

An Approach to Particulars I

Bundles and Substrata

Where Things Stand

- We have:
- . . . motivated the doctrine of universals.
- . . . offered several positive arguments, and found arguments concerning referring general terms especially compelling.
- . . . reviewed and rejected various versions of nominalism, noting that all linguistic and meta-linguistic versions succumb to objections, but that trope-theoretic nominalism fares better, at least with respect to these objections.

Next: Particulars

- N.b. that nominalist rejections of universals have presupposed a notion of particulars as unproblematic.
- Indeed, several arguments for the existence of universals have done the same.
- What, though, are particulars?
- We seek an account adequate to both the synchronic and diachronic identity of particulars.
- Three phenomena:
 - There *are* particulars, both synchronic and diachronic.
 - At least some particulars are mereologically complex: some particulars have parts.
 - At least some particulars are bounded in space and time.

Two Good Thoughts. . .

- One must remain sympathetic to the attempt to find a *deep* ontological distinction between unified and arbitrary particulars. . . (Armstrong, *A World of States of Affairs*, 111-112)
- We cannot know what something is without knowing how it is marked off from other things. Identity is thus of a piece with ontology. . . (Quine, 'Ontological Relativity,' 55)

. . .Gone Bad

- . . .If the world can be *partitioned* into unchanging particulars that are strictly identical through time, then one could certainly see the point of describing these things as the true particulars. (*A World of States of Affairs*, 112)
- . . . Accordingly, it is involved in the same relativity. ('Ontological Relativity,' 55)
 - Ontology is indeed doubly relative. Specifying the universe of a theory makes sense only relative to some background theory, and only relative to some choice of a manual of translation of the one theory into the other. ('Ontological Relativity,' 54-55)

Our Approach

- There are non-arbitrary, non-intention-dependent particulars. That is, some particulars are *privileged*.
 - At least some of these particulars undergo change. These are beings capable of remaining numerically one and the same while sustaining material replenishment.
- This judgment is made against the background of a theory; but the theory in question is categorial in character and abductively justified.
 - Abduction is here understood as a two-stage process: (i) we make an observation which would be wildly improbable were there no explanation at all for it and for which a justifying explanation is tendered in the form of an hypothesis; and (ii) a deduction is formed on the basis of that hypothesis.
- Our dominant claim: privileged diachronic continuants are *substances*.

Substances?

- x is a substance =_{df} x is . . .
 - . . . a bundle of properties (BT_p) or tropes (BT_t)
 - . . . a subject or substratum
 - . . . a hybrid of a bundle and a subject
 - . . . a categorially delimited basic being

Setting Aside an Alleged Impediment

- A Lockean Worry
 1. Necessarily, S has a meaningful concept c only if S has been directly acquainted with an instance of c .
 2. No-one is ever directly acquainted with any substance.
 3. Hence, no-one has a meaningful concept of substance.

Bundle Theories

- The idea of a substance is nothing but a collection of simple ideas that are united by the imagination and have a particular name assigned them by which we are able to recall, either to ourselves or others, that collection. (Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature* I vi)
- Ordinary objects are 'bundles of qualities'. (Russell, *Inquiry into Meaning and Truth*)

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Two General Problems

- In its property version, all substances exist of necessity; but some (all?) substances are contingent; hence, BT_p fails.
- In any version, BT holds that substances are identical with extensionally given bundles; such bundles are static, whereas substances can change; hence BT fails.

Substratum Theories

- Two flavours, pure and qualified:
 - ST_p : x is a substance $=_{df}$ x is a substratum (some stuff?) in which properties inhere
 - ST_q : x is a substance $=_{df}$ x is determinate substratum (a definite bounded quantity of stuff) in which properties inhere

Some Problems for ST

- ST is difficult to state: substances seem to be bare particulars, to have no intrinsic properties essentially; yet a substratum must perforce exemplify properties (logical properties, categorial properties, being a substance. . .).
- ST is difficult to specify: is substance *bounded* stuff? If so, how so? If not, is there more than one?

A Hybrid View

- HS: x is a substance $=_{df}$ x is a complex of: (i) a substratum (some stuff?), and (ii) the property instances which inhere in it.

And a Difficulty for HS

- First, the worries about ST stay with us.
- Second, this seems hardly category-specific.
- Third, the complex is or is not mereologically extensional: if it is, then the theory is false; if it is not, then the theory is at best incomplete.

An Impasse?

1. Substances are unified, non-instantiable, non-occurrent entities capable of existing diachronically as independent and determinate Fs.
2. If a substance is a unified complex, then it is unified: (a) in virtue of its own intrinsic features; or (b) by dint of the activities of entities extrinsic to it.
3. If (2b), then complex substances are not independent (and so, by (1), not substances after all).
4. If (2a), then a complex substance is united in terms of either BT, ST, or HS —and all of these are false.
5. Hence, there are no complex substances.

Something Amiss

- ‘But upon a more strict review of the section concerning personal identity, I find myself involved in such a labyrinth that, I must confess, I neither know how to correct my former opinions, nor how to render them consistent.’ — Appendix, *Treatise on Human Nature* (1975, 633)