

An Early Modern Scholastic Theory of Negative Entities:

Thomas Compton Carleton on Lacks, Negations, and Privations

[Penultimate Draft]

The notion of privation has played many roles in the history of Western philosophy. Aristotle argues that privations are required to give a satisfactory analysis of change.¹ Plotinus identifies matter with privation and privation with evil.² No doubt influenced by Plotinus, Augustine uses the notion of privation to solve the ontological problem of evil and finally to escape the intellectual clutches of Manichaeism.³ When we come to the early modern period, we find Descartes using the notion of privation to solve the problem of error, an epistemic version of the problem of evil.⁴ After initially rejecting the privation theory of evil, Leibniz uses the notion of privation to account for the origin of sin.⁵ Yet it is not always clear how we are to conceive of privations: what sort of thing *is* a privation? Is it any sort of thing at all? If not, how are we supposed to understand talk about privations?

17th-century scholastics engaged in a rich debate about the ontological status and nature of negative entities: lacks, negations, and privations.⁶ The realists in this debate postulate the existence of irreducible negative entities. Their position is characterized by Sebastián Izquierdo (1601-1681) as follows:

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¹ Aristotle, *Physics* 192a1-30.

² Plotinus, *Enneads* II.4.16, I.8.3, I.8.5.

³ Augustine, *Confessions* III.12, VII.18.

⁴ AT VII.55; CSM II.38.

⁵ For discussion of Leibniz's reception of the privation theory of evil, see Newlands, 'Leibniz on Privations'.

⁶ For relevant secondary literature see Schmutz, 'Réalistes, nihilistes et incompatibilistes: le débat sur les *negative truthmakers* dans la scolastique Jésuite Espagnole', 150-158; Knebel, *Wille, Würfel und Wahrscheinlichkeit*, 175-179; Ramelow, *Gott, Freiheit, Weltenwahl*, 230-250.

Concerning [negations], the first opinion is that a negation of a being is something really existing and having a place in the nature of things. To be sure, it is not positive, but negative, and so it is distinct from every positive being. But when a negative being is posited and truly exists in the nature of things, the positive being of which it is essentially a removal or negation is removed from the nature of things [...] [A negative being] begins to exist when the being to which it is opposed ceases to exist, and it ceases to exist when the being to which it is opposed begins to exist.

(*Pharus scientiarum*, 193.33.)⁷

Here Izquierdo describes the controversial thesis that there are irreducible negative entities responsible for the non-existence of positive entities. I call the non-reductionist realist theory of negative entities “carentism” (after the Latin for “lack”, *carentia*); early modern scholastics sometimes call advocates of carentism “*Carentiatores*” (which can be translated “Lackers”), but I will simply call them “carentists.” An elaborate theory of lacks is one of the signature accomplishments of the scholasticism that flourished in Spain and Italy during the early modern period: to the best of my knowledge, there is nothing quite like it in the history of philosophy before or since.

Early modern scholastic thought about negative entities will be of interest to historians of philosophy and to contemporary metaphysicians alike. Interest in early modern scholasticism is growing rapidly, but we still know very little about early modern scholasticism in general and nearly nothing about early modern scholastic thought about negative entities.⁸ By investigating one of the (many) signature accomplishments of early modern scholasticism, this paper goes some way toward filling a vast lacuna in our understanding of an important period in the history of philosophy. There is also a growing interest in the early

⁷ All translations in the paper are my own. Most citations are to page number and paragraph number where paragraph numbers are provided. Where the relevant paragraph number appears twice on one page, I cite the section number to disambiguate: 2.3.4 = page 2, section 3, paragraph 4. Where I cite a section of a work rather than a page and paragraph number, I abbreviate according to the divisions in each work. E.g., d1s2n3 = disputation 1, section 2, paragraph number 3.

⁸ Schmutz discusses realism about negative entities in ‘*Réalistes*’, 150-158, but he does not say much about the details of the theory.

modern reception and appropriation of the privation theory of evil,⁹ but little attention has been paid to early modern scholastic treatments of privation more generally.

This paper explores topics of interest to contemporary philosophers as well. Metaphysicians have recently been concerned with the problem of finding truthmakers for negative truths:¹⁰ in virtue of what is it true that this liquid is colorless, for example, or that there are no arctic penguins? According to one answer, negative truths are made true by negative entities. On arguably the most well-developed view of negative entities, negative entities are conceived of as negative facts.¹¹ As I explain in greater detail below, the 17th-century debate about negative entities is sparked in response to the need to provide truthmakers for negative truths; moreover, the scholastics who endorse the existence of irreducible negative entities do not conceive of them as negative facts. Their discussion therefore provides an alternative to arguably the dominant contemporary approach to negative entities.

My purpose in this paper is to explain an influential 17th-century theory of negative entities, first developed by Thomas Compton Carleton (1591-1666), as he himself notes (*Philosophia universa*, 81.1.1).¹² Juan Caramuel Lobkowitz (1606-1682) testifies to Carleton's originality with respect to the theory of lacks: "Certainly no one explicitly dealt with the existence of negative beings before Father Compton [Carleton]" (*Leptotatos*, 77.142).¹³ Further, Carleton's account

⁹ See Newlands, 'Evils, Privations, and the Early Moderns'; Newlands, 'Leibniz on Privations'; Jorgensen and Newlands, eds., *Leibniz's Theodicy: Context and Content*.

¹⁰ See, e.g., Martin, 'How it is: Entities, Absences and Voids'; George Molnar, 'Truthmakers for Negative Truths'; Armstrong, *Truth and Truthmakers*, ch. 5; Mumford, 'Negative Truth and Falsehood'; Dodd, 'Negative Truths and Truthmaker Principles'; Merricks, *Truth and Ontology*, ch. 3; Barker and Jago, 'Being Positive About Negative Facts'.

¹¹ See, e.g., Barker and Jago, 'Being Positive About Negative Facts'; Armstrong, *Truth and Truthmakers*, 54, 58, 70, 73.

¹² Citations are good for the first and third editions of this work. I did not have access to the second edition.

¹³ No one dealt with the existence of negative beings in print at any rate: Jacob Schmutz cites a passage from Antonio Pérez indicating that Benito de Robles, an influential teacher of illustrious philosophers such as Hurtado, Arriaga, and Pérez, but who did not publish anything, was

exerts a significant influence on subsequent carentists.¹⁴ Writing 86 years after the publication of Carleton's discussion of negative beings, Luis de Losada reports of carentism, "In favor of this opinion most people refer to Father Compton" (*Cursus philosophici tertia pars*, Metaphysics, 150.9.)¹⁵ Given that Carleton appears to have been the first to develop a systematic theory of negative entities, and that his theory was influential on the subsequent debate, Carleton's discussion of negative entities bears historical interest. Because Carleton's theory is as far as we know the first of its kind, however, it is not always as explicit as we would like, and it leaves some questions unanswered. Fortunately, Carleton's theory can often be elucidated by considering the philosophical context and relevant background of his discussion. I will therefore advert to Carleton's near contemporaries where it helps to elucidate Carleton's own views. This practice confers the additional benefit of giving one a sense of broader trends in 17th-century thought about negative entities.

2. Preliminaries

Carleton was born in Cambridge in 1591 and entered the Society of Jesus in 1617.¹⁶ England not being kind to Jesuits at the time, Carleton went abroad for his education. Sources vary as to where Carleton was educated, but it seems likely that he was educated at the college of St. Omer in Spanish-ruled Flanders, and then in Madrid and Valladolid, Spain, where he was a fellow student with

actually the first to endorse realism about lacks. See Schmutz, 'Réalistes', 144-50. For more on Pérez's view of negative entities, see Ramelow, *Gott, Freiheit, Weltenwahl*, 230-250.

¹⁴ See, e.g., Polizzi, *Siculi platiensis*, d50; Garcia, *Cursus philosophicus* 3, 658-676.

¹⁵ Cf. Polizzi, *Siculi platiensis*, 648.43; Quirós, *Opus philosophicum*, 738.2.

¹⁶ Biographical details can be found in Backer and Backer, *Bibliothèque de la Compagnie de Jésus*, coll. 1354-5; Monchamp, *Histoire du cartésianisme en Belgique*, 170-172; McCormick, 'A Jesuit Contemporary of Descartes'; Doyle, 'Thomas Compton Carleton S.J.: On Words Signifying More than their Speakers or Makers Know or Intend'; Knebel, *Das System der moralischen Notwendigkeit*, 561; Schmutz, 'Réalistes', 151, n. 40; Ramelow, *Gott, Freiheit, Weltenwahl*, 477; and the entry on Carleton at www.scholasticon.fr.

the illustrious Spanish philosopher, Rodrigo de Arriaga (1592-1667).¹⁷ Carleton later became professor of theology at the English college of the Jesuits at Liège. He was one of the first scholastics to offer a wide-ranging critique of Cartesian philosophy in a scholastic textbook.¹⁸

It will be useful to begin by introducing some technical vocabulary. Carleton uses the terms 'lack', 'negation', and 'privation' to denote negative entities. Following Aristotle, scholastics standardly define a *privation* as the lack of a form in a subject apt to have that form.¹⁹ According to this definition, which Carleton endorses, the lack of vision in a frog counts as a privation because a frog is apt to see, but the lack of vision in a rock does not count as a privation because a rock is not apt to see.²⁰ From the standard definition of privation it follows that every privation is a lack, but it is not the case that every lack is a privation (the lack of vision in a rock, for example, is not a privation).

It was also common for early modern scholastics to define negations in terms of lacks: a negation is the lack of a form in a subject that is not apt to have that form—e.g., the lack of vision in a rock is a negation.²¹ It follows from this definition that the lack of Peter, for example, is not a negation, because Peter is not a form. On this common conception, negations and privations are mutually

¹⁷ Arriaga's *Cursus philosophicus* was printed in five editions between 1632 and 1664. He also wrote *Disputationes theologicae* in eight volumes. See the entry on Arriaga in Pierre Bayle's *Dictionnaire historique et critique*.

¹⁸ For Carleton's low estimation of Cartesian philosophy, see the preface of *Philosophia universa*. Carleton criticizes Descartes's views of: substantial and accidental forms (Physics, d11-12), the Eucharist (Physics, d12; see Monchamp, *Histoire*, 170-187), creation (Physics, d41s1n5), 'rarefaction' (De Ortu, d11s2), the body (De anima, d7n2), and matter (De Coelo, d2s1n10).

¹⁹ See Aristotle, *Categories* 12a26–13a36, *Metaphysics* 1022b22-1023a8 and 1055a34-1055b29. Aquinas endorses the standard definition in *Summa theologiae* I, q. 48, a. 5. Carleton discusses the standard definition of "privation" in *Philosophia universa*, 86.8-14. Cf. Hurtado de Mendoza, *Universa philosophia*, 185.1; Polizzi, *Siculi platiensis*, 640, preface; Peinado, *De gen.*, 202.2; Arriaga, *Cursus philosophicus*, 241.172; Lobkowitz, *Leptotatos*, 72; Losada, *Cursus philosophici tertia pars*, *Metaphysics*, 147.3.

²⁰ Carleton does not offer an explicit explanation of what aptness amounts to, but in one place he claims that a lack of a form counts as a privation with respect to a subject if that subject is able to receive the form as well as the effects of that form (*Philosophia universa*, 88.4). This suggests that Carleton has a merely modal conception of aptness, which would be much more permissive than a teleological notion (cf. Lobkowitz's diagram in *Leptotatos*, 72). Nothing in what follows hangs on Carleton's conception of aptness.

²¹ See the loci cited in fn. 19.

exclusive sub-categories of lacks. However, the distinction between lacks and negations does not seem to play a role in Carleton's theory, and Carleton seems to use the terms 'lack' and 'negation' indiscriminately. (I follow Carleton in this practice.) Because he does not formally recognize a distinction between lacks and negations, Carleton gives one account of the metaphysics of both lacks and negations. As we shall see, however, privations receive special treatment.

What then is a lack or negation? A full answer to this question must wait until section three; for now we can quote Carleton's preliminary characterization of lacks:

Whatever they are, they are certainly pernicious and even fatal to positive things; for negative things rise by the fall of positive things, are born by their ruin, live by their death.

(Philosophia universa, 80, preface)

In light of this characterization of lacks, Carleton sometimes calls lacks "removals of beings [*remotiones entium*]" (*Philosophia universa*, 81.1.1). It is important to note that Carleton calls lacks "removals" and not "removers [*removentes*]" of beings. This choice suggests that lacks are not *causally* responsible for the non-being of positive entities—indeed, as we shall see below, lacks have no causal powers whatsoever. Rather, lacks *constitute* the non-being of positive entities.

Since carentists are Aristotelians, one wonders at the outset which of the Aristotelian categories negative entities belong to. In his discussion of the categories, Carleton explains that lacks do not belong to any of the ten traditional Aristotelian categories (*Philosophia universa*, 584.2.2). Negative entities are therefore neither substances nor accidents of any kind: they are *sui generis* entities.

Why believe that there are such things as lacks? Carleton adduces the authority of Aristotle and Augustine (*Philosophia universa*, 81.2.4-5), but his primary argument for the existence of lacks is as follows:

That the man is dead, that the fire is extinguished, that Peter is not sitting and is not reading, that Paul is blind, and six hundred other such propositions, are no less true, really and mind-independently, than that the man lives, that Peter sees, &c. Therefore there must be something in reality from which the denomination ['true'] comes to these propositions. But that couldn't be anything except negations.

(*Philosophia universa*, 82.2.6)

This is pretty clearly a truthmaker argument. Many early modern scholastics had the notion of a truthmaker [*verificativum*],²² and after the publication of Carleton's discussion of negative entities, the truthmaker argument became the primary motivation for the postulation of negative entities.²³ Carleton's version of the truthmaker argument for negative entities can be formulated in three premises:

- (1) Some negative propositions are true.
- (2) Negative truths are made true by something in reality—i.e., they have truthmakers.
- (3) The only entities that can make negative truths true are negative entities.
- (4) Therefore, negative entities exist.

The dialectic in which the truthmaker argument is situated is complex, and a discussion of its details would take us too far from the aim of this paper. Nonetheless, some might wonder why Carleton is willing to follow the truthmaker argument to its seemingly bizarre conclusion. Carleton takes the cogency of the truthmaker argument for granted, opting not to defend its premises. Fortunately, we may gather more details about the dialectical situation

²² John Doyle was the first (in print) to suggest "truthmaker" as a translation of "*verificativum*" ('Another God, Chimerae, Goat-Stags, and Man-Lions', 773, n. 12). For a helpful survey of some of the 17th-century literature on truthmakers, see Schmutz, 'Verificativum', 739-748; Ramelow, *Gott, Freiheit, Weltentwahl*, 230-241. Readers interested in the contemporary discussion of truthmaking may begin by consulting Gonzalo Rodriguez-Pereyra 'Truthmakers', *Philosophy Compass* 1, no. 2 (2006): 186-200.

²³ As reported by Bernaldo de Quirós (*Opus philosophicum*, 738.2). For other truthmaker arguments for carentism, see Polizzi, *Siculi platiensis*, 645.23; Giattini, *Logica*, 265. Pallavicino (1607-1667) attributes the truthmaker argument to Antonio Pérez although Pérez himself was not a carentist (Pallavicino, *Disputationum tomus primus*, 80.1).

by consulting other texts in which the truthmaker argument makes an appearance.

Early modern scholastics universally accept premise (1) of the truthmaker argument, but why endorse premises (2) and (3)? As I argue at length elsewhere,²⁴ Carleton and many other early modern scholastics accept premise (2) because it is entailed by their preferred analysis of truth:²⁵

Truth: For a proposition 'p' to be true is for the total intentional object of 'p' to exist.

Here propositions are conceived of as mental acts, and the total intentional object of a proposition is the object of the proposition taken as a whole. Hence, the object of 'Peter runs' is said to be Peter's running, and the object of 'Peter is not running' is the negation of Peter's running; the former is true if and only if Peter's running exists, and the latter is true if and only if the negation of Peter's running exists. The upshot of Truth is two-fold: first, Truth entails that for every truth there is something, its intentional object, in virtue of which it is true—i.e., every truth has a truthmaker. *A fortiori*, negative truths have truthmakers (Premise (2)). Second, because the truthmaker for any proposition 'p' is the intentional object of 'p', every truth is about its truthmaker. We may see how Truth operates in the truthmaker argument for negative entities by making it an explicit step in the argument; the modified truthmaker argument now runs as follows:

- (1) Some negative propositions are true.
 - (2) For a proposition to be true is for its total intentional object to exist.
- (Truth)

²⁴ 'Truthmakers in Early Modern Scholasticism', in progress.

²⁵ For relevant texts see Giattini, *Logica*, q8a5 and q6a5; Polizzi, *Siculi platiensis*, d25s4; Carleton, d44s1.

- (3) Negative truths are made true by something in reality—i.e., they have truthmakers. (From 2)
- (4) Truths are about their truthmakers. (From 2)
- (5) Negative truths are about negative entities. (Assumption)
- (6) Negative entities make negative truths true. (From 4, 5)
- (7) Therefore, negative entities exist. (From 1, 6)

Of course, it could now be asked why Carleton would endorse premises (2) and (5) of the modified argument. Indeed, some early modern scholastics reject premise (2) of the modified argument, and there was a lengthy debate over premise (5).²⁶ Rather than getting side-tracked onto a discussion about truth and truthmaking in early modern scholasticism, however, I want to proceed to the theory of negative entities. What sort of thing is a negative entity, according to Carleton?

3. Carleton on lacks, negations, and privations

3.1 Ontological Negativity

Early modern scholastic opponents of carentism allege that there is no way to draw a principled distinction between positive and negative entities. Antonio Bernaldo de Quirós expresses this worry by riffing on the etymology of “positive”: a *positive* entity is something that *posits* something in reality (*Opus philosophicum*, 738.3). But every entity posits something in reality. So every entity is positive. This was a common worry about the concept of negative entities.²⁷ Some contemporary philosophers have expressed similar worries: Josh Parsons

²⁶ A straightforward rejection of premise (2) can be found in Madritano, *De anima*, 244.83. For discussion of premise (5), see Izquierdo, *Pharus scientiarum*, 89-91 and Polizzi, *Siculi platiensis tomus tertius*, 668-670. It should also be noted that some early modern scholastics argue that negative truths are made true by positive entities. See, e.g., Mauro, *Liber secundus*, q49.

²⁷ E.g., Hurtado, *Universa philosophia*, 185.2; Izquierdo, *Pharus scientiarum*, 194.36-37; Polizzi, *Siculi platiensis*, 667.156; Peinado, *De gen.*, 212.25; Losada, *Cursus philosophici tertia pars*, Metaphysics, 151.12-152.14; Giattini, *Logica*, 266-267.

asks, “What is it for a chair, a person, or a rock to be positive? I have honestly no idea.”²⁸

Prima facie there are two ways one might account for the difference between positive and negative entities: in terms of existence or in terms of essence – i.e., in terms of *how* something is or in terms of *what* something is. The idea behind the first approach would be to posit a new mode of existence, which might be expressed by its own quantifier in a formal language. On this view, negative beings are negative because they have negative existence. The negative existence view is suggested by the phrase ‘negative being’ [*esse negativum*] and similar terms such as Polizzi’s ‘abusive being’ [*esse abusivum*].²⁹ The idea behind the second approach is that negative beings exist with the same kind of existence as positive beings, but they are negative because of something peculiar about their essences.

Both strategies may be found in the early modern scholastic literature, but Carleton endorses the second strategy.³⁰ As we have already seen, Carleton calls negative entities “removals of beings [*remotiones entium*].” Later he distinguishes between positive and negative entities as follows:

A positive thing is not a pure removal, but it has many other functions. The positive being-ness [*entitas*] of a positive thing is distinguished [from negative being-ness] by means of these other functions.

(*Philosophia universa*, 85.6.6)

According to this passage negative entities are removals of beings *and nothing else besides*. Positive beings are also removals of beings (since positive beings remove their negations), but positive beings have “many other functions” besides that of being removals of negative entities.

²⁸ Parsons, ‘Negative Truths from Positive Facts?’, 591. See also Cameron, ‘Truthmakers’; Schaffer, ‘Truth and Fundamentality’, 313 fn. 23; Baron, *et al.*, ‘What is a Negative Property?’

²⁹ Polizzi, *Siculi platiensis*, 673*.188 [NB: Polizzi’s p. 673 is erroneously marked ‘667’].

³⁰ Giattini and Benito de Robles appear to endorse the first strategy. For more on Robles see Schmutz, ‘Réalistes’, 146-147; for Giattini, see *Logica*, 266.

There is an obvious problem with this characterization of the distinction between positive and negative entities, a problem that did not go unnoticed by opponents of carentism.³¹ The problem is that negative entities *do* have other functions in addition to being removals of entities. Most notably, negative entities are truthmakers.

It is hard to believe that Carleton overlooked the fact that negative entities are truthmakers for negative truths, so his account of the distinction between positive and negative entities cannot amount merely to the claim that negative truths have only one function. Fortunately, his remarks on the distinction between positive and negative entities make more sense if we consider them in light of similar remarks made by his contemporaries. Other carentists and their opponents consistently account for the negativity of negative entities by saying that they are *essentially* mere removals or excluders of positive entities. Giuseppe Polizzi, who models his theory of negative entities on Carleton's, accounts for the distinction between positive and negative entities as follows:

Just as a positive contingent thing has its own essence and existence, so also does its lack. But the essence of a lack consists in the fact that it is the pure exclusion of something else from its company. So a lack's only intrinsic feature is that it excludes from reality the positive thing of which it is a lack.

(Polizzi, *Siculi platiensis*, 667.157)

Here the distinguishing feature of lacks is that they are essentially mere excluders. This account of the distinction between positive and negative entities seems to have become fairly mainstream, since it was repeated even by opponents of carentism. Luis de Losada, for example, describes lacks as follows: "The entire or primary quiddity [of a lack] is *the removal* of positive existence."³²

³¹ E.g., Peinado, *De gen.*, 212.26; Lobkowitz, *Leptotatos*, 75.138; Losada, *Cursus philosophici tertia pars*, Metaphysics, 151.14.

³² Losada, *Cursus philosophici tertia pars*, Metaphysics, 150.9. Cf. Izquierdo, *Pharus scientiarum*, 194.37; Pallavicino, *Disputationum tomus primus*, 80.2-4; Garcia, *Cursus philosophicus* 4, 371.641.

Carleton's account of the negativity of negative entities makes sense if we construe it along the lines of the account here endorsed by Polizzi and reported by Losada. Notice that Polizzi calls lacks *exclusions* of positive entities, whereas Losada and Carleton call lack *removals* of positive entities. It seems nothing hangs on this terminological difference; I will adopt Polizzi's language of exclusion, and I will say that a negative entity is an *excluder* of a positive entity in the way that blue is an excluder of red. As we shall see, Carleton thinks that lacks exclude positive entities from regions of space-time. The relevant notion of an excluder may therefore be characterized as follows: for m to be the excluder of p is for it to be the case that, necessarily, m exists in a region of space-time R if and only if p does not exist in R . It is important to not that positive as well as negative entities are excluders on this conception of 'excluder'. What is unique about negative entities is that they are essentially *mere* excluders—i.e., the essence of a negative entity m is fully constituted by its being the excluder of another entity p . To be sure, a negative entity may have additional features such as being a truthmaker or being located in such-and-such a place, but these features do not enter into the essence of the negative entity. Positive entities, by contrast, have essential features in addition to being an excluder of a being.³³

We now know how Carleton and his followers account for the negativity of negative entities, but many questions remain. How are negative entities individuated? Are they concrete or abstract? How are they related to their subjects (if they have subjects)? I will take these questions in turn. It should be noted going forward that, although I have explained ontological negativity using the term 'excluder', Carleton himself prefers the term 'removal'. Where that term and its cognates appears below, the reader may understand a removal as an excluder as explained above.

³³ An interesting alternative proposal, suggested by the passages from Polizzi and Losada, is to take ontological positiveness as primitive and define negativity in terms of it: to be negative is to be a pure removal of *something positive*. This procedure presupposes a prior conception of positivity.

3.2 Individuating Lacks

At the foundation of Carleton's theory of lacks are two methodological principles that together provide a principled way to approach what might otherwise seem like an intractable problem: determining the identity conditions of lacks. The first principle says, roughly, that we can learn about lacks by considering the things of which they are lacks. The reason behind this principle is that lacks are defined in terms of the things of which they are lacks. The lack of Peter, for example, is essentially an excluder of Peter. So we can use Peter's identity conditions to find out about the identity conditions of the lack of Peter.³⁴

The second principle I call "Carleton's Razor," the inspiration for which is familiar:

Carleton's Razor: Negative entities are not to be multiplied without necessity (*Philosophia universa*, 85.4).³⁵

Using these two methodological principles, Carleton establishes three principles that together tell us how lacks are individuated both specifically and numerically. First is the Principle of Specific Diversity:

Principle of Specific Diversity: Lacks are multiplied with respect to species according to the specific diversity of forms to which they are opposed (*Philosophia universa*, 85.7.1).

Peter and Pegasus are different in kind (species), so it follows from Carleton's Principle of Specific Diversity that lacks of Peter and Pegasus are different in

³⁴ Carleton presupposes that we can have singular thought about the non-existent. For a contemporary defense of this view, see Crane, *The Objects of Thought*.

³⁵ Here Carleton uses "non-entity" rather than "negative entities", but I take it the point of doing so is that it recalls Ockham's version of the Razor. I have rendered the Razor more consistent with Carleton's terminology elsewhere.

kind. The Principle of Specific Diversity is motivated by the first methodological principle discussed above.

Carleton uses the same approach to establish a Principle of Numerical Diversity:

Principle of Numerical Diversity: The number of negations is to be taken from the number of things or forms that the negations remove (*Philosophia universa*, 85.7.2).³⁶

The Principle of Numerical Diversity tells us that there is a one-one correlation between lacks and the things they remove.³⁷ Hence, the lack of Peter is distinct from the lack of Paul if and only if Peter is distinct from Paul. Carleton's Principle of Numerical Diversity results in a staggering number of lacks.³⁸ To illustrate: for every possible, non-actual entity in David Lewis's pluriverse, there is a lack of that entity in Carleton's actual world. For every alien property in David Lewis's pluriverse, there is a lack of that property in Carleton's actual world. But Carleton also countenances lacks of impossible objects such as chimeras, alien gods, and goat-stags (*Philosophia universa*, 81.2.2). There are more things in Carleton's heaven and earth than are dreamt of in David Lewis's philosophy.

³⁶ Cf. Hurtado de Mendoza, *Universa philosophia*, 186.8.

³⁷ Someone might worry that there is a formal problem lurking behind the Principle of Numerical Diversity. The principle tells us that the number of negations = the number of things removed by the negations. It is often thought that statements of the form 'the number of Fs = n' are materially equivalent to statements quantifying over the Fs – e.g., 'the number of mugs = 2' is equivalent to ' $\exists x \exists y (\text{Mug}(x) \wedge \text{Mug}(y) \wedge x \neq y) \wedge \forall z (\text{Mug}(z) \rightarrow (z=x \vee z=y))$ '. If so, then 'the number of non-existents = n' is equivalent to a statement quantifying over non-existents, and Carleton's Principle of Numerical Diversity appears to entail non-sense. At least three responses are available to Carleton. First, he could deny the equivalence on the grounds that there are infinitely many non-existents; hence, there is no finite quantificational statement equivalent to 'the number of lacks = the number of non-existents'. Second, he could admit the equivalence and deny that quantification expresses existence. This would be to admit a domain of discourse (quantification) that includes non-existents. For a recent defense of this sort of move, see Crane, *The Objects of Thought*, ch. 2. Failing these two options, he could go Meinongian and admit that non-existents have a mode of being that falls short of existence, and the ' \exists ' expresses this inferior mode of being.

³⁸ Carleton explicitly claims that there is an actual infinity of lacks in *Philosophia universa*, 391.6.

There is a further question about the individuation of lacks left unanswered by Carleton's Principle of Numerical Diversity. Suppose Peter and Paul are both blind. How do we count the lack of sight? Are there distinct lacks of sight for Peter and Paul, or is there just one lack of sight, which Peter and Paul somehow share? Carleton answers this question with his Principle of Non-Multiplication:

Principle of Non-Multiplication: Lacks are not multiplied according to the multiplication of subjects.³⁹

The Principle of Non-Multiplication tells us to ignore the subject of a lack when counting the lack. Accordingly, there is only one lack of sight that is somehow shared by Peter and Paul.⁴⁰

Because the Principle of Non-Multiplication can seem counterintuitive, it needs argument. Carleton establishes this principle using an example that I call the "Creation Case." Suppose at t_0 there is space with a lack of air and a lack of light. Now suppose that at t_1 God creates air. After t_1 there is space and air, but no light. What happens at t_1 to the lack of light that existed at t_0 ? According to Carleton, nothing happens to the lack of light that was at t_0 : it remains and is furthermore responsible for the darkness at t_1 . The alternative to saying that the original lack of light remains when the air is created is to say that the original lack perishes, giving way to a new lack when the air is created. But Carleton claims that such a move would be *ad hoc* since there is no principled reason why the original lack should perish (*Philosophia universa*, 86.5). So it seems that the original lack of light from t_0 remains throughout t_1 , when air is created. If so, we can also conclude that at t_1 no new lack of light comes into being. For if a new lack of light arose upon the creation of air, there would then be two lacks of light,

³⁹ This is the conclusion of *Philosophia universa*, Logic, d18s8.

⁴⁰ Carleton's principle of non-multiplication raises a question about his theory of properties. If the lack of a property is not multiplied according to subject, then it follows from the Principle of Numerical Diversity that properties are also not multiplied according to subject, which suggests that Carleton conceives of properties as universals rather than as tropes. Carleton's theory of properties, however, lies outside the scope of this paper.

which would violate Carleton's Razor (*Philosophia universa*, 85.3). Carleton concludes that the lack of light in empty space is not distinct from the lack of light in air.

How does the creation case support the Principle of Non-Multiplication? In the creation case, Carleton thinks of empty space as one subject and air as another. Since there is only one lack of light for the empty space at t_0 and for the air at t_1 , there is only one lack of light for two subjects. Hence, lacks are not multiplied according to subject. It should be noted, however, that the Principle of Non-Multiplication was controversial among carentists.⁴¹

3.3 *Abstract or Concrete?*

I take it to be the hallmark of abstract objects that they are (i) not located in space and time and (ii) do not feature in causal interactions. For the purpose of this paper, I will understand concrete objects to be objects that (i) are located in space and time or (ii) do feature in causal interaction. The disjunctive statement of these criteria allows God to be a concrete object even if not located in space and time.⁴²

It is clear from the creation case that for Carleton negative entities are located in space and time. The spatio-temporal location of negative entities is a running theme in Carleton's discussion, and it can be found in the following passages:

Strictly speaking, there is only one negation for each thing or form, but it is divisible. Hence, once a thing or form is posited, its negation is not entirely taken away, but only that part of the negation that corresponds to the place where the thing or form is produced.

(*Philosophia universa*, 85.8.1)

So when Peter is first produced, he does not destroy the whole negation of himself but only that part of his negation that was in the place where he was produced. But

⁴¹ Polizzi rejects it in *Saeculi platiensis*, 673*.192-674.197; cf. Garcia, *Cursus philosophicus*, 665.1322.

⁴² It also allows for concrete objects that do not feature in causal interactions.

when Peter successively comes into contact with various parts of his negation, he successively destroys them, and new parts of his negation emerge in those parts of space that he successively leaves behind. For in each place there must be one of two contraries: a thing or its negation.

(*Philosophia universa*, 87.10)

These are remarkable passages, and several points in them require comment. The point I wish to emphasize by quoting these passages is that for Carleton lacks occupy space and time. In both passages, moreover, Carleton claims that a positive entity p is not in a location because part of p 's negation is in that location.⁴³ Carleton therefore suggests that negations have parts, and this suggestion requires comment.

Although Carleton speaks as if lacks have parts, Carleton is committed to the simplicity of negations for the following reason. If the lack of Peter had proper parts, those parts would presumably be smaller lacks of Peter. But the postulation of smaller lacks of Peter would violate both Carleton's Razor and the Principle of Numerical Diversity; as is clear from the first passage above, "strictly speaking, there is only one negation for each thing or form." If there is only one lack of Peter, it is hard to see how Peter's lack could have parts. Nonetheless, Carleton consistently speaks as if lacks are "divisible" and have "parts". How are we to resolve this tension at the heart of Carleton's theory of lacks?

My suggestion is that it is best to conceive of Carleton's lacks not as having proper parts but as spatially extended simples (although, as we will see below, privations are not simple).⁴⁴ I suggest that the "parts" of negations are the various spatial sub-regions of one spatially extended simple negation. We can conceive of the left and right hemispheres of a spatially extended simple. In our non-technical moments, we can call those distinct hemispheres "parts," although strictly speaking a spatially extended simple has no parts. If God creates Pegasus

⁴³ Cf. Izquierdo, *Opus theologicum*, 137-140 for an alternative account.

⁴⁴ For contemporary discussion of extended simples, see Simons, 'Extended Simples'; McDaniel, 'Extended Simples'.

in the middle of Times Square, he does not, strictly speaking, destroy a part of Pegasus's lack (because Pegasus's lack does not have parts); rather, he changes the shape of Pegasus's lack by contracting it around the Pegasus-shaped region of space now occupied by Pegasus.

A second point in the above two passages that merits comment is Carleton's claim that "in each place there must be one of two contraries: a thing or its negation." It follows from this remarkable claim that, not only are there infinitely many negations in Carleton's universe, but there are also infinitely many negations in each location of Carleton's universe, since infinitely many positive things fail to exist at each location.

It is therefore clear that Carleton's lacks satisfy the first criterion for being a concrete object: lacks occupy space and time. This is a desired result, for surely it is dark in this room because there is a lack of light *in this room*; it would be strange if it were dark in this room in virtue of of an abstract entity without any location.

What about the second criterion? Are lacks capable of causal interaction? Carleton insists that lacks do not have causal powers (*Philosophia universa*, 203.2). However, this point needs to be finessed for two reasons. First, although lacks do not have causal powers, there does seem to be some sense in which positive entities can act causally on negative entities: I can move my lack by moving myself; I can banish the lack of light from a room simply by flipping a switch. These seem to be genuine causal interactions, but it is not clear how Carleton would account for them. Aristotelian efficient causation on the influx model does not seem to fit the bill, since it seems clear that when I move my lack, nothing "flows into" it. What we can say is that at least some lacks change location as a result of the changing locations of positive entities. A second point that is relevant to the issue of causality is that Carleton, following Aristotle, agrees that privations are principles of change (*Philosophia universa*, 205.3).⁴⁵ In spite of the

⁴⁵ For a thorough discussion of privation as a principle of change, see Garcia, *Cursus philosophicus* 4, 368-406.

relevance of lacks to the goings-on of the positive natural world, it remains the case that Carleton's lacks do not have causal powers, and so arguably fail to satisfy the causal criterion for being a concrete object. Because they satisfy the first criterion, however, they count as concrete objects.

The picture that emerges from the above passages is as follows. Your lack is a spatially extended simple,⁴⁶ located wherever you are not located: you are surrounded by your lack, just as in the sea you are surrounded by water, displacing it wherever you go. It should now be clear that Carleton's lacks are not conceived of as negative facts. Negative facts are structured complexes built out of individuals, properties, and relations, but Carleton's lacks are no such things. This is an important point because the few other commentators who have written on this topic have claimed that the early modern scholastics thought of lacks and negations as negative facts.⁴⁷

3.4 Lacks, Privations, and Their Subjects

Carleton states that privations cannot be "properly in a subject".⁴⁸ He does not explain what "properly in a subject" means, but a good guess is that being properly in a subject is something like inhering in a subject. As we have seen, however, a privation is standardly defined as the lack of a form *in* a subject apt to have that form. If privations cannot be "properly in a subject," then Carleton must come up with a way in which a privation can be "in" and affect its subject. This goes for negations of properties more generally, not just for privations.

Carleton claims that a sufficient condition for *a*'s not being F is that the lack of F is "intimately present" to *a* (*Philosophia universa*, 86.7).⁴⁹ It is clear from Carleton's examples that by a lack being "intimately present" to a subject, he

⁴⁶ It is worth noting that on my reading Carleton's view inherits all of the difficulties attendant upon the hypothesis of spatially extended simples.

⁴⁷ Schmutz attributes the negative facts view to Carleton in particular. See, 'Réalistes', 154. See also Sven Knebel *Will, Würfel und Wahrscheinlichkeit*, 175; and Tilman Ramelow, *Gott, Freiheit, Weltenwahl*, 231.

⁴⁸ *Philosophia universa*, 86.8. Cf. Polizzi, *Siculi platiensis*, 673*.188.

⁴⁹ I use the variable 'F' to denote strictly positive properties.

means that the lack and the subject are spatially coincident in some way. For example, Carleton claims that if an angel is “penetrated” with dark air, the angel as well as the air will be dark.⁵⁰ In order to explain Carleton’s conditions for something’s lacking a property, we need two location relations. Where Carleton uses the term ‘penetrates’ to describe the appropriate spatial relation, I shall use the term ‘pervades’, and I shall say that F pervades a region of space r just in case no sub-region of r is free of F.⁵¹ I shall say that a is entirely located in r just in case a is located in r and nowhere else. Now we may say that a is pervaded by F just in case a is entirely located in r and F pervades r —in short, a is pervaded by F just in case in every region where there is a , there is F. From Carleton’s example of the dark angel, we can gather the following sufficient condition for a ’s not being F.

Sufficient condition for lacking a property: If a is pervaded by the lack of F, then a is not F.

This condition is meant to be fully general, applying to negations as well as privations. One might now wonder why pervasion by a lack is a sufficient but not necessary condition for lacking a property. This has to do with Carleton’s special treatment of the metaphysics of privations in particular, which I explain shortly.

Thus far Carleton has given a unified account of negations and privations. He is compelled, however, to give a special account of privations in response to a bizarre objection concerning overlapping demons (*Philosophia universa*, 86.9-10). As we know, demons have the misfortune of lacking grace. And as we also know, nothing is easier than for two demons to occupy the same region of space. Apparently, 17th-century scholastic philosophers had the intuition that distinct

⁵⁰ Some might be surprised to find that incorporeal substances can be dark. Nothing hinges on this example.

⁵¹ For discussion of these and other location relations, see Parsons, 'Theories of Location'.

demons have distinct privations of grace. But if two demons—Alichino and Barbariccia, say—occupy the same region of space, then according to Carleton’s theory of privations there is no sense in which the two demons have distinct lacks of grace.

Given Carleton’s claim that lacks are not multiplied according to the multiplication of subjects, we would expect him simply to deny the intuition that distinct demons have distinct privations. Oddly enough, he tries to accommodate rather than deny the intuition. In doing so, Carleton effectively accepts the following principle of multiplication for privations:

Principle of Multiplication for Privations: Privations are multiplied according to the multiplication of subjects.

Carleton’s task is to reconcile the Principle of Multiplication for Privations with his Principle of Non-Multiplication for lacks more generally. If lacks aren’t multiplied according to subject, and privations are lacks, how can privations be multiplied according to subject? Carleton’s answer to this question significantly complicates his theory of privations.

Carleton hits upon a solution to the problem of coincident demons by considering the fact that when a subject has a property, the subject is somehow united with that property. If the union between a subject and a property is a positive entity, then it must have its own lack: if there is a union between Paul and sight, there is also a lack of union between Paul and sight. The lack of union between Paul and sight, moreover, is defined in terms of Paul; it can therefore play a role in making Paul’s blindness in some sense his own and in making Alichino’s lack of grace in some sense his own. Privations, Carleton now claims, are aggregates or mereological sums of (i) the lack of a form and (ii) the lack of union between the subject and the form:

Privation transcendently taken is nothing other than the complex [composed] of the negation of a form and the negation of union with respect to a subject naturally apt to receive such a union and form.

(*Philosophia universa*, 88.4)

In other passages Carleton speaks of the negations of form and union as “parts” of a privation (*Philosophia universa*, 86.9-12). We can now say that Alichino’s privation of grace is composed of (i) the lack of grace and (ii) the lack of union between Alichino and grace; Barbariccia’s privation of grace is composed of (i) the lack of grace, and (ii) the lack of union between Barbariccia and grace. Because these composite privations have distinct parts, they are distinct privations. Alichino and Barbariccia can rest assured of not having to share their privations with other demons.

We can now see why pervasion by a lack of F is merely a sufficient condition for *a*’s not being F: *a* can also fail to be F if *a* is pervaded by a lack of union between *a* and F, even if *a* is pervaded by F. This is clear from the following passage:

Even if light is penetrated with air, nonetheless the air will not be lit [*lucidus*], nor will it have light in itself with respect to the formal effect of light, unless the union of this light is placed in the same place along with the air.

(*Philosophia universa*, 86.12)

Here Carleton imagines light and air occupying the same region of space. Still, the air will not be lit if (*per impossibile?*) there is no union between the air and the light *in the same place* as the air and light. The upshot is a second sufficient condition for a thing’s lacking a property:

Second sufficient condition for lacking a property: If *a* is pervaded by the lack of union between *a* and F, then *a* is not F.

Note that this second sufficient condition for a thing's lacking a property, like the first condition, is fully general in that it applies to negations as well as privations.

To recap this section, Carleton complicates his theory of lacks by claiming that privations are composite lacks: the privation of a property *F* with respect to a subject *a* is composed of (i) the lack of *F* and (ii) the lack of union between *a* and *F*. This complication of Carleton's theory is motivated by the need to reconcile the Principle of Multiplication for Privations with the Principle of Non-Multiplications for non-privative lacks. It is not clear why Carleton accepts the Principle of Multiplication for Privations, but other carentists also accept that principle. In order to avoid the complication in Carleton's theory, those who accept the Principle of Multiplication for Privations also accept that principle as applied to lacks more generally. Consequently, these other carentists offer a unified treatment of privations and non-privative lacks.

We have also seen that Carleton offers two sufficient conditions for a thing's lacking a property. These conditions are fully general, applying to negations as well as privations. Something can lack a property by being pervaded by (i) the lack of that property, or (ii) the lack of union with that property. Carleton does not say whether these conditions can be fulfilled separately, but in the case of privations he must say that they cannot, since *a*'s privation of *F* is composed of the lack of *F* and the lack of union between *a* and *F*.

4. Theological Objections

Before God created anything, this typewriter did not exist. Hence, before God created anything, the lack of this typewriter did exist. This statement entails, first, that the lack of this typewriter existed from eternity, and second, that the lack of this typewriter is an uncreated entity. Moreover, Carleton postulates lacks of impossible objects such as goat-stags and round squares. Such lacks are not only eternal and uncreated but also necessary. So Carleton's position entails that there are infinitely many necessary, eternal, uncreated entities other than God.

Sometimes Carleton's opponents call the theological implications of Carleton's theory "ridiculous" and "plainly absurd" (Izquierdo, *Pharus scientiarum*, 195.38). Other times they put a finer point on the objection.⁵²

In the first place, there is the first line of the Nicene Creed: "We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, *maker of all things* visible and invisible." *Prima facie*, this line of the creed implies that there are no uncreated beings other than God. This problem cannot be skirted simply by stipulating that God does in fact create all things, lacks included. For, as Silvestro Mauro points out, this response leads to another problem. Mauro explains that God can consider himself and conclude, "My infinite perfection is good enough for me. I don't want there to be anything imperfect" (*Liber secundus*, 203). Based on these reflections, God can decide not to create anything at all. But if lacks are created, then it seems that God cannot abstain from creating. For by deciding not to create Socrates, for instance, God *must* create the lack of Socrates, and so on for everything else. As Mauro puts it, God is the fountain of all being, and he ought to be able to close the fountain if he so chooses (or, one might add, never open it in the first place). But if carentism is correct, and if God creates lacks, then God cannot close the fountain of being: for every positive being p , God must create p or its negation. Carleton therefore faces a dilemma: either lacks are uncreated, which conflicts with the first line of the Nicene Creed, or they are created, and God is forced to create something.

In the second place, God is supposed to be omnipotent, but if there are necessary lacks, then there are things that God cannot destroy. He must simply put up with them, and this seems to detract from God's power. Izquierdo asks,

⁵² See, e.g., Giattini, *Logica*, 267; Izquierdo, *Pharus scientiarum*, 195.38, 195.41; Losada, *Cursus philosophici tertia pars*, *Metaphysics*, 152.15; Peinado, *De gen.*, 213.29; Mauro, *Liber secundus*, 202-204. These philosophers raised several additional objections to carentism. I focus on the most obviously problematic objections.

“How can he be omnipotent who can’t rid himself of the company of such essences?” (*Pharus scientiarum*, 195.41).⁵³

Finally, Carleton’s reification of privation smacks of Manichaeism.⁵⁴ The Manicheans thought that evil exists and is uncreated by God. Augustine identifies evil with the privation of good precisely in order to maintain that evil does not exist (see *Confessions* III.12, VII.18). If Carleton, like many scholastic philosophers before him, also identifies evil with privation, then his view begins to take on a Manichaean aspect insofar as evil would then be an uncreated entity.

Carleton’s response to these objections is surprisingly terse; he dedicates approximately one sentence to each objection. Like many of his colleagues, Carleton was a theologian as well as a philosopher—indeed, Carleton wrote a *Cursus theologicus* as well as a *Cursus philosophicus*. It is safe to assume that he would have been sensitive to the theological worries about negative entities. The brevity of his replies suggests that in Carleton’s view the theological objections are not very strong.

Carleton responds to the first two worries reported above. In the first place, he admits that lacks are uncreated (*Philosophia universa*, 85.6). However, Carleton thinks he can accommodate the traditional commitments of classical theism because, he says, those commitments concern positive entities only. Hence, according to Carleton, a theist must maintain that God is the only uncreated *positive* being, not that God is the only uncreated being *simpliciter*.

In order to accommodate the first line of the Nicene Creed, Carleton denies that negative entities are things; hence, he agrees that God is “the maker of all things.” As I understand it, this response is equivalent to claiming that “all

⁵³ For a contemporary statement of similar worries, see Alvin Plantinga, *Does God Have a Nature?* I have stolen the phrase, “simply put up with them” from Plantinga.

⁵⁴ Mauro mentions the Manichean connection in *Liber secundus*, 204, but this objection did not get much play in the primary literature.

things” contains an implicitly restricted quantifier, ranging over only positive things.⁵⁵

From the fact that God does not create lacks, it does not immediately follow that lacks are entirely independent of God. Much ink has been spilled in the attempt to carve out conceptual space for uncreated beings that are somehow distinct from God yet somehow dependent on God.⁵⁶ There is no sign that Carleton wishes to avail himself of these efforts—there is no sign of the formal distinction or exemplar causation in Carleton’s discussion of lacks. For Carleton there seems to be no sense in which lacks are ontologically dependent on God. By Carleton’s lights this admission is not theologically problematic because Christian doctrine only requires that *positive* entities be dependent on God. Moreover, there remains a sense in which the existence of contingent lacks is under God’s control, since God can annihilate the lack of Pegasus, for example, by creating Pegasus. Carleton admits that God has no such control over necessary lacks. But, he maintains, saying that God cannot destroy the lack of a round square is no worse than saying that God cannot make a round square, and everyone is committed to the latter claim (*Philosophia universa*, 85.6). So the fact that God cannot destroy the lack of a round square is not a problem and certainly not a special problem for carentism.

Carleton does not respond to the objection about Manichaeism. This might seem puzzling at first, since the Manichean objection seems like an obvious objection to raise. But in fact it is easy to see why Carleton was not worried about the charge of Manichaeism: he rejects the privation theory of evil.

Historians of philosophy sometimes assume that every scholastic philosopher endorsed a privation theory of evil invented by Augustine, codified

⁵⁵ For a contemporary instance of this move, see Van Inwagen, ‘God and Other Uncreated Things’.

⁵⁶ For one early modern scholastic example of such efforts, see Albertini’s appropriation of (the traditional reading of) Henry of Ghent’s view of eternal essences (*Corollaria, tomus secundus*, p1d1q1).

by Aquinas, and repeated for good measure by Suárez.⁵⁷ As is usually the case with scholastic philosophy, however, things are not so straightforward. In his theological work, Carleton discusses the question “whether the badness [*malitia*] of sin formally consists in something positive or in something negative – i.e., in a privation of rectitude that ought to be in something”; he observes that this question “has been disputed most bitterly in the schools,” and the resulting disagreement was “not a light one” (*Cursus theologicus*, 446, preface). Carleton goes on to argue forcefully against the privation theory of evil. He claims that hatred toward God, for example, is a mental act that is bad in itself; it is not bad because it is attended by a privation. In particular, hatred toward God is not bad because it is a lack of love for God, for hatred toward God is worse than a mere lack of love for God (*Cursus theologicus*, 446.4-5). Carleton has a similar view of physical (non-moral) evil. Pain, for example, is a state of the body that is bad in itself, not because of an attendant privation. Pain is certainly not reducible to a lack of pleasure, for pain is much worse than a lack of pleasure (*Cursus theologicus*, 448.6). Carleton has several arguments to the effect that the privation theory of evil is not only counterintuitive but also incoherent. These arguments merit a separate discussion of their own, a discussion which is beyond the scope of this paper. The important point for present purposes is that Carleton does not identify evil with privation, and he therefore escapes the charge of Manichaeism.

5. Conclusion

We have seen that Carleton postulates negative entities because he thinks they are required as truthmakers for negative truths. We have also seen that Carleton conceives of negative entities as pure removals of being, as spatio-temporally located, extended simples with which we can interact and which affect their subjects (if they have subjects) by means of spatial overlap. Moreover, Carleton

⁵⁷ E.g., Newlands, ‘Leibniz on Privations’.

conceives of privations as composite lacks composed of lacks of properties and lacks of union between properties and subjects.

Many philosophers old and new have looked with suspicion upon the reification of lacks or negative entities. Stephen Mumford asks, “Can it really be a fact in the world that there is no hippopotamus in the room? This sounds like an absence of a fact, and an absence is nothing at all” (‘Negative Truth and Falsehood’, 46). And Julian Dodd remarks, “ontological commitment to absences would seem to be tantamount to a category mistake,” and “the lack of an entity is not an entity” (‘Negative Truths and Truthmaker Principles’, 388). Some of the resistance to negative entities may well be motivated by a lack of well-developed theories of negative entities. While Carleton’s theory is by no means flawless, in light of his theory it is not obvious that ontological commitment to lacks is tantamount to a category mistake, or that the lack of an entity is not an entity.

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