

Particularised Attributes

An Austrian Tale

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Introduction: The Stage and the Players

For philosophers interested in ontological issues, the writings of the important figures of Austrian philosophy in the nineteenth and early twentieth century contain many buried treasures to rediscover. Bernard Bolzano, Franz Brentano, Alexius Meinong, and Edmund Husserl, to name just four grand names of that period, were highly aware of the importance of a feasible ontology for many of the philosophical questions they addressed throughout their works.

In this essay, I will discuss some ideas that these philosophers had with respect to the ontological category of *particularised attributes*; the discussion is intended to be a contribution both to the history of ontology, and to ontology itself. In the first major part of the essay I will review three arguments to the effect that we should allow particularised attributes into our ontology. In the second major part, I will discuss certain problems for the idea that particularised attributes have a *unique bearer* and present two alternative solutions to them.

Before I enter the discussion, a remark on nomenclature is in order: the entities I am concerned with are known under many names. At least sometimes, when philosophers spoke about (individual) accidents, modes, particularised qualities (or: properties), instances or cases of properties, (individual) moments, or tropes, they were alluding to what I called particularised attributes.¹ For the present purpose, I shall freely choose between the different terms and, to honour a philosopher whom Dummett once called *the great-grandfather of analytic philosophy*, I shall also use yet another title for them when I call them by Bolzano's title of an *adherence*.²

1. Why Accept Particularised Attributes?

a. An Argument Form: Accounting for Abstract Reference

For some analytic philosophers, grown up in the twentieth century, the idea of particularised qualities may seem somewhat extraordinary. Especially during the boom of formal semantics and topics related to modal logics, philosophical mainstream was mostly concerned with properties conceived of as *shareable* entities. But things have not always been like that; particularised attributes were quite generally acknowledged in early Austrian's philosophy (as

¹ The different terminologies are *sometimes* connected with different conceptions of particularised properties and related entities. For some remarks and references on the variety of terms see Schnieder (2004b: 155–161).

² When Bolzano introduces the term 'Adhärenz' in his *Athanasia* (AT: 21), he does not proclaim it to be his own coinage but rather alludes to an established use by "the philosophers" – unfortunately without mentioning whom he had in mind.

well as in many other philosophical periods). But even when philosophers felt generally inclined to accept particularised properties, they sometimes articulated reasons to do so – I shall inspect three such reasons in the following sections. Here, I will briefly introduce the general kind of reason I am concerned with.

Among the existing variety of arguments for the acceptance of particularised properties we can distinguish between two sorts: some philosophers constructed such arguments in terms of the *philosophical utility* of those entities and argued either that they serve certain theoretical purposes better than entities of other sorts, or that they are needed to resolve some philosophical puzzles. Other philosophers argued from a more descriptive point of view to the effect that particularised properties belong to the ontological framework shared by ordinary thinkers; i.e. that particularised attributes play an irreducible role in everyday thought and speech. In what follows I will discuss three arguments of the latter type which can be extracted from the writings of Husserl, Meinong and Bolzano.

The arguments I shall concentrate on share some common structure, which is similar to that exhibited by a much-debated argument for the existence of (shareable) properties, to be more precise, the argument from the phenomenon of *abstract reference*, an explicit version of which can be found in Husserl (LU II, §2).³ Let me briefly introduce the argument: it seems hardly controversial that the statements

‘Wisdom is a virtue’, ‘Red is a colour’, and ‘Impatience can be annoying’

are true. If the logical form of these statements is mirrored by their grammatical form, then they are of some simple subject-predicate structure, and we can conclude by the *truth* of these statements that their subject-terms are non-empty singular terms. So, if these terms really refer to *properties* (as they certainly seem to do), then we can conclude that there are properties.

To make its structure more transparent, we can put the argument as follows:

- (1) There are statements which are
 - (a) apparently true,
 - (b) apparently of a subject-predicate structure, and which
 - (c) apparently involve reference to some property as their subject.
- (2) A non-conniving subject-predicate statement of the form ‘*a* is *F*’ can only be true if its subject term has a reference.
- (3) The appearances mentioned in (1a) to (1c) are not deceptive.
- (C) Therefore, there are properties.

Here one can easily see what line a possible defence could take. Premise (1) just states some

³ For some discussions of this argument cp. Küne (1983: 128–138) and Loux (1978: ch. 4).

undeniable linguistic data, and also premise (2) seems hard to reject. Accordingly, it is the remaining premise (3) which has usually been under attack from those who deny the existence of properties. This premise can be denied by declaring one of the observations (1a) to (1c) to express some deceptive appearance after all. The first of these three options (i.e. declaring the statements in question to be false, despite the appearance) would lead to a very general and unattractive error-thesis. What about the third alternative? If someone denies that the subject of ‘wisdom is a virtue’ refers to a property, even though it seems to be the case, she should provide us with some *Ersatz*-entity that is in fact referred to. In the case of properties, at least some nominalists were attracted to the idea of substituting *sets* for properties (while it seems fair to say that the debates about this idea made its prospects look dismal). The last option for a sceptic with respect to properties is to assign some logical form to statements apparently dealing with properties that deviates sufficiently from the surface grammar of the statements. Thus, one might hold that a meaning-preserving, though more perspicuous, paraphrase of such statements will show that the singular terms seemingly referring to properties *merely appear* to be singular terms, because in the proper paraphrases they will be replaced by some expressions of a different logical status. At least in some cases it is easy to produce promising paraphrases; thus, many philosophers would agree that the sentence ‘Socrates possessed wisdom’, which apparently expresses a relation between a particular and a universal, is merely a stylistic variant of ‘Socrates was wise’, a statement which has no relational structure at all. But there are more complicated cases which might pose insurmountable problems to this strategy.⁴

Enough about shareable properties. As I said earlier, I introduced this well-known argument in favour of an ontology of properties, because I shall discuss some arguments in favour of particularised properties which I take to share the general structure of the argument. The arguments will start from the observation that there are certain (apparently) true statements which seem to deal with particularised properties (they contain phrases of the form ‘*x*’s *F*-ness’, which friends of particularised properties regard as the canonical means to refer to such entities). To account for the truth of these statements, the arguments proceed, we should countenance particularised properties.

While the arguments thus can easily be seen to share their structure with the argument from abstract reference above, there remains one potentially important difference. The statements from which the arguments for particularised properties will start are in general more *complex* than those which underlie the argument for shareable properties. This is already due to the fact that canonical designators of particularised properties are definite descriptions, that is, logically complex terms; but also some of the predicates that will appear in the statements are of a complex character. Presumably, this fact leaves more room for quarrelling about the logical form of the statements.

⁴ Cp. Jackson (1977), and also Künne (op. cit.), Loux (op. cit.).

Furthermore, the strategy of finding some *Ersatz*-entities as referents of alleged singular terms for particularised properties is more promising and will, accordingly, be endorsed by more philosophers than in the case of shareable properties. Two *Ersatz*-entities suggest themselves, because the terms employed – phrases of the form ‘*x*’s *F*-ness’ – are systematically ambiguous and can be used (i) to refer to some *universal attribute* rather than some particularised property; thus, one can refer to a particular shade of green which is multiply exemplifiable by referring to it with the phrase ‘the green of my bathroom-tiles’. And (ii) such terms seem to allow for a use in which they refer to *facts* rather than to particularised properties; on some occasions such terms seem to be interchangeably used with that-clauses (or even that-clauses prefixed with the phrase ‘the fact’). Thus, to say that a husband was aware of his wife’s infidelity seems to be just a variant of saying that he was aware (of the fact) that his wife was unfaithful.⁵

To defend the arguments against such reactions, their proponents will have to provide reasons that at least in *some* cases only particularised properties can fulfil the job in question, whereas both *Ersatz*-entities prove to be unsuited for it (of course, the availability of *Ersatz*-entities does not, in itself, show that instead of particularised qualities, the *Ersatz*-entities are *actually* referred; but if there are suitable *Ersatz*-entities, this takes the sting from the argument from abstract reference, since then it cannot show any more that we *have to* accept particularised qualities because of the statements we make).

No more introductory remarks; let us turn to the arguments.

b. Argument 1: Passing Away

In his early *Hume-Studien I*, Meinong put forward an argument to the effect that whenever we say that two objects share one and the *same* property, we do not really mean what we say – in mentioning *sameness* (or: identity) here, we speak rather loosely:⁶

⁵ Cf. Slote (1974: 79f., 106). The somewhat classic linguistic investigations by Zeno Vendler (1967) are particularly interesting in this context; though Vendler himself concentrates on singular terms which can both be used to refer to facts as well as to events, his observations easily expand to terms which are ambiguous between designating particularised properties and facts.

⁶ The passage quoted has been taken to show that Meinong was some kind of a *moderate realist* – that he dispensed with shareable attributes in favour of particularised ones (see Barber 1970: 555ff. and Grossmann 1974: 5ff.). Rollinger (1993: 46f.), however, points out that there is a tension between the quotation (and the interpretation) and a nearby passage (*Hume-Studien I*: 49), in which Meinong seems to regard attributes as shareable entities; Rollinger concludes that Meinong wavered between incompatible ontological positions. I cannot decide this dispute. But whatever Meinong’s contention in his early years may have been, at least in his later writings he certainly accepted *both* shareable and particularised properties (see, as a particularly clear example, *Erfahrungsgrundlage*: 26f.).

Suppose we have two congruent triangles, A and B. Is the triangularity of A identical to the triangularity of B? – i.e. is the triangularity of A the triangularity of B? No one will deny that A can persist if B has been annihilated, – equally, it will not be disputed that the attribute adheres to its object, that it persists with it, and that it passes away with it. Now, if B no longer exists, then the triangularity of B no longer exists either, while A and its triangularity continue to exist undisturbed. But according to Mill, the triangularity of A is the triangularity of B, so that the same triangularity exists and yet fails to exist; but no one would be inclined to regard this as possible. – What these apparently idle considerations should show is merely the following: when we call two attributes that are alike but belong to different things identical, we just cannot mean identity in the strict sense of the word. (Meinong, Hume-Studien I: 22f.)⁷

Here Meinong presents the following argument:⁸

- (1) *A* and *B* are two congruent triangles.
- (2) Triangle *B* is destroyed.
- (3) Every attribute adheres to its bearer (i.e. the object possessing it), in such a fashion that the attribute vanishes if its bearer vanishes.
- (C-1) Therefore, the triangularity of *B* vanishes.
- (4) But the triangularity of *A* persists.
- (C-2) Therefore, the triangularity of *A* ≠ the triangularity of *B*.

Premises (1) and (2) are true by assumption, and premise (4) is indisputably correct. The remaining premise (3) has to carry the whole burden of the argument then – but is it suitable to do so? It seems not; the premise is neither particularly lucid, nor, if given a clear reading which supports the argument, is it likely to be accepted by everyone. Whoever takes attributes to be abstract objects lacking spatio-temporal existence will certainly object to it. Thus, a Platonist might point out that (i) wisdom is an attribute, and (ii) wisdom will not vanish on the day the last wise human dies. But then, wisdom provides a counter-example to the general claim formulated in (3). Hence we see that Meinong should better not rely on this principle, which seems acceptable only in light of the doctrine of particularised properties, i.e. the doctrine which is to be established by the argument.⁹

But there is more to Meinong's reasoning than this. He introduced an element into his argument which is not mandatory for its purpose and even distracts attention from its important core: the superfluous element is that in Meinong's setting not only the attribute of the second

⁷ Cp. also Husserl (LU II, §19: 155).

⁸ For Mill's position, which Meinong is attacking, see e.g. *System* Book I, Ch. ii, §4: 29f.

⁹ In their discussions of Meinong's argument, both Grossmann and Barber (op. cit.) concentrate on the controversial claim (3) and rightly criticise the argument for this assumption. But they dismiss Meinong's point too hastily because they overlook that a boiled-down version of the argument does not need this premise (see below).

object, but the object *itself* passes away. Objects may lose some attributes without thereby going out of existence. And it is the perishing of the attribute that carries the burden of the argument. Meinong's basic point seems to be that given two objects *a* and *b*, which are said to have an attribute in common, it may be correct to say that *a*'s attribute persists for a longer time than does *b*'s attribute. Then, the argument goes on, it cannot be one and the same attribute after all, which immediately follows from the uncontroversial direction of *Leibniz' Law*:

(LL) $\forall x \forall y (x \text{ has some feature which } y \text{ lacks} \rightarrow x \neq y)$.

Talk about attributes persisting and vanishing is entrenched in ordinary discourse: the colour of an old photograph can *disappear* over the years, an old man may lament the *loss* of his former strength, and somebody's hopes can *perish*. So we do say that attributes may vanish; and if one person's timidity is gone, it surely does not follow that anybody else's timidity must also be gone. In so speaking, then, we distinguish between the attribute of one thing and the attribute of another, not in virtue of a *qualitative* difference between the attributes, but in virtue of their being *possessed* by *different* objects.

Hence Meinong's argument applies to any two objects which are said to share an attribute while one of them loses it before the other does. And since a difference in *modal* properties of some entity *x* and some entity *y* already secures the non-identity of *x* and *y*, the argument even applies to any pair of objects sharing a property that they *can* lose independently of one another (which is the default case when it comes to contingent properties of distinct objects). The argument then runs as follows:

- (1) *A* and *B* both contingently (and independently of one another) possess *F*-ness.
- (2) If (1) is true, then *B*'s *F*-ness may vanish, while *A*'s *F*-ness persists.
- (C) Therefore – by (LL) – *A*'s *F*-ness \neq *B*'s *F*-ness.

Unlike Meinong's own version, this reduced variant of his argument is not laden with any metaphysically dubious premise; the only metaphysical principle on which it relies is the variant of *Leibniz' Law*, (LL); and this is better left untouched. Of the two premises, (1) is true by assumption, and (2) seems analytic.

Is the argument convincing, then? There are two possible lines of defence here, which parallel those mentioned with respect to the argument from abstract reference:

(i) One might deny that terms of the form '*x*'s *F*-ness', as employed in statements concerning the vanishing of some attribute (such as the second premise) are genuinely referring terms. After all, what is said by '*x*'s *F*-ness is gone' seems pretty close to what is said by 'Once, *x* was *F*, while now it is not *F* any more'. This would block the transition from the premises to the conclusion.

(ii) One might agree that whatever we refer to by terms like '*x*'s *F*-ness' in the discussed cases cannot be a shareable attribute, but deny that it is a particularised attribute. Someone who

disbelieves in such attributes but countenances facts might hold that in using sentences of the form ‘ x ’s F -ness has vanished’ we really talk about facts, meaning as much as: while it used to be a fact that x is F , it is not a fact any more. Then the conclusion would still follow, but it would only assert the difference of two *facts* (which doubtless are different).

These proposals cannot easily be dismissed out of hand. We should conclude that Meinong’s argument, though making an interesting point, provides no conclusive evidence for the acceptance of particularised properties in everyday speech.

c. Argument 2: Attributes as the Subjects of Change

A passage from Bolzano’s *Athanasia*, albeit not containing an *explicit* argument for the acceptance of particularised properties, equips us with a second reason to acknowledge such entities:

It is true that not every object to which we ascribe a change has to be a substance; for we can also say about a mere adherence, for instance about the mere colour of this flower, that it has changed. That is because mere attributes have themselves their attributes, which can be present at one time and absent at another; the colour of the flower, for example, may be paler today than it was yesterday. (Bolzano, AT: 23f.)

Bolzano points out that the subjects of some statements of change seem to be attributes, and he is certainly right about this.¹⁰ We can say that Jeanne’s beauty became more autumnal over the years, that Tiresias’ sight grew dim, that the temperature of the oven is rising, that John’s anger cooled rapidly, and that Orson’s instincts developed astonishingly. But attributes, conceived of as universals, shareable and abstract entities, do not seem capable of undergoing changes. A particularised property, however, seems a better candidate of being the subject of a change.¹¹

We can construct an argument along this train of thought which can be called *the argument from change*. Let me use Bolzano’s example of a flower (say, a rose) whose colour has been fading to formulate the argument:

- (1) The colour of the rose has been fading.
- (2) If (1) is true, then whatever we refer to by ‘the colour of the rose’, as employed in (1), must have been fading.
- (3) The colour red cannot fade.
- (C) What we refer to by ‘the colour of the rose’, as employed in (1), is not the colour red.

¹⁰ Here and henceforth, I shall be concerned only with genuine changes rather than mere *Cambridge* changes.

¹¹ A similar reasoning is, for instance, expressed in Ayers (1991: 70), Cleland (1991: 243), Mertz (1996: 3f.), Slote (1974: 81f.), and Strawson (1953: 169n.); some of my examples are borrowed from these sources.

Premise (1) is a statement which is true by hypothesis. Premise (2) seems to be the outcome of a relatively uncontroversial principle:

- (SP) A subject-predicate statement of the form ' $F(a)$ ' is true iff a denotes an object which has the property signified by ' F '.

The final premise (3) is evidently true (indeed, one can hardly make sense of its contrary, i.e. the proposition that *the colour red* is fading). So, when we use the term 'the colour of the rose' in (1), we do not refer to an abstract colour. Having established this conclusion, the proponent of the argument will continue: what we refer to in (1) then is nothing universal (nor, obviously, a fact), but rather a particular instance of the colour red, an instance which belongs to the flower before us, and which is capable of undergoing changes in a way that is barred to abstract, shareable properties. – Is the argument convincing?

I am afraid it is not; not, at least, without further ado. To see this, let us take a look at the following statements:

- (4) The number of saved people is still rising.
 (5) My annual income has increased.

It is obvious that statements like these can be true. But it is equally obvious that whatever their subject-terms refer to are not the right kind of thing to undergo some intrinsic change. No natural number, such as the number 46 for example, can rise (or shrink). And a certain sum of money – say, 20.000 Euros – cannot increase (except in the sense that you earn interest for it; but earning interest for some money does obviously not involve a genuine change of that amount of money). However statements (4) and (5) have to be understood, a reading according to which they attribute some change called *rising* to a number, or some change called *increasing* to an amount of money is rather far-fetched.

How could we parse (4) and (5), then, in a more perspicuous way which does not even superficially suggest the absurd readings? The first step to an answer consists in realising the implicitly indexical character of the definite descriptions which make up the subject phrases of the two statements. These phrases are not temporally neutral; that which is my annual income *now* was not my income *last year*, and to speak of the number of saved people is always to speak of the number of people that have been saved *up to a certain moment*.

It is this feature of a hidden indexical reference to a time that the predicates of the sentences exploit. Let me explicate this by an example; for this we assume that

- (6) The number of people that have been saved *by now* is lower than the number of people that will have been saved *by tomorrow*.

This is a precise, but cumbersome way of speaking; saving some breath, we can express the same by uttering the following:

(6*) Tomorrow the number of saved people will have risen.

So we see that some statements of change do not attribute some alteration to the entities which their subject terms seem to refer to. Correctly understood they rather postulate that two different entities satisfy a certain functional description at different times. Those statements will in general be of the form

(F) x 's F is φ -ing,

where φ is a verb of change that implies a certain terminus of comparison, R (of course, the tense of the sentences can vary; I chose the present progressive only for illustration). These statements are to be read as

(F*) What is *currently* the F of x will be replaced by some different entity, that will *then* be the F of x , and which is R -related to its predecessor in this office.

The particular predicates will dictate the terminus of comparison; if, for instance, the predicate is 'rise', the relation in question could be called *being of a higher value*.

Returning to the statements relevant to the argument, i.e. statements which apparently attribute some change to a particularised property, we see that they contain relational descriptions of attributes. Bolzano's example contains 'the colour of this rose', other relevant examples contain phrases such as 'John's anger', 'the temperature of the oven' etc. And these descriptions are temporally sensitive; what we refer to with 'John's anger' in a certain context may be distinct from what we refer to in another context (this should be agreed upon by both friends and foes of particularised properties). But then these statements might behave as those about numbers discussed before; they might be statements about the *replacement* of some attribute by another of a related sort, rather than about an alteration of one and the same attribute. That

(1) The colour of this rose has been fading,

would then amount to the claim that

(1*) The current colour of the flower is paler than the colour which the flower had previously.

Similarly, the statement that

(7) John's anger cooled rapidly,

might then amount to nothing but

(7*) John went quickly through states of anger with decreasing intensity.

Now if these statements are understood in terms of replacement, they cannot feed the argument for particularised properties. For such replacements could be replacements of *shareable* attributes, and someone who wants to avoid particularised properties can therefore easily produce some *Ersatz*-referents for the alleged designators of adherences in these cases. (By the way: even if such statements are concerned with replacements only, they *might* be about particularised properties; but they will not show the *need* for such entities then.)

Thus, the value of the argument above depends upon a decision in this matter. But how are we to decide whether such statements are about some replacement or some genuine change of one entity? The question is delicate and I feel uncertain how to answer it. Michael Slote thinks that the replacement reading is at odds with our linguistic practise.¹² He writes that we can say that Helen's beauty is less brilliant than *it* was. But now assume that we are confronted with a box of clothes whose content has just been replaced; we would not say in such a case that the clothes in the box are drabber than *they* were. Slote seems to stress that the use of anaphoric pronouns has a kind of linguistic signal function for the act of re-identifying one and the same entity. Though he is principally right about this, he overlooks that we have at our disposal the so-called "lazy" use of pronouns which is free from re-identifying import. And there are clearly uses of lazy pronouns in replacement-statements of the sort relevant to our argument. We can say that the number of unemployed people is higher than *it* has ever been before – the use of the pronoun in no way commits us to a strange view about rising numbers here. What the pronoun does is holding place for its grammatical antecedent, which will, however, receive a different reference embedded in the second clause than it has embedded in the first. And notice that at least sometimes we can make a similar use of a lazy pronoun when we talk about substances. The chancellor of Germany has never been invited to this ceremony, the French minister might say on a particular occasion, but now we decided to invite *him*. At least in one reading of what he uttered, he was not only speaking about the *current* chancellor.

Finally, it is important to see that in the case of some statements which apparently attribute a change to an adherence there are good reasons to retreat to the replacement reading – reasons which are independent of one's stance towards adherences. The colour of Rudolf's nose, we might note, keeps constantly changing from pink to red, depending upon the amount of drinks he has had since he got up. But is it a sensible assumption that there is one instance of a colour which switches between being an instance of the colours red and pink respectively? Most philosophers who acknowledge particularised properties would not think so. An instance of a property cannot become an instance of a different property.¹³ So if we talk about the colour of Rudolf's nose changing from pink to red, we need a replacement interpretation of this claim.¹⁴

¹² See Slote (1974: 82).

¹³ On this reasoning cp. Anscombe & Geach (1961: 93).

¹⁴ Cleland (1991) would deny this; according to the semantic theory she developed, even a statement such as 'the colour of his nose went from green to red' attributes a genuine change to an adherence. For her proposal, she has to assume that there are, *in addition* to instances of

And the fact that we *sometimes* need such an interpretation anyway might make the general defence against the argument from change less vulnerable.

In summary, it seems to me that the argument from change has its weaknesses. True; if we really acknowledge that attributes can be the subjects of changes, they should be particularised. But whether such a view plays any major role in ordinary thinking is hard to see. To establish a convincing case, the friends of particularised properties would do better to mobilise other arguments.

d. Argument 3: Attributes as Causal Relata and Objects of Perception

Let us turn to a third reason for acknowledging particularised properties. As I remarked before, Bolzano coined his own term of art for particularised properties – he called them *adherences*. When he introduces the notion of an adherence, however, he does not mention *particularity* as a defining feature. Rather, he defines an adherence as an *actual* (‘wirklich’) attribute.¹⁵ The notion of actuality, which he employs, is intimately connected to the notion of causal efficacy; actual objects are those which can be affected upon or take effects themselves and which, generally speaking, occupy some spatio-temporal position (contemporary metaphysicians would sometimes talk about concreteness, where Bolzano talks about actuality).¹⁶ Ordinary objects such as chairs, persons, clocks, and moles are clear examples of actual objects. But Bolzano holds that such objects (*substances*, in his sense of the word), are not the only things which possess actuality:

[There are cases] in which we may and must attribute actuality to a property – namely those where the object in which the property inheres possesses actuality itself. (WL I, §80: 387)¹⁷

Bolzano’s adherences are features of actual objects and ‘inherit’ the ontological status of their bearers. Meinong shared this contention with Bolzano; thus we read in his *Hume-Studien* that

[...] attributes are not less actual than the things to which they adhere. (*Hume-Studien* I: 49)

completely determinate properties, also instances of determinable properties and that terms such as ‘the colour of his nose’ refer to them. While the former claim is certainly debatable (but see Ehring 1996: 461ff.; 1999: 19ff. for a defence of the opposite view), the latter seems to me clearly at odds with our usage of such terms.

¹⁵ See Bolzano (AT: 21; WL I, §118: 557; WL III, §272: 10).

¹⁶ On Bolzano’s notion of actuality see also Schnieder (2002: 21–26). The notion was common property among metaphysicians for a long period; Husserl expresses it by the term ‘real’ (cp. LU II: 123f.), while Frege still employs it under the same title as Bolzano, ‘wirklich’; see Frege (1884: §85; 1903: §74).

¹⁷ Cp. also Bolzano (BE 79; WL II, §142: 65).

He never gave up this idea; it recurs, for instance, in his late treatise on possibility and chance, where he talks about

[...] attributes or states which are made concrete by their inherence in some *concretum*, as for example the colour of this table which is just as actual as the table. (*Möglichkeit*: 169)

That attributes can be actual in the relevant sense implies that they can be causally *efficacious*. And this latter idea seems to be in accordance with ordinary thinking. Davidson prominently stressed the fact that we take individual, datable events to be causes and effects, and Bolzano would wholeheartedly agree. As we have seen, he subsumes events under his category of adherences, he regards them as attributes of a dynamic kind.

But we do not have to resort to the classification of events as attributes to see that we attest attributes causal powers. Take individual states as an example. We say that desires and beliefs *cause* people to do something. And a particular conviction, such as Candide's belief in the benevolent nature of being, can *be* the *cause* of some occurrence, be it a tragedy or a comedy. Thus, Candide may come to realize finally that his naïve belief was among the causes of his personal misfortunes. And what is true of states is also true of other attributes; a friend's paleness can shake us, Jean's courage can decide the battle, and Socrates' wisdom can help to solve a certain riddle. The stock of causal entities acknowledged in ordinary parlour includes properties and states as well as events.

But to be causes, attributes should be particularised: Bolzano's conviction that the tempest is looming may be causally efficacious and relevant to the explanation of his behaviour – he may, for example, have closed the shutters of his windows because of this conviction. In that case, it was *his* conviction and nobody else's that had moved him. Even if his neighbour had a conviction with the same content, *it* will not have moved Bolzano to close his shutters – no matter how similar his neighbour's conviction may have been. Similarly for Jean's courage. From the fact that it decided the battle, it does not follow that anybody else's courage decided the battle too – no matter how alike that other person may have been to Jean in respect to her courage.

The simple lesson from these considerations is that causally efficacious things have to be particular rather than universal. They have to be situated in time (and, at least usually, space), and be distinguished from other potential causes. Universal properties are not the right kind of entity to play such a causal role – so if we allow attributes to have causal powers at all, we should better stick to particularised attributes for that purpose.¹⁸

Some philosophers, however, accept facts to be causes and effects. They might then want to offer facts as *Ersatz*-referents for terms apparently referring to adherences in causal claims.¹⁹

¹⁸ Cp. Campbell (1981: section 3).

¹⁹ Of course, one can also accept facts *and* other entities (events, states, or what you like) as different kinds of causes and effects (perhaps combined with some idea about the primacy of

Because the canonical designators for particularised properties are usually nominalized expressions, they can rephrase the relevant causal statements either by using factive nominalizations instead, or by denominalising the designators into sentences and using the sentential connective 'because'. Thus, they could claim that

- (1) Candide's belief that nature is benevolent caused his misfortunes,

means either as much as

- (1*) Candide's misfortunes were caused by the fact that Candide believed that nature is benevolent.

or as much as

- (1**) Candide's misfortunes took place because Candide believed that nature is benevolent.

But such paraphrases will not always be faithful to the import of the original statements.²⁰ Imagine Kriton paying a visit to the imprisoned Socrates; he is alarmed by the condition that Socrates was in; indeed

- (2) Socrates' paleness shook Kriton.

But of course, Kriton had been aware of the unpleasant situation that Socrates was in, and he had expected Socrates to be pale. It is just that he did not expect him to be *that* pale. And thus, while (2) is true, the corresponding sentential causal statement is false; it is not the case that

- (2*) Kriton was shaken because Socrates was pale.

And the same holds for the formulation in terms of facts; it is not that

- (2**) Kriton was shaken because of the fact that Socrates was pale.

Hence, causal contexts lend support to the friends of adherences.

The case made can even be strengthened if we focus on *perceptual* contexts in which we seem to refer to adherences (if certain causal theories of perception are on the right track, then perceptual contexts will constitute a subclass of the broader group of causal contexts).²¹ In many statements we assume that attributes can be *perceived*. We can not only see pale people, coloured noses, and kicking folk, but we can also see the paleness of a particular person, the colour of some nose, and kicks delivered by certain people. Now if we see the colour of one

some class of entities as causes). Proponents of factual causation that also accept event causation include, for instance, Bennett (1988) and Mellor (1995).

²⁰ The following reasoning was brought forth by Helen Steward (1997: 148).

²¹ For the following cp. Mulligan *et al.* (1984 : 304–308), and Textor (1996: 67).

guy's nose, we do not thereby see the colour of anybody else's nose. It is, therefore, not a shareable attribute that we take to be the object of our perception.

But again, some philosophers would want to rephrase such perceptual statements, so that the alleged designators of adherences disappear in favour of the sentences from which the designators were derived. But this manoeuvre will not generally yield adequate results. Take the statement that

(4) Kriton saw Socrates' paleness.

Now (4) is not equivalent to the result of substituting the apparent designator of an adherence, 'Socrates' paleness', for a that-clause:

(4-E) Kriton saw that Socrates was pale.

The reason of the non-equivalence of (4) and (4*) is that constructions of the form 'x saw (heard, perceived etc.) that p' have some epistemic import – if such a phrase is true of a subject x, then x should, on the basis of her perceptual input, believe that p. But Kriton may have seen Socrates' paleness without noticing that it was Socrates to whom the paleness belonged. So (4) could be true in cases where Kriton lacks the belief which the truth of (4*) would require him to have.

One might try to circumvent this reasoning by allowing a *de re*-construal of (4*), such that it would only amount to something like

(4-E*) Kriton saw of Socrates that *he* was pale.²²

(4-E*) is compatible with Kriton not realising whom he saw to be pale. But if *perceiving that* really has the epistemic import we said it has, then (4-E*) is still more demanding than (4). Ascriptions of object-perceptions may be true even if the perceiving subject forms no perceptual beliefs whatsoever from his perceptions. The subject may, for example, erroneously believe himself to suffer from some extreme perceptual hallucination and mistrust every single thing he seems to see.²³ If Kriton were in such a predicament, he might still see Socrates' paleness – but radically disbelieving his senses he would not see of anybody *that he is pale*

The upshot of these considerations is that if we accept the cleavage between perceiving some object and perceiving *that* such-and-such is the case, then the apparent reference to an adherence in (4) cannot be paraphrased away by means of a that-clause which replaces the designator 'Socrates' paleness'. But could we not perhaps find some adequate paraphrase of (4)

²² Constructions such as 'x saw of y that she was F' are admittedly awkward. An alternative phrasing to the same effect would perhaps be 'x saw y and furthermore that she was F' (in our case: Kriton saw Socrates and furthermore that he was pale).

²³ Cp. Künne (1995: 116f.).

which ascribes only some object-perception to Kriton, though some perception of a different object than an adherence? The most likely candidate

(4-O) Kriton saw the pale Socrates.

falls off the mark badly. Obviously, Kriton could have seen the pale Socrates without seeing his paleness – he could have seen him from the distance, in the dark, or only some non-pale part of him (probably most pale fellows are not pale all over). Talk about the perception of adherences, be they events or particularised properties, seems to be a hardly reducible affair that lends considerable support to the friends of adherences.

e. Taking Stock

I have discussed three arguments in favour of particularised properties; the arguments from *vanishing attributes*, from *change*, and from *causality (and perception)* respectively. While the first two of these could not prove their points, the last one holds under scrutiny. Once this argument is accepted and adherences are allowed a place in our ontology, resistance to the first two arguments appears less reasonable. Taken together, the three arguments show how adherences, attributes that are distinguished for being possessed by different objects, feature prominently in an important part of ordinary discourse.

2. Bearer Uniqueness

Particularised attributes are usually said to have a *unique bearer*, which is seen as somewhat characteristic of these entities. However, there are cases which make this claim rather doubtful. After introducing the problems for the uniqueness thesis, I will present two possible reactions (inspired by Brentano and Bolzano respectively).²⁴ But before I turn to the thesis of bearer-uniqueness, I shall briefly comment upon Brentano's and Husserl's ideas about the relation between *bearerhood* and *parthood*.

a. Particular Properties and Parthood

For the current purposes, I presuppose some basic grasp of the relation of *bearerhood* in which an object stands to one of its particularised properties, and the converse relation which may be called *inherence*. But can we perhaps say something illuminating about the nature of this relation?

²⁴ I discuss another promising, but in the end unsuccessful, reaction in Schnieder (2004a: 221f.).

Some philosophers suggested that particularised qualities and their bearers stand to each other in the relation of *parts* to *wholes*. Among those who think so there is a wide consensus about which of the entities involved in this affair will play the role of the part, and which the role of the whole: the particularised property is taken to be part of its bearer.

But, somewhat surprisingly, there is a dissident voice raised in early Austria. Franz Brentano thought that accidents are more comprising than the substances to which they belong; the former, he held, contain the latter as parts. To what extent this conflicts with other doctrines about adherences I cannot definitely say. For we must notice that Brentano's conception of an individual accident is not wholly congruent in spirit with the more traditional conception of, say, Bolzano, Meinong, and Husserl (although their sources of inspiration overlap, and Brentano's theory contains elements common to the other conceptions).²⁵ When Brentano talks about accidents, his examples sometimes differ from the commonly accepted examples of individual accidents. Instead of particular smiles, such as Belmondo's smile, and instances of redness, such as this apple's redness, Brentano talks about *smiling people*, such as the smiling Belmondo, and *red apples*, such as this red apple.²⁶ These "accidents" he distinguishes from their substances, in our case, Belmondo and this apple. The distinction he makes seems eccentric to a considerable degree and can be doubted on good grounds. But assume we buy the distinction for the nonce and interview Brentano about how Belmondo and the smiling Belmondo differ. It is in his answer to this question where he employs the mereological notion of a part: Belmondo is a part of the smiling Belmondo, he would say.

Now if Belmondo is only a *part* of the smiling Belmondo, it seems reasonable to ask what constitutes the *rest* of the latter. I must confess that Brentano's answer strikes me as esoteric: there is no rest, he would say. Even though Belmondo is only a part of the smiling Belmondo, the latter is not composed by the former and some other part(s).²⁷ This contention seems evidence to me that Brentano does not employ *any* ordinary notion of parthood here. It seems constitutive of such notions that for any part of some object, there is at least one other part of it which together with the former composes the whole. If this is the analytic truth I deem it to be, then either Brentano's claim is blatantly false, or it involves some other concept which he only inadequately invokes by the title 'part'.

We might better leave Brentano behind and turn to the other side of the medal. According to Edmund Husserl, a particularised property is a part of its bearer – with this contention, he surely is in bigger company than Brentano.²⁸ But in what sense is a particularised property part of its bearer? Husserl seems to feel the need of explicating his usage of 'part'; thus he announces the following:

²⁵ For a concise reconstruction of Brentano's ontology see Smith (1994: ch. 3).

²⁶ His own example is *a thinking soul* – not a thought (Brentano 1933: 53).

²⁷ Cp. Brentano (1933: 11, 53ff.).

²⁸ Thus, Husserl's view is part of many recent trope theories (see for instance Campbell 1990, and Simons 1994).

We shall take the concept *part* in its *broadest* sense, in which it is feasible to call everything a part which is distinguishable “in” an object or, to use some objective vocabulary, which is “present” in it. A part is everything that the object “has”, in the “actual”, or better real sense of the word ‘has’, in the sense of something *actually* composing it. (Husserl, LU III, §2: 228)²⁹

Husserl’s inflationary use of square quotes in this passage indicates that he is moving on slippery grounds. Indeed he is. The first explication he gives concentrates on the little word ‘in’: a part of *x* is something distinguishable or present *in x*. While this explication may warrant to call *some* particularised qualities *parts* of their bearers, it does certainly not warrant to call *all* of them this way: whereas a smile can be said to be (present or distinguishable) *in* a face, the redness of this apple is in no sense of the word *in* the apple (and, a fortiori, neither is it present nor distinguishable *in* the apple). And the same is true for an object’s surface, its weight, or its smell: all of them are not *in* the object. Furthermore, many things which we *do* call parts of other things (and rightly so) are not *in* the other things; kidneys are *in* bodies and at the same time parts of them, but fingers are equally parts of bodies while only seldom they reside *in* bodies. A surgical treatment is among the rare cases, in which a finger might really be present *in* a body, and this possibility shows another problem with the explication above: that some physicians’ finger might one day find its way into my body would not make it *part* of my body.

The second explication, employing the monosyllable ‘has’, is neither of much help. You can have lots of things: TVs, husbands, debts, and bad dreams, but none of these things will, because you have it, be a part of you. Perhaps Husserl wanted to exclude such cases by the addition of ‘in the “actual”, or better real sense of the word ‘has’ ...’. But the meaning of this remark is rather elusive to me.

I shall stop being snappish. Certainly, the assimilation of inherence (the relation holding between particularised properties and the objects they are properties of) to parthood is not endangered by my remarks. But it seems to me that there is indeed no perfectly easy and natural way for such an assimilation, contrary to what Husserl may have suggested. Perhaps, the ordinary distinction between parthood and characterisation may be given up if theory presses hard enough – but this question cannot be settled here.

²⁹ In the original text, Husserl seems to make a subtle and hard to understand distinction between his use of the German word ‘real’ (which he puts in scare quotes; in the translation above: “*actual*”) and his use of the German word ‘reell’ (in the translation above: *real*).

b. The Principle of Bearer-Uniqueness and Its Problems

Now for the thesis of bearer-uniqueness, a thesis which is often proposed in the literature.³⁰ In fact, we saw this idea to play a role in Meinong's argument for the acceptance of particularised properties, and Bolzano relied on it in a letter to Exner when he wrote that

this red (numero idem) cannot be found at any other rose. The red which can be found at another rose may, if you like, be alike to it, even very much alike, but it cannot be the same, because it is not the same rose; two roses require two reds. (Bolzano, BE: 32f.)

The following semi-formal formulation may suggest itself as a precise rendering of the idea of bearer-uniqueness (i.e. the idea that a particularised quality has a *unique* object to which it belongs).³¹

(BU) For all particularised qualities a , b and all objects x , y :

$(a \text{ is a quality of } x \ \& \ b \text{ is a quality of } y \ \& \ x \neq y) \rightarrow a \neq b.$ ³²

Notice that this principle is free from modal operators and therefore should be distinguished from modalized variants of it,³³ furthermore, it is not identical to the claim that particularised qualities are *individuated* via their bearers. While this latter claim postulates a certain ontological priority of the bearers of particularised qualities, the former is neutral upon this question. Uniqueness of the bearer might be compatible, for example, with things being bundles of particularised qualities which receive their individuality from the qualities which compose them. Presently, I shall be only concerned with the weaker principle (BU).

And now for the troublemakers:³⁴ (BU) goes conform with simple standard examples of particularised qualities; Joan's courage is distinct from Socrates' courage, since Socrates and

³⁰ For some formulations of this idea (varying with respect to the modal strength of the formulation), see for instance Künne (1998: 238), Mertz (1996: 10), Stout (1923: 114), and Wolterstorff (1970: 134).

³¹ I limit my interests to *monadic* particularised qualities; several of my formulations would have to be modified as to apply to *polyadic* particularised qualities (instances of relations).

³² The following alternative formulation of the principle might be slightly easier to comprehend (although it is strictly equivalent to the version above):

For all particularised qualities a and all objects x , y :

$(a \text{ is a particularised quality of } x \ \& \ a \text{ is a particularised quality of } y) \rightarrow x = y.$

For certain reasons of presentation, however, I prefer the formulation given above.

³³ (BU) could be modally strengthened in different ways; cp. Schnieder (2004a: 220).

³⁴ The first who drew attention to those was (to my knowledge) Jerrold Levinson in his 1980 paper 'The Particularisation of Attributes'; later on Keith Lehrer and Vann McGee provided similar examples in their 1992 paper.

Joan are different persons, and the redness of this nose is to be distinguished from the redness of the nose over there, because we are confronted with *two* noses.

But then there are also quite straightforward *counter*-examples to (BU): my butter-knife is sharp, and so is its blade. Hence, there is the sharpness of my butter-knife and there is the sharpness of its blade. It seems crazy to deny that they are just one and the same sharpness, however it seems equally mad to declare the knife and its blade to be identical. Thus, the butter-knife defeats (BU). Analogous examples come in legion; the redness of this delicious apple is identical with the redness of its skin, but the skin is not the apple.³⁵

There are furthermore examples based on metaphysically more controversial claims.³⁶ The lump of clay over there, some philosophers would hold, is not identical with the statue occupying the same place. Whoever agrees on this should notice that nevertheless the weight of the statue surely is just the same as the weight of the lump, and thus provides another example against (BU). Equally for a person's strength and the strength of her body etc. So, how could one handle these cases?

c. Brentano's Simple Solution

When Brentano formulated a similar claim to the principle of bearer-uniqueness, he made a careful choice of words which opens a straightforward way of how to improve upon (BU). Let me quote the relevant passage:

An individual accident which belongs to an individual substance cannot belong to a *wholly distinct* substance. Just as the substances are two, so are the accidents; they are differentiated, even if they are alike in all other respects, by the different substances which they contain. (Brentano 1933: 54f. My emphasis.)

It seems that according to Brentano a particularized property may belong to *different* substances, as long as they are not *wholly* distinct. Although the phrase 'wholly distinct' is not completely transparent and the textual evidence does not seem decisive, Brentano may take *wholly* distinct objects to be those which are (at least) *mereologically* disjoint, i.e. which are neither part and whole nor overlapping entities. Furthermore, we may say that objects standing to each other in some relation of (non-mereological) constitution, are distinct, but not wholly so. Given this reading of 'wholly distinct', Brentano proposed a principle which differs from (BU) in having a limited scope, and which thereby can cope with the counterexamples that

³⁵ The knife is Levinson's example (1980: 114), Lehrer and McGee use a grapefruit and its yellowness (1992: 43). I prefer the apple, since a grapefruit sometimes tends to be yellow not only at its skin.

³⁶ As Levinson notes (1980: 114 f.); another example of this kind was produced by Lowe (1998: 79).

endanger (BU). We may take him as proposing the following principle (with ‘#’ signifying the relation of being *wholly distinct*):

(BU*) For all particularised qualities a, b and all objects x, y :
 $(a \text{ is a quality of } x \ \& \ b \text{ is a quality of } y \ \& \ x \# y) \rightarrow a \neq b.$

The relation expressed by ‘#’ may then either be taken as mereological disjointedness, or, by those who believe in a constitution relation different from identity, as disjointedness together with constitutional independence.³⁷ (BU*) is immune against the known counterexamples to (BU), because they always involve different bearers of a particularised property which stand in some intimate mereological (or constitutional) relation.

d. Bolzano on a Peculiarity of Certain Predicates

While Brentano provides us with a suitable reaction, I want to explore an alternative which is loosely based on an idea by Bolzano. To do so, I have first to prepare some conceptual grounds; having done so, I will return to (BU) and a second reaction to the alleged counterexamples in the following section.

(BU) is intended as a principle of ontology, dealing with particularised qualities. The examples that raise doubts about its correctness are formulated in everyday language. The crucial expressions which are taken to refer to particularised qualities are constructions in which a quality term is specified by a genitive phrase; if we take ‘ F -ness’ to be representative for quality terms in general, we can say that the expressions in question exhibit the form

(PQ) x ’s F -ness (or: the F -ness of x).

That the examples are apt to defeat (BU) depends on the question whether the genitive in expressions of the form (PQ) is taken to signify the ontological relation that is at issue in (BU). Particularised qualities have bearers, they belong to them, or to use a rather arcane term, they *inhere* in them. It might be natural to identify the relation of inherence with the relation signified by the genitive in expressions of the form (PQ), so that the following holds:

³⁷ Lehrer and McGee (1992: 43) also opted for this kind of reaction to the problematic examples and replaced their pendant to (BU) by a formula equivalent to (BU*) in the mereological reading of ‘#’. Notice that the examples considered so far do not force upon us the restriction to *disjoint* entities, but only to those not standing in a part-whole relation to each other. However, there are others that demand the further restriction: The white of the two left thirds of the tricolour over there is the same as the white of the two right thirds of it. Now the two left and the two right thirds do not relate as part and whole, but only overlap. To cope with examples like this we have to demand disjointedness in the modification of (BU).

(TR) The particularised quality q , to which we refer by ‘ x ’s F -ness’, is a quality which inheres in x .

Natural though this may be, we can ask for alternatives. In an interesting discussion of how predicates apply to compound entities, Bolzano made the following observation that will lead us the way to a different view:

Often we allow ourselves to attribute a certain feature (or change) to a *whole* where basically it is present (or occurs) only in one or several *parts* of that whole. Thus we say that a town was on fire, if actually only one or several houses were on fire. (Bolzano, AT: 33)

Here we can read Bolzano as highlighting a certain usage that many predicates in natural language have and which we might call *partitive*. I call the use of a predicate F in a true statement ‘ x is F ’ *partitive*, if it satisfies the scheme:

(Partitive Predication)

x is F , and it is so *because* there is a (prominent) part y of x , such that y is F .

Some apples are red, we are inclined to say. They are red despite of the fact that of course most parts of them (their whole insides) are not red at all. They are red, *because their skin is so*. Thus, ‘is red’ as applied to standard red apples is used partitively in the way described. The same holds for ‘is sharp’, when we are talking about my butter-knife. The knife is sharp, true, although many of its parts are not. But it is nevertheless, *because its blade is so*.

To acknowledge the partitive usage of many verbs should not lead to the wrong conclusion that many (or even most) things that we call, say, red, are *not really* red. To say that some thing x is *not really* ϕ suggests that (i) given a literal, non-conniving use of ‘is ϕ ’, it is false that x is ϕ , and (ii) there is a conniving use of ‘is ϕ ’, in which it is true to say that x is ϕ . But this is not the case with ‘is red’. This delicious apple is red, and it is *really* red; to say that something is red just does not mean saying that it is *wholly* red, or that all of its parts are red. Now this is not a conniving use of the predicate ‘is red’, it is its central, actual use.

In general there are many predicates having partitive uses, such that there is no corresponding non-partitive use of the predicate (or an equivalent predicate). We could of course invent a predicate ‘is NP-red’, such that an object x is NP-red only if it is red and it is not the case, that x is red because a part of it is red. But this is a predicate which has no simple equivalent in common English and there is no special usage of ‘is red’ in which it is synonymous with ‘is NP-red’.

Apart from partitive usages of predicates we can also talk of partitive properties or relations, by which we mean properties and relations signified by a verb partitively used (such that *being red* would be an example of a partitive property, and *kissing* or *being sharper than* examples of partitive relations).

If we now consider cases of *constitution*, as material constitution, we see that *if* constituted objects are different from the constituting ones, then a similar phenomenon to partitive predication can be made out: if for example a statue is to be distinguished from the lump of clay which constitutes it, then it will be correct to say that the statue weighs, say, 200 pounds, *because* the lump of clay constituting it weighs 200 pounds. So we can call the use of a predicate *F* in a true statement ‘*x* is *F*’ constitutive, if it satisfies the scheme:

(Constitutive Predication)

x is *F*, and it is so *because* there is an object *y* which constitutes *x*, such that *y* is *F*.

To have a term which covers both kinds of predication I have talked about, I shall use ‘derivative’ (as should be clear from what I have said above, I do not want to suggest that if someone uses a predicate for a derivative predication, she uses it somewhat connivingly or non-literally, or even worse, that she abuses it).

e. A Subtler Solution

Now back to our apparent counter-examples to (BU). From them it can easily be seen that genitive-constructions of the form (PQ) often involve a derivative use of the genitive. This redness is the apple’s redness, because there is a part of the apple, its skin, such that this redness is *its* redness. This sharpness is the knife’s one, because there is its blade and the sharpness is *its* sharpness. But now a possibility opens for handling these examples without giving up (BU). For why not say that the relation of *inherence*, which (BU) is meant to be concerned with, is *not* derivative? It might be that there is no common expression signifying this relation. But this is because detailed ontological distinctions do not play a role important enough to be always mirrored by linguistic conventions.

In effect, this strategy amounts to holding that

- (i) The relation of *inherence* that ontologists are interested in is non-derivative.
- (ii) Accordingly, the ‘is a quality of’ in (BU) should be given a technical, non-derivative reading.
- (iii) The genitive in expressions of the form (PQ) signifies a *derivative* relation, and thus *not* the relation of *inherence*. What it signifies is rather a relation that holds between a particularised quality *x* and an object *y* roughly if either *x* inheres in *y*, or *x* inheres in a (prominent) part *y*, or *x* inheres in an object which constitutes *y*.

Very seldom then in everyday discourse do we really specify the *bearers* of qualities, in the sense of specifying that in which the qualities *inhere*. Very often this might indeed be hard to do. But the metaphysician might be content with noticing that common people simply are not interested in exactly the same as what she is interested in. So she can stick to (BU) without

having to limit its scope in any way, by denying a one-to-one correspondence between expressions of the kind (PQ) and her metaphysical vocabulary.

Now we have seen two alternative ways of defending the idea of bearer-uniqueness against the problem cases: we can either modify (BU) into a version with a limited scope, or demand a non-derivative reading of the ‘is a quality of’. Which of these alternatives is preferable is not easy to see, although I am inclined to choose the latter option since it provides us with a general principle that seems to square best with some traditional opinions on the ontology of particularised qualities.³⁸ However, I lack the space to explore the respective advantages of both options in detail and must therefore leave the decision to the reader.

f. Bearer-Uniqueness and Particularised versus Non-Particularised Qualities

To conclude my discussion of the principle of bearer-uniqueness, I will make some remarks on the significance of this principle. Sometimes, the bearer-uniqueness of particularised attributes is thought to distinguish them from non-particularised attributes, which are universals and shared by many objects.

But although this claim may hint at a way of distinguishing particularised attributes from non-particularised ones, it evidently not suffices for such a distinction: there are presumably some *shareable* attributes which are, as a matter of contingent fact, not *shared* by multiple objects, but which are exemplified by a single object. Even worse, there could be non-particularised attributes which can, for conceptual reasons, be exemplified only by one object (being an even prime number) or even by none (being a round square).³⁹ But this would not make them particularised attributes in the sense we are concerned with, and so it seems that the numeric criterion of *possibly having multiple bearers* vs. *necessarily having a unique bearer* cannot fix the distinction between particularised and non-particularised attributes.

Nevertheless, this criterion may be a helpful hint at the nature of this distinction. And there might still be the possibility of exploiting the criterion in a more sophisticated way to draw a general distinction between the two categories. Perhaps, a tempting thing to say would be the following: it is a *categorical* feature of a particularised attribute that it cannot be shared by a variety of bearers. Given any particularised attribute, its bearer-uniqueness is secured by its belonging to the ontological category of particularised attributes. On the other hand, any example of a non-particularised attribute that can be possessed only by one entity (or even by none) will *not* be so in virtue of its *categorical* belonging. It is not in virtue of its being an attribute that *being even and prime* can be possessed by only one number. Rather, its limited exemplifiability will be due to certain reasons of mathematics, or perhaps due to the specific nature of the property in question.

³⁸ I indicate some relevant points in Schnieder (2004a: 226ff.).

³⁹ Cp. Wolterstorff (1970: 65f., 73), Künne (1983: 12).

Whether such an account is feasible in the end cannot be settled here. But we have seen that the admitted importance of the principle of bearer-uniqueness for the ontology of particularised attributes should not be overrated; it does not serve as a distinguishing line between particularised and non-particularised attributes.

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