

THE PHILOSOPHY OF
**RODERICK M.
CHISHOLM**

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RECURRENT PROBLEMS—ON
CHISHOLM'S TWO THEORIES OF
EVENTS

Conceptual priorities, like the priority of intentional over linguistic notions, play a central role in Chisholm's philosophy. In this paper I want to explore a problem of priority which arises in regard to the concept of an event. The problem is how events are basically to be counted. Are they to be counted like particulars, when we ask, for example, how many faculty meetings take place during a certain period of time? Or should we better ask how often one and the same event happens, i.e., how often the faculty meets? Is the 'How often?' idiom to be analyzed in terms of the 'How many?' idiom, or is it the other way around? And why should there be any priority here in the first place?

In the light of these questions I want to compare Chisholm's earlier with his present theory of events. Up to the early eighties Chisholm treated events as a certain species of states of affairs, and hence as abstract, noncontingent entities. Meanwhile he defines them as a certain species of concrete, contingent states. This is a dramatic change on the ontological level. I want to investigate what consequences this change has for the conceptual issues raised above.

I begin in sections 1 and 2 by providing some general background for my comparison. In sections 3 and 4 I follow closely Chisholm's own reasoning, suggesting that there is a striking conceptual continuity in his

two theories of events. In section 5 I return to the more general perspective from which I start.

1. THE ONTOLOGICAL APPROACH TO CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

What does a problem of conceptual priority amount to? Is it a problem about the order in which we acquire certain concepts? This would be an empirical question of developmental psychology, not a question for philosophers. But if not the acquisition of concepts, what else could determine a priority relation between them?

The candidate to be examined here is ontology. Conceptual priority, one might say, is grounded in ontological priority. What could this mean? It seems to me that this approach could be based on the following principle:

(OC) If entities E_1 are ontologically prior to entities E_2 , then concepts whose application commits us only to the existence of E_1 's are more basic than concepts whose application commits us also to E_2 's.

To see how this principle works consider the question whether the concept of number is more basic than the concept of equinumerosity. We know, thanks to Frege, that the former concept can be defined in terms of the latter and the latter independently of the first in terms of the notion of one-one-correspondence (Frege 1884, §68). Still one may ask why one should set up the foundations of arithmetics in this way. Here the above principle suggests itself. A Fregean could point out that judgments which involve the concept of number commit us to a special realm of abstract objects and functions, whereas judgments about a one-one-correspondence commit us only to concrete individual things. Given that concrete things are ontologically prior to functions, and functions prior to abstract objects, the respective concepts should be treated exactly in the order in which Frege does.

With this model in mind, let us turn to the problem whether the concept of frequency, which underlies the 'How often?' idiom, is more basic than the concept of number, which underlies the 'How many?' idiom. This requires three steps: (1) first we must establish that applying these concepts involves different ontological commitments, then (2) we must consider which of the entities presupposed by these concepts are ontologically prior, and (3) finally we must consider whether a conceptual priority can be defended on these ontological grounds.

2. THE COMMITMENT TO EVENTS

An answer to the 'How many?' question has the form 'there are n F 's', where ' n ' represents a number-term and ' F ' a noun-phrase, e.g.: there are two female members, or there are two faculty meetings each term. In predicate logic these statements can be analyzed as: there is an x and a y such that x and y are female members (faculty meetings), x is distinct from y and for all z , if z is a female member (faculty meeting), then z is either identical with x or with y . This analysis is instructive, according to Quine, because the quantifiers carry the ontological commitment of our statements (cf. Quine 1948). On this view, the only entities to which we are committed by answering a 'How many?' question are countable particulars like individual people or individual meetings.

This Quinean picture is taken over by Davidson as a central part of his particularist theory of events:

That it is dated, particular events that seem to be required if such sentences [as 'His first attempt at the North Face was his last'] are to be true is apparent from the principles of individuation implicit (for example) in the application of counting ('The third explosion was far more destructive than the first two', 'More than a third of all motorway accidents are caused by excess speed'). (Davidson 1970, p. 181)

This is the view which Chisholm opposes in a series of papers from the early seventies (Chisholm 1970, 1971b, 1975). There he presents a quite different view of how we are committed to the existence of events.

Consider an answer to the 'How often?' question. It has the form 'it happened exactly n times that p ', where ' n ' again stands for a number-term, but ' p ' for a complete sentence, e.g.: it happened exactly twice that John opened the meeting. If we bring this statement into the form of predicate logic, we may quantify over times (time-points or intervals), but we need not quantify over events. Thus we could analyze this sentence as saying that there are past times t_1, t_2, t_3 such that t_2 is between t_1 and t_3 , and it is true at t_1 and t_3 but not at t_2 that John opens the meeting, and there are no other past times at which this is true.¹

How then does a sentence of the form 'it happened n times that p ' commit us to the existence of events? It is not by some tacit quantification, Chisholm thinks, but by a that-clause. Chisholm here follows a tradition which takes that-clauses to be singular terms denoting certain objects. When we say 'John believes that he should open the meeting' or 'John hopes that the meeting will end soon', we describe a relation between John and the object of his belief or hope. We also refer to an object of this kind in statements of the form 'it happened n times that p '.

We are thus confronted with two very different approaches to ontology. On the one hand we have a theory which takes the quantificational form of sentences as its guide and introduces events as elements in the domain of quantification. On the other hand we have a theory of intentionality which assumes a special category of (possible) objects of intentional acts and treats events as a special kind of such objects.

In view of this difference it is no wonder that the debate between Chisholm and Davidson had to end in a deadlock. As Davidson puts it: "Both of us are happy to admit that we are talking about very different things" (Vermazen/Hintikka 1975, p. 222).

Still, there are points of agreement which are worth considering. Both Chisholm and Davidson agree on a principle of ontological parsimony which advises us to reject a notion of event that includes both event-types and event-tokens. According to such a view to say that an event recurs would simply be to say that different event-tokens 'realize', 'instantiate', or 'exemplify' the same event-type.²

How can one avoid such type-token dualism? This is exactly where Chisholm and Davidson differ. Davidson suggests that talk about event-types is ontologically uncommitting. It just means that we subsume particular events under a certain *description*. Davidson follows here the nominalist strategy to let linguistic entities do the work of abstract objects (cf. Davidson 1971, pp. 195f.).³

Chisholm's reaction is just the opposite. He suggests that we should take the talk about event-tokens as ontologically misleading. What counts for him are the intentional objects which are abstract entities like event-types. Let us take a closer look at his first theory now.

3. EVENTS AS STATES OF AFFAIRS

Chisholm's early theory, which he fully develops only in 1976, 1979a, and 1979b, puts events and propositions into a single category which he calls the category of 'states of affairs'. States of affairs may be said to *obtain, to occur, to happen, or to take place*. This must not be confused with saying that they exist. All states of affairs exist necessarily and eternally. Furthermore, all states of affairs are abstract entities, without this implying that they are instantiable like types or exemplifiable like properties. The obtaining or not-obtaining of a state of affairs is something peculiar, comparable only to the truth or falsity of a proposition (cf. 1970, p. 22; 1971b, pp. 180 and 188; 1976, p. 115).

How do events fit into this picture? Chisholm's idea is that states of

affairs can first be divided into propositions and nonpropositions, and that events then fall into the latter subcategory. He illustrates this classification with the following example:

Thus the state of affairs which is John walking at 3 p.m., E.S.T., on February 5, 1970, will be a *proposition*, for it is necessarily such that either it or its negation does not occur. But that state of affairs which is John walking will be an event; for it is contingent, it is possibly such that both it and its negation occur, and it implies change. (1970, p. 20)⁴

Chisholm uses gerundive expressions of the form '*a* being *F*' for referring to states of affairs. I prefer to use the corresponding that-clauses or the sentences from which they are derived.⁵ Thus I would make Chisholm's point by saying that of the following two sentences (that-clauses) the first one expresses (denotes) a proposition, whereas the second expresses (denotes) an event:⁶

- (1) (that) John is walking at 3 p.m., on February 5, 1970.
- (2) (that) John is walking.

Why should these sentences have different ontological correlates? The crucial notion to be considered here is the notion of the 'negation' of a state of affairs.

3.1. *Negating States of Affairs*

Chisholm distinguishes between saying that a state of affairs *A* does not obtain, and saying that the negation of *A*, call it *not-A*, does obtain (cf. Chisholm 1971b, p. 179). For instance, it is one thing to say that the state of affairs expressed by (1) does *not* obtain, and another thing to say that the state of affairs expressed by

- (3) John is not walking at 3 p.m., on February 5, 1970,

does obtain. Chisholm explains the difference in intentional terms.⁷ States of affairs are defined, as mentioned before, as the objects of intentional attitudes like 'accepting', 'entertaining', and 'considering' (cf. 1979a, p. 29; 1979b, p. 342). These attitudes have, Chisholm holds, the peculiarity that there is always *one thing* that is accepted, entertained, or considered. This provides states of affairs with identity conditions and also opens a gap between the not-obtaining of *A* and the obtaining of *not-A*.⁸ Intuitively it is not the same to consider the state of affairs *A* and to reject its obtaining, or to consider the state of affairs *not-A* and to accept its obtaining. Each consideration may eventually lead to the same result, but the individual attitudes involved are different in each case.⁹

Chisholm's treatment of negation allows him to say that both a state of affairs and its negation may obtain. In fact that is characteristic of an event. Of course, this can only mean that a state of affairs and its negation may obtain *at different times*, otherwise this would involve a contradiction.¹⁰ The state of affairs expressed by (2) obtains temporarily, not however the state of affairs expressed by (1); hence the first is an event and the second is a proposition.

One may object here that the definition of an event as a temporarily obtaining (or not obtaining) state of affairs is much too wide. Take for instance the sentence 'There is light'.¹¹ The state of affairs expressed by this sentence would qualify as an event, but intuitively it is not one. The response to this objection is, that we have left out an important constraint, namely that events must imply some *change*. This and other criteria are suggested by Chisholm for excluding those nonpropositions which are intuitively not events (cf. Chisholm 1976, p. 128; and 1979a, p. 40f.).

But there is another problem that needs to be solved. Can we ever say consistently that the same state of affairs obtains at some time and does not obtain at some other time? Consider again the state of affairs expressed by sentence (2). Apparently it expresses a state of affairs that obtains when John is walking and does not obtain when he is resting. This cannot be true, however, if (2) says the same as:

(2*) John is walking sometimes.

The state of affairs expressed by (2*) obtains even when John is resting, provided that he was walking before or that he will be walking later. How can (2*) express a proposition, and (2) express an event, if both sentences say the same thing? What we must take into account here is Chisholm's treatment of tense.

3.2. *Tensed and Untensed States of Affairs*

Chisholm repeatedly says that in a theory of events "tense must be taken seriously" (1979a, p. 43; 1979b, p. 346; 1989, p. 151; 1990, p. 413). This requires that we avoid any reference to moments or intervals of time, and instead use a tensed language. Then sentence (2) gives way to a disjunction of differently tensed sentences which may all express different events:

- (2a) John is now walking.
- (2b) John was walking.
- (2c) John will be walking.

According to this proposal we could say that tensed sentences express events, whereas tenseless sentences, like (2*), express tenseless states of affairs, i.e., propositions.

That this is what Chisholm has in mind is confirmed by his explanation of the tenseless 'is' in 'a is F'. This form, he says, should be taken as an abbreviation of 'a is, was, or will be F' (cf. 1979a, p. 43 and 1979b, pp. 346ff.). Following this suggestion, sentence (2*) should be transformed into a disjunctive statement, whereas sentence (2), as well as the gerundive form 'a being F', should be replaced by one of the disjuncts, namely by 'a is now F', 'a was F', or 'a will be F'.

However, there is also an alternative view to be considered. We might retain sentence (2) as a tenseless sentence which lacks a definite truth-value. In this case (2) would be neither equivalent to (2*) nor to the disjunction of (2a), (2b), and (2c). Rather these three sentences would have (2) as their common core. On this interpretation they all express the same event, given the following equivalence:

(E1) Sentences of the form 'a is now F', 'a was F', 'a will be F' are true if and only if the state of affairs expressed by their tenseless core 'a is F' obtains now, did obtain, or will obtain respectively.

In order to introduce tensed states of affairs, one would have to accept in addition the following equivalence:

(E2) The state of affairs expressed by sentences of the form 'a is F' obtains now (did obtain, will obtain) if and only if the state of affairs expressed by 'a is now F' ('a was F' or 'a will be F') obtains.

I can see no reason why we should make this further step. Events can be tenseless, and yet temporarily obtaining (or not-obtaining) states of affairs. What is tensed are their conditions of obtaining, not the states of affairs themselves. On this view neither moments of time nor tensed states of affairs are needed.¹²

After these clarifications let us turn to the explanation of recurrence in Chisholm's early theory.

3.3. *The Notion of Recurrence*

A theory of events, Chisholm says, should be "adequate to the fact of recurrence, to the fact that there are some things that ... happen more than once" (1970, p. 15; cf. 1971b, p. 180). Perhaps Chisholm should have said more cautiously that such a theory should be adequate to the

fact that we commonly *talk* as if there were things that happen more than once: faculty meetings, opening ceremonies, etc. His demand is that we must not dismiss this way of speaking as 'loose and popular talk', as when we speak of taking the same train, meaning a train that leaves at the same time every day (cf. 1970, p. 21).

Now, what does it mean to say of an event *A* that it recurs? Starting from his definition of an event, quoted above, Chisholm proposes the following definition of recurrence: 'Event *A* recurs' means '*A* occurs before *A* begins' (1970, p. 17).¹³ This again would lead to a contradiction, unless a tensed language were used. Therefore I prefer the following definition:

D1 *x* recurs sometimes = Df. It is, was, or will be the case that: *x* did occur, *x* does not occur, and *x* will occur (1971a, p. 20).¹⁴

This still leaves out the possibility of an event presently recurring. Therefore we must add:¹⁵

D2 *x* is recurring now = Df. It is now the case that: *x* occurred before *x* did not occur, and *x* occurs.

Which states of affairs can recur in the sense just defined? This again depends on the treatment of tense. If there are tensed states of affairs, then most of them cannot recur. Consider for instance the state of affairs expressed by the sentence (2b). It did not obtain before John walked for the first time, but does obtain and always will obtain after that. Similarly for the state of affairs expressed by (2c). It will obtain until John walks for the last time, then it will cease to obtain forever. This may be the reason why Chisholm suggests at one point that past- and future-tense sentences do not express events at all (1979b, p. 353f.). No such restrictions threaten if events are expressed only by the tenseless core of tensed sentences.

The notion of recurrence serves an important purpose in Chisholm's theory: it is the basis of his account of *counting* events. This is the most striking feature of Chisholm's theory to which I turn next.

3.4. *Counting Recurrences*

On Chisholm's view we do not count events, but we count how often they recur. Thereby we follow an inductive strategy which he explains as follows:

We first say what it is for something to occur during *A*'s first occurrence, but without using any term purporting to designate *A*'s first occurrence. In terms

of that, we next say what it is for something to occur during what is at least *A*'s second occurrence, and so on, for any finite number *n*. And then we can say what it is for *A* to occur exactly *n* times. (1970, p. 17f.)

An example may illustrate this procedure. Suppose there was rain last week on two distinct days. What does this mean ontologically? According to Chisholm there are the following things involved: one is the state of affairs *A* which is expressed by the sentence 'it rains' (a tenseless state of affairs on my assumption). In addition to that there are three other events *B*, *C*, and *D* which need not be further specified, but which must satisfy the following condition: each of them occurred only once last week, none of them happened simultaneously, and two of them happened while it was raining, where of these two events one happened earlier and the other later than the third one. Suppose that I once went to the movies last week, that I once bought myself a new record, and that I once had to see the dentist. If it happens that it rained last week during my visit to the movies and during my shopping trip, but not while I was at the dentist, and if the event during which it did not rain occurred between the other two, then we can conclude that it did not rain continuously, and hence that it rained *at least* twice last week. And if there are no five nonsimultaneous events, each occurring only once, such that it rained during the first, the third, and the fifth, but not during the second and fourth, then we can conclude that it rained *exactly* twice.

So far we can explain how often the same state of affairs recurs at different times. What about multiple occurrences of the same state of affairs at the same time?¹⁶ The state of affairs expressed by 'The movie starts' may obtain at a thousand theaters simultaneously. How do we count these multiple occurrences? Chisholm deals with this problem by introducing the notion of *concretization* (cf. 1976, pp. 129ff. and 1979a, p. 39). It denotes a relation which holds between abstract states of affairs and concrete things like movie-theaters, film-projectors, etc. The start of the movie is concretized by different things (projectors, screens, etc.) at different places at the same time. No concrete events need to be introduced in addition to the abstract states of affairs which are concretized.¹⁷

This method of counting is obviously much more complicated than the way in which we count particulars. That is the price which Chisholm must pay for taking events to be abstract states of affairs instead of concrete particulars. It may not be merely a question of complicating things, however.¹⁸ There is a more general worry about this procedure that needs to be addressed.

3.5. *A Problem for Chisholm's Early Theory of Events*

Chisholm builds his early theory on the assumption that all events are like abstract event-types and not like concrete event-tokens. Therefore all references to particular events must be eliminated. This would seem to have important consequences on the conceptual level, because Chisholm must avoid the entire conceptual apparatus that goes together with the reference to particular events. But this requirement is not so easily satisfied.

When Chisholm explains what it means for an event x to occur n times he must presuppose that we can already count events by their number. After all, there must be exactly $n + (n - 1)$ events which occur only once, and it is the number of nonoverlapping 'one-shot events' which occur while x obtains that tells us how *often* this state of affairs recurs. It is true that these 'one-shot events' are states of affairs too, not concrete particulars. The fact remains however that Chisholm cannot do without the basic concept of counting events by their number.

At this point the assumption with which we started becomes relevant. We assumed that the two ways in which events may be counted, namely by their number or by their frequency, carry different ontological commitments. The first idiom, we said, commits us to events as unrepeatable particulars, the second to events as repeatable universals. If this is correct, Chisholm's project of eliminating event-particulars cannot succeed. Since he cannot avoid counting the number of 'one-shot events', it follows from our assumption that these 'one-shot events' are particulars.

Of course, Chisholm could drop the assumption that one counts particulars when one counts events by their number. Thus he could keep his ontology intact. What then has to go, however, is the conceptual priority contained in the claim that the 'How many?' idiom can be analyzed, without circularity, in terms of the notion of recurrence. This analysis requires that we can tell how many 'one-shot events' there are, thus presupposing the very notion which is the subject of analysis.

This is, as far as I can tell, the situation for Chisholm's early theory of events. In the meantime Chisholm has changed his ontology considerably. Let us see what effect this has on the conceptual questions which drive his early theory.

4. EVENTS AS STATES

Chisholm first presented his new ontological foundations for a theory of events in a paper entitled "On the Positive and Negative States of Things" (1985/86). At the center of this new theory we find two dichotomies that cut across each other: all entities are divided into contingent and noncontingent things, as well as into dependent and independent ones (cf. 1989, pp. 162ff. and 1990, p. 418). No place is left here for entities, like states of affairs, which exist eternally, but obtain only contingently. Whatever is contingent is "possibly such that it ceases to be" (1985/86, p. 102). Events are contingent entities, hence they cannot be eternally existing things. A new category has to be introduced.¹⁹

This new category is the category of states. States are contingent dependent entities. That they are contingent means that they can come into being and pass away. That they are dependent means that they cannot exist by themselves; they necessarily exist *at* something else (cf. 1985/86, p. 100 and 1989, p. 164). This is also true of dependent entities like surfaces and other boundaries. The specific character of *states* can be gathered only from the following principle (1989, p. 150; cf. 1985/86, p. 99):

(S) For every x , there is the state x -being- F if and only if x exemplifies being- F .

Another formulation of the same principle would be this:

(S*) For every sentence S of the form ' a is F ', S expresses a state of a if and only if S is true.

This semantic formulation helps us to bring out the difference between the old category of states of affairs and the new category of states. States of affairs are expressed by sentences irrespective of whether they are true or false. Only true sentences, however, can describe the state of a thing. In this respect the *states* in Chisholm's new ontology are like the *facts* in the *Tractatus* and in Russell's *Logical Atomism*.²⁰ For all these ontologies the question whether a fact (or state) obtains does not arise, the answer being trivially 'yes'. This is why Chisholm can say now: "there is no need for us, in our theory, to introduce such expressions as 'takes place' and 'occurs'" (1990, p. 417).

Let us consider now some of the implications which this move from states of affairs to states may have for Chisholm's theory of events. I start with the topic of tense.

4.1. Tensed and Tenseless States

In Chisholm's early theory tense could be taken seriously in two ways: either by regarding states of affairs as themselves tensed entities, or by saying of (tenseless) states of affairs that they do, did, or will obtain. Once the notion of 'obtaining' has been dropped no such choice seems to be open any more. We seem to be forced to say that states are tensed entities with the consequence that different states are expressed by '*a* is *F*', '*a* was *F*', and '*a* will be *F*'.

This would be an unfortunate consequence, for we could no longer express the state in which a thing was (or will be) without being in it right now. Suppose John was walking, but is no longer walking. Then he was in a state which is neither expressed by the sentence 'John was walking' nor by 'John is walking'. The first sentence does not express John's former state, but a state in which he is now, whereas the latter sentence, being false, does not express any state at all.

Chisholm has a solution to this problem, however. He introduces the notion of the *content* and the *substrate* of a state. When John is walking, he says, John is the substrate of a state which has the property *walking* as its content. If John stops walking and later walks again we can say that his former state and his future state share the same content. John exemplifies the same property, and yet he is in different states.

Chisholm also introduces so-called 'past-oriented' and 'future-oriented' properties (1990, p. 414). The property of *having been walking* would be an example of the first kind. A sentence like 'John was walking' expresses therefore both a former and a present state of John. It says that:

- (a) John is now in a state with the content *having been walking*, and also that
- (b) John was in a state with the content *walking*.

Thus we see that, contrary to first appearances, states too can be tensed or untensed, because they can have a tensed or an untensed content. This distinction remains part of the theory even though the notion of 'obtaining' plays no role any more. And so we are not forced to distinguish between the tensed states expressed by '*a* is *F*', '*a* was *F*', or '*a* will be *F*'. We can just as well say that they express a common state in which *a* is, was, or will be, provided these sentences are all true.

4.2. Recurrence Again

In 1985/86, p. 103, Chisholm proposes the following new definition of an event:²¹

D3 *x* is an event = Df. There is a *y* such that *y* is a contingent substance and *x* is a contingent state of *y*.

This definition seems to be at the same time too narrow and too wide. It seems too narrow because there may be events which are states of states, and not states of substances. Chisholm has taken care of this problem in the meantime by adjusting his definition appropriately (cf. forthcoming, p. 16 in manuscript).²² Definition D3 may also seem too wide, however. It is satisfied by John's beginning or ceasing to walk as well as by his continuous walking, and also by John's motionless sitting and even by John's being tall. These are all contingent states of a contingent substance. To exclude at least the two last examples Chisholm would have to add some reference to change, as he did in his early definition of events as states of affairs. Thereby we would get a distinction between two kinds of *states* similar to the earlier distinction between events and propositions as two kinds of states of affairs.

There is one important advantage that Chisholm can claim for his new definition of events. It allows events to be part of the concrete world, i.e., to have temporal and spatial location and to enter into causal relations. That events have all these features Jonathan Bennett calls "a rock-bottom truth that a good metaphysics should imply to be strictly and literally true" (Bennett 1988, pp. 91).²³

This advantage also causes a problem however. Can events which exist in space and time recur? Chisholm must deny this because he holds on to the principle that no entity can have more than one beginning of existence (1970, p. 17; 1989, p. 153). States and events, he says, are "one-time things" (forthcoming, p. 16 in manuscript). This seems to sacrifice the condition that a theory of events should be able to explain the fact of recurrence. But even here we find continuity.

Chisholm saves the idea of recurrence with the notion of a generic event:

Generic events are events that may *recur* or *happen more than once*. And surely things can happen many times. *Jones's walking* has occurred many times. And it could be that, even if every walker will have walked only once, that event which is *someone walking* will have occurred many times. To deny such facts would cut the ground, not only from under the theory of probability, but also from the theory of causation. (Chisholm, unpublished, p. 12)

How does this go together with the metaphysical view that each entity has only one beginning? In his early theory Chisholm escaped this tension by distinguishing between the existence and the obtaining of a state of affairs. No state of affairs begins to *exist* more than once (because it does not begin to exist at all), but it can begin to *obtain* more than once. What replaces this solution now?

The proposal is that generic events may be identified with the "eternal objects that serve as the contents of states" (forthcoming, p. 16 in manuscript). The idea of reducing generic events to properties can already be found in 1979b, p. 353. This requires denying that generic events are events in the strict sense: "Strictly speaking," Chisholm says, "what recurs are not events but rather those attributes that constitute the repeatable contents of events" (1989, p. 153; cf. 1985/86, p. 102 and 1990, p. 414). He can say this without giving up his inductive counting procedure. Instead of counting the frequency with which an event recurs, Chisholm now proposes to count in this way the frequency with which a property is exemplified. The locution 'it happens n times that p ' is replaced by the locution ' x is F for the n -th time, everything else remains the same' (cf. 1990, p. 424).

How close Chisholm's present theory of states and events remains to his earlier theory of states of affairs can finally be demonstrated by looking at the problem of individuating events.

4.3. Events Particularized

Although Chisholm now agrees with Davidson that states and events are 'one-time things', this does not mean that he also accepts his principles of individuation. Concerning the question what makes an event a particular, Chisholm still defends his own position.²⁴

Suppose that John has taken a walk every Sunday for the last year. Then each Sunday there happened an event with John as its substrate and the property of *walking* as its content. What makes these different events distinct?

The answer would be easy if we had times and places in our ontology. Then we could say that the walks which John took are all different because even if John always took the same route his walks occurred on different days. But Chisholm has no days in his ontology and so he cannot give this answer. How does he solve the problem?

His solution is to introduce the notion of a *contemporary* (unpublished, p. 10). He defines it as follows:

D4 x has an instance of the property of being- F as a contemporary = Df. x is such that something is F .

The wording of this definition is somehow misleading. Chisholm does not appeal to property-instances or 'tropes', as Donald Williams called them. He finds these entities mysterious. When we talk about a particular fall, Chisholm says, "we are not saying that, in addition to the property of falling, there is also a kind of 'particularized property' or 'universal as particular' (1990, p. 417). He acknowledges that neither the content nor the substrate of a fall suffice to explain the particularity of the event, because the property of falling can be instantiated many times by the same thing.

What then makes an event a 'one-time thing'? To explain this, Chisholm suggests, we must appeal to *other* events which happen together with the event in question. What makes John's walk on the first Sunday of the year different from his walk on the second Sunday is, for instance, the barking of a dog that happened during his first walk, and the falling of a rock during his second walk.

There is a striking parallel between this answer and the way in which Chisholm solved the problem of counting the recurrences of a state of affairs. Formerly he would have said that the state of affairs expressed by 'John walks' occurs for the first time while a certain dog was barking, for the second time while a certain rock was falling, and so on for each time that John took a walk. Now he uses the same method for distinguishing between particular events that coincide in substrate and content.

This parallel may make it doubtful whether the notion of a 'contemporary' can really bear the weight of particularizing events. Can it rule out that the whole universe, with all temporal relations, repeats itself? Russell struggled with this problem when he tried to define instants of time as classes of overlapping events.²⁵ We cannot solve this problem by appealing to further contemporaries of contemporaries without starting a regress. Perhaps Chisholm can appeal to events whose content is such that there will never be an event with the same content in the future again.

5. A FINAL COMPARISON

I have pointed out now several respects in which Chisholm's present theory of states and events mirrors his early theory of states of affairs. But how can there be so much continuity, one may ask, if events were

formerly treated as abstract entities and now are said to be concrete particulars?

The similarities between these two theories result from the fact that properties take over the role which states of affairs played earlier, and properties are just as abstract and eternally existing as states of affairs. Viewed in this perspective, the following worry may arise: does Chisholm's theory of properties and states bring in through the backdoor a type-token dualism which he rejected for reasons of ontological parsimony?

It must be admitted that the relation between properties and states, and hence between the content of an event and an event particular, is not exactly like a type-token relation. Whereas an event-token may belong to many types, Chisholm demands that each event has exactly one content. It is thus excluded that a particular event should repeat itself, for instance, insofar as it is a walking, but not insofar as it is a shopping trip. On Chisholm's theory this can only mean that there is one event, a walking, whose content recurs, and a different event, a shopping trip, whose content does not recur. However this may be, both views are equally dualistic. Whether a dualism of properties and states is any better than a dualism of event-tokens and event-types, remains an open question.

In deciding this issue it is worth considering how rich the category of properties must be, if one wants to subsume generic events under this category. Suppose that John is walking only on Sundays and that Jim is walking during the week. Then there is an event, namely the event expressed by 'John is walking', which recurs only on Sundays, but the content of which also recurs on Mondays, namely as the content of an event which has Jim as its substrate. To distinguish the event-content that recurs on Sundays from that which recurs during the week, one must take the complex property *being John's walking* as the content of the one event, and the property *being Jim's walking* as the content of the other event. This move not only undermines the substrate/content distinction, it also brings back abstract event-types under a different guise. Why should anyone who rejects event-types accept such properties as *being John's walking*?²⁵

Of course, one need not accept such a rich theory of properties. One might even consider a view²⁶ which replaces abstract properties by concrete universals, thereby giving up the principle that 'things can have only one beginning of existence'.²⁷ Any change of this kind, however, would seem to undermine Chisholm's attribution theory of intentional states, and therefore is not available to him.

Chisholm's present ontology, I conclude, is in general line with a dualistic theory of event-tokens and event-types. Whereas his earlier theory of states of affairs was designed to oppose such a view, Chisholm now proposes a theory along this same pattern. That makes it hard to deny that the 'How many?' idiom and the 'How often?' idiom carry different ontological commitments. Whereas the first idiom commits us only to concrete events, the second commits us also to abstract properties. These different ontological commitments have no longer any conceptual implications however. As long as Chisholm argued for the elimination of concrete events, he needed an analysis of the 'How many?' idiom in terms of the 'How often?' idiom. Once concrete events are acknowledged, no need for such an analysis is left. It would arise again only if one could show that abstract properties are ontologically prior to concrete events. As long as no argument for such an ontological priority is given, no conceptual priority can be deduced from it.²⁸

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NOTES

1. Notice that the quantificational phrase 'there are past times' is ambiguous between 'there are times which are past' and 'there are times in the past', where the latter means 'there were times'. Which way the quantifier is taken depends on whether we use a tensed or an untensed language. More about this below.

2. Chisholm attributes this 'event-exemplification view' to C. I. Lewis and G. H. von Wright (cf. 1970, p. 23, n. 7; 1976, p. 121). He does not include in it Kim's 'property-exemplification view' which he considers to be close to his own position (cf. 1970, p. 22, n. 6; 1976, p. 121; 1985/86, p. 103, n. 12; 1989, p. 155, n. 2; and 1990, p. 426, n. 3.). I shall argue in section 5, however, that the differences between the event- and the property-exemplification view may not run very deep.

3. This strategy would be open also to other particularists, like Brand and Lombard, who make use of a type-token distinction in their explanation of recurrence. See Brand 1976, p. 143; and Lombard 1986, pp. 63ff.

4. Chisholm uses here the term 'to occur' as short for 'to occur, hold, obtain, happen, or take place' (1970, p. 16). I shall not follow this usage but reserve the term 'to occur' for events and speak of states of affairs as 'obtaining' or 'not obtaining'. This is also Chisholm's usage in 1979a, p. 41.

5. One reason for this is that it is not clear whether Chisholm uses the

sentential gerundives as perfect or imperfect nominals (cf. Bennett 1988, pp. 4ff). A second reason is that Chisholm does not think that every gerundial nominalization expresses a state of affairs, but he does not specify which of them do (cf. 1979b, p. 343).

6. The shift between saying that a sentence expresses, and saying that a that-clause denotes a state of affairs, I consider to be harmless.

7. This again shows that Chisholm's ontology in general follows his theory of intentionality, although there may be some feedback in the other direction too. For a discussion of these interdependencies see Butchvarov 1986.

8. Objections to Chisholm's identity conditions for states of affairs are raised in Davidson 1970, Davidson 1971, Corrado 1978, Lombard 1978, and Kim 1979. Replies are given in Chisholm 1971b, 1978, and 1979b.

9. It is worth noting at this point that Chisholm's account of events originally appeared as part of a larger paper dealing with the problem of identity over time. Since the very same thing can be entertained or accepted at different times, Chisholm seems to require that those things that are entertained or accepted must not change over time (cf. 1971a, pp. 17f).

10. A contradiction could be avoided here also by appealing to the spatial, instead of the temporal location at which states of affairs obtain, but it is not clear how far space and time can be treated in a parallel manner in a theory of states of affairs (cf. Chisholm 1970, p. 16, n. 1). I deal with this question briefly when I come to Chisholm's notion of 'concretization'.

11. In Chisholm 1971a, p. 19, the state of affairs 'there being light' is counted as an event by Chisholm.

12. To retain the temporal aspect in the form of tenses is no guarantee that moments and intervals of time can be completely eliminated or that they can be reduced to relations among events. In 1979a Chisholm proposes to "withhold commitment with respect to the question... [whether] propositions ostensibly about times [may] be reduced to propositions about the temporal relations between events" (p. 44); but in 1979b, p. 357, he proposes such a reduction.

13. Here and in the sequel I have changed the style of the variables in accordance with my usage elsewhere in the present paper. In Johnson 1975 a 'logic of recurrence' is proposed on the basis of Chisholm's definition.

14. Curiously, Chisholm sets this definition aside because it makes essential use of tense. By his own lights, however, this would seem to be a virtue, not a defect of the definition.

15. A similar definition is suggested in Braude 1971, p. 195, but Braude's definition does not secure that the event *x* occurred before it did not occur.

16. This question is raised in Wolterstorff 1979, pp. 182f.

17. The view that there are both states of affairs and their concretizations falls under the verdict of "multiplying entities beyond necessity" (cf. Chisholm 1971b, p. 188). For a critical discussion of the notion of 'concretization' see Kim 1979, pp. 159ff; Pollock 1979, pp. 163ff; and Chisholm's replies (1979b, pp. 354ff).

18. Counterexamples to this procedure are discussed in Johnson 1975 and in Wolterstorff 1979, p. 182. In Thomson 1977, pp. 107ff, an example is given that shows Chisholm's way of counting events to be in conflict with our intuitions concerning the parts of events.

19. The definition of events as states of affairs is already absent from 1975

although Chisholm there still holds on to states of affairs as a basic category. Later states of affairs are reduced to properties (cf. 1986, pp. 28f.).

20. Chisholm himself invites this comparison when he says that, once we have states, there is no need to "assume that there are also such things as 'facts'" (1985/86, p. 98; cf. 1990, p. 422).

21. The same definition, with minor variations is repeated in 1989, p. 152, in 1990, p. 419, and again in unpublished, p. 4.

22. Chisholm there also draws a distinction between events and processes according to this conception of an event, but I am not sure that I understand his distinction.

23. The concrete-event view is clearly weaker than the view that events are tropes. The first, not the second view is "hardly controversial," pace Bennett (cf. Bennett 1988, p. 93).

24. In this respect Chisholm's position differs considerably from Kim's theory. See n. 3 above.

25. I am grateful to Tony Anderson for having drawn my attention to this parallel between Russell and Chisholm. For a possible solution of Russell's problem see Anderson 1989.

26. Dean Zimmerman suggested to me that one could avoid properties like being John's walking by identifying the generic event with the ordered pair consisting of John and the property walking. This proposal, I think, is also unacceptable for someone who sets his face against a dualism of event-tokens and event-types.

27. I discuss this possibility in more detail in Brandl, forthcoming.

28. I am indebted to Roderick Chisholm for his advice in correspondence and for sending me unpublished material. I also would like to thank Marian David, Christian Piller, Peter Simons, Barry Smith, and especially Dean Zimmerman for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

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REPLY TO JOHANNES L. BRANDL

It has been a pleasure to read Brandl's paper, "Recurrent Problems: Chisholm's Theory of Events." He has quite obviously understood what I have written and has seen why it is that I have had to change my views again and again—and again.

He makes it clear that the writings that have been available to him leave us with questions about *recurrence*. And he concludes with this question: If recurrent states of affairs are no longer available and if concrete events cannot recur, then what things *do* recur?

To say of an event that it *occurs* is no more nor less than to say of it that it *exists*. Therefore to say of an event that it *recurs* is to say that it *exists more than once*. But *nothing* can exist more than once.

Some have held, however, that there are two kinds of events: (i) the "one-time things" that we have been discussing and that do *not recur*; and (ii) "generic events" that *do* recur. What *reason* do we have for thinking that there are such "generic events?" I would say that we have *no* good reason for supposing this.

To find the things that *recur*, we should look to *attributes*. I propose the following definition which allows us to attribute "recurrence" to *attributes* instead of to *events*.

D1 The attribute of being-F recurs in the case of $x = \text{Df. (1) } x \text{ is } F, \text{ and (2) } x \text{ has been such that it ceased to be } F.$

We may also put the definiens by saying: " x has been such that it was F for the first time." And so we may *have recurrence* and yet say that *no event recurs*.

Using a scholastic terminology, we may say that recurrence does not require actual ceasing to be (ceasing to be *per se*); it requires only ceasing to be *per accidens*. It requires only that something *cease to have* certain properties.

We should also emphasize in this connection the *temporal orientation* of attributes. Thus there are attributes that point toward the future (for example, being such that it is going to walk) and there are attributes that point toward the past (for example, being such that it did walk). *Every* attribute that is exemplified points toward the present.

D2 P is an attribute that is oriented toward the present = Df. (1) P is an attribute which is necessarily such that whatever has it either did have or will have attributes; (2) P is possibly such that whatever has it had no attributes; and (3) P is possibly such that whatever has it will have no attributes.

D3 P is an attribute that is oriented toward the past = Df. (1) P is an attribute which is necessarily such that whatever has it had attributes; and (2) P is possibly such that whatever has it will have no attributes.

D4 P is an attribute that is oriented toward the future = Df. (1) P is an attribute which is necessarily such that whatever has it will have attributes; and (2) P is possibly such that whatever has it had no attributes.

Thanks to reflecting upon Brandl's paper, I have a much better understanding of recurrence than I had had before.

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