

Bare Particulars and Constituent Ontology

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Bare Particulars and Constituent Ontology

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Abstract My general aim in this paper is to shed light on the controversial concept of a bare particular. I do so by arguing that bare particulars are best understood in terms of the individuating work they do within the framework of a realist constituent ontology. I argue that outside such a framework, it is not clear that the notion of a bare particular is either motivated or coherent. This is suggested by reflection on standard objections to bare particulars. However, within the framework of a realist constituent ontology, bare particulars provide for a coherent theory of individuation—one with a potentially significant theoretical price tag, but one that also has advantages over rival theories.

Keywords Bare particulars · Constituent ontology · Individuation · Substance · Realism · Essences

The concept of a bare particular plays an important role in disputes concerning the nature of substance and the way in which a substance stands to its properties.¹ In this article I aim to clarify the notion of a bare particular by showing that the concept of a bare particular is not univocal between relational and constituent ontologies, and, indeed, that the concept of a bare particular is best and perhaps only understood from within the framework of a realist constituent ontology.

The paper has three parts. In Part 1 I discuss the supporting concepts and considerations for several key premises in a specific argument for bare particulars; doing so further evinces the need for bare particulars, but will also introduce certain problems concerning concepts used in the argument for them. In Part 2, I present what I call the *Numeric Difference Argument* for bare particulars; this will facilitate an understanding of the ontological work that bare particulars are supposed to do within a realist constituent ontology. Finally, in Part 3, I discuss some of the common objections to bare particulars, especially the charge that the concept of a bare particular is incoherent. I proceed in this order to clarify certain key concepts and premises (in Part 1) before presenting the argument that deploys them (in Part 2).

¹For recent critical discussion of bare particulars see Bailey (2012), Davis (2003 and 2004), Davis & Brown (2008), Mertz (2001 and 2003), Moreland (2000), Moreland and Pickavance (2003), Pickavance (2009 and [Forthcoming](#)), and Sider (2006).

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It is important to note that I will discuss the case for bare particulars only in so far as it sheds light on the notion of a bare particular and on the way in which bare particulars are most naturally deployed within a constituent ontology.² It is more apt, of course, to speak of the *cases* for bare particulars, since philosophers have posited them for various reasons. To provide a preliminary sense for the putative importance of bare particulars in analytic metaphysics, I'll begin by mentioning three standard reasons for postulating them.

First, and traditionally, philosophers have thought that there must be something that *bears* or *has* the properties that we ascribe to ordinary objects, a subject of predication, something which *underlies* properties which is not itself a property. For example, where there is a hard red sphere, there is more than sphericity: there is also something that is *spherical* in virtue of *having* sphericity.

Second, and similarly, philosophers have thought that there must be something that *unifies* the properties that are together associated with and jointly characterize a substance. That is, there must be something for properties to jointly characterize. In the case of the hard red sphere, that which is spherical is also that which is itself hard and red. There is a single subject of all these predications, a subject, which is thickly characterized in virtue of having multiple properties at once.³ The job of unifying is also assigned to the bare particular.

Third, philosophers have thought that there must be something non-qualitative and non-relational that grounds the numerical difference in the possible case of two qualitatively indiscernible objects.⁴ Among other things, the need for such a ground is predicated on an acceptance of realism about properties—the view that properties are universals, shareable properties which are numerically identical in their instances. This kind of argument for bare particulars is the *Numerical Difference Argument* (NDA) that I detail in Part 2. To be sure, however, not all constituent ontologists accept realism. Trope bundle theorists, for example, subscribe to a constituent ontology on which the properties that constitute objects are not universals, but “particularized properties”, or tropes. Some trope theorists go further to posit substrata or bare particulars, but on such a view, bare particulars are not needed to *individuate* objects, but to play one or both of the first two roles mentioned above. Thus, in what follows I will focus on a realist constituent ontology.⁵ I do so because such a framework is the traditional and most natural home for bare particulars and provides a framework in which the concept of a bare particular can be best understood.

1 Supporting Concepts and Considerations

In order to understand the notion of a bare particular, it is helpful, if not essential, to understand the NDA. This is because bare particulars are defined in terms of the ontological work they are supposed to do—indeed, in terms of the work they *alone* can do. I will begin

² See Garcia (2009), Loux (2006), and Moreland (2013) for a broader discussion of the differences between relational and constituent ontology.

³ A related issue is the challenge of accounting for the *fact* (not necessarily the *subject*) of thick-character. Gonzalo Rodriguez-Pereyra calls the challenge of accounting for thick-character the “Many Over One” problem (2002, pp. 46–49).

⁴ Much of the widespread conviction that this is possible has its source in Black (1952).

⁵ I discuss nominalist constituent ontology, and, in particular, trope bundle theory, in “Bundle theory’s black box: gap challenges for the bundle theory of substance” (2013), “Tropes and dependency profiles: problems for the nuclear theory of substance” (2013), and (2009).

by characterizing certain terms and distinctions deployed by the NDA. As we will see, a key move in the NDA is the claim that properties cannot individuate objects. In particular, the claim is that neither Plantinga-style-Essences (hereafter simply “essences”) nor coordinate properties can individuate objects.⁶ I shall discuss each part of this denial in turn.

1.1 The Rejection of Essences as Individuators

First, consider the claim that essences cannot individuate objects. This claim is underwritten by a distinction between pure and impure properties, and this distinction turns on the notion of “ontological constituent-dependence.” I will briefly characterize this notion and the distinction it underwrites. However, my aim here is not to defend the rejection of Essences; and this is for two reasons. First, I am somewhat, but not fully convinced the rejection can be sustained. Second, and more importantly, since in this paper I am concerned with clarifying the *notion of* a bare particular, I will discuss the *case for* bare particulars only in so far as it sheds light of the notion of one.

That being said, the distinction between pure and impure properties is to be understood in the following way. According to Michael Loux (1978, p. 133):

[A] property, P, is impure just in case there is some relation, R, and some substance, S, such that necessarily, for any object, *x*, *x* exemplifies P if and only if *x* enters into R with S and that a property, P, is pure just in case P is not impure.

Because Loux means something specific by “substance” and we need not accept his meaning in order to accept the pure/impure distinction, J. P. Moreland (2000, p. 46) has suggested that we replace “some substance, S” with “some particular, S”. I will appropriate Moreland’s amendment in what follows.

Examples of pure properties include *being negatively charged*, *being square*, and *being to the left of a person*. Examples of impure properties include *being identical to Socrates* (i.e., “Socrateity”) and *being to the left of Socrates*.⁷ The important point is that an impure property is supposed to have a particular as a constituent. Speaking less formally, for example, Loux (1978, p. 132) says that impure properties “‘incorporate’ at least one determinate substance.” Likewise, Moreland (2000, p. 46) says that certain “particulars are constituents of impure properties.”

Note that the notion of an impure property assumes that it is possible for an ordinary concrete particular to be an ontological constituent of an abstract object like a property. Call this assumption “CNA” (for *concreta in abstracta*). This assumption is generally not defended in arguments for bare particulars, and I suspect that the absence of such a defense can be explained in the following way. As far as I can tell, bare particulars are always, in fact, posited within a constituent ontology. Constituent ontologists often assume, as a framework principle, that it is possible for abstract objects like properties to be ontological constituents of ordinary concrete objects. Call the latter assumption “ANC” (for *abstracta in concreta*). Although it would be interesting to explore the relationship between CNA and ANC, doing so would take us far afield of bare particulars. The relevant point is that assuming CNA seems natural enough for an

⁶ The notion of an essence discussed here is from Plantinga (1974).

⁷ Others such as Gary Rosenkrantz (1993, pp. 77f) call this the distinction between qualitative and non-qualitative properties.

ontology that already assumes ANC. Nevertheless, this raises an important question: Could bare particulars consistently fit within a relational ontology? More pointedly: Does the rejection of constituent ontology imply the rejection of bare particulars? I will return to this question below.

Let's return to the distinction between pure and impure properties. Given the definition of an impure property, the following is supposed to follow: If *F* is an impure property that has the particular *S* as a constituent, then *F* cannot individuate *S*. If anything, *S* is at least part of what individuates *F*. We can now see how the notion of an impure property is deployed in the argument for bare particulars. Its deployment consists in the following claim: Because essences are impure properties, an essence expressed by "being identical to *S*" cannot individuate the individual referred to by "*S*". Let "ECI" stand for the latter thesis. Put less precisely, ECI is the thesis that essences cannot individuate. (I say "less precisely" because the claim at issue is not that an essence cannot individuate *any* particular whatsoever; the claim is that an essence cannot individuate the particular that comprises it.)

It is beyond the scope of this paper to detail the arguments for ECI. Nevertheless, it will serve our purposes to note how disputes concerning essences relate to those concerning the distinction between constituent and relational ontologies.

The typical defense of ECI turns on the claim that essences are impure properties. Thus, it seems open to someone like Plantinga to insist that essences—or at least essences as he understands them—are posited *within* a relational ontology. As such, essences could be impure only if impure properties are possible within a relational ontology. Since the relational ontologist typically denies that abstracta can be parts of concreta—that is, they reject ANC—it would seem natural for the relationalist to also deny that concreta can be part of abstracta—to deny CNA. Thus, it seems open to the likes of Plantinga to deny that impure properties are even *possible* within a relational ontology.

Because a relational ontologist seems to be within her rights to reject CNA, let's suppose the rejection of CNA is essential to (or at least a non-peripheral commitment of) relational ontology. It would follow that, on a relational ontology, essences cannot be impure properties. This means that essences like Socrateity are given different ontological assays by the relationalist and constituentist. Thus, when the constituentist argues in the above manner for ECI—that essences cannot individuate—the concept she is attacking is *not* the relationalist's concept of an essence.

There are two relevant upshots. First, the argument that essences cannot individuate (for ECI) is best seen as an argument from *within* a constituent ontology. A fully general argument for ECI would have to show that *even within a relational ontology*, essences cannot individuate. Otherwise, the argument for ECI would seem to involve an infelicitous tacit rejection of relational ontology, or at least a misconstrual of it. Second, one's answer to the question "Do essences or bare particulars individuate objects?" may depend upon one's answer to a more fundamental question, "Is a relational or constituent ontology correct?"

1.2 The Rejection of Coordinate Properties as Individuators

Another tactic is to take spatiotemporal properties to individuate objects. However, this approach to individuation is unattractive, if not problematic. It faces the following dilemma, which is developed from a dilemma posed by Moreland (2000, p. 32f)

On the one hand, suppose an absolutist view of space and time is correct and that F is a coordinate property (e.g., *being at location l*) that individuates some particular S. This alternative is unattractive in two ways. First, because F is essential to S, to avoid untoward implications—such as (i) *S cannot move and endure* or (ii) *there is no possible world in which S is at a different location*—this alternative will need to take on further assumptions, such as perdurantism, counterpart theory, and/or the addition of modal spatiotemporal properties (e.g., *being at location l in world w*) to the ontology.⁸ Thus, this alternative would seem to require the support of additional substantive and controversial metaphysical theses. Second, it would seem that F itself must be individuated. On pain of regress, this must be done without involving further coordinate properties. Thus, it would seem that taking this route doesn't ultimately solve the problem of individuation.

Suppose, on the other hand, that a relational account of space and time is correct and that a particular S is individuated by R, where R is a spatiotemporal relation (or a conjunction of spatiotemporal relations). If so, then R is an external relation (or R is a relational property had contingently by S). But if R is an external relation, then R presupposes S and so cannot constitute S (Moreland 2000, p. 33). Hence, if R is a spatiotemporal location, R cannot individuate S. Thus, on a relational view of space and time, there are reasons to think that S is not individuated by a spatiotemporal property. In sum, the general tactic of taking spatiotemporal properties to individuate objects comes with significant costs. It is desirable, if not needful, to look elsewhere for a theory of individuation.

1.3 Taking Stock

In this section we've seen that within the framework of a realist constituent ontology, a case can be made that neither essences nor coordinate properties can individuate objects. In the next section we will see how framework principles of a realist constituent ontology rule out other candidate individuators and converge upon the concept of a bare particular.

2 The Numerical Difference Argument

We will now see how the foregoing concepts and considerations are deployed in the NDA. The argument utilizes the following three principles:

- Realism Properties are numerically identical in their instances.
 Not-II The pure version of the Identity of Indiscernibles is false; that is, it is false that necessarily, $(x)(y) [(z) (z \text{ is a pure property of } x \leftrightarrow z \text{ is a pure property of } y) \rightarrow x=y]$.
 PCI The Principle of Constituent Identity is true: $(x)(y) [(z)(z \text{ is a constituent of } x \leftrightarrow z \text{ is a constituent of } y) \rightarrow x=y]$.⁹

The NDA goes as follows:

Consider a possible world W with only two (non-overlapping) particulars, S₁ and S₂, where (i) S₁ and S₂ are numerically distinct, and (ii) it is false that S₁

⁸ I wish to thank a referee for helpful suggestions as to how (i) and (ii) might be avoided.

⁹ Loux (2006, p. 228)

exists only if S_2 exists, and it is false that S_2 exists only if S_1 exists. Since it is possible (given Not-II), further suppose that S_1 and S_2 share all of their pure properties. Since S_1 and S_2 are distinct, PCI tells us that they must differ with respect to some constituent. That is, either there is some constituent that S_1 has but S_2 lacks, or there is some constituent that S_2 has but S_1 lacks. It is reasonable to infer that *both* disjuncts are true: that S_1 has a constituent c_1 that S_2 lacks *and* S_2 has a constituent c_2 that S_1 lacks. Note that c_1 individuates S_1 , and c_2 individuates S_2 . Given PCI and that S_1 and S_2 share all their pure properties, c_1 is either a non-pure property (i.e., an impure property) or not a property at all. If c_1 is an impure property, then it has as a constituent some particular S^* which is already individuated. Given that S_1 and S_2 are the only particulars in W , either S^* is identical to S_1 or S^* is identical to S_2 (exclusive disjunction). But S^* cannot be identical to S_1 , since S^* is a constituent of S_1 (and not the only constituent of S_1). S^* cannot be identical to S_2 , for the following reason: Given (ii), above, S_1 doesn't depend for its existence upon S_2 . But if S^* is identical to S_2 , then S_1 *does* depend for its existence on S_2 . Thus, c_1 is not an impure property. So c_1 is not a property at all. But if c_1 is not a property, then c_1 is a particular. If the particular c_1 *itself* has properties as constituents, then it is possible that there be some particular S^{**} such that c_1 and S^{**} are (non-overlapping and) numerically distinct but share all of their pure properties; but then c_1 and S^{**} must differ with respect to some non-property constituent, and so on... This regress must be finite, so there must be some particular that is a constituent in S_1 and which is simple (i.e., has no constituents). For simplicity of argument, we may suppose that c_1 is this simple particular in S_1 . Thus, c_1 is a simple particular, c_1 is a constituent in S , and c_1 individuates S_1 .

The foregoing argument puts us in a better position to appreciate the notion of a bare particular. Hereafter, “ b ” stands for any bare particular, where b is a “particular” in that the following statements are true:

- P1: b is not a property and *a fortiori* not a nature.
- P2: Thus, b is not the kind of thing that can possibly be a constituent of more than one ordinary particular.¹⁰
- P3: Thus, b individuates the particular of which b is a constituent.

In addition, b is “bare” in that the following statements are true:

- B1: b lacks constituents; that is, b is simple.
- B2: There is no property F such that F is a constituent of b .
- B3: There is no nature N that is a constituent of b .
- B4: There is no property F such that b has F essentially. More precisely, it is false that there is some property F such that b is a constituent of a particular S only if F is also a constituent of S .

I will discuss the significance of B4 in more detail below. Notwithstanding all of these descriptions, the notion of a bare particular still bears some bearing out. We will accomplish this by considering objections to bare particulars.

¹⁰ Cf. Bergmann (1967, p. 24) and Wolterstorff (1970, p. 118).

3 Objections to Bare Particulars

The first objection to consider is really a family of objections that allege that the notion of a bare particular is incoherent and self-contradictory. I will call these “Absurdity Objections.” Apparently, this kind of objection originates from a footnote by Wilfrid Sellars (1963, p. 282 fn.1). Sellars argues that the sentence “Universals are exemplified by bare particulars” is self-contradictory and that this becomes evident as soon as we translate it into logical notation. The sentence then becomes

$$(x)[(\exists\phi)(\phi x) \supset \neg(\exists\phi)(\phi x)]$$

which means “If a particular exemplifies a universal, then there is no universal which it exemplifies”—a self-contradictory statement.¹¹

Joshua Hoffman and Gary Rosenkrantz raise similar objections against a version of substratum theory that is (for our purposes) a theory of bare particulars.¹² They raise two Absurdity Objections. Here is the first one:

1. Necessarily, every entity exemplifies properties.
2. Thus, if a theory entails that there could be a property-less entity, then that theory is incoherent.
3. According to bare particular theory, a bare particular exemplifies no properties.
4. Thus, bare particular theory is incoherent.

Here is the second one:

1. According to bare particular theory, a bare particular exemplifies no properties.
2. But, the bare particular theory must attribute properties to bare particular, including *being such that properties can subsist or inhere in it, being concrete, being a particular, and being devoid of all properties.*
3. Thus, bare particular theory is self-contradictory.

In response, bare particular advocates argue that Absurdity Objections misconstrue their view. In particular, they deny that they must accept the key premise of each of the above objections—the premise that a bare particular fails to exemplify any properties. For reasons that will emerge below, I will call this the “Naked Premise.” Although it is tempting to dwell on the question of who is to blame for the alleged misunderstanding, it will suffice to note that William Alston (1954) charged Sellars with misconstruing bare particulars in this regard.¹³ However, Alston also admitted that advocates of bare particulars haven’t explicitly made the distinctions needed to safeguard against such a misunderstanding. Subsequently, Robert Baker (1967, p. 211) offered such a clarification:

¹¹ This quotation is from Sellars (1963, p. 282). The logical notation is from Baker (1967, pp. 211–12) and is different from Sellars’s only in style.

¹² These objections are taken, respectively, from their (1994, pp. 48–50) and (1997, pp. 17–20). I use “bare particular” where they have “substratum”.

¹³ Alston’s purpose in his (1954) was not to argue for the existence of bare particulars, but to show how Sellars’s objection was based on a misconstrual of bare particulars as well as “a confusion between facts and particulars.”

A puckish defender of bare particulars is well advised to follow the lead of Sir Kenneth Clark and distinguish between the naked and the nude. Particulars are *nude* in that they have no natures, that is, they are *not necessarily connected* to any specific property or set of properties. A nude particular has no nature, and is to be distinguished from the naked particular which has no properties. Those who claim that there are bare particulars, Russell, Bergmann, Allaire, et al., claim that they are nude of *natures*, *not* that they are naked of *properties*.

This passage typifies how the bare particular advocate will respond to an Absurdity Objection: she will reject (and deny that she ever held) the Naked Premise. Indeed, advocates can (and typically do) accept the plausible principle that a condition for existence is the having of properties. Thus, the bare particular advocate affirms that, necessarily, bare particulars have properties. (As we will see, however, advocates stop short of affirming that bare particulars have necessary properties.)

Not surprisingly, many find this last statement puzzling. Hoffman and Rosenkrantz (1997, p. 18), for example, claim that the bare particular theorist “owes us an explanation” of what she means by saying both that (a) bare particulars have properties, and that (b) bare particulars don’t have properties as constituents like ordinary particulars do. Interestingly, Alston’s explanation predates their demand for it by over forty years:

...there must be some sense in which a substratum fails to exemplify any universal; why else call it ‘bare’? Evidently, what is called for is a distinction of senses of ‘exemplify’.... It is not difficult, however, to distinguish two such senses, in terms of which we can give an analysis of the substratum concept which will both reflect the way in which the notion of a substratum has been used and also enable us to [escape Sellars’s Absurdity Objection]. (1954, p. 257).

Alston goes on to distinguish between an “underlying” sense of exemplification and an “inclusion” sense of exemplification. Moreland calls these the “tied-to” and “rooted-in” modes of exemplification, respectively (2000, pp. 51–2). Coming to terms with this distinction is necessary for understanding the notion of a bare particular. “Underlying” refers to the kind of relation holding between a bare particular *b* and a property *F* when they constitute an ordinary particular *S*; *b* underlies *F*. “Inclusion” refers to the kind of relation holding between *S* and *F*; *S* includes *F*.

In order to flesh out this distinction, consider the (simplified) case of a green and round ball. The bare particular advocate will offer the following assay of the ball: The bare particular in the ball *underlies* greenness and roundness; the ball *includes* greenness and roundness. Moreland would say that the bare particular in the ball is *tied to* greenness and tied to roundness; and, greenness and roundness are *rooted in* the ball. Importantly, underlying is an external relation. Bergmann (1967, pp. 46–7) is clear on this:

A particular, though bare, is yet a thing. So is the universal it exemplifies, or perhaps better, which it happens to exemplify. The two face each other as equals, as it were. ...Also, being bare, a particular provides no cue whatsoever as to which universal or universals it may or may not exemplify. That is why I just said: happens to exemplify. Let me express this state of affairs by saying that a particular and a universal it exemplifies are *wholly* external to each other.

Alston (1954, p. 257) goes further, and insists that *including* is an internal relation:

A substratum might have underlain quite different properties from those which it in fact does and still be the same substratum; since it includes no properties, its identity does not depend on being associated with one set of universals rather than another. But a concrete individual could not possibly fail to include any of its properties and still be exactly the same individual which it is; its self identity depends on its constituents.

However, I think that Alston's additional claim is optional for the bare particular advocate. The reason it is optional is that the advocate should be able to accommodate the possibility that ordinary objects undergo accidental change. Suppose Alston is right, and, suppose that S is an ordinary particular composed of a bare particular, *b*, and set of properties Σ , such that S underlies the properties in Σ . Then S could undergo accidental change only if there is a kind of possibly contingent exemplification relation R that obtains between S (qua complex of *b*-underlying- Σ) and some property F, where F is not a member of Σ . It is not clear that R could be the relation of underlying. Regardless, the easiest solution would be to construe inclusion as the kind of relation that can be internal or external. On this solution, the essential properties of an ordinary particular S are those that S includes essentially. Similarly, the contingent properties of an ordinary particular S are those that S includes contingently.

A second objection to bare particulars is raised by D. W. Mertz (2001). In responding to Absurdity Objections, we saw that the advocate of bare particulars will rightfully insist that, *necessarily, bare particulars have properties*. As Moreland and Pickavance (2003, pp. 8f) note, this is not to be confused with the claim that *bare particulars have necessary properties*. The defender of bare particulars will deny the latter, and her doing so expresses B4 (from above):

B4: There is no property F such that *b* has F essentially. More precisely, it is false that there is some property F such that *b* is a constituent of a particular S only if F is also a constituent of S.

Mertz's objection is predicated on B4 and is straightforward: The externality of the underlying relation implies, absurdly, that "properties like Simplicity are both necessary and contingent attributes" of a bare particular (2001, p. 51). Although this objection can be construed as an Absurdity Objection, I think it is best seen as forcing the bare particular advocate to pay what may seem to be a very high ontological price.

Moreland & Pickavance respond to Mertz as follows:

We believe that the properties said to be necessary for bare particulars are not genuine properties; these include simplicity, particularity, unrepeatability, and those of the three categories of transcendental, disjunctive, and negative properties. (2003, p. 10).

To be fair to Moreland & Pickavance, they argue at some length that paying the price is neither ad hoc nor idiosyncratic. Given my purposes here, I will forego assessing these arguments. The point at hand is that "paying the price" does not automatically render the concept of a bare particular incoherent. In part, this is because whether this price *can* be paid is a matter of whether one can assert P1-P3 and B1-B4 without thereby ontologically

committing oneself to the existence of some property F such that b has F necessarily. With respect to the question of whether or not this can be done, it is worth keeping in mind that metaphysicians, are, as it were, in the business of finding ways to assert true subject-predicate sentences without thereby postulating a unique property that corresponds to the sentence's predicate. In addition, this means that understanding the concept of a bare particular is achieved by appreciating the force of the NDA, which aims to show that from within a realist constituent ontology there must be something that grounds the numerical difference of ordinary objects which is a particular (not a property) and a simple (lacking constituents).

In conclusion, we can now see why the concept of a bare particular may not make sense within the framework of a relational ontology. As noted above, Moreland & Pickavance deny that particularity is a genuine property. I take it that particularity amounts to *being a particular*. Clearly then, the bare particular advocate will also deny that bare particulars have individual essences. That is, she will deny that *being identical to b_1* (where b_1 names a certain bare particular) is a genuine property, since if this were a property, then b_1 would have it necessarily. But it would seem arbitrary to deny that bare particulars have essences and affirm that ordinary particulars do. Thus, the bare particular advocate should deny that there *are* individual essences. Note that this considerably increases the ontological price of bare particulars. Even if such essences could not individuate, they could still do things that bare particulars could not, namely, exist in every possible world and thereby ground a host of modal truths. If bare particulars preclude individual essences, then we have an answer to the earlier question of whether bare particulars are consistent with a relational ontology: insofar as a relational ontology deploys individual essences, the answer is No.

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