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Preface

This volume documents the 6th European Congress of Analytic Philosophy, held in Krakow, 21–26 August 2008; the Congress was organized by the European Society of Analytic Philosophy. The book contains the plenary talks, invited lectures (unfortunately, not all these speakers submitted their papers), as well as selected contributions delivered during the course of special workshops. Previous European Congresses have not culminated in the publication of proceedings. We therefore hope the work at hand will install a new tradition with regards to the meetings of European analytic philosophers. Here we would like to express our gratitude to Dov Gabbay for taking these proceedings under the wing of College Publications, and to Jane Spurr for her assistance.

Jan Woleński

Generals and Particulars

Andrea Borghini

ABSTRACT

Is it true that some entities are general, while others are particular? Ramsey famously challenged this distinction, and more recently Fraser McBride has revived the challenge. In this paper I argue that there are at least five substantial distinctions among entities, and that the distinction between general and particular entities should be made to correspond to one of those substantial distinctions.

In this paper I wish to wonder about what, for simplicity, I will label THE QUESTION: What tells apart a general from a particular entity? That *prima facie* there is such a distinction is hard to deny. We appear to use it everyday. Consider, for example, a war: this is one, but it is also many. As I am writing, the war is in Congo, it is in Sudan, it is in Somalia. To be there, in each of those countries, is the same entity, the war; and the being of the war in one country is independent from the being of the war in another country. An end to the war in Congo will not affect the war in Somalia. Different wars are fought, although it is the same entity to be involved in every case: the war.

Saddam Hussein, on the other hand, was a particular entity. There was at most one entity corresponding to the name 'Saddam Hussein.' There are several entities closely resembling Saddam Hussein, and in fact the secret services had some work to do to find the right one. Yet, once he was found, Saddam Hussein was captured. The whole Saddam, not only a part of it (at least, the whole Saddam *at that moment*, if Saddam has temporal parts and whether those have been wholly or partially captured is a question we should keep out of the picture here). More generally, each person is particular; many of our values depend upon such conviction and our actions are guided by it too.

To adopt a more mundane example, consider two standard cans of Coca-Cola (as packaged for the U.S. market), that we will name respectively MIO and MIA. Each can is unique. MIO is only here on the right, and MIA only here on the left. On the other hand, their colors are the same: white lettering over a bright red background. And they have the same typical can-shape. So, for example, *Redness* and *Being a can* are both *here* and *here* (pointing at the cans' backgrounds); and *Redness* and *Being a can* are here in MIO in its entirety. We could destroy MIA and all the general entities related to it without affecting *Redness* and *Being a can* in MIO.

One more example. Here are two copies of the same book, the *Commedia* by Dante Alighieri. They are two copies, two particular entities. There is only one of each. On the other hand, both are books, i.e. *Being a book* is in both of them. The *Commedia* is also in both of them. *Being paper* is in both of them too, as is *Being a cover* or the letters N-E-L-M-E-Z-Z-O-D-E-L-C-A-M-M-I-N-D-I-N-O-S-T-R-A-V-I-T-A, and so on. So here we have two particular entities and a multiplicity of general ones. This, *prima facie*, seems a plausible thing to say.

Like the war, *Redness*, and the *Commedia*, there are many other *prima facie* general entities: *Generosity*, *Mass*, *Being a person*, *Motherhood*, and so on. And like Saddam Hussein, MIO, MIA, and these books, there are many other *prima facie* particular entities: each of us sitting in this room, Sherlock Holmes, the dog Rubino, my basil plant, this chair, and so on. In what follows, I shall not be concerned with pinning down which ones of those *prima facie* entities are 'ultimate' or 'real'; what I wish to do is to throw some light on what sets apart these two kinds of entities.

* * *

That there is a distinction between general and particular entities is, however, a *prima facie* impression, which clashes with other *prima facie* thoughts that we might have (on this point, cfr. Ramsey (1990)). Here are two of them:

1. Although many entities might seem easy to classify as general or particular, there are several controversial cases: are numbers general or particular? Is a law a general or a particular? Are ideas or concepts, such as the idea of beauty, general or particular?

2. Besides, even the examples I mentioned before might turn out to be controversial. Is the war really general? After all, every war is different from any other, and sometimes it's hard to find compelling elements of resemblance. The first Punic War was quite different from the Gulf War, so different that we might want to classify them even as two distinct categories of events. Or, above I mentioned *Being a person*; but, is there really such a general entity? People are all so different; to what extent can we claim that there is this universal, *Being a person*?

On the other hand, particulars are no less immune from difficulties. MIA may not be, after all, so unrepeatable: we seem to have many exact replicas; by placing them in spatio-temporal regions that are perfectly identical to the one that MIA now occupies, we could have MIA two, three, or infinite times. The same would go for each of us, for the dog Rubino, for the basil plant, and so on. Ultimately, what is it about each of them that is unrepeatable?

The distinction between what is general and what is particular tends thus to blur at a closer look. Maybe no case is uncontroversial. And, certainly, no case is uncontroversial till we have a definition of what a general and a particular entity are.

Now, what the best definition might be (if one is there) is a vexed old question. And it is a question recurring across most philosophical fields and styles. That is, one may reasonably expect any philosopher to have an opinion on what makes a particular a particular and what makes a universal a universal in the same way than one may reasonably expect any philosopher to have an opinion on what makes good good and what makes evil evil. This fact has a positive and a challenging aspect. In other words, the point at stake here is of broad interest. On the other hand, precisely because most of those who are versed in Philosophy will already harbor an answer to THE QUESTION, it is a delicate endeavor to ask for reconsideration.

Needless to say, I won't be able to do justice to every relevant answer that has been given to THE QUESTION. My goal will be to compare and contrast my own proposal to those that are closest. While doing this, I hope also to accomplish two further tasks: (i) to uncover some piece of methodology in theoretical philosophy; (ii) to pitch a relevant piece of metaphysical theory that I embrace. I will cover those tasks in order. I will first address the methodological issue: whether THE QUESTION concerns a logical, cognitive, or metaphysical distinction. I will argue for the latter. I shall, then, concentrate on four metaphysical distinctions that have been proposed, and argue in favor of the latter I will present.

Before entering into the details, I should add a disclaimer. The views I will discuss have been defended in various forms throughout the centuries and the various continents. Although I draw inspiration from a number of model authors and I value the close study of their texts, it is not here my pretense to accurately present the view of any specific author. Rather, my

goal is to present, to the best of my capacities, each view in the way I believe one might defend it today.

1. A Matter of Methodology

Let us thus start from the methodological aspect of THE QUESTION. Sometimes the distinction between general and particular entities has been identified with a certain distinction between either logical roles (dating back to Aristotle's *Categories*—cfr. Mann (2000), Strawson (1974), Westerhoff (2005)) or cognitive roles (cfr. Frege (1952a), Frege (1952b), Dummett (1981)). Here are two examples:

> *Example of a Distinction in Terms of Logical Roles*
> Particular entities are those that cannot appear in the role of predicates; general entities, on the contrary, can appear both as predicates and as logical subjects.

> *Example of a Distinction in Terms of Cognitive Roles*
> Particular entities are the most immediate subjects of knowledge (in other words: our experiential knowledge is knowledge of particulars); general entities are known only through our knowledge of particular entities.

I tend to be sympathetic with both these attempts; however, I don't think that, by themselves, they can provide a satisfying answer to THE QUESTION. For two reasons, one general and the other specific to each role.

General reason. To try to tell apart general from particular entities in terms of some features of our language or our cognitive attitudes is like trying to understand what the score of a game is by looking at the face of a spectator. There is a connection between the two, but they are two separate phenomena. My language does not (and cannot) make what I am looking at what it is; more specifically, a certain word cannot make something be particular or general. In the same way, my attitude does not (and cannot) make something what it is; more specifically, a certain attitude cannot make something be a particular or a general entity. There has to be something about the entities in our domain of discourse, which makes them particular or general.

Specific reason—Logical Role. Looking at the specifics of the Logical Role, we should note that logical roles can be switched or eliminated. It is futile to try and find whether an entity is particular or general by looking at the expression(s) denoting it. Expressions that function as predicates can be rendered logical subjects, and *vice versa* as in:

(1) Socrates runs

which can be transformed, arguably without changing its meaning, in

(2) Running socratizes.

A language can be regimented in several different ways. For example, as Ayer showed in "Individuals," you can construe a language void of reference to particulars.

Specific reason—Cognitive Role. As for the cognitive role, there simply is no agreement about which are the most immediate subjects of knowledge. Each party will claim that the entities envisaged by its theory are the immediate subjects of knowledge. Here are some foremost examples.

a) *Nominalists* claim that the most immediate subjects of knowledge are particulars. For example, in "Speaking of Objects," Quine claims:

> In one's earliest phase of word-learning, terms like 'mama' and 'water' were learned which may be viewed retrospectively as names each of an observed spatio-temporal object. (Quine, 1957, p. 12)

b) Some, like Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus*, claim we perceive facts: "The world is the totality of facts." (Wittgenstein, 1986, 1.1)

c) *Universalists* claim we perceive general entities. For example, Marcuse, in *One-Dimensional Man*, writes:

> Talking of a beautiful girl, a beautiful landscape, a beautiful picture, I certainly have very different things in mind. What is common to all of them—"beauty"—is neither a mysterious entity, nor a mysterious word. On the contrary, nothing is perhaps more directly and clearly experienced than the appearance of "beauty" in various beautiful objects. (Marcuse, 1991, p. 210)

Russell defended a similar view in his later writings, for example in *Enquiry into Meaning and Truth* and *Human Knowledge*.

d) Finally, others claim that both types of entities may play a role. Here is a passage from Strawson's "Particular and General":

> There is, for example, the suggestion that general, unlike particular, things cannot be perceived by means of the senses; and this seems most plausible if one is thinking of the things designated by certain abstract nouns. It is not with the eyes that one is said to see hope. But one can quite literally smell blood or bacon, watch cricket, hear music or thunder; and there are, on the other hand, certain particulars which it makes dubious sense to say one perceives. (Strawson, 1992, p. 235)

In the end, there certainly is no common agreement as to the role that one or the other type of entity plays in cognition. We may take side with one party or another, but by doing so we would fail to draw a distinction that attempts to appeal to a vast majority of the disputants. For this reason, it does not seem viable to try and answer THE QUESTION on the basis of which entity are the most immediate subjects of our knowledge.

The general and specific considerations offered suggest—I believe—that we refrain from drawing a distinction between general and particular entities based on any of these lines: a certain logical role that expressions may cover in our language, or, a certain role that an entity may play in our cognition. There is a link between our language and the entities we talk about; there is a link between our cognitive attitudes and the entities we entertain; yet these links are not going to tell us what those entities are. We need to do metaphysics in order to answer THE QUESTION. It is thus to metaphysical distinctions that I shall now turn.

2. Metaphysical Distinctions

There are four metaphysical answers to THE QUESTION that seem most deserving of attention. I think only one of them is tenable. I will present it for last and offer my interpretation of it. Before doing that, however, I will discuss the other three answers and explain what I find missing in them.

2.1. Role in Instantiation

The first answer draws from the role that entities play in the so-called instantiation relation, a binary relation occurring between an arbitrary *n*-tuple of entities, some of which are said to instantiate and the other(s) to be instantiated. For example, if MIO is red, MIO instantiates *Redness* (and *Redness* is instantiated by MIO). In a recent paper, Jonathan Lowe claims:

> As for the distinction between universal [here: general entity] and particular, I simply define it in terms of the instantiation relation. A particular is that which has (or, in a stronger version, that which can have) no instances, whereas a universal is that which has (or, in a weaker version, that which can have) instances. (Lowe, 2004, p. 303)

A general entity, say, *Wisdom*, can instantiate other general entities (e.g. *Virtuosity*) but can also be instantiated by other entities, such as Socrates. Socrates, on the other hand, cannot be instantiated, but only instantiate.

General and particular entities, thus, behave differently with respect to the relation of instantiation, which is, according to most philosophers, a necessary relation for the existence of an entity. General entities can have instances, while particular entities cannot. Thus we have these two classes of entities, *T1* and *T2*, and a relation *R*, such that the one in *T1* can be on both ends of *R*, while the others can be only on one end.

This much for the answer. Now let's see what is unpalatable about it. The major problem with this way of telling apart general from particular entities is that the relation of instantiation is a rather obscure entity.

If we intend it as a normal relation, we run into a famous regress: what relates the relation to each of the relata? If another relation, what will relate such relation to each of the relata and the instantiation relation?

On the other hand, if we intend the instantiation relation as a special relation, a primitive tie between entities, how are we supposed to intend such a tie? Most authors reply that, since it is a primitive, the instantiation relation does not need to be explained.

Now, it is not unusual to have primitives in Philosophy (probably it is even unavoidable); but, it seems plausible to expect that our primitives be in some way self-explanatory and compelling. For example, what makes Descartes's *Cogito* and proof of the existence of God particularly compelling is the fact that the first-person intuition, as well as the intuition of infinity and perfection, can be regarded both as self-explanatory and compelling. They are not just evident, but evident by "natural light," as Descartes puts it. Is the instantiation something that can be maintained to be evident by natural light? My impression is that we have a quite approximate and confused idea of it. One way to define the instantiation relation proceeds as follows:

> *IR*: a binary, non-symmetric and non-transitive relation occurring between an arbitrary *n*-tuple of entities, some of which are said to instantiate and the other(s) to be instantiated.

As *IR* shows, the relation is unspecified in most of its aspects: all that we know about it is that it is non-symmetric and non-transitive. But this is hardly enough for identifying *a specific* relation. Moreover, to try and make the relation more specific would be circular, as Strawson already pointed out (Strawson, 1992): to try and explain the instantiation relation in terms of logical roles (i.e., subject and predicate) is just another way to reaffirm that it is the distinction between entities that can and those that cannot have instances.

2.2. Mode of Instantiation

Other authors concentrated still on the instantiation relation, but on a different aspect of it. According to these, some entities (i.e. the general ones) enter in a relation of instantiation with the same number of entities; on the other hand, other entities (i.e. the particular ones) enter in a relation of instantiation with a variable number of entities. Our MIA, here, is instantiating—say—seven general entities; but they might change: for example, they might be eight if I would paint part of its surface with blue paint. Maybe there is a minimum number of general entities that MIA has to instantiate, yet the overall number is variable. On the other hand, *Being a cap*, for example, always enters into an instantiation relation with one entity, viz. the one which has the cap; the same goes for *Redness*, or *Being a can*.

Recently, this view has been at the center of a debate between David Armstrong—who defended it—and Fraser McBride—who criticized it (cfr. Armstrong (1997), McBride (1998a), McBride (1998b), McBride (1999), McBride (2004), McBride (2005)). The latter argued that the number of entities with which a general entity enters into a relation of instantiation is not an 'intrinsic characteristic' of the entity; therefore, it can change without changing the general entity, thus dissolving the distinction between modes of instantiation.

The problem with this objection is that it does not specify what an intrinsic characteristic of an entity is, nor why the number of entities with which an entity enters into a relation of instantiation should be variable.

I think there is a simpler way of addressing the problem with the proposed distinction between general and particular entities, a way which is in agreement with McBride's point, if I understand it.

Consider, for example, the entity *Being a can-maker*, and suppose that MIO and MIA were made by the same entity (probably a machine), call it Frank, which made only those two cans. There are two ways of portraying *Being a can-maker* when belonging to Frank. You could think that Frank has *Being a can-maker* twice, thus each time *Being a can-maker* relates two entities, viz. the maker with a can. On the other hand, you could think that *Being a can-maker* belongs only once to Frank: it belongs to him all along, and it relates Frank with MIO and MIA, thus being a three-place relation.

Now, if you are sympathetic to the latter case, then there will be a time at which *Being a can-maker* relates Frank and (say) MIO only, and a subsequent time at which it relates Frank and both MIO and MIA. Thus *Being a can-maker* enters into relations of instantiation which vary in the number of their *relata*.

A similar consideration holds for other general entities. Consider for example *Being a father*. If you have two children at two different times, do you instantiate *Being a father* twice (so that each time *Being a father* is a binary relation) or once (first as a binary and then as a triadic relation)? Is *Being a professor* binary or does it relate a variable number of entities?

At this point, to answer such questions, one might want to apply a test similar to the one I applied at the beginning to explain why *War* or *Redness* seemed to be general entities. Suppose Frank would have made only one of the two cans, say MIO. It would still instantiate *Being a can-maker* (supposing that to make one can is enough for instantiating *Being a can-maker*). Thus:

> (a) Frank would instantiate *Being a can-maker* even if it would have never made MIA.

But, an analogous counterfactual situation in which MIO and MIA are switched roles can also be imagined. Thus:

> (b) Frank would instantiate *Being a can-maker* even if it would have never made MIO.

Now, since the making of a can cannot change Frank's relation to the making of the other can, from (a) and (b) we can conclude that:

> (c) Frank instantiated *Being a gnome-maker* twice.

Since a similar argument could be run for any other general entity (claim the defender of the distinction we are considering), the instantiation relation is always *minimal*: it is binary for binary predicates, triadic for triadic predicates, *n*-ary for *n*-ary predicates. Thus, although particulars can instantiate more than one general entity at a time, general entities always enter into instantiation relation with an identical number of entities. (Of course the same general entity can be instantiated more than once. But, the point here is to see how an entity behaves with respect to a specific case of instantiation.)

To this argument I have a reply. The making of one extra can does indeed change the relation between Frank and the other can. Relations among entities change even after one of them ceases to exist, as Aristotle's paradox of a good life in *Nichomachean Ethics* teaches us. A rockstar can have tons of fans as she is alive and lose them all after a few years her death, upon the discovery of some dishonoring deed of her.

Upon making another can, Frank's relationship with the first can will be changed. It won't be any longer its only can, perhaps it won't be any longer

its best can, perhaps it will change our mind on the quality of the first can made by Frank.

But, suppose that not all instantiation relations are like *Being a can-maker*. Consider *Being two feet apart*. I am—say—two feet apart from MIO; and now I am two feet apart also from MIA. The latter certainly did not change my *Being two feet apart* from MIO. Thus, *Being two feet apart* is here instantiated twice. Once with respect to me and MIO, the other with respect to me and MIA.

The example of *Being two feet apart* just shows that *some* general entities enter into relation with the same number of entities all the times. What the defender of the distinction should be able to show is that all relations are of this sort. This seems quite implausible, however. Consider, for example, *Generosity*. It can be ascribed to one person, but also to two people who made a joint donation. *Courage* can be of one person, but also of all the players in a team. If you become a father of a second child your relationship as a father to the first child is going to change.

Maybe, I am confused as to what the claim exactly is when one says that general entities always enter into relations of instantiation with the same number of entities, while particular entities don't. What do we mean when we say that MIA instantiates seven general entities? Here are two options:

A) *MIA has one instantiation relation with seven entities*. If so, why each of such general entities does not have, in turn, a relation with seven entities, and why isn't then such number variable as it is for MIA?

B) *MIA has seven instantiation relations with general entities, each of which is minimal (as proved above)*. If so, isn't also MIA always in an instantiation relation with an identical number of entities, else, if instantiation is not always *minimal*, doesn't the number of entities which entertain the instantiation relation vary in the same way both for MIA and for the general entities it instantiates?

Either way, I do not see why this answer to THE QUESTION should stand. Thus, I conclude, this way to tell apart general from particular entities is not viable.

2.3. Completeness

The third distinction I would like to consider is the one between complete and incomplete entities. Here is how Peter Strawson, in *Individuals*, introduces it:

> A subject-expression is one which, in a sense, presents a fact in its own right and is to that extent complete. A predicate-expression is one which in no sense presents a fact in its own right and is to that extent incomplete. (Strawson, 1959, p. 187)

This much for what concerns the semantic distinction. At the ontological level, we have a parallel one:

> So the fundamental picture, or metaphor, I offer is that of the particular resting on, or unfolding into, a fact. It is in this sense that the thought of a definite particular is a complete thought. (Strawson, 1959, p. 211)

Hence, for Strawson it seems that:

A) A particular is an entity, which necessarily exists in a specific place or context, thus it has to rest on a fact.

B) A general entity, on the other hand, can rest on no specific place or context.

Although such interpretation probably loads Strawson's thought with more metaphysical speculation than he would have been willing to admit, I take this to be his main metaphysical lesson. It's a lesson that can be derived also from the distinction he endorses in "Particular and General":

> It is a necessary condition for a thing's being a general thing that it can be referred to by a singular substantival expression, a unique reference for which is determined solely by the meaning of the words making up that expression; and it is a necessary condition of a thing's being a particular thing that it cannot be referred to by a singular substantival expression, a unique reference for which is determined solely by the meaning of the words making up that expression. (Strawson, 1992, p. 257)

The reference of expressions referring to particulars cannot be grasped solely by grasping their meaning since they contain contextual elements; this is because particulars are necessarily rooted in facts, they have to exist in a specific place or context, which is reflected by the expressions referring to them. The reference of the name "Barack Obama" cannot be determined solely by knowing Barack under some description. We need to look into this room and point at him.

On the other hand, the reference of expressions picking out general entities can be grasped by grasping their meaning. And you may know what *Redness* means without the need of looking into any specific place. General

entities are not necessarily rooted in any fact, thus we can think of them also outside of any specific context.

But, if this is the case—I surmise—then a general entity may exist in no specific place, while it is necessary for a particular entity to exist in a specific place. Thus, general entities might have an incomplete existence, an existence that is not determinate, while particular entities always have a complete (i.e. determinate) existence.

I find myself in disagreement with both Strawson's semantic and metaphysical theses. But, I shall not talk about the semantic view here. As for the metaphysical thesis, I believe that it may be interpreted in two ways, both of which might be philologically inaccurate. But, my pretense is of course not to push Strawson to defend theses he always refrained from defending. My goal is instead to delve into two ways of maintaining, in a metaphysical sense, that general entities are incomplete while particular ones are complete. With this spirit, let us explore the two interpretations.

1. The first interpretation forces upon us a Platonist conception of general entities. *Being a can* could exist in no specific place because general entities do exist in no specific place. For many, however, it is simply false that *Being a can* could exist in no specific place. The fact that we can refer to *Being a can* without calling into question any specific can does not suffice to entail this conclusion. This suggests that the way we form concepts of general entities differs from the way we form concepts of particular ones. In the case of an expression referring to a general entity, we seem to abstract from the specific instances of the general entity we encounter; on the contrary, we do not do this when it comes to particular entities. Yet, to claim that this is so because general entities can exist without being in any specific place means to reify our abstraction. And this is not what most of us want to do.

This conception also brings with itself a host of problems. If general entities can be in no specific place, do they exist in a different realm? Do they exist everywhere? And what relationship is there between general and particular entities? If general entities exist also in space, are the instances of a general entity that are in space and those that are not the same type of instances?

I am not claiming that those questions cannot receive an answer. The point is that the distinction between general and particular entities should not cut across a distinction so fundamental as the one between Platonists and Aristotelians on general entities. Probably, as I said at the outset, it is impossible not to distinguish between general and particular without partially relying on one's own philosophical inclinations. But, to imbue the distinction with another fundamental metaphysical distinction regarding general entities seems to cut off the intelligibility of the account too deeply.

2. According to the second interpretation, the fact that general entities can exist in no specific place just means that they are more imperfect than particular ones. Particulars always have a completely determinate existence, while general entities are by nature incomplete. They become complete only upon being instantiated by a particular.

This interpretation strikes me as more plausible than the first one, at least in its form. In fact, it does not presuppose additional metaphysical distinctions or doctrines. On the other hand, it seems the least tenable interpretation from a theoretical standpoint. Consider MIO, and the general entity *Being a can*. It seems to me that, as we are able to form the concept of the general entity *Being a can* in a way that abstracts from the present context, so we are able to form an idea of MIO which abstracts from the present context. That's precisely what we do when we consider MIO in some counterfactual situation. And note (this is key) that most of the times such counterfactual situations do not pick out a fully specified context. When considered in this respect, MIO does not seem to me less complete or incomplete than *Being a can* or *Redness*. Certainly I can think of the latter without thinking at a specific context, yet I can similarly think of MIO without thinking of it in a specific context. The concept of a particular abstracts from a specific context as much as the one of a general entity.

Hence, this reading of Strawson's claim strikes me as simply false. General and particular entities are complete and incomplete in an analogous way.

2.4. Repeatability

We now come to the fourth and last distinction I will present, the one I prefer. It is a classical distinction, which is formulated with different terminologies, such as:

(A) General entities are *repeatable*; particular entities cannot repeat.

(B) General entities can be *wholly present* at more than one place/time; particular entities cannot be wholly present at more than one place/time.

(C) General entities *can be in their entirety* at more than one place/time; particular entities cannot be in their entirety at more than one place/time.

For example, *Redness* is both here (MIO) and here (MIA); while each can cannot be in its entirety in more than one place at a time.

Most authors introduce expressions such as "wholly present" or "present in its entirety" without any further clarification, assuming that it is evident what they mean. Although I believe (and this will turn out to be crucial later) that these expressions do appeal to an intuition, I also believe that by themselves they are not explanatory enough for the distinction. In fact, most authors introduce them without pretending that to include entities of this sort into their ontology is in some way paradoxical or, at least, controversial. On the contrary, I believe that the distinction between general and particular entities should bring to light the theoretical burdens of accepting general entities into one's ontology. In other words: we owe an explanation of such expressions. So, the main task is to explain what repeatability/whole presence/entire existence are. Out of the three possible expressions, I will consider repeatability as the main term for tracing the distinction. Our question, hence, is: what is repeatability?

We should start our answer by availing ourselves of an example. Consider the following two sentences, representing two propositions:

P: "*Being a can* exists"
Q: "*Socrates* exists"

P and *Q* represent propositions, which are fully specified by the expressions contained in *P* and *Q*. There is no hidden intended context or any other contextual element which should be supplied in order for us to understand the propositions that *P* or *Q* represent.

I believe that there is a key difference in the way in which the entities that *P* and *Q* are about exist. It is this difference which gives us the meaning of 'repeatable' or 'unrepeatable'; thus, it is this difference that tells us what the distinction between a particular and a general entity is. The main difference lies—I argue—in the possible number of the truth-makers of the propositions expressed by *P* and *Q*. Here is why:

<u>*Q*-FEATURES</u>

- *Q* ("Socrates exists") has at most one truth-maker.
- For every possible scenario that we consider, either Socrates exists or he does not exist in the scenario.
- *Q* is true in all the scenarios in which Socrates exists.

<u>*P*-FEATURES</u>

- *P* ("*Being a can* exists") can have multiple, possibly infinite, truth-makers.
- For every possible scenario that we consider, *Being a can* could 'exist one, two, . . ., infinite times' if you pass me this expression.
- *P* is true in all the scenarios in which *Being a can* exists.
- But—and this is the key difference from *Q*—the truth of *P* can be *over-determined*. *P* might be true twice over, three times over, or infinite times over.

This is what it means to say that there are multiple, possibly infinite regions in each scenario where *Being a can* might be wholly/in its entirety.

Here you might suspect that the distinction I am drawing is in some way 'linguistic,' in that I am introducing it by appealing to sentences. However, this is not the case. I am appealing to propositions, and their truth-makers. I believe that a proposition is a metaphysical entity, that it is 'a piece' of the world (probably not a primitive piece, but still a piece).

More in details, *P* and *Q* express simple propositions, single 'pieces' of the world. That some of those 'pieces' exist at most once, while others exist two, three, or infinite times is an intuitive fact about the world. It is the intuitive fact with which I started off this talk and that the distinction in terms of possible number of truth-makers purports to spell out.

Thus, it is not that particular entities are complete while general ones are not. In a sense, general entities, are even more complete: they can wholly exist more than once! We need to look at the way the world is to establish the truth-value sentences regarding both sorts of entities.

The distinction is that a sentence such as *P*, expressing a proposition constituted by a general entity, can be over-determinedly true, while this is not the case for a sentence expressing a proposition constituted by a particular entity.

Moral

The distinction between general and particular entities belongs to metaphysics. Among the definitions that have been proposed, the ones appealing to instantiation are circular or inconclusive. The one appealing to completeness strikes the wrong metaphysical cord. I believe my distinction in terms of the number of truth-makers that a sentence can have has two main virtues:

(i) It preserves the chief intuitive distinction, i.e. that particular entities are unrepeatable while general ones can repeat;

(ii) It points the finger to the distinguishing feature, the possible number of truth-makers.

It is the fact that the truth of a proposition like *P* can be over-determined to render general entities unpalatable to many. You might not want to accept that there are entities that exist more than once. My stance is that we constantly use to think that there are. If you deny this, then you are a Particularist. But, the definition of particularity and generality here offered stands. And this is what I aimed to achieve.

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