

Relativistic Holism - A Maximally Relational Ontology

There's no such thing as a thing - at least as far as anything "fundamental" goes. What makes a thing "what it is" isn't what it's made of, except inasmuch as its interactions with other objects may be possible to characterize by a sum of the respective interactions of its composite objects. What makes a thing what it is - that is, what gives it its form, its definition, its role (whatever that may be, from an electron to a gear to the human mind) - is the set of its interactions with everything else. Furthermore, this is the case for every "object," and truly, every "thing" in the universe, with no foundational level, per se.

Some objects, as I mentioned, can be thought of as being characterized by the sum of its composite objects' interactions, but this reaches a limit somewhere, likely at the level of fundamental particle physics. I may perhaps refer to this as a sort of "irreducible level," from which composite interactions may be defined with great effort (try explaining sociology with basic particle physics. It should be theoretically possible, but it is also - for all practical purposes - a uselessly complex endeavor), but I would not call it "foundational." Even at this irreducible level, there are still different "objects" and different interactions between them. The key point is this:

Everything is defined only by the set of its interactions with other things, including all other things, such that there is no foundation. Even at the fundamental level. There is only a sort of closed "interaction network," such that all internal behaviors are defined, but not relative to something somehow "external" to the set of all interactions. Everything is characterized only relative to one another. In fact, it ceases to make sense to even *refer to* anything "outside" the irreducible interaction network. If something influences the irreducible interaction network, it exists relative to all which is composed of the internal interactions. Otherwise, it does not exist at all.

The entire concept of existence itself becomes something sensible only in reference to interactions affecting (in other words, internal to) the irreducible network, and the entire set of irreducible interactions goes on to give definition to the members (or objects) which interact according to them. From there, these internal interactions can combine in different, increasingly complex ways to give rise to all manner of potential emergent interactions.

Within this is the nature of existence itself. Utterly relative, self-defining, and allowing all to exist, by virtue only of relation. Given all possibility, relation is a member. And thus, the universe is born, as a particular set of internally-defined interactions. □