

1

* A traditional metaphysic: The world contains two independent categories – substances (which are particular and concrete) and properties (which are universal and abstract).

* Understand universals:

“Universals, by contrast, are unrestricted in the plurality of different locations in space-time at which they may be wholly present. Altering the number of instances of a universal (*being a bee*, for example), increasing or decreasing it by millions, in no way either augments or diminishes the universal itself.”

* Q: But why not think of properties as being particular, just like the substances that instantiate them? These would be abstract particulars or tropes.

The abstract/concrete distinction is independent of the universal/particular distinction. And properties must be particular in *some* sense (e.g., two instances or occurrences, at least). And we can destroy or alter one instance of redness, say, without destroying or altering the other. They seem to have the marks of particularity.

2

* D.C. Williams argued that tropes are fundamental and that ordinary concrete objects are built up out of tropes (rather than tropes being dependent on such objects).

“The least which could exist on its own may well be less than a whole man or a whole piece of cloth. It may be just a single trope or even a minimal part of a single trope.”

“On the view that tropes are the basic particulars, concrete particulars, the whole man and the whole piece of cloth, count as dependent realities. They are collections of co-located tropes, depending on these tropes as a fleet does upon its component ships.”

3

* Causation relates properties understood as particulars. Events bring in too many irrelevancies. And it is a particular instance of a property, not some universal, that is involved in a particular causal relation.

“The cause of the collapse is the weakness of this cable (and not any other), the whole weakness, and nothing but the weakness. It is a particular, a specific condition at a place and time: so it is an abstract particular. It is, in short, a trope.”

4

* Tropes are also the immediate objects of perception. We also evaluate objects in various respects, and these respects are distinct tropes.

5

* What, then, makes concrete particulars unified individuals? It would be mysterious if the world contains some non-qualitative elements – like prime matter or bare substrata – that unifies them. An alternative is that concrete individuals are bundles of properties. But, since the Identity of Indiscernibles is false, these properties must be particular.

* A concrete object is the maximal sum of compossible tropes.

6

* The Problem of Universals: How can the same property occur in multiple instances? The real issue here is what ontological structure (if any) grounds the fact that different things can resemble one another and satisfy the same general terms?

Universals violate Locke's dictum, and Nominalism (supposedly) has the unwanted consequence that similarities aren't objectively real.

* Hypothesis: Properties are sets of resembling tropes. Resemblance is then taken as primitive. And this theory avoids two objections that plague theories that identify properties with sets of resembling concrete objects. These are the "companionship" and "imperfect community" objections.

There is something left unexplained here. But, one might wonder whether or not this is a bad thing:

"What do two smooth tropes have in common, in virtue of which they match?
And now we have no answer, or only answers that restate the situation: These
tropes resemble, or are alike, in virtue of their nature, in virtue of what they are."

7

* The particularity of tropes holds in virtue of their spatio-temporal location. And there is some kind of non-spatio-temporal "location" in which non-spatial tropes are instantiated!

* There is not a one-to-one correspondence between predicates and (sets of) tropes.

8

* 3 types of change in tropes: motion, substitution, and variation.