the other basic concepts, but also they jointly give rise to the conceptual framework and thus secure the possibility of individuating and referring to individuals.

It is worthwhile to recapitulate and tidy up the relationships between the framework and the basic concepts, described in the first chapter, including the concept of causation. First, we began with the question of how the identification of particulars in general is secured. The answer is that it is secured, between participants of a discourse, when they can specify the sector of the universe where an identifying expression applies. It turned out that while demonstrative identification is a special case of identification, the demonstrative force, that is the force that enables participants to locate an object, is the primary source of identification, on which other ways of identifying depend. Since demonstrative identification concerns the locatability of a referent, sectors of the conceptual framework we employ should be identifiable. Therefore, the framework should include the concept of Space and Time for us to indicate the location of an object.

On the other hand, as demonstrative identification has been proven to be the primary way of identifying, we have a question of what kinds of objects can be referents of demonstratively identifying expressions. The answer is material bodies. They are spatiotemporally locatable and at the same time, the spatiotemporality of the framework is to be identified by the relations between material bodies. The argument in the last chapter is, for one part, meant to indicate that the relations here between objects are causal.

Even though persons are also partially material bodies, they are not merely referred to as material bodies. They are also the subjects of which mental states are predicated. In order for us to explain why bodily and mental features belong to the same particular, the same person, it should be that we take persons as the basic particulars, primitive in relation to mind and body. It is evident that we, persons, are what the possibility of identification hinges on; we perceive, name objects and refer to them by names and expressions, we are the holders of the conceptual framework. The argument in the last chapter is also meant to show that our perception and observation of the world, the touch between objects and persons, require causality. In sum, the framework is dependent on the concept of causation in that it has the ability to hold together the basic particulars, and also in that the concept of causation makes no sense without any of the basic concepts of the framework.

Then, identification *in general* is dependent on the concept of causation, or more precisely, relationships between objects and also between a subject and objects. That said, it should be specified further how the concept of causation, and the causal relations between basic particulars contribute to identification of particulars.

The guiding questions of this chapter are as follows. Granted the concept of causation is embedded in the framework for us to identify an object, what do we take, among those relations, as identifying features? In addition, how should we construe identifying features?

This chapter is more tentative than the preceding two chapters, and might have gained from further thought, which given the circumstances I could not manage to offer.

3. 1 Causal Identification and Identifying Features

I have argued that the concept of causation must be included in the conceptual framework with spatiotemporality, which we employ, in order for us to experience and make descriptions of the world, or more specifically to secure the relationship between a subject

and objects of perception on the one hand, and to secure identification of particulars on the other. That said, what kind of causality must be involved in identification of particulars?

Although we do not consciously relate an object and its causal history, as it were, we do not just pick random features of the object to individuate and identify it. Suppose I am trying to individuate and thereby refer to the guitar I have been using for the last two years. I would certainly distinguish between its features in terms of their relevance to the identification of it: I would not pick the new set of strings I just put on it, nor the almost invisible dent I had not noticed until yesterday, but I would pick most certainly the fact it has been 'mine', or the very noticeable peel of the paint on the front of the body and so on, so that I would be able to distinguish my guitar from one of the same model.

Then what are the differences between features of the former type and those of the latter? That is, what counts as identificational features of particulars? Again, the concept of causation should be in play as I identify my guitar, because the relationships among me or the subject, my guitar, the object, and other particulars should be secured causally and above all because the distinction between a subject and objects as well as describing something as 'mine' is also secure by the concept of causation in the framework. That said, the question is much more complicated than it looks. Let us, again, suppose the case of me and my guitar, but this time I am forming an identifying thought 'counterfactually'. Then I would be thinking of sentences like 'my guitar could have had flawless paint', or even 'if my guitar had not been mine'. Then it seems to follow that none of these identifying features necessarily belong to my guitar.

This suggests that even necessary features of an object, if any, fail to meet the condition of identifying features. This would tempt one to presuppose a feature-independent identifying mechanism, that is, a mechanism that enables us to identify an object however it is causally related to other objects. Appealing as it may seem to those who are in search of a

solution to the counterfactual identification, or even identification of particulars in general, this is evidently implausible. As I have argued, the conceptual framework is spatial and temporal and this spatiotemporality is exactly how and why identification of an object is possible. That is, the identifiability of a particular ultimately rests on the locatability, at least on the conceptual level, of a particular. To say that one is able to identify a given particular no matter how it is related to other objects, is to say that one is able to identify it outside the conceptual framework. Given Strawson's conception of particulars, a particular has the conceptual completeness in the sense that it 'unfolds into a fact'. This is to say, particulars must, logically, be presented as objects of possible experience. Now if it is granted that a particular is identifiable outside the conceptual framework, we must be endorsing a chimerical conception of particulars at the cost of losing the grasp of the whole conceptual framework as well as the scaffold of experience.

Then, what was happening in the case of counterfactual identification? The contrast between the identification by actual features and that by counterfactual features merely shows that identifying features depend on how we relate objects that we wish to individuate. Let us suppose another case: now I have two guitars side by side in front of me, mine and the one that looks the same enough that people including me cannot tell the difference between them just by looking at them. In this case, unless I am hopelessly forgetful, I would individuate my guitar, probably by the fact that I certainly brought one of the two guitars and placed, say, on the right side. Or maybe the sound of my guitar is so distinguishable that no matter how it is placed, I can tell which one it is just by playing it. The point I am making here is that there is more than one way to relate objects in terms of features that can enable us to distinguish one from others. That is, identification is highly relational and relative, and thus there might not be a unified principle as to what counts as identifying features. Where there is no apparent difference between the actual object and a counterfactual equivalent in terms of their looks,

then we have to rely on non-visual features. By contrast, when there is no difference between their sounds, then I would identify mine by its visual features.

In the case of counterfactual identification, where the guitar has none of the features by which I identify it in actual cases, we were identifying the guitar that would not have been mine, would not have had the noticeable peel, by features that make comparable the actual and the counterfactual. To investigate to what extent precisely we can modify actual features of a particular in a counterfactual situation is beyond the scope of this thesis. But, for the current concern, it is enough to say that for us to secure the identifiability of a particular in a counterfactual situation, the actual and the counterfactual should remain comparable in terms of some identifiable, or effable features.

After all, it may be impossible that we identify a particular in a counterfactual situation if it has none of its actual features. Let us think about a sentence like 'my guitar could have been a white chair'. What should we make of this sentence if it were to be intelligible at all to us? It seems that the guitar and the counterfactual equivalent of the guitar, namely a white chair share no comparable features. Yet, if we are to make sense of the sentence, I think we presuppose they have highly abstract common features, like their both being material bodies and hence their both being at least conceptually locatable. Cases like this are merely of theoretical interest, so I hope no one would wish to commit themselves to a view along the lines of that 'anything that is a material body and thus locatable in the conceptual framework can be counterfactually identifiable', as this would bring us back to the chimerical conception of particulars.

The point I have made so far is that features we take as individuating and identifying, are relational and relative to what we intend to individuate and identify. At this point, we have to remind ourselves of the argument in 'On Referring'(1950). One of Strawson's main contentions there is that we have to draw a distinction between a sentence, a use of a

sentence, and an utterance of a sentence. While other philosophers had it that a sentence has a strict logical structure and whether a sentence is true or false is determined solely by the truth condition represented by its logical structure, Strawson maintains that a sentence itself does not carry truth values, but instead, a use of a sentence does. That is, when a sentence is used to make an assertion, it can be said to be true or false depending on the context of an utterance of a sentence (1950). Moreover, he directs our attention to another distinction between referring and asserting. While a definite description in a sentence can be used to signal that a unique reference is made, it does not necessarily assert the existence of the referent.

So to put it in the terms currently of concern for us, the identifiability of a particular in the framework is distinct from asserting the existence of a particular. That is to say, while a particular is identifiable when it can be located in the conceptual framework, whether an expression refers to an existing object is a different story. Rather, identifiability, or more precisely, being spatiotemporally locatable in the framework, is a necessary but not sufficient condition of existence. Strawson would agree with this point. Assessing the ontological slogan put forward by Quine[19], 'No entity without identity', Strawson maintains that this is no more than to say that 'There is nothing you can sensibly talk about without knowing, at least in principle, how it might be identified'(1997, p.22).

So far, I have argued that in usual cases, the identifiability of a particular is dependent on the locatability of it in the conceptual framework, and the locatability is then dependent on the causal connections between a subject and an object of identification. Then, it follows that the identifiability of a particular ultimately rests on the causal connections.

Now we can go back to the question we started this section with, that is, what kind of causality must be involved in identification of a particular? As identification *per se* is not an

---

[19] See Quine, 1950, reprinted in Quine, 1969, p. 23.

assertion of the existence of an identified object and as the locatability of a particular, which the identifiability hinges on, is sufficient even if it is only within the conceptual framework, the causality in identification could be a possible causality between objects and between a subject and objects of identification. But this possible causality should depend on the actual framework the identifying subject employs, as the story-relative cases of identification ultimately depend on the present objects demonstratively identified. This way, mere reference to a particular can be regarded not as an assertion of the existence of a referent.

The causality being merely possible would not compromise my argument set out in the previous chapter. Following Strawson's argument, I have derived the notion of causation from that reference and identification ultimately rest on the demonstrative force they contain, that is, reference and identification of distant objects or merely thought objects ultimately rest on the objects we can immediately identify. In cases of demonstrative identification, the causality between the subject and the object is not merely a possible one but an actual causality, because, as we have seen, perception is an instance of causation, between a subject and the objective world. So, even if the identifiability of a particular depends on the recognition of merely possible causality, the concept of causation should be taken as basic in the conceptual framework as long as identification ultimately rests on the perception of the world.

Now it has come to seem that there are two ways of connecting the concept of causation and identification. For one, the identifiability of a particular rests on the causality between a subject and objects; for two the causality between objects, together with the former kind of causality, contribute to identification of a particular by feeding us descriptive information about the object to be identified. Let us again think about the distinction between a sentence and a use of a sentence. While a sentence has no function of asserting by itself, a sentence is used to assert and furthermore used to signal that a unique reference is made. So it

should be said that the second way in which the concept of causation contributes to identification is, by helping us pick up relevant features conceptually, but not by elucidating descriptions of an identifying expression, upon identifying an object.

The point I just made could be summarised as follows. Relations between the subject and objects and between objects instruct us to use an identifying expression in a certain way. As we have also seen the distinction between mere referring and asserting the existence, we have to specify further the manner we use the concept of causation or causal relations in identifying an object. That is, here arises a question: do we take features we use to identify an object to be existent in the object in question or to be merely presupposed for the sake of identification? This question then leads us to think about discrepancies between our experienced world, that is, the world through the conceptual framework and the objective world.

Recall the relationship between concepts and experience again. Concepts acquire their meaning through being conceived as concepts of our possible experience. Experience is presented to us by means of our concepts, but the concepts are presented or acquired as concepts of experience. So it seems to follow that upon locating and thus identifying an object in the conceptual framework, we take features including causal relations between particulars, to be *there* at least on the conceptual level, granted that identification also takes place on this conceptual level. Conceptualizing a given particular in the framework partially by causal terms is not merely to presuppose causal relations, but to represent a particular to ourselves as the result of the causal relations. In this sense, I think the concept of causation or causal relations should be taken as basic or *real* in the framework.

3. 2 Causal Identification and the Reality of Causation

I have elucidated the connections between the concept of causation in the framework and identification. After all, Strawson himself must have recognised the significant role the concept of causation plays in the conceptual framework. He writes:

> Within this indefinitely large range it is possible to distinguish a number of fundamental, general, pervasive concepts or types of concept, which together constitute the structural framework, as it were, within which all ordinary detailed thinking goes on. To name a few at random, I have in mind such ideas as those of space and time, object and property, event, mind and body, knowledge and belief, truth, sense and meaning, necessity and possibility, existence, identity, action, intention, *causation and explanation*. (1990, p.312; italics added.)

Yet, he does not explicitly include it as one of the basic concepts of the framework in his initial investigations on the framework. At this point, his worries, or the reasons he does not do so, can be seen more vividly. For one, as Strawson argues that causal relations between *particular* events have no footing, but only the notion of causation *in general* has a basis in the observational vocabulary, so causal relations should be taken to be general or abstract relations between general notions that are used to identify particulars. Then the worry arises:

> [I] think it theoretically impossible to give any general specification of a type of description-in-purely-general-terms such that it was necessarily true that only one individual answered to a description of this type. That is, one might think it impossible to specify any type of purely general description which guaranteed uniqueness to any particular it applied to, while thinking it necessary that there should exist a uniquely applicable general description for any object. (Strawson, 1959, p.120)

So, admitting causal relations to be a way of identifying a particular, or even, recognising spatiotemporal relations between particulars as causal would run the risk of reducing a particular into a unique combination of general, causal relations.

Second, as I have argued, the concept of causation is not merely an explanatory apparatus but it has a detectable root in reality, namely in perception. On the other hand, again, Strawson maintains only the notion of causation *in general* has a footing in our experience, that is, he thinks that it is not detectable in particular events in the spatiotemporal realm. He writes:

> The fear is that a theoretical commitment to the existence of universals amounts to a confused half-assimilation of the general to the particular, accompanied, perhaps, by a confused analogical picture of the relations of these spurious quasi-particulars, the universals, to the actual objects to be found in space and time. (1997, p.53)

This might be one of the reasons why Strawson abstains from admitting that the concept of causation has a basis in particular instances of causation and places it within the explanatory vocabulary.

That said, it seems to be inevitable that we represent relations between particulars, and between particular events, under descriptions in *general* terms. At the same time, representing any identifiable particulars in the framework must rest ultimately on perception, which in turn is buttressed by the concept of causation. As was shown in the second chapter, Strawson would agree that perception involves causation between a subject and objects, which secures the connection between experience and concepts. Also, he agrees that identifying a particular inevitably involves representing it in general terms:

> [W]e cannot think of, or, in a full sense, perceive, any natural thing, whether object or event, without thinking of it, or perceiving it, under some general aspect; as being

so-and-so or a such-and such; as having some general character or as being of some general kind. (1997, pp.58-59)

Note that granted perception involves causation, we can here see two ways in which the concept of causation is intertwined in identification: first, in perceiving an object; second, in identifying it in general terms. The basic-ness of the concept in the first way has already been shown in the second chapter, and this is not to be regarded as an assimilation of a universal to a particular since perception of a particular, or the whole possibility of the conceptual framework is dependent on the concept of causation.

In fact, the previous section is meant to suggest that the concept is basic in the second way, too. There, I have investigated what we take as identifying features, and we have seen that identifying features are relative to what we are trying to individuate and relational in the sense they differ depending on other objects, in relation to which we are individuating the object in question. In the end, I concluded that locating and identifying a particular in the conceptual framework, in general, is to represent it, for one part, as a result of causal relations.

As we have seen, Strawson consciously avoids reducing a particular into universals, which is because particulars like spatiotemporally observable material bodies, have the completeness, namely, the quality of 'unfolding into a fact'. But, in doing so, he seems to reduce universals into mere generalizations of particulars. Strawson himself seems to have recognised this tension between particulars and universals and tries to avoid the one-sided position on this issue. He writes:

For when we make the transition from the thought of the fact into which the particular unfolds to the thought of the particular itself, then we are thinking of it as the constituent of some further fact. Just as the particular rests upon, or unfolds into, a fact, so the non-general fact may be folded up into, or supply the basis for, a

42

particular, provided that we are ready with criteria of identity for particulars of that class and with a range of characterizing universals for them, i.e. with a range of possible facts for them to be constituents of. (1959, p.211)

Indeed, to insist on the ontological priority of particulars is to define universals as secondary to them. But, this is so only on the *revisionary* level. The close connection between experience and concepts suggests that even general concepts acquire their meaning as concepts of possible experience. Then, it should be said that on the descriptive level universals are provided with their meaning or their contents as *of* possible particulars, whereas particulars are represented under some universal or general descriptions. In sum, the relation between particulars and universals is not merely that in which one is prior to nor dependent on another, but rather they are interdependent and intertwined, at least on the descriptive level.

This is to say, they should be the subject of connective analysis; one is not reducible to another but they must be analysed elucidating their connections. In fact, this has been my hidden assumption and I have been using the concept of causation as a device to best elucidate the connections. To this, I think Strawson would agree:

We know in advance the range of possible fillings; for we know what type of thing we have to deal with. It is not that we first acquire the concepts of types of thing and only then, and only by repeated observations of similar conjunctions of events or circumstances, come to form beliefs about what kinds of reaction may be expected of such things in what ranges of antecedent conditions. Rather, such beliefs are inseparable from our concepts of the things. (1992a, p.121)

Although the concept of causation is something we acquire through experience of the world, in forming the concept we do not randomly collect in mind instances of causation and sort them under one name. To say that an instance is of causation just because it belongs to the

43

class of causation is *obviously circular*.[20] It should be noted that, although I have presented the argument so far as an argument to show the relation between particulars and universals, I do not mean to contend that the same relation holds between particulars and *any* universals. Rather, the argument should be restricted to the effect that where a universal has a footing in reality, there might be the same relation between particulars and the universal in question. We have already seen the special place of the concept of causation and causal relations in the conceptual framework. So I think the argument holds for the concept of causation. So it is not that the concept is not reducible to the notion of regularly occurring sequences of particular events, nor that events are defined solely in terms of causality. But in the conceptual framework, particulars and the concept of causation are intertwined, while each of the two notions maintains a distinctive place and role.

At the end of the day, Strawson would agree to this point. In considering whether causal relations are those that hold in nature between particular existences or between facts describing those existences, he writes:

> [W]hen the particular events and circumstances mentioned in the statement of the explaining and explained facts are indeed distinct existences; then, although the relation holds only because the particular events and circumstances are of the kinds described in the explaining and explained propositions, there seems no particular harm in saying that those particular events and circumstances, however described, do in fact stand in a particular relation which may be called causal. (1992a, p.131.)

Recall, concepts have their contents as concepts *of* possible experience. After all, the concept of causation has also an explanatory role, and this is so solely because it has its content, meaning or use as a concept that is applicable to and also derivable from our experience. But

---

[20] See Strawson, 1990, p. 311.

its applicability and derivability are also interdependent by virtue of the close connection between concepts and experience.

To sum, we have seen the purported reasons why Strawson does not include the concept of causation in the conceptual framework described in *Individuals*: first, it is because admitting that identification rests solely on causality between objects and between a subject and objects would ultimately render particulars redundant; second, it is because he thinks the concept of causation, having no footing in its *particular* instances, is merely an explanatory notion. On the other hand, it is true that we represent particulars to ourselves under some general descriptions which depend on relations between objects described sometimes as causal and also ultimately on the way we perceive the world, namely, a causal relationship between a subject and objects. One possible solution I propose following Strawson, is that we should *connectively* analyse the relations between the concept of causation and its particular instances instead of defining one in terms of another, given the fundamental role the concept plays in the framework. This is to say, the concept of causation should be basic and as real in the conceptual framework we employ as other basic concepts like Space and Time, material bodies, and persons.

4. Conclusion

In this thesis, I have probed the conceptual framework described in *Individuals* and from its basic concepts and the way we identify objects in the framework I have argued that the concept of causation must be embedded in the framework along with the basic concepts.

In Chapter 1, I introduced Strawson's methodology and investigated the conceptual framework in *Individuals* and showed the connections between the basic concepts. The key terms were individuation, identification, and reference. They helped us see how we employ concepts and also the connection between concepts and experience. Then, I concluded that the concept of causation must be included in the framework in order for us to secure the identifiability and thus the close connection between concepts and experience.

In Chapter 2, I tried to excavate the concept of causation from the descriptions of the framework and Strawson's theory of perception. Then, I tried to identify the location of the concept in the framework considering the contrast between explanation and causation put forward by Strawson. I concluded that given not only identification of a particular but also the framework itself is secured by the concept of causation and given that there is a close connection between concepts and experience, the concept of causation is not merely an explanatory apparatus but rather it is an essential component of our experience of the objective world.

In Chapter 3, first, I tried to elaborate on the way the concept of causation contributes to identification, or more precisely, the way the concept helps us conceptually pick out features of a particular as identifying features. Then I indicated that identifying a particular by causal relations would presuppose that the particular in question should be locatable and existent at least in the conceptual framework. Then, there arose two problems: first, causal identification would reduce a particular to a combination of general notions; second, as Strawson thinks, saying general, universal notions are existent might be mere assimilation of

universals to spatiotemporally locatable objects. The indispensability of particulars as well as universals suggests that we should analyse them connectively. The concept of causation is one of many cases where universals and particulars stand interdependently and where the relationship between them must be elucidated connectively. That is to say, the concept of causation should not be reducibly analysed. The concept of causation is as basic and as real as that of Space and Time, material bodies, and persons.

Bibliography

Bird, G. (2003). Kant's and Strawson's Descriptive Metaphysics. In H. J. Glock (ed.), *Strawson and Kant* (pp.67-85). New York: Oxford University Press.

Brown, C. (2006). *Peter Strawson*. Stocksfield: Acumen.

Evans, G. (1985). Things Without the Mind - A Commentary upon Chapter Two of Strawson's Individuals. In *Collected Papers* (pp.249-90). Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Glock, H. J. (2003). Strawson and Analytic Kantianism. In H. J. Glock (ed.), *Strawson and Kant* (pp.15-42). New York: Oxford University Press.

—. (2012). Strawson's Descriptive Metaphysics. In L. Haaparanta and H. J. Koskinen (eds.), *Categories of Being: Essays on Metaphysics and Logic* (pp.391-419). New York: Oxford University Press.

Grice, H. P. & Strawson, P. F. (1956). In Defence of a Dogma. *The Philosophical Review*, 65(2), 141-58.

Hacker, P. M. S. (1998). Analytic Philosophy: What, Whence, and Whither? In A. Biletzki & A. Matar (eds.), *The Story of Analytic Philosophy: Plot and Heroes* (pp. 3-34). New York: Routledge.

—. (2002). Strawson's concept of a person. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 102(1), 21–40.

—. (2003). On Strawson's Rehabilitation of Metaphysics. In Hans-Johann Glock (ed.), *Strawson and Kant* (pp.43-66). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

—. (2020). The Methods of Connective Analysis. In J. Hermann, J. Hopster, W. Kalf, & M. Klenk (eds.), *Philosophy in the age of Science?: Inquiries into Philosophical Progress, Method, and Societal Relevance* (pp.111-130). Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publisher.

Hume, R. E. (trans.). (1921). Chāndogya Upanishad. In *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads, Translated from the Sanskrit* (pp.177-274). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Snowdon, P. (2006). P. F. Strawson: *Individuals*. In J. Shand (ed.), *Central Works of Philosophy Volume.5: The Twentieth Century: Quine and After* (pp. 40-63). Chesham: Acumen.

—. (2009). 'Persons' and Persons. *Organon F: Medzinárodný Časopis Pre Analytickú Filozofiu*, 16(4), 449-476.

Strawson, P. F. (1950). On Referring. *Mind*, 59(235), 320-344.

—. (1956). Construction and Analysis. In A. J. Ayer, W. C. Kneale, G. A. Paul, D. F. Pears, P. F. Strawson, G. J. Warnock, R. A. Wollheim, & G. Ryle, *The Revolution in Philosophy* (pp.97-110). London: Macmillan.

—. (1959). *Individuals: An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics*. New York: Routledge.

—. (1974). Causation in Perception., Perception and Identification., & On Understanding the Structure of One's Language. In *Freedom and Resentment and Other Essays* (pp. 73-93, 94-118, 218- 228). Oxon: Routledge.

—. (1985). *Skepticism and Naturalism: Some Varieties*. New York: Columbia University Press.

—. (1989). Sensibility, Understanding and the Doctrine of Synthesis: Comments on D. Henrich and P. Guyer. In E. Förster (ed.), *Kant's Transcendental Deductions: The Three Critiques and the Opus postumum* (pp.69-77). Stanford: Stanford University Press.

—. (1990). Two Conceptions of Philosophy. In R. Barrett & R. Gibson (eds.), *Perspectives on Quine* (pp.310-18). Oxford: Blackwell.

—. (1992a). *Analysis and Metaphysics: An Introduction to Philosophy*. New York: Oxford University Press.

—. (1992b). Analysis, Science, and Metaphysics. In R. M. Rorty (ed.), *The Linguistic Turn: Essays in Philosophical Method* (pp.312-320). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

—. (1997). Entity and Identity., Universals., & Kant's New Foundations of Metaphysics. In *Entity and Identity and Other Essays* (pp.21-51, 52-63, 232-243). New York: Oxford University Press.

Szubka, T. (1998). Connective Analysis and Basic Concepts. *Philosophia*, 26(1-2), 141-50.

Quine, W. V. O. (1950). Speaking of Objects. Reprinted in *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays* (1969), (pp.1-25). New York: Columbia University Press.

—. (1951). Two Dogmas of Empiricism. *The Philosophical Review*, 60(1), 20-43.

—. (1990). Comments on Strawson. In R. Barrett & R. Gibson (eds.), *Perspectives on Quine* (pp.319-20). Oxford: Blackwell.

Wittegenstein, Ludwig. (1953). *Philosophical Investigations* (G. E. M. Anscombe, P. M. S. Hacker & J. Schulte, Trans. 4th ed.). Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.