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 # 2

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Against Tropes

Against tropes

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Definitions

- Tropes are dependent particulars

- Tropes appear as a genuine metaphysical option once we cross the distinction between particulars and universals with he distinction between existentially independent and existentially dependent entities.

	Particulars	Universals
Independent	substances	platonic universals
Dependent	tropes	aristotelian universals

- *Particular vs universals*: an entity is a universal iff it is mutliply exemplifiable (or repeatable), that is if it can have more than one complete occurence. An entity is a particular iff it can't be multiply exemplified.

- *existential dependence vs. existential independence* : x is existentially dependent on y iff (i) x cannot exist without y. (ii) this modal fact is grounded in the essence of x (and not in that of y or any other entity).

Further features of tropes

- Tropes are *properties*: They qualify or characterise some other entity (either by being exemplified by them, or by being constituents of them). This does not follows from the fact that tropes are dependent particulars since some dependent particulars aren't properties (effects, processes, events, boundaries, holes, shadows...).

- Tropes are *basic*, unanalysable, simple entities. They have no constituents. (some people, e.g. C. Daly, 1994 or J.P. Moreland, 1985: 192 takes tropes to be complex states of affairs, of substance having a universals. This is not the view is shall attack here.)

   ➡The main upshot here is that tropes theory takes properties to be irreducible to other ontological categories. Trope theory isn't, contrary to ressemblance nominalism, a "blob theory" (Armstrong, 1989), that takes substances or objects to be simple entities. Like realists about universals, tropes theorist believe that the distinction between the different property of a thing is a real distinction in the thing. Classical nominalists, on the other hand, claim that the distinction between properties of a thing is either a distinction in thought or a distinction in its relations to other things.

- Tropes can be *exactly similar*. Two numerically distinct trope can be qualitatively identical. A typical proposal is to reduce determinate universals to class of exactly ressembling tropes.

The problem: grounding trope's particularity

- Contrary to universals, tropes can be numerically distincts even when they are exactly ressembling.

➡ What distinguishes the tropes of blueness which appear on the left disc from the trope of blueness which appears on the right one ?

- Let us call this the problem of the particularization of tropes. What grounds the numerical difference between two exactly ressembling tropes? What makes tropes particulars ? What is their particularity-maker ?

- What is not at stake:

  (i) the epistemological problem of individualizing tropes (= singling out, identifying, reidentifying them)

  (ii) the problem of individuating qualitatively different properties of a same type (redness and blueness, roundness and squareness...)

- *A speculation* : tropes are here conceived as properties, but the same puzzle may arise if they are conceived as processes, events or states. Upholders of processes, events and states as basic entities still have to answer the question : are processes particular or universals? If they are particulars, what is the ground for the numerical distinction between two exactly ressembling processes? The following objections to tropes as properties may also apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to tropes conceives as events, processes and states.

Overview

- Thesis to be defended: there are no tropes.

- General argument: there are no good way to account for the particularity of tropes (which is essential to tropes).

- Six views to be rejected:

    1. Tropes particularized by their locations in formal spaces

    2. Tropes as scattered particulars

    3. Tropes particularized by their bearers

    4. Tropes particularised by their constituents

    5. Tropes particularized by their individual dependence to their bearers

    6. Tropes as primitely particular

1. Tropes particularized by their locations in formal spaces

- The proposal: what distinguishes two tropes of the same type is their occupying different position the formal space of that type. Trope are particularized by their occupying different position in such spaces.

- Ex: What grounds the numerical differences between two shades of red is their occupying different position in the colour space (colour solid).
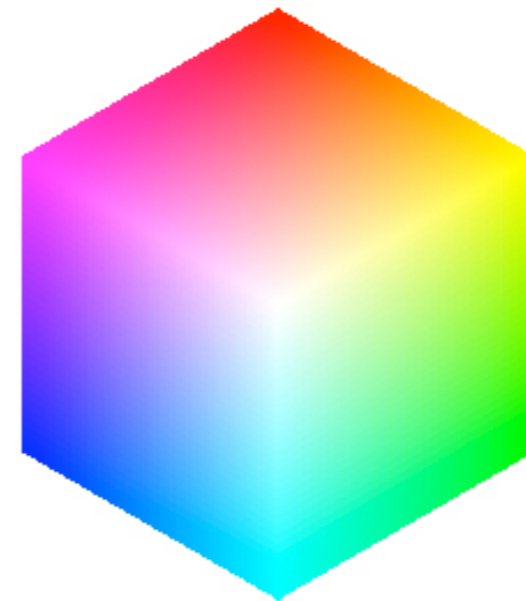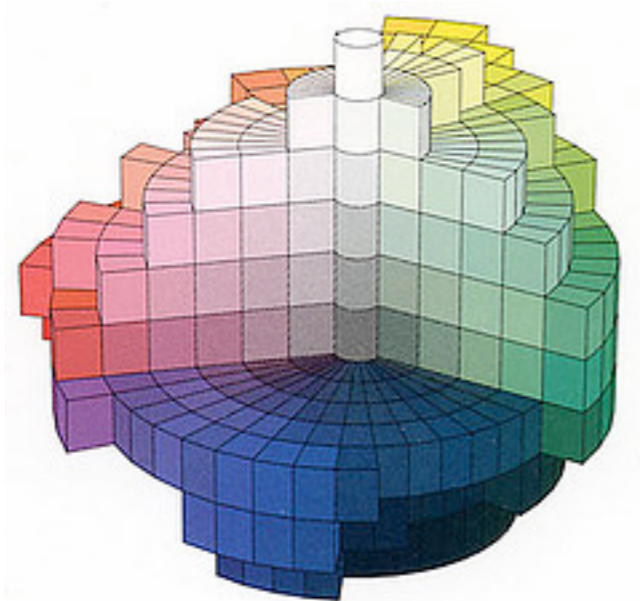
First objection to the view that tropes are locations in formal spaces

- That solution cannot account for numerical difference between *exactly* ressembling tropes, identity of indiscernibles being in true in such formal spaces. Such a proposal is at best an answer to the question of the *individuation of determinate properties*, not to the question of the *particularity of tropes*.

    - *Possible reply* : still, determinates properties are particulars (non-repeatable) *in their space*.

    - *Answer* : begs the question, particularity relative to a space is not what is at stake here. Upholder of universals agree that a determinate shade of red isn't repetable in the space of colours. That universals have inviduation conditions, doesn't make them particulars. True particularity of a determinate property is non-repetability in at least one other space than the space of its determinable, plausibly in some *material space.*

    - NB : one between *material* spaces and *formal* ones is that material spaces are absolute : some locations can be unoccupied or unfilled. This imply that identity of indiscernible is false in material spaces.

- One possible explanation between tropes and determinates properties is that the indexical expression "that property" which is widely used by upholder of tropes for presenting their view, sometimes referers to a determinate property and some other times to a particular.

- Though trope theorists are themselves not confused on this point, they are often ready to interpret past philosophers (e.g. Aristotle) as speaking of tropes, and to omit the alternative interpretation according to which they are speaking of determinate properties.

Second objection to the view that tropes are locations in formal spaces

- Such a proposal may not even be an answer to the question of the individuation of determinate properties because it reverts the natural order of explanation.

- Formal spaces supervene on the determinate properties that constitute them. The colour solid is what it is because the colour determinates are what they are, not the reverse. The relation between determinate properties of a falling under the same determinable are internal in the sense of supervenient on their terms, being necessitated by them.

- Individuating determinate properties by there position in such spaces would require to conceive of the relation between determinate colours as internal in Bradley's sense: relations that are logically prior to their terms. Such a strong holism/structuralism is at least prima facie dubious.

2. Tropes as scattered particulars

- The proposal: a possible reaction for the tropes theorist would be to claim that determinate properties are indeed scattered particular properties. That determinate shade of blue should be conceived of as a property that has only one instance, but which is scattered in many differents places.

- An illustration: the eraser-god. Suppose the world is first uniformly blue. God erase that blue from some places, most places indeed. Sometimes he paints the erased extents with other determinate colours, sometimes he leaves them unfilled. At the end he gets our present coloured-world.

- In that story, the blueness of the right disc and the blueness of the left disc are only two parts of the very same particular blueness. Blueness is not a universal because it is not *wholly* present in different places.

- If blueness is conceived of as filling not only the actual world but all possible worlds, this solution ensure that blueness isn't repeatable.

Objection to the view that tropes are scattered particulars

- This is not what tropes theorists have in mind usually: If a trope is a scattered individual (the sum or set of all determinate blue-extents), then it is never the case that two tropes can be exactly similar, just because their is only one trope per determinate property.

- If the upholder of the view says that the tropes aren't the scattered individual but each spot resulting from the erasing, he looses all the advantage of his view. He has still to explain (i) why two spots of blueness are exactly similar. (ii) why two spots of blueness are two.

The relation between colour shapes and locations

- We have distinguished spatial properties from spatial substances and claimed than they enter into mutual generic dependence. We have now to ask : what is the relation between coloured shapes and locations ? Three options at least.

- (i) Coloured shapes are particular object (bundles) that are located in space.

- (ii) Coloured shapes are complex properties that are exemplified by a bare or thin particulars, this whole states of affairs being a particular object (states of affairs) that is located in space.

- (iii) Coloured shapes are complex properties exemplified by bare location.

The problem

- Material things and properties (have to) fill, occupy, have to be located in space, while space doesn't fill, occupe, or is located in material things and properties.

  ‣ *Primacy of space intuition* : material entities have to be located in space, but space needn't be located in material entities (because he can't). Space is the entity that is filled.

- One cannot conceive certain spatial properties without certain non spatial ones : a boundary without any difference between filling properties, a shape without anything shaped, or a motion without anything moving (bare space cannot move).

  ‣ *Dependency of space intuition* : at least some spatial properties are existentially dependent one some filling properties.

- Tension : Primacy suggest an asymmetrical relation between space and filling entites ; dependency suggest a symmetrical relation since filling properties also depend on space.

First solution : asymetrical dependence

- Two ways of accounting for those two intuitions :

- 1) asymmetrical dependence between extent and filling properties.

  - The filling properties individually depend on extents. But extents only generically depends on filling properties.

  - Dealing with the primacy intuition : extent is "less" dependent on filling properties that filling

  - Dealing with the dependency intuition : extent is neverthless dependent on filling properties.

  - Ontological cost : two types of dependency relations, individual and generic.

  - As [Husserl] points out sensible qualities stand in an asymmetrical relation to extent: the former cover or fill the laterr. Husserl fails to uncover the source of this asymmetry because he does not wish to give up the

A suspicion

- If a filling property is individually dependent on a extent, then that property is a particular property, a trope. It could have been the property of another extent.

- Individual depence is the symptome of the present of a trope, but can it be the criterion of tropes?

- If tropes are definied as individually dependent entity, that the dependee of the trope and its invidiual dependency wear the trousers of their particularity.

- (i) suppose the trope we individually dependent on a universal. Would is inherit the multi-exemplifiability of the universal? Apparently yes, because it would occur in as many instances as the universal. But if would still be the property of that universal only.

Second solution: spatial substances vs. spatial properties

- 2) distinction between spatial substance and spatial properties.

- Spatial substances are independent of any filling property, but spatially property are generically dependent on fillings properties.

- *Primacy intuition* : spatial substance are existentially independent.

- *Dependency intuition* : spatial properties depend on filling properties (the dependence between spatial and filling properties is generic in both senses).

- Ontological cost : two types of spatial entities : substances and properties.

3. Tropes particularized by their bearers

- *The proposal*: exactly ressembling tropes are numerically distinct in virtue of having numerically distinct particular bearers.

  - RQ : it is necessary to claim that the bearers of tropes are not only numerically distinct but also particular: two second order properties of two first order universals would have numerically distinct bearers, but still they won't be tropes since they will have as many instances as their respective universal bearers.

- *Two main versions*:

  - the bearers of tropes a bare places (regions, zones, locations, positions, points) in space-time. (K. Campbell, 1981; M. Bordes, 1998; J. Shaffer, 2001)

    "*x* and *y* are distinct tropes iff they are either not exactly resembling, or at distant locations (Distance (x, y) >0)"

  - the bearers of tropes are bare particulars (C.B. Martin, 1980, E.J. Lowe, 2008?)

  - ➡ The first version has the advantage of avoiding bare particulars, but the inconvenients of forbiding true motion, while the second makes room for motion at the cost of admitting bare particulars.

  - ➡ NB: The claim that bearer-uniqueness is what particularizes tropes is stronger than the claim that all tropes have a unique bearer (B. Schnieder, 2004; 2006) : bearer uniqueness may also be conceived as a mere symptom of the particularity of tropes.

- *Ex*: what distinguishes the exactly similar bluenesses of the two discs above is either (i) that they are at different places. (ii) that they are bluenesses of different bare particular.

First (bad) objection to the view that tropes are particularized by their bearers.

- Trivially, this view only works for substance-attribute views of tropes, but not for bundle views.

- Possible answer : The upholder of the bundle view could try to say that each trope is particularized by the other tropes it depends on, though they are not its bearers.

- If so, he has to admit that not only the existence, but also the particularity of trope is *mutually founded*. A trope 1 is particular because of the particularity of trope 2, and that trope 2 is itself particular because of the particularity of trope 1. (The same for existence)

Second objection to the view that tropes are particularized by their bearers

- Let us consider the trope, and only the trope, in abstraction from its bearer (of course the trope cannot exist without its bearer, but as long as the trope is distinct from its bearer we can focus on the trope only). What makes that pure trope a particular ? There is nothing intrinsic to it that renders it particular in this solution. The particular (be it a bare substantial particular or a bare location) is outside the trope.

➡ So there still no ground for the particularity of the trope inside the trope. It is said that the trope could exemplify any other particular, but why is that so, given that the trope is what it is ?

    (i) In that view, there is no particularity-maker intrinsic to the trope.

    (ii) The particularity-maker of any entity should be intrinsic to it (it can't be a relation to sth else).

    ➡ The particularity of tropes is still ungrounded.

- As it stands, this objection to the view that tropes can be particularized by their bearers is not devastating, nevertheless. The tropes theorists may adopt two strategies for dealing with it :

    - Rejection (i), and including the bearer in the trope itself.

    - Rejecting (ii), and claim that an entity can be particularized its relation to sth else.

4. Tropes particularised by their constituents, first try.

- *The proposal*. The first possible reaction to the previous objection is to include the particular bearer inside the trope itself (F. Brentano, 1933; K. Campbell, 1981) . The places or the bare particulars are no more outside the trope, they are constituent of it.

  - *Note*: Whether the particular still deserve to be called a "bearer" in such a solution is left open (Brentano, who claims that substances are contained in their accidents would have answered positively).

- There would be no tropes of redness located at places extrinsic to them, but only tropes of redness-at-a-place. Only this whole thing is a redness trope.

- *Ex*: What distinguishes the blueness of the first disc from the blueness of the second, is that they contain (have as their constituents) numerically distinct places (or bare particulars).

Objection to the view that tropes are particularized by their constituent(s)

- This suggestion makes tropes complex entities, akin to states of affairs. Upholder of universals such as Armstrong are happy to grant that the state of affairs consisting of a universals exemplified by a particular are themselves particulars, though they have a universal constituent ("victory of particularity").

    - A possible answer is to say that there is still a difference between tropes conceived as properties-at-places and full-fledged states of affairs. States of affairs are complete in the sense of being existentially independent of other states of affairs. A property-at-a-place may still be ontologically dependent: for instance roundness-here may well depends on the existence of a filling property (a colour for instance) at the same place. To put in another way, states of affairs usually contain many properties while "property-at-place" contains by definition only one property. Therefore they may need other properties.

- But even if tropes can be distinguished from states of affairs, the main problem is that they are still complex entities. If tropes are not simple we are entitled to ask, for each constituent of a trope, whether it is a particular or a universal. Plausibly the place is a particular, but the main problem is with the quality. If it is a universal, then the project of most tropes theorists to avoid realism about universals fails. If it is a particular quality, then the problem of the particularisation of that quality reccurs inside to trope itself.

4'. Tropes particularised by their constituents, second try.

- If so, the only way to spell out the proposal according to which tropes have particulars as their constituents while maintaining that tropes are simple is to say that the distinction between two constituents of tropes, their quality and their particular is only a distinction of reason, that correspond to nothing in reality.

- A distinction of reason is a distinction between two constituents (parts, properties, aspects) of an entity to which correspond no real distinction in the entity. Conceptualists, for instance, take the distinction between the shape and the colour of a disc to be a distinction of reason.

- According to the present proposal, tropes are property-at-a-place, but "property" "at-a" and "place" here a words that refer to nothing else than a distinction in thought. Tropes are simple, unstructured entities, that happen to be described by complex expressions.

First (bad) objection to the view that tropes are particularized by their constituent(s)

- A first objection is that the view that the distinction between the tropes and its spatial location is a distinction of reason, then the trope theorist can't account for the distinction between the colour and the shape of a disc.

- Facing this objection, some trope theorists bite the bullet :

  The geometric features are doubly special; they are essential to ordinary trope and in themselves insufficient to count as proper beings. Form and volume are therefore best considered not as tropes in their own right at all. Real tropes are qualities-of-a-formed-volume. The distinctions we can make between color, shape, and size are distinctions in thought to which correspond no distinctions in reality. A change in the size or shape of an occurence of redness is not the association of the same red tropes with different size and shape tropes, but the occurence of an (at least partly) different trope of redness. K. Campbell, 1981.

- If so the view according tropes are simple properties in which we distinguish by reason different constituent has a big cost: it should abandon the view that tropes theory is a theory of all properties. Trope theory should reject the view that shapes are properties.

The objection answered

- But the objection above relies on a confusion between two categories of spatial entities: spatial substances and spatial properties.

- As noted by Moreland (1985), Campbell is here overlooking a distinction between spatial substantial particulars (such as space-time point, regions, locations, zones, positions, places...) and spatial properties (such as shape, motion...)

- If such a distinction can be secured, the upholder of tropes can claim that the distinctions between colours and locations on the one hand, and shape and locations on the other are indeed distinctions of reason. But the the distinction between colour and shape is still a real distinction.

Second (good) objection to the view that tropes are particularized by their constituent(s)

- A more important objection to the view that tropes are simple "quality-at-a-place" (the distinction between quality and place being only a distinction of reason) is that such a view implies that two tropes can never be exactly similar.

- The problem is that the place being now included in the trope, it becomes a similarity-maker for the trope, on a par with its quality. There is then no clear answer to the question "Is blueness-at-place1 more similar to a blueness-at-place2 than to grayness-at-place1 ?"

- This is a bad news for the tropes theorist whose standard strategy is to reduce universals to class of exactly ressembling tropes. The fact that a blueness trope can be more similar to a grayness trope than to another blueness trope threatens the whole project of reducing determinate universals to classes of tropes.

Third (good) objection to the view that tropes are particularized by their constituent(s)

- A last objection to this view is due to J.P. Moreland (1985: 70). If there is no real distinction between the trope and the place (or the particular), if both are indeed identical, it seems impossible for two differents tropes to have the same location (or for two different tropes to be properties of the same bare particular).

- Suppose that two different tropes (say a determinate blueness, and a determinate coldness) are at the same place. This implies that the two tropes blueness-here and coldness-here partly overlap.   But this in turn seems to imply that tropes are not really simple : they have at least two constituents, the constituents that overlap with other tropes (the place) and the constituents that do not overlap (the quality proper).

- If trope are really simple there is no middle term between complete separation and identity. No possibility of partial overlap. All the tropes that are at a single place are fused into one single trope. Trope theory ceases to be a theory of properties.

5. Tropes particularized by their individual dependence to their bearers

- The proposal : (i) tropes are individually dependent on their bearers. (= they are not only generically dependent, that is, dependent of any bearer of a certain type. They are individually dependent on *that* specific bearer. You cannot change the bearer withtout changing the trope). (ii) the ground of that individual dependence lies in the trope itself.

- Why do we need (ii) ? Compare those two cases :

    A. Pascal is so in love with Claudine that he cannot even look at any other woman.

    B. Claudine is so possessive towards Pascal that he cannot even look at any other woman.

- In the first case, the modal fact that Pascal can only look at Claudine (=that Pascal'looks are modally individually dependent on Claudine) is grounded in Pascal's identity (in its feeling). In the second case, the same modal fact is grounded in Claudine's identity (its possessivity).

- As far as trope are concerned, we want to exclude the later case, B. the fact that a trope can only be the property of that particular shouldn't be grounded in the nature of that particular. Their would still be nothing in the essence of the trope itself that would insure its individual dependence on that particular.

- One way to understand the claim that the very essence of a trope requires a specifique particular bearer is to conceive a trope as having a hole in which in which only one particular bearer in the world can enter. In this way, the particular bearer remain outside the trope but is still somehow present in the trope. The trope doesn't contain the bearer, but something like a tag or indexical pointing toward it. This insures that the trope is intrinsically attracted by this particular.

- ex: the bluenesses of the two discs are distinct because they contain tag for different particulars.

Objection to the view that tropes contain tags of their bearers

- The tropes appears to have an quasi-intentional reference to the particular it depends on.

- This view still forbids exact ressemblance between tropes (because tropes contains different tags).

- It is no clear whether this view doesn't surreptitiously introduces a structure inside the trope: isn't the tag itself a constituent? If so the view is open to the other criticism to the view that tropes are particularized by their constituents.

- If there is no such constituent in the trope, the individual dependence of the trope has no more ground in the trope itself.

6. Tropes as primitely particular

- , P. Simons (1994?), K. Campbell (1990: 69):

  To meet these disasters, let us abandon the view that a colour trope is individuated by its place....
  To preserve the simplicity of tropes, one must then affirm that individuation is basic and unalysable. That is, to the question: what is it about one F trope that makes it the F trope it is and not some other F trope? there can be only the non-informative, but true, answer: (not any feature, aspect or constituent of that F trope but) just being that F trope rather than any other. Campbell, 1990 : 69.

- After all, even upholder of states of affairs admit primitive particularity in their metaphysics: when asked what is the particularity-maker of a bare (or thin) particular, or of a location, they simply answer "themselves" or "there is no particularity-maker for such entity, they are primitevely particulars".

Objections to the primitive view

- 1. The essential link between tropes and locations being broken this paves the way for two more classical objection to tropes theory, namely that it allows for empy possibilities : *pilling* and *swapping* of tropes. (Campbell 1990: 68 suggests that pilling is this is a genuine possibility, see also Livianos, 2007).

- 2. It is true that upholder of bare particulars or locations appeal (at least implicitly) to the view that such entities are primitively particular. But bare particulars or locations have only one ontological role, namely to particularize.Tropes on this other hand, have two-roles : they are both particularity-makers and similarity-makers. The primitivist has to say the truthmakers for the propositions *a and b are exactly similar tropes* and *a are b are numerically distinct tropes are* the same, namely *a* and *b*. This is a lot of work for only two tropes.

    This would be a good strategy if a trope really was a simple entity like a bare particular. For it seems to me that only simples can simply differ and bare particulars could simply be different entities. But bare paticulars are mere individuators. A trope has two functions and a trope defender would have to postulate two ultime, unanalysible facts about a trope —its individual difference from other tropes and it exact similarity with other tropes. I have been arguing that a trope qua simple cannot have it both ways. It is either a bare particular or a universal", Moreland 1985: 80.

- 3. Finally, this option introduces a gap between what tropes are and what they seem. (offering a good ontological description of perceptual content was one of the main initial motivation for trope theory). Surely, we distinghuishes different tropes in perception by their occupying different position, or by their being hang on different moving objects. But according to the primitive view, this is not what particularizes tropes. If so, it is apparently impossible to perceive tropes as tropes, their true particularity is hidden to us.

Conclusion

- If their are properties, they must be universals. No particular can own a property.

- "Property of properties is theft !"

- see Hochberg paper, especially the quotation of Bergman underlined, which as clear affinities to mine and Moreland's one.