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**Article:**

Connolly, N. (2015) *Yes: Bare Particulars!* *Philosophical Studies*, 172 (5). pp. 1355-1370.  
ISSN 1573-0883

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-014-0353-5>

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# Yes: Bare Particulars!

## ABSTRACT

What is the Bare Particular Theory? Is it committed, like the Bundle Theory, to a *constituent ontology*: according to which a substance's qualities - and according to the Bare Particular Theory, its substratum also - are proper parts of the substance? I argue that Bare Particularists need not, should not, and - if a recent objection to 'the Bare Particular Theory' (Andrew Bailey's 'New Objection') succeeds - cannot endorse a constituent ontology. There is nothing, I show, in the motivations for Bare Particularism or the principles that distinguish Bare Particularism from rival views that entails a constituent ontology. I outline a version of Bare Particularism that in rejecting a constituent ontology avoids the New Objection. I argue against Theodore Sider that this really is a distinct theory to the version of Bare Particularism that endorses a constituent ontology, and not a mere terminological variant. I show that this, the best version of the Bare Particular Theory, is also defensible against the old objections.

## KEY WORDS

Bare Particulars, Substratum, Bundle Theory

## 1. No Bare Particulars?

What is the Bare Particular Theory? The consensus among both the friends and the enemies (these are more numerous) of the Bare Particular Theory understands it to share a basic commitment with its rival the Bundle Theory.<sup>1</sup> Both theories are understood to endorse a *constituent ontology*. Both, that is, are understood to take a substance – a tomato, say, or a badger, or an electron – to have its qualities, and according to the Bare Particular Theory its bare particular or substratum too, as *proper parts*.

This is the consensus about the Bare Particular Theory. It is not though that every self-confessed Bare Particularist and everyone who has ever been called a ‘Bare Particularist’ is a constituent ontologist. Plato has been called a ‘Bare Particularist’<sup>2</sup> and Plato is not a constituent ontologist. The account of substances considered by Locke in (1689, II, xxiii, §2), to which the notion of ‘substratum’ is usually traced, is not a constituent ontology.<sup>3</sup> Theodore Sider (2006 p388) – one of the friends of Bare Particularism - acknowledges that ‘there is supposed to be a ... division among substratum theorists, between those who think that a particular contains its universals as parts and those who think that it does not.’ However Sider denies that this supposed division is a real division. He argues that the supposed difference between the two sides of the division is ‘merely verbal’ (Sider p388).

I will argue in this paper that Bare Particularists need not and should not endorse a constituent ontology. If a recent objection to ‘the Bare Particular Theory’ – Andrew Bailey’s

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<sup>1</sup> See for example Loux (1998, p234), Benovsky (2008), who argues that the two theories are ‘twin brothers’, Wildman (2104).

<sup>2</sup> Sider (2006, p387) counts Plato as a Bare Particularist, citing *Timaeus* 48c–53c. See McPherran (1988) for a discussion of whether Plato is committed to the Bare Particular Theory.

<sup>3</sup> I will say more about Locke’s discussion, and substantiate this interpretation, in footnote 15.

<sup>4</sup> Gustav Bergmann, who introduced the term ‘bare particular,’ was a constituent ontologist: see Bergmann (1967). The view that ‘The Bare Particular Theory’ refers only to Bergmann’s precise position and any theory that differs in any detail from Bergmann’s doesn’t merit the name would clearly be misguided though. A theory with the same core content is a version of Bare Particularism. The core content of the theory can be determined by examining the motivations behind the theory and its position in relation to other theories in the space of possible theories. At the end of the day I am willing to call the view I will defend here ‘the Bare Particular Theory\*’. But I think the considerations of section 2 and section 5 show that the ‘\*’ is not needed.

(2012) 'New Objection' – succeeds then they cannot. I will take this objection as my starting point: it is set out just below. It defines the position it is targeting as committed to a constituent ontology. I will show in section 2 that nothing in the motivations for Bare Particularism or the principles that distinguish the Bare Particular Theory from rival views compels the adoption of a constituent ontology. In section 3 I will outline a version of the Bare Particular Theory that in rejecting a constituent ontology circumvents Bailey's New Objection. If the New Objection refutes the view it targets, then this is the only acceptable version of Bare Particularism. But even if the New Objection fails to definitively refute the version of Bare Particularism it targets, this is a better version. In section 4 I will argue, against Sider, that this theory really is a distinct version of the Bare Particular Theory: the distinction between this theory and the version of Bare Particularism that endorses a constituent ontology is not merely verbal. In section 5 I will address any lingering concerns that it doesn't merit the name 'Bare Particular Theory'. In section 6 I will show how it handles some old objections.

But first: the New Objection. Bailey's definition of the position he is arguing against identifies it as the conjunction of two theses:

1. THE CONSTITUENT THESIS. Every substance has at least two kinds of nonmereological (proper) constituents: its properties and its bare particular (property-subject).
2. THE HAVING THESIS. Every substance has its properties by having as constituents properties that are instantiated by another of its constituents: its bare particular (property-subject). (Bailey 2012 p32) <sup>5</sup>

The New Objection poses a dilemma for this position: a dilemma over how to answer the following question.

QUESTION. Do bare particulars have the ordinary properties of their host substances? (Bailey 2012 p35)

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<sup>5</sup> Bailey says a 'non-mereological' constituent. But Sider's characterisation of Bare Particularism takes substrata and qualities to be ordinary mereological parts.

Does the bare particular associated with a tomato also have the tomato's qualities: roundness, redness and so on? To answer 'no' is to deny the HAVING THESIS; so Bare Particularists can't answer 'no'. But in answering 'yes', Bare Particularists allow that for any substance, there are two things (in the same vicinity) that have the properties had by the substance: the substance and also its associated bare particular. So for example there is something other than me in the vicinity of me, that has all my properties: that is also a human being of this shape and size and so on. This is clearly false and so the answer can't be 'yes'. Bare Particularism is refuted; or at least, the conjunction of the CONSTITUENCY THESIS and the HAVING THESIS is refuted (Bailey 2012 pp35-40).<sup>6</sup>

That's the New Objection. I will get around to the old objections. It is not that Bailey thinks the old objections are ineffective. Bare Particularism may already be refuted, he thinks; but he wants to put the final nail in its coffin and (to paraphrase Bob Dylan) to stand over its grave 'til he's sure that it's dead<sup>7</sup>.

## 2. Why Posit Bare Particulars?

There are two reasons for positing substrata (let me use this term instead of the misleading 'bare particulars'): two theoretical roles (not unrelated) that substrata play. First, substrata are posited to account for the identity and distinctness of substances. According to the Bundle Theory for substance A to be identical to substance B is for A and B to have the same one-place properties: the same *qualities* (excluding 'qualities' whose definitions question beggingly make reference to identity). Bare Particularists object to this account. It is possible, they maintain,

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<sup>6</sup> Although I find it pretty persuasive, I am not assuming that this objection definitively refutes the position it targets. Bailey considers a couple of replies to his objection. One distinguishes between two ways of having properties, and maintains that two co-located things that *have the same properties but in different ways* don't present a problem. Wildman (2014) elaborates this reply and defends it against Bailey's rejoinder.

<sup>7</sup> Zimmerman, Robert. 'Masters of War' *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*. Columbia Records. 1963.

for there to be two distinct substances that don't differ in respect of the qualities (whose definitions don't question beggingly make reference to identity) they possess.<sup>8</sup> A substance is not then individuated by its qualities. Something else, something other than qualities, individuates it.

This something else, the substratum, is a particular, not a universal, an individual, not a property. Some participants in the individuation debate distinguish between qualitative qualities - *suchnesses* - and non-qualitative qualities: *thisnesses* or *haecceities*. The Haecceity Theory, a third position in the debate, maintains that a substance is individuated by its haecceity: for A to be identical to B is for A and B to have the same haecceity.<sup>9</sup> Bare Particularists deny that what individuates a substance is a quality or qualities of any sort, neither ordinary qualitative qualities nor a haecceity.

One way of thinking about this debate between Bare Particularists, Bundle Theorists and Haecceitists, is as a debate over which are the fundamental ontological categories. An ontological category is not fundamental if the identity of its members is analysable in terms of members of another category. Consider the suggestion of the Bundle Theory: for a substance A to be identical to a substance B is for A and B to have the same qualities. Substances for the Bundle Theory are not fundamental. Properties - qualities and relations - are fundamental: there is no analysis of what it is for property P to be identical to property Q. For the Haecceity Theory substances are not fundamental: qualitative properties and haecceities are fundamental. There is a further position in the debate over individuation which can perhaps be best understood in the light of this way of thinking about the debate. The Substance Ontology (see e.g. Loux) has it that for a substance A to be identical to a substance B is for A and B to be the same instance of the *kind* A and B belong to. I understand the Substance Ontology to take

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<sup>8</sup> If qualities are universals, that is. If qualities are tropes the problem for the Bundle Theory is explaining the similarity of distinct substances (see Allaire (1963) p1). Positing universals in addition to tropes solves both problems, but makes for an ontology that is no more parsimonious than Bare Particularism's two category ontology.

<sup>9</sup> The 'Haecceity Theory' I discuss is the theory Rosenkrantz (1993) defends that defines the identity of particulars in terms of haecceities; rather than anti-essentialist 'haecceitism' (see for e.g. Mackie, who describes the 'extreme haecceitism' she argues for as involving a commitment 'to something like 'bare particulars'' (Mackie 2006 p154)).

substance kinds – like tigerhood – to be fundamental, and to deny that individual substances are fundamental. As Loux puts it ‘Kinds are prior to their members; the identity of a substance – its being the thing it is – depends upon the kind to which it belongs’ (Loux p242).

For Bare Particularists particulars are fundamental. So are properties - Bare Particularism is a two category (at least) ontology - but the fundamental categories include the category of particulars. There is no analysis of what it is for substratum A to be identical to substratum B.

The first reason for positing substrata was to occupy the role of individuators of substances; if the fundamental items are those whose identity is primitive, substrata are cast by this role as fundamental items. The second role that has been envisaged for substrata is as the ultimate bearers of a substance’s qualities: as the ultimate subjects of predication.

Why hold that substrata are needed to bear properties? One not very good motivation for holding this assumes that reality must mirror language: the subject predicate form of a sentence must be mirrored in reality by a substratum and a quality. A better motivation for holding that substrata are needed to bear properties supposes that there is a difference between a property being uninstantiated and its being instantiated. What is that difference? For the Bundle Theory, for a property to be instantiated is for it to be part of a bundle of properties.<sup>10</sup> The Bare Particularist account of instantiation has it that instantiation involves an instantiator. To be instantiated a property must be instantiated *by, or borne or had or saturated by* a substratum.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Strictly speaking (see below), part of a bundle of *compresent* properties, or part of a ‘bundle’ in the sense of ‘*compresent* collection’ of properties.

<sup>11</sup> Nathan Wildman argues that Bare Particularists should hold that a substance’s substratum bears the substance’s qualities, because this allows an account of the ‘*unity*’ (Wildman 2014, pp 3-4) of the substance’s qualities. I think what is meant by this is an account of the co-instantiation of the substance’s qualities. Interestingly, Wildman denies that Bare Particularists, just to count as such, *must* hold that a substance’s substratum bears the substance’s qualities. He envisages a version of Bare Particularism which deploys substrata solely in the role of individuators. I am denying Bare Particularists must hold one supposedly defining tenet of Bare Particularism (THE CONSTITUENT THESIS). But the supposedly defining tenet that a substance’s qualities are borne by its substratum seems to me to be non-negotiable. The view Wildman envisages posits a substratum as an additional proper part of a bundle of qualities that plays no special role in the account of instantiation. But this view’s account of instantiation then is the Bundle Theory’s account, and this would have it that the additional part - a part in just the same way the qualities are parts - is *instantiated*

This role for substrata - as the ultimate bearers of qualities - is captured by the HAVING THESIS; though the HAVING THESIS, I will maintain, goes beyond the specification of this role in assuming a constituent ontology (I take it that 'constituent' in the HAVING THESIS means 'proper constituent'). I will have more to say about instantiation below. My aim at present is just to make clear where Bare Particularists are coming from and where, therefore, they may end up. The point I will make in the next section is that there is nothing in what I have just said - in the account I've given of the motivations that motivate Bare Particularism and the principles that differentiate Bare Particularists from Bundle Theorists and Haecceitists and Substance Ontologists - that compels Bare Particularists to end up committed to a constituent ontology.

### 3. Substrata as Identical to Substances

The motivations for positing substrata compel Bare Particularists to posit a unique substratum associated with every substance: each substance must be associated with a unique substratum if substrata are to individuate substances. The unique substratum associated with a given substance, Bare Particularists must say, is the bearer of the substance's qualities. But does the relation between a substance and its substratum have to be the constitution relation? No; there is another candidate for the relation between a substance and its substratum: *identity*. Bare Particularists have the option of identifying a substance and its substratum. The substance/substratum, they can say, *individuates itself*. For substance/substratum A to be identical to substance/substratum B is just for substance/substratum A to be identical to substance/substratum B. The substance/substratum, the thing itself, they can say (for what else?) is the ultimate bearer of its properties.

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by the substance. Sure, this additional part is not a universal. But neither is a haecceity a universal. The envisaged view is just the Haecceity Theory.



Identifying a substratum with its substance requires giving up not just one but both elements of the constituent ontology. If Bare Particularists deny that a substratum is a proper part of its substance and instead identify a substratum with its substance, they must also deny, if they want to be Bare Particularists rather than Bundle Theorists or Haecceitists, that the substance's qualities are proper parts of the substance. As the substance's substratum isn't an additional proper part, if the substance's qualities are proper parts of the substance then the substance is just a bundle of qualities (possibly including a haecceity).

To deny that a substance has its qualities as constituents is to miss out on an alleged benefit. Characterising the link between a substance's qualities and the substance - as the Bundle Theory appears to characterise it - as the familiar and un-mysterious relation of part-hood, allegedly de-mystifies the notion of instantiation. On the flip side characterising the link between a substance's qualities and the substance as part-hood mystifies the notion of part-hood. The grip we feel we have on this familiar notion is loosened if we have to allow that the qualities of a substance are no less parts of it than parts that we immediately recognise as such. Bailey's 'Bare Particular Theory' takes qualities to be 'non-mereological' parts of substances; but this only deepens the mystery: what is a non-mereological part?<sup>12</sup>

The version of Bare Particularism that takes a substance's qualities to be parts of the substance can be accused, along with the Bundle Theory, of mystifying part-hood. But this version of Bare Particularism can't of course claim the alleged benefit of de-mystifying instantiation. This is an alleged benefit that any version of Bare Particularism must forswear because every version of Bare Particularism holds that instantiation involves the having of qualities by a substratum.<sup>13</sup> The link between a substratum and the qualities it bears cannot be the relation of constitution: otherwise the substratum (assuming it has no further constituents) would be just a bundle of qualities.

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<sup>12</sup> Bailey notes the objection to the Bundle Theory and to his 'Bare Particular Theory' that the notion of non-mereological parthood is 'nonsense' (Bailey p32), citing Van Inwagen (2001 pp1-2). But he declines, in the spirit of charity, to pursue this objection.

<sup>13</sup> See footnote 11 above however. There is an *alleged* version of Bare Particularism that doesn't hold this. This position de-mystifies instantiation just if the Bundle Theory does. I will argue in a moment though that the Bundle Theory doesn't actually de-mystify instantiation.

I indicated above that I would say more about instantiation. It won't be much more. All versions of Bare Particularism must hold that properties are had or borne by, and are not parts of, a substratum. The Bare Particularist account of instantiation, to avoid a regress, must avoid regarding *having* as a relation; taking *having* as a relation prompts the question 'what is it for respectively a substratum and a quality to stand in the *having* relation?' More relations are called for, prompting more of the same kind of questions. But if *having* is not a relation what is it? Can anything more be said that sheds further light on instantiation? Perhaps it's not obvious that anything more needs to be said; but it's certainly not obvious that *nothing* more needs to be said. The Bare Particular Theory's account of instantiation, I will admit, doesn't de-mystify instantiation. But neither, contrary to first appearances, does the Bundle Theory's.

The Bundle Theory can't simply equate instantiation with part-hood.<sup>14</sup> For a property to be instantiated is not just for the property to be a part of a bundle in the sense of a fusion or collection or set of properties: there are bundles (in these senses) of uninstantiated properties. Bundle Theorists must say that for a property to be instantiated the property has to be *compresent* with other properties. But what is *compresence*? If *compresence* is invoked to explain instantiation then it cannot (no more than *having*) be regarded as a relation. Taking *compresence* to be a relation between properties prompts the question 'what is it for properties to stand in (to instantiate) this relation?' More relations are called for, prompting more of the same kind of questions.

But the important comparison, for present purposes, is not between the Bare Particular Theory and the Bundle Theory. It is between the version of Bare Particularism that identifies a substance with its substratum and rejects a constituent ontology (let me call it the 'Identity Theory'<sup>15</sup>), and the version that holds that the substratum and qualities are proper parts of the

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<sup>14</sup> This is a familiar point. See Sider 2006 p389.

<sup>15</sup> I could also call it the 'Lockean Theory'. The account of substances Locke considers in (1689, II, xxiii) identifies a substance and its substratum: 'we accustom ourselves, to suppose some substratum, wherein they do subsist, and from which they do result, which therefore we call substance' (1689, II, xxiii §1). Locke says that the (complex) *idea* of a particular kind of substance is constituted by the ideas of the substance's qualities and the 'confused' idea of a substratum (§3). But the relation between a substance and a substratum, if this confused idea is an idea of anything at all, is identity, not part-hood. Although Locke also speaks of qualities

substance. The Identity Theory is not at a disadvantage as far as its capacity to explain instantiation is concerned. Neither version de-mystifies instantiation. But the 'Bare Particular Theory' that holds, like the Bundle Theory, that a substance's qualities are parts of it mystifies part-hood. The Identity Theory, in denying that a substance's qualities are parts of it, doesn't mystify part-hood. Also in denying that a substance's substratum is a proper part of it and therefore an additional item, the Identity Theory is more parsimonious. This is what I meant when I said that even if the New Objection doesn't refute the 'Bare Particular Theory' it targets Bare Particularism is better off without a commitment to a constituent ontology. And if the New Objection *is* effective Bare Particularism is better off without a commitment to a constituent Ontology. The Identity Theory circumvents the New Objection. The New Objection posed the question: Do bare particulars have the ordinary properties of their host substances? The Identity Theory answers 'Yes.' This doesn't have the objectionable consequence that there are two items in the same vicinity with the same properties. The substance and its substratum are one.

#### **4. The Identity Theory: Really a different Theory?**

I have argued that the Identity Theory, if it is a version of Bare Particularism, involves the denial of a constituent ontology: the denial that substrata or qualities are constituents of substances. The Identity Theory is an alternative version of the Bare Particular Theory to

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'subsist[ing] [in]' and 'existing in' (§3) substances/substrata, he cannot mean existing in as parts. '...we cannot conceive, how [qualities] should subsist alone, nor one in another' (§4) he says. The substance that 'supports' (§2, §4) the substance's qualities, then, isn't simply constituted by them, and of course it isn't constituted by the qualities plus a substratum because the substratum just is the substance.

This interpretation of Locke echoes Korman (2010). Korman's 'deflationary interpretation' has it that for Locke 'the relationship between substrata and associated particular substances themselves is one of identity' (63). I refer readers to this article for arguments that support the attribution of something like the Identity Theory to Locke, and for considerations bearing on the understanding of and plausibility of the Identity Theory. (Thank you to an anonymous referee for drawing it to my attention.)

versions of Bare Particularism that, in endorsing a constituent ontology, are subject to Bailey's New Objection. So I maintain; but if Sider (2006) is right this is wrong: the Identity Theory is not an alternative. There is no alternative, if Sider is right, for Bare Particularists, to versions of Bare Particularism that endorse a constituent ontology. Because the disagreement between Bare Particularists who claim particulars have their properties as parts and those who deny this - as Identity Theorists must if theirs is to be an alternative version of the Bare Particular Theory - is 'merely verbal' (Sider 2006 p388).

Sider defines a 'thick particular' as the mereological fusion of a particular and its qualities, and a 'thin particular' as the mereological difference between a thick particular and its qualities. He asserts that...

'All substratum theorists agree that thin and thick particulars both exist. Thick particulars contain their universals as parts, thin particulars do not. Whether *particulars* have their universals as parts then depends on the nonissue of whether one means thick or thin particulars by 'particulars'. (Sider 2006 p388)

Sider's argument, if sound, undermines everything I have been saying. If thin particulars and thick particulars, as defined, both exist, and if when it is asked whether particulars, like a tomato, or me, have their qualities as parts or not, 'particulars' can be interpreted either as 'thin particulars' or as 'thick particulars', then, as he says, whether particulars have their qualities as parts is merely a verbal question. Also, if, when it is asked whether substances like a tomato, or me, are identical to their substrata or not, 'substances' can mean either 'thin particulars' or 'thick particulars', then this question is merely a verbal question. If by 'substance' I mean thin particular then a substance is identical to its substratum. On the other hand if by 'substance' I mean thick particular then a substance isn't identical to its substratum: its substratum is a proper part of it.

If Sider's argument is sound then the Identity Theory is not a different version of Bare Particularism to the version attacked by Bailey's New Objection. I need to show that the argument is unsound. Let me then address the reason Sider gives for his contention that 'all substratum theorists agree that thin and thick particulars both exist'. He says 'I take it that unrestricted mereological composition is common ground here.' (388 footnote 5) Unrestricted mereological composition has it that for any collection of items there is an item that is the fusion of those items. Why should all substratum theorists agree to this?

It seems to me to be acceptable, if not mandatory, to deny unrestricted mereological composition on the ground that the notion of the fusion of a particular and a universal makes no sense. It makes sense to talk about the fusion of two or more particulars: this item being a further particular. And perhaps it makes sense to talk about the fusion of two or more universals: this item being something wholly abstract. But the notion of the fusion of a particular and a universal makes no sense: what category would such an item belong to? It is open to substratum theorists to deny unrestricted mereological composition on this ground. I deny it on this ground. And I am happy to take this hard line. But there is also a more concessive response that I can make. Even if unrestricted mereological composition is granted, I can maintain, Sider is not right.

Imagine, if you can, the fusion of a substance with a quality that is not one of its qualities. Imagine for instance the fusion of a red tomato with whiteness. Clearly this strange item - part particular, part universal - is irrelevant to the question of whether a particular, for instance the tomato, has its qualities as parts. Sure, the strange part particular, part universal thing has a quality as a part. But when I ask whether a particular like the tomato has its qualities as parts, I cannot be interpreted as meaning by 'a particular like the tomato' something like this strange thing. Is this thing a particular? Is it a substance? I would be inclined to say no on both counts. Is it a tomato? Certainly not.

But now consider, if I want to deny a constituent ontology, shouldn't I say just the same things about the putative item, the fusion of the tomato and redness, that I have said about the

putative item, the fusion of the tomato and whiteness? If I want to deny that a tomato's redness is a part of it, I will say that what Sider defines as a 'thick particular' is questionably a particular, questionably a substance and certainly not a tomato. Whether a particular like the tomato has its qualities as parts or not, and whether a particular like the tomato is identical to its substratum or not, are not verbal questions. 'A particular like the tomato' in the context of these questions, cannot mean something like the strange item - part particular, part universal - that Sider calls a 'thick particular'.

If I want to deny a constituent ontology, I can say that holding that the question 'do particulars have their qualities as parts or not?' is merely verbal, because 'particular' could mean 'thick particular', is like holding that the question 'do Hollywood actors like George Clooney have their agents as proper parts or not?' is merely verbal, because 'Hollywood actor' could mean the fusion of an actor and his or her agent: for instance the fusion of George Clooney and Bryan Lourd. If I want to deny a constituent ontology, which I do, I can grant unrestricted mereological composition (though I am inclined to deny it) and still deny that the questions that crystallize my disagreements with Bare Particularists who are constituent ontologists are merely verbal.<sup>16</sup>

## **5. The Identity Theory: Really a version of the Bare Particular Theory?**

The Identity Theory is a distinct theory, I conclude. But is it really a distinct version of the *Bare Particular Theory*? I have already argued that given where Bare Particularists are coming from the Identity Theory is somewhere they may end up. But is this place they may end up really the sort

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<sup>16</sup> Substances are not thick particulars according to Sider's definition of 'thick particular', I maintain. But the terms 'thick particular' and 'thin particular' have been used by David Armstrong (see Armstrong 1978, p114) to mean something else. As I understand Armstrong 'thick particular' and 'thin particular' are terms with different senses but which stand for the same thing, like 'Superman' and 'Clark Kent'. I'm not sure how helpful Armstrong's terminology is but the view he uses it to express in (Armstrong 1978) seems to be something like the Identity Theory.

of place they would want to end up - does the Identity Theory really give Bare Particularists what they want – given that it doesn't state that substances involve, in any way, *bare particulars*?

The Identity Theory doesn't state that substances involve, in any way, bare particulars, if 'bare particulars' means 'quality-less particulars': if the tomato's substratum is just the tomato then it has qualities like redness and so is a clothed particular, not a bare particular. But any position according to which substrata are the ultimate bearers of properties - any version of Bare Particularism that is - denies that substances such as tomatoes involve bare particulars in this sense. This is why calling substrata 'bare particulars' is misleading.

Penelope Mackie uses the term 'bare particulars' in a different sense: the sense of 'individuals whose modal nature is compatible with just about any properties you please' (Mackie p154). It is in something like this sense of 'bare particulars' that the Identity Theory holds that substances are bare particulars. I say 'something like this sense'. Let me try to be clearer. First let me adopt a sparse conception of qualities that rules out for instance that 'is square and non-square' stands for a quality. 'An individual whose modal nature is compatible with just about any properties you please' may be taken to mean 'an individual such that there is no set of qualities it doesn't possibly possess'. The Identity Theory can allow (though it doesn't insist) that a substance – a tomato say – is a bare particular in this sense.

The Identity Theory, like other versions of Bare Particularism, takes substrata to be irreducible particulars: particulars whose particularity - whose self-identity and distinctness from other particulars - is primitive. The other positions in the individuation debate - the Bundle Theory, the Haecceity Theory, the Substance Ontology - offer accounts of why this object is this very object that mention other items: qualities, haecceities, kinds. In doing so they each commit to a form of essentialism: this object, in every situation in which it can be found, is this bundle of qualities, or has this haecceity, or belongs to this kind. Bare Particularism - and the Identity Theory is at one with other versions of Bare Particularism in this regard - doesn't build essentialism into the very notion of particularity.

Having said this, the Identity Theory isn't, in itself, incompatible with essentialism: it doesn't entail the falsity of essentialism. The Identity Theory says there is nothing about what it is to be this

very object that precludes this object's possession of any set of qualities. This doesn't rule out that there is something else (I will elaborate below) that limits what qualities this object can possess. The Identity Theory allows but doesn't insist that a substance is a bare particular in the sense of 'an individual such that there is no set of qualities it doesn't possibly possess.' There is another interpretation that can be put on (maybe forced on) Mackie's definition of 'bare particular' though. 'An individual whose modal nature is compatible with just about any properties you please' might also be taken to mean 'an individual such that there is nothing about what it is to be that individual that precludes its possible possession of any set of qualities'. The Identity Theory insists that substances involve – they are identical to – bare particulars in this precise sense.

Substances *are* bare particulars in one sense of the term, the Identity Theory holds. But now go back to the very first sense of 'bare particulars' that I defined: the sense of 'quality-less particulars'. Making sense of this notion of 'bare particular' also, obviously, requires a sparse conception of qualities, according to which relations, 'relational properties', 'disjunctive properties', and 'negative properties' don't count as qualities of objects. 'Is self-identical', 'is either green or non-green,' 'is bare (doesn't have qualities),' 'is an object' (what does this mean other than 'is self-identical and distinct from other objects and not a property'?) and other putative qualities that would render the notion of 'bare (quality-less) particular' absurd, are ruled out by such a conception of qualities.

According to the Identity Theory there is nothing about what it is to be this individual that precludes its possible possession of *any* set of qualities, *including the null set*. The Identity Theory, then, though it doesn't state that substances involve bare particulars in the sense of objects that lack any qualities, doesn't rule out that there could be bare particulars in this sense. It doesn't insist that there could be bare particulars in this sense: maybe there is something else that precludes the possibility of quality-less objects (again, I will elaborate below). But it doesn't rule out genuinely bare particulars in the sense of quality-less objects. The Identity Theory not only fails to rule out the



possibility that a tomato could have been, or could become, a tiger or a rock formation<sup>17</sup>, it doesn't rule out that a tomato could have been or could become, a genuinely bare particular.<sup>18</sup>

## 6. Some Old Objections

Could there be genuinely bare particulars: objects that lack any qualities? An old objection (Bailey refers to this as the 'Classic Objection') to Bare Particularism urges not. Another old objection objects that a substance could not have been and could not become a bare particular. I will mention three lines of response to these objections, each of which is available to the Identity Theory. The first line of response grants that there couldn't have been bare particulars, and a substance couldn't have been and couldn't become a bare particular. The Bare Particular Theory doesn't rule out these possibilities; but something else, according to this line of reply, does. For David Armstrong (1989) this something else is a theory of possibility<sup>19</sup>. For J.P. Moreland (1998 pp260-261) this something else is a theory of existence. If there is something else that rules out the possibility of bare particulars and the possibility of a substance having been or becoming a bare particular then the Bare Particular Theory isn't remiss in failing to rule out these possibilities and Bare Particularists are off the hook.

The first line of response grants that there couldn't have been bare particulars, and a substance couldn't have been or couldn't become a bare particular. The second line of response refuses to grant this. Sider refuses to grant that there couldn't have been bare particulars. Spacetime points, and numbers, he says, are examples! (Sider 2006 p395) And Sider's examples can be added to. Timothy Williamson (2013) makes a case that the best explanation of the logic

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<sup>17</sup> Mackie's 'extreme haecceitism' (see footnote 4) accepts the first scenario - that a tomato could have been a tiger - as a possibility; but Mackie refrains from insisting the second scenario - that a tomato could become a tiger - is possible.

<sup>18</sup> (Author, article date pp) goes further, mistakenly I now think, than I wish to here, in taking the Bare Particular Theory to entail that a tomato could become a bare particular.

<sup>19</sup> Sider notes but doesn't accept the objection that Armstrong's theory imposes 'an ad hoc restriction on an otherwise liberal combinatorial component to our modal thinking' (2006 p393).

and metaphysics of modality posits 'contingently non-concrete' items, possessing only 'modal properties' and so no qualities in the sense of the word I am employing (this explanation allows that a substance could have been a bare particular). Author (article date) argues that the best explanation of facts about past and future existents and the best explanation of facts about fictional and merely intentional objects posit bare particulars (the former explanation allows that substances can and do become bare particulars)<sup>20</sup>. Finally, the *Ontic Structural Realism* of Ladyman and Ross (2007) is an account of physical reality that is similar to mathematical structuralists' account of numbers. Ontic Structural Realists acknowledge the reality of physical relations while denying that these relations relate substances with intrinsic qualities. A problem for this view is distinguishing the relations that hold - that are instantiated - from those that don't. A solution is taking the relations that hold to be instantiated by bare particulars.

If there are examples of bare particulars, then the second line of response is right to refuse to grant that there couldn't be such things. The first line of response - Moreland and Armstrong's stratagem of precluding the possibility of bare particulars by other means - is unnecessary and misguided. But none of the putative examples of bare particulars - neither Sider's nor the others - are un-contentious. Consider Bertrand Russell's objection to structuralism about numbers.

...it is impossible that the ordinals should be, as Dedekind suggests, nothing but the terms of such relations as constitute a progression. If they are to be anything at all, they must be intrinsically something; they must differ from other entities as points from instants, or colours from sounds. (1903, p. 249)

It is not clear to me exactly what the thought behind this objection is; but it may be that objects, just to count as things or entities, must make their presence felt in the world, through their qualities, in distinctive ways. If there is something to this thought - according to which it

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<sup>20</sup> And compare Priest 2005.

doesn't make sense to speak of entities that lack 'genuine nature[s] of their own' (Russell 1903, p. 249) - then it is the second line of response that stands accused of being misguided.

The third line of response to the objections (Author, article date) is a compromise. It allows that there may be examples of bare particulars. There are theoretical roles that arguably, only bare particulars can play. We may need bare particulars; so let's not be too quick to rule them out. On the other hand this response accepts the theory of existence that, according to Moreland, precludes the possibility of bare particulars along with the possibility that an object can 'splinter off from its qualities' (Moreland 1998, 260-261). According to this theory of existence, for a particular to exist is precisely for it to have qualities (at least one).

This account of existence rules out the existence of bare particulars. For Moreland, this is tantamount to ruling out that there could be such objects as bare particulars. But author's response embraces the thesis - famously associated with Meinong - that the totality of objects isn't exhausted by the totality of existents. Author's reply to the objection that there couldn't be bare particulars concedes that the possibility that bare particulars could exist should be ruled out - something that the theory of existence can do - while denying that it follows that there aren't or couldn't be bare particulars. Author's reply to the objection that a substance couldn't have been or couldn't become a bare particular concedes that the possibilities of a substance having *existed* as a bare particular and of a substance surviving (in the sense of continuing to *exist* despite) becoming bare should be ruled out: something that the theory of existence can do. But author's response to this objection denies that it follows that a substance couldn't have been or couldn't become a bare particular.

This line of response to the objections allows for examples of bare particulars while conceding something to the thought behind Russell's objection to structuralism. It distinguishes mere membership of the domain of quantification and the thin notion of an object as something that is identical to itself and distinct from other objects and all properties, from thicker notions like 'existent' and 'substance' - a substance I am assuming is a clothed particular, and hence an

existent – which entail the possession of qualities. It concedes that the result of applying one of these thicker notions to a bare particular would be an absurdity.

Does this concession miss the point? The point, it may be urged, is not that counting as a substance or an existent requires the possession of qualities; but that being ‘anything at all’ and counting as an ‘entity’ requires the possession of qualities. But if the point is that mere membership of the domain of quantification requires the possession by members of ‘genuine natures of their own’ then the point is not compelling. It is not clear to me whether ‘thing’ or ‘entity’ entail the possession of qualities; that is it is not clear to me whether to count as a thing or an entity is to count as an existent. But if this is the case then I maintain that bare particulars are *non-entities* and though they count as objects, they fail to count as things.

The third line of defence of Bare Particularism, in endorsing Meinong’s distinction between existent and non-existent objects, may alienate some readers. If they find one of the other two lines of defence acceptable then I don’t mind. But I will also point out that I am not committed to full-blown Meinongianism. If to exist just is to possess qualities – if the possession of qualities is a necessary and a sufficient condition for existing - then the correct account of non-existent objects is very different from Meinong’s and avoids what Reinhardt Grossmann (2001) dubs Meinong’s ‘main mistake’.<sup>21</sup> In denying that qualities are existence entailing Meinong allows that something could be a horse for instance and yet fail to exist. If bare particulars are non-existent objects and non-existent objects are bare particulars, then there are no non-existent horses and detectives (not to mention round squares).<sup>22</sup>

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The feeling that the possession of qualities is a necessary condition for counting as an existent entity may be behind both the old objections to Bare Particularism. But there is

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<sup>21</sup> Compare Williamson 2013 19-20

<sup>22</sup> This doesn’t mean there are no fictional horses and fictional detectives (see Author, article date and Priest 2005).

another motivation also for denying that a substance – this tomato say - could have been or could become a bare particular. These scenarios are ruled out by a version of essentialism: a version of essentialism according to which this tomato, say, has some quality or qualities – its essence – that it has in every possible situation in which it is to be found. The feeling that essentialism is correct is another motivation for denying that a substance could have been or could become a bare particular.

If a defence of Bare Particularism acknowledges, as I wish to, that a substance could have been or could become a bare particular, then it can try to placate essentialists by embracing another version of essentialism, according to which this tomato has some quality or qualities that it has in every possible situation in which it *exists*: that is in which it has any qualities<sup>23</sup>.

As noted above the Identity Theory, and Bare Particularism generally, allows that essentialism – even this second version of essentialism – may be false. Bare Particularism fails to rule out that a tomato could have been or could become a tiger or a rock formation. This itself may prompt an objection from essentialists. However, as was also noted above, the Identity Theory, and other versions of Bare Particularism, don't insist that a tomato could have been or could become a tiger or a rock formation: they don't entail the falsity of essentialism. The accounts Bare Particularists give of what it is to be this individual have it that there is nothing about what it is to be this individual that rules out that this tomato could have been or could become a tiger. It may be though that the scenario of this tomato becoming a tiger is ruled out by a principle by which certain qualities preclude their succession by other qualities, and the possibility of the tomato having been a tiger is ruled out by a principle by which certain qualities preclude the possible instantiation of rival qualities by their instantiators.

However it may be felt - and an objection may be developed that expresses this feeling - that the job of saying what is impossible for an object falls to theories of individuation: theories

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<sup>23</sup> Compare the version of essentialism Williamson suggests is compatible with the view that every substance could have been a non-concrete bare possibilium, according to which 'a tiger is essentially if concrete a tiger'(2013 p8).

of what it is to be this very object. If any readers feel this way there are a couple more things I will say, that may or may not help.

Firstly, is the scenario of a substance becoming a completely different kind of thing really impossible to contemplate: do we not do just that in entertaining fantasies like the tale of the frog prince and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*? Secondly, let me grant that of course, if individuals can become re-clothed in completely new sets of qualities then it is impossible to keep track of which individual is which. How can I know that two individuals haven't just swapped their qualities? It is natural then that we should disregard this possibility and that our *concepts* of substances should rule it out. But Bare Particularism can be a project of *revisionary metaphysics*; as such, if it accounts for the phenomena of individuality and instantiation, and if it doesn't contradict itself, then it is not an objection that it contradicts the assumptions implicit in our current conceptual framework.

The final remark I will make is that if the arguments for Ontic Structural Realism establish that necessarily there are no substances - that talk of tomatoes, tigers, electrons and so on, if it purports to allude to objects with genuine natures of their own, fails to do so - that there are only relations relating bare particulars, then the position that being a particular object involves having a quality or qualities that are irreplaceable - no matter how entrenched in our conceptual scheme it is - must be given up.

## **7. Conclusion**

I want to reject the essentialism of the substance ontology, and I don't think haecceities - supposed non-qualitative qualities - explain anything. I want to deny that substances are bundles of qualities. I am not even sure if there are any substances: any clothed particulars. I think there are useful theoretical roles that can only be played by quality-less objects. I agree

with the Bare Particularist stance in the debate over the individuation of objects, and with the Bare Particularist stance in the debate over the instantiation of properties.

The position I have called the 'Identity Theory' takes the stance that Bare Particularists take in the debate over the individuation of objects and it takes the stance that Bare Particularists take in the debate over the instantiation of properties. It is an option for anyone who wants to take these stances and wants to reject the other theories I've mentioned: the rivals to Bare Particularism. The Identity Theory holds that substances are bare particulars in the sense of objects such there is nothing about what it is to be that object that precludes the possession of any collection of qualities, and it allows that there could be bare particulars in the sense of quality-less objects.

I have maintained therefore that it counts as a version of the Bare Particular Theory. But names are not important. What is important – what you should take from this paper - is that there is a theory, whether I am permitted to call it a version of the Bare Particular Theory or not, that says – apart from its denial that substrata and qualities are proper parts of their substances – exactly what Bare Particularists want to say. Contra Sider, this theory is a distinct theory from the 'Bare Particular Theory' that endorses a constituent ontology. It is defensible against the old objections to Bare Particularism and it circumvents the 'New Objection' to Bare Particularism that was this paper's starting point. If the New Objection refutes the version of Bare Particularism that it targets then the Identity Theory is a better option for Bare Particularists. But even if the New Objection doesn't refute the version of Bare Particularism that endorses a constituent ontology, the Identity Theory is a better option for Bare Particularists. The New Objection draws attention to a commitment that Bare Particularists are better off without.

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