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An Argument for the Existence of Tropes

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1 Introduction

Meet Sam. Sam is a red, round, and soft ball. Ontologically speaking, he belongs in the category of concrete particulars.¹ That entities belonging to this category exist can hardly be doubted.² That entities belonging to this category *could* exist – that they are a possible kind of entity – is self-evidently true.

Now, even self-evident truths may need defending in the face of (what seems to be) evidence to their contrary. In this paper I therefore defend, not only the actual, but also the possible existence of Sam and other members of his category. In so doing, I end up with an unusually potent argument for the existence of tropes.

2 Preliminaries

To make my argument as transparent as possible, I should start by making explicit four of the assumption upon which it depends. It is assumed, first, that at least some true propositions³ (namely those of relevance to the present argumentation) are made true by

¹ Our notion of a concrete particular may appear especially resistant to analysis. In our non-philosopher capacity we tend to think of all sorts of entities as belonging to this category. When wearing our philosopher's hat we find it hard (perhaps impossible) to come up with a list of necessary and sufficient conditions for 'thing-hood' fit for all of those entities. For present purposes, it is enough if we require that concrete particulars occupy at most one position in space at each moment in time; that they have what we may call a 'nature' and, finally; that they are capable of surviving qualitative change. This, I believe, is *prima facie* acceptable to everyone (pending a deeper analysis of what the above entails in terms of ontological commitments). For a nice discussion of our notion of a concrete particular (as well as a first introduction to our friend Sam) see Loux (1998).

² It is a 'Moorean fact'. Cf. Moore (1959).

³ Read 'proposition' as short for the truthbearer of your choice.

some entity or entities in the world.⁴ It is assumed, moreover, that propositions with at least partly independent truth-values must have different truthmakers.⁵ More substantially, it is assumed that concrete particulars are by their nature ontologically complex.⁶ It is assumed, finally, that there is a separate and fundamental category of properties and that entities belonging to this category at least partly constitute the concrete particular.

I take it that these are all reasonable assumptions.⁷ They are compatible, both with the view that a concrete particular is a substrate in which properties are instantiated, and with the view that it is a bundle of its properties. The final assumption, moreover, is compatible both with the view that properties are universals, and with the view that they are tropes. If you are a bundle theorist, Sam is nothing but the bundle of his component tropes/universals; if you are a property-substrate theorist, he is nothing but a substrate exemplifying some tropes/universals.⁸

3 An Argument against the Possible Existence of Sam

⁴ As the relevant propositions are (positive) singular existential propositions of the form $\langle a \text{ exists} \rangle$, this assumption should be acceptable to the great majority of truthmaker theorists, whether they be critics of so-called truthmaker maximalism or not. For more on truthmaker theory, cf. e.g. Simons (1992); Armstrong (2004); Beebe and Dodd (2005); Cameron (2008).

⁵ As much follows from so-called truthmaker necessitarianism (TN); the assumption that the existence of a truthmaker necessitates the truth of some particular proposition ($\Box((\text{TM}(p) \text{ exists}) \rightarrow p)$). Whether or not we should accept (TN) has been hotly debated. It is at least an open question (the answer to which I believe depends upon what stand one takes on the issue of the individuation of truthmakers) if my assumption not only follows from, but also requires, the truth of (TN). For a discussion of (TN), cf. Cameron (2005).

⁶ What is assumed is not just that concrete particulars have or could have *parts* but more specifically that they are entities with ontological *constituents*. Constituents, moreover, understood as the sort of things that do not behave exactly as do the ordinary concrete parts of concrete particulars. Armstrong (1997) talks of constitution explicitly as a “nonmereological mode of composition”.

⁷ For some arguments to that effect, cf. my (2002; 2009; 2010).

⁸ In view of what I believe are convincing objections against the idea that concrete particulars are bundles of universals, this alternative will be disregarded in what follows (for arguments both for and against this contention, cf. Zimmerman (1997)). As the view that concrete particulars are substrates instantiating tropes involves (I believe, unnecessarily) the existence of mysterious substrates, it will be likewise ignored (cf. my 2002: chapter 6). Nothing in my argument depends on these restrictions (other than the ease with which I can represent the different alternatives) and the reader is free to disregard them. With the restrictions in place, we are left with two ways of conceiving of Sam; as a bundle of his tropes or as a substrate instantiating his universal properties.

The possible existence of Sam and his fellow concrete particulars is challenged by an argument in the form of a Bradleyan *reductio*.⁹

Start by assuming that Sam exists and that he, as agreed, is ontologically complex. To say of Sam that he is ontologically complex is to say that he is one thing and that he is also many things. In Sam's particular case, it is to say that he is one thing and that is also redness, roundness, softness (either conceived of as tropes or as universals) and (possibly) a substrate. But what could it mean to say this about Sam? That we should be able to answer this question seems reasonable and whatever our answer turns out to be it must entail either:

1. ...that Sam is **nothing but** the mere aggregate of his constituents, or
2. ...that Sam is **something more than** the mere aggregate of his constituents.

Let us investigate these options in turn. If Sam is nothing but the mere aggregate of his constituents then as soon as his constituents exist so does he. But this means that what seems clearly possible, that what happens to constitute Sam could exist without Sam thereby existing, is ruled out as impossible. This is unacceptable. Sam must therefore be something more than the mere aggregate of his constituents.

To say of Sam that he is something more than the mere aggregate of his constituents is the same as saying that he is nothing but the aggregate of his constituents *plus* something else; it is to say that he is nothing but his constituents⁺.¹⁰ But what could we add to Sam's constituents so as to produce Sam? Whatever our answer, what we add must be either:

1. ...*internal* to Sam's constituents: i.e., something in the nature of Sam's constituents such that, if Sam's constituents are that way, Sam exists, or
2. ...*external* to Sam's constituents: i.e., something distinct from (and independent of) Sam's constituents such that, if it exists in addition to them, Sam exists.

⁹ This argument is *very* much inspired by a famous passage in F. H. Bradley's *Appearance and Reality* (1908: 17-23). In my interpretation, the argument retains its overall structure, but differs from the original in a number of other ways. Whether it differs from the original to the extent that it is in fact no longer a (contemporarily phrased) version of Bradley's argument is a question I will not address in this paper. So as not to cause confusion on this issue, I will henceforth refer to the argument presented and discussed in this paper as a 'Bradleyan', and not as 'Bradley's', argument.

¹⁰ To say of Sam that he is something more than the mere aggregate of his constituents is not, in other words, compatible with saying that he is something *completely distinct* from his constituents. To say this would be to deny what we here assume to be true, namely that Sam is ontologically complex.

The problem with the first option is that although it may sound as if introducing talk of the internal nature of our constituents is to add something to their (mere) aggregate, it really isn't. To say of Sam's constituents that they are *by their nature* such that he exists is simply a more roundabout (and admittedly more informative) way of saying that the existence of Sam's constituents is enough to ensure that he exists.¹¹ Which means that we are back with our first, already discarded, answer. Our only choice, therefore, is to say that Sam is nothing but his constituents plus something existing *independently* of them. Call this extra something *a relation*.

If our first option left no room for the separate existence of Sam's constituents, the trouble now is that we seem unable to provide for the existence of Sam. If our relation is external to and independent of that which it supposedly relates (which it seems it has to be to prevent option two from collapsing into option one), the result of its addition is nothing more than a slightly longer list of constituents (now including not only non-relational, but also relational ones). And just as before, we can imagine that the items on this list exist without Sam thereby existing.¹² Adding yet another relation in the hope of thereby somehow connecting our first relation to Sam's non-relational constituents so as to produce Sam does not help. For each new relation we add, the list of constituents keeps getting longer, but at no point do our additions turn what are many into one. The only outcome of our efforts is an infinite regress which is vicious as it contradicts our original claim that Sam's constituents exist related (i.e., that Sam exists).¹³

No options remain. We are forced to conclude that no sense at all can be made of the idea that Sam is one ontologically complex entity. And so no sense at all can be made of the claim that Sam (an ontologically complex entity) exists. But this is absurd. That Sam and his fellow concrete particulars exist (that they at least could exist) is self-evidently true. It is a 'Moorean fact'. Disproving any argument to the effect that a Moorean fact is false, presents

¹¹ But why could we not say that Sam's constituents *being a certain way* is what makes Sam exist yet accept that Sam's constituents *being a certain other way* could exist without Sam thereby existing? First, because that would require Sam's constituents (properties, substrate) not just to have a nature, but to have a nature that might change. This seems odd. Second, and more importantly, if we want to say that it is the internal nature of the constituents that makes the difference between a world in which Sam exists and one in which he doesn't we must be able to account for this difference philosophically (not just say that it exists). But this means that a Bradleyan argument analogous to the one presented above could be reproduced on the level of the internal nature of Sam's constituents. With analogous, and likewise disastrous, results.

¹² Just as Sam's constituents might exist and not constitute Sam, our relation might exist and not relate Sam's constituents (but rather relate some other entities so as to make up some concrete particular distinct from Sam).

¹³ For a more thorough discussion of the distinction between vicious and benign regresses, *cf. my* (2007).

us with a ‘Moorean’ task.¹⁴ It is to the completion of that task I shall dedicate the remainder of this paper.

4 A Crucial Assumption

The ‘success’ of the Bradleyan argument rests on one crucial assumption concerning how the following sorts of propositions relate to one another:¹⁵

- A. <red₁, round₁, and soft₁ exist>, alternatively
<Redness, Roundness, Softness, and substrate₁ exist>

- B. <red₁, round₁, and soft₁ compresent with each other exist>, alternatively
<Redness, Roundness, and Softness instantiated in substrate₁ exist>

It is the assumption that the truth of A is independent of the truth of B.¹⁶ Put in truth-maker theoretical terms it is the assumption that whatever makes true A cannot, at least not on its own, also make true B. In modal terms, it is the assumption that there is at least one possible world in which Sam’s constituents exist, yet Sam does not. In essentialist terms, finally, it is the assumption that Sam’s constituents are not essentially, but only accidentally, Sam’s constituents. This assumption I call *DISTINCTION*.

That *DISTINCTION* plays a crucial role in our *reductio* is easily seen. If the truth-value of A is independent of the truth-value of B then according to one of our assumptions A and B must have different truthmakers. But if A and B have different truthmakers, then we are barred from saying that Sam is nothing but the mere aggregate of his constituents.¹⁷ And if

¹⁴ According to Armstrong (1980: 441), a ‘Moorean question’ is one that must be given a (substantial) answer. A ‘Moorean task’ is then a task that must be performed and brought to its successful conclusion if our theory is to be deemed acceptable.

¹⁵ Subscripts indicate that what is being referred to is particular (whether a trope (red₁) or a substrate (substrate₁)). Capitals indicate that it is universal (Redness). ‘Compresence’ is, as far as I know, the most common term used to refer to the relation that binds the constituents of a bundle together. Likewise, ‘instantiation’ (as well as its converse ‘exemplification’) is the most common term for the relation that holds between universals and substrate. Nothing depends on our choice of words here – feel free to substitute ‘compresent’ and ‘instantiated’ with the more neutral ‘relation’ and ‘related’.

¹⁶ I assume here that Sam is *nothing but* whatever is mentioned in B, which means that the truth of B is equivalent to the truth of <Sam exists>.

¹⁷ Just as we are barred from saying that he is nothing but the collection of his constituents⁺, where the extra something (the ‘+’) is *internal* to these constituents.

we are barred from saying this, then we are forced to say something which in the end will land us in vicious infinite regress.

To save Sam and his friends I must show that there is something wrong with the argument which threatens their possible existence. As the argument is valid, this means that I must contest one of its premises. A *prima facie* attractive alternative is then to contest the crucial assumption upon which the ‘success’ of the argument rests; i.e. to contest DISTINCTION.¹⁸

If DISTINCTION is rejected, the possible existence of Sam and his fellow concrete particulars can no longer be challenged, at least not on Bradleyan grounds. If the truth-value of A depends on the truth-value of B, then what makes A true can also (and thereby) make B true (and, hence, make <Sam exists> true). If DISTINCTION is rejected, we are therefore no longer barred from saying that Sam is nothing but the mere aggregate of his constituents, which means that nothing that may land us in vicious infinite regress will have to be added to Sam’s constituents in order for our theory to be able to account for his existence.

To reject DISTINCTION should nevertheless be considered as a last resort only. DISTINCTION is an intuitive assumption that represents what most would consider a non-empty possibility. Its rejection, moreover, would seem to entail some clearly unintuitive consequences. Not only is a world in which DISTINCTION is false a world in which no concrete particular could have been differently constituted.¹⁹ Worse, it is a world in which what constitutes a concrete particular could not have constituted something or someone else instead. If DISTINCTION goes, therefore, so must many of our most treasured modal intuitions. This is close to unacceptable.²⁰ Only if there is absolutely no other way in which to defend the possible existence of Sam should we consider rejecting DISTINCTION.

5 Saving Sam without Sacrificing DISTINCTION

Our goal now is to try and rescue *both* Sam and DISTINCTION. Only if Sam turns out to be something more than the mere aggregate of his constituents can we keep DISTINCTION. To save Sam as well as DISTINCTION we must therefore show that Sam *can* be something more than the mere aggregate of his constituents.

¹⁸ This is in fact the most common response to the Bradleyan challenge. *Cf.* e.g. Molnar (2003); (at least partly) Simons (1994) and; Armstrong (2005; 2006) (a view that he has now abandoned).

¹⁹ This is something we will have to accept whether or not we reject DISTINCTION (*cf.* section 8 below).

²⁰ Close, because there might be a way in which to reject DISTINCTION that is acceptable after all (*cf.* section 8 below).

According to the Bradleyan *reductio*, only if the relation we add to Sam's constituents is *external* to them is Sam's existence compatible with DISTINCTION, but only if it is *internal* to them can we account for the existence of Sam without ending up in vicious infinite regress. This seems right. Again according to the argument, an external relation is one such that what is related may exist even if the relation does not, and *vice versa*. If a relation is external, in other words, it and that which it relates are *symmetrically existentially independent of one another*. An internal relation, on the other hand, is one such that the relation may not exist unless the relata do and *vice versa*. An internal relation and that which it relates are therefore *symmetrically existentially dependent on one another*. And these are all the alternatives.

But this seems wrong. Any argument set out to prove that there is no way in which relation and relata may stand to one another that does not either force us to give up DISTINCTION or end up in vicious infinite regress must, to be convincing, consider (and reject) *all* the alternatives. If dependence (and independence) of relation on relata and of relata on relation can be symmetric, it would however seem that it can also be *asymmetric*. But then two more options need to be evaluated. Apart from being either internal or external, a relation may be what I will call:

1. ...*Semi-internal*: i.e. such that if the relata exist, the relation must exist and relate them but the relation may exist even if the relata do not (the relata depend for their existence on the existence of the relation; the relation is existentially independent of the relata), or
2. ...*Semi-external*: i.e. such that if the relation exists so must the relata which it then relates, but the relata may exist even if the relation does not (the relation depends for its existence on the existence of the relata; the relata are existentially independent of the relation).

Semi-internal relations, it is easily seen, still force us to choose between saving Sam and saving DISTINCTION (by forcing us to choose saving Sam). Semi-external relations are, however, a different story.

If the relation we add to our aggregate of constituents is something that could not exist unless it relates precisely the entities included in that aggregate, then every world in which the relation exists is a world in which the concrete particular exists. Viewed in this way, so-to-speak 'from the perspective' of the relation, a semi-external relation will behave just as an *internal* relation does. However, even if what the relation relates is in this sense internal to it, it is not true that the relation is internal to that which it relates. Dependence is *asymmetric*. From the perspective of that which is related, it is as if the relating were *external*. It is, in other words, still true that the relata might exist and not be related.

If relations are semi-external, therefore, neither Sam nor DISTINCTION will have to be sacrificed. The presence of a semi-external relation in a world which also (and hence) features the aggregate of Sam's (non-relational) constituents, is now enough to account for

the truth of <Sam exists>. There will be no infinite regress because the result of adding the relation to the aggregate is no longer a slightly enlarged aggregate *all* of which members could exist without Sam (thereby) existing. As a semi-external relation, *it* could not exist without Sam (thereby) existing. And yet there is no need to reject DISTINCTION. There is still some possible world in which it is true that what happen to be Sam's constituents in the actual world (minus the relation) exist, yet Sam does not. Problem solved.

6 An Argument for the Existence of Sam Turned Into an Argument for the Existence of Tropes

What more can be said about the nature of a relation able both to account for the existence of Sam, and to respect DISTINCTION? On the present suggestion, relations must be such that they relate some particular relata. In this, they are like “hooks” fit for not just any loop. If concrete particulars are bundles of tropes, this means that, because that which the relation essentially relates is particular, at no time can it exist in more than one place at one moment in time.²¹ This is also true if concrete particulars are substrates exemplifying universals. Because substrates are particular, it follows that the whole constituted by a substrate and the universals it instantiates cannot exist in more than one place at each moment in time.²² In this sense, therefore, relations are particular. They are however clearly not *concrete* particulars.²³ Relations are abstract. They are *abstract particulars*. They are tropes.

The universal realist will not be happy. Although my conclusion should not be read as an argument *against* the existence of universals, an argument to that effect is easily construed. If every time some concrete particular exists, a particular trope-relation exists, we have little reason to suppose that the *non*-relational constituents of concrete particulars are nevertheless universals.²⁴ This gives the universal realist reason to try to resist my conclusion. Her resistance may take several forms. She could argue that semi-external relations might be understood as universals after all. To be able to pull this off, she must

²¹ If concrete particulars are bundles of universals (which is a problematic view to begin with) a case could be made for saying that the relation which ties such bundles together may exist in more than one place at one moment in time. However, this can hardly be said to make the universal-bundle view any more attractive; quite the opposite. Thus understood, we are now barred from saying that, although identically constituted, two indiscernible concrete particulars could still be distinguished by their being distinct ‘bundlings’.

²² This is what Armstrong calls the “victory of particularity” (1978a: 115).

²³ They do not monopolize their position in space-time; we cannot pick them up and move them around; and so forth.

²⁴ Considerations of ontological economy speak strongly against this.

however argue that what distinguishes a universal from a particular is not (or, at least not just) that the former is multiply realizable and the latter is not. Even if this is not an impossible stance to take, it is however one that she will have a hard time defending.²⁵

Another possibility is if she resists instead my claim that only semi-external relations will allow you to rescue both Sam and DISTINCTION. As we shall see however, and to the dismay of the universal realist, the only alternative to accepting my particular solution to the Bradleyan problem is if we accept a solution that in fact constitutes a strengthening of my argument for the existence of tropes.

7 Intuitions Again

My argument for the existence of semi-external relations in part depends on the claim that if Sam is nothing but the mere aggregate of his constituents, then some of our most treasured modal intuitions must be given up. This claim may, however, be contested.

What drives my argument is the idea that intuitions, especially if they are basic and important, should as far as possible be explained and not contradicted. But a theory which explains and is consistent with a certain intuition may very well be a theory that does not literally respect it. Philosophy is in fact filled with examples of theories which respect important intuitions without literally respecting them. Nominalism, for instance, explains and is consistent with the vast majority of our intuitions about properties; still Nominalism does not accept the literal existence of properties. Perdurantism explains and is consistent with most of our intuitions about identity and change over time but, again, without taking those intuitions at face value. And so on. Could not DISTINCTION be likewise ‘quasi-respected’?

To see how it might be, it is instructive if we start by considering how another deep-seated intuition, closely related to but not identical with DISTINCTION, could be literally rejected yet quasi-retained:

IDENTITY: Sam (as well as every other member of his category) could have been different(ly constituted).²⁶

²⁵ That multiple realizability is normally taken as the universal’s defining characteristic is easily demonstrated. According to the *Stanford encyclopaedia of philosophy*: “To say that properties are universals is to say that the selfsame property can be instantiated by numerically distinct things”. In his introduction to *Metaphysics* (1998: 23), M. J. Loux explains that: “Universals...are construed as repeatable entities. At any given time, numerically one and the same universal can be wholly and completely exhibited or, as realists typically put it, exemplified by, several different spatially discontinuous particulars.”. Examples could be multiplied.

If we accept that Sam is nothing but his constituents, or nothing but his constituents⁺, i.e. if we accept that he is ontologically complex, the literal truth of IDENTITY is contradicted.²⁷ If Sam is *nothing but* the aggregate of his constituents, then any change in Sam's constituents brings into existence a new aggregate, distinct from the original one (and distinct, therefore, from the aggregate of constituents with which Sam was originally identified), *mutatis mutandis* if we identify Sam across possible worlds.²⁸ This is not anything we need to worry too much about however. IDENTITY could, and with good results, be quasi-respected. When considering Sam over time, we might say that what exists at t_1 (a certain bundle of tropes, or a certain substrate instantiating universals), although not strictly identical with what exists at t_2 (a slightly different bundle of tropes, or a certain substrate instantiating a slightly different set of universals), is nevertheless loosely identical with what exists at t_2 .²⁹ When considering Sam across possible worlds we might likewise say that although a possible world w_1 which contains a ball very much like our Sam, does not (indeed cannot) contain Sam, it may very well be that the ball in question is a *counterpart* of our Sam and that, therefore, Sam could (loosely interpreted) have been different after all (*cf.* Lewis (1986)).

If IDENTITY is an assumption about Sam, DISTINCTION is an assumption about Sam's constituents. It therefore seems reasonable to suppose that, if IDENTITY could be quasi-respected by an appeal to the counterparts of Sam, DISTINCTION could be quasi-respected by appeal to the counterparts of Sam's constituents. We might, in other words, claim that the intuition that what now constitutes Sam could have existed and constituted something or someone else instead can be catered for with reference to, not Sam's constituents but the counterparts of Sam's constituents. It is 'quasi-true' that Sam's constituents could have constituted something or someone else instead because it is true that the counterparts of Sam's constituents constitute something or someone else. But this

²⁶ This intuition comes in both a weaker, temporal, and a stronger, modal, version. As stated above, it is of the modal kind. Put in temporal terms, it is the intuition that Sam could change yet not (thereby) cease to exist.

²⁷ Provided, in the modal case, that we accept the thesis of the necessity of identity.

²⁸ Notice that IDENTITY must be literally rejected irrespective of what we take Sam's constituents to be (irrespective, that is, of whether we are bundle-theorists or substrate-universal theorists). In his (2006: 241), Armstrong argues against this contention and claims that: "It is not quite so obvious that subject/attribute analyses of particulars must yield the necessity of predication [which, I take it, in this context is the same as IDENTITY]. This is because a subject/attribute analysis creates a certain 'distance' between a particular and its properties, a distance not present in bundle theories /.../ given a subject/attribute analysis, the subject, the particular, seems to stand in some way or degree outside its properties." It is clear from this quote, however, that the only way in which a subject/attribute theorist may avoid giving up IDENTITY is if she is willing to identify the concrete particular with the *substrate* only. But then IDENTITY is saved at the expense of a whole host of other, just as respectable, intuitions.

²⁹ *Cf.* Chisholm (1976).

means that even if Sam is nothing but the aggregate of his constituents, important modal intuitions may still be respected to a satisfactory degree. To save Sam as well as (what is important in) DISTINCTION we therefore no longer have to accept the existence of semi-external trope-relations. But then, it seems, an argument for the possible existence of Sam does not equal an argument for the existence of tropes.

Or does it? When we identify Sam's counterparts, we presumably do this by looking for worlds in which there are concrete particulars exactly similar to Sam in certain respects, and perhaps sufficiently similar in others. That is, we look for concrete particulars which share some (but not necessarily all) of Sam's properties. Think now of what it would mean to identify the counterparts of Sam's *constituents*. Suppose, e.g. that we want to identify the counterpart of Sam's constituent Redness. How do we go about doing that? Do we look for something sufficiently like Redness? A slightly different shade of Red perhaps? That seems strange. We should rather be on the lookout for a possible world which is as far as possible exactly like the actual one, but where (exactly!) similar counterparts of Sam's constituents exist, yet Sam does not. But what does it mean to say of Redness that it is exactly similar to Counterpart-Redness? Now things become complicated. The universal realist understands resemblance between concrete particulars in terms of the number of universals the concrete particulars have in common, and she understands resemblance between universals in terms of overlapping or partial identity (an idea first introduced by Armstrong (1978b)). For our present purposes, neither of these analyses of resemblance will do. Sam cannot resemble Counterpart-Sam because they share some (or all) their constituents. What constitutes Sam *must*, if DISTINCTION is literally rejected, constitute him, which means that Sam and his constituents exist only in the actual world. Sam's constituent Redness, moreover, cannot resemble Counterpart-Redness in the sense that Redness and Counterpart-Redness partially overlap. Redness and Counterpart-Redness *cannot* overlap, because Redness exists in the actual world only, whereas Counterpart-Redness is exclusively bound to some possible world distinct from the actual one. Resemblance between possible worlds, between concrete particulars and their counterparts, and between the constituents of concrete particulars and their counterparts, must therefore be treated differently from the way resemblance is treated when it occurs between concrete particulars or between universals *in* the actual world. Most probably, the universal realist will have to say that resemblance between possible worlds (and so, between the constituents of possible worlds) is primitive. This leaves the universal realist in a worse position than where she started as her theory now features two different notions of resemblance.³⁰ Worse still, if we consider each possible world as itself a (very

³⁰ Which would be very bad indeed if you, as does Armstrong, think that the fact that the universal realist, but not the trope theorist, can do without a primitive notion of resemblance is what counts most strongly in favour of universal realism (Cf. Armstrong (1997: 22f)).

complex) concrete particular, then the properties that characterise these concrete particulars may be ‘the same’ and still, if properties are world-bound, we must say that they are distinct. The properties that characterize worlds considered as single concrete particulars, therefore, can be rightly characterized as universals in name only. For all intents and purposes, they are tropes.

Not surprisingly, your prospects look considerably brighter if properties actually *are* tropes. According to trope-theory, tropes are particular qualities that may resemble one another to different degrees (up to exact similarity). Trope-theorists generally treat resemblance as an undefined primitive and so, from this perspective, resemblance should cause no problem (i.e., resemblance across possible worlds will not force the trope theorist to accept a second notion of resemblance). The counterpart of Sam’s constituent red_1 is simply the (primitively) exactly similar trope red_2 . If properties are tropes, but not if they are universals, DISTINCTION can therefore be quasi-respected. But this means that whether or not we choose to literally respect DISTINCTION, in order to respect the possible existence of ontologically complex entities such as Sam, we must accept the existence of (at least some) tropes. QED.

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