PARTICULARS AND THEIR QUALITIES

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DOUGLAS C. LONG

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The traditional analysis of substances in terms of qualities which are supported by a “substratum” was rejected by conscientious empiricists like Berkeley, Hume, and Russell on the grounds that only qualities, not the substratum, could be experienced. To these philosophers the proper alternative seemed obvious. One simply eliminates the “unknowable” element in which qualities are alleged to inhere. In Russell’s words, “What would commonly be called a ‘thing’ is nothing but a bundle of coexisting qualities such as redness, hardness, etc. “1

But this empiricist formula has difficulties of its own, and some philosophers have attempted to develop other views of particulars which avoid the errors of the Substratum Doctrine on the one hand and the Bundle-of-Qualities Theory on the other.2  Discussions of what this third alternative might be have generally approached the question through an examination of the epistemologically suspect concepts of a substratum and its close relative, the concept of a “bare particular”. The concept of a quality of something, because it seemingly presents no epistemological difficulties, has attracted much less critical attention. This imbalance in critical interest is unfortunate, however, for a close scrutiny of this latter concept, especially in its role as the key element in the “bundle” analysis of particulars, throws a great deal of light on the relation between particulars and their attributes.

In what follows I propose to examine representatives of two types of

1Bertrand Russell, *An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth* (London, 1940), p. 97. This book will hereafter be cited as *Inquiry .*

2See, for example, Wilfrid Sellars, “Particulars”, *Philosophical and Phenomenological Research*, Dec. 1952, pp. 184-99; Edwin B. Allaire, “Bare Particulars”, *Philosophical Studies*, Jan.-Feb. 1963, pp. 1-8; Morris Lazerowitz, *The Structure of Metaphysics* (London, 1955), chap. 7, “Substratum”.

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Bundle Theory (BT) with the intention of showing (1) that neither of the concepts of “a quality” employed by these versions of the BT can be used to state the theory coherently, and (2) that the fatal defects in these concepts point to easily overlooked but essential features of the correct alternative to both the Substratum Doctrine and the BT. This alternative, which I will call the Qualified Particulars Theory (QPT), is implicit in our pre-philosophical conception of things and their qualities. In fact it is so much a part of our thought that its details are not easily made explicit. However, this difficult is greatly diminished when the QPT is contrasted not only with the Substratum Doctrine but also with examples of the unsuccessful BT. The two versions of the latter theory which I will discuss I have taken from the writings of Bertrand Russell3 and G. F. Stout,4 because these authors employ concepts of a quality, in their analyses of particulars, which differ in a very important respect. According to Russell, qualities can occur at more than one place at a time, while Stout maintains that the qualities of things are unique items, like particulars. In each case a different aspect of our ordinary view of qualified particulars is stressed while others are ignored. However, by properly blending the two versions of the BT with the Substratum Doctrine and making adjustments for their respective errors, the correct view of particulars may be obtained.

While the main portion of my discussion will be devoted to the controversy concerning “material” substances and particulars, in my final section I will point out certain features of the present topic which have analogues in another philosophical issue. I refer to Hume’s analysis of “minds” or persons as bundles of perceptions. He himself remarks in the Appendix to his *Treatise* that

Philosophers begin to be reconcil’d to the principle, *that we have no idea of external substance, distinct from the ideas of particular qualities.* This must pave the way for a like principle with regard to the mind, *that we have no notion of it distinct from the particular perceptions.*5

Hume is quite right to point out this analogy, but it cuts both ways. As I will explain, criticism of the Bundle Theory concerning objects paves the way for a like criticism of Hume’s own theory of mind.

I

The concept of a quality employed by the BT is generated in reaction to the type of view which was being defended by Locke when he wrote:

We must take notice, that our complex ideas of substances, besides all those simple ideas they are made up of, have always the confused idea of something to which they belong, and in which they subsist: and therefore when we speak of any sort of substance, we say it is a thing having such or such qualities; as body is a thing that is extended, figured, and capable of motion; spirit,

3Russell presents his theory mainly in *Inquiry* and in *Human Knowledge: Its Scope and Limits* (New York, 1948), chaps. 3 and 8 (hereafter cited as *Human Knowledge*).

4See his Henriette Hertz Lecture, “The Nature of Universals and Propositions”, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 10 (1921). This essay is reprinted as the final paper in his *Studies in Philosophy and Psychology* (London, 1936), pp. 384-403, and my subsequent references to Stout’s views will cite passages from this book.

5David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby Bigge (Oxford, 1888), p. 635.

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a thing capable of thinking; and so hardness, friability, and power to draw iron, we say, are qualities to be found in the loadstone.6

But Locke then adds a candid remark about his analysis of substances which led later empiricists to reject his view. Referring to the ascriptions of attributes to body, spirit, and the loadstone, he says that “these and the like fashions of speaking, intimate that the substance is supposed always *something besides* the extension, figure, solidity, motion, thinking, or other observable ideas, thought we know not what it is”.7 Locke’s admission that it is not possible for us to know the nature of this substance or “substratum” or even that there is such a thing, opened the way for Berkeley, Hume, Russell, and others to reject the idea that qualities have something supporting them, a move which leaves us with precisely the conception of a complex of qualities.

A striking feature of these “qualities”, however, is that they are basically not possessed by anything. Defenders of the BT will of course insist that they can express the fact that, for example, a certain ball has a red colour and a spherical shape. But what they really mean by these attributions is that redness and sphericity are grouped together with other appropriate qualities at a certain location. Thus the qualities in question are “nonpossessed” in the sense that the particular which is nominally said to have them is eliminated at the most basic level. Indeed the qualities of things are themselves regarded as particulars. That they are so regarded is of course a salient characteristic of Stout’s view, but it is no less important to Russell’s, even if it is less obvious. If we look closely at Russell’s theory we see that syntactically what it does is to convert adjectives, which typically occur in the predicates of sentences, into nouns and noun phrases which are then placed in the subject position. For instance, ‘The pencil is red’ is replaced by such sentences as ‘Redness is at such-and-such a place-time’. In the latter sentence ‘redness’ is intended to be a name, not a predicate. What it names is a “repeatable” particular which is “universal” in that it can occur at an indefinite number of places at a given time. It nevertheless resembles a particular since it does occur in space-time, and is not predicable of anything else.8 For this reason it is misleading to claim that the BT eliminates *particulars* in favour of bundles of *qualities*. It is more accurate to say that it attempts to eliminate both “bare particulars” and what we ordinarily think of as the qualities of things, in favour of special particulars.

Because this peculiar concept of “a quality” differs from that of the “substratum” in that it is apparently above suspicion on epistemological grounds, Hume, Russell, Stout and others have accepted it uncritically. They have failed to see that merely erasing part of the Substratum Doctrine and accepting what remains has carried the confusion which led to that Doctrine over into their own view.

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6*An Essay Concerning Human Understanding,*ed. A. C. Fraser, Bk. II, chap. XXIII, sec. 3.

7*Ibid.*

*8*In his reply to Morris Weitz in *The Philosophy of Bertrand Russell*, ed. P. A. Schilpp (Evanston, Ill., 1944), p. 685, Russell makes it clear that the “qualities” to which he refers are *particulars* which can occur at many places at one time.

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Their simple correction of the traditional analysis of particulars is in fact an over-correction which discards our familiar concept of a quality and with it our conception of qualified particulars. And because they have passed over the QPT, they are compelled to provide special features in their theories which are meant to account for the individuation of qualities and groups of qualities to form particular objects. But, as I will explain in the next two sections, their artificial attempts to make up for the loss of particular subject of qualities are completely unsuccessful. I will first show this in the case of Russell’s formulation and then in the case of Stout’s.

II

Because Russell’s “qualities” are “repeatable particulars” which need not have a unique location, it would appear that, as he himself points out, an Eiffel Tower in New York would be identical with the Eiffel Tower in Paris if they consisted of the same qualities.9 Russell seeks to avoid this consequence of his theory by using different spatiotemporal locations to individuate exactly similar groups of qualities. Thus the universal-cum-location which constitutes each quality-instance in one of the towers would contain a different location from the quality-instances of the other tower. This point must not be misunderstood, however. Although the BT must “tie” qualities to an object’s location in order to capture its particularity, this does not commit it to the meaninglessness of propositions such as “This pencil which I have in my hand might have been in the drawer at this moment instead”. The qualities in the pencil-bundle are supposed to be tied to whatever locations the pencil in fact has. But the claim that the pencil might have had a different history can easily be interpreted on the BT in terms of alternative space-time “worms” which represent careers the pencil might have had.

Nevertheless, the need for spatio-temporal individuation of his “qualities” does raise a serious problem which Russell himself saw and attempted to meet. He must introduce a space-time grid in which to place those “qualities” without making use of any unique particulars. In an early paper Russell insisted that particulars occupying one place at a time were required by our conceptual scheme since “whatever may be the case with ‘real’ space, perceived space is certainly not absolute, i.e. absolute positions are not among the objects of perception”.10 However, by the time he came to write *Inquiry into Meaning and Truth* he had become convinced that position in the visual field is absolute and can be counted as a sensible quality.11 This suggested to him that he could do without any particulars other than qualities if this latter class included locational qualities. Thus a red patch in his visual field is to be considered a complex consisting of

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9Russell, *Inquiry*, p. 97.

10Russell, “On the Relations of Universals and Particulars”, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 12 (1912), p. 15.

11*Inquiry*, p. 99. This view still seemed satisfactory to him when he wrote *My Philosophical Development* (London, 1959); see pp. 161-171.

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redness at a certain place in that field or redness “compresent”12 with certain locational qualities, e.g. “centrality” or degrees of “leftness” or “rightness.”13

However, Russell does not mean to apply his theory only to patterns in the visual field. That he means to extend it to objects in physical space is quite clear from his own explicit remarks and from his examples. In *Inquiry* he says, for instance, “I wish to suggest that, wherever there is, for common sense, a ‘thing’ having the quality C, we should say, instead, that C itself exists in that place, and that the ‘thing’ is to be replaced by the collection of qualities existing in the place in question”.14 In *Human Knowledge* he remarks: ”It is only the assemblage of qualities that makes the instance unique. Every man, in fact, is defined by such an assemblage of qualities, of which humanity is one”. 15 But once we leave the visual field and attempt to apply the theory to the sorts of objects to which we commonly give names, the relational character of space raises new problems for Russell. Admitting that his chief problem in this case is to account for the diversity of exactly similar quality-complexes, he suggests that it is possible to extend the space-time order beyond one person’s experience to the physical world by taking as spatiotemporal points extremely complex bundles of “compresent” qualities. These bundles would be so complex in fact that it is “very probable” that they would be unique. Ordinary objects would then be regarded as complexes of qualities occupying limited but continuous regions of the space-time order thus defined.16

This is not a satisfactory solution to his problem, however. Since, on Russell’s theory, position outside the visual field is not given by groups of qualities which can be guaranteed to be unique, his “bundles” have a *de facto* uniqueness which depends upon the world’s being very complex. His concept of a bundle of qualities is not equivalent, therefore, to our concept of a qualified particular. In order to express our conception of objects as being unique individuals, even when they inhabit of universe with objects exactly like themselves, the BT requires an absolute spatio-temporal grid which would permit particular spatio-temporal locations to play the role which irreducible particulars would otherwise play. But this leaves the BT open to the obvious objection that it turns “places into bare particulars”17 thus defeating its whole purpose. Moreover, mere places cannot be distinguished from one another

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12In *Human Knowledge*, p. 297, Russell explains that “compresence” is a relation which can be given an ostensive definition simply by calling attention to the relation “which holds between two or more qualities when one person experiences them simultaneously—for example, between high C and vermillion when you hear one and see the other”. In the physical world outside the experiences of an individual the relation holds between the qualities which “overlap in space-time.”

13For a criticism of Russell’s attempt to describe the patterns occurring in the visual field with only names of universals and relations of order and coincidence, see Gustav Bergman, “Russell on Particulars”, *The Philosophical Review*, Jan. 1947, pp. 59-72.

14*Inquiry*, p. 98.

15*Human Knowledge*, p. 298.

16See Russell’s *Human Knowledge*, pp. 304-07 for a summary of his views concerning the “construction” of objects.

17Edwin B. Allaire, *op. cit*., p. 7.

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and individual locations re-identified without reference to some unique item existing at some location or other.18 But if particular individuals of which one can keep track are required to serve as points of reference for a system of locations, the BT cannot reproduce particular things with its limited means.

Apparently Russell was not enough impressed by these difficulties to give up his view, possibly because his “constructed” spatio-temporal locations were more acceptable than the recognition of “bare particulars” which he assumed was the only alternative to some sort of Bundle Theory. What he failed to see is that even if he is granted a spatio-temporal grid of locations his theory is unacceptable. It depends upon the supposition that it makes sense to assign locations to colours, shapes, sizes, and hardnesses, independently of the location of the particulars which are said to have these qualities.19 But contrary to what philosophers have generally supposed, the assignment of a location directly to a quality of an object is not possible. It only appears to be possible because we are able to give the location of the object to which the quality is attributed.

To see that this is so we have only to consider a few illustrations. For example, suppose that we are asked to give the location of an instance of a particular shape, e.g. the shape of the red rubber ball which is on the table near the door. Presumably we are to say that sphericity is located tangentially above that table, along with redness. But does this make any sense? Is sphericity itself extended, for example, so that it occupies the same volume of space occupied by the ball? I think not, since saying this suggests that sphericity is a particular entity which is itself spherical and that its instances come in various sizes like the very objects which the BT is proposing to analyse. Then are we to say that sphericity occurs at each point within the volume of the ball? This makes sense only if we give it some sense. But what could justify our saying this about each of those points? Nothing other than the fact that something spherical occupies the volume containing those places.

Again, suppose that one is asked to locate an instance of a colour, say, the red colour of the ball in our example. We are to locate not the ball, however, but simply its colour. To suppose that this makes sense is to commit what some philosophers like to call a “category mistake”. There is no way to give a location to the colour per se. The colour itself, the abstract aspect of the ball, can be given no spatial location. To say, for example, that redness is at s1t1 can only make sense if we understand it to mean that something red occupies s1t1. Likewise, to assert, for instance that this greyness is five feet

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18See P. F. Strawson, *Individuals* (London, 1959), pp. 36-37, for further discussion of this point.

19For instance, in *The Logical Syntax of Language* (London, 1937), pp. 12-13, Rudolph Carnap suggests that we may assign qualities to spatio-temporal positions in order to eliminate proper names. Thus we would say that “the position (x,y,z,t) is blue” instead of “The object *a* is blue”. This suggestion is discussed by Russell in *Human Knowledge*, pp. 73-78.

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to the north of that blackness is merely a distorted way of expressing the fact that something grey (the filing cabinet) is just that distance from something black (my briefcase). To say that those colours themselves are at that distance from one another is unintelligible. To give still another illustration of my point, the claim that redness and being four inches in length are moving through space can only be understood as meaning that some object which is red and four inches long is moving through space.

Notice that I am not merely objecting that the direct location of qualities is equivalent to giving the position of a particular thing having those qualities. My point is that we do not understand the assignment of locations to qualities independently of the location of the things having those qualities. It is easy to think that we do understand this direct quality-location, however, because we have no difficulty in “reading” the Bundle Theory’s assertions in terms of the location of particulars having the qualities in question. But the placing of qualities cannot serve the purposes of the Bundle Theory if assigning spatio-temporal position to them directly makes no sense. For if individual qualities cannot be said to have location directly, there is no reason to think that collections of qualities are any different this in respect. This is particularly obvious if the “bundling” relation is “compresence” in space-time, for that relation is inapplicable if the present objection is correct. And if places must be assigned to qualified particulars rather than to groups of their attributes, then the BT cannot individuate by location the “bundles” which it intends to put in place of ordinary particulars. Therefore, Russell’s theory cannot be made to work even if he is permitted the use of a spatio-temporal grid.

III

But individuation of qualities by spatio-temporal location is not the only possibility we have to consider. Some philosophers have rejected the idea that qualities are literally shared by objects, and in view of the failure of a form of BT which employs universals or “repeatable” particulars, it does appear at this point that the only hope for a successful BT lies with this suggestion that individual qualities, which, unlike universals, require no further individuation, should form the basis of the analysis of particular substantial entities. This concept of a quality is generally associated with the name of G. F. Stout, who insisted that

A character characterizing a concrete thing or individual is as particular as the thing or individual

which it characterizes. Of two billiard balls, each has its own particular roundness separate and distinct from that of the other, just as the billiard balls themselves are distinct and separate. As Jones is separate and distinct from Robinson, so the particular happiness of Jones is separate and distinct from that of Robinson. What then do we mean when we say, for instance, that roundness is a character common to all billiard balls? I answer that the phrase “common character” is elliptical. It really signifies a certain general kind of class of characters. To say that particular things share in the common character is to say that each of them has a character which is a particular instance of this kind or class of characters. The particular instances are distributed amongst the particular things and so shared by them.20

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20Stout, *Studies in Philosophy and Psychology*, p. 386.

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In fairness to Stout, however, I must point out that it is not entirely clear that he would describe his view as a “bundle” theory. He says that a thing or substance is a “complex unity of an altogether ultimate and peculiar type, including with it all characters truly predicable of it”,21 a remark which suggests that he would be reluctant to accept the idea that the qualities of a thing form an accidental unity. Yet he also says that a substance is “nothing apart from its qualities”,22 and this together with his view that qualities are particulars in their own right makes it difficult to see how the unity of the substance could be anything but a contingent grouping of such qualities. In any case his view supplies the essential ingredient of an alternative to Russell’s bundle theory, namely the idea that a particular quality of something is as separate and distinct from the “same” quality of another thing as the two things are from each other. It is this feature which appears to relieve us of the burden of individuating qualities in formulating a Bundle Theory.23

But this advantage of Stout’s suggestion is only an illusion. One must still ask how particular quality-instances of the same kind are to be distinguished from one another. How are they to be individually identified? For instance, what distinguishes the red quality of this ball from the red quality of that fire engine? Of course, we cannot suppose that the distinction lies in a difference in the shade of red of each or in the other qualities which the two objects have, for, according to Stout’s view, instances of exactly the same shade of red exhibited by exactly similar objects would be utterly distinct. When this point is acknowledged, there seem to be only three possible answers to our question.

1. We might take the distinct identity of instances of qualities to be a fundamental fact which cannot be further accounted for.
2. We might say that this instance of red is distinct from the exactly similar one because this instance includes essentially, and thus is identified by, a location which is different from the location included in that instance.
3. We might say that this instance of red is distinct from that because the first is identified essentially as the colour-quality of one particular and the second is identified as the colour-quality of another particular, where the particulars referred to are not qualities but ordinary coloured objects.

This third alternative is clearly not one which Stout would accept, since it implies that the particularity of qualities of things derives from the particularity of the things themselves, and he wishes to maintain that the characters are as particular as the substances they characterize. Which of the first two listed alternative he would accept is not entirely clear from his writings. However, he does argue that one

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21Ibid., p. 393.

22Ibid., p. 391.

23D. C. Williams has developed in detail this type of “bundle” theory in his two-part article, “The Elements of Being”, *Review of Metaphysics*, Sept. 1953, pp. 3-18, and Dec. 1953, pp. 171-92.

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particular cannot be distinguished from another by its relations to other particulars, “for in order that one particular may be known as related in the required way to others, it is a logical precondition that it shall itself be known as one particular among others”.24 On a relational view of spatial location this would entail that unless instances are seen to be distinct they could not be seen to have different locations. Thus alternative (1) seems to be favoured by this “logical precondition”. Moreover, if we adopted the suggestion that qualities contain a location within their “essence” we would have a view which is not interestingly different from the one considered in the previous section where quality-instances were individuated by their location. Therefore, I will suppose that the present version of the BT accepts alternative (1) as an explanation of the uniqueness of quality-instances.

This alternative invites us to regard such instances as being identifiable in their own right. By this I mean, for example, that it should be possible to understand the suggestion that the particular instance of red which characterizes the pencil which I hold in my hand right now might have characterized the fire engine across the street instead. For one would expect qualities which are numerically distinct to have the sort of identity which would permit such things to be said of them. But the suggestion turns out not to make any sense because there is no criterion for the identity of colour instances which renders intelligible the possibility that the very same colour-quality belonging to one particular might have belonged to another particular instead. The concept of numerical identity and difference, if it applies to qualities at all, surely does not apply to them in this way.

But if quality-instances are not distinct in the sense of being individually identifiable in their own right, this eliminates the first type of explanation concerning the individuation of quality-instances which we previously listed. And since we have already rejected individuation by location, it appears that we must seriously consider the third alternative once again in spite of Stout’s protests. According to that alternative, unique quality-instances are identified by reference to the particulars to which they belong. But this means that a particular cannot be analyzed in terms of quality-instances at all. In order to identify the elements of the proposed analysis one would have to identify them essentially as qualities of the particular to be analysed. For example, suppose one attempts to refer to a certain group of quality-instances, hoping thereby to be referring to elements constituting “this pencil”. One of these instances is “this particular redness”. But precisely what colour-instance is intended? The colour of a certain area of the object? The colour of the object itself? The colour of the various objects in the room which resemble each other in colour? To what does the phrase ‘this redness’ refer? Let us suppose that the instance in which we are interested is the colour which this pencil has and which no other thing has, not even the pencil which came just after it out of the factory. The instance in question then

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24Stout, *op. cit*., p. 391.

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Is the redness-of-this-pencil”. But if the identification of the instance requires us to mention the object to which it belongs, we cannot provide an analysis of particular objects merely in terms of their quality-instances. Hence a coherent formulation of the BT cannot be given in terms of Stout’s qualities any more than it can be if we begin with qualities that are “repeatable”. Problems of individuation and identification of instances defeat the attempt at each turn.

IV

Having completed my criticism of the two principal types of bundle theory, I now propose to use what we have learned from their failures as a basis for developing a third alternative to replace both it and the Substratum Doctrine. This is the view which I call the Qualified Particulars Theory or QPT.

Let us return to the point in the controversy at which the BT is first introduced, namely the point at which the support for qualities is rejected. This deceptively simple excision of the substratum from Locke’s analysis constitutes an unfortunate over-reaction to his view, in that it discards not only the substratum but also the idea that a quality must be ascribed to something. Locke rightly points out that “when we speak of any sort of substance, we say it is a thing having such and such qualities”,25 and doubtless he wanted his theory to preserve the connection between a quality and that to which it is ascribed. But because his critics accept his mistaken description of the subject of qualities as an unknowable item, they assume that the way to eliminate his epistemological problem is to eliminate the subject of qualities altogether. Thus his confusion carried over into their own theory, although its nefarious influence is now represented by the acceptance of “non-possessed” qualities which belong to something only if they are “compresent” with certain other qualities which together constitute that thing. It is even possible on this view for individual attributes to occur in isolation from others and hence not be attributes of anything at all.

The proper reaction to Locke’s view, however, is a refusal to accept his claim that the subject of qualities is itself “unknowable”, if this means that “we experience qualities, but not the subject in which they are supposed to inhere”.26  Our conviction on this score is what gives rise to the suspicion that the BT denies that there are objects and then tries to placate us by substituting in their places groups of abstractions, i.e. mere qualities. In opposition to both views we must retain our familiar conception of a qualified particular, according to which there is no such thing as an instance of a “bare” or “non-possessed” quality any more than there is an instance of a “bare” particular. An observed quality-instance is always a quality of something, e.g. a material entity, a reflection, a shadow, an appearance, etc., although we may not be able to perceive at a given moment exactly what it is that has that quality.

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25*Essay*, Bk. II, Chap. XXIII, sec. 3.

26Russell, *Inquiry*, p. 98.

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For instance, we may see only “something” red down at the end of the hall, without being able to see whether it is a picture, a piece of cloth, or merely a reflection on the wall. But we do not see mere “redness”, as though it could be an open question whether or not it is the redness of something. This conceptual point is reflected in the fact that when we describe what we perceive we employ adjectives which must be syntactically associated with nouns and noun phrases.

Moreover, the claim that there are no “bare” or “non-possessed” qualities applies even in complex cases of perception where we must consider the apparent qualities of objects. For instance, suppose that one sees something with an elliptical shape resting on a shelf across a large room. Initially it can be an open question whether one is perceiving the true shape of a material object or not. It might turn out to be a round, flat plate which is being viewed at an angle, so that there is no elliptical object “there” to be seen. But there is no question that whatever qualities one perceives belong to some particular or other. There are two alternative ways to describe the case, both of which support this claim. We might say either (1) it turned out to be an elliptical appearance which one saw, a move which provides a particular subject for the adjective ‘elliptical’, or (2) it turned out that the plate only appeared elliptical and was really circular. This last suggests that the “elliptical shape’ is not really a quality of anything after all, although failing to be a quality of something is in this instance not a quality’s failing to have a subject. We simply do not have a genuine quality. Hence, on either interpretation we do not have a “non-possessed” quality.

A quality-instance not only must belong to some particular or other; it must also belong to that particular which has it and no other. Contrary to what Stout supposed, a quality of a thing is not a particular in its own right, but must be picked out from among other instances as the one belonging to such and such a thing. Thus, while it is a contingent fact that this ball which I have in my hand is red, it is not contingent that the instance identified as “the-particular-redness-of-this-ball” belongs to this ball. In other words, when we say of the ball that it is red, we are not saying of an instance of that colour that it belongs to the ball as a matter of fact.27 This is why it makes no sense to suppose that the colour-instance of a particular pencil might have belonged to a particular fire engine instead. I believe that this also explains why some critics have felt that the BT lacked a “principle of unity” which would account for the “substantial unity in things behind the multiplicity of their states and qualities”.28 There is indeed more than an accidental unity among the qualities of a thing where these qualities are thought of as instances belonging to that thing and no other. But this is because such instances are not independently

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27An interesting parallel to this point may be found in remarks by Sydney Shoemaker, concerning the “bundle” theory of the self, in *Self-Knowledge and Self-Identity* (Ithaca, NY., 1963), p. 110.

28A. E. Taylor, *Elements of Metaphysics* (New York, 1961), p. 133.

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Identifiable particulars which may or may not belong to a certain substantial entity. There is no “disunity” possible among the qualities of a particular, and so no additional “principle of unity” is required to account for the grouping of those instances with a certain individual substance. Such a principle appears to be necessary to critics of the BT only because they have already accepted that theory’s suggestion that qualities are distinct particulars.

I wish to make it clear, however, that rejection of the BT does not entail acceptance of “bare” particulars, the mere kernel of objects “which remains after a thing has been stripped bare of its qualities…”29 The things which are characterized by qualities are objects like tables, persons, molecules, etc., hence the name ‘Qualified Particulars Theory’. These objects are distinct from their qualities in that they cannot be reduced to them as the BT suggests. In this sense objects are something “over and above” their qualities. But this is not to say that they are distinct from their qualities in the sense that they contain a distinct element which somehow possesses no qualities itself yet which is, as a matter of fact, characterized by them. Of course there is a respect in which it is not necessary that a particular thing have the quality-instances that it does have. Although a certain instance must belong to a certain particular given the occurrence of that instance, it is not necessary that the instance occur in the world. For example, it is not necessary that this pencil which I have in my hand be red, and so the redness-of-this pencil might not have existed. Likewise the pencil need not have this colour or shape or size or other particular values of its various determinables. But this does not entail that the pencil could exist without having any qualities or that the concept of something remaining when all of its qualities are “stripped away” is intelligible.

Edwin Allaire has argued that what he calls “bare particulars” are required to “ground the numerical difference of two things which are the same in all (non-relational) respects”.30 Inviting us to consider two red discs that are exactly alike, he reasons as follows:

To claim that both discs are but collections of literally the same universals does not account for the *thisness* and *thatness* which are implicitly referred to in speaking of them as *two* collections. That is, the two collections of characters…are, as presented, numerically different. Clearly, therefore, something other than a character must also be presented. That something is what proponents of the realistic analysis call a bare particular. Or, perhaps better, that is their explication of ‘bare particular’.31

Allaire fails to explain, however, why he thinks that the element required in his account is a “bare” particular rather than an ordinary qualified object. Nor does he make it clear in what sense such a particular is “other than a character”. He says that “in being presented with a red spot one is presented with two things”, an individual and a character, and that “the sense in which these are two

things is merely the sense in which there are two characters (red and square) in the presentation of a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

29Lazerowitz, *op. cit.*

30Allaire, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

31*Ibid*., p, 7.

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red square”.32 But by this he means only that the individual and character are not spatially related, which does not tell us much.

We can agree that for distinguishable things to be exactly alike there must be something other than universal characteristics presented. But what is presented in fact are two similar qualified objects which are neither bundles of qualities nor bare particulars. No advantage is gained in principle by locating the particularity of those objects in some other element whose individuality must itself be accepted without further explanation. The idea that a bare particular must be brought into the account is simply a counterpart of the Bundle Theory. Allaire’s own argument illustrates this point. When one finds that the BT does not satisfactorily explain the distinctness of similar objects there is a temptation not to reject the view as a whole, but to add to each bundle of qualities a distinct “quality-less” individual. The qualified object then becomes a complex of two types of independent items, an individual and its various characteristics. However, we should reject the Bundle Theory as a whole and with it the counter-thesis that qualities of things are associated with “bare” particulars. The correct alternative to these theories is to acknowledge that the particularity of “substances” is borne by the qualified particular itself.

Summarizing briefly, we have seen that if we try to analyse a “thing” in terms of qualities alone we find ourselves requiring particulars to provide the individuation which Russell expected locations to supply and which Stout thought was already built into qualities. On the other hand, the suggestion that the particulars which are required are both intrinsically without qualities and yet somehow characterized by them is not intelligible. In the sense that the concept of a qualified particular is not analyzable in these terms, that concept must be regarded as being basic to the metaphysical framework in terms of which we speak of particulars and their qualities. This is the main tenet of the Qualified Particulars Theory.

V

The points which I have been arguing in criticism of the BT and in defense of QPT are analogous to ones which can be made against the Humean theory that a person is essentially a bundle of perceptions. It is illuminating to compare the BT and Hume’s theory in this respect. (I will merely call attention to the analogies without attempting to argue over again in detail for each point.)

There is a sense in which a pain or an after-image experienced by Smith is distinct from an exactly similar pain or after-image experienced by Jones. This suggests that it is possible to analyse Smith and Jones in terms of their respective experiences. For instance, it seems that certain thoughts, memory-impressions, and mental images standing in some empirical relation to one another constitute one distinct group to which we give the names ‘Smith’, while we give the name ‘Jones’ to another group

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32*Ibid.*

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of distinct “perceptions”. But what distinguishes one such “person” from another? There seems to be a perfectly good sense in which perceptions may be regarded as being universals, i.e., as being simultaneously repeatable like Russell’s qualities. This is the sense in which Smith might complain of “that same throbbing, slightly nauseating headache” that Jones suffered from the week before, or the sense in which the two of them might have the same green spot before their eyes after looking into a red light. Nor is it inconceivable that all of the thoughts, sensations, and memory-impressions of two persons might be exactly the similar, however unlikely this may be. For this reason reliance upon Russell’s device, i.e. the suggestion that bundles of perceptions are sufficiently complex to guarantee a high probability that such collections are qualitatively distinct, will not suffice to reproduce our concept of a person. And as in the case of qualities, spatio-temporal locations cannot be used to individual perceptions, since it is not possible to assign a spatial location to a thought, feeling, or memory-impression. The closest we can come to this is to assign a location to the person who has them, but this can be of no use to the “bundle” analysis of persons.

At this point the analogue to Stout’s theory suggests itself. Perhaps we can regard perceptions as particulars in their own right. But if so, it should be possible to identify each perception independently of the person to who it belongs. For instance, we should be able to make sense of the suggestion that the particular pain which Smith is suffering right now might have occurred to Jones instead of to Smith. This is not to suppose merely that Smith might not have had the pain he now feels and Jones might have had an exactly similar pain. The claim is that Jones might have had Smith’s pain instead of Smith. But our present criteria for the identity of pains do not permit us to say this, any more than we can say that the particular red quality-instance of this object might have belonged to that other object instead. It seems that we distinguish the perceptions and sensation of different persons by identifying them as the experiences of different individuals, not by identifying them as individuals in their own right.33 Thus, although exactly similar after-images experienced by Smith and Jones may be regarded as *particular* experiences in that they belong to different persons, they are not *particulars* which are contingently related to the persons having them. Therefore, the attempts to express the particularity of persons in terms of their perceptions and the particularity of objects in terms of their qualities are equally unsuccessful and for similar reasons. In this respect the concept of a particular person or subject of psychological attributes is no more reducible to its alleged elements than is the general concept of a qualified particular.

*University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.*

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33For further discussion of these points concerning the individuation of experiences see Strawson, *op. cit.,* p. 41, and Jerome Shaffer, “Persons and Their Bodies”, *Philosophical Review*, Jan. 1966, p. 66.