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The Nature of Being

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Abstract

There would seem to be differences which lie not in the natures of certain entities, but in their being. Take, for example, the difference between an actual and a merely possible dollar. This difference is utterly unlike the difference between a cat and a canary, a mountain and a molehill, or a table and a tablet. For these things differ in their nature. But an actual and a merely possible dollar need not differ in their nature. They might have exactly the same size, shape, weight, and chemical composition; they might well be perfect—perhaps even indiscernible—duplicates. Yet, for all their similarities, there still seems to be an important and peculiarly ontological difference between them: one is actual, the other is merely possible. Or take, for another example, the difference between a number and a nightingale. A nightingale has a determinate size, shape, and weight. These properties help to make up its nature. But while a number appears to determinately lack any of the properties that help make up the nature of a nightingale, the true extent of the difference between them does not seem to be captured solely by a difference in their natures. There is a further and, it seems, peculiarly ontological difference between them: one is abstract, the other is concrete.

This dissertation is an examination of the nature of being. I argue that being is fragmentary: that is, that there are different ways of being. I also argue that these ways of being are best understood as sufficiently general, non-qualitative properties which do not admit of real definition. In chapter 1, I argue against the view—recently defended by Kris McDaniel and Jason Turner—that these different ways of being are best understood not as properties, but rather as perfectly natural quantifiers ranging over distinct domains. In chapters 2-4, I develop an account of the distinction between qualitative and non-qualitative properties. I first argue, in chapter 2,

that this distinction should not be understood in linguistic terms; the qualitative properties should not be taken to be those properties that can be designated descriptively without the aid of directly referential devices (such as demonstratives, indexicals, or proper names). I next defend, in chapter 3, a causal account of the natue of the qualitative properties, according to which a property is qualitative if and only if it plays—or is grounded in properties that play—a fundamental causal role at some world. I combine this positive account of the nature of the qualitative properties with a positive account of the nature of the fundamental non-qualitative properties, according to which a fundamental property is non-qualitative if and only if it is not subject to various principles of recombination. I then attempt to undermine an alternative, ontological account of the fundamental non-qualitative properties, according to which a fundamental property is non-qualitative if and only if it is the property of enjoying a fundamental way of being. For this account will only be plausible if haecceities such as *being Socrates* and *being Plato* are individualistic ways of being: that is, ways of being that can only be enjoyed by a single individual. But, as I argue in chapter 4, we should not take haecceities to be individualistic ways of being. In chapter 5, I argue that what makes a property peculiarly ontological—what makes it a way of being—is its emptiness. I defend the claim that a way of being is empty, and thus does not contribute to the nature of the entities that enjoy it, if and only if it is sufficiently general, it is non-qualitative, and it does not admit of real definition. I start by assuming that there is a generic way of being that absolutely everything enjoys, and that this way of being is itself empty. I then show that other intuitively empty ways of being are importantly analogous to this generic way of being. I am left, then, with a version of pluralism about being which accepts a generic way of being. In chapter 6, I take up some recent objections—due to Trenton Merricks—to combining pluralism with a generic way of being.

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I first became interested in the topic of this dissertation in the Summer of 2003 after reading Franz Brentano's *On the Several Senses of Being in Aristotle* ([1862] 1975). I don't really remember any of the details and I'm not sure how much of it I really understood anyway, but what I took away from it is still clear: namely, a resolute belief that there are different ways of being. I became disillusioned, however, in the Spring of 2005 when I took my first metaphysics class with Jonathan Schaffer. No one, I was told, took the idea that there are different ways of being seriously anymore. It was simply a confused relic from a bygone era. There is, I was assured, only one way of being, namely, existence, which can be adequately expressed by the existential quantifier of first-order logic. I probably should have resisted. But, instead, I did what all good philosophy majors do: I adopted the orthodox view.

It didn't take long for my commitment to waiver. I soon found myself drawn to modal realism. But not the version defended by David Lewis (1986). I could accept the claim that, say, a merely possible dollar is no less a dollar than an actual dollar, that it buys no less bread. For a dollar is, after all, what it is regardless of whether it is actual or merely possible. But I could not bring myself to believe that a merely possible dollar has the same ontological status as an actual dollar, that it enjoys the same kind of reality as you or me. Thus, it wasn't Lewis's modal realism that I found abhorrent; it was his indexical account of actuality. The version of modal realism that I found most attractive was, unsurprisingly, the version defended by Phil Bricker (2001, 2006), which combined modal realism with an account of absolute actuality. But what I did not yet realize, what I have only now come to appreciate, was that my commitment to the claim that 'it is meaningful to speak of things differing in ontological status, or belonging to distinct

ontological kinds' was sufficient to make me, as Bricker (2006: 63) put it, an 'ontological pluralist'. (See also Bricker 2001: 30.)

My interest in ways of being was rekindled in the Spring of 2008 while sitting in on Phil Bricker's seminar on existence. The central question of the course was whether the whole of reality can be divided into two (or more) fundamentally different classes: the existent and non-existent, the actual and the merely possible, or what have you. Eventually, we turned to the question of whether there are different ways of being, and read drafts of both McDaniel (2009) and Turner (2010). Phil, as I recall, had two main criticisms: the first was that differences in ontological status should not be cashed out in terms of quantification, the second was that it would be better—more neutral and less question begging—to talk about ontological categories than to talk about ways of being. I found myself in agreement with the first criticism, but not the second. There was, I thought, something important that was captured by talking about different ways of being, something that wasn't really captured by talking about ontological categories. But what that was, or even what that might be, I could not yet say. I can only hope, naively perhaps, that the version of pluralism that I have defended here will help to explain why differences in ontological status are best understood as differences in being.

I owe an enormous debt of philosophical gratitude to many different people. It has been a long and winding road, and it has taken me a while to get here. It would probably be impossible to thank everyone who has helped me along the way. But I didn't make it this far on my own, so I should at least try. I'll start with everyone who helped with the content of this dissertation.

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Introduction

Absolutely everything there is—or, better, absolutely every entity—enjoys some way of being.[1] But the being of an entity appears to be distinct from the nature of an entity: we learn, it seems, nothing about *what* something is merely by learning *that* it is. So what, then, is being?

Any plausible account of the nature of being must, at the very least, provide us with answers to three important questions:[2]

Q1 Is being unitary or fragmentary? Is there only one way of being which absolutely every entity enjoys or are there different ways of being?

Q2 Is being the same as existence? Does everything that enjoys some way of being exist in some way or are there any non-existent entities?

Q3 How should being be represented in our metaphysical theories? Are ways of being most perspicuously expressed by quantifier expressions, by predicates, or by something else entirely?

We can ask, first, how many ways of being there are. To hold that there is only one way of being which absolutely every entity enjoys and, thus, that being is *unitary* is, I will assume, to hold that while entities might differ in their nature, they do not—and, indeed, cannot—differ in their

[1] An *entity*, as I will use the term, is something that enjoys some way of being. This allows me to remain officially neutral about whether there are any non-entities, that is, items, things, or objects that do not enjoy any way of being at all. For a defense of the Meinongian (or noneist) thesis that there are non-entities, see Routley (1980) and Priest (2005).

[2] See Moltmann (forthcoming) for a similar list of questions. Note, however, that she frames these questions as questions about the nature of existence rather than being.

being. Likewise, to hold that there are different ways of being and, thus, that being is *fragmentary* is to hold that there are peculiarly ontological differences between certain entities, differences which lie not in their nature, but in their being. We can ask, next, about whether being is the same as existence. I will assume that *existence* is itself a way of being.[3] Thus, if there are non-existent entities, that is, entities that enjoy some way of being but do not themselves exist, then being will turn out to be fragmentary. In order to maintain that being is unitary, we would have to hold that existence is the only way of being. We can ask, finally, about how being should be represented in our metaphysical theories. I will assume that there is something substantive at issue here. If, for example, ways of being are most perspicuously expressed—and best reflected—by quantifier expressions, this should tell us something important about what being is, about the nature of being itself: namely, that it is quantificational.[4]

A consensus arose among philosophers in the twentieth century about how these questions should be answered. The current orthodoxy consists of three theses:

[3] This assumption appears to be denied by Russell (1903: 449) who distinguishes between being and existence, but insists 'that there is only one kind of being, namely, being *simpliciter*, and only one kind of existence, namely, existence *simpliciter*'.

[4] On a more deflationary interpretation of perspicuity, there is nothing deep about the claim that being is most perspicuously represented by quantifier expressions. It just tells us that we should use a different piece of linguistic machinery to designate aspects of an entity's being than we do to designate aspects of its nature. I shall be working instead with a metaphysically substantive understanding of perspicuity. Thanks to Daniel Nolan for encouraging me to draw this distinction.

The Monistic Thesis: being is unitary.[5]

The Equivalence Thesis: being is the same as existence.

The Neo-Quinean Thesis: being is perspicuously expressed by particular—or existential—quantifier expressions.[6]

The neo-Quinean thesis appears to stand as the central pillar of this orthodoxy. For suppose that being is best expressed in terms of quantification. Then, since we can say in one breath that Socrates, Smaug, and the number 2 have being and are three things, there would seem to be a generic way of being enjoyed by absolutely everything there is.[7] But, it might be claimed, once we grant that there is a generic way of being, we should lower our credence in the claim that there are specific ways of being enjoyed by only some of what there is, and should, in the interest of ideological parsimony, embrace the monistic thesis instead.[8] Yet once we come accept the

[5] The monistic thesis should not be mistaken for what we might call the universality thesis. For while the universality thesis merely holds that there is a generic, unrestricted way of being that absolutely every entity enjoys, the monistic thesis adds that this generic way of being is the only way of being.

[6] The neo-Quinean thesis, as I understand it, tells us only that ways of being should be represented in our metaphysical theories by existential quantifier expressions. It does not tell us that the existential quantifier expressions which appear in our best metaphysical theories should be taken to represent ways of being. I thus distinguish the neo-Quinean thesis from what I shall call the converse neo-Quinean thesis. Together, these two theses support the stronger claim that to be is to be the value of a variable.

[7] This is van Inwagen's (1998: 17, 2009a: 61-3, 2009b: 41-2) counting argument. Berto (2013: 32) notes that it serves as a powerful argument for the univocity of being.

[8] Szabó (2003: 13) suggests that the acceptance of something like the neo-Quinean thesis has led philosophers to give little credence to the idea that there are different ways of existence. Builes (2019: 400) suggests that considerations of ideological parsimony should lead from the acceptance of the neo-Quinean thesis to the acceptance of the monistic thesis.

monistic thesis, we will have good reason to accept the equivalence thesis as well. For we are assuming that existence is a way of being, and so, by the monistic thesis, must itself be the only way of being. There is, to put the orthodox view in a nutshell, exactly one way of being that all entities enjoy, namely, existence, and this way of being is best captured by the existential quantifier of first-order formal logic.

Being, on this orthodox account, is the emptiest of all concepts: it does not at all contribute to the nature of the entities that enjoy it.[9] For while an entity's nature is captured by various predicates, its being is expressed by the existential quantifier. We can, in this way, avoid what Peter van Inwagen (2001: 4) calls 'the mistake of transferring what properly belongs to the nature of [an entity]…to the being of [that entity]'. For, on this account, the concept of being is 'closely allied with the concept of number: to say that there are Xs is to say that the number of Xs is 1 or more—and to say nothing more profound, nothing more interesting, nothing more'. The orthodox account thus appears to be 'the highest development of what may be called the "thin" conception of being'.

In this dissertation, I will provide an alternative, pluralistic account of the nature of being. This account is committed to a thin conception of being: that is, it holds that an entity's being is distinct from its nature.[10] But, unlike the orthodox account, it takes being to be fragmentary: that is, it takes there to be different fundamental ways of being. The primary motivation for this account comes from the observation that certain entities appear to differ not in their nature, but in

[9] It is, as Hegel puts it, 'the poorest and most abstract determination' ([1827/ 1830] 2010: 101/ GW 20: 92).

[10] I believe, following D. C. Williams (1963: 754, cf. 757) that it is the 'very distinction' between the being and the nature of an entity is the 'only license' for pluralism. An avowed pluralist who nevertheless fails to accept a thin conception of being is not, I think, really a pluralist about *being* at all.

their being. Take, for example, the difference between an actual and a merely possible silver dollar. This difference is utterly unlike the difference between a cat and a canary, a mountain and a molehill, or a table and a tablet. For these entities differ in their nature. But an actual and a merely possible dollar need not differ in nature. They might have exactly the same size, shape, weight, and chemical composition; they might be perfect—perhaps even indiscernible—duplicates. Yet, for all their similarities, there still seems to be an objective and peculiarly ontological difference between them: one enjoys actual existence, the other does not.[11] This phenomenon of objective, ontological difference is, I believe, the basic phenomenon that any pluralist about being should attempt to capture and explain. But how exactly should a pluralist capture this phenomenon?

Recent defenders of pluralism—such as Kris McDaniel (2009, 2010b, 2017) and Jason Turner (2010, 2012, forthcoming)—have sought to capture and explain the basic phenomenon of ontological difference in quantificational terms. They have combined the pluralistic thesis that there are different ways of being with the neo-Quinean thesis that ways of being are most perspicuously expressed in our metaphysical theories by (semantically primitive) quantifier

[11] Or take, for another example, the difference between a present and a past silver dollar. These two dollars need not differ in nature. They might have exactly the same size, shape, weight, and chemical composition; they might be perfect—and, if ours is a world of two-way eternal recurrence, perhaps even indiscernible—duplicates. Yet, for all their similarities, there might still be an objective and peculiarly ontological difference between them: one enjoys present existence, the other does not.

expressions.[12] They have endorsed what I will call *quantificational pluralism*.[13] This is the least heterodox version of pluralism about being.

I believe, however, that only a more thoroughly unorthodox account of the nature of being can adequately capture the basic phenomenon of ontological difference. I maintain, against the current orthodoxy, that a way of being is a special kind of fundamental property: namely, a sufficiently general, non-qualitative, indefinable property.[14] And, since properties are best represented in our metaphysical theories by predicates, these special ontological properties should be represented in our theories by special predicates. My account of the nature of being thus combines the following theses:

The Pluralistic Thesis: being is fragmentary.

The Difference Thesis: being is not the same as existence.

The Anti-Quinean Thesis: being is perspicuously expressed by special predicates.

Note, however, that the difference thesis is not essential to this account. For given the pluralistic thesis that there are different ways of being, we can either identify one of these ways of being with existence (or actuality), or we can say that more than one of these ways of being are themselves ways of existing. I will often talk as if there are ways of being—such as abstract possible subsistence—that are not themselves ways of existing, but this convention is dispensable. What is important is not what we call a way of being, but whether we recognize a

[12] A quantifier expression is *semantically primitive* (in a language) whenever it cannot be defined in terms of an absolutely unrestricted quantifier and some restricting predicate.

[13] This view, or one much like it, appears to have been held by both Herbert W. Schneider (1962: 10) and Nino B. Cocchiarella (1969).

[14] A property is *fundamental* just in case it is an ultimate source of objective similarity.

way of being as such. I will, to this end, say something about the extent of being's fragmentation. I recognize the following ways of being: actual existence (enjoyed by every part of our world), concrete possible existence (enjoyed by every part of our world as well as by dragons, unicorns, etc.), abstract possible subsistence (enjoyed by the number 2, but not by the parts of our world or by dragons, unicorns, etc.), and a generic being way of being (enjoyed by absolutely everything there is).

I will defend this account of the nature of being and the extent of its fragmentation in the following chapters. In chapter 1, I will argue that ontological pluralists should not accept the neo-Quinean thesis, and thus should not be quantificational pluralists. For if ways of being are perspicuously represented by quantifier expressions, then ways of being should themselves be quantifiers.[15] And if ways of being are quantifiers, then they should be more natural than their corresponding domains. But since it does not appear to be the case that these quantifiers are more natural than their corresponding domains, quantificational pluralism does not appear to be true. The pluralist about being should, I think, reject the neo-Quinean thesis. This leaves the pluralist with the difficult problem of explaining what it is that is peculiarly ontological about ontological differences. The pluralist can, I think, make headway on this problem by recognizing that ontological differences appear to be importantly non-qualitative.

[15] I distinguish between *quantifier expressions* which are pieces of language or ideology, and *quantifiers* which are those parts or aspects of the quantificational structure of reality. This allows me to distinguish between language and reality, between a quantifier expression in a language and the quantificational structure of reality that that expression is supposed to represent. Note, however, that a quantifier—that is, whatever part of aspect of reality that a quantifier expression designates—might be, but need not be, an entity.

To this end, I shall develop an account of the distinction between the qualitative and the non-qualitative properties. This distinction plays an important role in cashing out the intuitive notions of duplication and indiscernibility. Duplicates instantiate the same intrinsic qualitative properties, while indiscernibles instantiate the same intrinsic as well as the same extrinsic qualitative properties. Take, for example, a world consisting of nothing but two duplicate iron spheres—Castor and Pollux—located a small distance apart. These two spheres are indiscernible duplicates. But for all their qualitative similarities, there is still an important non-qualitative difference between them: one has the property *being identical to Castor*, the other does not. Or take, for another example, an actual and a merely possible dollar. These two dollars might, it seems, be perfect—perhaps even indiscernible—duplicates. But for all their qualitative similarities, there is still an important non-qualitative difference between them: one has the property *being actual*, the other does not.

In chapter 2, I will take up the commonly held assumption that there is an interesting connection between the qualitative/non-qualitative distinction and various linguistic facts.[16] It is often held that if we had a sufficiently rich language (containing general—but not necessarily primitive—predicates for all the basic qualitative properties and relations, and allowing for complex infinitary constructions), we could describe the complete qualitative profile of every possible object. But it is also held that unless this language were to contain demonstratives (such as '*this* cat' and '*that* dog'), indexicals (such as 'I', 'here', 'now', and 'actual'), or proper names (such as 'Socrates' and 'Plato'), it would lack the resources to specify any of an object's non-qualitative properties. The basic idea can be summed up as follows:

[16] See, for example, Carnap (1947b: 138), Adams (1979: 7), Lewis (1986: 221), Gallois (1998: 249), and Divers (2002: 349 n 12).

The Linguistic Thesis: necessarily, a property or relation is *qualitative* if and only if it can be designated descriptively without the aid of directly referential devices (such as demonstratives, indexicals, or proper names).

I will argue that this thesis fails in both directions: there might, on the one hand, be non-qualitative properties that can be designated descriptively, and there appear to be, on the other hand, qualitative properties that can only be designated directly. I will suggest that while the linguistic thesis is ultimately untenable as stated, it can be plausibly recast as a thesis about our concepts rather than the properties they designate.

In chapter 3, I will put forward and defend my preferred account of the distinction between the fundamental qualitative and the fundamental non-qualitative properties.[17] This account can be summed up as follows:

The Causal Thesis: a fundamental property or relation is *qualitative* if and only if it plays a fundamental causal (or nomic) role at some world.

The Necessary Connections Thesis: a fundamental property or relation is *non-qualitative* if and only if it is not subject to the true principles of recombination.

[17] This chapter is essentially an extended commentary on the following passage from Phillip Bricker (2006: 49-50):

> The fundamental non-qualitative properties and relations are needed to provide the underlying framework for logical space. Here I include, in addition to sameness-of-ontological-kind properties, identity, part-whole, instantiation, and perhaps spatiotemporal and other external relations. Fundamental qualitative properties and relations, on the other hand, can be distinguished as those that are subject to principles of recombination: they are distributed over logical space every which way.

The Humean Link: a fundamental property or relation plays a fundamental causal (or nomic) role at some world if and only if it is subject to the true principles of recombination.

This causal account will properly class the fundamental ontological properties of *being actual*, *being concretely possible*, and *being abstractly possible* as non-qualitative properties. For it seems that none of these properties will play a fundamental causal role at any world and each of these properties would appear to be a source of various necessary connections and exclusions.

There is, however, an alternative account of the nature of the non-qualitative properties that I like almost as much.[18] On this alternative account, the qualitative/non-qualitative distinction aligns with the distinction between the being and the nature of an entity. Those properties that contribute to an entity's nature are, on this account, taken to be qualitative, while those properties that contribute to an entity's being are taken to be non-qualitative. This yields the following:

The Ontological Thesis: a fundamental property is *non-qualitative* if and only if it is the property of enjoying a fundamental way of being.

This ontological account will correctly class the fundamental ontological properties of *being actual*, *being concretely possible*, and *being abstractly possible* as non-qualitative. Yet, unlike

[18] This account is suggested by a stray remark in McDaniel (2017: chapter 6). For in section 6.5, McDaniel (2017: 181) promises to give a brief discussion of the question: 'What is a qualitative property?'. But in section 6.7, where this discussion is supposed to take place, we find nothing of the sort. What we find instead is simply the suggestion that non-qualitative properties such as *being Socrates* and *being Plato* are individualistic ways of being. If this section is indeed supposed to contain an answer to the question at hand, it would appear to be that a fundamental property is *non-qualitative* if and only if it is the property of enjoying a fundamental way of being.

my preferred causal account, this ontological account need not class the fundamental mereological and spatiotemporal relations as qualitative, it will be consistent with the possibility of fundamentally *de re* laws, and it will also be consistent with the claim that there could be fundamental and essentially epiphenomenal qualitative properties. These considerations might be taken to count in favor this alternative, ontological account of the qualitative/non-qualitative distinction over my preferred, causal account. But the overall plausibility of the ontological thesis will, however, ultimately turn on whether or not fundamental haecceities such as *being Socrates* or *being Plato* are individualistic ways of being: roughly, ways of being that can only be enjoyed by one individual.[19]

In chapter 4, I will introduce a view I'll call *haecceitistic fragmentationalism*, which holds, roughly, that there are haecceitistic ways of being. It combines a belief in fundamental haecceities such as *being Plato* and *being Aristotle* with a belief in ways of being. A haecceity, on this view, is not a complex property that somehow has an individual as a constituent; it is simply an individualistic way of being. I will argue that, as pluralists, we should not believe in such individualistic ways of being. For we should, as pluralists, accept a distinction between actual and merely possible entities. But if we accept this distinction, we should be modal realists.[20] The modal realist who accepts individualistic ways of being faces two problems: it

[19] Note that I distinguish between the non-fundamental property *being identical to Socrates*, had by a single individual at a single world, from the seemingly fundamental property *being Socrates*, had by many different individuals at many different worlds. It is the latter property that is here being taken as a fundamental way of being.

[20] I don't mean to claim that the pluralist has no choice but to accept modal realism here. For those who, following Kit Fine (1994), reduce possibility to the essences of things and who believe that non-actual entities—or entities that do not figure in reality—have essences might attempt to distinguish between essential being (which is enjoyed by

does not sit well with the possibility of island universes and it conflicts with a plausible claim about the relation between a way of being and an ontological category: namely, that for every way of being, there is a corresponding ontological category. The haecceitist who thinks that there are fundamental non-qualitative properties such as *being Socrates* can, I think, avoid these objections. But only at the cost of denying that haecceities are individualistic ways of being. This should, I think, undercut whatever advantage the ontological thesis might be thought to have over the causal thesis. Thus, in the remaining chapters, I will return to the task of developing and defending my preferred form of pluralism.

In chapter 5, I will argue that pluralists can plausibly take various restricted ways of being to be empty and that this emptiness is not well captured by taking these ways of being to be expressed by semantically primitive existential quantifier expressions. I will defend the view that a fundamental way of being is *empty* not because it is quantificational, but because it is sufficiently general, lacking in qualitative content, and does not admit of real definition. The motivation for this view comes, first, from the assumption that the generic, unrestricted way of being is empty and, thus, does not contribute to the nature of the entities that enjoy it; and, second, from the observation that the specific, restricted ways of being which appear to be empty are analogous to the generic way of being in three respects: they are sufficiently general, they are non-qualitative, and they do not admit of real definitions.

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everything that has an essence) and actual existence (which is enjoyed by everything that is actual, or which figures into reality). There might be, on this account, actual people who have the same nature or essence as various merely possible people, but there would still be an important ontological difference between them: the actual people enjoy actual existence, the merely possible people do not. I do believe, however, that modal realism with absolute actuality is preferable to this Finean alternative.

The plausibility of my account turns on the acceptance of a generic way of being. It is, I think, because the specific, restricted ways of being are importantly analogous to the generic, unrestricted way of being that they should all be thought of as ways of being. But Trenton Merricks (2019: 601-4) has recently raised three objections to combining pluralism with a generic way of being: such a view conflicts with what Merricks takes to be the pluralist's core intuition, is vulnerable to the charge that it posits a difference in being where there is simply a difference in kind, and is in tension with various historically influential motivations for pluralism. If Merricks is correct, then my attempt to capture what is peculiarly ontological about various properties is doomed to fail.

In chapter 6, I will argue that none of Merricks's objections give us reason to think that pluralism should not be combined with a general, unrestricted way of being. The main issue that divides us is whether the pluralist is minimally committed to what I will call weak, strong, or extreme fragmentation:[21]

[21] The extreme thesis entails the strong thesis: if there are absolutely no ontological similarities between certain entities, then clearly there are no fundamental ontological similarities either. And the strong thesis appears to entail the weak: if there are no fundamental ontological similarities between two entities, then—assuming that everything enjoys at least one fundamental way of being—there would need to be some kind of fundamental ontological difference between them.

The ontological elitist, who holds that holes and shadows are almost nothings, would deny the assumption that every entity enjoys at least one fundamental way of being. She would deny that the weak thesis follows from the strong: neither holes nor shadows enjoy any fundamental ways of being, so there cannot be any fundamental ontological similarities between them; but given that they don't enjoy any fundamental ways of being, there cannot be any fundamental ontological differences between them either.

Weak Fragmentation Thesis: there are fundamental ontological differences between certain entities.

Strong Fragmentation Thesis: there are no fundamental ontological similarities between certain entities.

Extreme Fragmentation Thesis: there are absolutely no ontological similarities between certain entities.

Merricks tends to think that the special, restricted ways of being are best taken to be disjoint. But not all the ways of being need to be like this. I claim that actual existence is nested in concrete possible existence, Meinong ([1910] 1983: 57-61/ AMG 4: 73-78) claims that existence is nested in subsistence, while Moore (1903: 110-12) and Russell (1903: 71, 449-50) claim that existence is nested in being. There have certainly been pluralists motivated by, say, considerations of divine simplicity or divine transcendence, who have accepted stronger and more extreme versions of pluralism. But these pluralists have simply gone beyond what is minimally required of pluralism as such: namely, the recognition of various ontological differences.

Another issue which divides us is whether the pluralist can opt for a thin conception of being or whether she must accept a thick conception of being. Merricks, following van Inwagen, appears to think that the pluralist cannot help but to ascribe to the being of an entity that which should be properly ascribed to its nature. I believe, however, that the pluralist who takes ways of being to be adequately general, qualitatively empty, and appropriately indefinable can accept a sufficiently thin conception of being. The pluralist thus has good reason to think that ways of being are only correlated with certain kinds of differences among generically existing entities.

Chapter 1: Should an Ontological Pluralist be a Quantificational Pluralist?

Abstract: *Ontological pluralism* is the view that there are different ways of being. Recent defenders of this view—such as Kris McDaniel and Jason Turner—have taken these ways of being to be best understood as perfectly natural quantifiers ranging over distinct domains. They have thus endorsed, what I shall call, *quantificational pluralism*. I argue that this focus on quantification is a mistake. For if quantificational pluralism is true, then a quantifier should be more natural than its corresponding domain; but since it does not appear to be the case that a quantifier is more natural than its corresponding domain, quantificational pluralism does not appear to be true. Thus, I claim, an ontological pluralist should not be a quantificational pluralist.

1.1 Introduction

Ontological pluralism—or *pluralism about being*—is, roughly, the view that there are different ways of being. The core pluralist insight, as I see it, is that there are peculiarly ontological differences between certain things. Take, for example, the difference between an actual and a merely possible hundred dollars. This difference is utterly unlike the difference between a cat and a canary, a mountain and a molehill, or a table and a tablet. For these things differ in some of their intrinsic qualitative properties. But an actual and a merely possible dollar need not differ in any such properties. They might have exactly the same size, shape, weight, and chemical composition; they might well be perfect—perhaps even indiscernible—duplicates. Yet, for all their similarities, there still seems to be an important and fundamentally ontological difference between them: one is actual, the other is merely possible. Or take, for another example, the difference between a number and a nightingale. A nightingale has a determinate size, shape, and

weight. It has a determinate number of feathers, it sings a pretty song, etc. These properties help to make up its positive intrinsic qualitative character. But a number doesn't have a size, shape, or weight. It isn't anywhere or anywhen. It instead appears to altogether lack a positive qualitative profile. A number and a nightingale are thus radically different qualitatively. Yet the extent of the difference between them seems to go beyond this. There appears to be a further non-qualitative and, it seems, fundamentally ontological difference between them: one is abstract, the other is concrete. To be a pluralist is thus to recognize various objective, ontological differences. But what exactly is it that makes these differences peculiarly ontological?

Recent defenders of ontological pluralism—such as Kris McDaniel (2009, 2010b, 2017) and Jason Turner (2010, 2012, forthcoming)—have sought to capture and explain the basic phenomenon of ontological difference in terms of quantification. To this end, they have endorsed what I will call *quantificational pluralism*. There are, on this view, several fundamental quantifiers that range over distinct domains. These quantifiers are supposed to be highly natural; they are supposed to carve reality at the joints. Entities enjoy different ways of being, on this view, when they are ranged over by different fundamental quantifiers. So, to return to our examples, the difference between an actual and a merely possible dollar is to be explained by the fact that the former but not the latter is ranged over by the fundamental actualist quantifier, $\exists_@$, which ranges over all and only actual entities; while the difference between a number and a nightingale is to be explained, at least in part, by the fact that the former but not the latter is ranged over by the fundamental subsistentialist quantifier, $\exists_a$, which ranges over all and only abstract entities.[22] These differences are, moreover, said to be peculiarly ontological because

[22] I here assume—following McDaniel (2009: 303-4, 314-15, 2017: 11, 24-6)—that subsistence is a fundamental way of being enjoyed by all and only abstract entities. It is, on this view, disjoint from what we might call

they involve differences in quantification. Ontological differences, on this view, are quantificational differences.[23]

I will argue that this focus on quantification is a mistake. It does not, I think, really help to capture and explain the basic phenomenon of ontological difference. For the domain of a fundamental quantifier would seem to comprise a natural class. But we can ask: is a quantifier's domain a natural class because it is ranged over by a natural quantifier, or is a quantifier a natural quantifier because it ranges over a natural class? The direction of explanation should, I think, be clear: a quantifier inherits the naturalness of its domain. But the domain of a quantifier, being a natural class, would seem to be best represented by a predicate. If this is correct, it leaves the pluralist with the difficult—although I do not believe insurmountable—task of saying exactly what it is about these classes that makes them peculiarly ontological.

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existence—or, perhaps, concrete existence—which is a fundamental way of being enjoyed by all and only concrete entities. This is not, however, the only way to understand the distinction at hand. Indeed, this is not how Meinong ([1910] 1983: 57-61/ AMG IV 73-78) understands it. He agrees that existence and subsistence are fundamental ways of being, but he thinks they are nested rather than disjoint: 'what can exist must', Meinong claims, 'first of all subsist' ([1910] 1983: 58/ AMG IV 74). Yet not everything that subsists can enjoy existence: abstract entities—or what Meinong calls ideal objects—merely subsist. See also Meinong (1921: 18, trans. in Grossmann 1974: 228 / AMG VII 20).

[23] Quantificational pluralism, or a view very much like it, appears to have first been suggested—and then quickly rejected—by Morton White (1956: 68). It makes a cameo appearance in W. V. Quine's *Word and Object* (1960: 241-2) as the view that the difference between the way in which abstract objects such as numbers and classes exist and the way in which physical or material objects exist is due to 'a difference in two senses of "there are"', and can later be seen in Herbert W. Schneider's claim that '[i]t may be necessary to have several kinds of existential quantifiers in logic, if ontology finds that things have different ways of being' (1962: 10). A more developed version of this view was defended by Nino B. Cocchiarella (1969).

1.2 Quantificational pluralism

Ontology is concerned with absolutely everything there is. It is the science of being as such. We ask ontological questions when we ask, for example, whether there are numbers, whether dragons exist, or whether some things are carnivorous plants. But what exactly are we asking when we ask such questions? Current orthodoxy holds that these questions should be formulated in the idiom of quantification. A central tenet of this meta-ontological orthodoxy is that talk of being is best understood in terms of particular—or existential—quantification. Ontological questions thus have something like the following form: '$\exists x(\mathrm{F}x)$?'; they are quantificational questions.[24]

The orthodox view rose to prominence in the twentieth century, and with its rise came the subsequent decline of the doctrine that there are different ways of being. There has, however, been a recent resurgence of interest in this doctrine. This is due, no doubt in part, to the fact that McDaniel (2009) and Turner (2010) have shown us how to square this seemingly heretical doctrine with a central pillar of current orthodoxy. The pluralist can simply grant that talk of being is best captured by existential quantification, but insist that there are multiple fundamental existential quantifiers. So while the monist and the pluralist about being agree that ontological structure is quantificational structure, they disagree about the 'shape' or 'complexity' of that structure. This locates the disagreement between monists and pluralists right where we should expect it: over whether being—and, thus, fundamental quantification—is unitary or

[24] This way of understanding current orthodoxy is due to Kit Fine (2009: 157-8). Adherents of this orthodoxy include Quine (1948, 1969) and van Inwagen (1998, 2009a).

fragmentary.[25] If the quantificational structure of reality is unitary as the monist believes, there will be exactly one fundamental—and perfectly natural—existential quantifier expression. (I shall talk of a *quantifier expression* when I mean to talk about a piece of language or ideology, and of a *quantifier*—or of the *meaning* of a quantifier expression—when I mean to talk about

[25] The received view of being incorporates three theses:

The Neo-Quinean Thesis: being is perspicuously expressed by particular—or existential—quantification.

The Monistic Thesis: being is unitary: there are no ontological differences between any entities.

The Equivalence Thesis: being is the same as existence.

The neo-Quinean thesis is what I am calling the central pillar of current orthodoxy. The monistic thesis is an endorsement of *ontological monism*—or *monism about being*—the view that there is exactly one fundamental way of being. It should not be confused with the weaker claim that there is a way of being that absolutely everything enjoys. For this is something that even some pluralists will accept. (See footnote 28 below.) The equivalence thesis is needed to properly license the identification of particular with existential quantification in the neo-Quinean thesis. It is denied, for example, by Russell (1903: 449), Moore (1903: 110-12), and Meinong ([1910] 1983: 57-61/ AMG IV 73-78), who take existence to be the way of being enjoyed by entities in space and time. I shall, however, simply assume the equivalence thesis here.

I have sought to improve upon a similar list due to van Inwagen (1998, 2009a) by isolating the central commitments of the received view. The equivalence thesis is the same as van Inwagen's Thesis 2. (No improvement here.) The monistic thesis corresponds to van Inwagen's Thesis 3 according to which existence is univocal, but removes its apparent commitment to the claim that being is the same as existence and ensures that the thesis concerns being rather than 'being'. (This strikes me as a minor improvement.) The neo-Quinean thesis corresponds to van Inwagen's Thesis 4 according to which the meaning of 'existence' is adequately captured by the existential quantifier of formal logic, but removes its apparent commitment to both the claim that being is the same as existence and the claim that being is unitary. (This strikes me as a substantial improvement.)

some part or aspect of the quantificational structure of reality.[26]) Being will thus be perspicuously represented in our fundamental theories by the unrestricted existential quantifier expression, '∃', of formal logic. For a representation is *metaphysically perspicuous* to the extent that it reflects reality's ultimate structure, and the existential quantifier expression of formal logic, being both simple and unrestricted, will perfectly reflect the fundamentality and universality of being on the monist's picture. But if the quantificational structure of reality is fragmentary as the pluralist believes, there will be fundamental ways of being enjoyed by only some of what there is. The existential quantifier expressions corresponding to these restricted ways of being won't range over everything there is, they will be *restricted* quantifier expressions. But if these restricted quantifier expressions are to perfectly reflect the fragmented ontological structure of reality, they should lack non-demonstrative, non-circular definitions in the language of our fundamental theories since such definitions would be suggestive of further—more fundamental—structure. So, for example, if the restricted quantifier expressions corresponding to the restricted ways of being were ultimately defined in terms of an unrestricted quantifier expression and various primitive restricting predicates, that would suggest that the ultimate quantificational structure is unitary. For there would only be one undefined existential quantifier expression in the fundamental language: namely, the unrestricted existential quantifier of formal logic. The fundamental language would then fail to adequately reflect reality's fragmented ontological structure. A more perspicuous representation would instead take the fundamental restricted quantifier expressions to lack any non-demonstrative, non-circular definitions; that is,

[26] This will allow us to distinguish between language and reality, between a quantifier expression in a language and the quantificational structure of reality that that expression is supposed to represent. Note that a quantifier—that is, whatever part of aspect of reality that a quantifier expression designates—might but need not be an entity.

it would take them to be *semantically primitive*.[27] A language with multiple semantically primitive quantifier expressions ranging over different domains will, it seems, perfectly reflect the ontological structure of reality on the pluralist's picture. McDaniel formulates ontological pluralism along these lines as 'the view that there are possible languages with semantically primitive restricted quantifiers that are at least as natural as the unrestricted quantifier' (2010a: 635, 2017: 146) and tells us that 'there are ways of being just in case there is more than one perfectly natural quantifier expression' (2013: 12, cf. 2009: 314, 2017: 122).[28] Turner follows

[27] Note that this doesn't mean that these quantifiers need to be unary (or type ⟨1⟩) quantifiers rather than binary (or type ⟨1, 1⟩) quantifiers. McDaniel could take sentences with the possibilist quantifier, which ranges over both actual and merely possible entities, to have the following form:

'$\exists_p x$(*x* is a dragon)' (or 'Something$_p$ is a dragon'),

where the quantified phrase '$\exists_p$' (or 'something$_p$') is taken to be a semantically primitive unary quantifier. But he could instead take them to have something like the following form:

'[$\exists_p x$: *x* is a dragon] (*x* hordes treasure)' (or 'Some$_p$ dragons horde treasure'),

where the determiner '$\exists_p$' (or 'some$_p$') is taken to be a semantically primitive binary quantifier. Note that while McDaniel usually takes the semantically primitive restricted quantifiers to be unary, he sometimes suggests that he would be willing to allow them to be binary (see, for example, McDaniel 2017: 34-5).

[28] The language of our fundamental theories must, on this view, contain semantically primitive restricted quantifier expressions. If, in addition to the special, restricted ways of being corresponding to these semantically primitive quantifier expressions, there is a fundamental way of being that absolutely everything enjoys, then the language of our fundamental theories will need to include yet another semantically primitive unrestricted quantifier expression to capture this general, unrestricted way of being. But whether the pluralist accepts that there is a fundamental way of being that everything enjoys will depend upon just how fragmented that pluralist takes being to be; that is, it will depend upon whether she accepts the strong—or just the weak—fragmentation thesis.

Weak Fragmentation Thesis: there are ontological differences between certain entities.

suit, describing it as 'the doctrine that a logically perspicuous description of reality will use multiple quantifiers which cannot be thought of as ranging over a single domain' (2012: 419), and telling us that, by the pluralist's lights, '[t]here are multiple joint-carving existential quantifiers—each of which ranges over a different [domain]—and any fundamental theory that has a hope of getting things right must use them all. To put ontological pluralism in a nutshell: *the true fundamental theory uses multiple existential quantifiers*' (2010: 9).[29] It should, however, be clear that the view so formulated is not simply ontological pluralism, it is quantificational pluralism.[30] Our official formulation of this view can now be given as follows.

Strong Fragmentation Thesis: there are no ontological similarities between certain entities.

(We can say that there is an *ontological difference* between two entities when there is a way of being that one enjoys that the other does not, and that there is an *ontological similarity* between two entities when there is a way of being that they both enjoy.) To be a pluralist is simply to accept the weaker of these two theses. For both of these theses conflict with the monistic thesis from footnote 25 above. Historically, some pluralists have taken certain ways of being to be nested rather than disjoint (where we'll say that two ways of being are *nested* when everything that enjoys one of them enjoys the other, but not vice versa; and that two ways of being are *disjoint* when nothing that enjoys one of them enjoys the other). So, for example, Meinong ([1910] 1983: 57-61/ AMG IV 73-78) claims that existence is nested in subsistence, while Moore (1903: 110-12) and Russell (1903: 71, 449-50) claim that existence is nested in being. This point does not appear to be sufficiently appreciated by Trenton Merricks (2019: 601-2), who takes something like the strong fragmentation thesis to be the core 'conviction or insight or intuition' that motivates pluralism. (See section 6.1 below.)

[29] A *fundamental theory* is, for Turner (2010: 9), a theory that only uses expressions of a fundamental language, and a *fundamental language* is in turn a language where every simple expression is fundamental. The pluralist, on this picture, is thus committed to there being more than one fundamental—or perfectly natural—existential quantifier.

[30] I do not mean to suggest that either McDaniel or Turner would insist otherwise. Indeed, it should be clear that McDaniel takes ontological pluralism—the view that there are different fundamental ways of being—to be distinct

Quantificational pluralism is the view that:

i. there are different fundamental ways of being, and

ii. these ways of being are most perspicuously represented, both logically and metaphysically, by different semantically primitive existential quantifier expressions ranging over distinct domains.

The question I wish to consider here is whether someone who accepts the claim that there are different fundamental ways of being should also accept the neo-Quinean thesis that being is perspicuously expressed in an ideal metaphysical language by (semantically primitive) existential quantifier expressions—or, to put this another way, whether an ontological pluralist should be a quantificational pluralist.

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from quantificational pluralism, which is, he thinks, the position you arrive at when you combine ontological pluralism with 'the neo-Quinean orthodoxy that there is a deep connection between quantification and existence' (2017: 80). For, as McDaniel points out:

> If you accept that there is a close connection between existence and quantification, then you will be attracted to Quine's slogan that to be is to be the value of a bound variable. And if you also think that there are fundamentally different ways to exist, you will hold that there are different fundamental quantifiers. You should then hold that to be in some fundamental way is to be within the scope of a fundamental quantifier. (2017: 92)

It thus strikes me as a mistake to complain as Nick Stang (2019) does that McDaniel simply assumes that the idea that there are different ways of being 'needs to be articulated through the idea of what quantifiers would appear in a metaphysically ideal language' and that 'the way to express the question of whether being is univocal or whether it fragments is to cast…it in terms of a question about the style of the quantifiers in an ideal metaphysical language'.

1.3 The priority of the domain

Suppose that there are multiple highly-natural, existential quantifiers that range over different domains. The domains of these quantifiers would seem to comprise highly-natural classes: that is, they would appear to have a high degree of internal unity. For entities belonging to the same domain appear to be objectively similar to each other, and entities belonging to distinct domains appear to be objectively different from each other. But what, if anything, can we say about the relationship between the naturalness of one of these quantifiers and the naturalness of its corresponding domain? I will assume that we can make meaningful comparisons between the naturalness of a quantifier and its domain.[31] I will also assume that a quantifier and its domain will never both be perfectly natural: one will always be metaphysically prior to the other.[32] And I will assume, finally, that if a quantifier expression is the most perspicuous representation of a fundamental way of being, then the quantifier designated by that expression will be perfectly natural. Thus, if quantificational pluralism is true, the quantifiers that represent the various ways of being will be more natural than—and metaphysically prior to—their corresponding domains.

I shall argue that the most natural quantifiers do not appear to be more natural than their corresponding domains. But the nature of this argument will depend upon what it takes for an

[31] This assumption could be challenged, but it strikes me as fairly plausible.

[32] This assumption could also be challenged, but it does not appear to be something that the quantificational pluralist can plausibly deny. For a domain is best understood as a class, and a class is most perspicuously represented by a predicate. But it is a central part of quantificational pluralism that ways of being are better represented by quantifier expressions than by predicates. If, however, it were to turn out that the meanings of the fundamental quantifier expressions and their corresponding domains are both perfectly natural, then the ontological structure of reality would seem to be represented just as well by primitive predicates as it is by semantically primitive quantifier expressions.

expression to count as a quantifier expression. There are two plausible criteria for quantification: a *semantic* criterion, according to which an expression counts as a quantifier expression if it has a certain kind of semantic value, and an *inferential* criterion, according to which an expression counts as a quantifier expression if it plays a certain kind of inferential role.[33]

Let's begin with the semantic criterion. The semantic value of the quantifier expression '$\exists$' of formal logic (and its closest English natural language equivalent 'something') is usually taken to be the set of nonempty subsets of a domain M.[34] The semantic value of the pluralist's semantically primitive restricted existential quantifiers would thus seem to be best understood as sets of nonempty subsets of distinct domains. So, for example, the semantic value of the actualist quantifier expression, $\exists_@$ would be the set of nonempty subsets of $M_@$ (where $M_@$ is the set of actual entities), while the semantic value of the subsistentialist quantifier expression, $\exists_a$, would be the set of nonempty subsets of M_a (where M_a is the set of abstract entities).[35] If a quantifier

[33] Turner (2010) appears to be indifferent between these two criteria, while McDaniel (2017: 34-5) expresses a marked preference for the latter.

[34] Or, at least, this is how it is understood on the theory of generalized quantifiers developed by Mostowski (1957) and Lindström (1966). See Glanzberg (2006) and Westerståhl (2011) for helpful introductions, and Peters and Westerståhl (2006) for a comprehensive survey.

[35] I am here assuming, for convenience, that the pluralist's quantifiers are unary (or type $\langle 1 \rangle$) rather than binary (or type $\langle 1, 1 \rangle$). If the pluralist were to take the fundamental existential quantifiers to be binary, then the semantic values of these quantifiers would be best understood as sets of ordered pairs of non-empty intersecting subsets of distinct domains. So, for example, the semantic value of the binary actualist quantifier, $some_@$, would be the set of ordered pairs of subsets of $M_@$ with non-empty intersections. To illustrate: consider '$Some_@$ dragons horde treasure'. This will be true if and only if the intersection of the set of dragons (from $M_@$) and the set of things that horde treasure (also from $M_@$) is non-empty. (For were the intersection of these sets to be non-empty, the ordered pair of the set of

expression just is its semantic value, then the naturalness of the pluralist's restricted existential quantifiers would seem to be determined by the naturalness of their corresponding domains. For, in general, any difference in naturalness between the semantic values of two quantifier expressions must, it seems, be due to a difference in (i) the naturalness of the domains of those quantifiers, or (ii) the naturalness of the relevant sets of subsets (of their domains). But when comparing the semantic values of two existential quantifier expressions, it seems fair to assume that the set of nonempty subsets (of the domain of the first) will be as natural as the set of nonempty subsets (of the domain of the second).[36] Any difference in naturalness between the

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dragons and the set of things that horde treasure would be contained in the relevant set: namely, the set of ordered pairs of subsets of $M_@$ with non-empty intersections.) But given that the set of dragons (from $M_@$) is empty, the intersection of this set with the set of treasure-hording things will also be empty. And so the sentence 'Some$_@$ dragons horde treasure' will turn out to be false.

[36] We might seek to question this assumption. But, as far as I can tell, the only reason why the set of nonempty subsets of one domain would be more (or less) natural than the set of nonempty subsets of another domain would be because the former domain is more (or less) natural than the latter. So, for example, we might want to say that the set of nonempty subsets of the domain of abstract objects is more natural than the set of nonempty subsets of the domain of abstract objects and the Eiffel Tower. But I can see no reason for why this would be so other than that the domain of abstract objects is more natural than the domain of abstract objects and the Eiffel Tower.

The assumption strikes me as even more plausible if we interpret the semantic value of a quantifier not as a set of sets, but as a property of—or a relation between—properties on a domain. Then any difference in the naturalness between the semantic values of two quantifiers would need to be due to a difference in (i) the naturalness of the domains of those quantifiers, or (ii) the naturalness of the relevant properties of—or relations between—properties (on these domains). Existential quantifiers will then be understood not a sets of nonempty subsets of a domain, but as the second-order property of *being instantiated*—or *having at least one instance*—on a domain. But since there seems to be no reason to think that the property of *being instantiated* would be more natural when

semantic values of two existential quantifier expressions must therefore be due to a difference in the naturalness of their domains. This suggests that, in general, the naturalness of the domain of a quantifier is prior to—or, at least, independent of—the naturalness of the quantifier ranging over that domain. Thus, the most natural quantifiers will fail to be more natural than their corresponding domains.

The quantificational pluralist will likely deny the force of this argument. For while the standard semantics for quantification might provide us with a useful and systematic way to talk about quantificational structure, it is not thereby guaranteed to be perspicuous.[37] Thus, we cannot assume that the naturalness of a quantifier is related to either (i) the naturalness of a domain, or (ii) the naturalness of a set of sets (on the domain). A related criticism is that the standard semantics assumes that quantifier expressions correspond to entities (namely, sets of sets), and is thus not adequately metaphysically neutral.[38]

Let's turn then to the inferential criterion, which provides the desired neutrality. The inferential role of '∃' is given by the standard natural deduction introduction and elimination

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applied to one domain than to another, our assumption appears to be vindicated. Thanks to Kris McDaniel for pushing me on this point.

[37] It might be, as Theodore Sider (2011: 90) puts it, 'appropriate in linguistic theory', but it need not 'ring true at a metaphysical level'.

[38] We should not, as Kris McDaniel (2017: 35) puts it, begrudge the semanticist's 'incursions into metaphysics' since she is simply 'providing models for the ways in which meaningful expressions in natural language combine with each other to form larger meaningful units'. But 'we are doing metaphysics now', and since there are 'metaphysical interlocutors' among us 'who do not think that there are entities that correspond to quantifier-expressions', we need 'a more neutral characterization of what it is to be a quantifier in order to accommodate them'.

rules. The pluralist's semantically primitive restricted existential quantifier expressions permit various similar inferences. So, for example, from 'Smaug is a dragon' or 'The creature I'm thinking about right now is a dragon' I can presumably infer '$\exists_p x$(x is a dragon)' (where $\exists_p$ is the possibilist quantifier ranging over both actual and merely possible entities), but not '$\exists_@ x$(x is dragon)'.[39] Turner (2010: 26) suggests that the we formulate the pluralist's inference rules as follows:

$\exists_i$I: $F(t) \ \& \ \exists_i x(x = t) \vdash \exists_i x F(x)$.

$\exists_i$E: If Q, R, …, $F(t)$, and $\exists_i x(x = t) \vdash$ P, and if t does not occur in P, Q, R, …, or $F(x)$, then Q, R, …, and $\exists_i x F(x) \vdash$ P.

I will assume that these rules tell us something important about the quantificational structure of reality. But we can ask about the relationship between the patterns of inference licensed by these inference rules and the domains associated with their corresponding quantifier expressions. The different natural patterns of inference should, according to the quantificational pluralist, help to explain the naturalness of the domains they carve out: Smaug will belong to the domain of $\exists_p$, on this view, because we are licensed to infer '$\exists_p x$(x is a dragon)' from 'Smaug is a dragon', and not the other way around. But this, I think, cannot be maintained. For it seems that the quantificational pluralist needs to presuppose these very domains in order to formulate adequate inference rules. So, for example, we need to assume '$\exists_p x$(x = Smaug)' in order to infer '$\exists_p x$ (x is a dragon)' from 'Smaug is a dragon'. And since the claim that $\exists_p x(x$ = Smaug) is, I think, most

[39] If the pluralist's existential quantifiers were binary rather than unary, these inference patterns would need to be modified accordingly. Once modified, they should, for example, allow me to infer 'Some$_p$ dragons horde treasure' from 'Smaug is a dragon' and 'Smaug hordes treasure', while continuing to prohibit me from inferring 'Some$_@$ dragons horde treasure'. I shall ignore these complications in what follows.

intelligibly understood as the claim that Smaug is in the domain of $\exists_p$, this essentially ensures that the patterns of inference allowed by the possibilist quantifier are determined by its domain. But if the quantificational pluralist needs to presuppose these very domains in order to formulate adequate inference rules, it seems that the naturalness—and not just the validity—of these rules will depend upon the naturalness of the domains we must presuppose, and not the other way around. So, for example, consider the following valid inference rules:

$\exists_{@}\mathbf{I}$: $\quad F(t) \,\&\, \exists_{@}x(x = t) \vdash \exists_{@}xF(x)$

and

$\exists_{@\backslash ET}\mathbf{I}$: $F(t) \,\&\, \exists_{@\backslash ET}x(x = t) \vdash \exists_{@\backslash ET}xF(x)$

(where $\exists_{@\backslash ET}$ ranges over all and only those actual entities that are not themselves identical to—or parts of—the Eiffel Tower). The reason why $\exists_{@}\mathbf{I}$ seems to captures a natural pattern of inferences and $\exists_{@\backslash ET}\mathbf{I}$ does not appears to be because the domain of $\exists_{@}$ is highly natural and the domain of $\exists_{@\backslash ET}$ is not. But if that's right, then it seems that we cannot grant that a domain is explanatorily prior to a pattern of inference without also accepting that the naturalness of this domain is prior to the naturalness of that pattern of inference. This would suggest that, in general, the naturalness of the domain of a quantifier is prior to—or, at least, independent of—the naturalness of any patterns of inference involving that quantifier. Thus, since the naturalness of a quantifier appears to be due simply to the naturalness of the patterns of inference it licenses, the most natural quantifier will fail to be more natural than their corresponding domains.[40]

[40] There is a further problem for the quantificational pluralist given the inferential criterion. If a quantifier is prior to its domain as quantificational pluralism predicts, then that domain should be carved out by the patterns of inference allowed by that quantifier. And if the patterns of inference were prior to the domain in this way, then the fact that a certain entity belongs to a given domain—and, more important, enjoys a certain way of being—would seem to be

I have argued that the most natural quantifiers are not more natural than their corresponding domains. The argument has taken the form of a dilemma, which we might put as follows:

(1) Either the correct metaphysical account of the nature of a quantifier is given by the semantic criterion, or else it is given by the inferential criterion.

(2) If, on the one hand, the correct metaphysical account of the nature of a quantifier is given by the semantic criterion, then the most natural quantifiers will fail to be more natural than their corresponding domains.

(3) If, on the other hand, the correct metaphysical account of the nature of a quantifier is given by the inferential criterion, then the most natural quantifiers will again fail to be more natural than their corresponding domains.

(4) *Therefore*, it is not the case that the most natural quantifiers are more natural than their corresponding domains (from 1, 2, and 3).

The basic assumption behind the first premise is that a criterion of quantification will not only provide a standard for what counts as a quantifier expression, but also a metaphysical theory about the nature of a quantifier. We might seek to deny this assumption by denying that a criterion of quantification tells us anything about the 'essence' of quantification. We could thus, it seems, easily slip through the horns of the dilemma by simply denying that these criteria capture anything important about the fundamental structure of reality.[41]

purely relational. But, I claim, the fact that I am actual is not merely relational: my being actual does not have anything to do with my being related to something else. It is a way of being that I enjoy intrinsically. The same goes for my being concrete.

[41] Thanks to Nick Tourville and Jason Turner for pushing me on this point.

I want to distinguish between two different versions of this strategy: on the first, the quantificational pluralist holds that her preferred criterion provides an account of what it is for an expression to be a quantifier, but insists that it does not thereby provide a metaphysical account of that aspect of the structure of reality that these quantifier expressions are supposed to represent; whereas, on the second version of this strategy, the quantificational pluralist holds that while these criteria give us a reliable way of distinguishing those expressions that are quantifiers from those expressions that are not, they neither provide us with an account of the nature of that aspect of the structure of reality that these quantifier expressions are supposed to represent nor of the nature of these quantifier expressions themselves.

The first version of this strategy leads, I think, to an untenable—and perhaps even outright incoherent—position. For if the quantificational pluralist's preferred criterion provides an account of what it is for an expression to be a quantifier and if these quantifier expressions are, as the quantificational pluralist believes, supposed to perspicuously represent—and thus best reflect—the ontological structure of reality, then we should also take this criterion to provide us with the best metaphysical theory about the nature of the meaning of these quantifier expressions (that is, we should take it to provide the best metaphysical account of that aspect of the structure of reality that these quantifiers expressions are supposed to represent). To insist otherwise is to claim that these quantifier expressions have a distorting effect: that they do not perspicuously represent the ontological structure of reality after all.

That leaves us with the second version of the strategy. The metaphysical nature of a quantifier will be taken as primitive on this view, and so will the 'essence' of the quantifier expression that perspicuously represents it. The quantificational pluralist will thus deny that the 'essence' of certain linguistic expressions is given by either the semantic or the inferential

criteria. All these criteria are supposed to do, on this view, is give us true necessary and sufficient conditions for an expression's being a quantifier expression. The semantic criterion just tells us that all and only quantifier expressions can be modeled as sets of subsets of a domain, while the inferential criterion just tells us that all and only quantifier expressions play certain inferential roles.

My inclination here is to say that while these criteria might not be part of the 'essence' of a quantifier expression, they should still be thought to flow from—or somehow be explained by—the 'essence' of these expressions. More important, I think, is the fact that these criteria will be somehow reflected in reality. For, assuming that these quantifier expressions are maximally perspicuous, anything that flows from their 'essence' should reflect something that flows from the metaphysical nature of the quantifiers they represent. And this, I take it, should help to capture and explain the basic intuitive phenomenon of objective, ontological difference.

But now, I fear, that I lose my grip on the nature of a quantifier. My problem is not simply that we have to take the quantifier as metaphysically and conceptually primitive. It is that, if we do, then I no longer have a good sense of how or why these criteria would flow from the nature of the pluralist's quantifiers. And, without this, I no longer have a sense of how the quantificational pluralist would capture and explain the basic phenomenon of objective, ontological difference.

1.4 Two approaches to quantificational pluralism

Let me say a bit more about my basic approach. I take, as my fundamental starting point, the observation that there are—or would seem to be—various peculiarly ontological differences between certain entities: so, for example, an actual dollar is ontologically different from a merely

possible dollar; a number is ontologically different from a nightingale; and God, perhaps, is ontologically different from His creation. This phenomenon of objective, ontological similarity and difference is the basic phenomenon that, I think, any ontological pluralist should attempt to capture and explain.

The significance of this phenomenon will vary depending upon our approach to quantificational pluralism. The intuitive approach to—or motivation for—quantificational pluralism, which I prefer, starts with the basic observation that there are objective, ontological similarities and differences. It combines this basic observation with the orthodox view that being is best represented in an ideal metaphysical language with existential quantifier expressions, and thereby indirectly motivates the claim that the ideal metaphysical language contains multiple fundamental existential quantifier expressions.[42] An alternative approach might begin from broader theoretical considerations about our best fundamental theories and the metaphysically ideal languages in which they are couched. These theoretical considerations might themselves directly motivate the claim that the ideal metaphysical language contains multiple fundamental existential quantifier expressions. If we also accept the claim that being is what is represented by existential quantifier expressions in an ideal metaphysical language, then these theoretical considerations will provide an indirect motivation for the claim that there are objective,

[42] I am here quite sympathetic to the following remark from Nick Stang (2019): 'I was antecedently inclined to find the idea of different modes of being coherent and attractive…, more attractive, in fact, than I find the idea of a metaphysically ideal language'.

ontological similarities and differences between certain entities. The basic phenomenon becomes a discovery, not a datum.[43]

Here's another way to put this. The quantificational pluralist is committed to the truth of the following three theses:

> **The ontological pluralist's thesis:** there are different fundamental ways of being.
>
> **The neo-Quinean thesis:** being is perspicuously expressed in an ideal metaphysical language by (semantically primitive) particular—or existential—quantifier expressions.
>
> **The quantificational pluralist's thesis:** there are different fundamental particular—or existential—quantifier expressions (ranging over different domains) in the ideal metaphysical language.

But she might have two very different reasons for accepting these theses. I think that the ontological pluralist's thesis can be intuitively motivated. And if we combine this intuitively motivated thesis with the orthodox neo-Quinean thesis, we get the quantificational pluralist's thesis. The alternative approach would instead take the quantificational pluralist's thesis to be motivated by various theoretical considerations about the language of our best fundamental theories. But, then, if we combine this theoretically motivated thesis with a strong version of the neo-Quinean thesis (which combines what I have above called the neo-Quinean thesis with what I will call the converse neo-Quinean thesis according to which being is what is represented by

[43] Ross Cameron (2018: 793) draws a similar distinction between '[positing] that there are two fundamental quantifiers…*because* [there are] independent reasons for thinking that [certain entities] exist in different ways' and being '*driven* to [say] that [certain entities] exist in different ways, because there are two fundamental quantifiers'.

existential quantifier expressions in an ideal language), we will get the ontological pluralist's thesis.[44]

The above argument against quantificational pluralism gained traction because I was attempting to capture and explain an independent phenomenon of objective, ontological similarity and difference. I started with the observation that there are peculiarly, ontological differences between certain entities and the claim that ontologically similar entities appear to form natural classes. I had envisioned that the quantificational pluralist would have to tell us how these classes were unified—and thereby made natural—by different fundamental quantifiers. It is thus because I take the phenomenon of objective, ontological similarity and difference so seriously that the problem of the priority of the domain arises.

But not everyone will profess to have such a firm grip on this phenomenon. We might thus want to have another way to determine whether certain entities enjoy different ways of being. This is exactly what the alternative, theoretical approach is supposed to provide. Indeed, if we were to rely solely upon this approach, we would remove the main motivation for thinking that ontologically similar entities—entities that enjoy a shared way of being—form highly natural classes, and we would thus no longer need to show how the most natural quantifiers unify these classes. I do not, however, think that we should adopt this purely theoretical approach. For if we were to do so, we would have to say that certain views, which do not intuitively appear to be versions of ontological pluralism, are committed to there being different fundamental ways of being.

[44] This is, I think, the approach that would be preferred by Jason Turner, who writes: 'There's a sort of vague "feeling of ontological similarity" that I can kind of grok, but it all feels a bit fuzzy and slippery, and when we start trying to…lean heavily on [it] I get uncomfortable' (personal communication).

Take, for example, the following view. Some philosophers have held that concrete reality divides into *things* (such as ravens, rivers, and rocks), on the one hand, and *stuff* (such as air, earth, and water), on the other. Things, on this view, are made up out of—or constituted by—stuff. They can be counted: we can ask how *many* of them there are. Stuff, however, is distinct from the things it constitutes. It cannot be counted. But, unlike things, stuff can be measured: we can ask how *much* of it there is. So while it makes perfect sense to ask how many rivers there are on Earth or how much water there is on Mars, it doesn't really make sense to ask how many water there are on Earth or how much river there is on Mars. We might take this to suggest that quantification over things cannot be reduced to quantification over stuff, and vice versa. An ideal metaphysical theory will, on this view, have to make use of both thing- and stuff-quantification.[45]

If we take a purely theoretical approach to ontological pluralism, then we will have to say that things and stuff enjoy different fundamental ways of being. But this strikes me as the intuitively wrong thing to say.[46] For we can—and, indeed, I think we should—distinguish

[45] Ned Markosian (2004a: 413, 2004b: 334) appears to have once held something like this view. He now holds that while 'it would not be so bad if positing stuff meant that we had to introduce a new pair of quantifiers to our logical toolkit', it does not actually require us to do so since we can make the distinction between things and stuff 'explicit with the use of predicates rather than special quantifiers' (2015: 685). But just because we can represent this distinction with special predicates doesn't mean that we should. This distinction might, after all, be more perspicuously represented by quantifiers than by predicates. It thus seems open to Markosian to continue to endorse this view.

[46] I here agree with Cameron (2018: 792), who claims that '[t]he dual thing/stuff ontology seems to me like a paradigm case of reality containing different kinds, it doesn't seem to me like we should be forced to interpret it as a view on which there are different ways of being'. Turner (forthcoming) grants that this case raises 'several tricky

between the *being* and the *nature* of a portion of reality. But while things have parts, stuff does not. And while things have a determinate form or structure, stuff is amorphous. It is, I think, because of what things are that they are countable, it is because of what stuff is that it is measurable. The demand for different thing- and stuff-quantifiers thus appears to arise solely from the nature of the different portions of reality that these quantifiers quantify over, not from their being. It thus strikes me as a mistake to claim that being is what is represented by existential quantifier expressions in an ideal language. But without this thesis, a purely theoretical approach cannot get off the ground.

1.5 Conclusion

I have argued as follows:

(1) If quantificational pluralism is true, then the most natural quantifiers will be more natural than their corresponding domains.

issues' but does not think that it is obvious that by embracing both thing- and stuff-quantification, proponents of the mixed thing/stuff ontology 'aren't thereby dabbling in ontological pluralism. It seems strange to say that they are; but it also seems strange to say that they aren't'. I must confess, however, that I do not see why it would be strange to say that proponents of the mixed ontology aren't thereby dabbling in ontological pluralism. We should not, I think, appeal to the converse neo-Quinean thesis that being is what is represented by existential quantifier expressions in an ideal language since this is exactly what we are here calling into question. The only other motivation that I can see for thinking that proponents of the mixed ontology are dabbling in ontological pluralism comes from the claim that for every ontological category there is a corresponding way of being. But this claim cannot, I think, be plausibly maintained. For while simples and composites might plausibly be said to belong to different ontological categories, they do not appear to thereby enjoy different ways of being.

(2) But it is not the case that the most natural quantifiers are more natural than their corresponding domains.

(3) *Therefore*, quantificational pluralism is not true (from 1 and 2).

This argument does not target the claim that there are different fundamental ways of being, it merely targets the claim that these ways of being are most perspicuously represented by different semantically primitive existential quantifiers ranging over distinct domains. Thus, it gives us reason to reject quantificational pluralism, but not ontological pluralism.[47] So if we are tempted to believe that there are ontological differences between certain entities, we should not take these differences to be underwritten by differences in quantification. But my conclusion is not entirely negative, for I have also suggested that we would do much better to look at the domains of these quantifiers, which appear to form perfectly natural classes. This leaves the pluralist with the difficult—although I do not believe insurmountable—task of saying what it is that makes these classes peculiarly ontological. It is this task that I shall take up in the chapters that follow. I shall ultimately defend the view that a natural class is ontological if and only if its corresponding property is sufficiently general, is non-qualitative, and does not admit of real definition.

[47] Indeed, if we so much as take pluralism to be an intelligible position, we should also take this argument to give us reason to reject the neo-Quinean thesis as well. For the neo-Quinean thesis, if true, should be compatible with every intelligible position about the nature of being.

Chapter 2: Impure Concepts and Non-Qualitative Properties

Abstract: Some properties such as *having a beard* and *being a philosopher* are intuitively qualitative, while other properties such as *being identical to Plato* and *being a student of Socrates* are intuitively non-qualitative. It is often assumed that, necessarily, a property is *qualitative* if and only if it can be designated descriptively without the aid of directly referential devices (such as demonstratives, indexicals, or proper names). I argue that this linguistic thesis fails in both directions: there might be non-qualitative properties that can be designated descriptively, and there appear to be qualitative properties that can only be designated directly. I conclude that while the linguistic thesis is ultimately untenable as stated, it can be plausibly recast as a thesis about our concepts rather than the properties they designate.

2.1 Introduction

The distinction between qualitative and non-qualitative properties plays an important role in cashing out the intuitive notions of duplication and indiscernibility. Duplicates instantiate the same intrinsic qualitative properties, while indiscernibles instantiate the same intrinsic as well as the same extrinsic qualitative properties. Consider, for example, two drops of water—Agenor and Belos—with exactly the same size, shape, weight, and chemical composition. They are duplicates. But one has the property *being identical to Agenor*, the other does not. Next consider an actual and a merely possible silver dollar, composed of exactly the same kinds of metals, with exactly the same size, shape, and weight. They are perfect duplicates. But they nevertheless appear to differ in an important respect: they belong to fundamentally different ontological kinds.

One has the property *being actual*, the other does not.[48] The aforementioned properties do not appear to be concerned with how their objects are related to anything else. They would appear to divide not only duplicates, but even indiscernible duplicates. They thus appear to be intrinsic non-qualitative properties.

Many philosophers believe that, in addition to this connection to duplication and indiscernibility, there is also an interesting connection between the qualitative/non-qualitative

[48] These two examples are drawn from Kant ([1781/ 1787] 1998: A 263-4/ B 319, A 599/ B 627). The second example might strike some as somewhat contentious for one of two reasons. First, it turns Kant's example on its head. I assume *possibilism*, the view that some things are non-actual, and take the example of an actual and a merely possible dollar to highlight the peculiarly non-qualitative status of actuality. But Kant appears to use the example to argue against possibilism itself. See Stang (2015) for a recent defense of this interpretation. I can, however, see no real reason to object here provided that we are clear about what we are and what we are not attributing to Kant.

A second, more pressing, reason is that it assumes that there are concrete merely possible entities. But since few will accept this assumption, the example might seem unfit to motivate the project at hand. This problem can, I think, be (partially) remedied. For while the assumption that there are merely possible entities is highly contentious, the assumption that there are past—and even future—entities is much less so. Suppose we accept an ontology that contains past, present, and future entities. We might still wish to accommodate the basic A-theoretic intuition that time 'flows' or 'passes'. One way to do so is to think of the present as a spotlight moving through time, shining now on these, now on those entities. But note that, on this view, the entities that currently bask in the light of the present seem to enjoy a special ontological status. Yet they need not thereby differ qualitatively from any past—or future—entities. A past and a present entity could, it seems, be perfect duplicates. But while one has the property *being present*, the other does not. Thus, on this version of the moving spotlight theory of time, the property of being present appears to be something like an intrinsic non-qualitative property. (The reason I take this to be only a partial remedy is that I am not sure whether the 'shiftiness' of the present—the fact that one and the same thing can be present at one time and past at another—is ultimately intelligible. Since I see no such problem in the case of actuality, I take it to better serve as a motivating example.)

distinction and various linguistic facts.[49] It is commonly held that if we had a sufficiently rich language (containing general—but not necessarily primitive—predicates for all the basic qualitative properties and relations, and allowing for complex infinitary constructions), we could describe the complete qualitative profile of every possible object. But it is also held that unless this language were to contain demonstratives (such as '*this* cat' and '*that* dog'), indexicals (such as 'I', 'here', 'now', and 'actual'), or proper names (such as 'Socrates' and 'Plato'), it would lack the resources to specify any of an object's non-qualitative properties. The basic idea is captured by the following thesis.

> **The Linguistic Thesis**: necessarily, a property is *qualitative* if and only if it can be designated descriptively without the aid of directly referential devices (such as demonstratives, indexicals, or proper names).

This thesis appears to depend upon two assumptions concerning the descriptive, qualitative predicates of any sufficiently rich language. The first assumption is that these predicates are closed under even infinitely many applications of conjunction, disjunction, negation, and quantification: every predicate that is defined up out of descriptive predicates is itself a

[49] See, for example, Carnap (1947b: 138), Adams (1979: 7), Lewis (1986: 221), Gallois (1998: 249), and Divers (2002: 349 n 12). Each of these authors holds that qualitative properties can be expressed without the use of proper names (or, as Carnap would have it, without the use of individual constants). Adams adds that they can be expressed without the use of proper adjectives, proper verbs, indexical expressions, or referential uses of definite descriptions, while Divers also mentions natural kind terms in this context. Gallois goes so far as to claim that the qualitative properties are expressible by predicates that don't themselves contain any rigid designators other than the ones used to designate those properties.

descriptive predicate.[50] The second assumption is that a sufficiently rich language will contain descriptive predicates for all the fundamental qualitative properties and relations (although these predicates need not themselves be primitive). I shall call these the *closure* and *fundamentality* assumptions.

A few brief comments are in order before we proceed. We can often designate a property in a variety of different ways. Indeed some seemingly qualitative properties are most readily designated with the aid of various directly referential devices. Consider, for example, the determinate shape had by the Eiffel Tower. A perfect duplicate of the Eiffel Tower would, it seems, have this very shape. We might designate the property of having this shape in a direct fashion: namely, as *having the shape of the Eiffel Tower*. But we could also give a purely descriptive specification of this property as *having such and such a shape*. The presence of a direct route to a property need not impugn its qualitative status.[51]

[50] Carnap (1947b: 138) would not have accepted this assumption since he held that complex predicates such as 'red or not red' do not designate a qualitative property, but rather a trivial non-qualitative (or, as he would say, positional) one. He would have thus rejected the linguistic thesis because he held that the necessary property can be designated descriptively, but is not purely qualitative.

[51] This is not entirely uncontroversial. So, for example, Hoffmann-Kolss (2019: 997-9) claims that *having the shape which the Eiffel Tower actually has* and *having such and such shape* are different properties. For, she thinks, while the former property is haecceitistic, the latter is not. She also claims that given an entity, call it Isengard, at a world w_1 that has the same shape that the Eiffel Tower actually has, *having the shape which the Eiffel Tower actually has* and *having the shape which Isengard has at* w_1 are intuitively different properties, and hence that neither should be identified with *having such and such a shape* (2019: 998 n 1). I cannot see, however, why we should think that *having the shape which the Eiffel Tower actually has* and *having the shape which Isengard has at* w_1 are different properties. Indeed, this strikes me as a clear case where there are simply different ways to pick out the same property.

The absence of a purely descriptive route is, however, an entirely different matter. We can often come close to specifying some identity properties descriptively. So, for example, consider Benjamin Franklin. He invented bifocals, and since no one else shares this distinction at our world, we can pick him out indexically as the actual inventor of bifocals. We can then specify his identity property as *being identical to the actual inventor of bifocals*. But, by invoking an indexical, we will have failed to designate the property *being identical to Benjamin Franklin* in a purely descriptive fashion. If, as seems plausible, this identity property is non-qualitative, then the linguistic thesis predicts that our search for a descriptive route will turn up empty.

I should, next, distinguish between stronger and weaker versions of the linguistic thesis. On a strong version of this thesis, a qualitative property can be designated in an infinitary expansion of a language had by creatures like us, in epistemic situations similar to our own, without the aid of directly referential devices; while on a weaker version, a qualitative property can, at least in principle, be designated without such devices, but perhaps only in an infinitary expansion of a language had by agents in much better epistemic situations than our own. These different versions of the linguistic thesis might, in turn, yield different results about the qualitative status of certain properties. I will focus my attention on the strong version of the linguistic thesis (although my criticisms should carry over to weaker versions as well).[52]

I should, finally, be clear that the linguistic thesis is not here intended as an analysis, nor should it be put forward as one.[53] One problem is that the linguistic thesis, if true, is presumably

[52] Thanks to an anonymous referee for encouraging me to make this distinction.

[53] I assume here that an analysis does not simply tell us that the *explanandum* holds if and only if the *explanans* holds, but also that the *explanandum* holds because the *explanans* holds and not the other way around. So, were we

true due to the special nature of the qualitative properties. This should become clear by considering the above-mentioned connection to duplication. It seems plausible that two objects are duplicates because they share all their intrinsic qualitative properties. If, however, the linguistic thesis were taken as an analysis, the reason these objects share all their intrinsic qualitative properties would be due to various linguistic facts. It thus appears that they would be duplicates because we can designate their intrinsic profiles descriptively. But, intuitively, their being duplicates does not have anything to do with facts about our—or any—language. Duplication seems to be a mind- and language-independent relation. If we think the linguistic thesis is true, we should say that a property can be designated descriptively because it is qualitative, not the other way around. If proposed as an analysis, the linguistic thesis would appear to invert the proper direction of explanation.[54]

Another problem is that the linguistic thesis, if it is to be at all adequate, requires the assumption that the primitive descriptive predicates of our language always designate purely qualitative properties. This should become clear once we consider cases of inadmissible predicates. Take, for example, the predicates 'pegasizes' and 'socratizes'. Since I am not here assuming a view on which all individuals have qualitative essences (that is, purely qualitative properties that are their individual essences), these predicates will intuitively designate non-

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to take the linguistic thesis as an analysis, it would tell us that a property is qualitative because it can be designated without the use of directly referential devices and not the other way around; thus, it would tell us not only what the qualitative properties are like, but *what it is* to be a qualitative property.

[54] See Rosenkrantz (1979: 516, 1993: 69) and Cowling (2015: 287) for similar criticisms. Rosenkrantz objects to explaining a non-linguistic distinction in linguistic terms, while Cowling objects to explaining a mind-independent distinction in mind-dependent terms. I have tried to amplify these criticisms by focusing upon the connection to duplication.

qualitative properties. But if we took them on board as primitive and unanalyzable predicates, they would not contain any directly referential devices. They are, however, inadmissible as descriptive predicates because, as we just noted, they designate non-qualitative properties.[55] If the linguistic thesis were put forward as an analysis, a property would be qualitative because it can be designated by an admissible predicate. But, as we have just seen, a predicate is only admissible because it designates a qualitative property. If proposed as an analysis, the linguistic thesis would appear to be circular.[56]

I will argue that the linguistic thesis fails in both directions. There might turn out to be, on the one hand, non-qualitative properties that can be designated descriptively. So, for example, depending upon the lay of logical space, we might be able to designate certain identity properties—or, more problematically, the property of actuality—with infinite conjunctions, disjunctions, and negations of purely descriptive predicates and without the use of directly referential devices. This indicates a potential failure of the closure assumption. In such cases, the

[55] We might instead insist that proper verbs such as 'pegasizes' and 'socratizes' (along with proper adjectives such as 'solar' or 'lunar') are themselves directly referential devices. But, again, the only reason for classifying them as such appears to be that they designate non-qualitative properties.

[56] See Adams (1979: 7) and Stalnaker (2012: 61-2) for this criticism. We might seek to avoid it by distinguishing between the because of *analysis* and the because of *explanation*. The circularity is supposed to arise when the claim that a property is qualitative because it can be designated by an admissible predicate is supplemented by the claim that a predicate is admissible because it designates a qualitative property. There would only be a genuine circularity involved here if the 'because' in both cases were the because of analysis. But an explanation need not be an analysis. Thanks to André Gallois for suggesting this line of response. It is, however, not entirely clear to me how we could adequately explain the difference between an admissible and an inadmissible predicate without providing an analysis.

right-hand side of the biconditional would be true, while the left-hand side would be false. There appear to be, on the other hand, qualitative properties that can only be designated directly. So, for example, we seem unable to designate certain fundamental physical properties without the use of directly referential devices. This indicates a failure of the fundamentality assumption. In these cases, the left-hand side of the biconditional will be true, and the right-hand side will be false.

In what follows, I will be working within a broadly modal realist framework supplemented with absolute actuality (see Bricker 2001, 2006, 2008).[57] I assume that our world—the whole of our physical universe, the cosmos—is but one of a plurality of possible worlds. These worlds are very much like our own. They are concrete, fully determinate individuals. Each world is an internally unified whole, and is absolutely isolated from every other world. I also assume that possible individuals are world-bound: that is, that they are wholly part of at most one world.[58] The property of being identical to a particular individual will thus correspond to the unit class containing that individual. But I won't assume that all worlds are ontologically on a par. Our world, at least, appears to be special. It is actual, while others are

[57] Some will, no doubt, find this framework too much to be believed and worthy only of an incredulous stare. I would advise such readers to treat it as a useful heuristic, enabling us to identify a property's intension with its extension across all possible worlds. My arguments, except where they concern co-actual worlds, could then easily be recast with only slight modification. The only real points of substance that would be lost concern the basis for my antipathy toward biting the bullet concerning the qualitative status of the property of actuality in section 2.2, and my objection to global structuralism in section 2.3.

[58] I do not say, as Lewis (1986: 214) does, that possible individuals are wholly part of *exactly* one world. Trans-world individuals are composed of parts of different worlds; they are not wholly part of even one world. But I would not thereby call them impossible. For I accept a non-standard possible worlds analysis, according to which something is possible iff it is true at some world or worlds (see Bricker 2001: 40-5, 2006: 53, 2008: 117).

merely possible. This marks a genuine, objective difference between these worlds. They belong to fundamentally different ontological kinds. Nor will I assume that our world alone is actual. I hold instead that it is possible for many worlds to be co-actual.[59] The mereological sum of these co-actual worlds would not, however, itself constitute a further world, nor would there be a world that duplicates this sum. For worlds are internally unified and anything made up of absolutely isolated parts is not. I am thus forced to adopt Bricker's non-standard possible worlds analysis, according to which something is possible iff it is true at some world or worlds.[60]

A possible object's status as actual is not a mere matter of its being a part of our world—there is a genuine objective difference between the actual and the merely possible—and yet, given the peculiarly ontological nature of this difference, any attempt to capture it requires making reference to ourselves, our world, etc. For admissible descriptive predicates are plausibly assumed to designate properties that are observable or detectable in some way or another.[61] But

[59] The possibility of multiple actual worlds is left open, for example, by the pre-critical Kant. See Kant ([1770] 1992: Ak 2:408).

[60] In order to capture the contingency of actuality, we must distinguish between what is true *at* a world—what a world represents to be the case—and what is true *of* a world—what that world is really like. Every world (and every plurality of worlds) represents itself as being actual whether or not it really is actual. It is thus true at every world that it is actual. But since the truth conditions of modal statements are cashed out in terms of what is true at a world (and not in terms of what is true of that world), it will turn out that other worlds could have been actual. The distinction between what is true of and what is true at a world is not *ad hoc*. The modal realist already needs it to provide adequate truth conditions for *de re* modality. For discussion, see Bricker (2008: 50-3).

[61] Carnap (1947a: 84, 1947b: 138, 1950: 74), for example, appears to assume that admissible predicates must designate properties that are somehow observable or otherwise detectable (for he believes that all observable differences should be expressible in terms of the admissible predicates). Leibniz ([1717] 1956: 38) also appears to

the property of actuality does not appear to be observable or detectable in any way. We can, for example, observe a coin's size, shape, and weight, we can detect its chemical composition, but we can neither observe nor detect its actuality. Indeed nothing could, even in principle, affect us in such a way that we would be able to tell that it is actual rather than merely possible.[62] For the

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assume, at least implicitly, that the qualitative properties must be observable or detectable when he claims in his fourth letter to Clarke that:

> To say that God can cause the whole universe to move forward in a right line, or in any other line, without making otherwise any alteration in it; is another chimerical supposition. For, two states indiscernible from each other, are the same state; and consequently, 'tis a change without any change.

This passage is often interpreted as putting forward something like the following argument: if spacetime exists, then a world at rest and a boosted world (where everything moves at an absolute velocity of 5 kilometers per hour to the west) would be distinct; but since these worlds are exactly alike observationally, they are qualitatively indiscernible, and hence identical; therefore, spacetime does not exist. This argument has come to be known as the 'boost' (or 'kinematic shift') argument against substantivalism. See Maudlin (1993: 188-92) and Dasgupta (2015) for helpful discussion. Earman (1989: 118-20) complains, in effect, that Leibniz's combination of the claim that the qualitative properties are observable with the principle of the identity of qualitative indiscernibles leads to an objectionable form of positivism where '[a] difference, to be a real difference, must be a verifiable difference'. But note that it is the addition of the principle of the identity of indiscernibles that leads to this result, not the claim that the qualitative properties are observable. I deny this principle, and so avoid the charge of positivism.

[62] We should distinguish between contrastive and non-contrastive conceptions of detectability. A *non-contrastive* conception merely requires the ability to detect the presence of a property. But a *contrastive* conception requires the ability to detect the presence rather than the absence of a property. It is the latter conception that I have in mind here. Note that since there seems to be no way to detect the presence rather than the absence of non-qualitative properties like *being identical to Pegasus* or *being identical to Socrates*, the assumption that admissible predicates must designate properties that are somehow observable or otherwise detectable nicely explains why predicates like 'pegasizes' and 'socratizes' are inadmissible.

property of actuality is simply too thin, too empty, and too diaphanous to be detected at all. So if we have a conception of our status as absolutely actual, as I believe we do, we could not have acquired it by means of observation and so, it seems, cannot designate the corresponding property of actuality descriptively.[63] We can only hope to successfully designate this property by means of directly referential devices: the thought that a thing is actual (in this robust ontological sense) is the thought that it is of the same ontological kind as me and everything else at my world.

2.2 The possibility of non-qualitative properties that can be designated descriptively

If we assume both that there are no indiscernible worlds and that necessarily coextensive (or cointensive) properties are identical, then it will turn out that some intuitively non-qualitative properties can be specified without the use of directly referential devices. I'll focus my attention on two examples. Suppose, first, that the complete qualitative profile of some possible person, call him Arturo, is unique. Arturo is part of exactly one world, he is discernible from all of his worldmates, and no other world is a duplicate of his own. The property *being identical to Arturo*, which corresponds to Arturo's unit class, will thus be necessarily coextensive with—and hence identical to—the property *having such and such a qualitative profile*.[64] Suppose, next, that the

[63] See Williams (1962: 751) for an argument along these lines. It is the unobservability of absolute actuality—or 'existence' as Williams puts it—that ultimately leads to the skeptical problem of how I can know that I am 'a member of the existing world and not a mere possible monad on the shelf of essence' (1962: 752). See Lewis (1970: 19, 1986: 93-4) and Bricker (2006) for further discussion of this problem.

[64] See Eddon (2011: 320-1) and Cowling (2015: 297) for similar examples. Eddon's example focuses on arbitrary individuals at non-symmetrical worlds (where a world is *non-symmetrical* iff the only one-one function that both

complete qualitative profile of the actual world is unique. The actual world is discernible from every merely possible world, and so any indiscernible duplicate of an actual object must itself be actual. The property *being actual* will thus be cointensive with—and hence identical to—the property *having such and such, or so and so, or some other qualitative profile* (where this is shorthand for the disjunction of the complete qualitative profile of every actual object).

What should we say about these cases? There are three straightforward responses available: (1) we could claim that every world has an indiscernible duplicate and thus reject the first assumption; (2) we could adopt a hyperintensional conception of properties and thus reject the second assumption; or (3) we could simply deny that the properties in question are non-qualitative after all.

Let's start with the first response. Should we believe in indiscernible worlds? David Lewis (1973, 1986) is officially agnostic. There are, on the one hand, pragmatic reasons to favor the hypothesis that there are no indiscernible worlds. It is more quantitatively parsimonious—that is, it posits fewer entities—than its competitors. But, on the other hand, these worlds are supposed to be independent of us. And, in the face of this independence, we should admit to a certain amount of humility. We should confess that there might be much about these entities that we do not—and perhaps cannot—know (see Lewis 1973: 87-8). And so, it seems, there are no theoretical benefits to be gained by accepting or rejecting the hypothesis that there are indiscernible worlds (see Lewis 1986: 157, 224).

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maps the domain of that world onto itself and preserves all its qualitative properties and relations is the identity map). Cowling's example focuses on individuals that are themselves worlds. If the worlds in their examples fail to have indiscernible duplicates, then the individuals in question will fail to have indiscernible duplicates as well.

Phillip Bricker (2001: 49) is more enthusiastic. We need indiscernible worlds to account for the possibility of duplicate island universes. We arrive at this possibility in two steps. First, we need to show that island universes are possible. It seems like we can robustly imagine them; that is, we can imagine reality—or actuality—dividing up into two or more parts that are casually and spatiotemporally isolated from each other. To accommodate this, we need to amend the standard analysis of possibility. Rather than saying that something is possible iff it is true at a world, we should instead say that it is possible iff it is true at some (class, aggregate, or) plurality of worlds (see Bricker 2001:40-5, 2006: 53, 2008: 117). But we also need a way to distinguish our simply being able to think about a plurality of worlds and our being able to think about those worlds as island universes. We do this by allowing more than one world to be actual. If multiple worlds were actual, then reality—or actuality—would appear to divide into absolutely isolated parts, it would be made up of island universes. The possibility of island universes is best represented by pluralities of co-actual worlds. Next, we need to show that *duplicate* island universes are possible. It seems there could be island universes that are all very similar to each other. But if they could all be very similar, then it seems that they could all be exactly alike as well. Thus, it seems that there could be any number of duplicate island universes (see Bricker 2001: 49). Belief in indiscernible worlds allows us to capture possibilities that we wouldn't be able to capture otherwise. There are theoretical benefits to be had after all.

Suppose we're convinced that every world is infinitely reduplicated. This guarantees that Arturo is not unique. He will have hoards of indiscernible duplicates littered throughout logical space. Any description of Arturo will pick out these doppelgängers as well. We can only specify the property *being identical to Arturo* by making use of directly referential devices. But that only solves half the problem. For suppose, first, that there are infinitely many indiscernible duplicates

of our world; and, second, that all and only these worlds are actual. The property *being actual* will then be cointensive with the infinitely disjunctive property *being identical to this, that, or some other possible object* (where we here directly designate every one of the objects at the plurality of these actual worlds), which will in turn be cointensive with the infinitely disjunctive and intuitively qualitative property *having such and such, or so and so, or some other qualitative profile* (where we here descriptively designate every actual object by disjoining descriptions of their qualitative profiles).[65] So, even if we allow that every world has infinitely many indiscernible duplicates, we might still be able to describe the property *being actual* without making use of directly referential devices.[66] The first response seems to leave open the

[65] Note that the mereological sum of any of these actual worlds will itself be actual as well. So we will need to be able to directly designate these sums in order to include them in the intension of the property *being identical to this, that, or some other possible object*. Note also that these sums will have qualitative profiles that are distinct from the qualitative profiles of the worlds from which they are fused. So we will also need to be able to descriptively designate these sums in order to include them in the intension of the property *having such and such, or so and so, or some other qualitative profile*. We might do this by first describing the qualitative profile of our world, and by then describing, for instance, pairs of sums of distinct duplicates of our world as those things that are composed of exactly two distinct worlds with such and such a qualitative profile.

[66] We might seek to close off this possibility in one of two ways. We might, first, deny that every indiscernible duplicate of our world could be actualized. For if there are infinitely many indiscernible duplicates of our world, then the possibility realized by all of these worlds being actualized would be no different in kind from the possibility realized by all but one of these worlds being actualized. So there seems to be a way to can get all the intuitive possibilities we want without being saddled with the possible cointensivity of *being actual* and *having such and such, or so and so, or some other qualitative profile*. The problem with this line of response is that, in order to maintain it, we would need to say that the ontological status of some worlds might depend upon the ontological status of some other worlds, and this claim strikes me as implausible.

possibility that there be at least one non-qualitative property which can be designated without the use of directly referential devices.

Let's turn to the second response. Should we break with philosophical orthodoxy and adopt a hyperintensional conception of properties? Let's say that hyperintensional distinctions are distinctions that cut finer than necessary equivalence. Take, for example, the distinction between the property *being a trilateral figure* and the property *being a triangular figure*. These properties have the same intension; they apply to the same things across all possible worlds. But they seem to be different somehow. One is concerned with the number of a figure's sides. The other is concerned with the number of a figure's angles. Or take the property *being identical to Arturo* and the property *having such and such a qualitative profile*. These properties, given our assumptions, have the same intension; they apply to only one possible object: namely, Arturo. But he doesn't seem to have them in the same way. He has the property *having such and such a qualitative profile* partly in virtue of his surroundings, while he has the property *being identical to Arturo* solely in virtue of himself alone. One is extrinsic. The other is intrinsic. We might take

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We might, next, adopt a creation rather than a transformation version of modal realism with absolute actuality. The difference between these versions lies with the entities to which the property of actuality applies: according the *transformation* version, the property of actuality applies directly to the realm of *possibilia*, but, according to the *creation* version, it applies to a separate realm of entities. See Bricker (2001: 30, 2006: 48). I have been assuming the transformation version. If, however, we assume the creation version instead, then our world will be guaranteed to have a merely possible duplicate no matter how many times over it is duplicated in actuality. The property *being actual* will thus divide the property *having such and such, or some other qualitative profile*, that is, only some of the objects that have the latter property will have the former property; they will not be cointensive. This appears to be a point in favor of the creation version, but I still think we should on balance prefer the transformation version. See Bricker (2006: 48-9) for considerations in its favor.

these kinds of considerations to motivate a hyperintensional conception of properties (see Eddon 2011).

I grant that there are differences here. But I think they're differences in our concepts, not in the properties they designate. I thus take hyperintensional distinctions to be conceptual, not metaphysical. How should we cash this out? Let's distinguish between concepts and properties.[67] A *concept* is what we grasp in virtue of our understanding of a predicate in our language; it is associated with that predicate's meaning. A *property* is what gets designated by the use of a predicate in our language. The basic idea is that there are different ways to represent the same parts or aspects of reality. We must, on this view, distinguish between concepts and properties so as not to confuse representation with reality. Take the predicates 'is trilateral' and 'is triangular'. We can think about the class of triangles by fixing upon their having three sides. But we can also think about them by fixing upon their having three angles. Either way we fix upon the class of triangles, we're thinking about the same property. We're just thinking about it using different concepts: namely, the concept *being a trilateral figure* and the concept *being a triangular figure*.[68]

I think we should say the same thing about Arturo's unit class. I can think about it in different ways. I can think about it in a way that is primarily descriptive: as containing a person of a certain size and shape, who is related to a variety of external objects. When I do this, I think about it by a route that involves descriptive elements, which situate Arturo in his environment. But I can also think about this class in a way that is more direct: namely, as containing Arturo.

[67] I here follow Bricker (2006: 60).

[68] See Bealer (1982) for a worked-out version of a view along these lines. Also see Lewis (1986: 55-9) on the difference between structured and unstructured properties.

When I do that, I think about it by a route that is directly referential and bypasses Arturo's environment. Either way I think about this class, I think about the same property. I'm just thinking about it using different concepts: namely, the concept *having such and such a qualitative profile* and the concept *being identical to Arturo*. One is relational. The other is not.[69] Our concepts provide different routes by which our thoughts can hit the same targets. We can, as we observed in section 2.1, designate the very same property in a variety of different ways. The second response requires a proliferation of properties where a proliferation of concepts will suffice.

Let's turn now to the third response. Should we just bite the bullet? Suppose that Arturo really doesn't have any indiscernible duplicates. I don't think it would be all that bad to deny that *being identical to Arturo* is non-qualitative. Suppose we were agnostic about the existence of indiscernible worlds. We wouldn't know that Arturo is special. And while we would know that we can pick the property *being identical to Arturo* out directly, we wouldn't know that we can also pick it out descriptively (because we wouldn't know that it is necessarily coextensive with the property *having such and such a qualitative profile*). We should then be agnostic about whether or not this property can only be indicated directly. But we're not. Why not? I suspect we give too much weight to the structure of our concepts. We know that the identity properties of indiscernible worldmates are non-qualitative. Consider, for example, a world containing nothing but two duplicate iron spheres—Castor and Pollux—located a mile apart.[70] These spheres are qualitatively indiscernible. But they do not share all their properties: one has the property *being*

[69] See Humberstone (1996: 209-27) for a defense of the claim that the relational/non-relational distinction applies to concepts rather than properties.

[70] This example is due to Black (1952: 156).

identical to Castor, the other does not. Some identity properties are clearly non-qualitative. We also know that the concepts by means of which we can think about these properties have the same form as the concept by means of which we usually think about the property *being identical to Arturo*. But we make one or another mistaken assumption: either we assume that concepts with the same form always fix upon properties with the same qualitative status; or we assume that concepts containing non-qualitative components always fix upon properties that are non-qualitative.[71] We can, it seems, plausibly deflate our intuitions concerning the qualitative status of the property *being identical to Arturo*.

I do not, however, think that a similar story will be plausible in the case of actuality. Suppose that no actual worlds have any merely possible, indiscernible duplicates. We should, of course, be agnostic about this because—given what has been suggested above—we should be agnostic about whether the property *being actual* is cointensive with the property *having such and such, or so and so, or some other qualitative profile*. And since we know—or should

[71] To see that the first assumption is mistaken, just pick some qualitative property with denumerably many instances, say, *being such and such a big, purple hippopotamus in a world of two-way eternal recurrence*. We can fix upon this property with the infinitely disjunctive concept *being identical to Albert, or Beatrice, or Candice, or…*. Now suppose we had a different concept that left out every other disjunct: namely, the concept *being identical to Albert, or Candice, or Ester, or…*. This concept would have exactly the same form as the first. But—given how we've selected its disjuncts—it will fix upon a non-qualitative property. Thus, concepts of the same form do not always fix upon properties of the same qualitative status.

To see that the second assumption is mistaken, recall the concept *having the same shape as the Eiffel Tower* from section 2.1 above. This concept contains a non-qualitative component. But the property indicated by our use of this concept is the qualitative property *having such and such shape*. Thus, concepts containing non-qualitative components do not always fix upon properties that are themselves non-qualitative.

believe—that cointensive properties are identical, we should also be agnostic about whether the property *being actual* can be designated descriptively. But if we accept the linguistic thesis, an agnosticism about whether a property can be designated descriptively should carry over to an agnosticism about its qualitative status. We are not, however, agnostic about the qualitative status of the property of actuality. Why not? Perhaps because our concept of actuality is, as Bricker (2006: 64, 2008: 125) suggests, that of *being of the same ontological kind as all the things at my world*.[72] Our intuitions about the non-qualitative status of the property designated by our use of these concepts do not appear to be based upon judgments about the form of these concepts, but about their content. We think the ontological kind indicated by these concepts carves reality at the joints: the objects belonging to it are all objectively similar, and yet they are otherwise too qualitatively heterogeneous for this similarity to spring from anything other than a basic source. Our intuitions about the non-qualitative status of actuality rest upon the judgment that the source of this similarity must itself be non-qualitative. The third response fails because we cannot plausibly deflate our intuitions concerning the non-qualitative status of the property *being actual*.

What we have just seen is that unless we are prepared to take on board a hyperintensional conception of properties, we should admit that there might be at least one non-qualitative property that can be designated without the use of directly referential devices. I do not believe

[72] Bricker's main motivation for this suggestion appears to be that it offers us a way out of a skeptical problem: namely, the problem of how we can know that we're actual if actuality is absolute. The idea is that I know that I'm actual simply by knowing that I belong to the same ontological category as myself. I find the suggestion that our concept of absolute actuality is indexical to be independently plausible because, as I argued in section 2.1, we cannot acquire it by means of observation.

that such a conception of properties can be independently motivated enough to justify a break with current orthodoxy. I thus prefer not to go hyperintensionalist about properties, and so believe that there might be a non-qualitative property that can be designated descriptively.

2.3 The existence of qualitative properties that can only be designated directly

We have just seen that there is reason to be skeptical about the closure assumption: depending upon the lay of logical space, certain infinitary descriptive predicates might turn out to designate some intuitively non-qualitative properties. We now turn to the fundamentality assumption, which says that a sufficiently rich language will contain descriptive—albeit not necessarily primitive—predicates for all the fundamental qualitative properties.

If we assume both that the fundamental roles given to us by our best scientific theories could have been realized by fundamentally different properties and that we can only pick out the properties that actually realize these roles by specifying the roles which they in fact play, then it will turn out that some intuitively qualitative properties can only be designated with the aid of directly referential devices. I'll focus my attention on the following examples. Suppose, first, that there are worlds structurally just like our own, but where unit positive and negative charge switch their causal and nomic roles.[73] The fundamental property that here occupies the positive charge role, there occupies the negative charge role and *vice versa*. These worlds differ from our own by a permutation of fundamental qualitative properties (see Lewis 2009: 205-12). Suppose, next, that there are worlds structurally just like our own, but where the properties realizing the unit positive and negative charge roles are uniformly replaced by alien fundamental properties,

[73] We'll assume that the properties designated by the predicates 'has unit positive charge' and 'has unit negative charge' are fundamental physical properties. If this turns out to be false, then our examples can simply be reworked.

uninstantiated at our world. The unit positive and unit negative charge roles are there occupied by alien fundamental properties. These worlds differ from our own by a uniform replacement of fundamental qualitative properties (see Lewis 2009: 212-13). What these two examples seem to show is that the unit positive and negative charge roles could have been realized by fundamentally different properties. But then, given that there are worlds where other properties fill these roles, we cannot designate the properties that actually play these roles by merely describing the roles themselves (for each of these worlds satisfy the same Ramsey sentence). We also need to add that these properties are the occupants of these roles in our world; that is, that the fundamental kinds of things in question are the kinds of things that actually play the unit positive and negative charge roles.[74] And to do that—to pick out the properties these kinds of things have indexically—we must rely upon directly referential devices.[75]

[74] I am assuming, for example, that the fundamental qualitative property that in our world plays the unit positive charge role, which we might call *being F*, is the property that we designate as *being the kind of thing that actually plays the unit positive charge role*. The later designation specifies a class of objects which includes not only the actual instances of the fundamental property in question, but all possible instances of the same kind—whether or not those objects themselves play a similar role in their respective worlds. The properties *being F* and *being the kind of thing that actually plays the unit positive charge role* will thus be cointensive.

[75] We might worry, at this point, that the argument in this section cannot simply treat the modal realist framework in which I am working as a useful heuristic, but must instead rely upon it as a substantive hypothesis. Suppose we were to endorse some form of ersatzism and hold that possible worlds are abstract: they might be maximal possible states of affairs, maximally consistent sets of sentences, or what have you. Suppose, further, that the actual world is among these possible worlds. It has the distinction of obtaining in—or corresponding to—concrete reality (or actuality). This concrete reality (or actuality) is absolute. Thus, on this view, 'actual object' and 'concrete object' would appear to be cointensive; they pick out the same parts of concrete reality. If we were to accept this alternative account of the metaphysics of modality, then it seems that we could designate the properties that actually play the fundamental

roles in our best scientific theories by replacing occurrences of 'actual' (a directly referential device) with 'concrete' (a seemingly descriptive referential device). So, for example, the property *being the kind of thing that plays the unit positive charge role in the actual world* will be cointensive with the property *being the kind of thing that plays the unit positive charge role in the concrete world*. But, then, we could designate the qualitative properties that in fact play the fundamental roles in our best scientific theories without relying upon any directly referential devices at all. (Thanks to an anonymous referee for suggesting this line of response.)

It should be clear that something has gone seriously wrong here. For if everything we have just said were correct, then the intuitively non-qualitative identity property *being identical to Benjamin Franklin* would be cointensive with the property *being identical to the person who is the inventor of bifocals in the concrete world*, and that would mean that an intuitively non-qualitative property could be designated without the aid of directly referential devices. The argument from section 2.2 would return with a vengeance. But what exactly has gone wrong here? This, I think, is much less clear. The problem, as I see it, is that talk of the concrete world is ambiguous between talk of the possible world that corresponds to concrete reality and talk of that concrete reality itself. Understood the first way, 'the concrete world' is a name for the possible world that corresponds to concrete reality. But since a name is a directly referential device, the designation *being identical to the person who is the inventor of bifocals in the concrete world* will turn out to contain a directly referential device after all. Understood the second way, talk of concrete reality seems to be talk of the ontological status that things like these (pointing at various donkeys, puddles, protons, and stars or just waving all around) enjoy. The suggestion here is that the abstract/concrete distinction is best explained by, what we might call, the Way of Demonstrative Example. This seems plausible given that the difference between, say, a number and a nightingale does not seem to be exhausted by their qualitative differences but instead appears to transcend them, which suggests that the abstract/concrete distinction cannot be straightforwardly explained by the Way of Negation. See Cowling (2017a: 74-92) for a number of arguments to this effect. It thus appears that the concept of concrete reality (or *being concrete*) should be indexical for the ersatzist in the same way that the concept of absolute actuality (or *being actual*) is indexical for the realist. But if that's right, the designation *being identical to the concrete inventor of bifocals* will contain a directly referential device after all.

What should we say about these cases? There are, once again, three straightforward responses available: (1) we could deny quidditism—the thesis that there are quidditistically different worlds; that is, worlds that have the same structure but differ over which qualitative properties confer which causal powers[76]—and thus reject the first assumption; (2) we could accept some weak form of quidditism but deny that it entails any kind of semantic humility and thus reject the second assumption; or (3) we could simply deny that the properties in question are qualitative after all.

Let's start with the first response. Should we deny that there are quidditistically different worlds? Suppose we were attracted to a causal theory of properties according to which properties have their causal profiles essentially (see Shoemaker 1980, 1998, 2007: 142-4).[77] If that's right, then the property that plays the unit positive charge role could not have played the unit negative charge role. And so there isn't a world where these properties switch roles. We also find that the property that plays the unit positive charge role could not play this role in a world where a different property plays the unit negative charge role. For their causal profiles are interdefined. A

[76] Quidditism is often defined as the view that there are primitive identities between fundamental qualitative properties across possible worlds. It is, so construed, a view about property individuation. I prefer to define quidditism—or what Tyler Hildebrand (2016) calls *qualitative quidditism*—as the thesis that there are qualitatively discernible worlds with the same overall structure. This thesis might be entailed by various principles of plenitude (which tell us that if something is possible, then something else is possible as well). But it is not itself in the business of expressing the plenitude of possible worlds. We could, I think, coherently accept the quidditist thesis while rejecting the more general principles of plenitude that might lead to it.

[77] Bird (2005: 446-7) calls this view *weak essentialism*. It amounts to a kind of necessity claim. It should be distinguished from *strong essentialism* which adds to this the corresponding sufficiency claim: namely, that if properties F and G have the same causal features, then they are identical.

world without unit positive charge is a world without unit negative charge, and *vice versa*. But that's not all. Their causal profiles are, as Jonathan Schaffer points out, holistically interdefined in terms of a web of causal interrelations with all the other physical properties: 'charge is defined in terms of a disposition to exert force, force is defined in terms of its connection to charge and its disposition to accelerate mass, etc.' (Schaffer 2005: 11). A world without unit positive and negative charge would be a world without any of the other actual physical properties as well. And so there isn't a world otherwise just like our own except that alien properties there play the unit positive and negative charge roles.

So far, so good. But we haven't yet shown that quidditism—understood as the thesis that there are quidditistically different worlds—is false.[78] For while it might be essential to charge that it is structurally related to force and mass in a certain way, this doesn't guarantee that there aren't worlds with wholly alien properties (schmarge, quorce, and schmass) that are structurally related to each other in that very same way. The causal theory of properties is thus consistent with there being worlds structurally just like our own, but otherwise wholly alien to it.[79] If we want to rule out such worlds, we need to take on board more than just a causal theory of properties.

[78] This point is conceded by Bird (2005: 446, 450-1), who grants that weak essentialism is compatible with the thesis that there are quiddistically distinct worlds.

[79] This is, for example, a possibility left open by the modest causal structuralism canvassed in the appendix to Hawthorne (2001: 226-7).

Suppose we were instead attracted to some form of pure global structuralism according to which two worlds are structurally isomorphic only if they are qualitative duplicates.[80] We'll say that an individual (or world) is *structurally isomorphic* to another individual (or world) iff there is a one-one correspondence between their parts that preserves the overall pattern of their fundamental qualitative properties and relations.[81] And we'll say that an individual (or world) is a *qualitative duplicate* of another individual (or world) iff there is a one-one correspondence between their parts that preserves not just the overall pattern of fundamental qualitative properties and relations, but the fundamental qualitative properties and relations themselves.[82] A global structuralist can allow for structurally isomorphic individuals that are not qualitative duplicates provided that those individuals are worldmates. She can, for example, allow for worlds populated by several differently colored spheres. She can even allow for a world containing nothing but two differently colored spheres located a mile apart. This world is, after

[80] I assume that the structuralist at issue here will take the properties that realize the fundamental roles given to us by our best scientific theories to be qualitative. This might be denied by a structuralist who accepts some form of what Bricker (2017: 49 n 18) calls *haecceitism about properties*. The haecceitist about properties agrees with the global structuralist that there cannot be qualitative differences between worlds without structural differences, but adds that worlds can differ by a permutation or wholesale replacement of properties without differing qualitatively. For, according to the haecceitist, the fundamental properties lack primitive qualitative suchnesses and have only bare non-qualitative thisnesses. The haecceitist about properties thus breaks the link between the properties that play various causal or nomic roles and the properties that make for qualitative similarity. I shall return to haecceitism about properties when I turn to the third response to the argument in this section below.

[81] See Leuenberger (2010: 331-2, 334-5) for the technical details. But note that what I call a structural isomorphism, Leuenberger calls a fundamental isomorphism.

[82] This is essentially the definition from Lewis (1986: 61), but the formulation is drawn from Bricker (1993: 274, 1996: 227). Note that, due to their isolation, worlds are duplicates iff they are indiscernibles.

all, not structurally isomorphic to any world containing nothing but two identically colored spheres located a mile apart, since these two worlds differ in their overall pattern of fundamental qualitative properties. But these are possibilities that a *local* structuralist—who holds that two individuals are structurally isomorphic only if they are qualitative duplicates—would be forced to deny. It is for this reason that local structuralism seems much less plausible than its global cousin.[83]

I don't think we should accept global structuralism. For just as it seems possible for there to be duplicate island universes, it also seems possible for there to be structurally isomorphic alien island universes. We'll say that an individual (or world) is *qualitatively alien to* another individual (or world) iff no part of one is a duplicate of any part of the other.[84] We can imagine there being another part of reality out there, which is causally and spatiotemporally disconnected from—as well as structurally isomorphic to—our own, and we seem to be able to make sense of the thought that the objects in the other part of reality are totally alien to the objects in this part of reality. But, as we observed in section 2.2 above, the best way to represent this possibility is in terms of pluralities of co-actual worlds. Then, since worlds have the same contents when they are

[83] We might also distinguish between strong and weak forms of global structuralism. *Weak* global structuralism, which I am here simply calling global structuralism, is the view that worlds are structurally isomorphic only if they are qualitatively indiscernible. *Strong* global structuralism adds to this the claim that worlds are qualitatively indiscernible only if they are numerically identical. Heller (1998) defends an ersatzist version of strong global structuralism. But as we have already seen, in section 2.2 above, the possibility of island universes gives us reason to reject its realist counterpart.

[84] This is essentially the definition from Lewis (1986: 91-2), but the formulation is due to Bricker (forthcoming a: sect. 3.2).

considered plurally as they do when they are considered singularly, there must be structurally isomorphic worlds that fail to be qualitative duplicates.

The global structuralist might object to this argument in one of two ways.[85] She might, first, object to our interpretation of the possibility of island universes, and instead seek to accommodate this possibility within a single world. This world would be composed of causally and spatiotemporally disconnected islands, which would nevertheless be unified by a primitive worldmate relation. If, however, this were the right way to think about this possibility, then—since worlds are internally unified wholes—the other part of reality that we're imagining would not be absolutely disconnected from our own. But, it seems, this was something we could indeed imagine. So it seems that we would do better to think of the possibility of island universes as represented not by a single world, but by pluralities of co-actual worlds. Worlds must be unified, reality need not be.

The global structuralist might, instead, object to the very possibility of structurally isomorphic alien island universes. She might simply deny that there could be such universes. But

[85] A third objection might come from the structuralist who accepts haecceitism about properties and thereby breaks the link between the properties that play various causal or nomic roles and the properties that make for qualitative similarity. This structuralist could say that two individuals (or worlds) are *bare duplicates* whenever there is a one-one correspondence between their parts that preserves not just the overall pattern of fundamental properties and relations but the bare identities between them as well, and then add that two individuals (or worlds) are *brutally alien to* each other iff no part of one is a bare duplicate of the other. This allows the structuralist to claim that brutally alien island universes are possible even if qualitatively alien island universes are not, which might be enough to satisfy our intuitions about the present case. But given that structuralist who accepts haecceitism about properties denies that the properties that realize various causal or nomic roles are qualitative, the present objection ultimately collapses into a version of the third response below.

this denial appears to be difficult to maintain for two reasons. First, the global structuralist thinks that it is possible for there to be nothing but two structurally isomorphic alien individuals. She thinks, as we saw above, that there can be a world containing nothing but, say, a wholly red sphere and a wholly blue sphere located a mile apart. But since every part of the red sphere is red and every part of the blue sphere is blue, no part of one is a duplicate of the other. These two spheres are both structurally isomorphic and alien to each other. Yet once the global structuralist allows for complete possibilities that are represented not just by single worlds but also by pluralities of worlds, she opens up the possibility that these structurally isomorphic individuals be worlds in themselves. The second reason that it is difficult for the global structuralist to deny the possibility of structurally isomorphic alien island universes is that she thinks that it is possible for there to be alien island universes that have almost the same overall structure. There might, for instance, be a pair of co-actual worlds where one contains nothing but a perfect red sphere and the other contains nothing but a scratched blue sphere. These alien worlds are not structurally isomorphic: one is perfectly spherical, the other is not. But they have almost the same structure: they only differ by a small scratch. And yet it seems, however, that if we can imagine there being island universes with almost the same overall structure, then we can also imagine a sequence of island universes whose structures become more and more alike until they eventually converge. We can imagine a sequence of pairs of worlds where each pair is just like the last pair except that the scratch on the blue sphere is a little less pronounced.[86] We have then,

[86] One might be tempted to insist, on the global structuralist's behalf, that the color of the scratched blue sphere turns to red as the scratch disappears. But this is only an artifact of the example. This response would not have been open to us had I instead chosen two properties that were not obviously determinates of the same determinable. It

at the limit of this sequence, the possibility of structurally isomorphic alien island universes: a pair of co-actual worlds where one contains nothing but a perfect red sphere and the other contains nothing but a perfect blue sphere. To deny this possibility, would be to accept an arbitrary gap in logical space.[87] The first response requires us to give up an intuitively plausible possibility.

Let's turn to the second response. Should we deny that quidditism carries with it a commitment to some form of semantic humility, and thereby insist that the properties that play the unit positive and negative charge roles can be designated both descriptively and determinately even if quidditism is true? These properties could, it seems, be so designated in a language which contained primitive predicates for all the fundamental qualitative properties. These predicates would get their extension not from the role they play in describing our world, but from the role they play in describing all of logical space. Suppose we had such a language.[88] We could use this language to construct what Theodore Sider (2002) calls a pluriverse sentence, which represents the totality of possible worlds—the whole of logical space—all at once. We would seem to have a way to describe our world that would not at the same time describe any inverted—or even structurally isomorphic alien—worlds. Indeed, with such a language, we

would not, for instance, have been so readily available had we started off with, say, a perfect wooden sphere and a scratched iron sphere.

[87] This argument is adapted from Adams (1979) and Bricker (2001: 49).

[88] I suspect that we could not have such a language in anything like our current epistemic situation. If that's right, then the current suggestion could only be used to salvage what I called the weaker versions of the linguistic thesis in section 2.1 above. It does not seem available to proponents of stronger versions of the thesis.

would be able to describe all of logical space, we just wouldn't be able to locate ourselves within it. But this is, of course, exactly what we should expect of a purely descriptive language.

I don't think this response can solve the problem without ultimately surrendering the linguistic thesis. Suppose that the pluriverse sentence of the language in question both descriptively and determinately (or uniquely) designates the totality of possible worlds. No two fundamental qualitative properties could then be similarly distributed throughout logical space (for otherwise there would be a structural isomorphism from the totality of possible worlds onto itself that did not preserve the fundamental qualitative properties themselves, and thus the role our primitive predicates play in describing the totality of possible worlds would not be unique; the pluriverse sentence would map onto the totality of possible worlds in different ways). But, given the plenitude of possible worlds, it seems quite plausible to think that some fundamental qualitative properties are similarly distributed throughout logical space: that is, that there is a structural isomorphism from the totality of possible worlds onto itself that does not preserve the fundamental qualitative properties themselves. Thus, it seems that we either need to give up on taking the primitive predicates of the language in question to be descriptive or we need to give up on taking them to be determinate. They cannot be both. In order to avoid this indeterminacy problem, we might make an exception for the primitive predicates of this language by allowing them to designate the fundamental qualitative properties directly.[89] But, as a defense of the linguistic thesis, this exception appears to be completely *ad hoc*. We thus appear to be saddled with a commitment to a form of semantic humility after all. The second response fails because it

[89] This is, in effect, what Gallois (1998: 249-50) does when he takes the qualitative properties to be those properties that are expressible by predicates that do not themselves contain rigid designators other than the ones used to designate them.

requires us to smuggle directly referential devices into the very fabric of our basic descriptive predicates themselves.

Let's turn now to the third response. Should we just deny that the properties in question are qualitative after all? Consider, for the moment, how things appear to us as conscious subjects. We find ourselves in a world where everything looks, smells, sounds, tastes, and feels a certain way. But different (centered) worlds might appear the same to certain subjects. We can, for example, imagine people on Twin Earth, who—like the ancient Greeks—see a certain heavenly body in the evening sky and call it 'Hesperus' and see a certain heavenly body in the morning sky and call it 'Phosphorus'. These Twin Greeks have, as Saul Kripke puts it, 'exactly the same evidence, qualitatively speaking' as the ancient Greeks once did, but—unlike the ancient Greeks—when they use the names 'Hesperus' and 'Phosphorus' they happen to refer to two different objects (Kripke 1980: 104). We can also imagine people on Twin Earth, who have 'the same sensory evidence' about the watery stuff on their planet that we had prior to the discovery that the watery stuff on our planet is composed of molecules of H_2O. These Twin Earthlings are 'in a situation qualitatively identical to [our own] with respect to all the evidence' we once had, but—unlike us—when they use the predicate 'is water', they manage to designate the property *being composed of molecules of XYZ* (Kripke 1980: 142).

The epistemic situations of these Twin Earthlings were, for a while at least, qualitatively similar to our own. But the similarity between our epistemic situations was quite fragile. There were a lot of differences between our worlds that we weren't seeing. As we both discovered more about the worlds around us, our epistemic situations began to diverge and ceased to be qualitatively similar. If, however, our worlds had been structurally isomorphic, then our epistemic situations could not have diverged. This might lead us to say that such isomorphic

situations are qualitatively indiscernible.[90] The differences between them could then be said to be non-qualitative. Worlds that differ from our own only by the permutation or wholesale replacement of properties would be qualitatively no different from our own. The properties that realize the fundamental roles given to us by our best scientific theories would be non-qualitative.

The plausibility of this response will depend upon how we understand the sensory evidence had by the agents in these epistemic situations; it will depend, moreover, on whether the fundamental properties could ever be given immediately in experience.[91] For if there were pairs of isomorphically situated epistemic agents that were directly acquainted with different fundamental properties, then their epistemic situations would intuitively differ from the inside.[92] If their worlds differed by the permutation of certain fundamental properties, these epistemic agents, being directly acquainted with all the same fundamental properties, would be able to clearly and distinctly conceive of what it would be like, qualitatively speaking, to inhabit each

[90] This is, in effect, to endorse a version of haecceitism about properties (see footnotes 80 and 85 above).

[91] Russell ([1912] 1959) held that our knowledge of some properties is by acquaintance. I am here only assuming that there are possible epistemic agents who are directly acquainted with some of the fundamental properties.

[92] To see how this might work, suppose that colors are given immediately in experience and consider a world exactly like our own except that the qualitative color spectrum is systematically inverted. Our epistemic situation would be structurally isomorphic to that of our spectrum inverted counterparts. But these epistemic situations would not be qualitatively alike from the inside. For we can clearly and distinctly conceive of what it would be like to occupy the epistemic situations of our spectrum inverted counterparts, and we seem to be in a position to know that these isomorphic situations would be qualitatively unlike—and hence discernible from—our own. Yet we can, it seems, only designate redness directly as the property that appears here and over there. No purely structural qualitative description will do since the property of *being red* plays the very same structural role in our world that the property of, say, *being green* plays in the inverted world. See Swinburne (1980: 317-19) and Hildebrand (2016: 518) for similar appeals to cases of inverted spectrums.

other's worlds. They could thus conceive of structurally isomorphic but qualitatively discernible worlds. But given that their only access to the fundamental qualitative properties appears to be direct, these epistemic agents would only be able to describe the differences between these worlds with the use of directly referential devices.[93]

I believe that such pairs of epistemic agents are possible. It would, however, be a mistake to think that because they cannot describe the differences between their worlds descriptively, their experiences—and hence the (centered) worlds they directly represent—must be exactly alike qualitatively speaking. It is their basic concepts that appear to be non-qualitative, not the properties they designate. The third response fails because it mistakes a conceptual distinction for a metaphysical one.[94]

What we have just seen is that unless we are prepared to accept some form of structuralism, we should think that there are qualitative properties that can only be designated with the use of directly referential devices. I prefer not to go structuralist, and so believe that there are qualitative properties that can only be referred to directly.

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[93] These considerations appear to show that even the weak version of the linguistic thesis—according to which a property is qualitative iff it can, in principle, be designated without the use of directly referential devices, but perhaps only by agents in better epistemic situations than our own—fails in the 'only if' direction. But if the weak version fails in this direction, the strong version should fail as well.

[94] This might not be the only problem with the third response. For, as noted in footnote 90 above, it is wedded to some version of haecceitism about properties. And as Hildebrand (2016) argues, haecceitism about properties—or what he calls *bare quidditism*—is the proper target of many of the objections that are standardly aimed at quiddistism. But while these arguments might, as Hildebrand (2016: 526) rightly points out, 'have some force against' the haecceitist about properties, 'they are powerless against' quidditism as I understand it.

2.4 Conclusion

Let's take stock. I have argued that the linguistic thesis fails in both directions: there might be non-qualitative properties that can be designated descriptively, and there appear to be qualitative properties that can only be designated directly. I have also suggested that the best way to avoid these failures is to adopt a hyperintensional conception of properties along with some form of global structuralism. But these proposed solutions—while perhaps not strictly speaking incompatible—do not appear to sit particularly well with each other: for the hyperintensionalist seeks to inflate, while the structuralist seeks to deflate our overall catalogue of properties.[95] It thus seems that we should look elsewhere if we wish to vindicate the initial appeal of the linguistic thesis.

The suggestion that has begun to emerge is that while the linguistic thesis is ultimately untenable as stated, it can be recast as a thesis about our concepts rather than the properties they designate. We should have assumed the following thesis all along.

> **The Conceptual Thesis**: a concept is *pure* (or *qualitative*) if and only if it does not contain any directly referential concepts (such as demonstrative, indexical, or singular concepts).

Our concepts are often built up from and thereby contain other concepts. Consider, for example, the concept of *being trilateral*. It is built up from the concepts of *being a closed plane figure* and *having three sides*. It will be pure if, upon analysis, its component concepts do not themselves contain directly referential concepts. Consider, next, the concept of *having the same shape as the Eiffel Tower*. Since a component of this concept—namely, the singular concept of *being*

[95] See Shoemaker (1980: 213-14) for the related charge that the claim that properties are individuated by their causal powers is incompatible with a hyperintensional conception of properties.

identical to the Eiffel Tower—is directly referential, the concept of *having the same shape as the Eiffel Tower* is thereby impure.[96] Our concepts, unlike the properties they designate, are structured. When the nodes in these structures serve as directly referential hooks, when, for instance, our concepts contain demonstrative, indexical, or singular concepts, they latch themselves onto the world. These concepts are somehow impure; they are intermixed with something empirical.

Let's consider the conceptual analogs of our earlier linguistic assumptions. We can retain the spirit of the closure assumption. Concepts are closed under construction: concepts built up from entirely pure concepts are guaranteed to themselves be pure. But there is no guarantee that the properties they designate will themselves be qualitative. So, for example, if all and only worlds structurally isomorphic to our own were actual, then the pure concept *having such and such, or so and so, or some other structural profile* would designate the seemingly fundamental non-qualitative property *being actual*. But we should give up on the fundamentality assumption. Pure basic concepts are not always needed for a complete understanding of the world: our conceptual scheme is in no way impoverished when we lack pure concepts for the fundamental qualitative properties. I might, as a world-bound subject, need to employ the impure concept *being the kind of thing that plays the unit positive charge role in my world* in order designate the seemingly fundamental qualitative property *having unit positive charge*.

[96] Similarly, the concept of *being water* appears to be the concept of *being the clear, potable, liquid substance of my acquaintance that falls from the clouds; flows in the lakes, oceans, and rivers; is used for bathing, cooking, and drinking; etc*. But a component of this concept—namely, the indexical concept of *being the substance of my acquaintance*—is directly referential, and so the concept of *being water* appears to be impure.

We have seen that there might be non-qualitative properties that can be designated descriptively and qualitative properties that can only be designated directly. We have thus severed the link between qualitative properties and directly referential devices. I take this to be particularly interesting because it opens up the possibility that there are other properties (such as identity, parthood, and set-membership), which can apparently be designated descriptively, that might turn out to be non-qualitative as well.

Chapter 3: Fundamental Non-Qualitative Properties

Abstract: The distinction between qualitative and non-qualitative properties should be familiar from discussions of the principle of the identity of indiscernibles: two otherwise exactly similar individuals, Castor and Pollux, might share all their qualitative properties yet differ with respect to their non-qualitative properties—for while Castor has the property *being identical to Castor*, Pollux does not. But while this distinction is familiar, there has not been much critical attention devoted to spelling out its precise nature. I argue that the class of non-qualitative properties is broader than it is often taken to be. When properly construed, it will not only include properties such as *being identical to Castor*, which somehow make reference to particular individuals, it will also include more general properties such as identity, composition, set membership, as well as various peculiarly ontological properties. Given that some of these more general properties help to explain objective similarity, we have reason to believe that there are fundamental non-qualitative properties.

3.1 Introduction

Let's begin with an example from Max Black (1952: 156). Imagine a world consisting of nothing but two iron spheres—Castor and Pollux—located a small distance apart. Imagine, further, that these two spheres are perfect qualitative duplicates of each other. Given that this world contains nothing besides these two spheres and perhaps some empty space, Castor and Pollux are not just qualitative duplicates, they are qualitative indiscernibles. They are, we might say, qualitatively identical but numerically distinct. And yet they do not share all the same properties: one of them

has the haecceitistic property *being identical to Castor*, the other does not.[97] Some haecceitistic properties appear to be non-qualitative.

Let's turn next to an example drawn from Immanuel Kant ([1781/ 1787] 1998: A 599/ B 627).[98] Consider a hundred actual and a hundred merely possible silver dollars. They are exactly alike in all qualitative respects, but they nevertheless appear to differ in an important respect—they are fundamentally different kinds of things, they belong to different ontological categories (the former is actual, while the latter is merely possible). They are, we might say, qualitatively identical but numerically as well as categorially distinct. The difference between them appears to be absolute, not merely due to their relations to us. An actual and a merely possible dollar might be perfect qualitative duplicates, but they do not thereby share all the same properties; they do not even share all the same non-haecceitistic properties: one has the categorial property *being actual*, the other does not.[99] Some categorial properties appear to be non-qualitative.

Let's turn finally to an example drawn from G. W. Leibniz ([1717] 1956: 38 / G VII 373). Imagine two worlds otherwise exactly alike except that everything in one world is at absolute rest and everything in the other moves at an absolute velocity of 5 kilometers per hour to the west. There appears to be no discernible difference between these worlds: they have the same

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[97] A *haecceitistic* property is a property—like *being identical to Plato* or *being a student of Socrates*, and unlike *having a beard* or *being a philosopher*—which involves or makes essential reference to a particular individual in some intuitive way. This rough gloss is not intended as a definition, but simply as an aid to understanding. It is meant to be consistent with both an intensional and a hyperintensional conception of properties.

[98] The property of presentness, at least given something like the moving spotlight theory of time described in Broad (1923: 59, 1938: 277), is another potential example of a non-qualitative property.

[99] A *categorial* property is 'a property something has by virtue of being or having an item from one of the categories' (Wedin 2000: 194).

fundamental laws and are observationally exactly alike. Consider some particle in the first world and its boosted counterpart in the other. These particles are indiscernible, but they do not thereby share all the same properties: one has the physical property *being at absolute rest*, the other does not. Some physical properties appear to be non-qualitative.

We have here three different examples of seemingly non-qualitative properties. But the qualitative/non-qualitative distinction, while somewhat familiar from discussions of the principle of the identity of indiscernibles, does not admit of a canonical interpretation. The standard way of drawing this distinction focuses on the non-qualitative side. The non-qualitative properties and relations are positively characterized as those properties and relations that, in some intuitive way, involve or make essential reference to particular individuals.[100] They are, so characterized, just the haecceitistic properties.[101] The qualitative properties are then negatively characterized as those properties that do not involve particular individuals, and thus are not haecceitistic. It should be clear that this is a mistake. For, as we have just seen, at least one non-qualitative property is not haecceitistic. An actual and a merely possible silver dollar might be composed of exactly the same kinds of metals and have exactly the same size, shape, and weight. They might even be qualitatively indiscernible. But they would still differ with respect to their actuality. This

[100] The nature of this involvement is often understood in non-linguistic terms. Fine (1977: 137) takes it to be a kind of *dependence*: a property is non-qualitative when its identity depends upon the identity of a particular individual; Rosenkrantz (1979: 517) takes it to be a kind of *constitution*: a property is non-qualitative when it has an individual as a constituent; and Cowling (2015: 289-91) considers an account that takes it to be a kind of *grounding*: a property is non-qualitative when it is grounded in a particular individual.

[101] I will generally take talk of 'properties' to cover both properties and relations.

property is not, however, best thought of as involving particular individuals.[102] The standard characterization fails to categorize actuality as properly non-qualitative.

Another popular strategy focuses on the qualitative side. The qualitative properties are positively characterized in terms of duplication and indiscernibility: intrinsic qualitative properties are those properties that intrinsic duplicates must have in common, while extrinsic qualitative properties are those additional properties that indiscernibly situated intrinsic duplicates must have in common as well. Since haecceitistic properties like *being identical to Castor* cannot be had by distinct individuals, they cannot be shared by indiscernibly situated intrinsic duplicates, and thus get classified as non-qualitative. This lends an air of plausibility to the proposed strategy. But, once again, the problem lies with actuality. For while an actual and a merely possible dollar might be *qualitative* duplicates, they are not thereby duplicates *without qualification*. They would, given the seemingly fundamental categorial difference between them, appear to differ in an important intrinsic respect: one is actual, the other is not. But given that the

[102] I do not want to say we cannot think about it as somehow involving particular individuals. We might be able to pick it out demonstratively as the property *being identical to this, that, or some other possible individual* (where we somehow manage to point to all and only the actual individuals). But this doesn't seem to be the most perspicuous way to represent this property. For it obscures the fact that actual objects seem to have something in common *as actual*. It doesn't make it clear why these individuals—rather than some other individuals—are supposed to be special.

The structured—and, thereby, hyperintensional—accounts of involvement that were mentioned in footnote 100 above fair no better in this respect. They do not identify the property of being grounded in actual individuals or having exactly one of them as a constituent with the property of actuality. For, on these structured accounts, it is one thing to say that some property cointensive with actuality contains exactly one of these individuals, and another thing to say that the property of actuality does so as well.

intrinsic categorial property *being actual*—unlike the intrinsic haeccietistic property *being identical to Castor*—can be shared by distinct individuals, an actual and a merely possible dollar aren't really *intrinsic* duplicates after all.[103] We might seek to revise this strategy by requiring the duplicates involved to be qualitative duplicates. But unless we can give substance to the word 'qualitative', the revised strategy will be circular and empty.

I seek an alternative way of characterizing the qualitative/non-qualitative distinction, which correctly classifies the property of actuality and, at the same time, provides substance to the distinction itself. To this end, I will look to the various ways the distinction gets invoked. This survey will generate a list of features that are typical—rather than definitive—of the properties on either side of the distinction. I list them not with the intention of laying down strict requirements, but with the hope of setting up mere desiderata. My overarching goal is to provide a positive characterization for both sides of the distinction: to account not only for the unity of the qualitative, but for the unity of the non-qualitative as well.

I shall proceed toward this goal as follows. In section 3.2, I distinguish the qualitative from the non-qualitative properties by appealing to the role that some properties play in causal processes. This provides us with a positive account of the qualitative side of the distinction: a property is *qualitative* whenever it plays—or is grounded in properties that play—a fundamental causal role at some world. In section 3.3, I argue that that class of non-qualitative properties is

[103] The property of actuality and the property of being Castor both appear to be intrinsic non-qualitative properties. But since the latter unlike the former can only be had by a single individual, it must be excluded from any plausible conception of intrinsic duplication. This strategy is bound to fail if there are intrinsic non-qualitative properties that can be had by distinct individuals. For intrinsic duplication won't then be equivalent to intrinsic qualitative duplication.

much broader than it is traditionally taken to be. In addition to the haecceitistic properties, there are three interesting classes of properties that have claim—quite independent of the causal account—to being non-qualitative: namely, the logical, mathematical, and ontological properties. Yet while this gives us a sense of the range of the non-qualitative properties, it leaves us without a positive account of their nature. In section 3.4, I will begin to develop just such an account. I first argue that some logical, mathematical, and ontological properties are fundamental, where a property is *fundamental* just in case it is an ultimate source of objective similarity. I then argue that these properties are negatively unified in their failure to ground causal powers. In section 3.5, I offer a positive account of the non-qualitative side of the distinction: the fundamental *non-qualitative* properties are best understood as the source of various necessary connections and exclusions. Thus, unlike the fundamental properties that play various causal roles, they fail to be subject to principles of recombination. This Humean link allows us to capture the dual unity of the qualitative/non-qualitative distinction. In section 3.6, I turn to three philosophical applications of this way of construing the distinction.

Before moving on, I should pause to lay out some background assumptions. I'll begin with my preferred ontology.[104] I assume modal realism with absolute actuality. Our world is but one of a plurality of possible worlds. These worlds are very much like our own. They are concrete, fully determinate individuals. Each world is an internally unified whole, and is absolutely isolated from every other world. I assume that these worlds do not overlap, that no individual is wholly part of more than one world. The plurality of these worlds is plenitudinous:

[104] I have taken this ontology wholesale from Bricker (2001, 2006, 2008, forthcoming b).

whenever something is possible, there is a world (or a plurality of worlds) at which it is true.[105] But these worlds are, presumably, not all on a par. Our world, at least, is special. It is actual, while others are merely possible. This marks a genuine, objective difference between them. I thus reject David Lewis's indexical account of actuality. A possible object's status as actual is not a mere matter of its belonging to our world. Actuality is absolute.

I also assume a robust form of mathematical platonism. There is, beyond the realm of concrete possible worlds, a realm of abstract mathematical entities. These entities are causally inert. They are entirely lacking in intrinsic qualitative character. They have only a relational character, and belong to isolated systems or structures. The 'pure' sets—namely, those sets that have in the transitive closure of the membership relation only other sets—form but one of a plurality of mathematical structures. The *sui generis* natural numbers—which are not themselves set-theoretic constructions of any kind, and thus are not to be identified with either the 'von Neumann' or the 'Zermelo' numbers—form another such structure. The plurality of these structures is plenitudinous: whenever a structure is possible, there is some collection of *sui generis* mathematical entities that matches and is isolated by that structure.[106]

I'll turn next to my preferred conception of properties.[107] I assume an abundant conception of properties according to which, for any class of possible entities, there is a property

[105] The parenthetical clause is included in order to accommodate the possibility of island universes. See Bricker (2001).

[106] Let's say following Bricker (forthcoming b) that a collection of entities *matches* a structure if it instantiates that structure and no more inclusive structure; and that a structure *isolates* a collection that instantiates it if the structural relations never hold between entities inside and outside of the collection.

[107] I mostly follow Lewis (1983a: 10-19, 1986: 59-69) and Bricker (1996: 227, 2001: 31) except that I have a broader conception of naturalness according to which a property can be perfectly natural without being guaranteed

had by all and only the members of that class. The entities that share such properties might be nothing alike, the classes they form might be gruesomely gerrymandered. But some few of these properties—presumably, a very small minority—will be fundamental or perfectly natural. The entities that share fundamental properties are objectively similar, the classes they form are internally unified. The fundamental properties correspond not only to universals or tropes, but also to modes of being, haecceities, and whatever other sparse similarity makers are employed to solve problems of one over many.[108] I will mostly avoid talk of such things and will simply posit a primitive inegalitarian distinction among the properties. This gives us a broad conception of naturalness according to which a property is *fundamental* or *perfectly natural* if and only if it is an ultimate bearer of objective similarity.

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to be qualitative. Bricker (1996: 237 n 21) notes that Lewis (1983a: 49-55) himself relies upon this broader conception of naturalness 'to help resolve indeterminacy of the content of thought'. I also collapse the distinction between structured and unstructured properties from Lewis (1986: 55-59) into a version of the distinction between concepts and properties found in Bricker (2006: 60).

[108] Modes of being correspond to properties like *being actual* and *being present*, while haecceities correspond to properties like *being Socrates* and *being Plato*. They appear to underwrite non-qualitative similarities among their instances. (My claim that haecceities are a kind of one over many might seem strange given that haecceities are usually taken to be shared only by individuals that are identical to each other, and these individuals are one, not many. But haecceities have traditionally been taken to be responsible for the identity of the individuals that enjoy them; they take what would have otherwise been many individuals and make them one. Haecceities are, in this respect at least, a kind of one over many. There is, however, a stronger respect in which haecceities might be taken to be a kind of one over many. For if worlds do not overlap and no individual is wholly part of more than one world, then the non-fundamental property *being identical to Socrates*, had by a single individual at a single world, might be distinguished from the potentially fundamental property *being Socrates*, had by many different individuals at many different worlds. It is, on this non-traditional view, the latter property that would correspond to a haecceity.)

I also assume an intensional conception of properties according to which two properties are identical if they are necessarily coextensive. Take, for example, the properties *being a triangular figure* and *being a trilateral figure*. These properties are necessarily coextensive: they are shared by exactly the same possible entities. They have the same underlying reality. But while I identify these properties, I distinguish the concepts we use to designate them. A *concept* is what we grasp in virtue of our understanding of a predicate in our language and is associated with that predicate's meaning, while a *property* is what gets designated by the use of a concept. When we apply the predicate 'is triangular' to some figure, we are primarily concerned with the number of that figure's angles; and when we apply the predicate 'is trilateral' to that very same figure, we are primarily concerned with the number of its sides. These predicates—and the concepts they express—allow us to represent the same underlying reality in different ways. But this difference lies only in thought, not in what is thought about. Thus, while properties are intensional, the concepts we use to designate them are hyperintensional.

I have assumed a vast plenitude of objects and a rich abundance of properties. These are controversial assumptions. But given the project at hand, we should have no problem taking them on board. We're looking for positive accounts of both the qualitative and the non-qualitative properties. We should thus be fairly permissive about the entities we countenance—especially when their properties have good claim to being non-qualitative. But we shouldn't be overly permissive about the properties we countenance—especially when those properties are hyperintensional. For sometimes the easiest way to designate a qualitative property is with an impure—and seemingly non-qualitative—concept. Consider, for example, the very specific mass of Mars. This mass is something Mars shares with countless merely possible entities, and the property of having this mass is clearly qualitative. But we can most readily designate this

property with the impure concept *having the mass of Mars at this world*. We should not, however, confuse our representation of this property with the property itself, and would do well to adopt an intensional conception of properties, which avoids this confusion entirely. Whoever does not believe in the entities we countenance or accepts a hyperintensional conception of properties might disagree with us about the overall extension or existence of various allegedly non-qualitative properties, but she need not disagree with our characterization of the qualitative/non-qualitative distinction itself. Our understanding of this distinction will be enriched by having more test cases available, and fortified by taking cointensive properties to be identical.

3.2 The unity of the qualitative

There are three importantly different features that have typically been associated with the qualitative/non-qualitative distinction. The first is *metaphysical*: the qualitative properties are often taken to be those properties that make for qualitative discernibility and give an object a certain qualitative character, while the non-qualitative properties are taken to be those properties that divide qualitative indiscernibles.[109] To ensure that this characterization is neither empty nor circular, let's start by saying that two things are *indiscernible* with respect to a class of intrinsic and extrinsic properties when they do not differ (and when their parts do not differ) with respect to (the arrangement of) any of the properties in that class. If one of these things has (or fails to have some arrangement of) a property in that class, the other has (or fails to have) it as well. Let's then say that a property *divides* a pair of objects when one item in the pair has that property (or when some arrangement of its parts has a particular distribution of that property) and the

[109] See, for example, Lewis (1983a: 25, 2001: 382 n 6), Eddon (2009: 15-19), and Cowling (2015: 279, 285).

other does not. And let's next say that a *metaphysically unified* class of properties is a class of properties that, in some way or another, can be reduced to some metaphysically interesting class of properties. To give substance to the notion of qualitative indiscernibility, we can now say, at least provisionally, that the *qualitative* properties form a metaphysically unified class of properties, which, among other things, does not divide the following pairs: Castor and Pollux, an actual and a merely possible dollar, and a 'resting' world where everything is at absolute rest and a 'boosted' world where everything moves at an absolute velocity of 5 kilometers per hour to the west. If we can find an underlying unifying notion, we will be able to say, without fear of vicious circularity, that two things are *qualitatively indiscernible* when they (and their parts) do not differ with respect to (the arrangement of) any of their intrinsic or extrinsic qualitative properties.

The second feature is *epistemic*: the qualitative properties are sometimes taken to be those properties that can be observed or otherwise detected and provide markers of an object's qualitative character, while the non-qualitative properties are taken to be those properties that are not, even in principle, detectable.[110] Let's say that we are *receptive* to differences in a property when our sensory receptors are sensitive to an object's having or lacking that property: if the object has that property, our sensory receptors will be affected in one way; if it lacks that property, they will be affected in another way. Let's stipulate that we can *detect* a property when we are receptive to differences in that property. And let's stipulate further that a property is, in principle, *observable* or *detectable* when some possible observer or instrument is receptive to differences in that property: that is, when it is possible for something both to be capable of

[110] See, for example, Carnap (1947a: 84, 1947b: 138, 1950: 74), Ismael (2001: 186-93), Ismael and van Fraassen (2003: 375-8), and Rickles (2006: 152-3, 159, 2008: 7-9).

reacting in one way to the presence and in another way to the absence of that property.[111] There seems to be a tight connection between the ability to observe or detect various properties and the ability to discriminate between objects based on their having or lacking those properties. For qualitative similarities and differences appear to be epistemically more robust than non-qualitative similarities and differences. We can, on the basis of our experience, recognize that one object is red and that another object is blue. The seemingly intrinsic qualitative difference between a red ball and a blue ball is robust in a way that the intrinsic non-qualitative difference between two red balls is not. It is on the basis of this qualitative robustness that we have the ability to observe or detect various properties. The qualitative properties are thus presumed to be observable—although, due to our limitations, we humans might not always be in a position to observe them.[112] The basic idea here is that the qualitative properties are those that can, at least

[111] We should distinguish between contrastive and non-contrastive notions of detectability. A *non-contrastive* notion will only require the ability to detect the presence of some property. A property will be non-contrastively detectable provided to is experienceable. But there is no reason to think that we could not have the (non-contrastive) ability to detect the presence of the non-qualitative property *being identical to Castor* while lacking the (contrastive) ability to distinguish Castor from Pollux. This suggests that the relevant notion of detectability must, therefore, be *contrastive*: for a property to count as detectable, an observer must be able detect the presence as opposed to the absence of that property. A property will be contrastively detectable provided its presence or absence could make a difference to one's experience. Thanks to André Gallois for helpful discussion on this point.

[112] I have a broad conception of observability where a property is observable if there is a possible observer with the resources to observe that property. We humans might not be in a position to observe all the observable properties. We might not even be in a position to detect them with various instruments. But I think the properties that we can neither observe nor detect should still count as observable since they have what it takes to be observed by a possible observer. This broad conception contrasts with a narrower one where only those things that we humans could observe, count as observable.

in principle, be detected by the senses, while the non-qualitative properties are those that require the additional workings of the intellect.

The third feature is *linguistic*: the qualitative properties are taken to be those properties that we can designate descriptively without the aid of directly referential devices (such as demonstratives, pure indexicals, or proper names), while the non-qualitative properties are taken to be those properties that can only be expressed with the aid of such devices.[113] Suppose we had a mighty language that contained general predicates for all the fundamental discernibility makers, allowed for complex infinitary constructions, but was completely lacking in directly referential devices. We could, with such a language, describe the qualitative characters of various objects, but we would lack the resources to pick out or describe one but not another of two indiscernible objects. To do that, we would also require the use of directly referential devices. Some of the properties that we could thereby pick out would be highly specific haecceitistic properties such as *being identical to Plato*, while others such as *being a student of Socrates* or *being exactly ontologically like me and everything else at my world* might be more general.

There are, as we have just seen, at least three features that have typically been associated with the qualitative/non-qualitative distinction. I will use the general thrust of these features to construct a list of desiderata for a positive account of the qualitative properties. But before I do that, I should explain how I think these features are related and which I believe should take priority.

It is a working assumption of the approach taken here that the qualitative/non-qualitative distinction is primarily metaphysical in nature and can be accounted for in more basic terms. The

[113] See, for example, Carnap (1947b: 138), Adams (1979: 7), Lewis (1986: 221), Gallois (1998: 249), and Divers (2002: 349 n 12).

qualitative properties should thus be taken to reduce to—or otherwise depend upon—some class of fundamental (or broadly perfectly natural) properties. I will take the relevant notion of dependence to be one of grounding (where the relevant grounding relation is understood in terms of global supervenience and comparative naturalness).[114] This, however, limits the extent to which the qualitative properties can be plausibly taken to be observable or detectable. For assuming that *being an electron* is a fundamental qualitative property, both *being a non-electron* and *being an electron or a non-electron* would appear to be grounded in it. But since everything in every possible world has the property *being an electron or a non-electron*, it won't be possible

[114] I will say that the B-properties *ground* the A-properties iff the A-properties globally supervene on the B-properties, and the A-properties are all broadly less natural than the B-properties. I thus take the relevant grounding relation to be a relation between properties. It is intended to be irreflexive, asymmetric, and transitive. It is not intended to be hyperintensional.

I take the relevant relation here to be one of grounding as opposed to mere supervenience because I want to leave open the possibility that the property *being actual* is cointensive with—and hence identical to—the property designated by the concept *having such and such, or so and so, or some other qualitative character* (where this is shorthand for the disjunction of the qualitative characters of every actual object). Suppose, for example, that all and only worlds that are duplicates of our own were actual. Individuals that are parts of these worlds and individuals wholly composed of parts of these worlds would be actual as well. But the qualitative characters of these individuals supervene upon the fundamental qualitative properties. Thus, given that all and only these individuals are actual, the property of actuality would appear to supervene upon the fundamental qualitative properties as well. Yet it would not, I believe, thereby be qualitative. For, as we shall see in section 3.4 below, the property of actuality is a fundamental non-qualitative property, and is thereby broadly as natural as any of the fundamental qualitative properties.

to detect its presence as opposed to its absence. The property *being an electron or a non-electron* thus appears to be both qualitative and undetectable.[115]

But even supposing that a property's qualitative robustness can become diffuse enough to be undetectable, there might still be a principled connection between the qualitative and the detectable properties. For fundamental properties are the ultimate bearers of similarity, and assuming that qualitative similarity is epistemically more robust than non-qualitative similarity, the fundamental qualitative properties should be detectable in principle. We might not be in a position to detect them: our sensory receptors are certainly not fine-tuned enough to observe differences at the sub-atomic level or beyond, and our best instruments might be too crude to devise suitable experiments to detect them. But an epistemic agent better acquainted with these properties should be able to detect them on the basis of their qualitative robustness. The desired connection between the qualitative and the detectable properties can thus be secured at the fundamental level.

The primitive predicates of a mighty language should be taken to correspond only to properties that are epistemically qualitatively robust, whose instances can be recognized given prior acquaintance. But a property's expressibility in such a language should not be taken as an

[115] The negation employed here is not strict negation. I am assuming that the intension of *being a non-electron* is properly contained in the intension of *being strictly a non-electron*. The latter, unlike the former, is a non-qualitative property that is had by abstract mathematical entities. For more details, see footnote 129 below. I am assuming, moreover, that the property *being an electron or a non-electron* is cointensive with—and hence identical to—the property *being concrete*, which I believe to correspond to a fundamental way of being and, hence, to be non-qualitative (see chapter 5 below). I cannot, for this reason, officially accept the example given in the text above. But I believe there will be other properties such as *being a part of a world with such and such qualitative character* that are both qualitative and undetectable.

infallible guide to its qualitative status. For thought, I believe, is prior to language, and if we allow, as I think we should, that an impure—and seemingly non-qualitative—concept such as *having the same mass as Mars at this world* can designate a qualitative property, we should also allow for the possibility that a pure—and seemingly qualitative—concept can designate a non-qualitative property.[116] We should not, as Sam Cowling (2015: 287) points out, take thought or language, which are plainly mind-dependent, to determine the scope of the qualitative/non-qualitative distinction, which is plainly mind-independent.

I hereby propose the following desiderata for a positive account of the qualitative properties: such an account should reduce these properties to some metaphysically interesting notion, it should rule the three examples with which we began our investigation as non-qualitative, it should secure a connection to what is observable or detectable, and it should supply primitive predicates for a mighty language.

I believe that these desiderata can be satisfied by a causal account which takes the relevant metaphysical notion to be that of playing a fundamental causal (or nomic) role.[117] This account has two components which together capture the desired reduction and satisfies the first desideratum:

[116] I believe this to be a live possibility. For depending upon the lay of logical space, the property of absolute actuality, which we designate with the impure, directly referential concept *being exactly ontologically like me and everything else at my world*, might also be designatable with a purely descriptive, infinitely disjunctive concept. But absolute actuality should I think, nevertheless, be taken to be non-qualitative. I argued for this in section 2.2 above.

[117] Teller (1984: 148) plausibly attributes something like this account to Lewis (1983a). It is similar to the supervenience view discussed in Cowling (2015: 295-8).

The Causal Thesis: a fundamental property is *qualitative* if and only if it plays a fundamental causal (or nomic) role at some world.

The Grounding Thesis: a property is *qualitative* if and only if (i) it is a fundamental qualitative property, or (ii) it is grounded in the fundamental qualitative properties.

A complete defense of this account would need to provide an explanation of what it is to play a fundamental causal (or nomic) role. I will settle for some brief elucidatory remarks. A fundamental causal (or nomic) role is importantly connected to the fundamental laws of nature. These laws, it is often said, can be written in purely fundamental terms. The fundamental causal facts are, in effect, instances of these laws. [118] Thus, the properties that play active roles in the fundamental laws of nature will be the properties that play fundamental causal (and nomic) roles.

Let's turn next to the second desideratum. The proposed account properly classifies each of the three examples as non-qualitative. It rules *being identical to Castor* as non-qualitative, since this property does not itself play a fundamental causal role, and does not supervene upon—and, hence, is not grounded in—the fundamental qualitative properties shared by Castor and Pollux. It rules *being actual* as non-qualitative, since this property is, as I will argue in section 3.4, fundamental and does not ground causal powers. And it rules *being at absolute rest* as non-qualitative, since this property does not itself play a fundamental causal role, and does not supervene upon the fundamental qualitative properties shared by a 'resting' world and its 'boosted' counterpart.

[118] Fundamental laws should be distinguished from derived laws which cannot be written in purely fundamental terms, but which can be somehow derived from fundamental laws. Similarly, fundamental causal facts should be distinguished from facts that merely underwrite true causal statements.

Let's turn now to the third desideratum. The causal account ensures that the fundamental qualitative properties are detectable. For in order to have causal powers, a property must be capable of affecting various objects. But if a property can affect various objects, there should be possible objects that are left differently affected by its presence than by its absence.[119] And if there are such objects, that property must be detectable. Thus, a fundamental property can have causal powers only if it is detectable in principle.

The causal account does not, however, ensure that the fundamental non-qualitative properties are undetectable. For the causal thesis only prohibits fundamental non-qualitative properties from featuring in fundamental laws of nature, it doesn't prevent them from featuring in derived laws.[120] Indeed, if there were fundamental haecceitistic properties, this would appear to be possible. For, to borrow an example from Michael Tooley (1977: 686), suppose that some world contains a garden—call it Hesperides—where all the fruit are apples. Different things happen to different fruits when people try to take them into Hesperides: some turn into apples,

[119] One might object that it seems possible for there to be a property that, as part of its essential causal role, always covers its tracks. Whenever this property affects an object, it also causes a complete and total coverup of that affection. Thus, while this property might be able to affect various objects, there won't be any possible objects that are left differently affected by its presence than by its absence. I question, however, the ultimately intelligibility of this example. I have no problem conceiving of a world where two distinct properties—one which affects something, another which reverses that affection—are always coinstantiated. I can make sense of the success of the latter property's coverup, in part, because I can also imagine its failure. But the property I am being asked to imagine is nothing like this. It is individuated by the dual power both to affect something and to simultaneously reverse that affection; it is necessarily self-masking. It cannot fail. Thanks to an anonymous referee for pushing me on this point.

[120] The related view that fundamental laws must be expressible without impure, non-qualitative predicates is a popular position, but is not without controversy. See Lange (1995: 430-6, 2000: 34-9) for critical discussion.

some turn into elephants, others are repelled by a mysterious force. It appears to be a *de re* law in this world that all the fruit in Hesperides are apples. But if so, the seemingly fundamental non-qualitative property *being Hesperides* will play a non-fundamental nomic role and should thus be detectable.[121]

Let's turn finally to the fourth desideratum. The causal account can supply primitive predicates for a mighty language by taking these predicates to designate the properties that play the fundamental causal roles. A language containing these predicates which also allowed for complex infinitary constructions would appear to have the resources to designate all the non-fundamental qualitative properties as well. The causal account thus appears to provide us with everything we want from a positive account of the qualitative properties.

I should add a few brief remarks before moving on. The causal account takes the fundamental qualitative properties to play various fundamental causal roles. But it does not require these properties to play a causal role at every world in which they are instantiated. Consider, for example, a world without a source of light that contains nothing but two objects exactly alike except that one is red and the other is blue. The properties *being red* and *being blue* do not play an active causal role in this world, but they might do so in other worlds. They are what David Lewis (2009: 205) calls *idlers* at the world in question, but only contingently so.[122]

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[121] That the nomic role played by *being Hesperides* is non-fundamental can be established by considering another world—qualitatively indiscernible from the one described above—where Hesperides has been 'replaced' by Eden. It would seem to be a *de re* law in this other world that all the fruit in Eden are apples. But these two worlds would appear to have the same fundamental causal facts. Thus, while *being Eden* and *being Hesperides* play causal and nomic roles at their respective worlds, the roles they play are not fundamental.

[122] The causal account does require the fundamental qualitative properties to play a causal role at some of the worlds in which they are instantiated. A fundamental property that was essentially an idler would be classed as non-

Nor does this account require these roles to be played by the same properties at every world. It is, in this respect, intended to be neutral between quidditism and structuralism. Quidditists hold that worlds can differ qualitatively without differing structurally.[123] They claim that distinct qualitative properties can play the same causal roles at different worlds. Structuralists deny this.[124] They claim not only that qualitative properties have their causal roles

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qualitative. The causal account is thus incompatible with the view that qualia are both fundamental and essentially epiphenomenal. Thanks to Sam Cowling and an anonymous referee for pushing me on this point.

[123] To be somewhat more precise, let's say that two worlds are *structurally isomorphic* iff there is a one-one correspondence between their parts that preserves the overall pattern of their fundamental qualitative properties and relations; and let's say that two worlds are *qualitatively indiscernible* iff there is a one-one correspondence between their parts that preserves not just the overall pattern of their fundamental qualitative properties and relations, but the fundamental properties and relations themselves. We can then define *quidditism about worlds* as the view that some qualitatively discernible worlds are structurally isomorphic. The quidditist will likely hold that the fundamental qualitative properties are individuated by basic qualitative suchnesses.

Quidditism should not be confused with *haecceitism about properties*, which holds that worlds can differ by a permutation or wholesale replacement of properties without differing qualitatively. The haecceitist believes that the properties that play the fundamental causal roles lack basic qualitative suchnesses and have only bare non-qualitative thisnesses. She must therefore deny the causal thesis. I don't take this to be a problem since I take quidditism to be far more plausible than haecceitism about properties. See Hildebrand (2016) for discussion. Note that Hildebrand calls these views *qualitative quidditism* and *bare quidditism*. I've adopted the terminology from Bricker (2017: 39, 49 n 18).

[124] We can define *structuralism about worlds* as the view that no qualitatively discernible worlds are structurally isomorphic (or, alternatively, as the view that two worlds are structurally isomorphic only if they are qualitatively indiscernible). It is, so understood, simply the denial of quidditism. There are, as I see it, two views about properties that motivate structuralism: *strong causal essentialism about properties*—a view that Hawthorne (2001) calls *causal structuralism* and Hildebrand (2016) simply calls *structuralism*—which holds that the fundamental qualitative

essentially, but that they are individuated by them. Since the causal thesis only requires that the fundamental qualitative properties play a causal role at some world, it can be endorsed by quidditists and structuralists alike.[125]

properties are individuated by their causal roles, and *haecceitism about properties* which holds that the fundamental properties are individuated by bare non-qualitative thisnesses. Both views tie a world's qualitative character to its overall structure, and both views hold that the most natural qualitative properties are individuated by their causal roles. But while the strong essentialist believes that these properties are perfectly natural, the haecceitist does not. It is because the haecceitist denies that there are fundamental qualitative properties that she must deny the causal thesis.

[125] The quidditist and the strong causal essentialist agree that the properties that play the fundamental causal roles have qualitative suchnesses. But they disagree about the connection between a property's playing a causal role and its having a suchness: the strong causal essentialist thinks that a property has a suchness because it plays a fundamental causal role, whereas the quidditist thinks that a property's qualitative suchness is independent of the causal roles it plays. This might suggest that while both the quidditist and the strong causal essentialist can accept the truth of the causal thesis, only the strong causal essentialist can take it to provide us with an explanation for why the properties that play the fundamental causal roles are qualitative.

I deny, however, that quidditists cannot take the casual thesis to be adequately informative. So while I am inclined to agree that the thesis that a fundamental property is qualitative because it has a basic qualitative suchness might provide a deeper metaphysical explanation of the nature of a fundamental qualitative property than the causal thesis, I don't think the concept of a basic suchness is terribly informative. I can gesture at it by giving various analogies, but I can't really help you acquire it if you lack it. I think the concept of playing a fundamental causal role is more informative. It is one that I could potentially help you to acquire. The causal thesis thus provides a kind of insight into the nature of the fundamental qualitative properties that the basic suchness thesis does not. The quidditist can, I think, accept the causal thesis, deny that it gets to the metaphysical heart of the matter, but still take it to be informative. Thanks to an anonymous referee for pushing me on this point.

The account is also intended to be neutral between Humean and anti-Humean theories of laws and causation. The Humean takes the fundamental qualitative properties to be *occurrent* or *categorical* (that is, to be neither primitive propensities, brute causal powers, nor fundamentally modal properties). The Humean then attempts to reduce laws and causation to the overall distribution of these fundamental occurrent properties. The anti-Humean does not think the laws can be so reduced. She thinks more is needed, and will either deny that the fundamental qualitative properties are occurrent or else insist that there must be additional primitive connections between them.

3.3 The range of the non-qualitative

Let's turn now to the range of properties that should be classified as non-qualitative. The standard account classes as non-qualitative all those properties that somehow make direct reference to particular individuals. Our alternative account classes as qualitative all those properties that somehow enter into causal processes. There are, however, at least three important classes of properties that fall into neither of these camps, and have claim—independent of the causal account—to being non-qualitative.[126]

[126] My primary aim in this section is to expand our intuitive, pre-theoretical conception of the non-qualitative as far as possible. It might be that some of my claims in this section do not hold up to intuitive scrutiny. But the general argument will be successful, I believe, to the extent that it expands our intuitive conception of the non-qualitative beyond the haecceitistic.

There are, first, the *logical* properties such as identity and composition.[127] A characteristic feature of such properties is their 'formality'. There are, as John MacFarlane (2000) points out, three main ways to understand this formality. We might take it to be a kind of generality: the logical properties apply, without qualification, to any domain.[128] There would seem to be entities that not only lack intrinsic qualitative character, but extrinsic qualitative character as well (the pure sets, the *sui generis* numbers, and other abstracta are plausible examples of such things).[129] But, given that the logical properties apply to these entities, they cannot be qualitative.[130] We might instead take this formality as a kind of topic neutrality: the

[127] Bricker (1996: 233-4, 2006: 49) and Hawley (2009: 102) take both identity and composition to be non-qualitative. Fine (1977: 138) appears to take identity as non-qualitative.

[128] MacFarlane (2000) calls this '1-formality'.

[129] In order to maintain that some entities determinately lack all qualitative character, I must deny the commonly held assumption that the qualitative properties are closed under (strict) negation. For while the *sui generis* natural numbers lie outside the intension of, say, *being an electron*, they nevertheless instantiate its strict negation, namely, *being strictly a non-electron*. But although I must deny the letter of this assumption, I can still capture some of its spirit. For the property *being concrete and strictly a non-electron* is, I believe, appropriately grounded in the property *being an electron*. This is because, as I suggested in footnote 114 above, grounding should be understood in terms of global supervenience and comparative naturalness. But since global supervenience is defined on concrete possible worlds, *being concrete and strictly a non-electron* will be grounded in *being an electron*. This gives negation a kind of closure in the realm of the concrete: the anti-intension of *being an electron* defined on the concrete possible worlds, which we might call *being a non-electron*, would seem to be a qualitative property.

[130] The qualitative status of parthood leads to an antinomy. The thesis of this antinomy is that parthood is qualitative; the antithesis is that it is not. The alleged proof of the thesis is that a property is qualitative if it is preserved by duplication, and since parthood is preserved by duplication, it must be qualitative. The proof of the antithesis is that

logical properties are indifferent to their subject matter and treat all individuals the same.[131] They don't introduce a special subject matter. But this suggests that they aren't qualitative, else they would usher in a qualitative subject matter. We might finally take this formality as a kind of abstraction: the logical properties take their objects in abstraction from their relations to the world.[132] But these properties, being detached from the world, should be free of its qualitative character. Thus, on any way of understanding their formality, the logical properties appear to be non-qualitative.[133]

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it is possible for there to be things that determinately fail to instantiate any qualitative properties or stand in any qualitative relations, but given that the parthood relation would apply to such things, it must be non-qualitative.

This antinomy can be resolved in favor of its antithesis. Consider the 'proof' of the thesis. The best motivation for the premise that parthood is preserved by duplication is that it must be included in the definition of duplication itself: to say that two objects are *qualitative duplicates* is to say that there is a one-one correspondence between their parts that preserves all the fundamental qualitative (as well as all the mereological) properties had by their parts and all the fundamental qualitative (as well as all the mereological) relations between their parts. But, given this definition, the plausibility of the premise that a property is preserved by duplication only if it is qualitative turns on the plausibility of the auxiliary assumption that the mereological properties and relations are themselves all qualitative. This assumption is not, however, particularly plausible: the proof of the antithesis gives us good reason to think it false. Thus, a property or relation can be preserved by duplication—and can thereby contribute to the qualitative character of an object whose parts have that property or stand in that relation—without itself being qualitative. Thanks to an anonymous referee for pushing me on this point.

[131] MacFarlane (2000) calls this '2-formality'.

[132] MacFarlane (2000) calls this '3-formality'.

[133] The argument in this paragraph turns on the plausibility of the claim that there are entities that have no intrinsic or extrinsic qualitative character whatsoever. This claim strikes me as intuitively quite plausible.

There are, second, the *mathematical* properties such as the membership and successor relations.[134] The membership relation is not topic neutral.[135] It introduces a special subject matter: it always relates things to sets. If the membership relation were qualitative, it would contribute to the qualitative character of the pure sets. But the pure sets do not seem to have any qualitative character: they do not seem to instantiate any qualitative properties or stand in any qualitative relations. The membership relation does not appear to be qualitative. Purely structural mathematical properties such as the successor relation hold between the *sui generis* natural numbers. But since these numbers appear to determinately lack all qualitative character, the successor relation does not appear to be qualitative. Thus, the mathematical properties appear to be non-qualitative.[136]

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[134] Bricker (2008: 117-18, forthcoming b) takes the mathematical properties to be non-qualitative. Carnap (1947a: 84) and Fine (1977: 138, 177) appear to do so as well.

[135] I am here working with an *absolute* notion of topic neutrality according to which a relation is absolutely topic neutral whenever each of its relata is indifferent to its subject matter. The membership relation is not absolutely topic neutral because, as we just observed, one of its relata must be a set. But this is not to say that the membership relation's other relatum will introduce a special subject matter. For if there are impure sets, it seems plausible to think that there can be impure sets of objects belonging to any subject matter whatsoever. We might take this to motivate the need for a *relativized* notion of topic neutrality according to which a relation is topic neutral relative to one of its relata whenever that relatum is indifferent to its subject matter. I owe this distinction to Kris McDaniel.

[136] My argument turns on the plausibility of the claim that purely mathematical entities have no qualitative character whatsoever. I'll consider two challenges to this claim. The first concerns a pure set's cardinality. Two sets have the same cardinality when there is a one-to-one correspondence between them. There are pure sets that have the same cardinality. For example, the singleton of the empty set, {∅}, and the singleton of the singleton of the empty set, {{∅}}, both have exactly one member. They are similar in this respect. If we thought that similarity must always be qualitative, we should say that these pure sets have qualitative character in virtue of their cardinality. But this strikes

me as the wrong thing to say. For a set's cardinality appears to be a purely quantitative, non-qualitative property. Two sets with the same cardinality thus appear to enjoy a kind of non-qualitative similarity. It is a mistake to think that similarity must always be qualitative. (Note that I am not here claiming that quantitative properties can never be qualitative. Some properties such as *having exactly 5 kg mass* strike me as both quantitative as well as qualitative, while other properties such as *having exactly 5 members* strike me as purely quantitative.)

The second challenge concerns an abstract *sui generis* geometrical object's shape. An abstract geometrical object can have the same shape as a concrete possible object. But since the qualitative character of a solid gold cube is different from that of a solid gold dodecahedron, their shape properties would appear to be qualitative. I must, it seems, either give up on the claim that abstract geometrical objects lack qualitative character or else deny that the shape properties had by concrete possible objects are qualitative after all. If forced to choose, I would take the latter option. But maybe I don't have to. A concretely possible object such as solid gold cube will have a property that might plausibly be thought of as a shape property in virtue of some pattern of the spatiotemporal relations between its parts. And, assuming that these relations are qualitative, this shape property will be qualitative as well. An abstract geometrical object will have a property that might also be thought of as a shape property in virtue of some pattern of the relations between its parts. And, assuming that these relations are non-qualitative, this shape property will be non-qualitative as well. Two objects, whether concrete or purely geometrical, can then be said to have the same shape when there is a mapping between them that preserves the relevant patterns of relations between their parts, call this mapping a *shape isomorphism*. Given these assumptions, I now have the resources to say everything I want to say: namely, that the shape properties of concrete objects are qualitative, and that the shape properties of abstract geometrical objects are non-qualitative. But what should I say about the properties that are preserved by shape isomorphism? Are they some third somewhat less natural kind of non-qualitative shape properties? Or are they just the non-qualitative shape properties had by purely geometrical objects? To put this another way: are the qualitative relations that underwrite qualitative shape properties themselves reinforced by non-qualitative purely geometrical relations or not? If not, there would seem to be three distinct kinds of shape properties here: the qualitative shape properties had only by concrete objects, the non-qualitative shape properties had only by abstract geometrical objects, and the somewhat less natural non-qualitative shape properties shared by both concrete and abstract geometrical objects. But if the qualitative relations that underwrite the qualitative shape properties are

There are, third, the *ontological* properties such as actuality and presentness.[137] A characteristic feature of such properties is that they are absolute: they do not appear to be concerned with how their objects are related to anything else, they carry a special non-relative metaphysical status. We tend to think, for example, that actual objects are importantly different from merely possible ones. We do not, as Robert Adams (1974: 215) puts it, tend to think that 'the difference in respect of actuality between Henry Kissinger and the Wizard of Oz is just a difference in their relations to us'. Indeed, the difference between them seems to be intrinsic. But it is not thereby a qualitative difference. For a qualitative duplicate of Henry Kissinger—even an indiscernible such duplicate—might fail to be actual. The property of actuality does not appear to be qualitative. We also tend to think, perhaps somewhat naively, that present objects are importantly different from both past and future objects. The present is like a spotlight that moves through time—endowing now this and now that object with a special ontological status. We don't, however, tend to think of this status as constituted by relations of cotemporality. For while Plato still bears relations of cotemporality to all the objects of his day, he no longer enjoys

indeed reinforced by non-qualitative purely geometrical relations, there would seem to be only two distinct kinds of shape properties: the qualitative shape properties had only by concrete objects, and the non-qualitative shape properties shared by both concrete and abstract geometrical objects. I prefer to say that there are only two shape properties here: one qualitative and had only by concrete possible objects, the other non-qualitative and had both by concretely possible and purely geometrical objects. (Note that if spatiotemporal relations are non-qualitative, there will only be one, non-qualitative, shape property here.) Thanks to two anonymous referees for pushing me on these matters.

[137] Bricker (2001: 29-31, 2006: 49-50, 2008: 122-5, forthcoming b) takes actuality to be non-qualitative. I take the ontological properties to correspond to modes of being. They are, in this way, unlike other categorial properties such as *being simple* or *being complex*.

present existence. Nor should we think of the difference between present objects and past (or future) objects as qualitative. For imagine that we live in a two-way eternal recurrence world where history repeats itself every 10 trillion years. There will then be infinitely many past (and infinitely many future) duplicates for every presently existing thing. But since these past (and future) duplicates seem to be qualitatively indiscernible from their present counterparts, the property of presentness does not appear to be qualitative. Thus, the ontological properties appear to be non-qualitative.[138]

My aim in this section has been to expand our intuitive, pre-theoretical conception of the non-qualitative as far as possible. A property, I have argued, might fail to be qualitative for a variety of positive reasons that are independent of the causal account: the logical properties fail due to their formality, the mathematical properties fail due to the special nature of their subject matter, and the ontological properties fail due to a combination of their non-relative status and their ability to divide even indiscernible duplicates. These properties are all negatively unified in this failure. But do they have anything in common beyond that? They might, for all I've said, just be a rag-tag band of properties without genuine unity.

3.4 Fundamentality and naturalness

The fundamental properties are sometimes said to be perfectly natural; they carve reality at the joints. These properties are supposed to play various roles. They are supposed to ground

[138] The argument in this paragraph turns on the plausibility of the claim that the ontological properties do not contribute to the nature of the entities that enjoy them. This claim strikes me as fairly plausible. If the ontological properties correspond to modes of being—as I believe they do—then to accept this claim is to accept a 'thin' conception of being (see chapter 5 below).

objective similarity, they are supposed to ground causal powers, and—more controversially—there are only supposed to be 'enough of them to characterize things completely and without redundancy' (Lewis 1986: 60). But we also learn that the perfectly natural properties are all supposed to be qualitative.[139] I don't take this narrow conception of naturalness to characterize the fundamental properties in general, but only the fundamental qualitative properties. The fundamental non-qualitative properties do not seem to ground—and they do not seem to be needed to ground—causal powers, and, as I hope to show, they can allow for some redundancy. They do, however, help to ground non-qualitative similarities. I shall take up each of these components in turn.

Let's start with the first component. Are there objective non-qualitative similarities? The haecceitist about individuals who denies overlap certainly seems to think so. She believes that there is a world with a qualitative history no different from our own where Socrates and Plato 'swap' their qualitative roles. At this world, Plato lives a life-history that is qualitatively indiscernible from Socrates' actual life-history, and Socrates lives a life-history that is qualitatively indiscernible from Plato's actual life-history. There is, on this view, an individual at our world and a numerically distinct individual at some other possible world who are non-qualitatively alike because they both enjoy the fundamental haecceitistic property *being Socrates*. This property corresponds to something like a haecceitity: it is a kind of one over

[139] For Lewis, objective similarity is always qualitative. He thinks that the problem with unnatural properties is that '[t]hey pay no heed to the *qualitative* joints, but carve things up every which way' (1986: 59, emphasis added), and that the '[s]haring of [the perfectly natural, or sparse, properties] makes for *qualitative* similarity' (1986: 60, emphasis added). They help to give us 'a complete *qualitative* characterization of things' (1986: 60, emphasis added).

many, the enjoyment of which is both necessary and sufficient for being Socrates. Thus, given haecceitism without overlap, the fundamental haecceitistic properties appear to underwrite a kind of objective non-qualitative similarity.

I am no haecceitist. But I believe there are objective non-qualitative similarities, and will argue that they are underwritten by many of the properties mentioned in the previous section. I think, for instance, that actual objects are not only importantly different from merely possible ones, but importantly similar to each other as well. But actual objects are too qualitatively heterogeneous for their similarity not to spring from a basic source. This source cannot, however, be qualitative. For then an actual and a merely possible dollar would be guaranteed to differ in a basic qualitative respect and could never be qualitative duplicates. Actuality thus appears to underwrite a kind of non-qualitative similarity.

I also believe that there are non-qualitative similarities between ordered pairs of entities. Take, for example, the pair of the *sui generis* natural number two and itself, on the one hand, and the pair of my left arm and itself, on the other. I think these pairs resemble each other in an important respect: the number two is identical to the number two, and my left arm is identical to my left arm. The identity relation seems to be an important source of similarity between these pairs. But, as we observed above, the *sui generis* natural numbers do not appear to have qualitative properties, nor do they seem to bear qualitative relations to anything at all. So, if there is some kind of similarity here, it cannot be qualitative. The identity relation appears to underwrite a kind of non-qualitative similarity.

We can run a similar argument for parthood. Take the pair of the fusion of the *sui generis* natural numbers and the number two, on the one hand, and the pair of my body and my left arm, on the other. These pairs appear to resemble each other in an important respect: the fusion of the

natural numbers has the number two as a part, and my body has my left arm as a part. The (proper) parthood relation seems to be an important source of similarity between these pairs. But the natural numbers do not appear to instantiate qualitative properties or bear qualitative relations. So the similarity between these pairs cannot be qualitative. The (proper) parthood relation appears to underwrite a kind of non-qualitative similarity.

We can extend this argument to composition by considering pairs that include pluralities. Take the plurality of *sui generis* natural numbers and their fusion, on the one hand, and the plurality of my body's atomic parts and their fusion, on the other. These pairs resemble each other in an important respect: the plurality of the natural numbers compose the natural number structure, and my body's atomic parts compose my body. But, again, the similarity between them cannot be qualitative. Composition appears to underwrite a kind of non-qualitative similarity.[140]

We might run arguments for the singleton and set membership relations as well. Suppose we believe in impure sets. Take the pair of the number two and its singleton, on the one hand, and the pair of my left arm and its singleton, on the other. These pairs resemble each other in an important respect. The singleton relation is an important source of similarity between them. Or take the pair of the plurality of *sui generis* natural numbers and the set of natural numbers, on the one hand, and the plurality of my body's atomic parts and the set of its atomic parts, on the other. These pairs also resemble each other in an important respect. The membership relation is an important source of similarity between them. But since the *sui generis* natural numbers do not

[140] Note that since everything composes itself, the pair of my body's parts and their fusion (namely, my body), on the one hand, and the pair of my body and itself, on the other, should also enjoy a kind of non-qualitative similarity. I think this is exactly what we should say.

themselves appear to stand in any qualitative relations, the singleton and membership relations appear to be sources of non-qualitative similarity.

I take these examples to show that there are objective non-qualitative similarities. Indeed, the properties in these examples have good claim to being among the ultimate grounds of similarity. And since it seems plausible to assume that a property is an ultimate source of similarity only if it is fundamental, there would thus appear to be fundamental non-qualitative properties. This result is intended to be independent of the causal thesis. It depends on only two things: first, a popular account of fundamentality according to which a property is fundamental iff it is among the properties that ground objective similarity; and, second, the observation that the properties in question are, as argued in section 3.3 above, non-qualitative. Does this show that Lewis's characterization of naturalness is too narrow? Not quite. We also need to show that these fundamental non-qualitative properties are not apt to ground causal powers, and that they may admit of some redundancy.

Let's turn then to the second component. Are there fundamental properties that do not enter into any causal processes? I shall assume that a fundamental property can ground causal powers only if it is detectable in principle. For if a fundamental property plays a causal role—and thereby grounds a causal power—at some world, then it would appear to be detectable at that world: an observer or instrument should be capable of being affected in one way by the presence and in another way by the absence of that property. Indeed if we think, as David Lewis does, of physics as aspiring 'to give an inventory of natural properties' (1983a: 27), then this project only

makes sense if we take these properties to be detectable.[141] It should thus suffice to show that the proposed fundamental non-qualitative properties are undetectable.

It should be clear that actuality is undetectable. For actuality is plausibly *pervasive*: if any part of a world is actual, then every part of that world is actual. It is, as Phillip Bricker (2001: 44-5) observes, unintelligible to suppose that we might find something non-actual if we just traveled to a remote enough corner of the world. But given the pervasiveness of actuality, nothing could be affected in one way by the presence of actuality and affected in another way by its absence. Actuality is thus undetectable.[142]

It should also be clear that identity is undetectable. Let's focus on identity over time. I'll assume for the moment that material objects persist by enduring, that they are wholly present at every time at which they exist. Imagine that there are two molecule-for-molecule duplicate coffee mugs on my desk at all times from noon until one. But suppose that while one mug is the same throughout, the other is not. It is really just a continuous succession of distinct mugs. I contend that there would be no way to detect which mug persists for the entire hour and which does not. I could keep an eye or a hand constantly upon them, I could even monitor them with the most sensitive of instruments, but the results would be the same in each case. Nothing, it seems, could be sensitive to the presence or absence of identity from one moment to the next.[143]

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[141] But what about idlers: namely, 'those fundamental properties, if any, that are instantiated within the actual world, but play no active role in the workings of nature' (Lewis 2009: 205)? Are they qualitative? I guess it depends upon whether they *could* play an active causal role in the workings of nature. If they could but don't, that is no threat to their status as qualitative. But if they couldn't ground causal powers, it seems that they wouldn't count as qualitative.

[142] See Williams (1962: 751) for a similar argument.

[143] See Hume ([1739] 1888: 253-4) for an argument along these lines.

There would thus seem to be no way to detect identity over time. The real takeaway here is not that endurantism is false, but rather that our perceptual experience would be the same regardless of whether or not it were true. If we have reason to accept or reject endurantism, it would seem to have nothing to do with anything we could observe or detect even in principle. But given that endurantism is a view about strict numerical identity, the identity relation appears to be undetectable.

It should be equally clear that parthood and composition are both undetectable (at least assuming, as we have, that they are fundamental logical relations).[144] I will focus on composition. The Special Composition Question asks for the conditions under which some objects, the *x*s, compose something, *y* (see van Inwagen 1990b). The only plausible, non-disjunctive answers to this question, given our assumptions, are nihilism (the view that the *x*s compose *y* whenever the *x*s are exactly one) and universalism (the view that the *x*s compose *y* whenever the *x*s exist). For assuming that composition is a logical relation, it must apply to any domain. But since composition applies to any domain, whatever informative, necessary, and sufficient conditions we might hope to give for when some objects compose something cannot themselves be qualitative (for these conditions are supposed to apply to objects that have no

[144] This claim might seem surprising if we reject this assumption. It might seem as if we can, for example, simply see that the handle of a coffee mug is a part of the mug itself. Here I grant that we can observe that the handle is in contact with—or, at least, in close proximity to—the rest of the mug; that we can observe that the handle is fastened to the mug; that we can observe that the handle cannot be pulled apart from the rest of the mug without breaking it; and that we might even be able to detect that the handle is joined to the rest of the mug in such a way that there is no boundary. But I deny that what we observe or detect in these cases is anything like composition or parthood. The tendency to think that we can observe mereological relations between things comes, I think, along with a tendency to presuppose various moderate answers to the Special Composition Question.

qualitative character whatsoever). And assuming that composition is also a fundamental relation, we cannot hope to grasp it merely by grasping the qualitative conditions under which concrete material objects compose something. For composition applies not only to concrete material objects, but to abstract mathematical objects as well, and anything we might plausibly say to account for when material objects compose a further object—such as when they are in contact, when they are fastened together, or when they constitute a life—is not also going to apply to mathematical objects such as the pure sets or the *sui generis* numbers. This would seem to rule out any plausible sounding moderate answers to the Special Composition Question. We are left, then, with either nihilism or universalism. I have been implicitly assuming that universalism is true. But whatever reason we have to decide between these views has, once again, nothing to do with anything we could observe or detect. For our perceptual experience would seem to be the same regardless of whether nihilism or universalism were true.[145] But if we cannot detect that, say, some particles arranged mugwise compose a mug rather than not, we cannot detect the presence rather than the absence of the composition relation. (Indeed assuming universalism, we can mirror the argument that actuality is undetectable. For any plurality of objects that we come

[145] See Merricks (2001: 8-9), Dorr (2002: sect. 1.4.1), and Rosen and Dorr (2002: 155) for arguments along these lines. Thomas Hofweber (2016: 191-6) appears to grant that the *phenomenology* of our perceptual experience would be the same whether or not some particles compose a mug, but insists that the relevant question is whether or not perception entitles us to believe that there is a mug. He argues that the *contents* of our perceptual beliefs distinguish between cases where composition occurs and cases where it never occurs. This might well be correct. It might show that I am entitled to believe that there is a mug in front of me, but it doesn't show that composition is contrastively detectable: that is, it doesn't show that I can detect the presence rather than the absence of the composition relation. Thanks to Sam Cowling for pushing me on this point.

across will compose something. But since composition always occurs, we cannot be differently affected by the presence or absence of the composition relation. It is undetectable.)

I also think that the singleton and set-membership relations are undetectable. Our perceptual experience would, I think, be the same whether or not there were impure sets. But if so, then we seem incapable of detecting the presence or absence of the singleton or set-membership relations. These relations thus appear to be undetectable.[146] (Indeed assuming that there are no impure sets whatsoever, these relations will again appear to be undetectable. For in this case, no part of any world will bear the singleton relation to anything at all. We would be incapable of detecting its absence rather than its presence. It would thus be undetectable in the relevant sense.)

Let's turn finally to the third component. Are there fundamental properties that allow for redundancy? The mereological relations of parthood, proper parthood, and overlap are all candidate sources of objective similarity. They are also interdefinable. But, as Theodore Sider (2011: 217-22) argues, a non-redundancy requirement on the fundamental would force us to make an arbitrary choice here. This would be an undesirable result. For objective similarity is not up to us in this—or, indeed, in any—way. The fundamental non-qualitative properties appear to allow for redundancy. But Sider's argument also extends to properties that appear to be qualitative. The temporal relation *earlier than* and its converse *later than* both appear to be fundamental. They are also interdefinable. But taking only one to be fundamental is arbitrary, taking both is redundant.[147] Our choice of spatial distance relations is also caught between

[146] I take it that Maddy (1990) would disagree with this claim. For she thinks that we have the ability to detect certain impure sets.

[147] See also Sider (1993: sect. 3.2.1).

arbitrariness and redundancy: should we measure distances in meters, feet, or something else? Choosing only one is arbitrary, choosing them all is redundant. The fundamental qualitative properties appear to allow for redundancy as well.[148] Redundancy appears to be unavoidable. Yet even if these properties allow for logical or modal redundancies, they might resist other forms of redundancy. If, for example, our catalog of fundamental qualitative properties were essentially causally redundant (and overdetermining), we would lack even defeasible reason to believe that only one property plays any given causal role. But whatever pressure there might be to say that the fundamental qualitative properties ground causal powers and hence form a causally minimal basis does not extend to the fundamental non-qualitative properties, since they are not themselves causally efficacious.

I think that the only thing it takes for a property to be fundamental is for that property to be an ultimate bearer of objective similarity. Objects that share these properties form broadly natural classes, which would appear to have a high degree of internal unity. This gives us a broad conception of naturalness. But there is a narrower one as well. Some fundamental properties not only make for objective similarity, but are also fit to play various causal roles. These are the fundamental qualitative properties. They correspond to the properties that Lewis often refers to as perfectly natural.

[148] I am assuming here that spatial, temporal, and spatiotemporal relations are all qualitative. I am, however, somewhat skeptical of this assumption. Spatial and temporal relations do not appear to play an active role in the workings of nature. And while the view that matter and spacetime causally interact (and hence that spatiotemporal relations play fundamental causal roles in general relativistic spacetime theories) might enjoy 'common acceptance', there are 'reasons to regard [it] as questionable' (Hoefer 2009: 701-4).

3.5 The unity of the non-qualitative

The picture developed in the previous section provides additional support for the causal thesis. But my aim is not just to unify the fundamental non-qualitative properties in their failure to ground causal powers, I also seek a positive characterization of their unity. This can be found in the source of their resistance to recombination.

The basic combinatorial idea is that '[a]ny pattern of instantiation of any fundamental properties and relations is metaphysically possible' (Wang 2013: 52). The fundamental qualitative properties and relations appear to be subject to recombination. They are, by the causal thesis, apt to ground causal powers. But causation does not, by Humean assumption, involve necessary connections or exclusions. There might, however, be non-causal necessary connections and exclusions between fundamental qualitative properties and relations that are determinates of the same determinable. Two problems arise for the basic combinatorial idea: the first involves exclusions of determinate properties, the second involves necessitations of determinate relations.

Let's start with the exclusion problem.[149] The instantiation of a determinate property appears to necessarily exclude the instantiation of other determinates of the same determinable. So, for example, nothing could instantiate both the property *having exactly 5 kg mass* and the property *having exactly 1 kg mass*. But these properties appear to be fundamental: they appear to underwrite objective similarities. Any pattern of instantiation that admits coinstantiations of distinct determinate properties of the same determinable does not seem to be metaphysically

[149] See Wang (2013: 542-4) and Bricker (2017) for discussion of the exclusion problem. Wang argues that the principles of recombination should either be amended or else abandoned. Bricker attempts to tackle the problem head on by arguing that determinables rather than determinates are fundamental.

possible. We can, however, maintain that possibility is preserved across patterns of instantiation that differ only by wholesale permutations, wholesale replacements, and wholesale eliminations of fundamental determinate monadic properties.

Let's turn next to the necessitation problem.[150] The instantiation of certain determinate relations appears to necessitate the instantiation of further determinate relations. So, for example, the determinate relations of spatial distance are symmetric and obey the triangle inequality.[151] But these relations appear to be fundamental: they appear to underwrite objective similarities. Any pattern of instantiation of fundamental relations of determinates of the same determinable that violates certain formal constraints does not seem to be metaphysically possible. We can, however, maintain that possibility is preserved by a pattern of instantiation that removes all fundamental determinates of the same determinable relation from an individual.

A fully worked-out theory of recombination would need to address these problems. It would provide us with the true principles of recombination. I shall not attempt to formulate such principles here. But such principles should be consistent with the claim that any pattern of instantiation of determinably-distinct fundamental qualitative properties and relations is metaphysically possible.[152] For there are no necessary connections or exclusions between determinably-distinct fundamental qualitative properties.

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[150] See Wang (2013: 539-41) for discussion of the necessitation problem.

[151] The triangle inequality tells us that, for any points *x*, *y*, and *z*, the distance between *x* and *z* is less than or equal to the sum of the distance between *x* and *y* and the distance between *y* and *z*; or, more formally, that $d(x, z) \leq d(x, y) + d(y, z)$.

[152] We can say, roughly, that properties are *determinably-distinct* when they are not determinates of the same determinable. See Saucedo (2011: 246) for a more precise definition.

The fundamental non-qualitative properties are a different story. They appear to involve necessary connections and exclusions that have nothing to do with determinates or determinables. The fundamental haeccceitistic properties don't appear to be determinates of any determinable. But they don't appear to be recombinable either. If they were, then, as Cowling (forthcoming: sect. 1.3) points out, there would be worlds where *being Socrates* is enjoyed by thirty-three distinct individuals. But there are no such worlds. The fundamental haecceitistic properties are not alone in their resistance to recombination: actuality, identity, parthood, composition, singleton and set-membership all resist it as well, and the source of their resistance has nothing to do with determinates or determinables. Actuality is, as observed above, pervasive: everything at a world is actual if anything is. It is simply unintelligible to suppose that there is a world where some things are actual and other things are not. Identity obeys a principle of indiscernibility: if objects *x* and *y* are identical, then *x* and *y* are (absolutely) indiscernible. It is unintelligible to suppose that there is a world where a duplicate of my wallet is identical to a duplicate of my cellphone.[153] Parthood is transitive. It is unintelligible to suppose that there is a world where a leg is part of a table and a particle is part of the leg, but the particle is not part of the table. The singleton relation appears to be generative: whenever something exists, there is singleton set of that thing. If that's right, then it would be impossible to imagine a part of a world that does not have a singleton.

These observations suggest that there is a unified phenomenon here. We can make good sense of this phenomenon if we take the fundamental non-qualitative properties to be those properties that impose especially strong constraints on their instantiation. They give rise to necessary connections and exclusions that have nothing to do with determinates or

[153] See, however, Baxter (2014: 247-9) for an argument to the contrary.

determinables, and thus are not subject to even the true principles of recombination. This yields the following:

> **The Necessary Connections Thesis:** a fundamental property is *non-qualitative* if and only if it is not subject to the true principles of recombination.[154]

The fundamental non-qualitative properties and relations appear to be the source of necessary connections and exclusions between distinct instantiations of determinably-distinct fundamental properties and relations. We can now explain when and why we should expect fundamental non-qualitative properties and relations to be redundant. If the patterns of instantiation of one set of fundamental properties and relations necessitate patterns of instantiation of another set of fundamental properties and relations and vice versa, then these properties and relations would seem to globally supervene upon each other.[155] But this mutual supervenience would be indicative of a redundancy since we wouldn't need both sets of properties and relations to completely describe the world. We have arrived, then, at a positive characterization of the fundamental non-qualitative properties.

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[154] Bricker (2006: 49-50) endorses something like this thesis. He endorses the 'if' direction. I'm not sure whether he would also endorse the 'only if' direction.

[155] I am here relying upon what we might call a broad notion of global supervenience defined not on worlds, but on maximally unified structures generally. Worlds are only one kind of maximally unified structure; their parts instantiate fundamental qualitative properties. There are, I think, other maximally unified structures, namely, the pure mathematical structures whose parts do not instantiate any fundamental qualitative properties. Let's say then that, roughly speaking, A-properties *broadly globally supervene* on the B-properties iff any two maximally unified structures that are B-indiscernible are A-indiscernible. See footnote 129 above for the more standard and narrower notion defined on worlds.

A potential problem arises here.[156] Suppose that worlds are unified by fundamental qualitative external relations.[157] But, as noted above, we should be able to completely server these relations from an individual. If, however, we take away all the fundamental qualitative external relations that connect my coffee mug to the rest of the world, the result should be a world where a coffee mug is externally isolated from a coffee pot. But there are no worlds where two things fail to stand in qualitative external relations (or chains of qualitative external relations) to each other. For, by assumption, worlds are unified by fundamental qualitative external relations. Recombination of the fundamental qualitative relations appears to take us from a possibility to an impossibility. The necessary connections thesis thus appears to be false.

The problem depends upon the claim that if there is no world at which the fundamental properties are arranged in a certain pattern, then it is not possible for the fundamental properties to be arranged in that pattern. I think this claim is false. But something very much like it is true. Instead, I accept the following: if there is no world *or plurality of worlds* at which the fundamental properties are arranged in a certain pattern, then it is not possible for the fundamental properties to be arranged in that pattern.[158] I grant that there is no world where a coffee mug is externally isolated from a coffee pot. But I contend that there is a plurality of worlds—namely, a world otherwise exactly like our own which removes (duplicates of) everything except my coffee mug and a world otherwise exactly like our own which only removes (a duplicate of) my coffee mug—at which the fundamental properties are arranged in

[156] It is a transformed version of the island universe problem for modal realism. See Bricker (2001).

[157] This view is suggested by some remarks in Bricker (1996: 237 n 22, 2008: 131 n 12) and appears to be endorsed by Cowling (2012: 407).

[158] See Bricker (2001, 2006) for a defense of this move.

the desired pattern. So, when properly understood, the necessary connections thesis is not violated.

We can capture the dual unity of the qualitative/non-qualitative distinction if we accept both the causal and the necessary connections theses: the fundamental qualitative properties are unified by their aptitude to play various causal roles, while the fundamental non-qualitative properties are unified by the source of their resistance to recombination. This dual unity appears to be reinforced by the following:

> **The Humean Link:** a fundamental property plays a fundamental causal (or nomic) role at some world if and only if it is subject to the true principles of recombination.

We can use this link to explain why the properties that ground causal powers are non-redundant. For if any of these properties were redundant, then they would globally supervene upon each other. But since these properties are subject to principles of recombination, they are guaranteed not supervene upon each other. Hence, the properties that ground causal powers should be nonredundant.

The positive account of the fundamental non-qualitative properties developed here, unlike the positive account of the qualitative properties developed above, is not intended to be metaphysically neutral. It is committed to the existence of worlds that differ qualitatively but not structurally. For assume that unit positive and unit negative charge are fundamental determinates of the same determinable. We have, as noted above, seen no reason to prohibit patterns of recombination whereby unit positive and unit negative charge switch their causal and nomic roles. There would thus seem to be worlds that differ from our own by a permutation of fundamental qualitative properties (see Lewis 2009: 205-12). It thus fails to be neutral between quidditism and structuralism.

Its relationship to the debate between Humeans and anti-Humeans about laws and causation is more complicated. Some anti-Humeans will deny the Humean assumption that the properties that ground causal powers can be recombined. A causal essentialist might claim that what it is to be charge is to play various causal roles and that these roles are holistically interdefined. Some of the properties that ground causal powers would, on this view, be interdependent and thus not subject to recombination. The causal essentialist might thus deny the necessary connections thesis.

Other anti-Humeans can accept everything we have said—provided that they take their relation of necessitation to be non-qualitative. Suppose that, as things stand, there aren't any deep causal connections between any events. Our world is instead one where causal successions are nothing more than accidental regularities. The causal connections at our world are thin and non-oomphy. Now consider another world, otherwise just like our own, where these regularities are underwritten by irreducible relations of causal or lawful connection. These oomphy causal connections cannot be imposed upon the world wily-nilly. They must respect its regularities and thus resist recombination. I think that it is plausible to say, in this example, that our Humean world of accidental regularities is qualitatively indiscernible from the non-Humean world with irreducible causal connections. For there would be no way for us to tell which world we were in, these worlds look exactly the same from the inside: causal or lawful connections are no more qualitatively robust than accidental regularities. We might take these necessary connections to provide the best explanation of some observed phenomenon, but they would not thereby be observable or detectable in any way. The fundamental qualitative properties thus appear to provide a Humean base that may sometimes be augmented with a non-Humean superstructure.

The necessary connections thesis plausibly predicts that the irreducible causal connections that make up this non-Humean superstructure are non-qualitative relations.

Does this violate the Humean link? It will do so only if these irreducible causal connections are themselves apt to play causal roles. But these fundamental non-Humean relations between events do not seem to be causing—or even apt to cause—anything at all. For if they were, then they should be detectable. But it does not seem possible for there to be a device that would be differently affected by their presence or absence. The necessitation relation is not subject to principles of recombination, but neither is it apt to play causal roles. The Humean link has not been violated. I take this to be an interesting and potentially satisfying result.

3.6 Applications

Let's turn now to three philosophical applications of the view put forward above. The first concerns the best way to formulate an account of ontological categories in terms of generality.[159] The basic idea is that ontological categories are highly general classes. It might appear, at first glance, that a class A is more general than a class B only if A contains B. But, upon further inspection, containment is clearly not sufficient for generality. For while the gerrymandered class of abstract objects and the Eiffel Tower contains the class of abstract objects, it is not obviously more general than it (see Norton 1976: 107 and Westerhoff 2005: 25-6). An account of generality must, it seems, make some appeal to the notion of broad naturalness.[160] We might say,

[159] See Westerhoff (2005: 25-40) for an overview such accounts.

[160] Westerhoff (2005: 26) takes the notion of naturalness to be obscure. He appeals instead to a notion of dependence, which he officially defines as follows: B depends on A iff necessarily, if A is empty, then B is empty as well (see Westerhoff 2002: 338, 2005: 27). But, as McDaniel (2017: 120) points out, this does not avoid the problem

for example, that a class A is more general than a class B if (i) A contains B, and (ii) A is at least as broadly natural as B.[161]

The main problem with accounts of ontological categories along these lines is that they are plagued by what Jan Westerhoff (2002: 338, 2005: 35-8) calls the *cut-off point problem*. There is a partial ordering of broadly natural classes by their generality. But since some ontological categories can be more general than others, we cannot simply define ontological categories as the topmost nodes in this ordering. Enter the cut-off point problem: How far down this ordering can we go before the broadly natural classes cease to be ontological categories? The trick is to rule out, say, the class of bosons from counting as an ontological category.

I think that the ontological categories are best understood not just as highly general classes, but as highly general *non-qualitative* classes. This gives us a clear answer to the question why *being simple* is an ontologically relevant feature while *being a boson* is not. For the class of bosons, being qualitative, will not appear in a partial ordering of broadly natural non-qualitative classes. I don't think that the distinction between qualitative and non-qualitative properties will make the cut-off problem go away, but I do think it makes it much less troubling. We might need to make arbitrary choices about which broadly natural non-qualitative classes to concern ourselves with when pursuing ontology, but we will no longer need to worry that 'we do not know what we are talking about' (Westerhoff 2005: 37).

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of gerrymandered classes: for it is necessary that if the class of abstract objects and the Eiffel Tower is empty, then so is the class of abstract objects.

[161] I do not want to claim that this condition is necessary for generality because I want to say that the class of actual entities is a highly general class. It does not, however, appear to contain any natural classes. See section 5.5 below.

The second application concerns the soundness of some recent combinatorial arguments. Take, for example, the argument put forward by Kris McDaniel (2007b: 136-7) and Theodore Sider (2007: 52-3) for the possibility of extended simples. This argument proceeds, roughly, as follows: location is a fundamental relation between material objects and regions of space; the mereological structures of material objects and regions of space are intrinsic; but, since any pattern of instantiation of a fundamental relation on non-overlapping, intrinsically-typed entities is possible, it follows that it is possible for the location relation to hold between a simple material object and a complex region of space. A related argument is put forward by Kris McDaniel (2007b: 135-6) and Bradford Skow (2007: 116-17) for the view that shape is extrinsic. It proceeds, roughly, as follows: location is a fundamental relation between material objects and regions of space; any pattern of instantiation of a fundamental relation on non-overlapping, intrinsically-typed entities is possible; but, since there are necessary connections between the shapes of material objects and the shapes of the regions they occupy, it follows that material objects do not have their shapes intrinsically. Note that even further arguments are put forward by Raul Saucedo (2011) for far more exotic conclusions.

I have placed a principled restriction on the recombination principle appealed to in these arguments. I claim that they will only be sound if location (or occupation) is a fundamental qualitative relation. But there are, I think, two reasons to think that location is not detectable and, hence, not a fundamental qualitative relation. First, there does not appear to be any way to observe or otherwise detect whether material objects are distinct from the spatiotemporal regions they occupy rather than simply identical to them. In other words, there seems to be no way to detect whether dualistic substantivalism rather than supersubstantivalism is true. For if we could tell that a material object was located at a region of spacetime, then we could tell that a material

object was distinct from a region of spacetime. But that would mean that we could detect whether or not the relation of identity held between them. Identity is, however, a fundamental non-qualitative relation. It is, as such, not a relation we can detect. The second reason to think that location is non-qualitative comes from considerations about the empirically undetectability of absolute velocity. Here we must distinguish between relative and absolute velocity. The relative velocity of a material object is its velocity relative to another material object, while the absolute velocity of that object is—on a dualistic substantivalist picture—how fast that object is really moving relative to spacetime. If location were detectable, then we would be able to detect whether or not everything was moving at an absolute velocity of 5 kilometers per hour to the west. But this is something we cannot detect.

A final application concerns the soundness of an argument put forward by Shamik Dasgupta (2009, 2017) that there aren't any primitive individuals, that is, that individuals do not figure into the fundamental facts about the material world. The argument proceeds, roughly, as follows: we have reason to think that, other things being equal, the structure of the material world does not contain anything that is physically redundant and empirically undetectable; but—just like absolute velocity—primitive individuals are both physically redundant and empirically undetectable; therefore, we have good reason to doubt their reality.

I readily grant that we have reason to think that the fundamental qualitative structure of the world is both detectable and non-redundant. I contend that our scientific theories seek to explain the world's qualitative structure. Absolute velocity was once assumed to be part of that structure. When it was found to be physically redundant and empirically undetectable, it lost the ability to play an explanatory role. We no longer had reason to appeal to it in our scientific theories. But things are not equal in the case of primitive individuals. They are not assumed to be

part of the world's qualitative structure. So, I claim, a demonstration that they are physically redundant and empirically undetectable should give us no reason to doubt their reality.

3.7 Conclusion

Let us take stock. I have argued that the traditional understanding of the non-qualitative properties as haecceitistic is far too narrow. I have also argued that the dual-unity of the qualitative/non-qualitative distinction is nicely captured by the following Humean picture:

> **The Causal Thesis:** a fundamental property is *qualitative* if and only if it plays a fundamental causal (or nomic) role at some world.
>
> **The Necessary Connections Thesis:** a fundamental property is *non-qualitative* if and only if it is not subject to the true principles of recombination.
>
> **The Humean Link:** a fundamental property plays a fundamental causal (or nomic) role at some world if and only if it is subject to the true principles of recombination.

I have not argued that this is the only way to capture the dual-unity of the distinction. But this Humean picture gains strong—albeit indirect—support given both the intuitive dual-unity of the distinction and the overall plausibility of the causal thesis.

Chapter 4: Are There Individualistic Ways of Being?

Abstract: *Haecceitistic fragmentationalism* is, roughly, the view that there are haecceitistic ways of being. It combines a belief in fundamental haecceities such as *being Plato* and *being Aristotle* with a belief in ways of being. A haecceity, on this view, is not a complex property that somehow has an individual as a constituent; it is simply an individualistic way of being: roughly, a way of being that can only be enjoyed by one thing. I provide a brief motivation for this view about the nature of haecceities. I then present two arguments against haecceitistic fragmentationalism. I argue, first, that it does not sit well with the claim that actual entities enjoy a way of being that is not enjoyed by merely possible entities; and, second, that it conflicts with a plausible claim about the relation between ways of being and ontological categories. I conclude that we should not believe in individualistic ways of being.

4.1 Introduction

Consider a world with a qualitative history no different from our own. There is a person in this world who was born when and where you were born, who has lived a life just like your own. This person is, both intrinsically and extrinsically, exactly like you in every qualitative respect. But must this person be you? Perhaps not. It seems plausible to claim that any purely objective, purely qualitative description of a world must leave out something of subjective importance: namely, whether and where you are to be found in that world. It thus seems possible for there to be a world that is qualitatively no different from our own where you have been 'replaced' by someone who does not actually exist.

You and your doppelgänger replacement would be perfect indiscernible duplicates. Yet, for all your qualitative similarities, there is a peculiarly non-qualitative difference between you: you enjoy different fundamental haecceities. Your haecceity is, roughly, a kind of one over many, the enjoyment of which is both necessary and sufficient for being you.[162] But what exactly are haecceities? An account of the nature of haecceities should, I think, be importantly neutral with respect to the nature and metaphysics of modality.[163] But if that's right, then haecceities cannot merely be, as David Lewis (1986: 229) points out, non-qualitative properties that cannot be had by more than one individual.[164] For assuming that there is a plurality of concrete possible worlds populated by individuals that wholly belong to at most one world and that there is a property for every set or class of these possible individuals, there will be an abundance of such properties. Take, for example, the property corresponding to your unit set. This non-qualitative property is had by exactly one individual at exactly one possible world. But while you have it,

[162] I say 'being you' rather than 'being identical to you' because I think it important to be able to provide an account of the nature of haecceities—or, perhaps better, of the nature of fundamental haecceities—that is theoretically neutral. If you are wholly present at different worlds, then we can say that an individual is you if and only if that individual is identical to you. But if we take haecceities seriously and take your haecceity to be fundamental, then we will probably want to say that it is because a possible individual enjoys your haecceity that that individual is—or is identical to—you. A haecceity is, thus, a kind of particularized—or particularizing—universal, a one over many where the many might themselves be one. (See footnote 176 below.)

[163] Indeed, it is because I think that we should strive for a theoretically neutral account of the nature of haecceities that I take Lewis's (1986: 229) argument against combining an account of fundamental haecceities with modal realism without overlap to threaten the intelligibility of the very notion of a haecceity itself.

[164] Or, as Lewis (1986: 225) puts it, 'non-qualitative properties of "thisness" which distinguish particular individuals'.

your doppelgänger does not. Or take, for another example, the property corresponding to the gerrymandered class of you at this world and my counterparts at worlds where you have been replaced by a doppelgänger. This non-qualitative property is never had by more than one individual at any given world.[165] But while you have it, your doppelgängers do not. The problem with these properties is that they don't seem to make for any kind of haecceitistic similarity between their instances. Haecceities must, then, be special in some way. But, as Lewis goes on to point out, they can't be special in the way that the perfectly natural qualitative properties and relations are special. For they don't carve along the qualitative joints and they don't seem to ground causal powers.[166] Indeed, they don't even seem to be observable or detectable at all. We thus appear to be left without a principled way to distinguish the allegedly special, sparse haecceitistic properties from the merely abundant ones. But if that's right, then we should be

[165] I might, on some counterpart relations, have more than one counterpart at a given world. So we must be careful to select a counterpart relation and a class of worlds such that I never have more than one counterpart at any of these worlds. I am assuming that this can be done.

[166] Lewis (1983a, 1986: 59-69) takes the perfectly natural properties to play various roles. They are supposed to ground objective similarity, they are supposed to ground causal powers, and there are only supposed to be 'enough of them to characterize things completely and without redundancy' (1986: 60). This gives us a fairly narrow conception of naturalness.

A broader conception would, I think, simply take a property to be perfectly natural (or fundamental) whenever it is an ultimate bearer of objective similarity. The perfectly natural non-qualitative properties and relations would then be whichever properties or relations, if any, that make for objective similarity but don't ground causal powers and might admit of various redundancies. I believe that actuality, composition, identity, parthood, set membership, as well as various other mathematical properties and relations are all fundamental and non-qualitative. I argued for this in chapter 3 above.

forced to admit that the notion of a fundamental haecceity is completely and utterly mysterious.[167]

Kris McDaniel (2017: 193-4) has recently put forward the intriguing suggestion that haecceities are individualistic ways of being: roughly, ways of being that can only be enjoyed by one thing. Haecceities will, on this view, be special in the same way that other ways of being are special, not by carving along the qualitative joints or by grounding causal powers, but by underwriting various ontological similarities and differences between things. My concept of my own haecceity—of *being exactly ontologically like me and me alone at my world*—will be much

[167] See Cowling (2012: 407-9) and Russell (2015: 418-9) for discussion of this argument. Russell notes that there are at least two ways to interpret Lewis's claim that fundamental haecceities are mysterious. The first is *stipulative*: talk of 'the joints in nature' is simply talk of 'the qualitative joints'. Thus talk of non-qualitative joints is a contradiction in terms. Lewis does seem to suggest that objective similarity is qualitative in nature. He thinks, for example, that the problem with unnatural properties is that '[t]hey pay no heed to the *qualitative* joints, but carve things up every which way' (1986: 59, emphasis added), and that the '[s]haring of [the perfectly natural, or sparse, properties] makes for *qualitative* similarity' (1986: 60, emphasis added). But the problem with this interpretation is that, as Russell points out, 'if this is how Lewis understands "qualitative", then he has subtly changed the subject' (2015: 419).

A second way to interpret Lewis, which Russell prefers, is based on an appeal to *parsimony*: the problem with fundamental haecceities is not that they are contradictory, but that they are an unnecessary piece of metaphysical machinery. Thus, given that we should only believe in enough fundamental notions to characterize reality completely and without redundancy, we should not believe in fundamental haecceities. But the problem with this interpretation is that it does not square well with Lewis's claim that '[t]here is no way to make sense of a [fundamental haecceity]' (1986: 230).

I instead follow Cowling in taking the problem to be one of *intelligibility*: we have, on this interpretation, no principled way of distinguishing the fundamental haecceities from the non-fundamental haecceities. Thus, it is entirely mysterious what it could mean to say that there are fundamental haecceities.

the same as my concept of actuality: namely of *being exactly ontologically like me and everything else at my world*. Haecceities thus appear to be no more—or no less—mysterious than other ways of being.[168]

McDaniel arrives at this account of the nature of haecceities by, first, assuming that there are individualistic ways of being and, then, noting that given certain assumptions about their modal profiles, they will play the role that haecceities are supposed to play and so might plausibly be identified with them.[169] But while he might have shown how we could take

[168] We do not, however, have access to the haecceity of every possible individual. For a way of being, given its elusive and causally-inefficacious nature, is only intelligible to us insofar as it is the way of being enjoyed by all and only the entities that are exactly ontologically like some specified collection of entities. We appear best suited to grasp our own haecceities: I can, for example, pick out myself and myself alone at our world and then move to conceive of entities that are ontologically just like me, that enjoy all the same fundamental ways of being. My concept of my own haecceity is, thus, that of *being exactly ontologically like me and me alone at my world*. We can also form, at least in principle, the concept of any of the haecceities enjoyed by any of the entities that are present at our world: I can, for example, form the concept of Socrates' haecceity as the concept of *being exactly ontologically like Socrates and Socrates alone at my world*. But we lack, I think, any understanding of every haecceity that is not enjoyed by any of individuals present at our world. Take, for example, *being Gandalf* which we can suppose is had by some but not all of the possible individuals that play the Gandalf role described in J. R. R. Tolkien's novels. Given that worlds can differ haecceitistically without differing qualitatively, we appear to lack the conceptual resources to pick Gandalf—rather than one of his doppelgängers—out descriptively. And, given that Gandalf enjoys a haecceity that is not enjoyed by any of the individuals that are present at our world, we won't be able to pick him—or anyone exactly ontologically like him—out directly. These alien haecceities are, and must remain, completely and utterly mysterious to us.

[169] McDaniel here relies upon two assumptions about the modal relations between an individual and its individualistic way of being: namely, that an individual which enjoys an individualistic way of being will, as a matter of necessity, enjoy that way of being if it enjoys any way of being at all, and that, as a matter of necessity,

individualistic ways of being to be haecceities, he didn't provide any motivation for believing that there are individualistic ways of being in the first place.[170] I will attempt to provide this motivation, in section 4.2, by proceeding in the opposite direction. I will begin by assuming that there are fundamental haecceities and will then attempt to show how we might plausibly take them to be individualistic ways of being. With this ontological account of the nature of haecceities in place, we can motivate a belief in individualistic ways of being by motivating a belief in fundamental non-qualitative haecceities. We can thus provide a plausible motivation for the view that there are individualistic ways of being.[171] I do not, however, believe that this view can ultimately be maintained, and will present two arguments against it. I will argue, in section 4.3, that the existence of fundamental haecceities does not sit well with the possibility of there

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anything which enjoys that way of being will be identical to that individual. These assumptions appear to require the additional assumption of overlap: namely, that some individuals are wholly present at more than one world. For without this assumption it is difficult to see how anything that enjoys my individualistic way of being could be strictly speaking identical to me. McDaniel's motivation for the identification of individualistic ways of being with fundamental haecceities thus appears to require a substantive assumption about the metaphysics of modality and thereby appears to lack theoretical neutrality. It can only be endorsed by someone who accepts overlap.

[170] This is not intended as a criticism. For McDaniel's remarks on individualistic ways of being are purely exploratory. His intention is not to show that there are such ways of being, but simply to explore a variety of proposals on which persons might turn out to enjoy a fundamental way of being. The view that each person enjoys a fundamental individualistic way of being is both the most radical and the most tentative of these proposals.

[171] I would have called this view 'individualistic fragmentationalism' if McDaniel had not already given that name to the view that each person enjoys an individualistic way of being. For the view described by McDaniel is a species of the more general view that there are individualistic ways of being, and it is this more general view which is, I believe, better deserving of the title 'individualistic fragmentationalism', while the view to which McDaniel actually gives that name might, I think, be more aptly described as 'personalistic fragmentationalism'.

being different parts of actuality which are importantly isolated from each other, so-called 'island universes'. For given that actual entities enjoy a way of being that is not enjoyed by merely possible entities, the best way to capture the possibility of island universes is to hold that every plurality of worlds represents a genuine possibility; but since there will be fundamental haecceities only if some pluralities of worlds—namely, those pluralities of worlds which contain different individuals sharing the same haecceity—do not represent genuine possibilities, we should not believe in fundamental haecceities. I will then argue, in section 4.4, that the existence of individualistic ways of being conflicts with a plausible claim about the relation between ways of being and ontological categories: namely, that for every way of being, there is a corresponding ontological category.[172] For given this claim, there will be individualistic ways of being only if there are individualistic ontological categories; but since we should not believe in individualistic ontological categories, we should not believe in individualistic ways of being either. These arguments, while independent of each other, together constitute a dilemma: the most plausible response to the first argument is ruled out by the second, and vice versa. The collective force of these arguments gives us strong reason to believe that we do not, in fact, enjoy individualistic ways of being.

I should lay out some background assumptions before we proceed.[173] I will assume *ontological pluralism*—or *pluralism about being*—the view that there are different fundamental

[172] Note that while I believe this claim to be plausible, it is not entirely uncontroversial (see footnote 192 below).

[173] These assumptions will play a significant role in the arguments to follow. They are admittedly controversial. Yet they cannot be easily resisted by the proponent of individualistic ways of being. For no one should believe in individualistic ways of being who does not already have reason to believe in some other ways of being. But, I think, anyone who has reason to believe in ways of being should believe that there is an importantly ontological difference

ways of being. The primary motivation for this view, as I see it, is the recognition of various non-qualitative ontological differences between certain entities. The foremost such difference is, I believe, the difference between the actual and the merely possible.[174] For while an actual and a merely possible dollar might be perfect—perhaps even indiscernible—qualitative duplicates, there would still seem to be an importantly objective and peculiarly ontological difference between them: one is actual, the other is merely possible. Ways of being thus appear to be a kind of ontological one over many: the class of all and only the entities which enjoy a fundamental way of being forms a highly natural class; it is unified by a fundamental way of being. These fundamental ways of being carve at the ontological joints and ground objective, albeit non-qualitative, similarities between things. But, unlike universals (or the perfectly natural qualitative properties that we might accept in their stead), they do not play any causal roles and are not observable at all.

I shall work within a broadly modal realist framework supplemented with absolute actuality (see Bricker 2001, 2006, 2008). I will assume that our world is but one of a vast plurality of concrete possible worlds. These worlds each form internally unified wholes and are importantly isolated from each other. They are, moreover, populated by various possible individuals. I believe that none of these possible individuals are wholly present at more than one world, but I will be officially neutral between modal realism with and modal realism without

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between the actual and the merely possible; and, I claim, anyone who believes this should be a modal realist. Thus it seems that anyone who believes in ways of being should also be a modal realist.

[174] I thus wholeheartedly agree with Etienne Gilson (1949: 3), who claims that 'the very first and the most universal of all the distinctions in the realm of being is that which divides it into two classes, that of the real and that of the possible'.

overlap. I will also assume that there is a genuine, objective difference between those worlds and individuals that are actual and those that are not: only actual entities enjoy actuality, which is a fundamental way of being. Thus, an object's status as actual is not, as David Lewis would have it, a mere matter of its belonging to our world even if our concept of that object's actuality is—and cannot be other than—that of its being of the same ontological kind as our world and everything in it. This framework should be quite congenial to anyone who holds that actual entities enjoy a way of being that is not enjoyed by merely possible entities. Indeed, given that the difference between the actual and the merely possible is one of the most widely recognized ontological differences and given, as I think seems plausible, that the best way to make sense of this difference is to accept modal realism with absolute actuality, the ontological pluralist should be a modal realist.[175]

4.2 Haecceitistic fragmentationalism

Ontological pluralists believe in different ways of being. But what could motivate a pluralist to believe in individualistic ways of being? For while it might seem as if there are fundamental non-qualitative, haecceitistic differences between certain individuals (such, perhaps, as the difference between you and your doppelgänger) and thus fundamental haecceities which underwrite these differences, they do not themselves immediately appear to be ontological. There are, however, at least three reasons to think that haecceities are themselves ways of being. I will call these the *analogical*, *ideological*, and *Montagovian* motivations.

[175] McDaniel (2017: 73-5) also seems to think that the best way to make sense of this ontological difference is to accept some form of modal realism with absolute actuality.

Let's begin with the analogical motivation. Haecceities appear to be interestingly similar to ways of being. For just as *being actual* is a non-qualitative way of being a possible entity, *being Socrates* is also a non-qualitative way of being a possible entity. Thus, insofar as we take this to be a reason to think of *being actual* as a way of being, we should also take it as a reason to think of *being Socrates* as a way of being. This analogy is suggestive, but it is by no means decisive. Its strength will ultimately depend upon the strength and success of the following motivations.

Let's turn, next, to the ideological motivation. Haecceities—along with universals and ways of being—appear to be a kind of one over many. But fundamental haecceities, like fundamental ways of being and unlike universals, do not carve at the qualitative joints or ground causal powers. They do, however, carve at the haecceitistic joints and, much like ways of being, ground objective, albeit non-qualitative, similarities. So, for example, *being Socrates* appears to underwrite a peculiarly haecceitistic similarity between individuals at different worlds.[176] This

[176] I take this claim to be available both to those who accept and to those who reject modal realism with overlap. If, on the one hand, possible individuals are wholly present at multiple worlds, then it might turn out that the individuals who enjoy Socrates' haecceity are all identical to each other: that is, it might turn out that, for any two individuals, those individuals enjoy the same haecceity iff those individuals are identical to each other. But, if we take haecceities seriously, we won't say that these individuals enjoy the same haecceities because they are identical, rather we will say that they are identical because they enjoy the same haecceity. A haecceity, on this view, will be a kind of particularizing universal, which somehow explains why certain individuals in different worlds are identical to each other.

If, on the other hand, no possible individuals are wholly present at more than one world, then it might turn out that two individuals can enjoy the same haecceity without being identical to each other. Different individuals at different worlds will be non-qualitative counterparts of each other in virtue of their enjoying the same haecceity. A

suggests the possibility of an ideological reduction: where there seemed to be two basic notions, that of a haecceity and that of a way of being, there is really only one. We cannot, I think, plausibly reduce the notion of a way of being to that of a haecceity. For we cannot plausibly take actuality to be perspicuously expressed as the disjunction of the haecceities of all actual individuals, since actuality appears to be unified and non-disjunctive. Nor can we take our status as actual to be expressed as our being a part of an entity with a particular haecceity, since actuality does not appear to be relational. But we might plausibly attempt to reduce the notion of a haecceity to that of a way of being.[177] A haecceity, on this account, would just be a special kind of way of being: namely, an individualistic one. A theory that can explain similar phenomena—in this case, haecceitistic and ontological differences—with a single basic notion is ideologically leaner than, and thereby preferable to, one that would require two. Thus, if we already accept ontological pluralism, we might take this as a reason to hold that haecceities are individualistic ways of being.

Let's turn, finally, to the Montagovian motivation. Haecceities appear to be importantly connected to proper names, and proper names are sometimes taken to be quantifiers.[178] So, if we believe in fundamental haecceities, we might take the proper names connected to these

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haecceity, on this view, will be a kind of particularized universal. It will be a *universal* since it will account for a special kind of similarity between individuals. But, unlike other universals, it will be *particularized*: there will be no possibility—no possible world or possible plurality of worlds—at which more than one individual enjoys the same haecceity. But it won't, on this account, be a particularizing universal: it won't do anything to make otherwise disparate individuals identical to each other.

[177] I will challenge the plausibility of this reduction in section 4.4 below.

[178] The suggestion that proper names are generalized quantifiers was first put forward by Richard Montague (1973). See Barwise and Cooper (1981: 164-6) and Peters and Westerståhl (2006: 93-5) for helpful discussion.

haecceities to themselves be fundamental quantifiers. But then, assuming that fundamental quantifiers express fundamental ways of being, it will turn out that fundamental haecceities and the proper names connected to them will correspond to fundamental, individualistic ways of being. Thus, if we incline toward the quantificational pluralism of Kris McDaniel (2009, 2010b, 2017) and Jason Turner (2010, 2012, forthcoming), we might take this to give us strong reason to believe that haecceities are individualistic ways of being.

There appears, then, to be sufficient motivation to take this ontological account of the nature of haecceities seriously. If we do, we can motivate a belief in individualistic ways of being by motivating the more familiar belief in fundamental non-qualitative haecceities.[179] It would thus seem to be advantageous to motivate the view that there are individualistic ways of being by adopting and motivating the following:

[179] As I see it, the primary motivation for a belief in fundamental non-qualitative haecceities comes from the intuition about subjectivity with which we began. For it seems that any purely objective, qualitative description of a world must ultimately leave out all the fundamentally subjective facts about where and whether I am to be found in that world. But if that's right and there are qualitatively indiscernible worlds that differ with respect to where and whether I am, then there would seem to need to be some kind of fundamental non-qualitative haecceities in order to account for these differences. See McDaniel (2017: 186-9) for a discussion of this argument. Similar arguments can be found in Nagel (1983: 223), Swinburne (1995: 396), Bricker (2008: 130), and Cowling (2017b: 4181-2).

McDaniel (2017: 189) ultimately sets this argument aside not because it doesn't motivate a belief in fundamental non-qualitative haecceities, but because it doesn't ensure that persons are themselves the bearers of these fundamental haecceities. For, as he points out, although my haecceity might fail to supervene on the distribution of fundamental qualitative properties and relations, it might nevertheless supervene on the distribution of the haecceities of my parts. But if my haecceity supervenes on the distribution of the haecceities of my parts, then it is not guaranteed to be fundamental. Thus, McDaniel seems to think that while the argument shows that there are fundamental non-qualitative haecceities, it does not show that I am guaranteed to have one.

Haecceitistic fragmentationalism is the view that

i. there are fundamental non-qualitative haecceities, and

ii. these haecceities are individualistic ways of being.

We have arrived, then, at what I take to be the best version of the view that there are individualistic ways of being. There are, however, two serious problems that must be addressed by any version of such a view. The first problem arises due to the nature of actuality. Let's turn to it now.

4.3 The argument from island universes

Our world and everything in it is actual. Yet it seems intelligible to suppose that this is not the full extent of actuality. We can, I think, imagine there being another part of actuality out there, importantly disconnected from our own. But if worlds are internally unified by various natural relations as has more or less been traditionally maintained, this other part of actuality will not be part of our world.[180] It thus seems possible for actuality to be made up of isolated parts, so-called

[180] Leibniz ([1710] 1985: 128/ G VI 107) essentially defined 'world' twice over. His official definition focuses on the idea of the totality of actual or existent entities:

> I call 'World' the whole succession and the whole agglomeration of all existent things, lest it be said that several worlds could have existed in different times and different places. For they must needs be reckoned all together as one world or, if you will, as one Universe.

But Leibniz also thinks that the totality of existent entities forms an interconnected whole.

> For it must be known that all things are *connected* in each one of the possible worlds: the universe, whatever it may be, is all of one piece, like an ocean: the least movement extends its effect there to any distance whatsoever, even though this effect become less perceptible in proportion to the distance.

'island universes'. But if we accept the possibility of island universes, as I think we should, we cannot accept the standard analysis of possibility as truth at a world. For there is no world at which it is true that there are island universes. There is, however, a simple and natural way to accommodate this possibility within a modal realist framework. If we supplement that framework with absolute actuality, then, as Phillip Bricker (2001) has shown, we don't need to modify the traditional definition of a world as a maximally unified whole. We only need to take possibility to involve plural rather than singular quantification over worlds: something is possible, on this revised analysis, iff it is true at a world or at some plurality of worlds.[181] We

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He thus provides the seeds to what would become the traditional definition of 'world' in the Leibnizian school. So, for example, Wolff claims that 'the *world* is a series of changeable things that are next to each other and follow upon each other, but, in general, are connected to each other' ([1719] 2009: §544) and that '[a] series of finite beings that are simultaneous as well as successive and connected among themselves is called a *world*, or also a *universe*' (1731: §48, trans. Courtney D. Fugate and John Hymers); and Baumgarten defines a world as 'a series (multitude, whole) of actual and finite beings that is not part of another' ([1739] 2013: §354). This definition was even taken up by some of their Pietist opponents. So, for example, Crusius says that 'a *world* is a real connection of finite things that are not in turn themselves a part of another to which they belong by means of a real connection. Or: a *world* is a system of finite and really connected things that is not in turn itself contained in another system' ([1745] 2009: §350).

These definitions can also be found in McTaggart (1921: 147-8), who calls the definition of a universe as 'a substance which contains all content', the definition by content, and the definition of a universe as 'a substance of which all other substances are parts', the definition by relation.

[181] We cannot get the desired result simply by adopting the revised analysis. For suppose I assert: "Island universes exist". My utterance appears to have a determinate truth-value. But it is false when evaluated at our world alone and true when evaluated at any plurality of worlds which includes our own. We need absolute actuality to resolve the threat of indeterminacy. See Bricker (2001: 41-3) for further details.

should, as pluralists who believe that actual entities enjoy a way of being that is not enjoyed by merely possible entities, be happy to accept the possibility of island universes. For, as the pre-Critical Kant ([1770] 1992: Ak. 2:408) pointed out, there is nothing in the traditional concept of a world which precludes multiple worlds from being actual. Nor, I would add, is there anything in our concept of actuality—that is, our concept of something's being of the same ontological kind as everything at our world—which limits the potential extent of actuality to our world alone. If we take these observations seriously and thereby take maximal possibilities to correspond not simply to ways a world could be, but to ways actuality could be, then we had better not restrict ourselves, in our analysis of possibility, to singular quantification over worlds. We should reject the standard analysis. But if, in addition to believing that there is a special way of being that actual entities enjoy, we also believe in fundamental haecceities or individualistic ways of being, we cannot straightforwardly accept the revised analysis as it stands. For assuming that I am wholly present at this world and this world alone, none of the other individuals at other worlds who share my haecceity and, likewise, enjoy my individualistic way of being will be, strictly speaking, identical to me. But if we consider any plurality of two or more worlds that each contain someone who shares my haecceity, it will be true at this plurality of worlds that there are distinct individuals who enjoy my haecceity. And then, by the revised analysis, it will be possible for distinct individuals to enjoy the same haecceity. This would, however, appear to be impossible. For haecceities, by their very nature, can only be enjoyed by one thing; there is no possibility—no possible world and no possible plurality of worlds—at which more than one individual enjoys the same haecceity. Thus, if we are to believe in fundamental haecceities or individualistic ways of being, we had better insist that some pluralities of worlds fail to represent genuine possibilities.

We might, in an effort to accommodate a belief in fundamental haecceities, attempt to restrict the revised analysis to pluralities of worlds that are haecceitistically distinct (where worlds are *haecceitistically distinct* when none of the individuals that exist at those worlds share a fundamental haecceity). But there does not seem to be a plausible way to do so. If, on the one hand, we were to restrict the analysis *directly* by saying that something is possible iff it is true at some world or some plurality of haecceitistically distinct worlds, the resulting analysis would either be circular or else mired in primitive modality. For to say that a plurality of worlds is haecceitistically distinct is to say that none of the individuals that exist at those worlds share a fundamental haecceity, and to say that something is a fundamental haecceity is to say that it is a fundamental non-qualitative property—or, as the haecceitistic fragmentationalist would have it, a fundamental way of being—that cannot be had or enjoyed by more than one individual.[182] If, on

[182] I take the concept of a haecceity to be inherently modal. There are, after all, clearly true modal claims about haecceities: it is, for example, not possible for more than one individual to enjoy *being Socrates*. But it is one thing to assert that there are true modal claims about haecceities and quite another to assert that our concept of a haecceity is itself modal. So why should we accept the latter assertion? These true modal claims about haecceities must, I think, be somehow grounded in or otherwise explained by the nature of a haecceity itself. This explanation needn't be modal if we understand haecceities in terms of identity. If, for example, we understand Socrates' haecceity in terms of his being identical to Socrates, then there seems to be an obviously non-modal explanation for why it is not possible for more than one individual to enjoy Socrates' haecceity: namely, that if another individual enjoys Socrates' haecceity, that individual will thereby be identical to Socrates, and thus it is not possible for distinct individuals to share Socrates' haecceity. But if we understand the nature of a haecceity in this way, we cannot describe the intuitive phenomenon of haecceitistic similarity in a way that is properly theoretically and metaphysically neutral. We would need to then assume either that the relevant individuals are wholly present at more than one world or else that haecceities cannot be enjoyed by individuals at different worlds, that is, we would either need to give up any hope of theoretical and metaphysical neutrality or else we would have to deny the

the other hand, we were to restrict the analysis *indirectly* by assuming that there are qualitative limits on fundamental haecceities and prohibiting pluralities of worlds that violate these limits, the resulting analysis would be extensionally inadequate. For if I must have a certain qualitative character and we were to exclude from our analysis pluralities of worlds which contain multiple individuals that share this qualitative character, then we would be forced to say that, despite its apparent plausibility, it is simply not possible for there to be another part of actuality which is qualitatively very much like our own.[183] The costs of placing haecceitistic restrictions on the potential extent of actuality are just too high. Thus, unless we intend to deny the possibility of island universes altogether, we should accept the revised analysis and hold that every plurality of worlds represents a genuine possibility.

I have argued that there are fundamental non-qualitative haecceities only if some pluralities of worlds do not represent genuine possibilities; but since we should believe that every plurality of worlds represents a genuine possibility, we should not believe in fundamental haecceities. We have seen that the only plausible way for the haecceitistic fragmentationalist to reject the revised analysis of possibility, and thus the premise that every plurality of worlds represents a genuine possibility, would be to deny that island universes are possible. But what should we make of the premise that the revised analysis of possibility is incompatible with the

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intuitive, pre-theoretical phenomenon of haecceitistic similarity. I think that the only way to avoid this problem is to take our concept of a fundamental haecceity to irreducibly modal: to be a fundamental haecceity is to be a fundamental non-qualitative property—or a fundamental way of being—that cannot be had or enjoyed by more than one individual.

[183] I find, for example, the possibility of duplicate island universes to be fairly compelling. I think there could be another part of reality out there that is exactly qualitatively like our own. But if we exclude pluralities of worlds containing individuals that are qualitatively very much alike, then duplicate island universe will not be possible.

existence of fundamental non-qualitative haecceities? The case for this incompatibility turned on two assumptions: the assumption that no individual is wholly present at more than one world, and the assumption that fundamental non-qualitative haecceities can only be had by one thing. If we took the revised analysis to be compatible with the existence of fundamental non-qualitative haecceities, we would need to challenge one of these assumptions.

Let's start with the assumption that no individual is wholly present at more than one world. We might combine the denial of this assumption with modal realism in order to arrive at some form of modal realism with overlap. I will focus here on the substantivialist version of modal realism with overlap defended in McDaniel (2004), but supplemented with absolute actuality and modified in order to accommodate the possibility of island universes.[184] Worlds, on this view, are maximal spatiotemporally related regions of spacetime. They are distinct from their material occupants, which belong to a fundamentally different ontological category. These material occupants exist at a world (or at some plurality of worlds) by being wholly present at some region which is part of that world (or of one of those worlds), but they are not strictly speaking parts of the worlds they occupy. I am wholly present, on this view, at more than one world. But then there will be pluralities of worlds where I am wholly present at each of the worlds among that plurality. It will thus be possible for me to be wholly present in multiple disconnected regions of spacetime, none of which bear any spatiotemporal, causal, or other natural relations to each other. There will, however, only be one individual at this plurality of worlds who enjoys my haecceity: namely, me. The modal realist who accepts overlap might

[184] The view I have in mind here is not discussed in McDaniel (2006). It is to the substantivialist view that he calls MRO, what his MRO3 is to his trope-theoretic MRO2.

therefore claim that pluralities of worlds that fail to be haecceitistically distinct represent spatiotemporally disjointed careers for various individuals.[185]

A potential dilemma arises for modal realism with overlap when it is supplemented with absolute actuality. For either we are directly actual or else we inherit our actuality from the regions we occupy. If, on the one hand, we are directly actual, then our actuality will not be world-relative. We will be absolutely actual. But since we are wholly present in non-actual worlds, there would seem to be worlds where some things are actual and other things are merely possible. Yet, as Phillip Bricker (2001: 44-5) observes, it is unintelligible to suppose that we might find something nonactual if we just traveled to a remote enough corner of the world. For it appears to be constitutive of the concept of actuality that is pervasive: if anything that is wholly present at a world is absolutely actual, then everything that is wholly present at that world is absolutely actual. And if, on the other hand, we are only indirectly actual in virtue of occupying a region of spacetime that is itself directly actual, then our actuality will be world-relative. But if our actuality is world-relative, then, insofar as actuality itself is ultimately absolute and non-relative, we cannot be the primary bearers of actuality. We are actual, on this view, only derivatively. That is a problem, in part, because I should not be able to coherently doubt my own actuality. Yet if it is indeed alienated from me in this way and I am not a primary bearer of

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[185] McDaniel (2006: 322) notes that this is a bizarre result, which he is prepared to grant if need be. But he also notes that we could avoid this result, if we so desired, by claiming that:

> A proposition is possibly true just in case it is true at some worlds, the *w*s, such that if there is more than one of the *w*s, then there is no object, *x*, that is wholly present at more than one of the *w*s.

This would give the modal realist who accepts overlap a way to claim that pluralities of worlds which fail to be haecceitistically distinct do not represent genuine possibilities, and thus to restrict the revised analysis without invoking primitive modality.

actuality, then it won't be part of my concept of actuality that I am actual, and I will, therefore, be able to coherently doubt this fact. Thus, when modal realism with overlap is supplemented with absolute actuality it either lapses into incoherence or else becomes vulnerable to the threat of skepticism. I leave it to the reader to determine whether—and to what extent—this should count against the acceptance of overlap.

Let's turn next to the assumption that fundamental non-qualitative haecceities can only be had by one individual. Whether we accept this assumption will largely depend on how we think objects persist through time (where something *persists* through time whenever it, somehow or another, exists at various times). If we accept *endurantism* (or *three-dimensionalism*), the view that objects persist by being wholly present at different times,[186] or if we accept *perdurantism* (or the *worm view*), the view that objects persist by having different temporal parts, or stages, at different times,[187] then we will likely accept this assumption. But if we accept *exdurantism* (or the *stage view*), the view that objects persist by having temporal counterparts at different times,[188] then we will likely reject the assumption. For, on this view, it is most natural to say that my stages—and not the worm composed of them—enjoy my haecceity, and that these stages are my non-qualitative temporal counterparts in virtue of their enjoying my haecceity. But then it will be possible, by the stage theorist's lights, for multiple individuals to enjoy the same haecceity. The stage theorist might thus claim that pluralities of worlds that fail to be haecceitistically distinct represent radically disjointed careers for various individuals.

[186] Endurantists include Thomson (1965, 1983), Haslanger (1989, 2003), and van Inwagen (1990a, 1990b).

[187] Perdurantists include Quine (1950), Heller (1984, 1990), and Lewis (1986: 202-4).

[188] Exdurantists include Sider (1996, 2001) and Hawley (2001). The term 'exdurantism' was coined by Sally Haslanger (2003).

The problem with this response is that it threatens the intelligibility of our notion of a fundamental haecceity. We cannot say, on this view, that only one thing can have the same fundamental haecceity. For lots of different person stages enjoy my haecceity. Nor can we say that only one thing at any given time can have the same fundamental haecceity. For it seems that I could travel back in time to meet my younger self. But if this is possible, then given this combination of stage theory with fundamental haecceities, it is also possible for two distinct individuals to share the same fundamental haecceity at the same time. If my future self has not traveled back in time and is not currently living in the present, then I might be lucky enough to form a conception of my haecceity as *being exactly ontologically like me and me alone at the present time*. But we lose all sense of what it is that makes this way of being individualistic. It's not that only one thing can have it. It's not that only one thing can have it at any given time. So it's not clear that we really understand it at all. But if that's right, if haecceities are unintelligibly individualistic, then they are not something we can rationally believe in. Thus, the haecceitistic fragmentationalist won't be able to avoid the initial charge that fundamental haecceities, and thus individualistic ways of being, are completely and utterly mysterious after all.

The haecceitistic fragmentationalist's best response to the problem of island universes is, thus, to accept some version of modal realism with overlap. But, as I will argue in the next section, if the haecceitistic fragmentationalist accepts overlap, then she will be unable to avoid a second problem which arises for her view given a plausible claim about the relation between ways of being and ontological categories.

4.4 The argument from ontological categories

There is an old philosophical tradition of associating different ways of being with different ontological categories.[189] The seeds of this tradition can be found in some remarks from Aristotle, and according to some commentators, is Aristotle's own view.[190] But how exactly should we understand the nature of the connection between the different ways of being and the various ontological categories?

I do not intend to suggest, as McDaniel (2010a: 634, 2017: 122-7) does, that entities belong to the same ontological category just in case they enjoy the same way of being.[191] For I believe that two entities could enjoy all the same ways of being and yet still belong to different ontological categories. So, for example, I see no reason to think that simples and composites enjoy different ways of being even though they might plausibly be said to belong to different ontological categories. I do, however, claim that in virtue of their peculiarly ontological

[189] See McDaniel (2017: 122-4) for references to—and a brief discussion of—some of the adherents of this tradition.

[190] See, for example, Aristotle's *Metaphysics* Δ.7, 1017a22-31; E.2, 1026a33-b2; Z.1, 1028a10-15; Θ.10, 1051a34-b2; and N.2, 1089a7-14. For discussion, see Brentano ([1862] 1975), Ross (1924: 306-8), Frede (1987: 41-4), Witt (1989: 41-4), Kirwan (1993: 140-3) and Loux (2012: 23-4).

[191] McDaniel (2017: 124) sometimes suggests that entities belonging to the same ontological category not only enjoy all the same ways of being, but that 'there are as many possible *perfectly natural* meanings for "being" as there are ontological categories'. Thus, for every ontological category, there is a fundamental way of being enjoyed by all and only the entities belonging to that category. But the resulting claim is too strong. For, as Bernard Bolzano ([1837] 2014a: 402/ WL 1: §118, 558) observed, there appear to be negative categories such as the non-actual (or the merely possible). There need not, however, be a corresponding fundamental way of being enjoyed by all and only merely possible entities. The realm of the merely possible might, unlike that of the actual or the possible, simply lack positive unity.

differences, entities that enjoy different ways of being belong to different ontological categories, and assume that for every way of being, there is a corresponding ontological category.[192] Thus, if there are individualistic ways of being, there will also be individualistic ontological categories: that is, fundamental ontological kinds that can only be had by one entity.

A system of ontological categories should not, intuitively, include absolutely every kind there is, but only the most general of classifications. An ontological category must carve reality at the joints. Yet not every joint-carving classification corresponds to an ontological category. Some fundamental kinds—such, perhaps, as *being a boson* and *being an electron*—are too specific to count as ontological categories. But an alleged category, no matter how fundamental, which could only be had by one entity would be more specific still. Individualistic categories are, thus, too fine-grained to count as properly ontological. A genuinely ontological category should not, it seems, be this specific.[193] A related, although perhaps less serious, problem for taking

[192] This assumption is not entirely uncontroversial. For, as McDaniel (2017: 135) points out, while Aristotle's notions of *actuality* and *potentiality* appear to correspond to ways of being, they do not appear to correspond to any ontological categories. But it is not clear to me that the difference marked out by actuality and potentiality is properly ontological. If these notions are supposed to explain the difference between a lump of clay's actually being a statue as opposed to its potentially being a statue, then they do not, as McDaniel (2017: 123 n 32) somewhat hesitantly suggests, appear to correspond to two fundamentally different quantificational/existential senses of 'being', but instead appear to correspond to two fundamentally different kinds of predication or instantiation. To uphold the actuality/potentiality distinction would thus be to accept a version of what we might call 'is'- or copula-pluralism. But differences in predication or instantiation do not strike me as particularly ontological. The distinction between actuality and potentiality should not to be confused with the distinction between the actual and the merely possible, which does seem to be ontological.

[193] This is a version of what Jan Westerhoff calls the *problem of too specific categories*. See Westerhoff (2002: 339, 2005: 50-1) for a brief presentation of this problem. It is, along with what he calls the *cut-off point problem*, one of

individualistic categories to be ontological is that there would, if these individualistic categories were abundant enough, then appear to be too many ontological categories. Thus, we should not believe that there are any individualistic ontological categories.

I have argued that given the assumption that for every way of being there is a corresponding ontological category, there will be individualistic ways of being only if there are individualistic categories; but since we should not believe that there are individualistic ontological categories, we should not believe in individualistic ways of being either. I will now turn to two objections to this argument.

The first objection seeks to undermine the soundness of my argument by constructing a parallel one. Historically, some pluralists were motivated by the following argument: God is so radically different from His creation that univocal predication between God and His creatures is impossible. But then, since being cannot be univocally predicated of both God and His creatures, they cannot enjoy a shared way of being.[194] So far, so good. But God, on this view, would seem to enjoy an individualistic way of being: a way of being that He and He alone enjoys.[195] And,

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the two main problems that Westerhoff believes must be addressed by any account of the ontological categories. McDaniel (2017: 125) notes that his account of ontological categories as fundamental ways of being does not suffer from the cut-off point problem. But he does not address the problem of too specific categories. Indeed, he does not appear to take the problem seriously at all. For he claims that the task of answering the question of whether *being an electron* corresponds to an ontological category is not a meta-ontological question, but rather belongs to ontology proper. The task of answering this question is, he thinks, simply a matter of determining whether there is a special way of being that is unique to electrons.

[194] See, for example, Aquinas's *Summa Contra Gentiles* I.32 and *Summa Theologiae* I.13.5 co. This argument is a species of what McDaniel (2010b: 693, 2017: 5-6) calls the theological motivation for ontological pluralism.

[195] As God says to Moses: 'I am who I am' (Exodus 3:14).

then, given our assumption that for every way of being there is a corresponding ontological category, there would be at least one individualistic ontological category: namely, the fundamental ontological kind to which God and God alone belongs.[196] So either God, if He were to exist, could not enjoy a way of being all to His own or else something has gone wrong with my argument.[197]

I am willing to grant that God might be so radically different from everything else that He enjoys His own way of being, but if so, then we can easily make an exception for Him. The need for such an exception should, of course, come as no surprise given that God tends to pose all kinds of problems for all sorts of metaphysical views. It is not enough, however, simply to say that God is special, we also have to say why He—and He alone—might plausibly be thought to belong to an individualistic ontological category. The pressure to admit such a category arises, I think, from the combination of two claims: first, the claim that God is radically unlike absolutely everything else; and, second, the claim that nothing is categorially homeless.[198] God cannot,

[196] Indeed, McDaniel (2017: 122 n 30) suggests that, on Aquinas's view, 'God is the sole member of the ontological category to which He belongs'.

[197] Note that this problem will only arise if we think that there is a God. Since I deny this, the problem doesn't really arise for me. But out of deference to those pluralists who have thought otherwise, I will offer a more conciliatory response.

[198] McDaniel (2017: 126) ultimately denies the second claim. For he believes that cracks, holes, shadows, and other almost nothings don't belong to any ontological categories. But he would accept the related claim that nothing that is fully real is categorially homeless.

The standard medieval view was, as Jeffrey Brower (2014: 45) notes, that the ten Aristotelian categories only apply to created beings. But if that's right, then God would be categorially homeless. Thus, on the standard medieval view, there could be ways of being for which there is no corresponding ontological category. Yet we

given the first claim, belong to any of the same ontological categories as anything else. But, given the second claim, God must belong to some primary (or top-most) ontological category. Thus, He must belong to a category all His own. We face no such pressure, however, to admit individualistic ontological subcategories. For whatever belongs to an ontological subcategory, must already belong to a primary ontological category, and so will already have a home in our catalog of entities. It should be clear, however, that if there were fundamental non-qualitative haecceities such as *being Socrates* or *being Plato*, these would not be among the most extensive natural classes of entities. For while Socrates might be haecceitistically unlike anything else, he is not, as a concretely possible entity, categorially unlike everything else. But, then, since Socrates already belongs in our catalog of entities, there is no systematic pressure to admit a further individualistic category to which he belongs. We could, I think, plausibly insist that while systematic considerations of completeness suggest that there might be individualistic primary categories, there cannot be any individualistic subcategories. We could thus reformulate our argument against the haecceitistic fragmentationalist as follows: if there are haecceitistic ways of being, then there are individualistic ontological subcategories, but since we should not believe in individualistic ontological subcategories, we should not believe in haecceitistic ways of being. This response is, I believe, sufficient to show that an argument that Socrates cannot have an individualistic way of being diverges in important respects from the argument that would seek to show that God cannot have an individualistic way of being.[199]

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could, as Brower (2014: 49) goes on to point out, plausibly interpret Aquinas, at least, as postulating a category to which God and God alone belongs even though he never states his view in these terms.

[199] The success of this reply will ultimately depend upon whether we can find any other, more plausible, examples of individualistic subcategories aside from the alleged haecceitistic subcategories currently under consideration. I do

The second objection seeks to undermine the claim that the resulting individualistic categories are too specific in any problematic respect. For if we deny that individuals are wholly present at every world at which they exist, then there will be an abundance of individuals that all enjoy the same individualistic way of being. Indeed, if we accept the stage view and take objects to persist by exduring, then these ways of being will seem less specific still. For the individuals across logical space that enjoy Socrates' way of being will, it seems, be fairly qualitatively diverse, and so *being Socrates* will enjoy a kind of generality that *being a boson* and *being an electron* do not. What this suggests is that we should distinguish between ways of being that are *strongly* individualistic—that is, ways of being that are enjoyed by exactly one individual in all of logical space—and ways of being that are only *weakly* individualistic. It is the former, and not the latter, which threaten to constitute too specific categories. There is, on this way of thinking, nothing wrong with ontological categories that are only weakly individualistic.

The haecceitistic fragmentationalist cannot avoid the problem of individualistic ontological subcategories if she accepts modal realism with overlap. For if Socrates is present at more than one world and if Socrates and Socrates alone enjoys his own way of being, then this way of being will be strongly individualistic. The haecceitistic fragmentationalist must,

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not think that we can. It is, however, important to note that the claim that there cannot be any individualistic ontological subcategories is consistent with the claim that there could be species which only have a single member. The phoenix might be taken to be an example of such a species. The angels have likewise been held to each belong to their own single-membered species as well. But since we have only placed a ban on too specific subcategories and not on too specific species, these examples do not seem to pose a problem for the present response. They would only pose a problem if they were to constitute examples of non-haecceitistic, single-membered, ontological subcategories, but, as far as I can tell, they do not.

therefore, deny overlap. But if she denies overlap, then she will be left without a plausible response to the problem of island universes from section 4.3 above.

4.5 Conclusion

I have argued that the haecceitistic fragmentationalist is faced with a dilemma. She should, as a pluralist, be a modal realist. For an ontological pluralist should believe that there is an importantly ontological difference between the actual and the merely possible, and anyone who believes this should be a modal realist. But the haecceitistic fragmentationalist must, as a modal realist, either accept or reject the claim that some possible individuals are wholly present at more than one world. If she accepts this claim, she cannot avoid the argument from ontological categories. And if she rejects this claim, she cannot avoid the argument from island universes. There is, I think, no way out of this dilemma. I thus conclude that we should not believe in individualistic ways of being.

Chapter 5: The Emptiness of Being

Abstract: A central tenant of the 'thin' conception of being is that an entity's being does not at all contribute to its nature. The canonical interpretation of this conception of being derives from the neo-Quinean thesis that being is best represented by particular—or existential—quantifier expressions. I will argue that the thin conception of being is not adequately captured by the neo-Quinean thesis. For while every version of ontological pluralism—the view that there are different fundamental ways of being—can be combined with the neo-Quinean thesis, not every version of ontological pluralism is thereby committed to a thin conception of being. The canonical interpretation must, it seems, be supplemented by some account of when an existential quantifier expression corresponds to a fundamental way of being.

5.1 Introduction

There is a venerable tradition in the history of philosophy according to which being is the emptiest of all concepts. Adherents of this tradition have been alleged to include Aristotle, Scotus, Suárez, Wolff, Hume, Kant, Hegel, Frege, Russell, and Quine.[200] An entity's being or

[200] Heidegger ([1927] 1962: 22-3/ SZ 3) names Aristotle and Hegel as representatives of this tradition, while Heidegger ([1975] 1982: 84/ GA 24: 118) adds Suárez; Caputo (1982: 112) mentions Scotus, Suárez, Wolff, and Hegel; van Inwagen (2001: 4) lists Kant, Frege, and Quine, while van Inwagen (2009a: 51-2) adds Hegel and Russel; Miller (2002: 2-13) discusses the views of Aristotle, Hume, Kant, Frege, Russell, and Quine; and Berto (2013: 12, 17) cites Hume, Kant, Frege, Russell, and Quine. I shall not attempt to defend the inclusion of any of these figures in this tradition as I suspect that our reasons for including someone in this tradition will vary depending upon how we understand—and what we take to motivate—the claim that being is the emptiest of all concepts. But the basis for the inclusion of these figures in this tradition would appear to come from the following texts: Aristotle,

existence, on this traditional view, does not at all contribute to its nature or essence. Take, for example, a particular silver dollar. It has a determinate size, shape, weight, and chemical composition; it is located somewhere in space and time; it can be exchanged for various goods and services; and so on. This tells us what this thing is. It tells us about its nature. But it does not, it seems, tell us anything about its being. It is thus possible, on this view, to distinguish between the being and the nature of a thing.

The now canonical interpretation of being's emptiness stems from the neo-Quinean thesis that being is best represented by particular—or existential—quantifier expressions in an ideal metaphysical language. An entity's being, on this view, is most perspicuously expressed in terms of quantification, while its nature is best expressed with various predicates. We can, in this way, avoid what Peter van Inwagen (2001: 4) calls 'the mistake of transferring what properly belongs to the nature of [an entity]…to the being of [that entity]'. For the concept of being will, on this account, be 'closely allied with the concept of number: to say that there are Xs is to say that the number of Xs is 1 or more—and to say nothing more profound, nothing more interesting, nothing more'. This, van Inwagen thinks, provides us with 'the highest development of what may be called the "thin" conception of being'.

But while this quantificational interpretation of being's emptiness might provide the canonical development of the thin conception of being, it does not constitute its central tenant,

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Metaphysics B.3, 998b22-7 and Γ.2, 1003b26-9, Scotus, *Ordinatio* I, d. 3, p. 1, q. 1-2, nn. 27-29 (Vatican 3:18-19) and *Lectura* I, d. 3, p. 1, q. 1-2, n. 120 (Vatican 16:270), Suárez, *Disputationes metaphysicae*, disp. 2, sect. 4, nn. 1-5 ([1597] 1861: 25:87-9), Wolff (1736: sect. 134), Hume ([1739] 1888: 66-8), Kant ([1763] 1992: Ak 2:70-7, [1781/1787] 1998: A592-603/B620-31), Hegel ([1812/ 1832] 2010: 59/ GW 21: 68-9), Frege ([1884] 1980: 64-5), Russell (1918-1919: 190-222), and Quine (1948).

which I take to be the claim that an entity's being does not at all contribute to its nature. For it is, van Inwagen (2009a: 56) claims, because 'Sartre and Heidegger and others in the existential-phenomenological tradition are…guilty of ascribing to the "being" of things features that should properly be ascribed to their natures' that they deny that being is the emptiest of all concepts; and, van Inwagen continues, it is because they deny that being is the emptiest of all concepts that 'they have, so to speak, a "thick" conception of being—as opposed to the "thin" conception of being that I believe to be the correct conception of being'. It thus seems to follow, on van Inwagen's own account, that a person has a thick conception of being because that person denies what I'm calling the central tenant of the thin conception. But if, as seems safe to assume, the thick conception of being is simply the denial of the thin conception, a person will have a thin conception of being simply because that person accepts the claim that an entity's being does not at all contribute to its nature. This, I think, is what captures the intuitive thinness of the thin conception.[201] It is what the alleged adherents of this tradition all seem to believe. It is something that any attempted development of this tradition must explain.

[201] Other commentators have attempted to locate this thinness elsewhere. Francesco Berto (2013: 31), for example, seems to think that to have a thin conception of being to accept what he calls the Parmenidean thesis that everything exists. There are, I think, two problems with this interpretation. The first is that, as Berto himself notes, the thick conception does not appear to entail the denial of the Parmenidean thesis. But if that's right, then the thick conception cannot simply be the denial of the thin conception. A second—and, I think, deeper—problem is that the thick conception is actually compatible with the Parmenidean thesis. For, as D. C. Williams (1962: 753) points out, the claim that existence is the most universal of all concepts is compatible with its also being the fullest of all concepts 'with more "content" than all the ordinary characters put together'. But if that's right, then the acceptance of the Parmenidean thesis does nothing to preclude the acceptance of a thick conception of being.

I will argue that the canonical interpretation of being's emptiness is ultimately untenable. My argument will proceed in two steps. I will first show, in section 5.2, that some versions of ontological pluralism—the view that there are different fundamental ways of being—are

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William Vallicella (2014: 47-8) suggests a different interpretation of the thinness of the thin conception. He thinks that to have a thin conception of being is 'to ascribe no metaphysical depth to the topic of existence'. It is to hold that existence does not have 'any extralogical content', that 'it is a topic that belongs to logic rather than metaphysics'. One problem with this suggestion is that it misclassifies, as adherents of a thick conception of being, those who following Theodore Sider (2009, 2011) hold that some existential quantifiers do a better job of carving at the ontological joints of reality. For, on this view, there is a non-logical difference between the compositional nihilist's quantifiers, which range over all and only entities that have no proper parts, and the compositional universalist's quantifiers, which range over arbitrary fusions of entities. The question of which quantifier to adopt is a question for metaphysics, not logic. Thus, there appears to be a kind of metaphysical depth to the topic of existence. But there is no reason to think that those who go in for joint carving quantifiers are thereby attributing to the being of an entity a feature that properly belongs to its nature. Another problem is that it also seems to classify those who accept the neo-Thomistic thesis that existence is an activity as adherents of a thick conception of being. But since the activity of existing is no part of the nature of the entities that engage in it, there is no reason to think that the neo-Thomist takes the being of an entity to contribute to its nature.

Kris McDaniel (2017: 215) thinks that to have a thin conception of being is to claim that being 'admits no hidden complexities and has no aspects'. Thus, he thinks that any quantificational account of being which holds that the meaning of the existential quantifier that ranges over absolutely everything there is not fundamental but is instead analogical will be a thick rather than a thin conception of being (2017: 31 n 43). This strikes me a mistake. For if such a pluralist could maintain that the specific, fundamental ways of being do not themselves contribute to the natures of the things that enjoy them, then she should also be able to maintain that the generic way of being, which is unified by these more specific ways of being, contributes nothing to their natures as well. So while it might be true on van Inwagen's preferred monistic development of the thin conception that being does not admit of any hidden complexities, it is not, I think, an essential part of the thin conception itself.

compatible with a distinction between an entity's being and its nature. I will then show, in section 5.3, that the canonical interpretation of being's emptiness cannot be combined with pluralism as it stands. For although pluralism can be combined with the neo-Quinean thesis, not every such version of pluralism can coherently maintain a distinction between the being and the nature of a thing. This suggests that it is not sufficient for the pluralist to say that differences in being are differences in quantification. The canonical interpretation must, it seems, be supplemented by some account of when differences in quantification correspond to differences in being.[202] I will attempt to provide such an account in sections 5.4, 5.5, and 5.6.

5.2 Ontological pluralism and the thin conception of being

Ontological pluralism—or *pluralism about being*—is the view that there are different fundamental ways of being. Two entities can differ, on this view, not only in their nature, but also in their being. A narwhal, for instance, is vastly different from a number. It has a determinate size, shape, and weight. These properties help to make up its nature. A number, on the other hand, has a very different nature. It lacks a size, shape, and weight. It isn't located at any time or any place. Yet the true extent of the difference between these entities does not seem to be captured solely by these differences in their natures. There also seems to be a peculiarly ontological difference between them: the narwhal, we might say, actually exists, while the number merely subsists. The pluralist thus holds that just as there is diversity in the nature of what there is, there is also diversity in the being of what there is. This presupposes that there is an intelligible distinction to be drawn between an entity's being and its nature.

[202] I am not here arguing for the falsity of the neo-Quinean thesis. I am simply arguing that the neo-Quinean thesis does not—all on its own—provide an adequate account of being's emptiness.

Peter van Inwagen has, however, sought to question the pluralist's allegiance to this distinction. For the pluralist would seem to take the observation that there is a vast difference between, say, a number and a narwhal to motivate the claim that there is an ontological difference between such entities. But, van Inwagen insists, 'a vast difference between [two things] must consist in a vast difference in their natures' (1998: 15, 2009a: 56). For once we have described the vast difference in the nature of two things, we 'have done everything that can be done to describe [the difference between them]. That's what describing a vast difference is' (2014b: 23, cf. 2018: 216). The pluralist, van Inwagen thinks, mistakes a difference in the nature of two things for a difference in the being of those things. It is for this reason that he claims that 'the foundation of the idea that there are distinct and irreducible modes of being' is based on 'a fundamental meta-ontological error': namely, 'the error of ascribing to the *being* of a thing a feature that properly belongs to its *nature*' (2014b: 21-2).[203]

I will grant that some avowedly pluralist positions commit this error. But I do not believe that every version of pluralism is committed to a 'thick' conception of being; there are, I think, some versions of pluralism which maintain that there aren't any fundamental ways of being that contribute to the nature of the things that enjoy them. So rather than focus on alleged cases of ontological differences between entities that have vastly different natures, I will look instead to

[203] See Williams (1962: 757) and Grossmann (1984: 169-70, 1992: 95-6) for similar criticisms. Merricks (2019: 602-3) attributes a slightly different argument to van Inwagen. The problem, as Merricks sees it, seems to lie with the pluralist's claim that certain differences between entities are peculiarly ontological. Yes, the argument goes, a number and a narwhal are different, but that's all there is to it. Once we say that one is abstract and the other concrete, we have said all that needs to be said. We don't need to—and we should not try to—express this difference by adding that it is peculiarly ontological. I will discuss this argument in section 6.3 below.

cases where the natures of the entities in question appear to be exactly the same. Take, for example, an actual and a merely possible silver dollar. These entities might have exactly the same size, shape, weight, and chemical composition. They might even be perfect indiscernible duplicates. But for all their similarities, there still seems to be an important and, I think, peculiarly ontological difference between them: one is actual, the other merely possible.

It won't do to insist that this difference is due to a difference in the natures of these entities. For if an entity's actuality (or lack of actuality) were part of its nature, then nothing that is actual could have exactly the same nature as anything that is merely possible. But then, assuming that there aren't any actual unicorns, nothing with exactly the same nature as a merely possible unicorn could have been actual (since, by assumption, the addition of actuality would alter the nature of a merely possible unicorn). It would thus be impossible for there to have been an actual unicorn. Indeed, it would also follow that nothing with the same nature as a merely possible entity could have been actual (since, again, the addition of actuality would alter the nature of these entities). But this, I believe, is extremely implausible. We thus appear to have good reason to think that an actual and a merely possible dollar can have the exact same nature.[204] Yet we also have reason to think that, for all we have just said, there is still a genuine, objective difference between them. And, given the distinction between the being and the nature

[204] Fine (2005: 14) makes a related observation. He considers a view where actual objects are alleged to be concrete and merely possible objects abstract. He then argues that if this is supposed to amount to a fundamental difference in the natures of these objects and 'it is of the nature of a possible object to be abstract, then this is presumably a property that it must have in any possible circumstances in which it is actual. But in such circumstance, it is an actual object and therefore also concrete'. This account is faced with a dilemma: it must either give up any hope of capturing the intuitive depth of the difference between the actual and the merely possible, or it must maintain that, despite what we might have thought, a merely possible object could not have been actual after all.

of an entity, it seems plausible to claim that the difference between an actual and a merely possible dollar lies not in their nature, but in their being. Thus, the pluralist who distinguishes between the actual and the merely possible does not, I think, make the mistake of ascribing to the being of an actual entity a feature that properly belongs to its nature.

Let's return then to the pluralist who takes there to be an ontological difference between a number and a narwhal. These entities have vastly different natures. But the same can presumably be said about an actual boson and a merely possible fermion, which not only seem to have vastly different natures, but appear to enjoy different ways of being as well. In order to show that abstract entities and concrete entities differ in their being, we would do well to focus not on cases where these entities have vastly different natures, but on cases where they have the exact same nature. Take, for example, an incredibly uninteresting, abstract mathematical structure with exactly one element. The abstract entity that makes up this mathematical structure does not have any proper parts, and aside from its simple mereological structure, it does not appear to have much of a nature at all. Now take a qualitatively bare, simple individual that alone constitutes a concrete possible world.[205] This concrete entity does not appear to instantiate any fundamental

[205] Why think that such an entity is possible? It seems possible for there to be a simple individual that does not instantiate any fundamental qualitative properties, but which bears a fundamental qualitative relation to a concrete entity. This suggests, I think, that our simple individual is itself concrete. For these two entities together appear to compose a further concrete entity, and, I assume, concrete entities are composed entirely out of concrete parts. We can then arrive at the possibility of a qualitatively bare, simple lonely individual by application of the principle of solitude: roughly, the principle that anything can exist all by itself. But if the simple individual with which we started was concrete, then the qualitatively bare, simple lonely individual with which we ended up should be concrete as well. Thus, it seems possible for there to be a qualitatively bare, simple individual that alone constitutes a concrete possible world.

qualitative properties or relations. It does not have any proper parts, and aside from its mereological structure (which is exactly the same as that of the abstract entity we just considered), it does not appear to have much of a nature at all. These two entities thus appear to have exactly the same nature: they are both simples and do not instantiate any fundamental qualitative properties or stand in any fundamental qualitative relations. But, for all their similarities, there is still an important and, I think, peculiarly ontological difference between them: one is abstract, the other is concrete.[206]

Many, I suspect, will simply insist that this example is too exotic to be taken seriously. But, given its apparent intelligibility, I can see no real reason to ignore it. Others will likely insist that there must be some primitive difference in the natures of these things: they will likely claim that the fact that one is abstract and the other concrete itself gives us reason to think that these entities differ in their natures. But if we have already countenanced one difference in being, namely, the difference between the actual and the merely possible, I can see no principled reason to refuse to admit another. Thus, the pluralist who distinguishes between the abstract and the concrete does not obviously make the mistake of ascribing to the being of an abstract entity a feature that properly belongs to its nature.

[206] Bricker (2008: 118) suggests that an entity is concrete if and only if and because it instantiates, or it has parts that instantiate, a fundamental qualitative property. The existence of a qualitatively bare, simple, lonely, concrete entity would, however, serve as a counterexample to this analysis. I suspect that Bricker would simply deny the assumption that concrete entities are composed entirely out of concrete parts, which I used to argue for the existence of such an entity in footnote 205 above. But unless we are already committed to Bricker's reductive analysis, I can see no reason to deny this assumption.

I have argued that some versions of ontological pluralism are compatible with the distinction between the being and the nature of a thing: the pluralist who takes there to be an ontological difference between the actual and the merely possible—as well as between the abstract and the concrete—can, I think, plausibly maintain that an entity's being does not at all contribute to its nature. If this is correct, then some pluralists can adopt an adequately thin conception of being. But, as we shall see in the next section, this puts pressure on the canonical interpretation of being's emptiness in terms of quantification.

5.3 The thin conception of being and the neo-Quinean thesis

Quantificational pluralism is the view that there are different fundamental ways of being that are best represented in an ideal metaphysical language by (semantically primitive) particular—or existential—quantifier expressions.[207] A difference between entities is peculiarly ontological, on this account, when those entities are ranged over by different fundamental quantifiers. Take, for example, the difference between an actual narwhal and a merely possible unicorn. The narwhal, but not the unicorn, is ranged over by the actualist quantifier, $\exists_@$. In general, we can say that *x* is actual (or enjoys actual existence) if and only if and because $\exists_@ y\ (y = x)$. Or take, for another example, the difference between a narwhal and a number. The number, but not the narwhal, is ranged over by the pure subsistentialist quantifier, $\exists_a$ (whereas the narwhal and the unicorn are both ranged over by the quantifier, $\exists_c$, which ranges over all and only concretely possible entities). In general, we can say that *x* is abstract (or enjoys pure subsistence) if and only if and

[207] We'll say that a quantifier expression is *semantically primitive* if it cannot be defined in terms of an absolutely unrestricted quantifier expression and some restricting predicate.

because $\exists_a y\ (y = x)$. The quantificational pluralist thus combines ontological pluralism with the neo-Quinean thesis.

I will argue that the coherence of quantificational pluralism gives rise to a problem for the canonical development of the thin conception of being in terms of quantification. For while any version of ontological pluralism can be formulated as a version of quantificational pluralism, not every version of ontological pluralism is committed to a thin conception of being. Thus, there would seem to be versions of quantificational pluralism that ascribe to the being of a thing a feature that properly belongs to its nature.

I will focus here on three potentially thick versions of quantificational pluralism.[208] The first holds that persons (or conscious subjects or Daseins) enjoy a way of being—namely, *Existenz*—that is not enjoyed by anything else.[209] You and I appear to be vastly different from tables and chairs, rocks and trees. We are the kind of entity whose being is an issue for it. We are the kind of entity that can sit around and think about the way of being we enjoy. Tables and chairs can't do that. Rocks and trees can't do that. Only persons can do that. There thus appears to be an important—and, on this view, fundamentally ontological—difference between a person and a non-person: persons enjoy *Existenz*, non-persons do not.

This existentialist view can, I think, be formulated as a version of quantificational pluralism. Our best metaphysical theories will, on this view, contain a special quantifier

[208] We'll say that a version of quantificational pluralism is *thick* if it is committed to a thick conception of being. And we'll say that to be committed to a thick conception of being is to be committed to the claim that there is at least one fundamental way of being that contributes to the nature of the things that enjoy it.

[209] This version of pluralism is discussed in van Inwagen (1998: 15, 2009a: 55-6, 2014b: 22) and McDaniel (2017: 277-9). It is inspired by Heidegger ([1927] 1962) and Sartre ([1943] 1969).

expression, '$\exists_e$', which ranges over all and only persons, and which cannot be defined in terms of an unrestricted quantifier expression and a restricting predicate (such as 'is a person'). This suggests that the predicate 'is a person' derives its naturalness from the quantifier expression '$\exists_e$', and appears to commit the existentialist to the claim that: *x* is a person (or enjoys *Existenz*) if and only if and because $\exists_e y\ (y = x)$. But since the predicate 'is a person' carries qualitative content about the nature of a person, and since this predicate appears to be defined in terms of the quantifier expression '$\exists_e$', this suggests that '$\exists_e$' itself carries qualitative content about the nature of a person. The existentialist thus appears to hold that an entity's being can contribute to its nature and is thereby committed to a thick conception of being.

To deflect the charge that the existentialist accepts a thick conception of being, we might attempt to distinguish between the predicates 'is a person' and 'enjoys *Existenz*'. These predicates will be intensionally equivalent: they will necessarily designate the same class of entities. But they will not thereby carry the same content. The predicate 'is a person' will be defined up in terms of various other predicates so as to represent the nature of a person. It will apply to various entities because those entities have that nature. But the predicate 'enjoys *Existenz*' will not be defined up in terms of the predicates that capture the nature of a person. It will instead be defined in terms of the quantifier expression '$\exists_e$'. It won't carry any qualitative content about the nature of a person.

We can now ask which of these intentionally equivalent predicates better captures the unity of the class they designate. There is, on this existentialist view, a fundamental and peculiarly ontological difference between persons and non-persons. This difference, being fundamental, is not well represented by the predicate 'is a person', which itself admits of further definition. It is better—albeit still not perfectly—represented by the predicate 'enjoys *Existenz*',

which is defined in terms of the quantifier expression '$\exists_e$'. Thus, while we can explain the difference between a person and a non-person by appealing to their natures, we cannot explain the fundamentality of this difference. To explain the fact that a person and a non-person appear to differ in a fundamental respect, we need to look not to the nature but to the being of these entities.[210]

I doubt that this response will completely dispel the worry that the existentialist has confused the nature of a person with the being of a person (especially given that, of necessity, all

[210] We seem to run into a similar situation in the case of actuality. For if we had what David Lewis (1986: 221) calls a 'mighty language', which 'lacked for nothing in the way of qualitative predicates, and lacked for nothing in its resources for complex infinitary constructions', then—depending upon the extent of actuality—the predicates 'is actual' and 'enjoys actual existence' might be intensionally equivalent with some infinitely disjunctive predicate. But while this infinite predicate would carry qualitative content about the nature of every actual entity, it would not account for the unity of actuality, which seems to spring from a basic and non-qualitative source. I argued for this in section 2.2 above.

The main difference between these two cases is that while the coincidence is merely accidental in the case of actuality, it is essential in the case of *Existenz*. We can, at least, conceive of entities that have exactly the same natures, but which do not both enjoy actuality. But we cannot, I think, conceive of entities that have exactly the same nature, but which do not both enjoy *Existenz*. So we might still worry that the existentialist has ascribed to the being of a person a feature that properly belongs to its nature. We might be able to dispel this worry if instead of focusing upon the difference between conscious subjects and everything else, we focused instead on the difference between a subject and a mere object. For it seems intelligible to suppose that a slumbering monad could have exactly the same nature as a mere object. But while a slumbering monad is a subject, a mere object is not. If that's right, then we should be able to intelligibly distinguish the being of a subject—its subjective existence—from the nature of a subject. The resulting view would not, of course, be a version of existentialism (since a subject need not be the kind of entity whose being is an issue for it), but it would, I think, nevertheless be an attractive version of ontological pluralism.

and only persons enjoy *Existenz*). I am, however, willing to give the existentialist the benefit of the doubt here. But, regardless of what we make of this response, it will not be available to other versions of quantificational pluralism.

Let's turn, next, to a second version of quantificational pluralism, one which is much more clearly committed to a thick conception of being. This pluralist holds that every perfectly natural physical property is really just a fundamental way of being in disguise.[211] There is, on this view, a way of being that, say, all and only photons enjoy. It is the enjoyment or non-enjoyment of this way of being that ultimately distinguishes a photon from a non-photon. So, given the neo-Quinean thesis, our best metaphysical theories will not contain a primitive predicate 'is a photon', but will instead contain a special, semantically primitive, restricted quantifier expression '$\exists_p$' which ranges over all and only photons.[212] This extreme pluralist would thus seem to hold that: *x* is a photon (or enjoys what we might call photonic existence) if and only if and because $\exists_p y\ (y = x)$. This will, however, load the quantifier expression '$\exists_p$' with whatever content is carried by the predicate 'is a photon'. And since this predicate reflects the nature of the entities to which it applies, '$\exists_p$' would seem to tell us something about the nature of the entities in its domain. This extreme pluralist thus appears to ascribe to the being of a photon a

[211] Similar versions of pluralism are discussed in Grossmann (1992: 96), who briefly considers a pluralist who rejects 'all properties (and relations) in favor of so many modes of existence' and Barnes (ms), who explores the view that there is a way of being for every intrinsic monadic predicate.

[212] I am assuming that *being a photon* is supposed to be a perfectly natural physical property. If it turns out not to be, we could just pick a different example. I am also assuming that the predicate 'is a photon' does not express a theoretical role that might be filled by a variety of different properties.

feature that properly belongs to its nature, and is thereby committed to a thick conception of being.

It should be clear that the existentialist's response is not available to the extreme pluralist. For one thing, this pluralist takes the difference between a photon and a non-photon to be primarily ontological: to say that something is a photon is just to say that it enjoys a special way of being, namely, photonic existence. There is thus no distinction to be drawn between the predicates 'is a photon' and 'enjoys photonic existence'. But there is a much deeper problem. For were the extreme pluralist to claim that the predicate 'is a photon' captures the nature but not the being of a photon, this predicate would—given the fundamental nature of a photon—have to be taken as primitive. But then there would be nothing left for the quantifier expression '$\exists_p$' to capture: the fundamentality of the difference between photons and non-photons would already be represented by the primitive predicate 'is a photon'.

Let's turn, at last, to a third potentially thick version of quantificational pluralism, according to which simples (or objects without any proper parts) enjoy a way of being different from that of composites. Our best metaphysical theories will, given the neo-Quinean thesis, have to contain a special quantifier expression, '$\exists_s$', which ranges over all and only simples, and which cannot be defined in terms of an unrestricted quantifier expression and a restricting predicate (such as 'is a simple').[213] But since the difference between a simple and a non-simple

[213] Compositional nihilists hold that everything is simple and that nothing has proper parts. There is, according to this pluralist, something right and something wrong about these claims. It is true that there is a fundamental way of being such that everything is simple and that nothing has proper parts. But there are other ways being as well. And it is certainly not that case that absolutely everything is simple or that nothing at all has proper parts. The way of being that all and only simples enjoy might be fundamental, but it is not the only fundamental way of being that there is.

is, on this view, supposed to be somehow ontological, this pluralist would seem to hold that: *x* is simple (or enjoys what we might call simple existence) if and only if and because $\exists_s y\ (y = x)$. This, once again, seems to load the quantifier expression '$\exists_s$' with whatever content is carried by the predicate 'is simple'. But since this predicate reflects the mereological structure of the entities to which it applies, and since an entity's mereological structure appears to contribute to its nature, '$\exists_s$' would seem to tell us something about the nature of the entities in its domain. This pluralist thus appears to ascribe to the being of a simple a feature that contributes to its nature, and thereby seems to adopt a thick conception of being.

I do not believe that this pluralist can plausibly claim that while the predicate 'is a simple' captures only a non-fundamental difference in nature between simples and non-simples, we need the quantifier expression '$\exists_s$' to capture the fundamentality of this difference. For, given the interdefinability of various mereological properties and relations, they all appear to have equal claim to fundamentality. But taking only some of these properties and relations to be fundamental would, as Theodore Sider (2011: 217-22) argues, require making an arbitrary choice with respect to what is fundamental. And this, I think, we should not do. The predicate 'is a simple' should therefore be taken to express the fundamentality of the difference between simples and non-simples. To insist that we need the quantifier expression '$\exists_s$' to capture this fundamentality would seem to ascribe to the being of a simple a feature that properly belongs to its nature.

I have argued that given the assumption that some forms of ontological pluralism are compatible with being's emptiness, the neo-Quinean thesis provides us with the best

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The nihilist, it seems, makes that same mistake as the actualist, who holds that everything is actual: namely, she focuses on a single way of being at the expense of all others.

interpretation of this emptiness only if every form of quantificational pluralism is committed to a thin conception of being; but since, as we have just seen, not every form of quantificational pluralism is committed to a thin conception of being, the neo-Quinean thesis alone does not provide us with the best interpretation of being's emptiness. It must, it seems, be supplemented by some account of when an existential quantifier expression corresponds to a fundamental way of being.

5.4 The nature of being

What is it, then, that accounts for the emptiness of a way of being? I will begin with the generic, unrestricted way of being that absolutely everything enjoys. I will not only assume that there is such a way of being, I will also assume that it is both empty and fundamental. But if this generic way of being is indeed empty, why might that be? I will suggest that it contributes nothing to a thing's nature due to a combination of its generality, its non-qualitative status, and its failure to admit of real definition.[214]

Let's start with its *generality*. The generic way of being is enjoyed by absolutely everything there is. It is, given this universality, highly general: it is enjoyed by entities with very different natures. But while this generality appears to be necessary to ensure that the generic way of being does not contribute to nature of the things that enjoy it, it is not sufficient. For the fact that a concept is general—even absolutely general—does not ensure that it contributes nothing to

[214] This account is inspired by Heidegger's ([1927] 1962: 21-24/ SZ 2-4) discussion of three traditional 'presuppositions' (or 'prejudices') about the nature of being: namely, that it is the most universal of all concepts, that it is undefinable, and that it is self-evident.

the nature of the things that enjoy it: there might, it seems, be some quite general nature that is common to absolutely everything.[215]

Let's turn next to its *non-qualitative status*. The generic way of being is, we assumed, fundamental. But any fundamental notion that contributes to an entity's qualitative character, contributes to its nature. This ensures that, given its emptiness, the generic way of being cannot contribute to an entity's qualitative character: it must instead have some kind of non-qualitative status. But while this is a necessary condition for the generic way of being's emptiness, it is not sufficient. For, as we saw above, mereological properties and relations contribute to an entity's nature, but these appear to be both fundamental and non-qualitative.[216]

Let's turn at last to its *failure to admit of real definition*. The generic way of being is fundamental. But even some fundamental concepts admit of real definitions: the mereological

[215] Aristotle would presumably have denied this. For, he argued, if being were a genus, then no differentia would have being (for a genus cannot be predicated of a differentia taken apart from its species) and being would lack universality; but since the differentia of any genus must have being, being cannot be a genus (*Metaphysics* B.3, 998b22-7). And if being is not a genus and the nature of a thing is given solely in terms of that thing's genus, species, and differentia, then the being of a thing will not contribute to the nature of a thing: a man and an existent man are, as Aristotle says elsewhere, the same thing (*Metaphysics* Γ.2, 1003b26-9). Thus, on this view about what constitutes the nature of a thing, being's universality would appear to be sufficient for its emptiness.

[216] I accept a causal account of qualitative properties and relations, according to which a fundamental property or relation is *qualitative* if and only if it plays a causal (or nomic) role at some world. See chapter 3 above. But I also believe that the mereological properties and relations are not even in principle observable or otherwise detectable in any way and so cannot be the kinds of things that play causal (or nomic) roles. Thus, given their fundamentality, I take the mereological properties and relations to be non-qualitative. Note that Phillip Bricker (1996: 233-4, 2006: 49) and Katherine Hawley (2009: 102) both take mereological relations such as composition to be non-qualitative as well.

properties and relations can, as noted in sections 3.4 and 5.3 above, be defined in terms of each other, and yet each of them appears to be fundamental. It thus seems that if we want to ensure that the generic way of being does not contribute to the nature of the things that enjoy it, we must assume that it cannot be properly defined in alternative terms (since these might contribute to its nature). But while this indefinability might be necessary to ensure that the generic way of being does not contribute to nature of the things that enjoy it, it is clearly not sufficient. For an entity's being a photon is, I will assume, a primitive and undefinable feature, and yet it clearly contributes to the nature of the things that have it.

These three conditions appear to be necessary for the generic way of being's emptiness. I believe that they are also jointly sufficient. But I won't argue for that just yet. I will first argue that the specific, restricted ways of being which, as we saw in section 5.2, appear to be intuitively empty are analogous to the generic, unrestricted way of being in all three of these respects. I will then argue that the ways of being which, as we saw in section 5.3, do not appear to be empty are not so analogous. This will lend credence to the claim that a fundamental way of being is *empty*—that is, does not contribute to the nature of the entities that enjoy it—if and only if it is sufficiently general, it is devoid of qualitative content, and it does not admit of real definition.

5.5 The analogy of being

I will begin by showing that actual existence, concrete possible existence, and abstract possible subsistence are importantly analogous to the generic way of being with respect to their generality, their non-qualitative status, and their indefinability. I'll start with their generality. A way of being will be general, roughly, to the extent that it is—or can be—enjoyed by a variety of

entities with a variety of natures.[217] The greater the variety, the more general the way of being. The generic, unrestricted way of being, given its universality, will be enjoyed by the greatest possible variety of entities with the greatest possible variety of natures. It is absolutely general. But actual existence, concrete possible existence, and abstract possible subsistence are not themselves universal. How, then, might these specific, restricted ways of being be sufficiently general?

One way to show that a way of being is highly general would be to show that it subsumes a variety of different natures. Let's say that entities with the same nature share *natural kinds*. We can then say that a fundamental way of being *subsumes* a natural kind whenever the class of entities that enjoy that way of being contains the class of entities that share that natural kind. Note, however, that the mere fact that a class A contains a class B is not sufficient to show that A is more general than B. For while the gerrymandered class of abstract objects and the Eiffel Tower contains the class of abstract objects, it is not obviously more general than it.[218] I will assume that A is more general than B if (i) A contains B, and (ii) A is at least as broadly natural as B.[219] Then, assuming that a class of entities which enjoys a fundamental way of being will be

[217] An individualistic way of being—a way of being that can only be enjoyed by a single entity at any given world—might be enjoyed by entities with a variety of different natures. For the nature of the entity that enjoys an individualistic way of being at this world might be very different from the nature of the entities that enjoy it at other worlds. But since this way of being can only be enjoyed by one entity per world, it will lack generality. To say that a way of being is general is not simply to say that it can be enjoyed by entities with a variety of different natures, but also that it can be enjoyed by a variety of different entities.

[218] See Norton (1976: 107) and Westerhoff (2005: 25-6).

[219] Westerhoff (2005: 26) takes the notion of naturalness to be obscure. He appeals instead to a notion of dependence, which he officially defines as follows: B depends on A iff necessarily, if A is empty, then B is empty as

a perfectly natural class, a fundamental way of being's subsumption of a wide variety of natural kinds will ensure that it has a high degree of generality.

There are two problems with this understanding of generality. The first is that subsumption is not necessary for emptiness. Take, for example, the way of being that all and only actual entities enjoy. It is one of the clearest cases of a specific, restricted way of being that does not at all contribute to the nature of the entities that enjoy it. It might, however, fail to subsume any natural kinds at all. For while our world might well be unique in its actuality, there don't appear to be any natural kinds that are unique to our world. A second, much deeper, problem lies not so much in the fact that actuality, which happens to be one of the clearest cases of an empty way of being, does not appear to subsume any natural kinds, but in the fact that it is only *because* the class of actual entities does not appear to contain—and instead only seems to intersect—various classes of entities that share a natural kind that actuality is one of the clearest cases of an empty way of being.

Another way to ensure that a way of being is highly general would be to show that it is pervasive across highly general fundamental relations. We'll say that a fundamental way of being is *pervasive* across a fundamental relation whenever it spreads through logical space in such a way that anything that bears that relation to something which enjoys that way of being will enjoy that way of being as well.[220] Actual existence, concrete possible existence, and

well (see Westerhoff 2002: 338, 2005: 27). But, as McDaniel (2017: 120) points out, this does not avoid the problem of gerrymandered classes: for it is necessary that if the class of abstract objects and the Eiffel Tower is empty, then so is the class of abstract objects.

[220] This will ensure that the rough criterion of being enjoyed by a variety of entities with a variety of natures is met provided that the relevant relation holds between a variety of different entities with a variety of different natures.

abstract possible subsistence all appear to be pervasive across the relations that unify concrete possible worlds and abstract possible structures. The way of being that all and only actual entities enjoy appears to be pervasive across the relations that unify worlds. For, as Phillip Bricker (2001: 44-5) observes, it is unintelligible to suppose that we might find something non-actual if we just traveled far enough away. Actual existence is thus all or nothing: if any part of a world enjoys it, then every other part of that world enjoys it as well. And since actuality contains—or could contain—a variety of different entities with a variety of different natures, actual existence will be highly general. The ways of being that all and only concrete possible entities and that all and only abstract possible entities enjoy appear to be equally pervasive. For it seems unintelligible to suppose that we might find the number two hiding in the cupboard, under the sink, or anywhere else for that matter. Concrete existence and abstract subsistence thus appear to be all or nothing: if any part of an externally unified whole is concrete, then every part of that whole is concrete; if any part is abstract, then every part is abstract. It thus seems that actual existence, concrete possible existence, and abstract possible subsistence are all highly general ways of being.

I'll turn then to their non-qualitative status. A way of being will have a non-qualitative status when the property of enjoying that way of being fails to be a qualitative property. But what does it take for a property to be—or fail to be—qualitative? The qualitative properties can be intuitively characterized in terms of qualitative duplication and indiscernibility: intrinsic qualitative properties are those properties that intrinsic qualitative duplicates must have in common, while extrinsic qualitative properties are those additional properties that indiscernibly situated intrinsic qualitative duplicates must have in common as well. This intuitive characterization is, of course, circular. For to say that two objects are *qualitative duplicates* is

just to say that there is a one-one correspondence between their parts that preserves all the fundamental qualitative (as well as all the fundamental mereological) properties had by their parts and all the fundamental qualitative (as well as all the fundamental mereological) relations between their parts.[221] But, provided that we can give substance to the notion of a fundamental qualitative property, this characterization need not be empty. I will more or less follow David Lewis (1983a) in taking a fundamental qualitative property to be a fundamental property that grounds causal powers. A property or relation will thus be *qualitative* whenever it plays, or is grounded in properties and relations that play, fundamental causal roles. The generic, unrestricted way of being will, given both its universality and its fundamentality, have a non-qualitative status provided that there are entities such as the *sui generis* numbers or the pure sets that do not themselves instantiate any fundamental causal properties or stand in any fundamental causal relations. For while none of the properties or relations had by such entities would appear to be qualitative, each of these entities have the property of enjoying the generic, unrestricted way of being. But since actual existence, concrete possible existence, and abstract possible subsistence are not themselves universal and needn't be had by absolutely everything there is, why think that these specific, restricted ways of being have a non-qualitative status as well? Or, to put this another way, why think that the properties of enjoying these ways of being do not play, and are not themselves grounded in properties that play, fundamental causal roles?

One way to show that a fundamental way has a non-qualitative status would be to show that the property of enjoying a fundamental way of being is undetectable. For a property that

[221] See Lewis (1986: 61), Bricker (1993: 274, 1996: 227), Sider (1993: sect. 3.2.1, 2014: 216), and McDaniel (2007a: 242-43, 253, 2008: 128).

plays a fundamental causal role will, it seems, be detectable in principle.[222] But an entity's actuality—or its concrete or abstract possibility—does not intuitively appear to be something that we could, even in principle, observe or detect. These ways of being are not epistemically robust in the way that paradigmatically qualitative properties such as *being red* or *being blue* would seem to be. We can, for instance, no more see that an entity is actual rather than merely possible than we can see that an individual is Socrates rather than someone who looks and acts just like him. There is, I think, intuitive pressure to take these ways of being to be undetectable. But there are more principled reasons to take them to be undetectable as well. For, as we just saw, these ways of being appear to be all or nothing: they spread throughout concrete possible worlds and abstract possible structures in such a way that if one part of a world or structure enjoys one of these ways of being, then every part of that world or structure enjoys that way of being. But anything that is pervasive in this respect cannot, it seems, be properly observed or detected (since no possible observer could be differently affected by the presence than by the absence of such things). It thus seems that the properties of enjoying actual existence, concrete possible existence, and abstract possible subsistence do not play fundamental causal roles.

Another way to show that a fundamental way of being has a non-qualitative status would be to show that that property of enjoying that way of being is tied up in various necessary

[222] I argued for this claim in section 3.2 above. The argument went roughly as follows: A property will play a fundamental causal role and thus have causal powers only if that property is capable of affecting various objects. But if a property is capable of affecting various objects, then there must be possible objects that are left differently affected by that property's presence than by its absence. And if there are such possible objects, then the property in question will be detectable in principle. Thus, if a property plays a fundamental causal role, it must be detectable in principle.

connections and is not freely recombinable. For a property that is involved in various necessary connections is not, by Humean assumption, fit to ground causal powers. But the properties of enjoying actual existence, concrete possible existence, and abstract possible subsistence cannot, due to their pervasiveness, be freely recombined. They are thus unfit to ground causal powers. It thus seems that actual existence, concrete possible existence, and abstract possible subsistence all have a non-qualitative status.

I'll turn finally to their failure to admit of real definition. A way of being will be *fundamental* when it makes for objective, ontological similarities among the entities that enjoy it. But the fact that a way of being is fundamental does not ensure that it must be taken as primitive. For some fundamental notions such as parthood, proper parthood, and overlap can, as we noted in sections 3.4 and 5.3, be interdefined. These notions appear to admit of real definition, and thus seem to inherit the nature of their *definiens*. For, in general, we can say that a fundamental notion, F, admits of real definition if and only if, necessarily, absolutely everything that enjoys F also satisfies some distinct but equally fundamental non-universal conditions, Φ, and vice versa.[223] Thus it seems that a fundamental way of being will contribute nothing to the nature of the entities that enjoy it only if it does not admit of real definition and must be taken as

[223] I am not here presenting a general account of real definition. I am simply attempting to say when a *fundamental* notion should be taken to admit of real definition. To do this, I am requiring that the relevant conditions, Φ, must not themselves include F and must not apply to absolutely everything there is. The first requirement is intended to rule out the possibility of trivial definitions (such as to enjoy F is to enjoy F), while the second is intended to ensure that the generic, unrestricted way of being cannot itself be defined. See Rosen (2015) for a detailed attempt to provide a general account of real definition. I should note, however, that I prefer a much more permissive account of real definition than Rosen does.

primitive.[224] The generic, unrestricted way of being will, given its universality, only be capable of satisfying universally applicable conditions. It will thus fail to admit of real definition. But given that actual existence, concrete possible existence, and abstract possible subsistence are not themselves universal, why should we think that these specific, restricted ways of being fail to admit of real definition?

To show that a fundamental way of being does not admit of real definition it is sufficient to show that it is intelligible to suppose that there are—or could be—entities which have the same nature and instantiate all the same fundamental properties and relations, but which do not both enjoy that way of being. Concrete possible existence and abstract possible subsistence can, I think, both be show to satisfy this condition. For, as I argued in section 5.2 above, it intelligible to suppose that there are entities that instantiate all the same fundamental properties and relations which nevertheless differ with respect to their enjoyment of concrete possible existence. A lonely, qualitatively bare, simple concrete individual and an utterly uninteresting, single element, abstract mathematical structure might otherwise instantiate all the same fundamental properties and relations, but they would still differ in an important respect: one enjoys concrete possible existence, the other does not. Thus, there do not appear to be any distinct, fundamental conditions that are satisfied by all and only entities that enjoy concrete possible existence.[225] The

[224] I should mention an important caveat here: if a fundamental way of being could be defined solely in terms of other fundamental ways of being that are themselves empty and thus do not contribute to the nature of the entities that enjoy them, there would be no nature to be inherited from these other ways of being. There would thus be an empty way of being that admits of real definition solely in terms of other empty ways of being. I will ignore this possibility in what follows.

[225] I thus reject a reductionist account of concreteness which holds that, necessarily, an entity enjoys concrete possible existence if and only if it has a part that instantiates a fundamental qualitative property or relation. This

same can be said for abstract possible subsistence.[226] Actual existence can, I think, also be show to satisfy this condition. For, as I argued in section 5.2, it is intelligible to suppose that there could be entities that instantiate all the same fundamental properties and relations which nevertheless differ with respect to their enjoyment of actual existence. An actual and a merely possible dollar could be perfect—perhaps even indiscernible—duplicates, but they would still differ in an important respect: one enjoys actual existence, the other does not. Thus, there do not appear to be any distinct, fundamental conditions that are satisfied by all and only entities that enjoy actual existence. It thus seems that actual existence, concrete possible existence, and abstract possible subsistence do not admit of real definition.

5.6 The analogy of being (continued)

We have seen that the specific, restricted ways of being that are intuitively empty—namely, actual existence, concrete possible existence, and abstract possible subsistence are all analogous to the generic, unrestricted ways of being with respect to their generality, their non-qualitative status, and their failure to admit of real definition. I will now show that ways of being that do not appear to be obviously empty—namely, *Existenz*, photonic existence, and simple existence—fail to be analogous to the generic way of being in at least one of these three respects.

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reductionist account incorrectly classifies a lonely, qualitatively bare, simple individual as abstract, and a mereological fusion of an abstract and a concrete entity as concrete.

[226] I do not think that concrete possible existence and abstract possible subsistence should be defined in terms of each other. For I do not think that mereological fusions composed of both abstract and concrete entities should be taken to be either abstract or concrete.

I'll start by considering whether any of these ways of being satisfy the generality condition. Some cases seem clear. The way of being that is supposed to be enjoyed by all and only simples intuitively satisfies this condition: entities can be alike in their simplicity but differ greatly in their nature, while the way of being that is allegedly enjoyed by all and only photons clearly fails to be adequately general: it can only be had by entities with a very specific nature, namely, entities that are photons.[227] Other cases are, I think, much less clear. The way of being that is supposed to be enjoyed by all and only persons does not obviously seem to satisfy the generality condition, but it doesn't obviously seem to violate it either.[228]

I'll turn next to their satisfaction of the non-qualitative condition. Some cases should again be clear. The way of being enjoyed by all and only photons clearly fails to have a qualitative status. For the property of enjoying this way of being would seem to play a fundamental causal role at various worlds. It thus appears to be a fundamental qualitative property. The way of being that all and only simples enjoys does seem to enjoy a non-qualitative status. For the property of enjoying simple existence—or of being simple—appears to be non-

[227] If, contrary to what we assumed in footnote 212 above, the predicate 'is a photon' expresses a theoretical role that might be filled by different fundamental properties, then a variety of different entities with a variety of different natures might be able to enjoy photonic existence. Would this be enough to ensure that photonic existence is sufficiently general? In a way, yes: there will be a variety of possible entities of very different natures that enjoy this way of being across all of logical space. But in another way, no: there will be at most one kind of possible entity that can enjoy this way of being at any given world.

[228] If persons can have radically different natures, then *Existenz* will turn out to be fairly general. Indeed, if the relation *being with* holds between all and only persons, then *Existenz* will turn out to be pervasive across this relation. But, of course, the mere fact that *Existenz* spreads across this relation will not be enough to ensure that *Existenz* is highly general if the relation *being with* is not itself highly general.

qualitative: it does not seem fit to play a fundamental causal role. Other cases are less clear. The way of being enjoyed by all and only persons would appear to carry content about the qualitative nature of a person, but insofar as it can only be enjoyed by entities with that nature, it does not appear to be freely recombinable and would seem to be tied up in various necessary connections.

I'll turn finally to whether or not any of these ways of being satisfy the indefinability condition. Some cases are clear. The way of being enjoyed by all and only photons must, it seems, be taken as primitive. For, on the view in question, it is because an entity enjoys this way of being that it is a photon. The way of being that all and only simples enjoy can, however, be defined in terms of proper parthood. For an entity enjoys simple existence if and only if it does not have any proper parts.[229] Other cases will be somewhat less clear. I believe that the way of being that all and only persons enjoy can be properly defined in terms of the properties that make up the nature of persons. But this is because I accept a fairly permissive account of real definition. For those who accept a more rigid account of real definition, it will be much less clear whether *Existenz* can be defined. But this unclarity will, I think, arise from an unclarity in what it takes to be a person, not from what it takes for a way of being to be definable.

Let's take stock. I have shown that those specific, restricted ways of being that are intuitively empty are analogous to the generic, unrestricted way of being with respect to their generality, their non-qualitative status, and their indefinability. I have also shown that those ways of being that obviously fail to be intuitively empty are not so analogous. I have, moreover,

[229] We will, I think, need to take the proper parthood relation as fundamental even if we attempt to define simple and composite existence in terms of each other. For we still want the ability to say when one composite is a proper part of another. But once we grant that proper parthood is fundamental, we will be able to define simple existence in terms of it.

suggested that it is unclear whether the way of being that all and only persons are supposed to enjoy, which is neither obviously empty and nor obviously non-empty, is analogous to the generic, unrestricted way of being. This, I believe, lends credence to the suggestion that a fundamental way of being is empty if and only if it is sufficiently general, it lacks qualitative content, and it does not admit of real definition.

5.7 Conclusion

An account of being's emptiness must, I think, not only be able to capture the emptiness of the generic, unrestricted way of being enjoyed by absolutely everything there is, it must also be able to capture the emptiness of various specific, restricted ways of being enjoyed by only some of what there is. I have attempted to provide just such an account in sections 5.4, 5.5, and 5.6 above. A way of being that satisfies the generality, non-qualitative, and indefinability conditions will be appropriately empty: it will not contribute to the nature of the entities that enjoy it. We might, if we want to maintain a thin conception of being, insist that a way of being must, as a matter of conceptual necessity, be empty or else it will fail to be a way of *being* at all. We could then insist that these ways of being should be represented in our fundamental theories by semantically primitive particular—or existential—quantifier expressions. But while this would allow us to hang onto the neo-Quinean thesis, it would seem to suggest that we could just as easily do without it. For we could insist that ways of being are fundamental non-qualitative properties that are sufficiently general and which cannot be defined in terms of other fundamental properties or relations. So if we are to cling to the neo-Quinean thesis, it cannot be because it helps to express the emptiness of being.

Chapter 6: Not the Only Way to Be

Abstract: *Ontological pluralism* is the view that there are different fundamental ways of being. Trenton Merricks has recently raised three objections to combining pluralism with a generic way of being enjoyed by absolutely everything there is: first, that the resulting view contradicts the pluralist's core intuition; second, that it is especially vulnerable to the charge—due to Peter van Inwagen—that it posits a difference in being where there is simply a difference in kind; and, third, that it is in tension with various historically influential motivations for pluralism. I reply to each of these objections in turn. My replies will help to bring out the true nature of the pluralist's basic commitments.

6.1 Introduction

Ontological pluralism—or *pluralism about being*—is, roughly, the view that there are different fundamental ways of being. The pluralist's core insight is, at least as I understand it, that there are peculiarly ontological differences between certain entities, differences which lie not in the nature of these entities, but in their being. Recent defenders of this view—such as Kris McDaniel (2009, 2010b, 2017) and Jason Turner (2010, 2012, forthcoming)—have sought to explain the peculiarly ontological nature of such differences in terms of quantification.[230] There are, on this

[230] They have thus endorsed, what I shall call, *quantificational pluralism*: the view that there are different fundamental ways of being which are most perspicuously represented by different fundamental quantifiers. This view, or one much like it, appears to have first been suggested—and then quickly rejected—by Morton White (1956: 68). It later makes a cameo appearance in W. V. Quine's *Word and Object* (1960: 241-2) as the view that the difference between the way in which abstract objects such as numbers and classes exist and the way in which

view, several fundamental quantifiers that range over distinct domains. These quantifiers are assumed to be *semantically primitive*: they cannot be defined in terms of an absolutely unrestricted quantifier and some restricting predicate. They are, moreover, supposed to be *fundamental* or *perfectly natural:* they carve reality at the joints. Entities enjoy different fundamental ways of being, on this view, when they are ranged over by different fundamental quantifiers.

McDaniel (2010a: 635, 2017: 146) formulates ontological pluralism as 'the view that there are possible languages with semantically primitive restricted quantifiers that are at least as natural as the unrestricted quantifier'.[231] This minimal formulation leaves open the possibility that the generic unrestricted quantifier is itself perfectly natural; that is, it leaves open the possibility that there is a fundamental way of being that absolutely everything enjoys. McDaniel contrasts this minimal formulation with what he calls a 'Heideggerian'[232] (or 'neo-Aristotelian'[233]) version of ontological pluralism according to which the semantically primitive restricted quantifiers are more natural than the generic unrestricted quantifier.[234] But the less than

physical or material objects exist is due to 'a difference in two senses of "there are"', and appears again in Herbert W. Schneider's claim that '[i]t may be necessary to have several kinds of existential quantifiers in logic, if ontology finds that things have different ways of being' (1962: 10). It was also explicitly defended by Nino B. Cocchiarella (1969).

[231] Note that all it takes for a quantifier to be *restricted* here is for it to range over only some of what there is.

[232] See McDaniel (2009: 312, 2017: 34, 55).

[233] See McDaniel (2010a: 635, 637, 2017: 146-7, 149).

[234] It is important to note that while McDaniel (2010a, 2017) ultimately accepts a neo-Aristotelian version of pluralism and thus takes the generic quantifier to be less than perfectly natural, his reasons for doing so seem to have very little to do with trying to accommodate the perceived ontological differences between things. He denies perfect

perfectly natural unrestricted quantifier need not be taken as a mere disjunction of the perfectly natural restricted quantifiers, it might instead be unified by analogy.[235] Thus it seems that the pluralist can accept a generic way of being—corresponding to the unrestricted existential quantifier of formal logic—enjoyed by absolutely everything there is.

Indeed, McDaniel gives two reasons for thinking that the pluralist must accept a generic way of being. The first begins with the observation that we can be sure *that* something is, while also being unsure *how* that thing is. But if we can be sure that something enjoys being, while also being unsure about which of the specific ways of being it enjoys, then we must possess a generic conception of being.[236] The second reason is based on the observation that we can say, in one breath, that Socrates, Smaug, and the number 2 have being and are three things. But assuming that there is a deep connection between being, quantification, and number, the pluralist will be unable to say such things unless she adopts a generic conception of being.[237] It thus seems that if pluralism is to be plausible, it must be combined with a generic way of being.

Trenton Merricks (2019: 601-4) has, however, recently raised three objections to combining pluralism with a generic way of being: the first objection is that such a view conflicts

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naturalness to the generic quantifier in order to capture the perceived ontological inferiority of various 'almost nothings' (such as cracks, holes, and shadows). It is thus not as an ontological *pluralist* that McDaniel appears to question the naturalness of the generic quantifier, but as an ontological *elitist*.

[235] See McDaniel (2010b: 695-7, 2017: 48-54).

[236] See McDaniel (2009: 297-8, 2017: 19). This is John Duns Scotus' argument from certain and doubtful concepts. See his *Ordinatio* I, d. 3, p. 1, q. 1-2, nn. 27-29. (See also William of Ockham's *Summa Logicae* I, c. 38.) Merricks (2001: 169) alludes to this argument, but attributes it to Benardette (1989: 46-7).

[237] See McDaniel (2009: 300-1, 2017: 22-3). This is van Inwagen's (1998: 17, 2009a: 61-3, 2009b: 41-2) counting argument. See Turner (2010: 23-5) for further discussion.

with, what Merricks sees as, the pluralist's core intuition; the second objection is that it is especially vulnerable to the charge that it posits a difference in being where there is simply a difference in kind; and the third objection is that it is in tension with various historically influential motivations for pluralism. These objections are supposed to apply regardless of whether or not we take the generic way of being to be fundamental (see Merricks 2019: 610 n 16). I shall reply to each of these objections in the sections below, but let me first sketch my preferred ontological framework.[238]

I accept modal realism with absolute actuality (see Bricker 2001, 2006, 2008). I believe that, beyond the realm of actuality, there is a vast plurality of concrete but merely possible worlds populated by various concrete but merely possible individuals. These concrete possible individuals have intrinsic qualitative characters and serve as the objects of many of our thoughts. But given that actuality is absolute, an object's status as actual is not, as David Lewis (1970: 18-20, 1986: 92-6) would have it, simply a matter of its belonging to our world. The actual and the merely possible are not on an ontological par. There is, instead, a genuine, objective, and peculiarly ontological difference between those worlds and individuals that are actual and those that are not: actual concrete entities enjoy not only *concrete possible existence*, but also *actual*

[238] The details of this framework are not essential to my replies. I will only rely upon it, in section 6.3, to show that there is an intelligible distinction to be drawn between those properties that correspond to ways of being and those that do not. I believe that this distinction could be made intelligible in an alternative framework, although I shall not attempt to prove this here. If, however, it were to turn out that this distinction can only be made intelligible in a modal realist framework, this would provide the pluralist with a novel argument for modal realism.

existence as their way of being—they not only exist_c, but also $\text{exist}_@$; while merely possible concrete entities do not enjoy actual existence—they simply exist_c.[239]

I also accept a robust form of mathematical platonism (see Bricker forthcoming b). I believe that, beyond the realm of the concrete, there is an abstract realm of mathematical entities. Among these entities are both the 'pure' sets (which have in their transitive closure only other sets) and the *sui generis* natural numbers (which are not themselves set-theoretic constructions of any kind, and thus are not to be identified with either the 'von Neumann' or the 'Zermelo' numbers). These abstract mathematical entities are causally inert and entirely lacking in intrinsic qualitative character. There is, moreover, a genuine, objective, and peculiarly ontological difference between them and the concrete entities that populate our world: abstract entities enjoy *abstract possible existence* as their way of being—they exist_a; while concrete entities enjoy concrete possible existence as their way of being—they exist_c.

I do not, however, intend to claim that these are the only ways of being. There might, I think, be entities that enjoy still other ways of being, which we are not—and, perhaps, could not be—aware. And there are, I believe, entities that do not seem to enjoy any of these ways of being. For I accept universalism about composition and thus believe that there is an entity which

[239] The distinction between the actual and the merely possible should, I think, be front and center in any discussion of ontological pluralism. For, as Etienne Gilson (1949: 3) points out, 'the very first and the most universal of all the distinctions in the realm of being is that which divides it into two classes, that of the real and that of the possible'. It is, moreover, one of the clearest possible cases of an ontological difference. Indeed, Kit Fine (2005: 2) takes it to be 'almost axiomatic that . . . there is an ontological difference between actual objects and merely possible objects—between actual people and actual cities on the one hand, and merely possible people and merely possible cities on the other'. An object's status as actual or merely possible thus appears to be absolute: *being actual* and *being merely possible* do not seem to be world-relative properties.

is wholly composed of nothing but Socrates and the number 2. Yet this entity does not strike me as being either abstract or concrete. It does, however, appear to enjoy *generic existence*: the way of being that absolutely everything enjoys (where this generic way of being is not simply to be understood as a mere disjunction of the specific ways of being).

I have combined the two forms of pluralism described in McDaniel (2009: 314-16) and applied them to the ontological framework found in Bricker (2001, 2006, 2008, forthcoming b). The resulting picture should be somewhat familiar.[240] Here it is in more traditional dress: actual concrete entities *exist in reality*, possible concrete entities *exist in the mind* (although they enjoy a being that is in no way dependent on their being objects of thought), while numbers and other abstract entities *subsist in a Platonic third realm*.

[240] A similar picture was developed by Bernard Bolzano, who held that:

> in addition to things that have actuality, i.e., the existing ones, there are also others that merely have *possibility*, as well as those which can never become actual, e.g., propositions and ideas in themselves. ([1837] 2014d: 127 / WL 4: §483, 184-5)

See Schnieder (2007) and Menzel (forthcoming) for discussion. It is not clear, however, whether Bolzano ([1837] 2014b: 44-6 / WL 2: §142, 64-7), who identifies existence, being, and actuality, should be properly thought of as an ontological pluralist. For he seems to hold that the difference between a merely possible object, an object that is not but could become actual, and an abstract object, an object that is not and cannot become actual, is not a difference in their being, but rather in their non-being. He thus appears to be, what we might call, a *meontological* pluralist, that is, someone who holds that there are different ways of non-being (μὴ ὄν). See McDaniel (2017: 38) for discussion.

6.2 Merricks's first objection

Merricks's first objection to pluralism with generic existence is that it conflicts with the pluralist's core 'conviction or insight or intuition' (2019: 601). But what exactly is the pluralist's core intuition, and how should we understand it?

The core pluralist insight, as I see it, is that there are peculiarly ontological differences between certain entities (where we can say that there is an *ontological difference* between two entities just in case one of those entities enjoys a way of being that the other does not).[241] I will focus here on two such differences.[242] Take, first, the difference between an actual and a merely possible silver dollar. This difference is utterly unlike the difference between a cat and a canary, a mountain and a molehill, or a table and a tablet. For these things differ in their nature. But an actual and a merely possible silver dollar need not differ in their nature. They might have exactly the same size, shape, weight, and chemical composition. Yet, for all their similarities, there still seems to be an important and fundamentally ontological difference between them: one is actual, the other is merely possible. Take, next, the difference between a number and a nightingale. A nightingale has a determinate size, shape, and weight. These properties help to make up its nature. But while a number appears to determinately lack any of the properties that help make up the nature of a nightingale, the true extent of the difference between them does not seem to be

[241] Talk of ontological differences owes, as far as I can tell, to the second edition of Edmund Husserl's *Logical Investigations*. See Husserl ([1901/ 1913] 2001: 17/ HU XIX/1 252). I believe that the intuitive, pre-theoretical phenomenon which the positing of ways of being is intended to explain is that of ontological difference. I thus prefer to describe the pluralist's core intuition directly in terms of ontological differences as opposed to indirectly in terms of the enjoyment of different ways of being.

[242] I shall introduce a third potentially ontological difference in section 6.3 below: namely, the difference between a past and a present entity.

captured solely by a difference in their natures. There is a further and, it seems, fundamentally ontological difference between them: one is abstract, the other is concrete. I take both the difference between the actual and the merely possible and the difference between the abstract and the concrete to be ontological differences.[243] I take, moreover, the recognition of either of these differences to be—all on its own—sufficient for pluralism. Thus, to be a pluralist is, at least as I understand it, to be minimally committed to the claim that there are ontological differences between certain entities, differences which lie not in what these entities are, but in the ways of being these entities enjoy.[244]

This is not how Merricks understands pluralism. He sees the pluralist's core insight not as a simple recognition of ontological difference, but as a complete denial of ontological similarity (where we can say that there is an *ontological similarity* between two entities just in case there is

[243] I shall attempt to explain what it is about these differences that is peculiarly ontological in section 6.3 below, but for now it should be sufficient to note that they are plausibly taken as ontological.

[244] Genuinely ontological differences should, I think, be distinguished from mere categorial differences. Some philosophers accept categorial differences, but deny that there are different ways of being. So, for example, Peter van Inwagen (2012) accepts a two-category ontology, according to which everything is either a substance or a property. But he does not thereby endorse ontological pluralism. For, on his view, categories are, roughly, natural classes whose membership comprises a significant portion of reality, which are not themselves subclasses of any other natural classes (see van Inwagen 2012: 193-4). But, given this account of the nature of the categories, there needn't be anything genuinely ontological about the so-called 'ontological' categories; they might, for all van Inwagen has said, simply carve out differences in the nature of the entities that belong to them. They are, I think, ontological in name only.

some way of being that these entities alike enjoy). For he thinks the pluralist is best understood as denying that there is a way of being that certain entities alike enjoy.[245] If he's right about this, then there is no hope of combining pluralism with generic existence. For if a number and a nightingale were both to enjoy generic existence, they would thereby be ontologically similar in this respect—there would be a way of being that they both enjoyed—and that would contradict the pluralist's intuition as Merricks understands it.

But if the pluralist's core insight is, as I claim, simply that there are ontological differences between certain entities, then it does not exclude the possibility of there being other ontological similarities between those entities as well. This becomes especially clear, I think, when we focus not on the difference between the abstract and the concrete as Merricks does, but on the difference between the actual and the merely possible. There is, as I see it, an ontological difference between an actual and a merely possible dollar: the former enjoys actual existence, the latter does not. But there is also an ontological similarity between these two dollars: both enjoy what I call concrete possible existence. What this shows is that, given my preferred ontological framework, we can take there to be an ontological difference between these entities without thereby denying that there are any ontological similarities between them.[246] But if that's right,

[245] Merricks takes Moore and Russell to 'give voice to the conviction. . . that it is false that there is a way of being that concreta and abstracta alike enjoy' (2019: 601). He says nothing to indicate that this conviction should be taken to be restricted to the case at hand as opposed to being perfectly general. Indeed, the general form of the pluralist's intuition would need to be understood as a complete denial of ontological similarity in order for the objection to apply, as Merricks claims it does, to all forms of pluralism.

[246] I believe that the distinction between the actual and the merely possible is best captured in a modal realist framework supplemented with absolute actuality. But the details of this framework are not essential to the distinction itself. It can, I think, be endorsed by someone who holds that there are true essentialist claims about

then pluralism—understood merely as the recognition of ontological differences and not as the denial of ontological similarities—appears to be compatible with a generic way of being enjoyed by absolutely everything there is.

How should we adjudicate this dispute? We must look, it seems, at what various pluralists say to motivate their view. I shall focus my attention on the passages from G. E. Moore and Bertrand Russell that Merricks thinks 'give voice to the conviction. . . that it is false that there is a way of being that concreta and abstracta alike enjoy' (2019: 601).[247] I will attempt to show that, when properly understood, these passages do not in fact give voice to this conviction. But if we take, as Merricks does, the intuitions evoked in these passages to be representative of the convictions of pluralists generally, then that would seem to suggest that the pluralist's core insight is not, as Merricks thinks, that there are no ontological similarities between certain entities, but rather, as I claim, that there are certain ontological differences between those entities.

Let's start with the passage from Moore:

> It is quite certain that two natural objects may exist; but it is equally certain that two itself does not exist and never can. Two and two *are* four. But that does not mean that either

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entities that do not actually exist. To have an essence or nature, on this possibilist view, is to enjoy what Henry of Ghent calls essential being (*esse essentiae*). But not everything that has an essence thereby enjoys actual existence (*esse existentiae*). For while I enjoy actual existence, my merely possible brothers and sisters do not. There is thus an ontological difference between us. But there is an ontological similarity between us as well: we all enjoy essential being. See McDaniel (2017: 263) for discussion.

[247] Merricks (2019: 611 n 20) sees the claim—allegedly stemming from Heidegger, Husserl, and Meinong—that 'the relevant conviction is justified (or caused by) the phenomenology of certain experiences' as another 'species of this motivation'. I will briefly discuss this phenomenological motivation for pluralism in section 6.4 below.

> two or four exists. Yet it certainly means *something*. Two *is* somehow, although it does not exist. (1903: 111)

What should we make of Moore's avowed certainty that natural objects enjoy existence—or concrete existence—as their way of being, while numbers such as two and four do not enjoy this way of being? It appears to spring from a conviction about the nature of (concrete) existence. For Moore tells us that natural objects such as narwhals, neanderthals, and nightingales 'can exist in time—can have duration, and begin and cease to exist—can be objects of *perception*' (1903: 110-11), while numbers belong to a class of objects 'which certainly do not exist in time, are not therefore parts of Nature, and which, in fact, do not *exist* at all' (1903: 110). But while this gives us good reason to think that existence—or concrete existence—can be enjoyed by nightingales but not by numbers, it doesn't give us any reason to think that being—or generic existence—cannot be enjoyed by numbers and nightingales alike. Indeed given his praise for those 'who have recognized most clearly that not everything which *is* is a "natural object". . . [and] have, therefore, the great merit of insisting that our knowledge is not confined to the things which we touch and see and feel' (1903: 110), Moore seems to leave open the possibility that there is a generic—perhaps even fundamental—way of being enjoyed by absolutely everything 'which *is*' (1903: 110), every possible '[object] of knowledge' (1903: 111).[248]

[248] He thus seems to be in agreement with the Russell of *The Principles of Mathematics*, who holds that '*[b]eing* is that which belongs to every conceivable term, to every possible object of thought' whereas '*[e]xistence*. . . is the prerogative of some only amongst beings' (1903: 449). This should, of course, come as no surprise given that Russell's early views on being and existence appear to have themselves been strongly influenced by Moore—as Russell (1903: viii, 1904: 204 n 2) himself readily admits. Indeed, Moore tells us that up until the winter of 1910-11, he held:

Let's turn next to the passage from Russell:

> Suppose, for instance, that I am in my room. I exist, and my room exists; but does 'in' exist? Yet obviously the word 'in' has a meaning; it denotes a relation between me and my room. This relation is something, although we cannot say that it exists *in the same sense* in which I and my room exist. ([1912] 1959: 90)

What should we make of Russell's assertion that we 'cannot say' that a relation exists in the same sense in which a person or a place exists? We might read this claim in one of two ways: first, as the claim that there is no way in which a relation, a person, and a place all exist; or, second, as the claim that there is a way in which a person and a place both exist, but we cannot say that a relation exists in this way as well. If we were to read Russell's assertion in the first way as Merricks appears to do, then it would indeed give voice to the intuition that abstracta and concreta are in no way ontologically similar to each other. But this reading is not supported by the text. For, a page later when Russell refers back to this discussion, he says only that we have seen that 'such entities as relations appear to have a being which is *in some way different* from that of physical objects' ([1912] 1959: 91, emphasis added). But if the above considerations are only supposed to show that the being of a relation is in some way different from the being of a person or a place, then they shouldn't be taken to show that the being of a relation is in no way

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> very strongly. . . that the words 'being' and 'existence'. . . stand for two entirely different properties; and that though everything which exists must also 'be', yet many things which 'are' nevertheless emphatically do *not* exist. (1953: 300)

But if Moore believes that existence is nested in being and that everything that exists has being, but not vice versa, then it should be clear that we can be, as Merricks (2019: 601) puts it, "'quite certain" that natural objects enjoy a way of being and "equally certain" that that way of being is not enjoyed by two or four' without also thinking that 'it is false that there is a way of being that concreta and abstracta alike enjoy'.

similar to the being of a person or a place. This provides some negative support for the second reading. But is there any positive support for the second reading? I believe there is. For Russell, like Moore, thinks that persons enjoy existence—or concrete existence—as their way of being because they can exist in space and time. But relations are, he thinks, fundamentally different in this respect; they cannot exist in space or time.[249] He thus appears to leave room for a generic—perhaps even fundamental—way of being enjoyed by everything that 'is something', everything that 'we can think about and understand' ([1912] 1959: 90).[250]

Moore and Russell simply claim that there is an ontological difference between abstract and concrete entities. They do not give voice to the conviction that there are no ontological similarities between these entities. Thus, they do not give voice to what Merricks takes to be the pluralist's core insight: namely, 'that it is false that there is a way of being that concreta and abstracta alike enjoy' (2019: 601). But Merricks doesn't just take this to be the pluralist's core

[249] This comes out pretty clearly in Russell's attempts to explain why it is that the relation 'north of' does not seem to exist in the same way in which Edinburgh and London exist. For, he writes,

> [i]f we ask 'Where and when does this relation exist?' the answer must be 'Nowhere and nowhen'. There is no place or time where we can find the relation 'north of'. It does not exist in Edinburgh any more than in London, for it relates the two and is neutral as between them. Nor can we say that it exists at any particular time. Now everything that can be apprehended by the senses or by introspection exists at some particular time. Hence the relation 'north of' is radically different from such things. It is neither in space nor in time, neither mental nor material; yet it is something. ([1912] 1959: 98)

It seems clear that the reason we cannot say that a relation exists in the same sense as a place exists is that relations are not in space or time. This marks, Russell thinks, an important ontological difference between relations and places. But it leaves open the possibility that there is still a kind of ontological similarity between them.

[250] White (1956: 63-6) makes a similar observation.

intuition, he also thinks it is 'the best motivation for pluralism' (2019: 602). It should be clear that the pluralist's intuition as Merricks understands it provides a *strong* motivation for pluralism, but it's not entirely clear why it is supposed to provide the *best* motivation for pluralism. I suspect, however, that the reason Merricks thinks it does is because he thinks that if we deny that there are any ontological similarities between abstract and concrete entities, then we will be best suited to avoid the objection that these entities differ simply in kind, not in being. Let's turn to it now.

6.3 Merricks's second objection

Merricks's second objection to pluralism with generic existence is that it is 'particularly vulnerable' to the objection that pluralism posits 'a difference in being where there is instead but a difference in kind among entities that exist in the same way' (2019: 602-3). The basic problem, as Merricks sees it, is supposed to be with the pluralist's claim that the difference between, say, an actual and a merely possible dollar or a number and a nightingale is peculiarly ontological. Yes, the objection goes, these entities are different, but that's all there is to it. Once we say that one is actual and the other is not or that one is concrete and the other abstract, we have said all that needs to be said. We don't need to—and we should not try to—express this difference by adding that it is peculiarly ontological.[251]

[251] Merricks (2019: 602) attributes this objection to van Inwagen (2014b: 23). But van Inwagen, as I read him, is concerned with a slightly different objection: namely, that the pluralist appears to take the observation that there is a *vast* difference between, say, a number and a nightingale to motivate the claim that there is an ontological difference between these entities as well. This, van Inwagen thinks, constitutes 'a fundamental meta-ontological error' (2014b: 21). For 'a vast difference between [two things] must consist in a vast difference in their natures' (1998: 15, 2009a:

My response here is purely defensive. I deny that once we've said that an actual and a merely possible dollar are different, we've said all that needs to be said. For, as I pointed out in section 6.2 above, the difference between an actual and a merely possible dollar is utterly unlike the difference between a cat and a canary, a mountain and a molehill, or a person and a penguin. The latter all differ in their nature. Yet an actual and a merely possible dollar need not differ in nature. The way in which an actual and a merely possible dollar differ is itself different from the way in which a cat and a canary, a mountain and a molehill, or a person and a penguin differ. But to say, as Merricks and van Inwagen suggest, that the difference between an actual and a merely possible dollar is just a difference in kind does nothing to explain the peculiar nature of this difference. Thus, it does not seem to be unreasonable to suggest that the difference between an actual and a merely possible dollar is itself somehow ontological, that it should be understood not as a difference in nature, but as a difference in being.

A similar point could be made by focusing not on modal but rather on temporal ontology. For, if we take the A-theoretic intuition that time 'flows' or 'passes' seriously, there would appear to be an objective difference between past and present entities: the latter bask in the glow of the present, the former do not. But, on this moving spotlight view of time, the light of the present does not appear to contribute to an entity's nature. A past and a present dollar would seem to have the same nature—indeed, they might even be perfect qualitative duplicates. Thus, it

56). But, van Inwagen claims, once we have described the vast difference in the nature of these two things, we 'have done everything that can be done to describe [the difference between them]. That's what describing a vast difference is' (2014b: 23, cf. 2018: 216). See Williams (1962: 757) and Grossmann (1984: 169-70, 1992: 95-6) for similar criticisms.

does not seem unreasonable to suggest that the difference between them is itself somehow ontological.

Merricks believes, however, that by accepting generic existence, I have left myself particularly vulnerable to this objection. For I must now accept the following claims:

x exists_a if and only if *x* generically exists and *x* is abstract.

x exists_c if and only if *x* generically exists and *x* is concrete.

Yet, once I have done this, I have agreed with the monist that there are entities—such as numbers and nightingales—which enjoy a shared way of being but differ with respect to whether they are abstract or concrete. And if I agree with the monist about this, I must also agree with the monist that there is a difference in kind between two entities—a number and a nightingale—which generically exist: the number is abstract, while the nightingale is concrete. But then, Merricks thinks, it seems like a mistake to add that the number exists_a and the nightingale exists_c and to, thereby, insist that the difference between them is ultimately ontological.

My response is, once again, purely negative. I do not see why granting that numbers and nightingales enjoy a shared way of being should leave me particularly vulnerable to the original objection. For I can agree with the monist that there is a difference in kind between a number and a nightingale. But I still think that we need to explain the peculiar nature of this difference. It does not, as I suggested in section 6.2 above, simply appear to be a difference in the nature of these entities, but instead appears to transcend all such differences. Thus, assuming that we already have reason to believe that there are ontological differences between certain entities, it does not seem to be unreasonable to suggest that the difference between a number and a nightingale is somehow ontological as well.

Merricks would not, I take it, be satisfied with this purely negative response. For he appears to think that the pluralist arbitrarily selects certain differences among generically existing entities—such as the difference between the abstract and the concrete or the difference between the actual and the merely possible—and calls them ontological.[252] But he also seems to think that there is no principled reason to select these differences as opposed to others.

I have tried to suggest that the selection process is not completely arbitrary: mere differences in the natures of things should not be taken as ontological. The difference between a cat and a canary is, for example, solely a difference in the nature of these things and thus fails to be properly ontological. But it will not always be clear when a vast difference in the nature of certain entities is merely a difference in their natures and when there is, in addition to this, a difference in their being as well. For while a number and a nightingale have vastly different natures, the same can presumably also be said about a boson and a fermion. But while there appears to be an ontological difference between a number and a nightingale, there does not appear to be an ontological difference between a boson and a fermion. I thus grant that in order to allay the arbitrariness worry, the pluralist needs to explain what it is that is peculiarly ontological about the properties that underwrite ontological differences. I will here offer only a sketch of what I think makes the properties of *being actual*, *being concrete*, and *being abstract* properly ontological.

[252] This, I take it, is the point that Merricks (2019: 602) intends to make by asking the following rhetorical question: 'why pick ways of being that are correlated with those particular differences among generically existing entities, as opposed to others?'

Being—or generic existence—is the most general of all concepts, it is empty of qualitative content, and it does not admit of real definition.[253] This, I take it, is more or less what van Inwagen (2001: 4-5, 2009a: 56) calls the 'thin' conception of being according to which the being of an entity does not at all contribute to the nature of that entity. It constitutes a fairly traditional answer to the question: 'What is being?' But if the pluralist accepts both this account

[253] These three features are drawn from Heidegger's ([1927] 1962: 21-24/ SZ 2-4) discussion of the three traditional 'presuppositions' (or 'prejudices') about the nature of being: namely, that being is the most universal of all concepts, that it is indefinable, and that it is self-evident. I have collapsed being's indefinability and self-evidence under a single heading and have attempted to draw attention to Heidegger's claim that being is traditionally taken to be 'the emptiest of concepts'. See Williams (1962: 752-4) for a helpful discussion of the emptiness of being.

It is this emptiness that comes to the fore in van Inwagen's paraphrase of what he calls 'an incidental remark of Hegel's', which he takes to provide a capsule summary of Heidegger's three theses: namely, that being is 'the most barren and abstract of all categories' (2009a: 51, see also van Inwagen and Sullivan 2014: sect. 2.1). Van Inwagen does not provide a citation for this paraphrase, but it would appear to be drawn from Hegel's claim in the *Encyclopedia* that being is 'the poorest and most abstract determination' ([1827/ 1830] 2010: 101/ GW 20: 92). Hegel elaborates on this claim in his *Science of Logic*:

> *Being, pure being*—without further determination. In its indeterminate immediacy it is equal only to itself and also not unequal with respect to another; it has no difference within it, nor any outwardly. If any determination or content were posited in it as distinct, or if it were posited by this determination or content as distinct from an other, it would thereby fail to hold fast to its purity. It is pure indeterminateness and emptiness. —There is *nothing* to be intuited in it, if one can speak here of intuiting; or, it is only this pure empty intuiting itself. Just as little is anything to be thought in it, or, it is equally only this empty thinking. Being, the indeterminate immediate is in fact *nothing*, and neither more nor less than nothing. ([1812/ 1832] 2010: 59/ GW 21: 68-9).

Being can, I take it, be said to be the most barren and abstract of all categories because it is 'the indeterminate immediate', '[t]here is *nothing* to be intuited in it', and '[i]t is pure indeterminateness and emptiness'.

of the nature of being and the ontological framework that I laid out in section 6.1, she can easily capture the peculiarly ontological nature of the properties of *being actual*, *being concrete*, and *being abstract*. For these properties are, I believe, importantly analogous to being. They are highly general because they are pervasive: anything that is properly related to something that enjoys a given way of being, enjoys that way of being as well.[254] They are empty of qualitative content because they are non-qualitative: they do not play, and are not grounded in properties that play, fundamental causal roles.[255] And they do not admit of real definition because we can only form indexical or demonstrative concepts of them: our concept of something's being actual is, for example, that of its being exactly ontologically like me and everything at my world.[256] It is, I believe, this generality, qualitative emptiness, and indefinability which accounts for the intuitive thinness of these ways of being and explains why their corresponding properties are properly taken to be ontological. There is thus an intelligible and non-arbitrary distinction that can be drawn between an entity's being and its nature.

The pluralist should, I think, accept this account of what makes these properties peculiarly ontological even if she intends to hold onto the central pillar of neo-Quinean orthodoxy: namely, that being is perspicuously expressed by particular—or existential—

[254] The properties of *being actual*, *being concrete*, and *being abstract* are, given my preferred ontological framework, pervasive across the relations that unify concrete possible worlds and abstract possible structures. They are all or nothing. This ensures that these properties enjoy a high degree of generality and can be had by a variety of different entities with a variety of different natures.

[255] Teller (1984: 148) plausibly attributes a similar account of the nature of the qualitative properties to David Lewis (1983a).

[256] But note that while the *concept* of actuality might be indexical, the *property* of actuality is not. See Bricker (2006: 63-6).

quantification.[257] For without such an account, this quantificational pluralist cannot avoid the charge of ascribing to the being of an entity what property belongs to the nature of that entity, and thus of accepting a 'thick' conception of being.[258] To see this, consider the following claims:

x is abstract if and only if and because $\exists_a y\ (y = x)$.

x is concrete if and only if and because $\exists_c y\ (y = x)$.

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[257] This orthodoxy can, I think, be adequately captured by the following three theses:

The Neo-Quinean Thesis: being is perspicuously expressed by particular—or existential—quantification.

The Monistic Thesis: being is unitary: there are no ontological differences between any entities.

The Equivalence Thesis: being is the same as existence.

This list is inspired by a similar list due to van Inwagen (1998, 2009a). But I have attempted to isolate, what I take to be, the core neo-Quinean commitments. The neo-Quinean thesis corresponds to van Inwagen's Thesis 4 according to which the meaning of 'existence' is adequately captured by the existential quantifier of formal logic, but removes its apparent commitment to both the claim that being is the same as existence and the claim that being is unitary. This thesis is shared by both neo-Quinean monists and quantificational pluralists alike. Indeed, where these two views differ is over the monistic thesis, which corresponds to van Inwagen's Thesis 3 according to which existence is univocal, but again removes its apparent commitment to the claim that being is the same as existence and ensures that the thesis concerns being rather than 'being'. Monists about being hold that being is unitary, while pluralists take it to be fragmentary. This is their main point of disagreement. The equivalence thesis is, however, just the same as van Inwagen's Thesis 2. It is something that pluralists can, but do not need to deny. Its denial strikes me as fairly plausible if we take existence to be the same as actuality, for being does not seem to be the same as actuality.

[258] Suppose, for example, that the quantificational pluralist were to claim that for every perfectly natural qualitative property, there is a fundamental way of being enjoyed by all and only the entities that have that property. This pluralist might take the quantifier $\exists_b$ to range over all and only those entities that are bosons, and thus hold that:

x is a boson if and only if and because $\exists_b y\ (y = x)$.

This would, I think, load the quantifier $\exists_b$ with whatever qualitative content is had by the predicate 'is a boson'. It would attribute to the being of a boson what seems to properly belong to its nature.

Suppose that *being abstract* and *being concrete* were to fail to be thin in the relevant respects: that is, suppose they were to somehow lack adequate generality, contain qualitative content, or admit of alternative definitions.[259] These features might, given their presumed thickness, be taken to belong to the nature of the entities that have them. In that case, the corresponding ways of being expressed by the quantifiers $\exists_a$ (which ranges over all and only those entities that are abstract) and $\exists_c$ (which ranges over all and only those entities that are concrete) would themselves fail to be thin. For, on this account, these ways of being are each a kind of one over many: they account for and explain the objective similarities between the entities that enjoy them. But if that's right, then any lack of generality, qualitative content, or definitional admissibility of the properties *being abstract* or *being concrete* would have to somehow derive from these ways of being themselves. The quantificational pluralist would thus appear to be guilty of ascribing to the being of things what properly belongs to their natures.[260]

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[259] I am assuming that for the quantificational pluralist, to say that an alleged ontological property is appropriately indefinable is to say that it can only be defined in terms of its corresponding way of being, and that that way of being is perspicuously expressed by a semantically primitive existential quantifier.

[260] Note that this criticism carries over to the neo-Quinean monist as well. For the neo-Quinean monist will presumably admit that:

> *x* has being if and only if and because $\exists y\ (y = x)$.

But if being were to fail to be appropriately thin, then its thickness would have to somehow derive from the generic way of being perspicuously represented by the absolutely unrestricted existential quantifier. The universality—or absolute generality—of being is not in itself enough to ensure that being is appropriately thin. For, as D. C. Williams (1962: 753) points out, the fact that being 'applies to everything is quite compatible with its being nevertheless the "richest" of principles, with more "content" than all the ordinary characters put together'. The desired thinness of being must, it seems, not simply derive from its generality, but also from its qualitative emptiness. The neo-Quinean

I have shown that the pluralist can accept a fairly thin conception of being, and that the intuitive thinness of this conception does not simply derive from taking ways of being to be best expressed in terms of existential quantification: the properties corresponding to the domains of these quantifiers must themselves be appropriately thin. But if that's right, then the pluralist shouldn't worry that she has ascribed to the being of an entity what properly belongs to the nature of that entity. It should now be clear why, by the pluralist's lights, it is not a mistake to add that numbers $exist_a$ and nightingales $exist_c$ once we have granted that they generically exist and are abstract and concrete respectively. For while the predicates '$exists_a$' and '$exists_c$' apply to all and only those entities to which the predicates 'is abstract' and 'is concrete' apply, only the predicates '$exists_a$' and '$exists_c$' make salient the fact that the differences expressed by these predicates are ontological. But, if we assume—as McDaniel and Turner assume—that ontological differences are quantificational differences, this will not be the end of the story. A complete explanation of these differences will also need to invoke the quantifiers $\exists_a$ and $\exists_c$.

6.4 Merricks's third objection

Merricks's third objection to pluralism with generic existence is that it 'is clearly in tension with the sorts of views that virtually all pluralists have tried to articulate and defend' and that this tension can be illustrated by the fact that 'historically influential motivations for pluralism are inconsistent with the claim that all entities generically exist' (2019: 604). But why exactly is this supposed to be a problem? Merricks doesn't really say. I suspect, however, that the problem is supposed to go something like this: recent defenders of ontological pluralism—such as McDaniel

cannot, I think, simply rest content by offering a quantificational account of being, but must also account for the intuitive thinness of being itself.

(2009) and Turner (2010)—often bill their view as part of a historically prominent tradition that has only recently fallen out of favor (due primarily and no thanks to Quine 1948); but if the view being put forward is genuinely part of this now forgotten tradition, then it had better be consonant with that tradition or else it will lose one of its biggest selling points. I take this criticism very seriously. If the historically influential motivations for pluralism are all inconsistent with the claim that absolutely everything enjoys a shared way of being, then pluralists who endorse generic existence would be making a radical break with a tradition they are otherwise attempting to revive. But I don't think that this criticism can be made to stick. I will focus on what McDaniel (2017: 5-8) calls the three dominant historical motivations for ontological pluralism: namely, the phenomenological, logical, and theological motivations.[261] I am willing to grant that some of these motivations might be inconsistent with a generic way of being, but I do not believe that all of them are.

Let's start with the *phenomenological* motivation.[262] The basic idea—allegedly stemming from Martin Heidegger, Edmund Husserl, and Alexius Meinong—is that different ways of being are given to us in our experience. Merricks (2019: 611 n 20) seems to suggest that the best way to understand the supposed content of this experience is as presenting, say, a number and a nightingale as in no way ontologically similar to each other. The thrust of the phenomenological motivation—as Merricks understands it—is that experience provides us with a

[261] Merricks (2019: 603-4), when presenting his third objection to pluralism with generic existence, focuses on the arguments that McDaniel classes as logical and theological. He does not mention the phenomenological motivation in this context, but briefly mentions it in a footnote when discussing the pluralist's core intuition (see Merricks 2019: 611 n 20).

[262] See McDaniel (2010b: 694-5, 2017: 6-7).

phenomenological justification of the claim that there are absolutely no ontological similarities between certain entities. But this claim not only motivates pluralism about being, it also motivates the claim that there isn't a generic way of being that absolutely everything enjoys.

It is clear, however, that the proponents of the phenomenological motivation do not all interpret what is immediately given in experience as Merricks does. Meinong, for example, claims that 'one apprehends [the difference between existence and (mere) subsistence] as immediately as the difference between blue and yellow' ([1910] 1983: 58/ AMG 4: 73). But since what is immediately given regarding an entity's blueness or yellowness is consistent with the claim that blue things and yellow things are similar insofar as they have color, what is immediately given regarding an entity's existence or (mere) subsistence should also be consistent with the claim that existent things and (merely) subsistent things are similar insofar as they have being. Indeed, when Meinong turns to considerations of mediate justification, it becomes clear that he thinks that existence and subsistence are nested, not disjoint: 'what can exist must, as it were, first of all subsist' ([1910] 1983: 58/ AMG 4: 74).[263] The phenomenological motivation is best understood as the claim that the contents of our experience should only be taken to provide immediate justification for the claim that there are ontological differences between certain entities, and thus it does not appear to be inconsistent with the acceptance of a generic way of being enjoyed by absolutely everything.

Let's turn next to the *logical* motivation.[264] The basic idea is that various logical considerations lead to pluralism. Consider, for example, Aristotle's argument that being is not a genus: roughly, if being were a genus, then no differentia would have being (for a genus cannot

[263] See also Meinong (1921: 18, trans. in Grossmann 1974: 228/ AMG 7: 20).

[264] See McDaniel (2017: 7-8).

be predicated of a differentia taken apart from its species); but since the differentia of any genus must have being, being cannot be a genus.[265] The familiar Aristotelian dictum that being is said in many ways appears to be a corollary of this argument: for if being is not a genus and yet is predicated of absolutely everything there is, then it cannot be so predicated univocally.[266] But, Merricks thinks, the claim that being cannot be univocally predicated of absolutely everything should not only be taken to motivate pluralism, it should also be taken to motivate the claim that there isn't a generic way of being that absolutely everything enjoys.

I cannot challenge the claim that if being is not a genus, then it cannot be univocally predicated of absolutely everything without also undermining the logical motivation for pluralism. It is, however, not exactly clear how we should interpret this claim. Is a genus supposed to be fundamental or not? I assume for the sake of argument that, in the Aristotelian framework, to be a genus is to be fundamental. But if that's right, then all the argument shows is that no fundamental mode of being can be univocally predicated of absolutely everything, it doesn't show that no non-fundamental mode of being can be univocally predicated of everything there is. Thus the logical motivation doesn't seem to rule out—and, more important, isn't

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[265] See Aristotle's *Metaphysics* B.3, 998b22-7.

[266] Note that a different argument for the claim that being is not a genus can be found in Porphyry:

> if the existent were a single genus common to everything, all things would be said to be existent synonymously. But since the first items are ten, they have only the name in common and not also the account which corresponds to the name. (*Isagore* 6.9-11, trans. Barnes 2003: 7)

But the argument here appears to proceed from pluralism—from the claim that there are ten primary ontological categories and, hence, ten corresponding ways of being—to the claim that being is not a genus. Porphyry seems to think that if being were a genus, there would be a single primary category to which absolutely everything belongs. But since there is no such ontological category and, hence, no generic way of being, being is not a genus.

inconsistent with—the claim that all entities generically exist. It does, however, seem to show that the generic mode of being should not be taken to be fundamental.

Let's turn finally to the *theological* motivation.[267] The main considerations here concern different features of God. Consider, first, divine transcendence: God appears to be so radically different from all of His creation that univocal predication between God and created things is impossible.[268] But if being cannot be univocally predicated of God and His creatures, then it seems that absolutely any way of being that God might enjoy must be radically different from the ways of being that created things can enjoy. This would seem to show that there are absolutely no ontological similarities between God and His creatures, and thus that there isn't a generic way of being that absolutely everything enjoys. Consider, next, divine simplicity: God appears to be absolutely simple. He has no parts and cannot be distinguished from any of His properties.[269] But if God is numerically identical to His way of being and the ways of being enjoyed by God's creatures are not numerically identical to God, then any way of being enjoyed by God must be radically different from the ways of being enjoyed by created things. This would clearly show that there are absolutely no ontological similarities between God and His creatures, and thus that there isn't a generic way of being that absolutely everything enjoys.

[267] See McDaniel (2010b: 693-4, 2017: 5-6).

[268] See Aquinas's *Summa Contra Gentiles* I, c. 32, and *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 13, a. 5, co.

[269] See Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 3.

I think I could grant that the considerations at play in the theological motivation establish a strong form of pluralism.[270] But they seem to be due more to the nature of God than to the nature of pluralism. First, I don't think these considerations carry over to other cases. God is supposed to be radically different from everything else there is. It thus seems plausible to think that there are absolutely no ontological similarities between God and anything else. But we don't have reason to think that an actual dollar is radically different from a merely possible one. Second, I take it that the ontological difference between God and everything else is also supposed to be more extreme than the ontological difference between an abstract and a concrete entity or an actual and a merely possible entity. It would, however, be difficult to capture the extremity of this difference if there were no more ontological similarities between a number and a nightingale or an actual and a merely possible dollar than between God and creation. For the difference would then be just as extreme in each case.

Let's take stock. Only one of the historically influential arguments considered in this section supports a version of pluralism that is inconsistent with a generic way of being. It thus appears to be a gross overstatement to claim, as Merricks does, that generic existence is 'in tension with the sorts of views that virtually all pluralists have tried to articulate and defend' (2019: 603). I thus see no reason to think that recent pluralists need to fear that they have, by adopting a generic way of being, thereby broken with a broader and historically prominent pluralistic tradition.

[270] Note that we might be able to avoid the argument from divine transcendence by restricting to fundamental (as opposed to positive intrinsic) similarities. But no such restriction would seem to allow us to avoid the argument from divine simplicity.

6.5 Conclusion

We are now in a better position to appreciate the nature and varieties of pluralism about being. The pluralist maintains that there are ontological differences between certain entities. What makes these differences peculiarly ontological is that they lie in the being and not in the nature of these entities. This makes ontological differences distinct from mere categorial differences. For while there might be a broad categorial distinction between composites and simples, between entities that have and entities that lack proper parts, this distinction merely captures a difference in the nature of these entities, not a difference in their being. It is thus possible to be committed to categorial distinctions—or to what we might describe as merely ontic differences—between entities without thereby being committed to genuinely ontological differences in the being of these entities. To be a pluralist, I have argued, is to be minimally committed to the claim that there are peculiarly ontological differences between certain entities, differences which lie not in what these entities are, but in the ways of being these entities enjoy. There have certainly been pluralists motivated by considerations of divine simplicity or divine transcendence, who have accepted stronger and more extreme versions of pluralism according to which there are no ontological similarities between certain entities. But these pluralists have simply gone beyond what is minimally required of pluralism as such: namely, the recognition of various ontological differences.

The plausibility of the pluralist's claim that there are peculiarly ontological differences between certain entities relies upon the further claim that there is an intelligible distinction to be drawn between the being and the nature of an entity. To maintain this distinction, the pluralist should adopt a thin conception of being according to which the being of an entity does not at all contribute to the nature of that entity. I have suggested that ways of being that are adequately

general, qualitatively empty, and appropriately indefinable do not contribute to the nature of the entities that enjoy them. If that's right, then the pluralist who only admits such ways of being can accept a sufficiently thin conception of being. There have been pluralists who have held that the being of certain entities contributes to the nature of those entities and have thus accepted a thick conception of being. But these pluralists have, I think, thereby transgressed against the very distinction that ought to serve as their fundamental charter.

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Syracuse University, *Ph.D. Philosophy* (expected December 2019)
Ph.D. Dissertation: 'The Nature of Being'
Dissertation Committee: Kris McDaniel (chair), Mark Heller, Michael Rieppel, Joshua Spencer (external), Jason Turner (external)

University of Massachusetts, Amherst, *BA Philosophy, BA Mathematics, 2007*
Magna Cum Laude, Departmental Honors in Philosophy
Honors Thesis: 'The Humean Denial of Necessary Connections'
Thesis Advisors: Phillip Bricker and Bradford Skow

PUBLICATIONS

'Fundamental Non-Qualitative Properties', *Synthese* (forthcoming).

'Impure Concepts and Non-Qualitative Properties', *Synthese* (forthcoming).

PRESENTATIONS

'Should an Ontological Pluralist be a Quantificational Pluralist?' *The 165th Meeting of the Creighton Club: the New York State Philosophical Association*, September 7th, 2019 (received the Graduate Student Presentation Award). Comments from Anthony Nguyen.

'Should an Ontological Pluralist be a Quantificational Pluralist?' *Pacific Division of the American Philosophical Association*, Vancouver, British Columbia, April 18th 2019. Comments from Nicholas Tourville.

'Should an Ontological Pluralist be a Quantificational Pluralist?' *Metaphysical Mayhem*, Rutgers University, May 22nd 2018. (Invited)

'Fundamental Non-Qualitative Properties' *Pacific Division of the American Philosophical Association*, San Francisco, California, March 31st 2016. Comments from Ned Markosian.

'The Compensation Argument for Schopenhauer's Pessimism' *Pacific Division of the American Philosophical Association*, Vancouver, British Columbia, April 3rd 2015. Comments from Sandra Shapshay.

COMMENTARIES

Comments on Carolyn Garland's "Plural Persons, Practical Persons", *Syracuse University ABD Workshop*, November 7th 2019.

Comments on David Builes's 'Pluralism and the Problem of Purity', *Syracuse University Graduate Conference*, April 13th 2018.

Comments on Naomi Dershowitz's 'Contingently Sized Simples', *Syracuse University ABD Workshop*, December 7th 2017.

Comments on Arturo Javier-Castellanos's 'Two Three-Dimensional Cohabitants are One Too Many Thinkers', *Syracuse University ABD Workshop*, December 1st 2016.

TEACHING

Instructor at Syracuse University:

Theories of Knowledge and Reality	Fall 2019
Human Nature	Spring 2019
Introduction to Moral Theory	Fall 2018
Theories of Knowledge and Reality	Spring 2017
Theories of Knowledge and Reality	Spring 2016
Theories of Knowledge and Reality	Fall 2015
Introduction to Moral Theory	Spring 2015
Introduction to Moral Theory	Fall 2014

Teaching Assistant at Syracuse University:

Ethics and the Media Professions, Paul Prescott	Spring 2018
Human Nature, Christopher Nobel	Fall 2017
Ethics and the Media Professions, Paul Prescott	Fall 2016
Theories of Knowledge and Reality, Mark Heller	Spring 2014
Introduction to Moral Theory, Ben Bradley	Fall 2013
Logic, Thomas McKay	Spring 2013
Theories of Knowledge and Reality, Robert Van Gulick	Fall 2012
Introduction to Moral Theory, Samuel Gorovitz	Spring 2012
Human Nature, Aaron Koller	Fall 2011

GRADUATE COURSEWORK (* = *audit*)

Metaphysics:

Proseminar: Language, Epistemology, Mind, Metaphysics, André Gallois	Fall 2011
Metaphysics of Freedom and Knowledge, André Gallois	Fall 2012
Metaphysics: Free Will, Mark Heller	Spring 2013
Hyperintensionality, Kris McDaniel	Fall 2013
* *Beyond the Modal: Essence and Potentiality*, Kris McDaniel	Fall 2016

History of Philosophy:

Proseminar: History of Philosophy, Kara Richardson	Spring 2011
* *Aristotle on Nous*, Jessica Gelber	Spring 2014
* *Plotinus*, Christopher Nobel	Fall 2017
* *Classical Arabic Philosophy*, Kara Richardson	Spring 2018
* *Descartes*, Kris McDaniel and Kara Richardson	Fall 2014

* *Spinoza*, Frederick Beiser	Spring 2016
Leibniz, Kris McDaniel and Kara Richardson	Spring 2013
* *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, Frederick Beiser	Fall 2011
Kant, Kris McDaniel	Fall 2012
* *German Political Philosophy, 1780-1830*, Fredrick Beiser	Spring 2019
Schopenhauer, Frederick Beiser	Spring 2013
Husserl's Logical Investigations, Kris McDaniel	Spring 2012

Ethics and Social Philosophy:

Proseminar: Moral and Political Philosophy, Hille Paakkunainen	Fall 2012
Varieties of Naturalism in Metaethics, Hille Paakkunainen	Spring 2013
Recent Work in Democratic Theory, Kenneth Baynes	Spring 2012
Feminist Philosophy, Kara Richardson	Fall 2013

Philosophy of Science and Logic:

Philosophy of Physics, Joshua Spencer	Fall 2011
Logic and Language, Thomas McKay	Fall 2011