

'PARTIALLY CLAD' BARE PARTICULARS EXPOSED

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In a recent series of articles, J. P. Moreland has attempted to revive the idea that bare particulars are indispensable for individuating concrete particulars. The success of the project turns on Moreland's proposal that while bare particulars are indeed 'partially clad'—that is, exemplify at least some properties—they are nevertheless 'bare' in that they lack internal constituents. I argue that 'partially clad' bare particulars (PCBPs) are impervious not only to traditional objections, but also those recently urged in this journal by D. W. Mertz. The real problem with Moreland's view, I contend, is that together with his containment model of predication, it leads to the unwanted conclusion that PCBPs actually contain themselves as constituents, thereby ensnaring them in a vicious (individuating) circularity.

Perhaps the most despised theoretical entity in all of philosophy, a bare particular (according to philosophical lore) is a something, we-know-not-what—a substratum that underlies all of the properties had or exemplified by a thing, but itself devoid of all properties: a propertiless property supporter. Convincing philosophers that these peculiar items might actually exist has proven monumentally difficult. Indeed, for the most part, philosophers have tended to write off bare particulars as simply incoherent, consigning them to the abyss of the logically impossible along with prime ministers who are prime numbers, square-circles, and the like.

The question naturally arises: why then have a dedicated few persisted in affirming that bare particulars really do exist? Perhaps the most compelling contemporary answer to this question comes from J. P. Moreland: 'bare particulars are crucial entities in any adequate overall theory of individuation' [2001: 149]; we cannot individuate particulars without them. Moreland's contention here is particularly interesting because of the price he must pay to secure it: bare particulars, it turns out, must be 'dressed up' and invested with at least some properties to do the individuating work demanded of them.

In what follows I give a brief sketch of the problem of individuation and explain how Moreland's bare particulars can be understood as providing its solution. I go on to show that although Moreland's theory has certain theoretical advantages, and easily survives D. W. Mertz's recent critique [2001: 45–61; 2003: 14–30], there are nevertheless serious difficulties with 'partially clad' bare particulars (PCBPs). I shall argue that Moreland's view, coupled with his containment model of predication, yields the unexpected result that PCBPs contain themselves as constituents, thereby generating a vicious circularity problem.

I. Moreland on Individuation

There is more than one problem of individuation. On the one hand, there is the problem of ‘singling something out at or through time’ or from world to world [Moreland and Pickavance 2003: 1]. This is a distinctively *epistemological* problem; it is the problem of finding a criterion that would enable us to pick out and identify an object (Quine, let’s say) in these various modal and temporal settings. Moreland is convinced that this version of the problem is something of a non-starter; at any rate, he has bigger fish to fry, for even if we can identify objects in this way, we are still faced with a problem involving ‘more distinctively metaphysical concerns’ [ibid.]. Moreland’s refurbished bare particulars are designed to solve this problem. But what exactly *is* the problem? Consider, he says, Aristotle and Plato—

two red, round spots that share all their pure properties in common. The [metaphysical] problem of individuation is the problem of offering an ontological assay of the situation so as to specify what it is that makes the two spots two particular, individual entities instead of one.

[Moreland 2001: 140]

As Moreland relies upon the notion of a ‘pure property’ in setting up the problem, some unpacking is in order. Following Michael Loux [1978: 132–4], he distinguishes between pure and impure properties. An impure property is a property that ‘incorporates’ a concrete particular. Take, for example, the property *being as wise as Quine*. This property ‘incorporates’ Quine in the following way: in every world in which an object has this property, it bears some relation or another to Quine. So *being as wise as Quine* is impure. By contrast, *being a philosopher* and *being politically conservative* are pure properties; they are wholly untainted, incorporating neither Quine nor any other concrete particular for that matter.

The problem of individuation is now within our reach. Following Moreland, let us suppose that there are two objects—say, our red, round spots, Aristotle and Plato—which hold all of their pure properties in common, while remaining numerically distinct. Why are they not the very same spot? What accounts for their distinctness? One’s initial inclination here is to individuate Aristotle and Plato in terms of some external (spatio-temporal) relation in which they stand. For example, suppose that Aristotle and Plato stand in the *is six inches from* relation; it then follows that they must occupy distinct spatio-temporal locations and thus count as distinct spots. However, as Moreland and Mertz rightly observe, this individuating solution will not work; for a pair of objects to occupy distinct spatio-temporal locations, those objects must already be distinct [Moreland and Pickavance 2003: 6; Mertz 2001: 52].

So why then are Aristotle and Plato distinct spots? Here Moreland’s reply brings a new and different question to the fore. For Aristotle and Plato, he says, are not in fact exhausted by their constituent pure properties. If we add up, for example, all of Aristotle’s pure properties—spothood, redness, roundness, and the like—we will not ‘get’ all of Aristotle. Something is missing; but what? There must be some constituent of Aristotle, Moreland says, that grounds its particularity and distinguishes it from Plato. It cannot be one of its pure properties, since these are shared *with* Plato. The problem of individuation, then, is the problem of ‘giving an account of the constituents of an entity . . . that serve to

individuate it' [Moreland 2001: 145]. We solve this problem by finding the candidate that best fills the role of individuator.

Are there any candidates up to the challenge? There are; but unfortunately they are not equally well suited for the job. The main contenders, Moreland informs us, are bare particulars and Leibnizian essences. A Leibnizian essence is a special sort of impure property, namely, the basic identity property (BIP) of an object (e.g., *being identical with Socrates*).¹ That objects have BIPs is perhaps controversial, but no more so than the idea that they have bare particulars. At any rate, I think we can see that if Socrates *does* have a BIP, then that property individuates him. For in every world in which Socrates exists, he will of course be the happy possessor of this property. Furthermore, it isn't so much as possible for any other object to have this property. But then it immediately follows that *being identical with Socrates* individuates Socrates.

Now Moreland is rather down on the individuating powers of Leibnizian essences. This theory of individuation, whose chief contemporary proponent (he says) is Alvin Plantinga,² is inadequate [ibid.: 144]. It is beset by problems of such a nature that until 'these problems are solved, one should look for a better theory of individuation' [147]. The better theory, of course, is Moreland's own. And it is to this theory that we must first turn our gaze, since Moreland's case against Leibnizian essences depends (to a considerable degree) on his positive case for bare particulars.

What *is* a bare particular? As we learn from Gustav Bergmann, 'Bare particulars neither are nor have natures. Any two of them are not intrinsically but only numerically different. That is their bareness' [1967: 24]. Some commentators have taken this statement to mean that bare particulars have no properties whatsoever; no property is such that it can be truly predicated of a Bergmannian or strictly bare particular. But surely this is absurd. Bare particulars must have *some* properties. For one thing, they are bare; that is, they are bereft of properties. At the very least, then, a putative bare particular will have the property of having no properties. And of course if it is a bare particular and not a universal, it will exemplify *being a particular*. Still further, like everything else, a bare particular will exemplify such trivially essential properties as *being coloured if red* and *being odd if identical with the number 9*, as these properties are metaphysically fastened to every object. Now while Moreland may have his qualms about the legitimacy of these alleged properties,³ he is not about to deny that bare particulars have properties. 'Bare particulars', he says, 'cannot exist without properties' [2001: 157]. If they exist at all, they must be 'partially clad'; indeed, existence just is the having of a property.

¹ Bernard D. Katz [1983: 40] defines a BIP as any property P such that (i) P is possibly exemplified by something, and (ii) P is necessarily such that for any objects x and y, if x and y both exemplify P, then x = y.

² So far as I know, Plantinga has never advanced a *theory* of individuation; there are, however, objects in his ontology which could serve as individuators. For example, Plantinga distinguishes between *thinnesses*, on the one hand, and *essences* or *haecceities*, on the other. A thinness of an object is its basic identity property. A haecceity 'is a property that is or could have been a thinness' [1985: 335]. Put in a slightly different way, a haecceity is either an exemplified essence (i.e., a thinness) which *does* individuate something or an unexemplified essence which *could* individuate something.

³ 'We believe that the properties said to be necessary for bare particulars are not genuine properties; these include simplicity, particularity, unrepeatability, and those of the three categories of transcendental, disjunctive, and negative properties' [Moreland and Pickavance 2003: 10].

But then in what sense are bare particulars actually *bare*? Here Moreland makes a rather ingenious suggestion. Their bareness doesn't consist in their failing to have properties (as we've seen, that is incoherent), but rather in the *way in which they do* have properties. Thus we are advised to distinguish between two types of predication with respect to concrete particulars: ordinary and non-ordinary. In the ordinary case, our predicating a property *P* of some particular *s* implies that *P* is 'rooted within' *s*: 'When a substance has a property, that property is "seated within" and, thus, an expression of the "inner nature" of the substance itself' [ibid.: 152]. Talk of properties being 'rooted within' things is of course metaphorical. There is no such thing, for example, as a property's being 'rooted' or 'seated within' a concrete particular; properties aren't the sorts of things that have 'roots'. So what does Moreland have in mind here? How are we to cash out this metaphor?

I think the basic idea can be grasped as follows. In an ordinary case of predication, we single out an object and predicate a property of it. Thus a proposition like

- (1) Quine is wise

affirms of Quine that he has the property *being wise*. But what this comes to on Moreland's constituent-whole ontology is just this: to say of Quine that he is wise is just to say that the property of being wise is among his constituents. Thus (1) is to be read as

- (2) Quine has *being wise* as a constituent.

Ordinary predication forges a constituency relation between a property (e.g., *being wise*) and the ontological whole (e.g., Quine) of which that property is a constituent. And this suggests that the subject of predication is structurally complex; ordinary garden-variety particulars (like you and I) are constituted objects with 'inner natures'.

Not so with bare particulars, however. Their bareness, says Moreland, consists not in their being bereft of properties, but rather in their having no constituents, no internal complexity, no 'inner natures'. (As Bergmann says, they 'neither are nor have natures'.) But how can this be? Since they are 'partially clad', there are things true *of* bare particulars—e.g., that they are constituents of things, that they individuate, and so on. But then if all we have is ordinary predication, PCBPs will have constituents, and so won't even count as bare in the sense of being ontologically simple. And of course if they *do* have constituents, then we immediately confront the possibility of there being two (distinct) PCBPs—those, say, associated with our red, round spots, Aristotle and Plato—which share all of their pure properties. But how, then, shall we account for *their* distinctness? The answer, presumably, will necessitate further appeal to bare particulars, and thus off we go on a vicious infinite regress, leaving us with no ultimate basis for individuating these particulars. Therefore unless there is some form of non-ordinary predication that would allow us to predicate a property *of* a PCBP without its being counted among its constituents, it seems that we must conclude that PCBPs are neither coherent nor capable of providing an ultimate basis for individuation. Not surprisingly, perhaps, Moreland does invoke a kind of non-ordinary predication here: 'Since bare particulars are simples, there is no internal differentiation within them. When a property is exemplified by a bare particular, it is modified by being tied to that particular' [ibid.: 153]. Nevertheless, he argues,

it is a primitive fact that properties are tied to them and this does not need to be grounded in some further capacity or property within them ... [bare particulars]

simply come individuated, even if properties are necessarily tied to them in the sense that they could not exist without properties.

[Ibid.: 155]

So it doesn't follow that in predicating a property P of a bare particular that P automatically becomes a constituent of that particular and, consequently, one of its constituents. By embracing 'tied to' predication we have averted both the incoherence and infinite regress objections in one stroke.

II. *Ad Mertz*

Now this dialectical move will no doubt strike some as a bit too easy. Indeed, according to D. W. Mertz, there are deep and intractable problems with 'tying' properties to bare particulars. Where ' p_a ' denotes a bare particular, Mertz points out that

nothing is in relatum p_a (being devoid of all content) to be the source or cause of the Tied-to relation linking it to any universal as the other relatum. The Tied-to relation is completely external in regard to relatum p_a . It makes no difference to the nature of relatum p_a what properties are tied-to it, and so p_a exists independently of such relatedness. However, if p_a can exist independently of entering into any Tied-to relation, then no such relatedness can be necessary to p_a . In short, all properties of bare particulars are contingent.

[Mertz 2001: 51]

Indeed, he says, if the relatum p_a has no 'controlling content', then 'there is no reason why both Round and Square could not be tied to p_a ' [ibid.]. Now the structure of Mertz's argument is not perfectly clear. How, precisely, is it supposed to go? The conclusion, clearly enough, is that *any* property (possible or otherwise) can be 'tied to' a bare particular; hence, we have a good reason to reject not only 'tied to' predication, but also the account of PCBP's that spawned it. But why should we go along with Mertz here? Why think that with regard to a PCBP's property possession: anything goes? What drives his argument, really, is a general principle about a special class of external relations:

(3) It makes no difference to the nature of an object that it stands in a relation R if and only if R is completely external to that object (and so holds only contingently).

That Mertz endorses this principle is clear enough. For on his view, a relation R is completely external to a relatum a just in case a is 'devoid of all content'. But if so, there can be nothing *in* relatum a to ground this relation; that is to say, there is no 'source or cause' for a 's being related by R to anything else. Accordingly, a 's nature is entirely indifferent to its standing in R , so that anything that is related by R to a can be so only contingently. And so with (3) in hand, we can then see the rest of Mertz's argument unfolding as follows. By hypothesis,

(4) A 'partially clad' bare particular (PCBP) has no nature.

Hence

(5) No relation in which a PCBP stands makes any difference to its nature,

which together with (3) implies

- (6) Any property at all (possible or otherwise) can be ‘tied to’ a PCBP.

Armed with (6), of course, Mertz can impute all manner of absurdities to Moreland’s theory of individuation.

This is a subtle and slippery argument; it deserves a careful look. It turns, as I say, on the truth of (3). In the present context, however, this premise seems to me highly tendentious. For one thing, Mertz neither defends (3) nor argues that it is a principle to which Moreland is somehow committed. So why think that it’s true or that Moreland must take responsibility for it? I cannot see any reason at all for making this supposition; in fact, I think we have every reason to reject it. For notice, first, that given the context of Mertz’s discussion, the occurrence of ‘nature’ in (3) undoubtedly means an ‘internal nature’: a complex internal structure, consisting of various appropriately related constituents. It doesn’t much matter what these constituents turn out to be. The important thing to see is that (3) makes hash of any ontology that contains simples (i.e., constituentless entities); this presents a problem, however, since as Moreland rightly notes, ‘In analytic ontology, one eventually comes to primitives’ [2001: 153] when analyzing complex objects in terms of their more basic constituents; and this is as it should be, for otherwise one’s analyses stumble on endlessly without hope of resolution.

For the sake of definiteness, then, let us consider contemporary trope theory. According to its most able proponent, Keith Campbell, Moreland’s two red spots—Aristotle and Plato—do not exemplify one and the same property, namely, *redness* or *being red*. Rather, each spot has its own redness: red_1 and red_2 , we might say. Campbell dubs these particularized qualities *basic tropes* [1990: 20]. Both red_1 and red_2 are members of the set *redness*—i.e., the set of all red tropes—and this in virtue of the fact that they bear the relation of exact similarity to each member of this set. For present purposes, the interesting thing about a basic trope is that it is ‘a single item, a (simple) particularized nature’ [ibid.]. But here we strike a problem; for (3), if true, plays all sorts of *a priori* havoc with Campbell’s trope theory. For example, if red_1 is a simple nature, containing no distinct elements, then any relation in which it stands (according to (3)) is completely external to it. But then the relation of exact similarity in which red_1 stands to each member of the set *redness* holds only contingently; in which case red_1 could have existed and yet failed to be a member of this set, which is just to say that red_1 could have existed without being red. And this, as they say, is repugnant to the intellect.

Perhaps it might be objected that although basic tropes are simple, they are not without content. If this is so, then my example fails, since Mertz’s argument depends essentially on the idea that PCBPs lack content; in which case basic tropes are not sufficiently analogous to PCBPs to make trouble for Mertz’s principle (3).⁴ Here it seems to me that we are equivocating on the term ‘content’. As I have already noted, the sense in which bare particulars are without content is that they lack any properties (intensions) *within* them: ‘no property *F* is rooted-in any bare particular p_a ’ [Mertz 2003: 15]. So the question is: do basic tropes lack content in *this* sense. The answer, I believe, is that they do. For a thick particular *a* to have content is for there to be at least one property *P* rooted-in *a*, which is just to say that *a* contains an individuator that grounds *a*’s particularity and to which *P* is

⁴ I am indebted to an anonymous reviewer for this interesting objection.

linked by the 'tied to' relation. The specific details here are not important. The crucial thing to see is that PCBPs and basic tropes lack content in just that sense envisioned in (3); they are wholly without internal elements. As Campbell himself says, a basic trope 'is not a union of distinct elements, one particularizing and the other furnishing a nature' [1990: 20].

Here is another example. Let us suppose that Plato is not a red spot, but a white one instead. And then let 'white₁' denote Plato's whiteness—its white trope. Next consider the proposition expressed by

(7) Red₁ is darker than white₁.

Surely this proposition is true—and indeed necessarily so. But if this is the case, then *is darker than* relates red₁ and white₁ intrinsically and essentially, which is impossible if (3) is true. For if (3) is true, then (7) could have been false, and white₁ could have been the same shade as or even darker than red₁. But of course this is absurd. My aim in all this is not to defend trope theory,⁵ but only to highlight how the rather loose analysis of a completely external relation in (3) very likely spells trouble for any ontology cleaving to primitive entities (be they basic tropes, bare particulars, or whatever). And this is far more than is required to show that Moreland's theory of individuation fails.

It is therefore far from obvious that we must grant that simple entities can only stand in completely external, contingent relations. Nor is it obvious that if a thing is simple, we can attribute any property we like to it just by virtue of its having no 'controlling content'. Why think, for example, that because red₁ is simple and without content, we can predicate the properties of being coloured *and* being non-coloured of it? This doesn't seem to follow at all. For perhaps it is of the very nature of these properties that they cannot be jointly exemplified, so that no further grounding of this fact—for example, in red₁'s 'inner nature'—is required. Mertz is unimpressed with this line of reasoning:

This objection misses the point ... Consider the shared 'subject' of Triangle in the facts corresponding to 'Round is contrary to Triangle' and 'Square is contrary to Triangle'. Here there is nothing in the natures of Round and Square as contraries that prevents them from being related by the relation *Is-contrary-to* to the shared relatum Triangle. Indeed, it is the very fact that they are contraries that allows them to enter into this particular relation with the intension [i.e., property] Triangle. Hence, it is possible that contrary properties can be related to the same subject.⁶

[Mertz 2001: 51]

This is a curious argument. I take it that 'Round', 'Square', and 'Triangle' are being employed as abstract singular terms to pick out (respectively) the properties *roundness*, *squareness*, and *triangularity*. I shall also assume (plausibly, I think) that by 'is contrary to' Mertz means 'is jointly unexemplifiable with'. If these assumptions are in order, and I think they are, his claim here comes to this: since

(8) Roundness is jointly unexemplifiable with triangularity

⁵ Moreland has effectively criticized Campbell's trope theory in a number of places [2000: 31–54; 2001: 53–73; 2002: 203–9].

⁶ This criticism also appears in abbreviated form in Mertz [2002: 178].

and

(9) Squareness is jointly unexemplifiable with triangularity

are true, it follows that

(10) There is something to which roundness and squareness are both related

is possible. This is no doubt correct; but it is scarcely an objection the proponent of ‘tied to’ predication need worry about. She can happily concede the truth of (10); indeed, given (8) and (9), she will insist on it. It certainly doesn’t follow, though, that either

(11) There is a PCBP that exemplifies both roundness and squareness

or

(12) There is a PCBP to which roundness and squareness are both tied.

After all, just because roundness and squareness can be *individually related* to some one thing, it doesn’t mean that they can be *jointly tied* to some other thing, especially if we are taking seriously the idea that the very nature of these properties precludes their being coexemplified by anything (bare particular or not). You might as well argue that since my brother and I are both related to my mother, we must also be married to the same wife!

Mertz’s response here is faltering. He notes that if two entities stand in one relation, then they also stand in another: ‘the fact that *a* is the father of *b* implies the obtaining of the fact that *a* is genetically similar (in some specifiable sense) to *b*’ [2003: 18]. This is true but presently irrelevant. The point at issue, rather, is whether from the fact that there is *some* thing and *some* relation in which roundness and squareness can stand separately, it also follows that there is a *specific* thing (e.g., a PCBP) and a *specific* relation (e.g., ‘tied to’) in which they can and do stand collectively. Mertz’s response does not address this issue at all. So while we can readily agree that ‘contrary properties can be related to the same subject’, there is little doubt that Mertz’s conclusion here—that ‘both Round and Square can be “tied-to” a bare particular *p_a*’ [2001: 51]—is invalidly drawn. And thus we have been given no reason at all for thinking that any property you please may be predicated of an ontological simple.

One final objection. Mertz makes much of Moreland’s endorsement [1998: 252] of the so-called principle of constituent identity, that is,

PCI: $(x)(y)[(z)(z \text{ is a constituent of } x \leftrightarrow z \text{ is a constituent of } y) \rightarrow x = y]$.

This principle says that objects having the same constituents are identical. The problem, Mertz alleges, is that PCI, together with the fact that all PCBPs have the same constituents (that is, none at all), leads to the awkward conclusion that there is only one PCBP [2001: 52; 2002: 178]. But this inference is hasty. For PCI is widely understood as applying only to complex wholes—not simples.⁷ Mertz’s reply is that if we do restrict the principle in this way, then ‘my original argument is nullified’ [2003: 20]. Still, he says, we must ask:

Why, other than to save bare particulars, must the principle be so restricted? Under the theory of bare particulars it is simply a ‘brute fact’ that two internally simple bare

⁷ According to Michael Loux, for example, PCI regulates the ontologist’s very use of the terms ‘constituent’ and ‘whole’. As such, Loux *explicitly* states that PCI ranges only over complex objects [1998: 107].

particulars are numerically distinct, and so accepting the theory one would have to restrict the constituent principle. But whether to accept the theory is precisely the issue.

[Ibid.]

But the answer to this question is easy. The basis of the restriction is not a desperate attempt to rescue the theory; rather, it is the principle of interpretive charity. It is simply not charitable to represent the proponent of bare particulars as being the sort who would claim that for any simples a and b , $a = b$ provided that a and b have the same constituents. That would be benighted indeed; we are, after all, talking about *simples* here. Think, for example, of your favourite constituentless object—a basic trope, perhaps. If we opt for an unrestricted version of PCI, then there is just one basic trope. On all accounts, that seems rather odd. In fact, things are even worse; for if PCI is not restricted to complex objects, then not only would there be only one PCBP, there would be (at most) one metaphysically simple entity—period. Every simple entity in one's ontology—a basic trope, a thin particular, a mathematical point, or what have you—would collapse into a single, simple, internally undifferentiated object. Surely, however, it is going too far to permit ontology to be held hostage in this way to an unrestricted PCI.⁸

We must therefore conclude, I believe, that not only is Moreland's theory of individuation a decided improvement over its classical predecessors, but it also has the dialectical advantage of having turned back a powerful recent challenge to its coherence. The question arises: should we conclude that Aristotle and Plato—our two red, round spots—are individuated by virtue of the fact that each includes (as a constituent) a distinct, pre-individuated, internally simple, 'partially clad' bare particular?

III. The Problem With Being Partially Clad

Not necessarily. For there is a Leibnizian challenger in the wings; and before we can conclude that PCBPs are the *best* candidates for the office of individuator, this challenge must be met. Well then, how does the challenge go? Approximately as follows. A Leibnizian essence—e.g., *being identical with Socrates*—is allegedly supposed to individuate Socrates; it is Socrates's unique and essential possession of this property that distinguishes him from everything else. But there is a serious problem here, says Moreland, if we take individuators to be constituents of the things they individuate:

Now the problem is that Leibnizian essences are ontologically dependent on the entities they are supposed to individuate and this cannot be because if the former are to

⁸ I should also mention a minor point. Mertz charges that positing 'tied to' predication in this context is an ad hoc invention. 'There is no independent motivation', he says, 'for the tied-to form of predication, it is simply posited in an attempt to save bare particulars from self-contradiction' [Mertz 2001: 50]. Moreland and Pickavance's response is that 'tied to' predication is a philosophical discovery made in light of assessing bare particular theory over and against its rivals [2003: 8]. The important thing to see, however, is that Mertz's objection (if cogent) is not fatal; it only shows that the theory has a mild to moderate epistemic weakness: it is insufficiently motivated. But recall that Moreland's claim on behalf of the theory is only that its preferred individuator is the better of the two main contenders: bare particulars and Leibnizian essences. And thus if Leibnizian essences turn out to be incoherent, then even if bare particular theory is insufficiently motivated yet coherent, it will still come out as the better of the two theories.

serve as individuators of the latter, then, e.g., Socrates should be ontologically constituent-dependent on Socrateity and not vice versa. However, if we do a constituent assay of the entities that compose being identical to Socrates, we will have to include the individual Socrates in our assay. And if that is the case, something must already individuate Socrates ontologically prior to his being a constituent of Socrateity.

[2001: 145]

Call this the Circularity Objection.⁹ Now a crucial premise in Moreland's argument is:

(13) Necessarily: if *being identical with Socrates* is a constituent of Socrates, then Socrates is ontologically constituent-dependent on *being identical with Socrates*

where an object *x* is ontologically constituent-dependent on an object *y* if and only if, necessarily, *x* exists only if *y* exists, and *y* is a constituent of *x*. And this is problematic, he says, because if (following the Leibnizian essentialist) we grant that *being identical with Socrates* individuates Socrates, then we must (following Moreland) admit that this BIP is one of Socrates's constituents, that is,

(14) *Being identical with Socrates* is a constituent of Socrates.

We are therefore committed to

(15) Socrates is ontologically constituent-dependent on *being identical with Socrates*

which gets the cart before the horse, since 'if one does a constituent assay of the entities that compose being identical to Socrates, one will have to include the individual Socrates in that assay' [ibid.]. To put things slightly differently: you cannot rightly individuate Socrates by appealing to a property (i.e., *being identical with Socrates*) that incorporates Socrates himself as a constituent. For then the question becomes: why is constituent-Socrates—that is, Socrates—who he is and not, say, Bill Clinton? A further appeal here to Socrates's BIP gets us nowhere; for then we have simply rounded a vicious (individuating) circle.

Now suppose we agree, for purposes of argument, that individuators must be constituents of the things they individuate, so that Socrateity is a constituent of Socrates. Is there even the slightest reason to think that Socrates himself is a constituent of Socrateity? It is difficult to see that there is. For the Leibnizian essentialist could maintain that Socrateity is simply a cluster of properties each of which is essentially unique to Socrates.¹⁰ So let 'S' denote this set of properties. Now of course any object that did (or even could) exemplify a member of S would be identical with Socrates; for by hypothesis each member of S is essential to Socrates, and also such that nothing else could possibly have it. Clearly, then, having this property cluster will individuate Socrates. But notice that there isn't even the hint of circularity here, as the internal structure of Socrateity has been unpacked without any essential reference to Socrates himself.

In any event, what is there to prevent the Leibnizian from holding that Socrateity is an 'irreducible haecceity or thisness' [Plantinga 2003: 150]—a thisness not reducible to any set of properties or constituents? As Moreland himself admits, 'Virtually all metaphysical

⁹ This objection is echoed in Ten Elshof [2000: 71].

¹⁰ I owe this insight to an anonymous reviewer.

theories have primitives and it is always open to a philosopher to claim that some entity or other is unanalyzable' [2001: 26]; indeed, he shows no hesitation at all in treating bare particulars—his favourite candidate for the role of individuator—as primitive: 'on the bare particular view, *qua* simples, bare particulars and the role they play as individuators are primitives' [ibid.: 153]. But surely, then, what's sauce for the bare particular goose is no less sauce for the Leibnizian gander; the Leibnizian essentialist is perfectly within her metaphysical rights in treating Socrateity as a primitive, irreducible thisness that just 'comes individuated'.¹¹ Accordingly, there is something like the following dilemma to be faced: either PCBPs cannot be individuated (since they don't have constituents) or it isn't necessary that what individuates a thing be among its constituents; in which case to insist that *only* Leibnizian essences need have constituents to qualify as properly individuated seems to be a case of special pleading.

Now here, perhaps, Moreland might respond that ontological primitives are of course to be expected in any properly constructed ontology; however, it does not follow that every would-be pretender to this role fits the bill. In particular, Leibnizian essences do not, since they 'violate what is true of predication in general':

whenever [a property] P is predicated of [an object] x, then P and x exist independently of each other in the sense that each is what it is and can be characterized as such without reference to the other. But this is not the case with Socrates and the property of being identical with Socrates... And unless there is strong justification for embracing a subclass of properties that neither are multiply-exemplifiable nor fit the general pattern of predication, one should stick with what we know to be true of properties in general.

[Ibid.: 145]

But *do* we really know this to be true of properties in general? I don't think so. For one thing, it is clear that there are perfectly good properties that aren't multiply-exemplifiable. For example, *being the only person to run a sub-four-minute mile* is a property Roger Bannister (and he alone) exemplified for a period of 47 days in 1954 (until John Landy also broke the four minute barrier). With the proper effort and training, perhaps, you or I might run the mile in less than four minutes; but of course even if we did, we wouldn't be the only ones to have done so. Accordingly, Bannister had exclusive (but alas temporary) rights to this property, which, sadly enough, can no longer be exemplified. So *being the only person to run a sub-four-minute mile* is not multiply-exemplifiable; still, it is none the worse off as a property for all that.

No doubt a critic will rejoin that not only is this not a 'perfectly good' property, it is not a property at all. Tacking 'being the only' onto an existing property is a poor recipe for cooking up yet another. For example, consider a possible world in which God decides to create a single object with only the following properties: redness, roundness, and having a mass of six kilograms.¹² (For ease of reference, suppose we call this object 'Alvin'.) If we have to countenance 'being the only'-type properties, then creating Alvin alone would be

¹¹ As Oaklander and Rothstein point out, perhaps 'all ontologies must sooner or later take individuation (whether between two bare particulars, two determinates of the same determinable, or whatever) to be basic' [2000: 98].

¹² Here I am grateful to an anonymous referee for the details of this example.

impossible. For then God would also have to add to Alvin such properties as *being the only object*, *being the only red object*, *being the only round object*, *being the only object having a mass*, and so on. But surely we can imagine Alvin, our merely-three-propertyed object, being the sole (existing) physical object. These 'being the only' properties are contrived at best.

Unfortunately, this example is fraught with difficulty. To begin with, I very much doubt that it is possible for God to create Alvin with just the three properties mentioned. For if God creates Alvin, then we cannot escape the fact that Alvin will have the property *being created by God*, together with every property supervening thereon (e.g., *being created*, *being created by someone*, etc.). And the same thing goes for Alvin's 'being the only' properties; they supervene on the state of affairs God actualizes in creating a world in which Alvin alone exists. There is no need for them to be 'added' to Alvin after the fact; for supervenient properties are not super-additions on top of the entities on which they supervene. Rather, as Armstrong tells us, 'You get the supervenient for free, but you do not really get an extra entity' [1997: 13]. At any rate, if God creates a world in which only Alvin exists, then surely it will be true of Alvin that Alvin alone exists. And if so, then *being the only object* will characterize him; it will be an attribute or property of Alvin. It therefore seems to me that there is nothing all that suspect about these 'being the only' properties; they are as good as any other.

But there is a second complaint to lodge against Moreland's account of predication. Why think that we cannot predicate *P* of *x* unless *P* and *x* can exist or be characterized independently of the other? The number nine and the property *being the square of three* cannot exist independently of one another; there is no possible world, for example, in which nine lacks this property. Does that mean we can't predicate the latter of the former? Of course not. So perhaps the idea, instead, is not that nine can *exist* apart from *being the square of three*, but rather that it can be *characterized* without reference to this property. But what does this come to? What does it mean to say of a thing that it can be 'characterized' independently of another? Moreland offers an example. Consider the following claims:

- (16) Socrates is human.
- (17) This (bare particular) is human.

Now, at first glance, it looks as though (16) stands as a counterexample to the principle of independent characterization, since the 'is' in (16) is that of essential predication, which might lead us to think that Socrates cannot be characterized apart from *being human*. But appearances here are misleading; for the 'is' in (16), says Moreland, 'should not be taken to assert a strict and philosophical notion of predication, but only a loose and popular one' [2001: 48]. Strictly speaking, rather, the 'is' in (16) is that of constituent-whole. Thus what (16) tells us is that 'humanness is an *essential* constituent of Socrates' [ibid., my italics]. As a general rule, then, in a context such as 'Socrates is ___', the general term filling the blank denotes one of Socrates's constituent properties; nothing ever gets 'tied' directly to Socrates.

But the property of being human has to be 'tied to' something, doesn't it? And if not Socrates, then what? The answer to this question surfaces when it is seen that (16) is 'grounded in' [ibid.] (17), which, at the very least, underwrites the former's *entailing* the latter. So far, so good. Now with (17) we are dealing with a 'strict sense of predication' [ibid.]. Here the copula 'is' expresses a 'basic, undefined, irreducible nexus of exemplification'

[*ibid.*: 99] which necessarily 'ties' the property of being human directly to Socrates's bare particular *b*, forming a *this-such*, namely, Socrates himself. We may then note that 'neither humanness nor the bare particular in Socrates requires reference to the other entity to be characterized' [*ibid.*: 146].

But here there is trouble along several lines. First, while at one point Moreland did hold that PCPBs have essential properties [1998: 261], his current view is that 'bare particulars actually have no necessary properties' at all [Moreland and Pickavance 2003: 8]. But how can this be? If no property is 'tied to' Socrates's bare particular essentially, then (given Moreland's account of predication) even *being human* isn't an essential constituent of Socrates, and therefore not among his essential properties. Indeed, if PCPBs have no essential properties, then all of Socrates's properties are contingent. And this, of course, we know to be false.

Notice, too, that Moreland's example doesn't actually tell us what it is to characterize a thing. What we are given is that (16), upon analysis, cashes out to (17). We are also told that Socrates's PCBP can be characterized without reference to the property of being human. But how, precisely, is this all supposed to work? Again, we are not told; but perhaps the idea is as follows. To characterize a thing—a concrete particular, say—is to offer an ontological assay of that thing. Thus, for example, we might (partially) characterize Socrates as the state of affairs consisting of the following constituents: *being human*, *being wise*, *being a philosopher*, the 'tied to' relation, and a bare particular *b*. But what if, like *b*, the particular being assayed is completely bare? Well then, the answer is easy. An ontological simple, like *b*, can be characterized as a state of affairs having no constituents; in which case, you will notice, we have made no mention at all of the property of being human.

Still, if you think about it, this doesn't give us anything like an overwhelming reason for rejecting Leibnizian essences in favour of PCPBs. For a Leibnizian might well embrace this account of 'characterization', while treating Socrates as an internally unstructured and undifferentiated blob. From this vantage point, Socrates has no constituents, and so there is no problem in characterizing him without reference to even his essential properties. The only way to make trouble for the Leibnizian essentialist here is to presuppose a constituent-whole ontology against her. In the present context, however, this is certainly question begging.

Finally, I turn to what is perhaps the most debilitating problem for the theory. Moreland appears to endorse or at any rate presuppose the following principle of constituent-dependence:

CD: Necessarily, for all *x* and *y*, if *x* is a constituent of *y*, then *y* is ontologically constituent-dependent on *x*.

Now Socrates's bare particular *b* is, of course, a key ingredient of Socrates; for it is *b* (and *b* alone) that individuates him. Thus, given (CD), it follows that

(18) Socrates is ontologically constituent-dependent on *b*.

But how shall we read (18)? In a 'loose and popular' sense or 'strictly and philosophically'? Following Moreland's earlier suggestion, I think we must say that (18) is 'grounded in' and therefore entails

(19) This (bare particular) is ontologically constituent-dependent on *b*.

And because 'this (bare particular)' denotes Socrates's bare particular *b*, (19) can be rendered as

(20) *b* is ontologically constituent-dependent on *b*

which, in turn, implies

(21) *b* exists entails *b* exists, and *b* is a constituent of *b*

by the definition of 'ontological constituent-dependence'. Finally, a familiar rule of logic permits us to infer

(22) *b* is a constituent of *b*.

So bare particulars *do* have constituents: themselves! Hence, if the role of bare particulars is to serve as the individuating constituents of things, then it is not true (as Moreland tells us) that they simply 'come individuated' [Moreland 2001: 155]. Rather, they are self-individuated. In an interesting twist, therefore, there is a circularity problem for Moreland's own theory of individuation.

By way of conclusion: J. P. Moreland's refurbished doctrine of bare particulars marks an important advance over classical formulations of that doctrine. It is clever, inventive, and nicely evades traditional and contemporary complaints. However, the objections to Leibnizian essences as individuators are (I think) themselves objectionable. Still further, 'partially clad' bare particulars face several serious shortcomings of their own. Sadly, then, I think we must conclude that the 'partially clad' emperor has no clothes.¹³

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