

# Haecceitism as a Theory of Individual Essences

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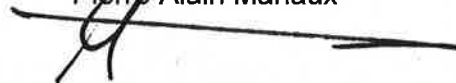
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Le doyen  
Pierre Alain Mariaux



**Abstract.** This thesis deals with the debate that opposes two metaphysical views: Haecceitism and anti-Haecceitism. Roughly speaking, according to anti-Haecceitists everything about reality is determined by the *qualitative* character of reality itself, while Haecceitists deny that this is the case.

The thesis has two main goals. The first is to formulate and defend a novel way to understand the two views in question. The second is to defend a form of Haecceitism that I call ‘Austere Haecceitism’.

The first goal provides the focus of the first four chapters of the thesis. In Chapter 1, I consider two arguments for anti-Haecceitism that I take to be emblematic of the typical rationale behind such a view. This rationale has it that if Haecceitism is true then what I call *cases of primitive identity* can possibly arise and that said cases are for some relevant reason unacceptable. Roughly, cases of primitive identity occur whenever the qualitative character of reality fails to ‘fix’ some non-qualitative feature of reality.

In Chapter 2, I lay out two *desiderata* that a form of anti-Haecceitism may or may not satisfy. I then argue that a form of anti-Haecceitism about the *Ks* (i.e., the things of a certain class) that satisfies both must rule it out that any of the *Ks* possibly has primitive, non-qualitative thisness. That is, it must hold that given every single *K*, for something to be that very *K* in particular is for it to be qualitatively a certain way. I also contend that (i.) the present debate – if correctly framed – is equally accessible to realists and nominalists about properties and relations; (ii.) the notion of a primitive thisness is not to be confused with that of a Scotusian *haecceitas*.

In Chapter 3, I distinguish the debate on metaphysical Haecceitism that is my topic from one it is at times mistaken with – i.e., the one on modal Haecceitism. I then address the question whether the issue of metaphysical Haecceitism can still (as the one about its modal ‘counterpart’) be stated in terms of supervenience. After providing reasons for a negative answer, I introduce two alternative takes on the present debate. The first one was set forth by Shamik Dasgupta: it is phrased in terms of a distinction between qualitative and non-qualitative facts and of a relation of grounding holding between them. The second strategy is the one I myself defend: it has it that to be an anti-Haecceitist about the *Ks* one must deny that any such thing may have primitive thisness. Since if something fails to have primitive thisness it must have what I call a ‘qualitative minimal individual essence’, anti-Haecceitism about the *Ks* in my sense entails that every *K* has a qualitative minimal individual essence. This entails, in turn, that the *Ks* respect a strong version of PII, the Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles.

If Dasgupta’s strategy is legitimate then this is not the case: the anti-Haecceitist can guarantee that the *Ks* do not possibly give rise to cases of primitive identity without committing to strong PII. The aim of Chapter 4 is to prove that strategy unviable. Its upshot is that a proper framing of the present debate must indeed characterize anti-Haecceitism as a view that claims that at least the fundamental entities must fail to have primitive thisness.

Chapters 5 and 6 are devoted to my case against anti-Haecceitism and for Austere Haecceitism.

In Chapter 5, I argue that anti-Haecceitism about the *Ks* is indeed committed to the claim that such things respect strong PII. After discussing such a commitment, I cast doubts on some further strategies that the anti-Haecceitist may attempt in order to avoid it – strategies that appeal, in particular, to non-qualitative individual essences, irreducibly plural individuation, or some form of eliminativism.

In Chapter 6, I develop and defend what I call a form of ‘Austere Haecceitism’. Any view that holds that some *Ks* have no qualitative minimal individual essence and that no *K* has a haecceity is a form of Austere Haecceitism about the *Ks*. My own position is that Austere Haecceitism is true about at least some *Ks*. Moreover, I hold that some such entities have strongly primitive thisness. That is, their being the very things they are does not consist in and is not determined by anything else at all. After recollecting the main tenets of my view, I defend them and the tenets of a weaker form of Austere Haecceitism, which they include, from some objections that may be raised against it.

**Keywords.** Haecceitism, Primitive Identity, Individual Essence, Individuation, Essentialism, Qualitativism.



**Résumé.** Cette thèse a pour sujet le débat entre deux théories métaphysiques : l'haeccétisme et l'anti-haeccéitisme. En substance, l'anti-haeccéitiste pense que tout ce qui est le cas est déterminé par la nature qualitative de la réalité, ce que l'haeccétiste nie.

La thèse comporte deux buts principaux. Le premier consiste à formuler et défendre une nouvelle manière de comprendre les deux théories en question. Le deuxième consiste à défendre une version de l'haeccétisme que j'appelle 'haeccétisme austère'.

Les chapitres 1-4 se focalisent sur le premier but. Dans le chapitre 1, je considère deux arguments en faveur de l'anti-haeccéitisme. J'explique que ces arguments sont représentatifs de la raison principale pour laquelle certains sont amenés à embrasser l'anti-haeccéitisme. Selon les philosophes en question, si l'haeccétisme est vrai alors ce que j'appelle des *cas d'identité primitive* peuvent se produire, et ces cas sont indésirables. En substance, un cas d'identité primitive se produit à chaque fois qu'une caractéristique non-qualitative de la réalité n'est pas fixée par le qualitatif.

Dans le chapitre 2, j'énonce deux *desiderata* qui sont satisfaits par certaines versions de l'anti-haeccéitisme. Ensuite, je défends l'idée qu'une version de l'anti-haeccéitisme au sujet des *K* (les entités appartenant à une certaine catégorie) doit éliminer la possibilité que des *K* aient identité primitive ou non-qualitative afin de satisfaire les deux *desiderata*. En somme, selon ces versions de l'anti-haeccéitisme, pour chaque *K*, être tel *K* en particulier consiste à posséder un certain profil qualitatif. J'affirme aussi que (i.) ce débat, si défini correctement, est accessible indifféremment aux nominalistes

comme aux réalistes au sujet des propriétés et de relations ; (ii.) avoir identité primitive n'est pas la même chose qu'avoir une haecceité telle que Duns Scotus le conçoit.

Dans le chapitre 3, je fais la distinction entre l'haecceitisme métaphysique – qui est le sujet principal de ma recherche – et une différente théorie qu'on appelle l'haecceitisme modal. Ensuite, j'explore la question de savoir si l'haecceitisme métaphysique peut être défini en termes de survenance. A cet effet, je fournis des raisons en faveur d'une réponse négative et je présente deux manières alternatives de définir le débat concernant l'haecceitisme métaphysique. La première alternative – défendue par Shamik Dasgupta – est formulée en termes de faits qualitatifs, faits non-qualitatifs, ainsi que d'une relation de fondation métaphysique. La deuxième alternative est celle que je défends. Selon cette dernière, l'anti-haecceitisme au sujet des  $K$  doit soutenir qu'aucun  $K$  ne puisse avoir identité primitive. Or, une entité qui n'a pas d'identité primitive est une entité qui possède ce que je définis comme une 'essence individuelle qualitative minimale'. Donc, l'anti-haecceitisme au sujet des  $K$  implique que chaque  $K$  a une essence individuelle qualitative minimale. Une deuxième conséquence est qu'une version forte du principe de l'identité des indiscernables (PII) au sujet des  $K$  est vraie.

En revanche, si la version de l'anti-haecceitisme de Dasgupta est défendue, elle n'implique pas de souscrire à une version forte du PII. Dans le chapitre 4, je montre qu'une telle version de l'anti-haecceitisme n'est pas viable. Une définition correcte du débat doit caractériser l'anti-haecceitisme comme une

théorie qui affirme qu'au moins les entités fondamentales ne peuvent pas avoir d'identité primitive.

Les chapitres 5 et 6 sont quant à eux dédiés à mes arguments contre l'anti-haeccéitisme et en faveur de ce que je définis comme l'haeccéitisme austère.

Dans le chapitre 5, je montre que l'anti-haeccéitisme au sujet des  $K$  est contraint de souscrire à l'idée selon laquelle les  $K$  satisfont le PII fort. Je discute les avantages et les inconvénients de cette obligation et je mets également en doute les différentes stratégies que l'anti-haeccéitiste peut adopter pour l'éviter.

Dans le chapitre 6, je mets au point et je défends une version de l'haeccéitisme austère. L'haeccéitisme austère au sujet des  $K$  soutient notamment qu'il y a des  $K$  qui n'ont pas d'essence individuelle qualitative minimale et qu'aucun  $K$  ne possède une haecceité. Je défends l'idée que l'haeccéitisme austère est vrai au sujet de certaines catégories d'entités. De plus, je soutiens qu'il y a des entités qui ont identité primitive au sens fort. C'est à dire, leur identité n'est pas déterminée par autre chose : il s'agit de faits bruts que ces entités sont ces qu'elles sont. Je conclus en répondant de manière systématique aux principales objections et difficultés qui sont avancées contre l'haeccéitisme austère.

**Mots-clés.** Haecceitisme, identité primitive, essence individuelle, individuation, essentialisme, qualitativisme.



Non chiederci la parola che squadri da ogni lato  
l'animo nostro informe, e a lettere di fuoco  
lo dichiari e risplenda come un croco  
Perduto in mezzo a un polveroso prato.

Ah l'uomo che se ne va sicuro,  
agli altri ed a se stesso amico,  
e l'ombra sua non cura che la canicola  
stampi sopra uno scalcinato muro!

Non domandarci la formula che mondi possa aprirti  
sì qualche storta sillaba e secca come un ramo.  
Codesto solo oggi possiamo dirti,  
ciò che non siamo, ciò che non vogliamo.

(Eugenio Montale, *Ossi di Seppia*)



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## Introduction

Among the many things that have populated our world, there is Richard Burton. Richard Burton was a famous movie star who married twice another famous movie star who got married eight times. So, among the many things that have populated our world there is one that falls under the predicate '*is a famous movie star who married twice another famous movie star who got married eight times*'. Call this complex predicate, for the sake of convenience, '*F*'. As far as I know, Richard Burton is the only entity that meets the conditions for falling under *F*. Suppose this is the case. It seems that we could still not express all we say by claiming that Richard Burton exists (or, which is the same, that there is a thing that is identical to Richard Burton) by saying that there is a thing that falls under *F*. For to start, it seems quite compelling to think that though there is actually none, there could have been things that fall under *F*, and still such that they are not identical to Richard Burton. Hence, the two predicates we are considering – '*is (identical to) Richard Burton*' and *F* – fail to have, we may say, one and the same modal profile.

Yet suppose we were told absolutely everything about how Richard Burton was from a qualitative point of view. Suppose we were also able to put all those data into words – possibly by means of an extraordinary language that would include some incredibly eloquent predicates. One of them would be the predicate *G* – it would convey a complete description of how Richard Burton was, from a qualitative point of view, and thereby exhaust Richard Burton's qualitative profile. Would we

then be able to say that Richard Burton exists by saying that a thing (and as a matter of fact only one) that falls under *G* exists? Note that semantic considerations will not be my focus here. Rather, my main concern in this dissertation will be with a particular metaphysical question that may lie behind one's answer to the questions above and to related ones. Roughly, the question may be put as follows. Given a certain entity, is it the case that for something to be *that* entity is for it to be qualitatively a certain way? One of my main aims in what follows will be to support the claim that, for at least some entities we may ask it about, the answer to that question must be negative. My primary reason will be the following. In order for us to rightly provide a positive answer to that question – when asked about *any entity* whatsoever – it should be the case that given every entity, there is a certain qualitative profile such that, for something to be that entity, it is necessarily both necessary and sufficient that it satisfies such a qualitative profile. At least under a certain understanding, such a qualitative profile would represent an individual essence of that entity (given some understandings of the notion of essence, these conditions would instead be necessary, but may fail to be sufficient, for something to qualify as an individual essence of something else. Such worries will be considered in due course). Hence, the claim that given a certain entity, for something to be that entity is for it to be qualitatively a certain way, and that this is the case for every entity whatsoever, commits one to the claim that every entity has a qualitative individual essence (under the minimal construal of an individual essence I just considered at least). Such a claim commits one, in turn, to the

idea that no two entities can have one and the same qualitative profile. For if something numerically different from me could have the same qualitative profile I have, then clearly no part of my qualitative profile would be necessarily both necessary and sufficient for being the entity that I am. There would be things (either actual or merely possible) that would be qualitatively exactly as I am, and that would still be numerically different from me. Hence, nothing about having the qualitative profile I do have would be sufficient for being the entity I am – for some things would have exactly the same qualitative profile I have without being the entity I am.

Thus, the claim that given any entity, for something to be that entity is for it to be qualitatively a certain way commits one to a particularly strong version of the Identity of Indiscernibles – PII, henceforth. Such a version of PII has it that, necessarily, no two things can be qualitatively indiscernible from one another. (As is well known, weakest forms of the Principle dictate that no two things can be indiscernible yet allow that the only feature distinguishing two things is that one is related to a certain thing in particular in a way that the other is not. Some such versions of PII are compatible, for instance, with there being two qualitatively indiscernible objects as long as one is in spacetime region  $R$  while the other is in spacetime region  $R_1$ ).

It may strike as surprising that I introduce a dissertation about Haecceitism in terms of the questions considered above. For typically, the view that is discussed under the label ‘Haecceitism’ concerns worries of a different, though in some ways related, sort – it is, roughly, a view concerning whether or

not maximal possibilities may differ in what they represent *de re* without also differing qualitatively. As per David Lewis's insight, they may thus differ, according to the Haecceitist, while the Anti-Haecceitist has it that maximal possibilities can differ in what they represent *de re* only if they differ in their qualitative character as well.<sup>1</sup> However, although I will also consider these two doctrines, my main concern is with a different topic – one that Kit Fine has labelled 'the issue of metaphysical (anti-)Haecceitism', thereby differentiating it from that of 'modal (anti-)Haecceitism' (i.e., roughly, from the one defined by Lewis).<sup>2</sup> In a paper that was originally written in 1984, Fine declares:

In contrast to the modal doctrine, metaphysical Anti-Haecceitism is a doctrine concerning the identity of individuals. It states that the identity of individuals – or, at least, of certain individuals – is to be explained in terms of their purely qualitative features or in terms of their qualitative relations to other individuals.<sup>3</sup>

I am interested in the debate between metaphysical Haecceitism and anti-Haecceitism as doctrines that may be, albeit only roughly, thus defined. I take that debate to have one of its main contemporary references in Robert Merrihew Adams's *Primitive Thisness and Primitive Identity* – an article

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<sup>1</sup> See Lewis (1986): 220-247.

<sup>2</sup> See Fine (2005): 19-39.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*: 31.

that famously starts by raising the following question ('Adams's question', henceforth):

Is the world – and are all possible worlds – constituted by purely qualitative facts or does thisness hold a place beside suchness as a fundamental feature of reality?<sup>4</sup>

However, I also think that a thoroughly accurate definition of such doctrines is yet to be found in the literature. A significant part of this dissertation will then be devoted to the elaboration and defence of my own conception of such doctrines. As I will argue, the present debate may significantly gain in clarity and completeness once such a conception is assumed.

In order to see that the debate has not yet been satisfyingly framed, consider a further bit of what Fine wrote in this concern:

Very roughly, metaphysical anti-Haecceitism is a version of the bundle theory ('there is nothing to a particular over and above its properties'), while metaphysical Haecceitism is a version of the doctrine of 'basic particulars'.<sup>5</sup>

Now on the face of it, it seems that Fine himself did not take very seriously the association of Haecceitism to a doctrine of bare particulars and of anti-Haecceitism to some sort of bundle theory. As a matter of fact, Adams had already disentangled such an association as follows:

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<sup>4</sup> Adams (1979): 5.

<sup>5</sup> Fine (2005): 31.

To deny that thisnesses [i.e., properties of being identical to a certain individual in particular] are purely qualitative is not necessarily to postulate ‘bare particulars’, substrata without qualities of their own, which would be what was left of the individual when all its qualitative properties were subtracted. Conversely, to hold that thisnesses are purely qualitative is not to imply that individuals are nothing but bundles of qualities, for qualities may not be components of individuals at all.<sup>6</sup>

However, I think that the association also arises from a further assumption that has so far dominated the debate about metaphysical Haecceitism. The assumption I have in mind in some sense precedes the one that was thus rightly disclaimed by Adams. For it has it that asking whether or not every thisness is purely qualitative – and hence whether or not thisness “holds” no “place beside suchness as a fundamental feature of reality”<sup>7</sup> – is to ask whether or not only qualities exist at the fundamental level of reality, so that the existence of individuals is in some sense derivative on the existence of qualities.<sup>8</sup>

I think that the assumption is wrong – I actually think that assuming a fundamental ontology of qualitative properties

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<sup>6</sup> Adams (1979): 7.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*: 5. As will be clear in due course, the claim that all thisnesses are purely qualitative and the claim that reality is fundamentally qualitative may as well be identified under Adams’s own reading of them two.

<sup>8</sup> I will have remarks to make about how the notion of an *individual* is employed in the context as well but let me for now use the term as (or, rather, as if it was) unproblematic.

alone is neither necessary nor sufficient in order to make sure that reality is fundamentally qualitative in one's metaphysics.<sup>9</sup> As a matter of fact, if I am right, then reality may be held to be fundamentally qualitative, in the sense that is relevant for the present debate, even in a metaphysics that is utterly nominalistic about properties (be they qualitative or otherwise). But if this is the case, then the question whether qualitative properties are components of individuals (however such a question is to be understood) not only is independent from the question whether thisnesses are purely qualitative: it may even fail to arise in the context of the latter issue – for the latter issue may be answered either way in a framework that has it that properties in general simply do not exist.

As I shall be arguing, we will have a lot to gain, theoretically, from acknowledging this point – i.e., by appreciating that the assumption I just mentioned is ill-founded. First, we will get much clearer on what the question about metaphysical Haecceitism authentically is. Second, we will be in a better position for evaluating theories that purport to answer it. For instance, it will be clear that ruling out any kind of nominalism about properties cannot be merely motivated by a need to

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<sup>9</sup> I am assuming that the term 'quality' in the quote of Adams's I am considering can legitimately be taken as a plain synonym of 'qualitative property'. In fact, I fail to see what else than a qualitative property a quality can possibly be – unless, perhaps, a qualitative feature of some entity that is *not* taken to be an entity itself, in turn. Yet in the quoted passage Adams is considering two views that take qualities to be *components* of individuals, in some relevant sense – the bare particular theory and the bundle theory. And however the notion of a quality as a component of an individual is to be understood, it seems unlikely that it can be understood in such a way that the quality in question does *not* turn out to be an entity at all.

defend some form of metaphysical anti-Haecceitism – however effectively such a need is supported.

A related assumption has it that, roughly, when it comes to Haecceitism something significant hinges on those allegedly special entities that are taken to deserve the label of *individuals*, in at least the following two, interconnected ways. i. Only (so-called) individuals are taken to be relevant as the scope of an (anti-)Haecceitist theory, so that either defending or rejecting metaphysical Haecceitism is to take a certain stance as concerns how (if at all) the identity of such things, and only of them, is qualitatively determined. ii. Such things alone – individuals – may give rise (so the thought goes) to those differences that, as will be clear in due course, the anti-Haecceitist typically aims to exclude, that is, to differences in the identity of the entities involved in some situations that are not accompanied by any qualitative difference.

I will argue that the widespread acceptance of such a twofold assumption has historical reasons (some of which are not even actually relevant to the issue of metaphysical Haecceitism, directly relating to *modal* Haecceitism instead), and that no substantive theoretical motivation lies behind them.

In view of this, my definition of metaphysical Haecceitism and related theses will in a sense be a quite general one. I will characterize the main tenet of Haecceitism as a claim about ‘the *Ks*’ – where ‘*K*’ stands for a predicate that singles out a given class of entities still yet to be specified. Given that basis, and by taking the *Ks* to be all and only those entities that are taken to be the individuals, I maintain that we can reach a sound

understanding of what Haecceitism in its metaphysical variant has (or, rather, should have) traditionally been taken to be.

Now, curiously enough, I will get to provide my definition of Haecceitism only indirectly – by contrast to what I will first suggest to be the best way to understand anti-Haecceitism. This may indeed strike as odd – at least in view of the respective labels: Haecceitism has, so to speak, a label of its own, so that we would expect that it be stated in its own right, while we would rather assume *anti*-Haecceitism to be defined as the negation of Haecceitism.

However – for reasons that will be clear in due course, and that will actually be among the most interesting parts of the story – I think that the best strategy for framing the issue is to start by considering what exactly the theoretical rationale behind anti-Haecceitism is. To make a long story short, I will argue that such a rationale consists in the aim to exclude cases of haecceitistic difference and of primitive identity.

I take haecceitistic differences to be but primitive identities of a special sort. Since the former notion is somewhat easier to characterize without facing technical difficulties, though, I will presently sketch only that one. Roughly, two situations differ haecceitistically in the relevant sense if and only if they differ merely as concerns the identities of some of the things that are involved in them, respectively.

After having appreciated this point, some theoretical work will need to be done in order to understand how the aim of the anti-Haecceitist may properly be fulfilled. I will argue that in order to effectively exclude every case of primitive identity while respecting a series of quite widely accepted *desiderata*, the anti-

Haecceitist will need to exclude there being *primitive thisnesses* in Adams's sense (*modulo* some definitional worries). And given what is meant by 'primitive' in the context (that is, approximately, 'primitive with respect to the qualitative'), this will be the same as arguing that every thisness is qualitative – or, at least, that it is in some relevant sense determined by the qualitative.

Already here it can be appreciated that Haecceitism, the direct opponent of anti-Haecceitism, may be stated as a negative claim – i.e., as the claim that it is not the case that all thisnesses are purely qualitative or somehow determined by the qualitative.

Furthermore, I will argue that the question whether all thisnesses are purely qualitative may as well be directly translated into the following question – incidentally, the one I set forth from the beginning: is it the case that for something to be identical to a certain entity is for it to be qualitatively a certain way – and is this the case for every entity (of a certain category at least) whatsoever?

While properly assessing all the notions I am making mention of, I will argue that a positive answer to this question is what the anti-Haecceitist needs to provide and defend. By contrast, a Haecceitist will be, under my approach, someone who answers *no* to that question. (Here again, there seem to be reasons for thinking that – if I am right of course – the main tenet of Haecceitism may conveniently be defined as a negative one).

Now, as I have – albeit briefly – argued above, a positive answer to that question commits one to the claim that every entity (that

is, every *K*, where the *K*s are the entities one is focusing on) has a purely qualitative individual essence. Or, at least, it commits one to the idea that given every *K*, a certain qualitative profile is such that, for something to be that *K* in particular, it is necessarily both necessary and sufficient that it has such a qualitative profile – again, relevant worries concerning whether or not essentialist notions in general, and that of an individual essence in particular, can be effectively understood in merely modal terms will be handled in due course.

In the light of all this, I will first characterize metaphysical anti-Haecceitism about the *K*s as the claim that, necessarily, every *K* has a purely qualitative individual essence (at least under the modal definition considered above), and then define metaphysical Haecceitism about the *K*s as the denial of the corresponding anti-Haecceitist tenet.

The formulation and defence of my own way to frame the debate about metaphysical Haecceitism will be the focus of the first four chapters of this dissertation.

In Chapter 1 I will introduce the notion of a case of primitive identity and consider two arguments for anti-Haecceitism that I take to be emblematic of the typical rationale behind such a view. As I said, such arguments have it that if Haecceitism is true then cases of primitive identity can possibly arise and that said cases are for some relevant reason unacceptable. Roughly, cases of primitive identity occur whenever the qualitative character of reality fails to ‘fix’ some non-qualitative feature of reality. The notions of qualitiveness and non-qualitiveness will then be characterized in the light of what they are supposed to convey within cases for anti-Haecceitism.

Diverse views have been supported by appeal to the rationale for anti-Haecceitism. In Chapter 2 I will lay out two *desiderata* that a form of anti-Haecceitism may or may not satisfy. I will argue that a form of anti-Haecceitism about the *Ks* that satisfies both must rule it out that any of the *Ks* possibly has primitive, non-qualitative thisness, and duly define such a notion. As I mentioned, I think that the present debate – if correctly framed – is equally accessible to realists and nominalists about properties and relations. After making this point, I will argue that the notion of a primitive thisness is not to be confused with that of a Scotusian *haecceitas*. I will also define the notion of *strongly* primitive thisness and argue that while if a thing has strongly primitive thisness then it must also have primitive, non-qualitative thisness, the converse does not hold.

As I said, the debate on metaphysical Haecceitism that is the topic of my work is not to be identified with the one on modal Haecceitism. After making this point, in Chapter 3 I will address the question whether the issue of metaphysical Haecceitism can still (as the one about its modal ‘counterpart’) be stated in terms of supervenience. After providing reasons for a negative answer, I will introduce two alternative takes on the present debate. The first one was set forth by Shamik Dasgupta: it is phrased in terms of a distinction between qualitative and non-qualitative facts and of a relation of grounding allegedly holding, or failing to hold, between them. The second strategy – the one I myself defend – is phrased in terms of qualitative individual essences instead. According to my strategy, to be an anti-Haecceitist about the *Ks* is not only to rule it out that any *K* may give rise to primitive identities and haecceitistic

differences; it is also to deny that any such thing may have primitive thisness. After defining the notion of a qualitative individual essence that is relevant for my framework, I will argue that if something fails to have primitive thisness then it must have a qualitative individual essence of that sort – that is, what I will call a ‘qualitative minimal individual essence’. As a result, anti-Haecceitism about the *Ks* in my sense entails that every *K* has a qualitative minimal individual essence. As I said, this entails, in turn, that no two *Ks* can perfectly resemble one another – i.e., that the *Ks* respect the strong version of PII mentioned above.

As will be clear in due course, if Dasgupta’s strategy is legitimate then this is not the case: the anti-Haecceitist can guarantee that the *Ks* do not possibly give rise to cases of primitive identity without accepting that each one of them has a qualitative minimal individual essence – hence, without committing to strong PII. Since my main charge against the anti-Haecceitist is exactly that her view has such a commitment, it is then crucial that I prove Dasgupta’s strategy to be unviable, or at least highly problematic. This will be the aim of Chapter 4. The upshot will be that a proper framing of the present debate must appeal to the notion of primitive thisness. More precisely, it must characterize anti-Haecceitism as a view that claims that at least the fundamental entities must fail to have primitive thisness.

Chapter 5 and 6 will be devoted to my case against anti-Haecceitism and for a certain form of Haecceitism.

In Chapter 5, I will argue that anti-Haecceitism about the *Ks* – at least under my construal, which turned out to be the best

one so far achieved – is indeed committed to the claim that such things respect strong PII. After discussing the merits and faults of such a commitment, I will then cast doubts on some further strategies that the anti-Haecceitist may attempt in order to avoid it – strategies that appeal, in particular, to non-qualitative individual essences, irreducibly plural individuation, or some form of eliminativism. I will argue that inasmuch as they do satisfy the rationale for anti-Haecceitism, all such views must ultimately commit to strong PII.

Finally, I will take the above to give contrastive support to the form of metaphysical Haecceitism I will develop and defend in Chapter 6. As any view that holds that (i.) there are entities that fail to have qualitative individual essences, and (ii.) none of such entities has a haecceity – i.e., a literally existing property that it would depend upon for its identity, my view is what I call a form of ‘Austere Haecceitism’. More precisely, a view that holds that some *Ks* have no qualitative minimal individual essence and that no *K* has a haecceity is a form of Austere Haecceitism about the *Ks*.

My own position is that Austere Haecceitism is true about at least some *Ks*. Moreover, I hold that some such entities have strongly primitive thisness. That is, roughly: there is at least an entity, *a*, such that for something to be *a* not only does not consist in and is not determined by its being *F*, where to be *F* is to have a given qualitative profile; it does not consist in and is not determined by anything else at all. After recollecting the main tenets of my view, I will defend them and the tenets of a weaker form of Austere Haecceitism, which they include, from some objections that may be raised against it. In particular, I

will argue that my view is not undesirably expensive, that it does not openly contradict any unquestionable interpretation of contemporary physics, and that, contrary to what some may contend, individuality is not excluded in the metaphysics I endorse.



## **Chapter 1**

### **Haecceitistic Differences and the Case for Anti-Haecceitism**

As I said, my aim in this dissertation is to characterize and defend a form of metaphysical Haecceitism. As I also anticipated, I think that in order to properly understand what Haecceitism is, we would better start by looking at the main reason that some have taken to tell *against* it. More precisely, we should first consider the typical case that anti-Haecceitists present for their view, define anti-Haecceitism on that basis, and then construe Haecceitism as the negation of anti-Haecceitism.

A reason for thus proceeding is, in a nutshell, the following. Once it is acknowledged that the issue about metaphysical Haecceitism is distinct from the one about modal Haecceitism (a point I will argue in Chapter 3), there is still the problem of precisely characterizing the former debate. The attempts towards such a task have taken, to this day, at least two very different directions. First, there is the suggestion we got from Kit Fine. Very roughly, an anti-Haecceitist about some entities would in this sense be someone who claims (while a Haecceitist about those same entities would be someone who denies) that the identity of such entities is to be explained away in terms of their qualitative profiles. (I am presently ignoring Fine's suggestion, which I see as wrong-headed, that anti-Haecceitism is some form of bundle theory while Haecceitism is a theory of bare particulars).

Second, there is a strategy that has been recently pursued by Shamik Dasgupta. Given this second approach, a Haecceitist claims (while an anti-Haecceitist denies) that at least some facts are neither qualitative nor grounded in qualitative ones.

But the theoretical oppositions that may respectively be defined in terms of such approaches – the two Haecceitisms and the two anti-Haecceitisms, so to speak – are significantly different from one another. So much so that some have attempted to defend anti-Haecceitism in the latter sense without committing to anti-Haecceitism in the former.

Still there is a common aim behind both (and, I argue, all) forms of anti-Haecceitism: it is the aim to exclude what I have called cases of primitive identity, in general, and cases of haecceitistic differences, in particular – as will be clear shortly, cases of the latter sort should be taken to be but special cases of the former. By contrast, it is not easy to make a clear sense of what the Haecceitist is up to in either of those terms without turning her view into one that it is not – or, at least, into one that it fails to *mandatorily* be.

Thus, on the one hand, against what the latter strategy I mentioned seems to suggest, the Haecceitist is not committed to there being some class of fundamental facts at all. She is not even committed to there being facts *simpliciter*, for that matter! On the other hand, the most important development of the former strategy had been provided by Robert Adams, who famously phrased the issue about Haecceitism as the question whether all thisnesses – where a thisness is a property of being identical to a given individual in particular – are purely qualitative or at least equivalent to qualitative properties. But,

as will be clear in due course, one may be either a Haecceitist or an anti-Haecceitist without taking there to be any properties at all. That is, both views are compatible with nominalism about properties – a point that easily goes unforeseen if they are phrased along the lines that Adams suggests *without* a previous understanding of what the issue about them exactly is. Again, such an understanding should be drawn, I suggest, from the typical purpose of the anti-Haecceitist – i.e., to stress once more, that of excluding cases of primitive identity.

In this chapter, I will start by introducing the notion of a case of primitive identity along with some important clarifications (§ 1.1, § 1.2). Having set such a background, I will then consider two arguments that I take to be emblematic of the typical rationale for anti-Haecceitism (§ 1.3, § 1.4). Both arguments contend that cases of haecceitistic differences are to be ruled out in view of certain considerations. Such cases possibly arise – so the thought goes – if anti-Haecceitism (in some form or another) is not true. As I said, I take haecceitistic differences to be cases of primitive identity of a particular sort. Cases of both primitive identity and haecceitistic difference are typically characterized in terms of the distinction between *qualitative* and *non-qualitative* items of reality of some sort: very roughly, they are cases in which the qualitative character of reality fails to determine or ‘fix’ the non-qualitative. Still in the light of what this amounts to according to the rationale for anti-Haecceitism, I will conclude by characterizing the qualitative–non-qualitative distinction (§ 1.5).

Before proceeding to that, though, a preliminary clarification is in order. While introducing primitive identity, I will speak of the

identity of *entities*, in general, while others typically speak of that of *individuals*, in particular. This is because (as I mentioned in the Introduction) there is a tendency to assume that the quarrel about primitive identity gets its relevance only inasmuch as facts of the matter concerning the identity of *individuals* (and not of entities of any kind) are investigated. As I also already announced, I will try to prove this assumption wrong. Until then, I will have to just keep on using this ‘mixed phrasing’ – in terms of individuals, when I quote others, and in terms of entities more generally, when I provide my own conception. I will not make any special remark about this unless an actual risk of theoretical confusion arises. After all, we may as well state the point in neutral terms, and only afterwards raise questions of scope – for instance, by asking whether only the entities of some particular category should be thought to possibly give rise to cases of primitive identity, and if this is the case, whether such a category is that of individuals. Or, at least, this may be done unless the scope of an (anti-)Haecceitist claim is presupposed in the way that claim is phrased – a point I will have to touch upon shortly.

### **1.1. Primitive Identity**

When I talk about a case of primitive identity, I mean a case in which there is a fact of the matter as concerns the identity of the entities involved in some given situation, and such a fact of the matter cannot be made to rest on further features of reality that may as well be characterized without making reference to the identity of any entity at all. In slightly different terms, we

have a case of primitive identity whenever there is a fact of the matter as concerns *which* entities are involved in some given situation, and such a fact of the matter cannot be made to rest on further features of reality that may as well be characterized without making reference to *which* entities are involved in that given situation at all.

Note that when I use the phrases ‘fact of the matter’ and ‘situation’ I do not mean to introduce any unfamiliar notions. Take any truth concerning a given entity in particular – say, the truth that *Richard Burton is divorced*. For any such truth, there is indeed a fact of the matter as concerns the identity of the entities involved in some given situation in the sense I mean. For instance, in the example given, it is *Richard Burton* that is involved in the situation of his being divorced – the identity of the entity in question matters for the content of the truth we are considering.<sup>10</sup> The same does not hold for, say, the truth that *a famous actor is divorced*.

More precisely, consider a situation in which some entities are involved. There are two possible cases.

1. It is determinate which entities are involved in the situation, or:
2. It is not determinate which entities are involved in the situation.

In turn, (1.) divides into two sub-cases:

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<sup>10</sup> Instances of the phrase ‘the identity of *x*’ may sound confusing; what I mean by them will be clear shortly.

- 1.1. That exactly *those* entities are the ones involved in the situation is determined by some features of reality that do not involve any entities in particular, and:
- 1.2. That exactly *those* entities are the ones involved in the situation is not determined by some features of reality that do not involve any entities in particular.

Only if (1.2) is the case the situation at issue faces us with a case of primitive identity.

As an example, consider the following scenario.

Consider the ship of Theseus and let me assume, for the sake of simplicity, that artefacts such as ships are enduring entities. Suppose the ship of Theseus is in the Piraeus at time  $t$ . All its wooden planks simultaneously rot away at  $t_1$ . However, something else happens at  $t_1$ : a magician replaces all the rotten planks at once with new planks. The new planks perfectly resemble the ones that were composing the ship of Theseus at  $t$ . Call the resulting ship *Theseus I*. Suppose *Theseus I* perfectly resembles the ship of Theseus as well.

Moreover, suppose at  $t_1$  a second magician builds a ship from the now rotten planks that were composing the ship of Theseus at  $t$  – suppose she places each plank exactly in the position it was occupying in the ship of Theseus. Call the resulting ship *Theseus II*.

At  $t_2$ , both *Theseus I* and *Theseus II* are in the Piraeus.

Which one is identical to the ship of Theseus?

For the sake of simplicity, let me consider only some possible answers.

- a. There is no fact of the matter. This is not to say that one of them is identical to the ship of Theseus, but it is

indeterminate which. Rather, it is indeterminate whether, at  $t_2$ , something is identical to the ship of Theseus at all.

- b. *Theseus I* is identical to the ship of Theseus. Since at  $t_2$  there is a ship that perfectly resembles the ship of Theseus, such a ship *is* the ship of Theseus.
- c. *Theseus II* is identical to the ship of Theseus, because it is composed of the same planks that once composed the ship of Theseus. Although *Theseus II's* planks are less similar to the ones that used to compose the ship of Theseus than *Theseus I's* are, *they* are the ones that used to compose the ship of Theseus. Being composed of *them* is what counts for being identical to the ship of Theseus.

Consider the situation that one might describe as *two ships that have been labelled Theseus I and Theseus II are in the Piraeus at  $t_2$* ; call it *S*. If it is determinate that one of the things involved in *S* is the ship of Theseus, then there is a fact of the matter as to which (at least some of) the entities involved in *S* are – we are in one of the cases that I described as (1.) above. This is not so if (a.) is true. It is, though, if either (b.) or (c.) is true. *S* does not face us with a case of primitive identity unless (c.) is the right answer to the little puzzle above. For if (b.) is the right answer, then there is a fact of the matter as to whether *the ship of Theseus* is involved in *S*. The ship of Theseus *is* involved in *S*. Yet this is made the case by some features of reality that do not rest on the identity of any things in particular, but only on issues of qualitative similarity between two ships. By contrast, if (c.) is true, then *the ship of Theseus's* being involved in *S* is

explained in terms that appeal to the identity of some things – i.e., of the planks that once composed the ship of Theseus. This all will be clearer in due course.

## 1.2. Clarifications

Before going on to introduce more examples and clarifications, two caveats are in order.

The first is simply this: when I talk about *primitive* identity in this sense, what I have in mind has nothing to do with whether the concept of identity is or is not analysable in terms of some other concept. Rather, I am using the term ‘primitive’ as one that is meant to apply to some features of reality with respect to others. For example, I can easily define ‘grandparent’ in terms of ‘parent’, but that does not mean that my parents are metaphysically more primitive than my grandparents. *Vice versa*, one might even think that grandparents are more primitive than parents – even if it turned out that the latter cannot be defined in terms of the former. Thus, when I say that some feature of reality is primitive *simpliciter* in the sense that is relevant here, what I mean is that it is a brute one – nothing metaphysically determines it.<sup>11</sup>

The second caveat is more substantive. When I consider facts of primitive *identity*, what I have in mind is not merely an issue of the formal properties that govern the identity relation. For such formal properties do not tell us anything about *which* entities are the ones involved in any given situation. Nor is it

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<sup>11</sup> For a related point, see Fine (2016); see in particular fn. 1.

the case that its material properties – i.e., the extension that such a relation happens to have – tell us everything that is relevant for issues of identity in the sense that is at stake here. For example, consider a situation  $S_1$  where two coins  $a$  and  $b$  that have previously been tossed are in the following configuration:

- $a$ : heads;  $b$ : tails.

Suppose nothing else than  $a$  and  $b$  exists in  $S_1$ .

The extension that the identity relation happens to have in  $S_1$  do tell us which things are there in  $S_1$ . Yet as soon as we aptly complicate the scenario, questions that are relevant for the present debate and that are left unanswered by the material properties of the identity relation may arise. To see this, consider a situation  $S_2$  where the same two coins  $a$  and  $b$  have been tossed and are in the following configuration:

- $a$ : tails;  $b$ : heads.

Suppose nothing else than  $a$  and  $b$  exists in  $S_2$ .

While the identity relation has the same extension in  $S_2$  that it has in  $S_1$ , that is:

- $\{ \langle a, a \rangle; \langle b, b \rangle \}$

the two situations differ as to which coin lends heads and which one lends tails. And this difference, too, is one that according to the anti-Haecceitist must somehow be settled by the qualitative character of  $S_1$  and of  $S_2$  or of reality more generally.

In other words, as will be clear in due course, issues of mere numerical identity with oneself and numerical difference from anything else are still purely qualitative issues about the entities one is considering. Or, at least, they count as such

under the notion of ‘qualitative’ that I will be advocating. But I will be working under the assumption that the anti-Haecceitist is someone who rejects fundamental, irreducible non-qualitative features of reality precisely in order to exclude cases of primitive identity in the sense I am trying to characterize. Hence, the features of reality that she aims to prove non-primitive cannot be such that they involve identity-issues in a merely qualitative fashion, so to speak.<sup>12</sup>

Moreover, the facts that are at issue when Haecceitism is discussed are not limited to cardinality facts – i.e., to issues concerning how many things are there, in general, or are involved in some given situation, in particular.

The point will be clear when I expose the typical anti-Haecceitist contention against those particular cases of primitive identity that I call haecceitistic differences. As we will see, the targeted difference will in each case be a difference as to *which* entities are involved in some given situation – while no difference as to *how many* entities are involved in the situations that are compared will be contemplated. But there are further ways to get to appreciate the same point, and I will but briefly sketch some of them now.

Consider, first, the familiar distinction between qualitative identity, on the one hand, and numerical identity, on the other.

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<sup>12</sup> Thus, points such as the one made in Lewis (1986): 192-193 and in Salmon (1987), roughly to the effect that something’s identity with itself and difference from anything else do not ask for explanation, can be equally well accepted by the Haecceitist and by the anti-Haecceitist as I suggest that we construe their views. See also Williamson (2013): 145. By the same token, the problem of whether identity is fundamental as addressed in Shumener (2016) does not touch the issue of Haecceitism. For Shumener investigates whether there are fundamental facts of identity and distinctness *simpliciter* – with no special focus on non-qualitative ones.

However the notion of ‘qualitative’ is to be specified, qualitative identity is a binary relation that holds both between a thing and itself and between any two things that are qualitatively just alike – if such pairs there be. Numerical identity is a binary relation too, but it does never apply to two things: it is precisely that equivalence relation that every thing has to itself, and to nothing else.

But we may wish to characterize a further sense in which we talk about identity – as a matter of fact, the one I am appealing to while using such phrases as ‘*the identity of* a certain thing’. As opposed to numerical identity – the relation that, given any thing, only can hold (and, it is standardly thought at least, *must* hold) between that thing and itself, identity in this sense may rather *prima facie* look like a property: the property of being identical to a certain thing in particular. (That exactly one thing can have such a property obviously follows from the logic of the identity relation). Thus, the notion may be directly connected to that of a *thisness* so as it was characterized by Robert Adams:

A thisness is the property of being identical with a certain particular individual – not the property that we all share, of being identical with some individual or other, but my property of being identical with me, your property of being identical with you, etc.<sup>13</sup>

Clearly, the notion should not be mistaken for that of *self-identity*, either. For, inasmuch as it is construed as a property

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<sup>13</sup> Adams (1979): 6.

at all, *being self-identical* will turn out to be one that we all share – just as *being identical to a certain individual or another*, Adams says, is.<sup>14</sup>

More about Adams’s notion of a thisness, and about my own construal and treatment of such a notion, will be said in the next chapter. I am appealing to the notion here mainly to give an idea of the sorts of questions that are at issue when identity in the sense that is presently relevant – we may call it ‘identity in the sense of thisness’ – is. Such issues are at times referred to as questions about ‘which is which’, but it is not easy to see what they are up to without considering particular cases. The ship of Theseus-case presented above is one.

An example may also be drawn from the wide-ranging definition of Haecceitism that David Kaplan provided in his (1975) “How to Russell a Frege-Church”. According to Kaplan, accepting Russellian propositions is to commit to a form of Haecceitism – where ‘Russellian’ or ‘singular’ propositions are those that “are about a particular individual in virtue of having that individual as a direct constituent”.<sup>15</sup> The first reason he presents to support this point is that “if propositions, attributes, etc. are represented in the usual way by functions on possible worlds, then in representing a singular proposition that contains an individual  $x$  we would want to assign truth to those possible worlds in which  $x$  has whatever property is attributed to him. But this presupposes that, for each world, it is a determinate question which, if any, of its individuals is  $x$ .”<sup>16</sup> By contrast, “[i]f

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. Rosenkrantz (1993): 3-4.

<sup>15</sup> Fitch and Nelson (2018).

<sup>16</sup> Kaplan (1975): 724.

we are only asked to represent general propositions, we can confine our attention, in each possible world, to considerations *internal* to the life of the world, and the *external* question, ‘But is it *x*?’ need never arise”.<sup>17</sup> The questions that Kaplan is considering here are, again, questions of identity in the sense of thisness.

It is important to see that such questions need not only arise when issues of *transworld* identity are considered. We face questions of this sort whenever we consider one or more arbitrary entities and raise what Kaplan would call ‘external’ questions as to whether it is the case that numerical identity holds between one of them and a given entity in particular that we have previously focused on and we are now, as it were, ‘holding fixed’.

For instance, we may hear that so-and-so a ship is in the Piraeus and wonder whether that ship is the ship of Theseus.

Analogously, we may hear that this and that is going on with so and so a person – say, that an expensive divorce is threatening a famous movie star – and wonder whether that person (that famous movie star) is or is not Richard Burton.

Or, which is the same, we may in the same context ask whether or not identity holds between the soon to be divorced movie star we are told about and Richard Burton.

Further examples of ‘which is which’-questions may help appreciate the point at issue. The ‘identity-questions’ that one is to consider in these cases are precisely the sort of queries

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

that stand at the heart of the cases for anti-Haecceitism I will examine in the next two sections.

First, given a certain entity, we may wonder whether or not *it* – as opposed to any other entity of the same kind – exists, or is accepted as an element of a given domain. A concern of this sort must be among the ‘external questions’ that Kaplan mentions in the passage I quoted above. For if a Russellian proposition that contains a certain individual,  $x$ , faces us with the problem of ascribing a definite answer to questions as to which individual of a given world is  $x$ , it by the same token commits us to the idea that, for every possible world, there is a definite answer to the question whether  $x$  is an individual that exists (in some sense) in that possible world.

Second, given a certain entity, we may wonder whether or not *it* – as opposed to any other entity of the same kind – is involved in a given situation, fact, or observation. The question I considered above, as to whether *Richard Burton* is the famous movie star threatened by the expensive divorce one is getting to know about, would be one of this sort.

All the questions I have considered so far are questions as to whether something is the case – in a nutshell, whether it is the case that identity holds between something and a certain entity in particular. The question of what makes that be the case – and of whether something does make that be the case at all – lies at the heart of the whole debate about Haecceitism.

As a final means to appreciating what identity in the sense of thisness consists in, we may turn to the long-standing problem of providing principles of individuation for entities of a given sort. According to a well-established tradition (one that is

endorsed, among others, by Lowe, 2005), the task that a given principle of individuation is supposed to fulfil is twofold. On the one hand, under this approach whatever individuates (in the metaphysical sense) a given entity is meant to be what makes it be *one* entity of its kind. On the other, what individuates a given entity is also what makes it be the very entity it is, in particular – say, depending on the case, *Richard Burton, you, or me*.

Issues of identity in the sense I am investigating properly concern the latter, and not the former, point. It may be thought that this is problematic inasmuch as it presupposes that the two tasks can be kept apart from one another – which may look contentious in the light of Lowe’s claim that “given that something does indeed qualify as a single object of some kind, it is hard to see how what makes it the very object that it is could fail to be what also makes it *one* object, for such an entity could not be the very object that it is without thereby being one object.”<sup>18</sup>

There are details that need not worry us here, for Lowe is mainly concerned with principles of individuation *for individual objects*, which he does take to fulfil the two tasks at once. Yet again, my present aims are broader: they do not confine to questions about the thisness of entities of any particular kind.

Even ignoring this aspect, it should be noted that Lowe’s point is hardly mandatory: after all, it could be that what makes an entity the very entity it is also makes it be *one* entity – but redundantly so, because something else (or, perhaps, nothing

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<sup>18</sup> Lowe (2005): 76.

at all) independently makes it be one entity. Moreover, even if sound, Lowe's point need not conflict with what I am claiming here – i.e., that issues as to what provides something with a certain thisness (so to speak) are issues about what makes that thing be the very thing it is and not about what makes it be *one* thing.

For I do not need to exclude that what makes something be the very entity it is also makes it be one thing – as Lowe takes it to be the case. It may by contrast seem that what I do need to deny, if anything, is that whatever makes something be one thing also, by the same token, makes it be the very entity it is, in particular. Yet as a matter of fact, I may even concede that this is the case. Maybe, given each entity, the question as to what makes it be one and the question as to what makes it be the very thing it is must be given one and the same answer. My point is simply that the two questions are distinct, and that the issue of what makes something have a given identity (in the sense of thisness) are questions of the latter, and not of the former, sort.

The general point that should be kept in mind is that all the 'which is which' questions I have considered above are questions as to which thisness a given entity has. Or, at least, they are as long as it is understood that a thing's thisness need not be conceived as a literally existing property at all – a point I will make in the next chapter (§ 2.2).

In what follows, it should then be intended that, unless otherwise indicated, when I use such phrases as 'the identity of' something I aim to refer to the thisness of that thing – that is, to that thing's being the very entity it is.

A further point I have touched upon, but not thoroughly justified so far, is that given the entities of a certain category (the *Ks*), issues of cardinality about them – issues of how many *Ks* there are, in a certain domain or context – do not exhaust issues about their identity in the sense of thisness. But this will be most clearly appreciated by looking at some cases against primitive identities.

### **1.3. A Case from Modern Physics**

This section and the next one will present two arguments that I take to be emblematic of the typical rationale behind anti-Haecceitism. Each one of them faces us with what I take to be a genuine case of primitive identity concerning entities of a given kind and contends that such cases are for some relevant reason unacceptable. Interestingly enough, as will be clear shortly, the two arguments are respectively meant to motivate the acceptance of two very different forms of anti-Haecceitism. More precisely – and in line with the construal I am advocating – each one of them is presented as a reason to accept one of the two forms of anti-Haecceitism that I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, that is, respectively: the view that the identity of the relevant entities is to be explained away in terms of their qualitative profiles, in one case, and the view that all fundamental facts are purely qualitative, in the other.

First, there is an argument that is due, in the form I will consider, to Dasgupta. However, the case has its ancestry in other arguments that were discussed at length in the philosophy of physics at least since Schrödinger and, more

generally, in the wider context of a certain contention that has broadly empiricist roots.<sup>19</sup>

Roughly, the idea is that facts of the matter that merely concern the identity of some entities lie beyond the limits of our knowledge, either in general or in the light of our best physical theories.

In the case I will consider, in particular, the aim is to support what Dasgupta calls ‘Qualitativism’, and I shall call a form of anti-Haecceitism – i.e., the view that has it that all fundamental facts about material reality are purely qualitative. His contention to this end stems from the idea that the opposite view – ‘Individualism’ in his own terms – entails that some non-qualitative (in his own terms, ‘individualistic’) facts fail to be grounded in the qualitative. And if this is the case – so the thought goes – then some aspects of reality turn out to be danglers: they are empirically undetectable and explanatorily redundant – in the light of physics from Newton Gravitational Theory (NGT) to this day.

Consider, first, Dasgupta’s case to the effect that such differences are explanatorily redundant. We are asked to take into account “the following system”:

[A] primitive individual called Peter is at an initial time  $t_0$  propelled up in the air by a slingshot, only to fall by gravity back to Earth. And now consider a different system whose initial state at  $t_0$  differs only in the fact that a different primitive individual, Paul, is slung. By hypothesis, we are

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<sup>19</sup> Morganti (2008) emphasizes the influence of Russell’s *Principle of Acquaintance* on such an attitude. See Russell (1912): chapter 5.

to suppose that Peter and Paul have the same mass, shape, charge and so on. (...) [I]f the two systems both obey NGT, then Paul will make exactly the same trajectory through space as Peter. According to NGT, the identity of each particle makes no difference to how the slingshot or the Earth's gravitational field affect it. (...) [I]t is a straightforward consequence of NGT that mere differences in individualistic facts at an initial time do not give rise to differences in the future evolution of inter-particle distances or any other difference (...).<sup>20</sup>

(The argument for the claim that primitive individuals are undetectable is more complicated, but the point I am about to make applies to it as well. In that case, Dasgupta asks us to consider a situation where there is an individual – e.g., a chair, in front of us, and to compare it with one where a numerically different chair is in front of us, but everything is exactly the same from a qualitative point of view.<sup>21</sup> Here, too, mere differences in *the identity* of entities are what is singled out as problematic – because, if the point goes through, empirically undetectable).

The relevant details and, in particular, the notion of a ‘primitive individual’ will be discussed later on, when I directly engage with Dasgupta’s particular form of anti-Haecceitism.<sup>22</sup> What is worth noting, for the present aim, is that what is said to be

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<sup>20</sup> Dasgupta (2009): 41.

<sup>21</sup> See *ibid.*: 42.

<sup>22</sup> See in particular § 3.2, § 4.1, and § 4.2 below.

unacceptable, in the light of physics from NGT onward, is a case of what I shall call ‘haecceitistic difference’. That is, it is a case of difference *merely* as concerns which entities are involved in some given situations. In other words:

Situation  $S_1$  and situation  $S_2$  **differ haecceitistically** =<sub>df</sub>  $S_1$  and  $S_2$  differ merely as concerns the identity of some of the entities they involve, respectively.

Hence, whenever two situations  $S_1$  and  $S_2$  differ haecceitistically there are some entities  $x, x_1, \dots, x_n$  that are involved in  $S_1$  but not in  $S_2$ , and there are some entities  $y, y_1, \dots, y_n$  that are involved in  $S_2$  but not in  $S_1$  – and there is no further difference between  $S_1$  and  $S_2$ .

I take cases of haecceitistic difference to be but cases of primitive identity of a special sort.

They are cases in which there is a fact of the matter as concerns which entities are involved in some given situation – and such a fact of the matter is, so to speak, a ‘contrastive’ one: there is a fact of the matter as to whether some given entities, *as opposed to some other ones*, are involved in some given situation.

Also, such a fact of the matter is *merely* one with respect to such a difference in the identity of some entities. Hence, it cannot be said to rest on – because it is not even accompanied by – any further difference that may be characterized without mentioning the identity of any entity at all.

In other words, nothing can play the role of a difference-maker for the difference at issue, because, apart from that very

difference, everything is exactly the same in the two situations that thus differ. (In the case advanced by Dasgupta, the two situations happen to be two physical systems).

Therefore, a view that is motivated by appeal to such cases being unacceptable is a view that is motivated by appeal to what I am claiming to be the typical reason that moves some to anti-Haecceitism.

Now, Dasgupta's argument is explicitly phrased in terms that appeal to the distinction between the qualitative and the non-qualitative – in particular, inasmuch as such a distinction is thought to apply to facts. That is, cases of haecceitistic differences are singled out as unacceptable in the light of post-Newtonian physics, and since such cases are characterized as cases of non-qualitative facts that are not grounded in qualitative ones, the argument against them is taken to be an argument for the idea that all facts are either qualitative or grounded in qualitative facts. Under the assumption that a fact's being fundamental is tantamount to its being ungrounded (which Dasgupta himself implicitly accepts), this entails that no non-qualitative fact is fundamental.<sup>23</sup> It may then strike as odd that I introduce the notions of primitive identities and of haecceitistic differences by considering, among other things, Dasgupta's argument *before* duly characterizing that distinction.

However, I think that this is the right way to proceed. That is, I think that we should understand what cases of primitive identity are in order to get clear on what we are trying to capture

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<sup>23</sup> I will say more on the available views about qualitative and non-qualitative facts – more precisely, about the grounding relations between them, in § 3.2.

with the ‘qualitative distinction’ as far as metaphysical Haecceitism is concerned. (I borrow the label ‘qualitative distinction’ from Sam Cowling, who uses it as applied to properties and relations. The label should be read as shorthand for ‘the qualitative *versus* non-qualitative distinction’).<sup>24</sup>

To mention but a reason for this, I think that there is some circularity – or at best a *petitio principii* – in the way the point is usually cashed out. More precisely, the notion of primitiveness that is relevant for defining primitive identity is commonly phrased in terms of the qualitative distinction – as we shall see in detail below, the cases that are targeted are cases of non-qualitative aspects of reality that are primitive with respect to the qualitative. Alongside with this, the distinction is usually characterized in terms that crucially appeal to the entities of a certain category – i.e., to those entities that, it is assumed, are at least in principle apt to give rise to cases of primitive identity. Those entities are usually taken to be (all and only) *individuals* – as we shall see, Dasgupta’s approach is no exception.

But such a move is – I will argue in due course – yet to be clearly motivated. And taking this whole approach may well be to put the cart before the horse, unless the question of which entities are apt to give rise to cases of primitive identity is faced *before* characterizing the qualitative distinction – and the notion of primitiveness here at issue – the way it has been so far.

In other words, both the circularity and the *petitio principii* may be avoided, I suggest, if we reverse the order – that is, if we first

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<sup>24</sup> See Cowling (2015).

get an understanding of what is wrong with cases of primitive identity by the anti-Haecceitist's lights (without presupposing that some entities in particular as opposed to others are apt to give rise to such cases), and then define the qualitative distinction in such a way as to capture the point about that.

#### **1.4. A Case from God's Will and the Principle of Sufficient Reason**

The second case for anti-Haecceitism I will consider is an argument for PII that was set forth by Leibniz in his correspondence with Clarke. The argument draws on the Principle of Sufficient Reason (PSR) as applied to God's will in creating the world – that is, in making a certain possible world actual. The underlying assumption is that since when God wills that a certain possible world be made actual She chooses that world that is the best among all possible ones, there must be a sufficient reason for God's choosing a certain world over another – i.e., God's will in creating the actual world must respect PSR.

The point against indiscernibles is, in the context I am considering, presented by Leibniz as a step in a broader argument against the claim that space is absolute in the actual world. The idea is that if space were an absolute being – if it were a *further* existent with respect to its occupants, then there would be indiscernible individuals: points of space (when considered in themselves, independently from what occupies them) would be. But this would lead us to accept that God's will violates PSR because – so Leibniz has it – if there actually were

indiscernible individuals then there would be worlds that are indiscernible from the actual one, and God would have had no sufficient reason for choosing between them, as She did choose when creating the actual world.

It should be noted in passing that Leibniz does not state this part of his case in exactly these terms – but I side with the very neat reading of the argument in Rodriguez-Pereyra (1999) and, in particular, with the idea that, “[s]ince God’s objects of choice, when creating, are possible worlds,” the point may as well be restated “by saying that absolute space entails the existence of different worlds between which God could have no reason to choose”.<sup>25</sup>

More precisely, according to Rodriguez-Pereyra Leibniz makes the point rest on the premise that for any world  $w_1$  containing indiscernible individuals there is a world  $w_2$  that is indiscernible from  $w_1$  and “spatially permuted” with respect to  $w_1$ . Two worlds are spatially permuted, in this perspective, if and only if they “have exactly the same particulars and differ only as to their spatial positions”.<sup>26</sup> This would be the idea behind Leibniz’s contention that points of space, if absolute and hence indiscernible, would conflict with PSR because:

[I]t is impossible there should be a reason why God, preserving the same situations of bodies among themselves, should have placed them in space after one certain particular manner and not otherwise – why

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<sup>25</sup> Rodriguez-Pereyra (1999): 431-432.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*: 434.

everything was not placed the quite contrary way, for instance, by changing east into west. (L III, 5.)<sup>27</sup>

And something similar goes, I argue, for claims such as the following:

It is an indifferent thing to place three bodies, equal and perfectly alike, in any order whatsoever, and consequently they will never be placed in any order by him who does nothing without wisdom. But then, he being the author of things, no such things will be produced by him at all, and consequently there are no such things in nature. (L IV, 3)<sup>28</sup>

For the relevant ‘indifferent options’ are options between which God would have no sufficient reason to choose. And possible worlds are the object of God’s choice.

However, Rodriguez-Pereyra says, the premise at issue fails – it is not the case that, for any world  $w_1$ , if  $w_1$  contains indiscernible individuals then there is a world  $w_2$  such that  $w_1$  and  $w_2$  are indiscernible and spatially permuted. A world such as the one that was infamously depicted in Black (1952) contains two indiscernible spheres (and nothing else). However, if such spheres are mereologically simple and if space is relative (as it is in Black’s characterization) then there is no way to obtain an indiscernible and spatially permuted world by merely modifying the positions of the spheres.

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<sup>27</sup> The present translation is from *G. W. Leibniz and Samuel Clarke: Correspondence*, edited by Roger Ariew (2002): 15.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*: 22.

For the positions of the spheres may be effectively modified only by modifying their spatial relations, which can be done, in turn, only by modifying the mutual distance between the spheres. (By simply switching the positions of the two spheres we would obtain one and the same world we have started with –  $w_{b1}$ , henceforth). Yet a world containing two spheres that are more or less distant than the spheres in  $w_{b1}$  are is a world that is *not* indiscernible from  $w_{b1}$ . And spatially permuted worlds, in order to conflict with PSR in the desired way, must be indiscernible from one another.

There is actually something slightly paradoxical here:  $w_{b1}$  (as any variation on Black's world) provides a violation of PII – the very principle Leibniz is defending. But the premise that space is relative (which is what Leibniz is ultimately arguing for in this context) would make Black's world acceptable inasmuch as the dialectic of the present argument – so as it is presented at least – is concerned. For it would make that world be one that contains indiscernibles without conflicting with PSR in the way that is at issue here: even on the hypothesis that She have made  $w_{b1}$  actual, God would not have been forced to choose between  $w_{b1}$  itself and any world that is indiscernible yet spatially permuted with respect to it!

Still, as Rodriguez-Pereyra rightly remarks, the problem for God's will respecting PSR arises from there being worlds of any sort that are indiscernible from the actual one – whether or not those are also spatially permuted with respect to it. In the light of this, Rodriguez-Pereyra says, the notion that Leibniz should turn to in order to escape the counterexample is that of what he calls 'alien-duplicated worlds'.

Any two worlds are alien-duplicated in case they are indiscernible but differ as to which individuals exist in them or, if they do not thus differ, they differ as to which individual has which property in them. For instance: supposing only spheres  $a$  and  $b$  exist in  $w_{b1}$ , a world  $w_{b2}$  that is indiscernible from it but inhabited by spheres  $c$  and  $d$  instead (where  $c$  and  $d$  are, respectively, numerically different from both  $a$  and  $b$ ) is an alien-duplicated world of  $w_{b1}$ . Furthermore, a world  $w_3$  whose only denizens are a sphere  $a_1$  that is red and a sphere  $b_1$  that is blue – where  $a_1$  and  $b_1$  are otherwise indiscernible – and a world  $w_4$  that is indiscernible from  $w_3$  and also has  $a_1$  and  $b_1$  as its only denizens but is such that  $a_1$  is blue and  $b_1$  is red in it, count as alien-duplicated as well.<sup>29</sup>

It must be noted that there are technicalities here I am not taking into account – in particular, Rodriguez-Pereyra’s analysis does appeal to the qualitative distinction, but I once again ignored this detail since I have not yet duly characterized the distinction myself. I will also not focus on the fact that, if his argument is right, then the need to take into account alien-duplicated worlds actually makes Leibniz’s own case fail.

What is worth noting for the sake of my present purpose is that the cases that Leibniz presents as unacceptable in the light of PSR are yet further cases of haecceitistic differences – and the same goes for the cases that, if the argument considered is sound, he should instead consider. They are cases in which the options (i.e., the worlds) that God is faced with, and between which She must choose, differ merely as to:

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<sup>29</sup> Melia (2003): 61 presents an example of alien-duplicated worlds (without employing the label) in order to introduce the issue of modal Haecceitism.

- a. which entities exist in them (this is the case for  $w_{b1}$  and  $w_{b2}$ ), or:
- b. which entities has which property (this is the case for  $w_3$  and  $w_4$ ), or:
- c. which points of space are occupied by which entities (as in the conjecture of God's being able to change East into West. Similarly for that of God's having to arrange in some order – as opposed to others that are indiscernible from the one She does choose – three indiscernible particles).<sup>30</sup>

Before proceeding to further points, a clarification is due. I proposed to call the ones that are targeted by such arguments as Leibniz's and Dasgupta's 'cases of haecceitistic differences'. But the notion should not be mistaken for the one in terms of which David Lewis characterized the *modal* doctrines of Haecceitism and anti-Haecceitism.<sup>31</sup> I will duly expound this point in Chapter 3.

In the light of the two arguments for anti-Haecceitism considered above, it may now be more clearly appreciated in what sense the facts of the matter that are relevant as far as cases of primitive identity are concerned do not boil down to cardinality issues. For, in each case of haecceitistic difference

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<sup>30</sup> Yet it should be noted that the latter conjecture, as opposed to the former, would be unacceptable by Leibniz's own lights even under the assumption that space is relative. For in this case the problem does not properly arise from the fact that space-points are taken to be indiscernible (because considered independently from their occupants), but from the fact that their occupants are taken to be.

<sup>31</sup> See Lewis (1986): 220-248.

such as the ones just seen, the difference – between systems, in Dasgupta’s argument, and between possible worlds, in Leibniz’s – has nothing to do with how many entities are involved in the situations at issue: the difference that is pointed out as problematic is one merely as to *which* entities are involved – respectively – in the situations one is comparing. So much so, that no difference at all in the number of entities involved is contemplated.<sup>32</sup>

### 1.5. The Qualitative and the Non-Qualitative

In the light of the considerations above, my approach towards the qualitative distinction may now be set forth.

As a preliminary *caveat*, it should be kept in mind that my attitude towards the distinction is merely, so to speak, *instrumental*: I am interested in that particular distinction that I take to be relevant for defining the issue about metaphysical Haecceitism, and exclusively in that. Providing a

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<sup>32</sup> This may seem imprecise inasmuch as, in the case about alien duplicated worlds such as  $w_{b1}$  and  $w_{b2}$ , views may differ as to how many entities there are – not in each world, respectively, but when entities in both  $w_{b1}$  and  $w_{b2}$  are considered. More precisely, if one aims to reject alien duplicated worlds, then, when faced with the case at issue, one may argue that the things that exist in  $w_{b1}$  are numerically identical to the things that exist in  $w_{b2}$ . If so, there would then be two entities in all, as opposed to four – as is assumed in the considerations above instead. Yet, first, this is not the sort of difference in cardinality that I am claiming not to arise here: my point is, rather, that no difference between how many things there are in  $w_{b1}$  and in  $w_{b2}$ , *respectively*, is contemplated (this is crucial for Leibniz because, as I stressed above, possible worlds are the object of God’s choice). Second, the claim that in the predicament at issue there are only two entities is not consistent with Leibniz’s modal metaphysics (for he is famously taken to endorse a doctrine of world-bound individuals), nor is it the least desirable in the context of his case against indiscernibles: if  $w_{b1}$  and  $w_{b2}$  do not even differ as to *which* individuals they contain, then *a fortiori*, how could the Leibnizian God possibly choose between them without violating PSR?

characterization that can do justice to every way the term ‘qualitative’ was used for further theoretical purposes (for instance, as employed in contrast to the notion of ‘quantitative’) is no part of my aims.

Moreover, I will not get into the question whether a proper *analysis* of the distinction may be provided – what cannot be done, for instance, according to Cowling (2015). Yet the distinction is crucial for the topic I am treating, and it is important that I give an idea of how I think it should be stated. Given what I have been saying so far – given, in particular, the way I characterized the anti-Haecceitist rationale in terms of primitive identities and of haecceitistic differences, it should be clear, at least approximately, what sort of distinction I have in mind. Roughly, the distinction would tell apart, among the items of some relevant class, those that involve the identity of some given entities (the non-qualitative)<sup>33</sup> from those that do not (the qualitative).<sup>34</sup> Usually, the class of *properties* or that of *attributes* (i.e., of properties and relations) is identified as the relevant one.

Since, *modulo* a worry that I will focus on shortly, the distinction I have in mind is very close to the one adopted by Adams, I will start by introducing the latter.

According to Adams, all those properties such that having them consists in being related in some way to a given individual in particular are non-qualitative; every other property is

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. Rodriguez-Pereyra (2006) for the notion of a ‘property of identity’.

<sup>34</sup> Some call the distinction I have in mind one between the *pure* and the *impure*; cf. Rosenkrantz (1979); Rodriguez-Pereyra (2006); Cowling (2015).

qualitative. So, for example, the property of *having married twice an actress that got married eight times* would be a qualitative one, while the property of *having married Liz Taylor twice* would be a non-qualitative one.

There is a further attempt to the distinction that Adams considers, but does not pursue. The thought is that:

[w]e might try to capture the idea by saying that a property is purely qualitative – a suchness – if and only if it could be expressed, in a language sufficiently rich, without the aid of such referential devices as proper names, proper adjectives and verbs (such as ‘Leibnizian’ and ‘pegasizes’), indexical expressions, and referential uses of definite descriptions.<sup>35</sup>

There is an extensive literature on such attempts to draw the distinction in linguistic terms. I will not get into the details of that debate here.

As I said, I think that the first suggestion by Adams that I considered above is very close to the one I need. But I will need to make some amendments to that. I will now briefly consider them and suggest that, if we take the motivations behind them seriously, then there are reasons to think that the distinction would better be drawn as one that applies to *predicates* instead of *properties* or *attributes*.<sup>36</sup> However, since there are also

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<sup>35</sup> Adams (1979): 7-8. Cf. Lewis (1986): 221 and Stalnaker (2012): Ch. 3 § 5 and Appendix C.

<sup>36</sup> For the idea that PII should be formulated and discussed in terms of predicates, see Ayer (1954): Ch. 2.

reasons to be dissatisfied with a distinction that applies to predicates, I will also provide two alternatives to that.

First, my aim is more general than Adams's. While Adams investigated whether *individuals* have primitive, non-qualitative thisness, my query is into whether some *entities* do – with no particular focus on individuals as opposed to other things.<sup>37</sup>

Relatedly, suppose that a thing, say, *a*, is not primitively individuated because for something to be *a* is for it be related in some way to *n* further things, say, *b*<sub>1</sub>, *b*<sub>2</sub>, ..., *b*<sub>*n*</sub>, in such a way that *a* depends on *b*<sub>1</sub>, *b*<sub>2</sub>, ..., and *b*<sub>*n*</sub> for its identity.<sup>38</sup> If so, I contend, we may still wish to deny that for something to be *a* is for it to be *qualitatively* so and so – even supposing, mind, that *b*<sub>1</sub>, *b*<sub>2</sub>, ..., *b*<sub>*n*</sub> are not themselves individuals but, say, properties.

This may strike as surprising, but I argue that it is much less odd than it looks *prima facie*. For instance, if properties are tropes, then the claim that neither they nor the things they compose or pertain to – i.e., concrete particulars – are qualitatively individuated should not sound surprising at all. Many trope theories do hold that tropes are primitively individuated.<sup>39</sup> If so, then it may well be the case that the identity of concrete particulars is determined by that of the tropes that compose them, but *not* by the qualitative profile of those tropes.

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<sup>37</sup> I will duly define the notion of a thing's having non-qualitative thisness in § 2.1. For the sake of the present claims, the reader can rely on Adams's characterization as mentioned in the Introduction and in § 1.4.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Introduction above.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. for instance Campbell (1990), Ehring (2011). For an overview, see Maurin (2016).

For if tropes are primitively individuated, then numerically different tropes may in principle be indiscernible from one another by being perfectly similar or by making the concrete particulars they compose perfectly similar under a given respect. *Ditto* for pluralities of tropes, which under the views at issue would be what provides concrete particulars with their qualitative profiles.

I think that analogous considerations hold, *mutatis mutandis*, about theories of individuation *via* haecceities à la Scotus, and also about Aristotle's thesis that an individual substance is individuated by its being composed of a given chunk of matter, in particular.<sup>40</sup>

The point about trope theory also suggests a parallel: something very similar may be claimed even if universals, and not tropes, are what confers concrete particulars their qualitative profile – and possibly also what 'composes' them, as in a bundle theory. For as a matter of fact, it is far from clear that what is commonly taken to differentiate particulars (in this case, tropes) from universals – i.e., their spatiotemporal behaviour – would make for a sufficient difference in this regard.

In the light of this, I think that not only the scope of (anti-)Haecceitism, but also the qualitative distinction should be generalized: it should not be taken to be one that mandatorily appeals to individuals.

A first attempt would consist in amending Adams's definition as follows: *all and only those properties such that having them*

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<sup>40</sup> More on this in § 2.3, § 3.3.2, and § 4.1 below.

*consists in being related in some way to a given entity in particular are non-qualitative.*

But this faces us with an obvious problem: the definition may seem to trivialize the qualitative distinction by turning every property into a non-qualitative one. For virtually any property may be understood as a property of being related in a certain way to – i.e., by instantiating – a given entity, that is, a property, in turn. For example, the property of *being wise* may be construed as the relational property of *instantiating wisdom* – one that fulfils the definition just suggested. Yet the property of *being wise*, one would wish to say, is a paradigmatically qualitative one.

Even worse, it seems that if, by adopting the definition, we take *instantiating wisdom* to be non-qualitative, albeit sticking to the idea that *being wise* is qualitative, we do not any more have the option of holding the property of *being wise* to be the property of *instantiating wisdom*. Yet the whole point of accepting such an entity as *wisdom* in one's ontology, and to hold that such a thing may be instantiated, is exactly that this should allow one to explain what it is for something to be wise!

Yet this problem is avoided if, as I suggest, the qualitative distinction is drawn at the level of predicates. For then the predicate '*instantiates wisdom*' may be classified as non-qualitative, and '*is wise*' as qualitative, although the two are taken to refer to one and the same entity – i.e., *wisdom*.

A further reason to draw the distinction at the level of predicates is the following. Given the qualitative distinction I am considering and given that *thisnesses* are understood as properties of being identical to a certain thing in particular, it

would seem that such properties would by default qualify as non-qualitative. For being identical to a certain thing *is* to be related in a certain way (i.e., *via* the identity relation) to that very thing.

But this seems to beg the question against someone who may wish to argue that every thisness *is* a qualitative property instead. For instance, one may wish to claim that Richard Burton fails to have primitive identity not only because *being so-and-so* is what makes something be Richard Burton, but because *being Richard Burton* and *being so-and-so* are one and the same.

The issue is raised by Adams, who ascribes to Leibniz the idea that thisnesses are nothing but complex suchnesses.<sup>41</sup> He tries to solve the problem by characterizing basic suchnesses first, and by claiming that every property obtained by logical or epistemic operations out of basic suchnesses will itself be purely qualitative – a complex suchness.<sup>42</sup>

However, the problem is as elegantly solved under my approach. For if the qualitative distinction is drawn at the level of predicates, we can take ‘*is Richard Burton*’ to be non-qualitative and still hold that *being Richard Burton* and some appropriate, purely qualitative *being so-and-so* are one and the same entity – i.e., the same property.

Finally, the choice of drawing the distinction at the level of predicates fits most naturally with my general approach – in particular, with my claim, which I will support in § 2.2, that the

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<sup>41</sup> Cf., e.g., § 8 of the *Discourse on Metaphysics*, where Leibniz refers to the purely qualitative complete individual concept of Alexander the Great as his *haecceitas*.

<sup>42</sup> Adams (1979): 8-9.

present issue should be phrased in terms that are compatible with nominalism about properties and relations.

Here is a proposal for how to characterize the notion of non-qualitativeness as applied to predicates:

***P* is a non-qualitative predicate** =<sub>df</sub> For some designators  $b_1, b_2, \dots, b_n, n \geq 1$ , and some  $n+1$ -ary predicate  $R$ , the predicate  $P$  and the predicate  $R, b_1, \dots, b_n$  are synonymous.

Since it is understood that the distinction between the qualitative and the non-qualitative is mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive of the class it applies to, every predicate that is not non-qualitative in this sense will therefore count as a qualitative one.

As I mentioned, however, one might well be dissatisfied with a qualitative distinction that applies to predicates – and, in particular, with the idea that two predicates can fall on different sides of the distinction although standing for the same property or feature. For this might seem to deprive the qualitative distinction itself of its metaphysical significance.

Moreover, one might contend that there may be more ways for things to be than are expressed in our language, or in any language.<sup>43</sup> Here is then an alternative in terms of properties:

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<sup>43</sup> See Stalnaker (2012), Appendix C, for an attempt to develop “a mighty language” that would provide all the needed tools for exhaustively defining the qualitative distinction.

**$P$  is a non-qualitative property** =<sub>df</sub> For some things  $b_1, b_2, \dots, b_n, n \geq 1$ , and some  $n+1$ -ary relation  $R$ , the property  $\lambda x Px$  is identical to the property  $\lambda x R(x, b_1, \dots, b_n)$ .

Under this alternative, some problems I mentioned above threaten: *instantiating wisdom* would seem to count as non-qualitative, and so would all thisnesses.

However, one may solve the latter issue by taking this definition to capture basic non-qualitative properties alone, and then follow Adams's strategy in allowing that thisnesses may be qualitative properties – albeit not basic ones.

And there are presumably ways to take care of the former worry too. Although seemingly *ad hoc*, one would be to exclude that the  $n+1$ -ary relation  $R$  in question may be instantiation. A further one may be to argue that *instantiating wisdom* does not count as non-qualitative anyway inasmuch as *wisdom* is taken to be a universal – i.e., not a thing of the sort we would refer to by means of an individual constant.<sup>44</sup>

Moreover, I do think that even the property of being wise might be construed in such a way as to make it count as non-qualitative for the sake of the present debate.

Suppose, for instance, that *being wise* is the same property as *agreeing with the wisest man on everything* – where  $a$  is the wisest man.

Suppose, now, at a subsequent time  $a$  is not the wisest man anymore:  $b$  is.

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<sup>44</sup> Cf. the form of nominalism defended in Goodman (1956).

I ask: is the property of being wise still the same as the property of agreeing with *a* on everything? Or is it the property of agreeing with *b* now? If the latter is the case, then *being wise* is qualitative indeed. But if the former is the case, I argue that *being wise* should count as non-qualitative for the sake of the present debate.

For if the former is the case, then the claim that being wise is what makes something be *c* commits to the idea that *c*'s identity depends on the identity of *a*. In effect, *c* is the thing it is by virtue of agreeing on everything with *a* – not just with any thing that happens to be the wisest man. If *a* is not the wisest man anymore, agreeing with the (new) wisest man does not make one wise anymore – and it is not a sufficient condition for making one identical to *c*.

To make a more general point, let us assume that *being wise* is qualitative. The idea that this being so, *instantiating wisdom* must also be qualitative rests on several assumption. Among them, I argue, is the idea that there is exactly one thing that is wisdom and that every wise thing instantiates that one thing – so that issues like the one about the once wisest man *a* and the now wisest man *b* above cannot possibly arise. But this is hardly mandatory. If there were indiscernible universals, it might be that Abram instantiates one universal of wisdom while King Solomon instantiates a numerically different one.

And while the notion of indiscernible universals might seem exotic, this is exactly what happens, *mutatis mutandis*, according to trope theories.

In view of this, and for further reasons I will expound in § 2.1, I take it that a qualitative distinction that does suit my present aims must be hyperintensional.<sup>45</sup>

Two further worries should be considered before moving on. First, a problem may seem to stand still with such expressions as '*Leibnizian*' or '*pegasizes*', which do not clearly count as non-qualitative predicates according to my definition, and yet are commonly taken to stand for paradigmatically non-qualitative properties. In this concern, my approach will have to count on the idea that whenever an expression of this sort *does* stand for some non-qualitative way for something to be, it is indeed synonymous with a predicate of the form ' $R \_, b_1, b_2, \dots, b_n$ ', for some  $n+1$ -ary predicate  $R$  and some designators  $b_1, b_2, \dots, b_n$ . For instance, '*is Leibnizian*' will count as non-qualitative inasmuch as it is understood as synonymous with, e.g., '*was first thought by Leibniz*' or some other predicate that something satisfies if and only if it is related some way or another to Leibniz. By contrast, one may doubt that '*pegasizes*' should count as non-qualitative because there is no such thing as Pegasus to be related to. Unless perhaps '*pegasizes*' is synonymous with a predicate such as '*is called Pegasus*' and *being called 'Pegasus'* is a way to be related to the very name-type 'Pegasus'. I leave the option open that someone who holds this to be the case may wish to count '*is called 'Pegasus'*' as non-qualitative after all.

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<sup>45</sup> See also Hoffmann-Kolss (*forthcoming*).

Second, one may argue that if stating the distinction at the level of predicates is a problematic move, then it is not true that the debate about Haecceitism may be phrased in nominalistic-friendly terms after all.

But there may be other strategies. For instance, although I will not explore the proposal in detail here, one may appeal to a primitive notion of resemblance so as it is employed in developing resemblance nominalism.<sup>46</sup>

A further proposal employs second-order non-committal notions as per the approach set forth in Rayo and Yablo (2001) in order to introduce a nominalistic-friendly qualitative distinction that does not apply to predicates.

An example is the following.

**$P$  is a non-qualitative way for something to be** (or, formally:  $\Phi P$ , where ‘ $\Phi$ ’ is an operator that takes a predicate to form a sentence) =<sub>df</sub> For some things  $b_1, b_2, \dots, b_n, n \geq 1$ , and some  $n+1$ -ary  $R, P \cong$  is  $R$ -related to  $b_1, b_2, \dots, b_n$  (in this order).

In the definition above:

- ‘ $R$ ’ is a second-order variable;
- ‘ $\Phi$ ’ is a third-order operator;
- ‘for some  $n+1$ -ary  $R$ ’ is a second-order quantifier *that must be read as non-objectual*. As a result, ‘ $R$ ’ need not stand for an entity at all;

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<sup>46</sup> See, in particular, Rodriguez-Pereyra (2002). The idea that something, say,  $a$ , has primitive thisness may then presumably be stated, for instance, as the claim that it is not the case that for something to be  $a$  is for it to exactly resemble  $a$ . Cf. § 2.1, § 2.4 below.

- ' $P$ ' is a second-order predicate that also expresses a way for something to be without standing for a literally existing entity at all;
- ' $\cong$ ' is an equivalence operator that takes a pair of predicates to make a sentence. The intuitive meaning of ' $F \cong G$ ' is that ' $F$ ' and ' $G$ ' express the same way for something to be.

While the equivalence operator ' $\cong$ ' expresses something like identity between ways for something to be, it does not express identity between any two *things* – for predicates do not stand for existing things under the present approach at all.

This might strike as odd, but I think that some familiar metaphysical theories do rely on a similar notion as well. For instance, consider the view that there are tropes and that there are no universals. Consider two tropes of redness,  $Red_1$  and  $Red_2$ .  $Red_1$  is instantiated by this hat while  $Red_2$  is instantiated by that shirt. (Let me ignore, for the sake of simplicity, how exactly the instantiation of tropes is to be conceived). If the hat and the shirt are of exactly the *same* shade of red, then  $Red_1$  and  $Red_2$  are such that the things that instantiate them are the *same way* under a certain respect. Using a second-order non-objectual quantifier, we could then say that there is a way for something to be such that the hat is that way because it instantiates  $Red_1$ , and the shirt is that way because it instantiates  $Red_2$ . In quite the same sense, the definition above appeals to the notion of a way for something to be such that two different predicates might express it.

Now, absent further qualifications, this would also count all thisnesses as non-qualitative. However:

1. it counts *being wise* as a qualitative way for something to be (for of course there is no room for the notion of instantiation under a nominalistic reading of second-order notions), which at least under a traditional view of such a feature is desirable;
2. it seems that it would give the right result with cases such as *being Leibnizian* as well. For instance, suppose for that '*is Leibnizian*' expresses the same as '*was first thought by Leibniz*'. *Being Leibnizian* would then rightly count as a non-qualitative way for something to be.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Identity as Thisness**

I singled out the aim to rule out cases of primitive identity as the main rationale for anti-Haecceitism. As anticipated, diverse views have been supported by appeal to such a rationale. In this chapter, I will lay out two *desiderata* that an anti-Haecceitistic metaphysics may or may not satisfy. I will also argue that forms of anti-Haecceitism about the *Ks* that satisfy both *desiderata* are committed to the claim that no *K* has non-qualitative thisness, and duly define such a notion (§ 2.1). I will then contend that the notion of non-qualitative thisness, and the present debate more generally, may well be stated in terms that are compatible with nominalism – i.e., with the view that there are no such things as properties or relations (§ 2.2). In particular, I will argue that claiming that a thing has non-qualitative thisness is not to claim that such a thing has a *haecceitas* as per the view that is traditionally ascribed to John Duns Scotus (§ 2.3). Finally, I will introduce the notion of strongly primitive thisness (§ 2.4). While the claim that a thing has strongly primitive thisness entails that such a thing has non-qualitative thisness, the converse entailment, I will argue, does not hold.

#### **2.1. Cases of Primitive Identity and Things with Primitive Identity. Non-Qualitative Thisness**

As I said, the aim that is common to arguments for anti-Haecceitism such as the two I considered in Chapter 1 and to

others along the same lines is that of excluding cases of haecceitistic differences and of primitive identity more generally.

Yet as I already emphasized, significantly diverse versions of anti-Haecceitism have been defended in the light of such arguments – depending on which strategy one is to take as a means to rule out the targeted cases.

In particular, Leibniz takes the violation of PSR that haecceitistic differences would give rise to as reason to defend PII – as applied to both worlds and individuals. By contrast, Dasgupta is eager to declare that the version of anti-Haecceitism he defends – i.e., Algebraic Generalism – is not committed to PII and, in particular, that it can embed such possibilities as that of a world where nothing exists but two perfectly indiscernible individual objects, just as the one described in Black (1952).<sup>47</sup>

More precisely, a stronger commitment to PII is part and parcel of Leibniz's mature metaphysics – at least as it was presented in the *Discourse on Metaphysics* and in the correspondence with Arnauld. The idea would be not only that PII must hold as a general truth – that no world can be inhabited by numerically distinct individuals that are perfectly alike – but also that every instance of PII is true because, given an individual, *a*, *a*'s qualitative profile is such that nothing but *a* actually or possibly has that very qualitative profile, and that the same is

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<sup>47</sup> See Dasgupta (2009): 47-50; (2014): 7; (2017): § 3.

true about every possible individual and its own qualitative profile.<sup>48</sup>

This particular aspect of Leibniz's commitment to PII does not follow from the argument I considered in the previous section. Leibniz argues for it, rather, from his theory of truth as containment and from his particular conception of what individuals – i.e., individual substances – are. Both lines of reasoning are set forth in the *Discourse* and further supported in the letters to Arnauld.

More precisely, the complete individual concept that is associated with each individual substance conveys – at least under a widely accepted interpretation of Leibniz's thought – an individual essence of the individual in question.<sup>49</sup> If the relevant interpretation is sound, then Leibniz's view is committed to anti-Haecceitism exactly in the sense I aim to single out and argue against: he is someone who holds, about the entities of a certain category (i.e., about individual substances) that each one of them has a purely qualitative individual essence.<sup>50</sup>

But I will not presently attempt to support that interpretation, nor (yet) to cast doubts on such a form of anti-Haecceitism.

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<sup>48</sup> The version of PII that Leibniz seems to have defended itself is also stronger than the one I just mentioned in the main text. In Rodriguez Pereyra's words, "[t]he texts suggest that for Leibniz there cannot be two *intrinsically* perfectly similar things", and since for him "quantitative differences are extrinsic differences", this would entail "that *no two things can differ in size alone*". Rodriguez-Pereyra (2014): 29, italics mine.

<sup>49</sup> See, for instance, Cover and O'Leary-Hawthorne (1999); Di Bella (2005); Rodriguez-Pereyra (2006). The point seems to be implicit also in Adams (1979) and Adams (1981).

<sup>50</sup> But see O'Leary-Hawthorne and Cover (1996) for how diverse strands of Leibniz's thought – including his essentialism – relate to modal Haecceitism as defined in Kaplan (1975). See also Mondadori (1973) for the idea that Leibniz's doctrine of complete individual concepts anticipates Lewis's counterpart theory in significant respects.

Rather, I aim to remark that *if* the construal of Leibniz's metaphysics I just mentioned is correct, then such a view is a form of anti-Haecceitism, also, exactly of the sort that Adams has in mind in the passages I have quoted in the Introduction. So much so, that Adams presents Leibniz as "the archetypal believer in a purely qualitative world" in the sense that he takes him to hold that each thisness is a complex suchness – that is, a purely qualitative property.

To recall some more terminology from the Introduction, if Adams is right then Leibniz's metaphysics has it that, given an arbitrary individual, for something to be identical to that very individual is for it to be qualitatively a certain way – i.e., it is for it to have a certain qualitative individual essence: the one that is conveyed by that individual's complete individual concept.<sup>51</sup> By contrast, the same cannot be said about the form of anti-Haecceitism that Dasgupta advocates. In this concern, I will now introduce two *desiderata* that a form of anti-Haecceitism – in the neutral sense of a view that endorses some given metaphysical claims in order to exclude cases of primitive identity – may or may not satisfy.

I will call the first 'identity-explanation'. Roughly, a form of anti-Haecceitism fulfils such a requirement if and only if it gets rid of every case of primitive identity concerning the entities of a given kind (say, the *Ks*) by providing, also, a principle of individuation for all the *Ks* involved in a given situation.<sup>52</sup> As a result, no fact as to which *Ks* are involved in a given situation fails to be determined by some further facts of the matter. Very

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<sup>51</sup> For more on the notion of an individual essence, see § 3.3 below.

<sup>52</sup> See § 1.2 above for the relevant notion of individuation.

roughly, this is because a situation involves some given *Ks* in particular precisely by involving those *Ks* that are so-and-so (where their being so-and-so is what makes them be the very things of their kind they are).

As regrettably unrefined as this characterization is, there is no easy way to provide a clearer one without presupposing the second *desideratum* I shall set forth. I call this further requirement ‘distributiveness’. In a nutshell, distributiveness requires that cases of primitive identity are altogether excluded because *each* one of them is. No ‘which is which’-question is then left unanswered because each and every fact as to which entity is involved in a given situation can be made to rest on some further fact of the matter.

In a view that satisfies both *desiderata*, each ‘which is which’-question concerning some *K* is settled by the qualitative because each and every *K* is such that for something to be that very *K* is for it to have some qualitative profile. In other words, under such a view, for a given *K* – say, *a* – to be involved in a situation is for a thing that is *F* to be involved in that situation. The reason for this is that for something to be *a* is for it to be *F*, where being *F* conveys part of *a*’s qualitative profile. The same holds, *mutatis mutandis*, for each and every one of the *Ks*. If the interpretations of Leibniz I follow are right, then this is the case in his metaphysics – at least when the *Ks* are taken to be the individual substances.

By contrast, if distributiveness alone is satisfied, then something about the qualitative reality always determines which *Ks* are involved in any given situation, but it may not be

the case that the *Ks* at issue are, by the same token, individuated by some purely qualitative means.

We may then state the requirement set forth by distributiveness as follows:

**Distributiveness.** There are no cases of primitive identity involving some *Ks* because each and every ‘which is which’-issue concerning a *K* is settled by the qualitative reality. Hence, not only all cases of primitive identity are excluded: they are excluded one by one – i.e., each one of them is.

Finally, if identity-explanation is fulfilled, but distributiveness is not, the view in question is one that gets rid of all cases of primitive identity concerning the *Ks* by providing a qualitative principle of individuation for all of the *Ks* – but not for each one of them, or, which is the same, not for all of them one by one.

Doubts may be raised as to whether this can as a matter of fact be done – as to whether, that is, some entities may be individuated as a plurality even if it is not the case that each one of them is individuated itself. I will not attempt to assess such a point here, although I will have to get back to it later on. We may define the requirement that identity-explanation (as considered independently, at least in principle, from distributiveness) faces us with as follows:

**Identity-explanation.** There are no cases of primitive identity involving some *Ks* because the *Ks* are individuated by the way they are, qualitatively. As a result, a situation’s

involving some *Ks* in particular is always a matter of how the *Ks* involved in that situation qualitatively are. That is why ‘which is which’-issues concerning the *Ks* are always settled by the qualitative reality.

Now, in slightly different terms, we may also say that a form of anti-Haecceitism that fulfils the two *desiderata* above does not merely exclude every case of primitive identity involving the *Ks*, but also denies that any of the *Ks* *has* primitive identity. That is, such a view also has it that no *K* has primitive thisness. (As will be clear shortly, ‘primitive’ here should be read as short for ‘primitive with respect to the qualitative’).

A given thing, *b*, has primitive thisness, in this sense, if and only it is not the case that for something, *x*, to be identical to *b* is for it to be *G* – for some qualitative *G*.

To see why ruling it out that some entities may have primitive thisness in this sense is also to exclude that there may be cases of primitive identity, consider the following.

The anti-Haecceitist has a problem with those facts of the matter that may be described as follows:

- i. *a* *Fs*;

(Where *a* is a certain entity in particular, say: Richard Burton, and for *a* to *F* is for it, as opposed to any other entity, to be involved in a given situation – say, to be slung by a slingshot, as in Dasgupta’s case, or to exist in a given possible world, as in Leibniz’s).

More precisely, the anti-Haecceitist aims to claim that all such facts of the matter as the one described by i. may be made to rest on some further facts of the matter. Now, arguably, the situation described by i. is also one we may describe as:

ii. the thing that *is identical to a Fs*

But if *a* does not have primitive thisness, then there is some qualitative *G* such that for something to be identical to *a* is for it to *G*. Hence, the fact of the matter we described by i. and by ii. may be made to rest on a further one to the effect that:

iii. the thing that *Gs Fs*.

The anti-Haecceitist will then need to hold that the fact of the matter described in i. is determined by the one described in iii. – again, in a sense that will have to be duly characterized – and that the same holds, *mutatis mutandis*, in any predicament of the same sort. Or, she may be an eliminativist about thisness and which-issues altogether, and contend that in any such case the relevant fact of the matter that may be described along the lines of i. or ii. is nothing but a fact of the matter of the same sort as iii. is. If Adams is right about Leibniz – if Leibniz is someone who takes thisnesses to *be* complex suchnesses, then presumably he could have, at least in principle, delivered a claim along these lines.

We may define what it is for something to have primitive thisness by making appeal to properties as follows:

**$a$  has primitive (i.e., non-qualitative) thisness\*** =<sub>df</sub> it is not the case that there is some qualitative property  $F$  such that for something to be  $a$  is for it to have  $F$ .

However, since I want my framework of the debate to be nominalistic-friendly, this cannot be my own take on the notion. Hence, my official approach will assume the following definition instead:

**$a$  has primitive (i.e., non-qualitative) thisness** =<sub>df</sub> it is not the case that  $\exists F$  such that  $Q(F)$  and for something  $x$  to be  $a$  is for it to be the case that  $Fx$ .

In the definition above, ' $F$ ' is a second-order variable and  $Q$  is a third-order condition that captures qualitiveness. As in the last qualitative distinction I proposed in § 1.5, the second-order quantifier must be read as non-objectual and the second-order predicate it binds must be read as expressing a 'way for things to be' without standing for a literally existent entity; see Rayo and Yablo (2001).

Roughly, the definition would read as follows:  $a$  has primitive, non-qualitative thisness iff<sub>df</sub> there is no qualitative way  $F$  for something to be such that for something  $x$  to be  $a$  is for it to be the case that  $x$  is  $F$ .

One might even propose a definition in terms of predicates as follows:

**$a$  has primitive (i.e., non-qualitative) thisness<sub>pred.</sub>** =<sub>df</sub> it is not the case that for something to be  $a$  is for it to satisfy ' $F$ ', where ' $F$ ' is a qualitative predicate.

However, this would seem to undercut the link between the notion of thisness and that of individuation. For indeed, few are likely to maintain that a thing is individuated by its satisfying some predicate.

The reason why I maintain that the qualitative distinction must be hyperintensional may now be appreciated by way of an example. *Being identical to the number 2* should count as non-qualitative, while *being the smallest natural even number* should count as qualitative, under my approach. Indeed, I do hold that since for something to be identical to the number 2 is for it to be the smallest natural even number, the number 2 (if such thing there be) does not have primitive thisness. The same conclusion cannot be reached by claiming that for something to be identical to the number 2 is for it to be identical to the number 2.

As for the two *desiderata* considered above, it should by now be clear that a form of anti-Haecceitism about the  $K$ s that aims at fulfilling both should commit to the claim that no  $K$  has non-qualitative thisness. As will be clear in due course, various forms of anti-Haecceitism may be classified with respect to whether or not they engage with either *desideratum*.

As a matter of fact, some anti-Haecceitists have attempted to exclude cases of primitive identity while sidestepping issues of primitive thisness altogether – exactly by refusing to satisfy one or both *desiderata*. Since my main case against anti-Haecceitism properly targets those forms of the view that hold that no *K* has primitive thisness, proving such attempts unsuccessful will play a crucial role in my argumentation.

## 2.2. Nominalism

As I already mentioned, when I talk of a thing's *thisness* this should not be taken to mandatorily stand for a property in an ontologically committing sense.

More generally, I take there to be no reason why a nominalist about properties should not be eligible to take part in the present debate – which, I will be arguing, must be stated in terms that do appeal to the notion of primitive thisness.<sup>53</sup>

By 'nominalism', here, I mean any view that holds that there are no such things as properties or relations. A nominalist in my sense is then someone who denies not only that there are universals, but also that there are tropes.<sup>54</sup>

Indeed, I contend, one may deny there to be any literally existing property of being identical to a certain thing in particular – and any literally existing property whatsoever, for that matter! Still, as long as a certain entity – say, Richard Burton – is admitted as part of one's ontology and is taken to be a possible value of an individual variable, and a possible

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<sup>53</sup> Cf. Chapter 4 below.

<sup>54</sup> See Rodriguez-Pereyra (2016) for an overview.

referent of an individual constant, in first-order logic with identity, one would want to be able to meaningfully say such things as ‘there is something that is identical to Richard Burton’ or, which is the same, ‘something is Richard Burton’. And one may at that point end up wondering whether such a truth and others of the same sort are among the ultimate, most basic ones about reality – again, even if one is not taking *being Richard Burton* to be a property in any ontologically committing sense. I take the rationale for anti-Haecceitism that I introduced in the previous chapter to be incompatible with the claim that they are.

Relatedly, it should be kept in mind that under my approach the question whether a certain entity *is Richard Burton* and the question whether that same entity *has the thisness of Richard Burton* are one and the same. For the question whether a certain entity is Richard Burton is indeed the question whether that entity has the thisness of Richard Burton inasmuch as it is duly appreciated that for something to have a certain thisness simply is for something to be identical with a given thing – whether or not thus being is to be construed as a property in a substantive sense at all.

That thisnesses need not be existing properties was also remarked by Adams:

It may be controversial to speak of a ‘property’ of being identical with me. I want the word ‘property’ to carry as light a metaphysical load here as possible. (...) We could

probably conduct our investigation, in somewhat different terms, without referring to thisnesses as properties (...).<sup>55</sup>

Part of my aim in this dissertation is that of both vindicating Adams's purpose in formulating his contention about primitive thisness and providing a phrasing of that same investigation that does not refer to thisnesses as properties. However, Adams seems to think that a substantive notion of a qualitative property is still needed in order to make sense of the debate about metaphysical Haecceitism. I, by contrast, attempt to phrase the *whole* point in terms that are 'nominalistic-friendly' – as concerns, so to speak, *both* the qualitative and the non-qualitative.

I see no reason, indeed, why a nominalistic-friendly notion of a qualitative feature should not be assumed for the sake of the present debate. As a matter of fact, I already provided two in § 1.5 above.

More generally, a nominalist need not be someone who denies that things come with a qualitative profile. She just needs to account for things' having a qualitative profile without appealing to the idea, which she rejects, that they do by having certain qualitative properties or by standing in certain qualitative relations. If she can do so, she can also accept, in principle, either of the following claims:

1. there is at least one possible thing that has primitive thisness. Supposing this thing is *a*, this means that for

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<sup>55</sup> Adams (1979): 7.

no qualitative way to be, for something to be *a* is for it to be that way;

2. claim 1. is false: no possible thing has primitive thisness.

As can be seen from what I said in § 2.1, the latter claim would entail that no case of haecceitistic difference can possibly arise – given the framework I am working with, it then counts as a form of anti-Haecceitism. The former claim, as will be clear in due course, contradicts a certain form of anti-Haecceitism and counts as a form of Haecceitism. Hence, both positions are in principle compatible with nominalism about properties and relations.

An analogous remark should be made as concerns a metaphysically committing fact-talk being unneeded in stating the present issue. I will say more on this in Chapter 4 and in Chapter 6. However, it may already be appreciated that since claim 2. above rules it out that any case of haecceitistic difference can possibly arise, it also does justice to the rationale for anti-Haecceitism without *prima facie* committing to an ontology of facts at all.

### **2.3. Haecceity and Thisness**

As I said, at least some forms of anti-Haecceitism – that is, those that get rid of every case of primitive identity concerning the *Ks* by respecting both identity-explanation and distributiveness – must commit one to the claim that no *K* has non-qualitative thisness. Forms of Haecceitism that oppose

such views will then endorse the claim that at least some *K* does have non-qualitative thisness.

Now, although ‘thisness’ is a literal translation of the Latin ‘*haecceitas*’ (a term that is commonly ascribed to John Duns Scotus), it is crucial that the two notions be kept duly distinguished.<sup>56</sup>

As a matter of fact, it should go by itself, from what I said in the previous section, that an entity having non-qualitative thisness is not the same as that very same entity having a *haecceitas* so as Scotus (and others) have characterized the concept.<sup>57</sup> For, as is well known, a Scotusian *haecceitas* must be a property in a robust sense. So much so, that in order to make full sense of a theory of individuation through *haecceitates* as per Scotus’s original suggestion, a form of extreme realism will have to be endorsed at least as concerns *haecceitates* themselves.<sup>58</sup>

Still the point is worth focusing on in some detail, not only for historical reasons (the debate about Haecceitism does have its roots, after all, in the one concerning the notion notoriously ascribed to Scotus), but also for theoretical ones. The fact that

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<sup>56</sup> Some protest that the notion of a *haecceitas*, if not the term, is actually due to Boethius – not to Scotus. See, for instance, Plantinga (1976): 149; (1978). I will not get into such a philological issue here.

<sup>57</sup> I take both Alvin Plantinga and Gary S. Rosenkrantz to closely follow Scotus in their construal and use of the notion of a haecceity – at least in all the respects that are relevant for the present debate. More on this in due course.

<sup>58</sup> Consistently with this, Gary Rosenkrantz argued at length that we should accept a form of extreme realism about properties because such a view is entailed by the acceptance of *haecceitates* as literally existing entities that individuate their bearers, and *haecceitates* of this sort are required by the best theory of individuation for particulars one may provide. See Rosenkrantz (1993): x; 53-54; 88-89; 132; 138; 148-149. For analyses of the problem of individuation so as it was construed and assessed by Scotus, see, among others, Park (1988); (1990); Bates (2010): 86-125; Cross (2014). Cf. also Noone (2003); King (2005).

many still tend to identify Haecceitism with a view that posits *haecceitates*, and are consequently led to reject it, broadly, by their commitment to Ockham's razor, strikes me as a sign that a lot of theoretical work is needed in order to get clear on what Haecceitism authentically is up to – and, in particular, on why its main tenet is *not* the acceptance of *haecceitates*.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, even if Adams's notion of a thisness were to be understood as a genuine property, such a concept would still be crucially different from the one of a *haecceitas* originally endorsed by Scotus – and so would be the resulting two theories of individuation.<sup>60</sup>

The difference is, in a nutshell, the following. The *haecceitas*, *h*, of an entity, *a*, is supposed to individuate *a* in the sense that if *a* has *h* as its *haecceitas* then *a* will depend for its identity on the identity of *h*.<sup>61</sup> But it would be deeply misguided to think that the same holds for an entity and its thisness under my construal of the notion – which I take, in this respect, to mirror Adams's.

Adams explains the point in detail in the 1981 paper *Actualism and Thisness*, where he defends, together with his own concept of a thisness, what he calls 'Serious Actualism'. Serious

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<sup>59</sup> Morganti (2013): Ch. 3 makes this point in the context of the debate about the identity and individuality of quantum entities – although he uses 'thisness' as synonymous with 'haecceitas', while I take the former to convey the nominalistic friendly notion (roughly, the one that Morganti ascribes to William of Ockham, and that he himself accepts), and only the latter to stand for a literally existing property responsible for individuation. Roughly the same idea, as applied to the debate about Quidditism, is vindicated in Locke (2012).

<sup>60</sup> For a view that takes thisnesses to be literally existing properties and attempts to duly characterize the metaphysics of thisness instantiation, see Diekemper (2015).

<sup>61</sup> For the notion of identity-dependence, see Tahko and Lowe (2016): § 4.2. Cf. Correia (2005); (2008).

Actualism holds, among other things, that “all possibilities are purely qualitative except insofar as they involve individuals that actually exist”.<sup>62</sup> Adams’s target was, in this context, the form of Actualism defended by Alvin Plantinga in the paper *Actualism and Possible Worlds* – in particular, the idea that “there are all the possibilities *de re* there could have been” because “while there are not all the individuals there could possibly have been, there are essences of all the individuals there could possibly have been”.<sup>63</sup> The term ‘essences’ should be understood, here, as short for ‘individual essences’ – where an individual essence of a thing (say, of Richard Burton) is a property that is both “essential to him and essentially unique to him”, so that “there is no possible world in which there exists something distinct from him that has it”.<sup>64</sup>

Every haecceity of something clearly is an individual essence in that sense.<sup>65</sup> And, if worries concerning the commitment conveyed by property-talk are set aside, every thisness of something is as well. This is the case both under Adams’s conception and my own.

Yet both Adams and I reject the idea that thisnesses may be “non-qualitative entities (...) which could exist without the individuals whose thisnesses they are”.<sup>66</sup> For if thisnesses are thus conceived, then “I depend on my thisness in a way that it does not depend on me; for certainly I could not have existed

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<sup>62</sup> Adams (1981): 3.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> Plantinga (1976): 149.

<sup>65</sup> However, for a defence of the idea that haecceities are not essential to their bearers, see Denby (2014).

<sup>66</sup> Adams (1981): 12.

without it” – that is, without being the very entity I am.<sup>67</sup> But “to be the property of being identical with a particular individual is to stand, primitively, in a unique relation with that individual”.<sup>68</sup> And “[t]he relation between an individual and its thisness is essential to both of them”.<sup>69</sup>

Under this construal, I could not possibly have existed had my thisness not existed but, also, my thisnesses could not possibly have existed had I not existed, in turn. For, had I not existed, my thisness could not have stood in any relation with me. Hence, it could not have been my thisness. Hence, it could not have been *simpliciter*.

(This is why Adams is led by his endorsement of Actualism to the claim that “there are not thisnesses of individuals that never actually exist – although of course there could have been other individuals than those that there are, and if they had existed they would have had thisnesses”.<sup>70</sup> Such a truth is also taken to be a necessary one: “in no possible world would there be thisnesses of individuals that do not exist in that world”).<sup>71</sup>

The point is that, under this perspective, a thisness is taken to have its existence parasitically on the thing it is the thisness of.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*: 11.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*: 4-5.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*: 5.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 10: “God can create a woman of such and such a qualitative character. And when He has done so, she is an individual and has a thisness, which is the property of being her; and there may be non-

Hence, under a traditional approach to individuation at least, it cannot be the case that every thing is individuated by virtue of having the thisness it has. For under such an approach, in order for, say, Richard Burton to be individuated by his thisness – in order for RB’s thisness to be an individuator of RB’s – it should be the case that RB depends for his identity on his own thisness. That is, it should be the case that which thisness in particular RB’s thisness is metaphysically determines which entity of his kind RB is. But this cannot be the case if identity-dependence (the relation that holds between a thing and its individuators) is supposed to be antisymmetrical, so that “no two distinct things can be *each other’s* individuators”.<sup>73</sup> And Adams is very explicit in emphasizing that there is no such asymmetry in the case of a thing and its thisness.

As far as existential dependence is concerned at least, he has it that (e.g.) my thisness depends on me no less than I depend on it – for none of us could have existed without the other. If anything, one may argue that my thisness depends on me in ways I do not depend on it, for:

- a. as mentioned above, given a thing and its thisness, the existence of the latter is taken by Adams to be parasitic on the actual existence of the former;
- b. Adams mentions two ways in which a thisness – as a property – may be conceived of consistently with his view,

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qualitative possibilities regarding her. But that property and those possibilities are parasitic on her actual existence”.

<sup>73</sup> Lowe (2012): 215.

although he does not explicitly support any of them in particular. Under one of them, he says, “my thisness could be conceived as the ordered pair whose first member is the relation of identity and whose second member is me. In that case I would be a constituent of my thisness, rather than my thisness of me, and it would be particularly obvious that my thisness could not have existed if I had never existed”.<sup>74</sup> But it may well also seem, I contend, that under this conception my thisness would depend on me for its identity – just as we usually take it that a set is individuated by its members, hence depending on them for its identity. (As I said earlier, existential dependence would still go both ways: my thisness could not have existed without me *and vice versa*);

- c. Adams says that under his view we do not “need a special constituent to make [individuals] identical with themselves or distinct from each other. Those can be seen as primitive relations of the individuals to themselves and to each other”.<sup>75</sup> In the same context, he declares that “the individuals themselves provide the basis for non-qualitative facts, by their identity and distinctness”.<sup>76</sup> Now, I have already stressed that the matters of identity that are at issue when Haecceitism is are not merely matters of identity with oneself and difference from anything else. However, such claims, together with the

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<sup>74</sup> Adams (1981): 17.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*: 13.

fact that Adams defines the main point about Haecceitism as the question whether “all possible worlds” are “constituted by purely qualitative facts” or “thisness hold[s] a place beside suchness as a fundamental feature of reality” suggest, I think, that he takes Haecceitism not to commit to thisnesses as existent entities at all, but only to certain claims concerning individuals and matters of identity concerning them.<sup>77</sup>

That things are *not* individuated by their thisnesses by virtue of depending on them for their identity is then consistent with Adams’s view, and is certainly the case under my own.

Thus, given my construal of the view, the Haecceitist about the *Ks* is *not* committed to positing thisnesses as existents by her theory of individuation for the *Ks*. For, as I have been arguing, such a theory does not hold that the *Ks* depend on their thisnesses for identity. Rather, her claim that at least some *Ks* have primitive thisness will amount to the idea that such *Ks* are not individuated by anything about their qualitative profiles. Yet this much was accepted already by Aristotle, who resorted to the *matter* composing an individual substance as a principle of individuation for it, and was never refuted by Duns Scotus, who posited haecceitates because he was discontent with Aristotle’s theory of individuation for reasons external to that tenet.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Adams (1979): 5.

<sup>78</sup> The main reference for this aspect of Aristotle’s thought is *Metaphysics*, Z. For an excellent overview, see Loux (1991). For analyses of Scotus’s theory of individuation, see references in fn. 58 above.

The question whether a thing's primitive thisness should be understood as a literally existing property nonetheless will be a further one. Such a question does not strictly need to be posed while framing the issue about Haecceitism in itself.<sup>79</sup>

#### 2.4. Two Degrees of Primitiveness

So far, I have been characterizing the notion of some entities having their thisness primitively in a somewhat narrow sense – that is, with respect to their qualitative profiles.

We may define the notion of a thing having primitive thisness in a stronger sense – in the sense, i.e., that nothing at all makes it be the very entity it is, in particular – in terms of properties as follows:

**$a$  has strongly primitive thisness\*** =<sub>df</sub> it is not the case that for some  $F$  such that  $\Psi(F)$ , for something to be identical to  $a$  is for it to have  $F$  (for  $\Psi$  a condition such that  $\Psi(F)$  just in case: (i.)\*  $F$  is not the same property as *being identical to  $a$*  (under the relevant conditions for property sameness) (ii.)\* there is no  $P$  such that for something to have  $F$  is for it to be identical to  $a$  and have  $P$ ).

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<sup>79</sup> Substantially the same point is made, I think, in Cross (2014), § 1: “According to Scotus, haecceities and essences are distinct real properties of substances. Scotus is not, in other words, a nominalist about these properties. But (...) it would be possible to hold that there is no purely qualitative or relational criterion for identity without holding that haecceities are metaphysical ingredients of things. It is possible to argue that any medieval opponents of haecceities (in Scotus's robust sense) in fact covertly accept this weaker form of haecceitism — and thus that at least part of the debate between Scotus and his later opponents has to do with the status of properties as such, rather than the question of individuation”.

The reason for imposing condition (i.\*) is obvious enough.

As for condition (ii.\*), suppose one aims to say that Richard Burton has strongly primitive thisness. Suppose, further, that RB is essentially human. Then, absent condition (ii.\*), the definition would not be adequate, because for something to be RB would be, indeed, for it to be RB and human. Adding condition (ii.\*) allows one to avoid such a problem.

Some may think that further conditions should be added. In particular, it might seem that the property of being RB if and only if human should also be ruled out in the definition above. However, I think that such a property is already ruled out by condition (ii.\*). Here is an argument to that effect.

Suppose some  $x$  has the property  $F$  defined as follows:

$$(1.) \quad \lambda x (Gx \leftrightarrow Hx)$$

Suppose, further, that for  $x$  to be the thing it is (say, Richard Burton) is for it to have  $F$ . Suppose  $G$  is the property of being RB.

Now,  $F$  may also be defined as follows:

$$(2.) \quad \lambda x ((Gx \wedge Hx) \vee (\neg Gx \wedge \neg Hx))$$

$x$  can have  $F$  by satisfying either of the disjuncts in the matrix of (2.), or both. But it cannot satisfy both, on pain of contradiction. And it cannot satisfy the second disjunct, because we are under the assumption that  $x$  is RB – hence, that it has  $G$ . Hence, it must be the case that  $x$  has  $F$  by satisfying the first disjunct in the matrix of (2.). For  $x$  to have  $F$  is then for it to have the following property:

$$(3.) \quad \lambda x (Gx \wedge Hx)$$

Hence, if for something to be RB is for it to have  $F$ , then there is some  $P$  such that for something to have  $F$  is for it to be identical to RB and have  $P$  – that is,  $H$ . Even if built as a biconditional instead of as a conjunction,  $F$  does not fulfil condition (ii.\*) above.

I grant that there might be other seeming counterexamples. In each of such cases, it will have to be verified whether:

- a. On deeper examination, they turn out to be already excluded by my definition as the one above is;
- b. They seem to single out features that the definition should exclude, but that it really need not exclude, or:
- c. They do impose that further conditions be added my definition.

As will be clear in due course, the notion of property sameness that I need to assume cannot count all properties that are necessarily coinstantiated as identical.

Nor can it be the case that  $F$  and  $G$  count as the same property if and only if it is true that *for something to be  $F$  is for it to be  $G$* . I need a more fine-grained criterion. More precisely, in all cases in which  $F$  and  $G$  count as the same property it is the case that for something to be  $F$  is for it to be  $G$ , but not *vice versa*.

It is intended, by contrast, that two expressions that are logically equivalent must express the same property under my approach.<sup>80</sup> Thus, some properties that as Rodriguez-Pereyra (2006) remarks would trivialize PII, such as the following:

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<sup>80</sup> As a consequence, whenever  $F$  and  $G$  are logically equivalent it is the case that for something to be  $F$  is for it to be  $G$ . While some might find this implausible, I am ready to bite the bullet.

$$(4.) \quad \lambda x (\neg(x \neq a \wedge Fx) \wedge \neg(x \neq a \wedge \neg Fx))$$

where  $F$  is, say, the property of being red, are excluded by my definition inasmuch as they count as identical to the property of being identical to  $a$ . Indeed, the expressions in (5.)-(8.) below are all equivalent to (4.):

$$(5.) \quad \lambda x ((\neg(x \neq a) \vee \neg Fx) \wedge (\neg(x \neq a) \vee Fx))$$

$$(6.) \quad \lambda x (\neg(x \neq a) \vee (\neg Fx \wedge Fx))$$

$$(7.) \quad \lambda x (\neg(x \neq a))$$

$$(8.) \quad \lambda x (x = a).$$

Hence, the property expressed by (4.) is excluded by condition (i.\*).

Another property that Rodriguez-Pereyra excludes is one that we can express as follows:

$$(9.) \quad \lambda x ((x = a \vee Fx) \wedge (x = a \vee \neg Fx)).$$

This property is excluded by condition (i.\*) inasmuch as it is equivalent to:

$$(10.) \quad \lambda x (x = a)$$

It is also excluded by condition (ii.\*) inasmuch as it is equivalent to:

$$(11.) \quad \lambda x ((x = a) \wedge (Fx \vee \neg Fx)).^{81}$$

I should point out that the considerations in Rodriguez-Pereyra (2006) are not formulated through lambda-abstractions and that they are more fine-grained than the ones I just presented. Rodriguez-Pereyra considers the properties that I have plugged in as conjuncts in the matrix of (4.) and argues that neither (nor any other property that is relevantly similar to them) can be

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<sup>81</sup> See Rodriguez-Pereyra (2006): 209-210.

allowed while formulating the weakest non-trivial version of PII. *Ditto* for the conjuncts in the matrix of (9.).

But my present issue is different from Rodriguez-Pereyra's – not all properties that would trivialize the Principle are mandatorily such that, if for something to be *a* is for it to have one of them, then *a* fails to have strongly primitive thisness.

For instance, Rodriguez-Pereyra excludes as trivializing properties such as that of being a member of the singleton of *a*. However, if it *were* the case that *a* is the thing it is by virtue of being a member of such a singleton, I think that *a* would indeed fail to have strongly primitive thisness.

The feeling of oddness that this might provoke is due, I think, to the fact that it is usually assumed that things are the other way around. It is commonly thought that  $\{a\}$  is the thing it is in virtue of being in a certain relation with *a*, *and not vice versa*. It is commonly thought that the identity of  $\{a\}$  depends on the identity of *a*, *and not vice versa*. If these claims were false, though, it might be the case that *for something to be a is for it to be a member of {a}* and that this being the case, *a* does not have strongly primitive thisness.

Note that Rodriguez-Pereyra takes it to be the case that “*a* belongs to  $\{a\}$  in virtue of being *a* rather than being *a* in virtue of belonging to  $\{a\}$ ”.<sup>82</sup>

If he is right, then it cannot be that what prevents *a* from having strongly primitive thisness is it being the case that for something to be *a* is for it to belong to  $\{a\}$  – and one might claim

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<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*: 217.

that the property of belonging to  $\{a\}$  should be excluded by my definition as well.

Yet he also takes the property of *belonging to*  $\{a\}$  to be the property of *being identical to  $a$  and being such that  $\{a\}$  exists*.<sup>83</sup> If so, then such a property is excluded by condition (ii.\*) of my definition.

Now, as in the case of primitive, non-qualitative thisness, I need a different definition in order for my framework to be nominalistic-friendly.

Here is a proposal that employs, again, second-order non-committal notions and the equivalence operator  $\cong$  that expresses sameness between (non-objectual) ways for things to be. (Here too – *mutatis mutandis* – ‘ $F \cong G$ ’ cannot simply be taken as synonymous with ‘For something to be  $F$  is for it to be  $G$ ’. The underlying criterion for sameness of ways for something to be must be more fine-grained.) The notion of something’s having strongly primitive thisness can then be defined as follows:

**$a$  has strongly primitive thisness** =<sub>df</sub> it is not the case that  $\exists F$  such that  $\Psi(F)$  and for something to be identical to  $a$  is for it to be the case that  $Fx$  (for  $\Psi$  a condition such that  $\Psi(F)$  just in case: (i.) it is not the case that  $F \cong$  is identical to  $a$ , and (ii.) it is not the case that  $\exists G$  such that  $F \cong (G \& \text{is identical to } a)$ ).<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> See *ibid.*: 217-218. This is also taken to explain why  $a$  belongs to  $\{a\}$  in virtue of being  $a$  and not *vice versa*.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. § 1.5 and § 2.1 above; Rayo and Yablo (2001).

Finally, a definition in terms of predicates – which would be subject to the same worry mentioned in § 2.1 – is the following:

**$a$  has strongly primitive thisness<sub>pred.</sub>** =<sub>df</sub> it is not the case that for something to be identical to  $a$  is for it to satisfy ' $F$ ' (where (i.) ' $F$ ' is not synonymous with 'is identical to  $a$ ', and (ii.) ' $F$ ' is not a conjunctive predicate of the form ' $G$  and  $H$ ', where ' $G$ ' is synonymous with 'is identical to  $a$ ').

Now, the form of Haecceitism I am presently considering – i.e., the thesis that at least some things have primitive, non-qualitative thisness – is compatible with, but does not strictly speaking entail, the stronger claim that some entities have strongly primitive thisness. In particular, it seems that one may hold that some things have non-qualitative thisness while denying that *those same entities* have strongly primitive identity. For it may be that a certain thing is not individuated by anything about its qualitative profile but is nonetheless individuated by other, non-trivial, albeit non-qualitative, means.

For instance, one may hold that for something to be Richard Burton is for it to be something that *has married Liz Taylor twice*. In that case, Richard Burton would not have strongly primitive thisness.

Yet under this hypothesis, it might still be the case that Richard Burton has non-qualitative thisness. For the feature of having

married Liz Taylor twice counts as non-qualitative under any of the qualitative distinctions proposed in § 1.5.<sup>85</sup>

By contrast, the claim that at least some things have strongly primitive thisness entails that some entities also have non-qualitative thisness. In effect, any thing that has strongly primitive thisness is itself, *a fortiori*, one that has non-qualitative thisness.

Penelope Mackie made a different, yet closely related point while assessing, in her book *How Things Might Have Been*, Graeme Forbes's views about modality and transworld identity. Forbes maintains, crucially, that cases of numerical identity and difference between individuals across possible worlds cannot be 'bare'. That is to say, he holds that, whenever an individual *a* in a possible world  $w_1$  is, or fails to be, identical to an individual *b* in  $w_2$ , where  $w_1$  is distinct from  $w_2$ , *a* and *b* being transworld identical (or distinct) must be in some way supported by a further matter of fact.

Now, I am being intentionally silent as to which connection in particular should be said to hold, in this perspective, between a case of transworld (non-)identity and the further fact of the matter in question. I take this question to be, at least to some extent, open. In Forbes's own terminology, transworld identities and differences must always be 'grounded' in something else. By contrast, Mackie, though at times glossing Forbes's tenet as

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<sup>85</sup> See Rodriguez-Pereyra (2006) for the notion of a "property of identity" (fn. 5) and for the "intuition (...) that the predicate 'thinks about *a*' and 'is one metre apart from *a*' contain the [Basic Identity Predicate] 'is identical to *a*'" (p. 212). See also p. 213: "*Being a member of {a}* seems to contain the property of *being identical to a* in the sense that it is a relational property whose relatum ( $\{a\}$ ) is specified in terms that depend on the identity of *a* and so, in that sense, on the property of *being identical to a*". Cf. Katz (1983).

the claim that “any transworld identity” must hold “in virtue of” “something (other than that identity)”, also calls this a “supervenience thesis” – and characterizes Forbes’s target (“the bare identities thesis”) as its negation.<sup>86</sup> Now, the association may look unfortunate, since *grounding* is nowadays known, mainly, as the label for an intensely debated notion of priority and metaphysical explanation that, crucially, cannot be captured in terms of supervenience or in other, still merely modal ones.<sup>87</sup> But I find the point unproblematic inasmuch as it is far from clear that Forbes meant to use such terms as ‘ground’ and ‘in virtue of’ in the technical sense they have been ascribed in the current debate. Moreover, as will be clear is due course, his own solution in terms of individual essences makes for a precise, comprehensive treatment of his own concerns about transworld identity – in terms that are, to some extent, immune to metatheoretical worries concerning the meaning of ground-talk.

Be that as it may, my main concern is not so much the details of Forbes’s view, here, as it is my own strategy in stating and defending a given form of metaphysical Haecceitism.

I will then presently take Mackie’s own construal of Forbes’s theoretical framework as unproblematic, and just present the distinction she needs to make as phrased under that approach. The abovementioned bare identities thesis that Forbes targets, Mackie says, should be kept distinct from modal Haecceitism.

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<sup>86</sup> Mackie (2006): 42-43. The main reference for Forbes’s views in this concern is Forbes (1985). See also Forbes (1980); (1994); (1997).

<sup>87</sup> See, in particular, Fine (2001); (2012); Correia (2005): Ch.3; Schaffer (2009); Rosen (2010). For introductions, see Clark and Liggins (2012); Trogdon (2013); Bliss and Trogdon (2014). For an excellent anthology on the topic, see Correia and Schnieder (2012).

She characterizes the latter, in turn, as the negation of a further supervenience thesis – one to the effect that every numerical (non-)identity across possible worlds must supervene on some further fact of the matter that is purely qualitative.

The two supervenience theses (and their respective negations) differ as concerns what is included in the supervenience basis a given transworld (non-)identity is supposed to supervene on (or may fail to). The “No Bare Identities” thesis that Forbes defends has it that “any transworld identity must supervene on facts other than that identity, although these facts may always include facts about the identities of other individuals”.<sup>88</sup> But the supervenience thesis that modal Haecceitism denies is stronger: it holds that the supervenience basis for a given transworld identity “cannot *ultimately* appeal to identity facts about other individuals, but must ultimately appeal to qualitative differences”.<sup>89</sup>

Mackie rightly remarks that Forbes is not committed to defending such a stronger thesis (as we shall see, he actually holds that the solution to the bare identities problem stands in ascribing to every individual an individual essence that is not purely qualitative, thereby grounding each fact of transworld identity or difference in further facts of transworld identity or difference).<sup>90</sup> The stronger, anti-haecceitist supervenience thesis, by contrast, entails Forbes’s No Bare Identities thesis: if every transworld (non-)identity must supervene on some further facts that are not themselves facts of (non-)identity, but

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<sup>88</sup> Mackie (2006): 43; 44.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> See *ibid.*: 43-44.

purely qualitative ones, then *a fortiori*, none of them can be bare in the sense of not supervening on anything else at all.<sup>91</sup> Finally, modal Haecceitism – if construed as the denial of the stronger supervenience thesis just mentioned – is compatible with, but does not by itself entail, the bare identity thesis that Forbes rejects: if no transworld identity fails to supervene on something other than itself, though some of them do not supervene on anything that is purely qualitative, then both modal Haecceitism so construed and the No Bare Identities thesis hold.<sup>92</sup>

In the light of Mackie's analysis, Forbes's No-Bare Identities thesis may be associated, *mutatis mutandis*, to the claim of someone who denies that any entity may have strongly primitive thisness. The idea is the following.

Where the former position urges us to claim that every transworld identity must supervene on something other than itself, the latter has it that the thisness of every possible thing consists in something else.

Something similar goes for modal anti-Haecceitism and the thesis that nothing has primitive, non-qualitative thisness. According to the former, every case of transworld identity must supervene not only on some other fact, but on some other fact that does not itself appeal to further transworld identities at all. Similarly, denying that anything may have non-qualitative

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<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> Mackie takes (modal) Haecceitism, as per her construal, to be essentially the same doctrine that was characterized and thus called by Lewis, although the latter was not phrased in terms of transworld identities. See Lewis (1986): § 4.4; Mackie (2006): 42-43, fn. 37. Since I have perplexities about this point, I will separately treat Lewis's anti-Haecceitism in the next chapter.

thisness is to hold that, given a possible thing, its being the very thing it is must consist in its fulfilling some further condition that does not involve the identity of the thing in question nor of any other.



### **Chapter 3**

#### **Supervenience, Grounding, and Individuation**

As I anticipated, the theses of metaphysical Haecceitism and metaphysical anti-Haecceitism that are the topic of this dissertation are not to be identified with the two *modal* theses that bear the same labels. By the latter, and as has become quite standard in the literature, I mean those theses that David Lewis (1986) famously stated in terms of supervenience. After making this point, I will address the question whether the debate on metaphysical Haecceitism can also be stated in terms of supervenience and consider reasons for a negative answer (§ 3.1). I will then present two alternative strategies to frame that debate. In § 3.2, I will focus on a proposal in this sense that was recently advanced by Shamik Dasgupta – one that is phrased in terms of a distinction between qualitative and non-qualitative facts and of a relation of grounding allegedly holding, or failing to hold, thereof. Finally, I will set forth my own understanding of the debate in terms of qualitative individual essences (§ 3.3, § 3.3.1, and § 3.3.2).

As will be clear shortly, an anti-Haecceitist in my sense is someone who excludes every case of primitive identity by respecting the two *desiderata* of identity-explanation and distributiveness, so that by the same token she excludes that any thing (of the category she takes as target at least) has primitive thisness. Not so in the case of anti-Haecceitism as is defined and defended by Dasgupta – a theory that attempts to exclude cases of primitive identity without respecting, at least, the second *desideratum*. Since this move is critical in

Dasgupta's attempt to avoid the sort of difficulties I ascribe to anti-Haecceitism – and, in particular, a commitment to strong PII – it is crucial that I approach that attempt in order to set the stage for the case I will make against it later on.

### **3.1. Metaphysical anti-Haecceitism: Still a Supervenience Thesis?**

In *On the Plurality of Worlds*, Lewis considered the somewhat multifarious definition of Haecceitism that had been advanced by David Kaplan (1975). He then singled out the following as what he took to be “the main doctrine” of Haecceitism – i.e., “the denial of a supervenience thesis”:

All hands agree in distinguishing two ways that worlds – genuine or ersatz – might differ. (1) Worlds might differ in their qualitative character; or, for ersatz worlds, in the qualitative character they ascribe to the concrete world. (...) (2) Also, worlds might differ in what they represent *de re* concerning various individuals: this-worldly individuals at least, and also other-worldly individuals if such there be.

(...)

What is the connection between these two ways for worlds to differ? Does representation *de re* supervene on qualitative character? (...) Or are there sometimes differences in representation *de re* without benefit of any difference whatever in qualitative character? If two worlds differ in what they represent *de re* concerning some

individual, but do not differ qualitatively in any way, I shall call that a *haecceitistic difference*. *Haecceitism*, as I propose to use the word, is the doctrine that there are at least some cases of haecceitistic difference between worlds. *Anti-haecceitism* is the doctrine that there are none.<sup>93</sup>

As has become quite standard in the literature,<sup>94</sup> by ‘modal (anti-)Haecceitism’ I will refer to the doctrines thus defined by Lewis.<sup>95</sup>

It is important to see that metaphysical Haecceitism and anti-Haecceitism, as I suggest we use the terms, are not to be identified with such modal doctrines. My reasons for thus thinking will still draw on my claim that in order to properly define metaphysical Haecceitism one should start by looking at cases against it such as the ones I considered in Chapter 1.

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<sup>93</sup> Lewis (1986): 221. A case of haecceitistic difference in Lewis’s sense that was intensely debated is in Chisholm (1967).

<sup>94</sup> As a matter of fact, many just drop the qualification, and label the Lewisian doctrines ‘Haecceitism’ and ‘anti-Haecceitism’, *simpliciter*. But that is because either they are not interested in the metaphysical versions of those doctrines, or because they use different terms for them, such as ‘Individualism’ and ‘Qualitativism’. As will be clear shortly, these last terms have been used for views that significantly differ from ‘metaphysical Haecceitism’ and ‘metaphysical anti-Haecceitism’ as I conceive of them. Hence, the difference is not merely terminological here.

<sup>95</sup> The landmark characterization offered by Kaplan is, as a matter of fact, source of theoretically interesting questions on its own. My own take on it – one that I have no way to justify here – is that it not only mashes together parts of the metaphysical doctrine and parts of the modal one, but also classifies as ways to adhere to Haecceitism, which is in both versions a metaphysical claim, stances that properly pertain to semantics, and most notably some aspects of Saul Kripke’s attitude towards proper names in modal talk. See Kripke (1980); cf. Hughes (2004). For what is, to my knowledge and in my opinion, the deepest analysis of Kaplan’s claims in this context, see Salmon (1996).

To begin with, a haecceitistic difference in my sense – one of those cases of primitive identity that the metaphysical anti-Haecceitist aims to exclude – may arise (if at all) even within a single world. The same cannot be true of a haecceitistic difference in Lewis’s sense, which is by definition a difference between worlds or between maximal possibilities more generally.<sup>96</sup>

Note that were we not to define haecceitistic differences – in the sense that is relevant for metaphysical Haecceitism – as differences that can possibly arise (at least in principle) within a single world, then the metaphysical anti-Haecceitist would not be in a position as to rule out such differences inasmuch as they are *intra-world* ones.

Yet both cases for anti-Haecceitism I considered in Chapter 1 are supposed to exclude intra-world haecceitistic differences. Indeed:

- I take it to be in the spirit of Dasgupta’s argumentation that differences such as the one involving Peter and Paul in his example must be excluded *within* any world whose physics respects NGT. Otherwise, the door would be open to differences that are, by Dasgupta’s own lights, danglers. For indeed, such intra-world differences would be undetectable by any of the measurement instruments that NGT can provide, and – still according to Dasgupta

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<sup>96</sup> See Skow (2008, 2011) for the idea that Lewisian Haecceitism should not be defined in terms of differences between worlds, but in terms of differences between maximal possibilities. Cf. Cowling (2016) for the different ways to define the doctrine depending on one’s stance as to how the modal operators should be assessed. See *ibid.* for further references on modal Haecceitism.

- they would contribute nothing to our physical knowledge of what is going on in the world in question;<sup>97</sup>
- Leibniz's case rests on the idea that God's will in creating the actual world respects PSR, and that if there were *worlds* that differ haecceitistically from the actual one that idea would turn out false. Yet intra-world haecceitistic differences are not acceptable by Leibniz's lights either. Otherwise, his case for PII could not play the role he ascribed to it in view of a case against absolute space.<sup>98</sup>

This worry may perhaps be escaped simply by adopting a notion of a haecceitistic difference that is broader than Lewis's. For instance (as in my own construal of the notion) we may take it that haecceitistic differences are differences between *situations* and that, while some situations are possible worlds, some are proper parts of one instead.<sup>99</sup>

However, there is a further worry that stands still even if such a strategy is adopted – it goes as follows.

Even when the 'difference-bearers' at issue – so to speak – are possible worlds,<sup>100</sup> my notion of a haecceitistic difference does not call into play the machinery of representation *de re* at all. Accordingly, two qualitatively indiscernible worlds some denizens of which are world-bound would differ haecceitistically in my sense – but not in Lewis's, in case they

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<sup>97</sup> Cf. § 1.3 above.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. § 1.4 above.

<sup>99</sup> I owe this point to Fabrice Correia.

<sup>100</sup> This should all be read *modulo* Skow's worries. However, I take it that none of what I am saying here does run into the difficulties that were raised by Skow.

are exactly alike not only qualitatively but also in what they represent *de re*.<sup>101</sup> And indeed, I take a case like this to be one that *Leibniz* must exclude.<sup>102</sup> For that would still be a case that faces God with two worlds among which She cannot choose without violating (so *Leibniz* has it) PSR.

Once it is appreciated that the issue of metaphysical Haecceitism is significantly different from the one of modal Haecceitism, the question may be raised as to whether the former can still exhaustively be phrased in terms of supervenience.

The point is important and, I argue, worth exploring. For, as they stand, the two arguments for anti-Haecceitism that I presented in the previous chapter do seem to point towards the need for a certain supervenience claim, or, at least, for what is commonly characterized in terms of supervenience – that is, a requirement of co-variation. It seems indeed that:

- At least *prima facie*, none of those danglers that Dasgupta takes ‘primitive individuals’ to be would seem to possibly threaten if every non-qualitative difference (i.e., every difference in the identity of the things involved in some situations) were accompanied by a qualitative one. For in that case, non-qualitative differences would not be empirically undetectable after all: each one of them could at least be detected indirectly, *via* detection of that qualitative difference by which it is accompanied.

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<sup>101</sup> Cfr. Lewis (1986: 224): “For all I know, there are many indiscernible worlds (...). I see no theoretical benefits to be gained by supposing that there are or that there are not, so on this question I advise that we remain agnostic”.

<sup>102</sup> See § 1.4 above.

(Note that I am not ascribing to Dasgupta the somewhat odd claim that contemporary physics can detect every qualitative difference whatsoever. What I am presently speculating to be a potential outcome of Dasgupta's argument may be duly modified, and still be stated in the lexicon of 'no *A*-difference without *B*-difference' – for instance, where '*A*' would stand for 'non-qualitative' and '*B*' for 'qualitative and detectable by post-Newtonian physics').<sup>103</sup>

A little more precisely, Dasgupta's arguments point to the idea that no device that post-Newtonian physics can allow us to build could possibly detect mere non-qualitative differences between the objects of our observations. But the mere non-qualitative differences in question are precisely non-qualitative differences that are not accompanied by qualitative ones!<sup>104</sup>

Analogous considerations hold for the point that Dasgupta makes about redundancy. His case in this sense rests on the following contentions:

“[I]t is a straightforward consequence of NGT that mere differences in individualistic facts at an initial time do not give rise to differences in the future evolution of inter-particle distances or any other difference; in particular, they do [not] give rise to any difference in general facts. (...) My claim here is just that primitive individuals are

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<sup>103</sup> Needless to say, Dasgupta's argument would then sound much less interesting than it does.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. Dasgupta (2009): 40-43.

redundant in the sense (...) that mere differences in individualistic facts do not give rise to any other differences at later times”.<sup>105</sup>

The supervenience claim I am speculating on – one to the effect that every non-qualitative difference must be accompanied by a qualitative one – would clearly seem to ban such a problem.

- Something similar may be said, *mutatis mutandis*, about Leibniz’s point. If every non-qualitative difference between worlds were accompanied by a qualitative difference, then none of them would face God with a choice between indifferent options. For necessarily, when willing that a given world be made actual, She would be choosing a world that does qualitatively differ from every other. No two worlds, indeed, would anywhere differ in a merely non-qualitative fashion. In particular, no world would differ in a merely non-qualitative fashion from the actual world. And since it is mere non-qualitative differences between the actual world and some other that – so Leibniz has it – would force God to choose between indifferent options, it seems that Leibniz’s concern would indeed not arise if every non-qualitative difference between worlds were accompanied by a qualitative one.

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<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*: 41.

Now, I know of no conclusive reason to *exclude* the possibility that some supervenience claim that does justice to the issue of metaphysical Haecceitism may be found.

However, diverse considerations may be taken as reason enough to look for an alternative characterization – one that in some sense goes beyond certain limits on what can be claimed in terms of supervenience.

A first line of thought in this sense is the following. One might think that a claim of supervenience would still fail to do justice to the spirit of anti-Haecceitism <sup>106</sup> *even though*, strictly speaking, such a demand would indeed exclude both danglers in Dagupta's sense and the threat to PSR that Leibniz describes. For – so the thought would go – it is in the spirit of anti-Haecceitism that some further feature, one that tracks *priority*, supports the supervenience relations in question. Thus, one may have it that the proper claim – on the side of the anti-Haecceitist – should at least be one of difference-making, with the result that every non-qualitative difference must be not only accompanied, but also produced, by a qualitative one.<sup>107</sup> And even more than that, one may argue, should be demanded – again, in the spirit of anti-Haecceitism. As in the phrasing of the issue that was first sketched by Adams, we may think that anti-Haecceitism should be properly thought to not only demand that all cases of primitive identity be ruled out, but that this be done within a theory that takes the qualitative to constitute the fundamental level of reality.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Now the comparison with the modal doctrines has been taken care of, I will refer to *metaphysical* (anti-)Haecceitism by dropping the qualification.

<sup>107</sup> I owe the starting point for such a hypothesis to Ghislain Guigon.

<sup>108</sup> The reference in this sense is, once more, Adams (1979): 5.

I find it quite natural that this should be so in a theistic perspective such as Leibniz's. For if some features of reality are singled out as the only ones that can properly be taken into consideration by God in the act of creating – if *they* are what God decides that be made the case when She chooses to actualize a given world – it would seem odd at best not to take those to be the fundamental features of reality.<sup>109</sup>

As for Dasgupta's framework, I suspect that things are less straightforward. Although he does take it to motivate the claim that reality is fundamentally qualitative, his argument against 'primitive individuals' largely turns on considerations as to which features of reality post-Newtonian physics can detect. It can detect the qualitative ones, while it cannot detect (if Dasgupta is right) the merely non-qualitative ones.

The question would arise, then, as to whether some features of reality's being detectable by post-Newtonian physics should be taken as mark of their being fundamental. While Dasgupta has to take it that this is the case,<sup>110</sup> I am happy to remain agnostic about such an issue.

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<sup>109</sup> Cf. Adams (1981), fn. 5: "Could God have created you without all the evils that preceded your coming to be? It might be suggested that He could have done so by simply deciding to create something having your thisness in a world without those evils. But I am claiming here that thisnesses of possible individuals are not available to God for that kind of decision. This thesis may be of some use for theodicy, but some theologians may be offended by the implication that God does not know as possible all the singular propositions that would actually be true if He created certain sorts of world (...). And we may speculate that Leibniz (i) believed that primitive thisnesses would depend on the actual existence of the thisses, (ii) saw that primitive thisnesses would therefore be a feature of the world that God could not have known as possible independently of which world He actualized, and (iii) regarded this consequence as theologically objectionable. I think this may have been one of Leibniz's motives for rejecting primitive thisnesses and affirming the necessity of the identity of indiscernibles".

<sup>110</sup> Although it may sound like he thinks otherwise: at times, he seems to take it that all facts that are neither qualitative nor *grounded in the*

As a matter of fact, I have a different reason to think that the issue of Haecceitism would better not be stated in terms of supervenience. For as I will argue in the next chapter, there is no way to satisfy the anti-Haecceitist's theoretical aim – that of excluding every case of primitive identity – without either (i.) banning, by the same token, any entity with primitive thisness (at least from one's fundamental ontology), or (ii.) turning anti-Haecceitism into something that it is not and, most importantly, that the arguments for it do not support. But to satisfy (i.) is to defend a form of anti-Haecceitism that gets rid of every case of primitive identity by respecting the two *desiderata* I have considered in § 2.1 – hence, by individuating every entity (or at least every fundamental one) by purely qualitative means. And I know of no way to do so *via* a claim of supervenience.

To sum up: the issue of metaphysical Haecceitism is not to be identified with the one of modal Haecceitism, and there is reason to doubt that the former can still effectively be characterized in terms of supervenience.

Aiming at a form of anti-Haecceitism that embeds the claim that reality is fundamentally qualitative, Dasgupta has set the debate in terms of grounding. Moving from different reasons to be dissatisfied with a phrasing in terms of supervenience, I

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qualitative would be danglers in his sense. Cf. Dasgupta (2014), 6: "(...) I favor qualitativism. Very briefly, my reason is that if individualism were true then the individualistic facts of our world would lie beyond our epistemic ken. The idea is that our knowledge of the world is limited to knowledge of its qualitative nature and whatever is grounded in that qualitative nature". But given the point I made above – i.e., since Dasgupta has not provided reasons to think that non-qualitative differences would be undetectable even if invariably accompanied by qualitative ones, I do not think that that is quite right.

characterize the issue in terms of qualitative individual essences. As will be clear shortly, anti-Haecceitism as I conceive of it is exactly the sort of view that Leibniz defended (at least under a certain interpretation of his thought). I will now turn to presenting Dasgupta's proposal and my own.

### **3.2. Grounding: Qualitativism**

Aiming to defend a form of anti-Haecceitism that not only excludes all cases of primitive identity but does so in such a way as to characterize reality as fundamentally qualitative, Dasgupta has set forth to phrase the present debate in terms of grounding.

It is important that I focus on this approach for at least two reasons.

On the one hand, Dasgupta's strategy, if successful, provides a way to satisfy the anti-Haecceitistic rationale without committing to qualitative individual essences and PII. Hence, I will have to prove that strategy unsuccessful (or at least deeply problematic) in order for my main point against anti-Haecceitism to go through.

On the other, I have considered at several points, but never clearly characterized, the question whether the qualitative settles or metaphysically determines the non-qualitative. The notion of metaphysical determination and cognate ones are nowadays widely conceived in terms of grounding. Since Dasgupta defines the whole point about Haecceitism exactly in those terms, assessing such an attempt will pave the way to further considerations as to what it means to argue that the

qualitative metaphysically determines the non-qualitative, as anti-Haecceitism is sometimes taken to hold.

As will be clear shortly, Dasgupta's way to frame the issue – as opposed to Adams's and my own – makes no appeal to the notion of thisness at all. Rather, as is quite standard in the literature on grounding, such a relation is taken to be one that may hold between facts, the term 'fundamental' is understood as tantamount to 'ungrounded', and the claim that a given fact grounds another would amount to the idea that the latter holds in virtue of the former – or, that the former's obtaining makes it the case that the latter obtains.<sup>111</sup> In line with this, Dasgupta takes the question whether all *ungrounded facts* are qualitative to exhaust the whole point about Adams's question,<sup>112</sup> and no inquiry as to how some entities are individuated is addressed – or so it *prima facie* looks.

More precisely, Dasgupta singles out two mutually antagonistic families of answers to Adams's question, as he conceives of it. One may be an Individualist, and claim that all fundamental facts are non-qualitative. Or, one may hold that every fundamental fact is qualitative instead – hence committing to Qualitativism. Unless either of such positions is combined with an eliminativist stance towards the non-fundamental facts, both will have to be further qualified. Still under Dasgupta's definitions, the Individualist has it that the qualitative facts are

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<sup>111</sup> See references in fn. 87 above.

<sup>112</sup> Note, however, that while Adams raised his inquiry as one that would concern all possible worlds, Dasgupta restricts his investigation to "*material reality*". None of his claims as to whether reality is fundamentally qualitative is then supposed to apply to worlds where such things as numbers, ghosts and Cartesian egos exist.

grounded in the non-qualitative ones – *vice versa* for the Qualitativist.

However, as will be clear in due course and as one may already foresee, Dasgupta's case for Qualitativism is effective (if at all) against views that are significantly weaker than Individualism. One is simply the negation of Qualitativism: it has it that at least one fundamental fact is non-qualitative – call it Weak Individualism. A further one claims that at least one fact is neither qualitative nor grounded in qualitative ones – call it anti-Qualitativism.

While Weak Individualism entails anti-Qualitativism (under the hypothesis that the fundamental facts are the ungrounded ones), the converse entailment may fail. For instance, suppose there is an infinite chain of non-qualitative facts  $F, F', F'', \dots$ , such that  $F$  is grounded in  $F'$ ,  $F'$  is grounded in  $F''$ , and so on. If the sole grounds of  $F$  are members of that chain, then anti-Qualitativism is true ( $F$  is neither qualitative nor grounded in qualitative facts). Yet Weak Individualism might still be false – for instance, if no fact whatsoever is ungrounded. (In that case, both Qualitativism and Individualism as defined by Dasgupta would of course be trivially true).<sup>113</sup>

Clearly, the above does not exhaust the aim of defining the positions in question: the distinction between qualitative and non-qualitative facts will first have to be duly characterized.

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<sup>113</sup> Thanks to Fabrice Correia for pushing this point and related ones below.

(Note that Dasgupta labels the non-qualitative facts ‘individualistic’. I take ‘non-qualitative fact’ and ‘individualistic fact’ as plainly synonymous and favour the former for reasons of overall terminological consistency. However, I will sometimes use the label ‘individualistic distinction’ for the distinction between qualitative and non-qualitative *facts*, lest the distinction is mistaken for the ones that apply to properties or to predicates).

Dasgupta does not provide a thoroughly unambiguous definition of the individualistic distinction;<sup>114</sup> however, he does advance several hints towards the notion he has in mind:

On this view [i.e., Individualism] the most basic, irreducible facts about our world include facts about what individuals there are and how they are propertied and related to one another, such as

*a* is *F*, *b* is *G*, *a* bears *R* to *b*

where *a* and *b* are individuals, or "primitive individuals" as I will call them to underline their status on this view.<sup>115</sup>

[R]oughly speaking a fact is individualistic iff whether it obtains depends on how things stand with a particular individual (or individuals) and qualitative otherwise.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> In one of his papers on the topic, he explicitly declares that he will not attempt to provide any such definition; cf. Dasgupta (2014): 5.

<sup>115</sup> Dasgupta (2009): 36.

<sup>116</sup> Dasgupta (2014): 5.

[A fact] F is individualistic iff there is an  $x$  (or there are some Xs) such that whether F obtains depends on how things stand with  $x$  (or with the Xs).<sup>117</sup>

Very roughly, says Dasgupta, we may think of qualitative facts as those facts that can be expressed in first order logic with identity but without constants; in order to express an individualistic fact, instead, we would need to refer to at least one individual in particular (not merely ‘to the thing that is so-and-so, whichever it may be’) – hence resorting to individual constants.<sup>118</sup> Intuitively, the fact that *Richard Burton married four women* would then count as individualistic, while the fact that *someone married four women* would count as qualitative.

Dasgupta does not advance a clear-cut definition of what an individual is, in turn: he takes it to be enough for his aims that we think of individuals as “what in ordinary English we call ‘things’ – apples, alligators, atoms, and so on”.<sup>119</sup>

Now, as I said, Dasgupta’s case for Qualitativism focuses on what he calls ‘primitive individuals’, and on the contention that such things are danglers in the light of post-Newtonian physics. More precisely, Dasgupta has it that non-qualitative facts that are not grounded in qualitative ones should be excluded

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<sup>117</sup> Dasgupta (2017): fn. 2.

<sup>118</sup> See Dasgupta (2009): 40, (2014): 5-6, (2017): § 1.

<sup>119</sup> Dasgupta (2014): 5; (2017): § 1. See also Dasgupta (2009): 35. In this last paper, Dasgupta goes as far as to present his argument for Qualitativism as one that provides, also, a reason to infer that “fundamentally speaking at least, there are no such things as material individuals” (*ibid.*: 35). I do not think that such a conclusion follows – but I will take care of this point in due course (see Chapter 4).

because, if there were such facts, the individuals involved in them would qualify as ‘primitive individuals’.<sup>120</sup>

In effect, even the weakest individualistic view I have considered above – the one I called anti-Qualitativism – is committed to there being non-qualitative facts that are not grounded in qualitative ones. Hence, such a view will posit at least some primitive individuals, in Dasgupta’s sense.

For the defender of such a view will have it that, for at least an individual, say, *a*, there is a fact of the matter as to whether or not *it* – as opposed to every other – is involved in some given fact (that is to say, in any fact such that whether or not it obtains depends on how things stand with *a* itself), and such a fact of the matter cannot be said to rest on any collection of merely qualitative considerations.

The way I understand the argument from danglers, and several other parts of Dasgupta’s dialectic, *this* is the idea behind the (at times confusing, I suggest) claim that there are (if Qualitativism is wrong) ‘primitive individuals’. For there does not seem to be much that characterizes something as a primitive individual, as opposed to an entity that is not, except for such a thing’s being involved in at least one non-qualitative fact that is not grounded in qualitative ones.

There would then be two ways to characterize the notion of a primitive individuals:

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<sup>120</sup> For Dasgupta’s point in this sense, and for the role it plays in his argument for Qualitativism, see Dasgupta (2009): 37-44. I will henceforth refer to that argument as ‘the argument from danglers’.

1. For any  $x$ ,  $x$  is a primitive individual iff<sub>df</sub> some non-qualitative fact  $F$  (i.) is such that whether or not it obtains depends on how things stand with  $x$ , and (ii.) is not grounded in qualitative facts.
  
2. For any  $x$ ,  $x$  is a primitive individual iff<sub>df</sub> some non-qualitative fact  $F$  (i.) is such that whether or not it obtains depends on how things stand with  $x$ , and (ii.) is fundamental (that is, ungrounded).

Weak Individualism would then be committed to there being primitive individuals under both definitions (of course things that satisfy 2. satisfy 1. as well). By contrast, anti-Qualitativism would embed primitive individuals only as defined in 1.

Both definitions should likely include, also, a condition imposing that something can be a *primitive* individual only if it is an *individual* in the first place. As I mentioned, though, it is not clear what Dasgupta means by ‘individual’. While he presumably has it that at least universals cannot possibly be primitive individuals, I will cast doubt on such a conviction in due course.

Dasgupta’s contention is one against primitive individuals even in the weaker sense of 1. above. For in effect, a world where all facts about material reality are non-qualitative while no fact is fundamental should count as a world including danglers if his contention is sound.

Now, note that through his argument from danglers, Dasgupta aims to do more than just single out an epistemic vice intrinsic

to individualistic views. In effect, he takes that argument to support a particular form of Qualitativism that he calls ‘Generalism’.

Dasgupta has it that a generalist view – as opposed to some other forms of Qualitativism such as the bundle theory – does not even attempt to give a story about how *individuals* can be said to consist in other, purely qualitative, items. It just focuses on the facts that can be said to build up the fundamental level of reality – that is, given the qualitativist *dictum*, only qualitative ones – and on how they should be properly characterized.

The view that Dasgupta labels ‘Quantifier Generalism’ provides a first suggestion in this sense: the idea is that the fundamental facts are all and only those facts that can be expressed in first-order logic with identity but without constants.

Consider again the case of a Black’s world.

The bundle theorist is still committed to what may be seen, in Dasgupta’s spirit, as a sort of ‘original sin’: she aims to build up individuals out of qualities. Faced with Black’s world, she will have no choice but to recognize a sole individual that is built out of a certain collection of compresent qualities (for the same collection lies behind the ‘two’ spheres) – hence accepting a substantive version of PII.

By contrast, the quantifier generalist can just embed the idea that there are two spheres in her own description of Black’s world – the latter will be something like:

(Q.G.)  $\exists x \exists y (x \neq y \wedge Fx \wedge Fy \wedge Hxy)$

where ‘F’ conveys a complete qualitative description of each sphere, and ‘H’ expresses the relation of *being at*, say, *nine metres from*.<sup>121</sup> And since the description mentions only what the quantifier generalist takes to be qualitative facts, she can claim that her account is indeed a qualitativist one.

However, according to Dasgupta this suggestion does not go far enough in getting rid of primitive individuals. For not only do we naturally take quantified expressions to range over a domain of individuals – hence may doubt that a satisfying alternative understanding is available;<sup>122</sup> it may also well be (and many do believe) that quantified facts are grounded in their instances. If this were the case, then any fact that can be expressed as “there is a sphere” would be grounded in the fact that a certain sphere in particular exists – hence, *contra* the quantifier generalist, no such fact would be fundamental.<sup>123</sup>

Moreover, if the qualitative facts are to be understood in terms of a domain of individuals, or even worse if they are grounded in their instances – i.e., in facts concerning at least one given individual in particular – it is not so clear how (if at all) one can claim that such facts constitute the fundamental level of reality without committing to the idea that the world must be accounted for in terms of some primitive individuals after all.

Nothing like this happens with Algebraic Generalism – i.e., with the form of Qualitativism that Dasgupta aims to defend. According to Algebraic Generalism, nothing exists at the fundamental level but a domain of *n*-adic properties; these are

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<sup>121</sup> See Dasgupta (2009): 49-50; Dasgupta (2014); Dasgupta (2017): § 3.

<sup>122</sup> Cf. Dasgupta (2009): 50.

<sup>123</sup> See *ibid.*; Dasgupta (2017): § 3.

arranged in a certain structure that can be described *via* formulas of a particular language G that well suits the Generalist's metaphysics. Dasgupta draws the relevant formal language from Quine's *Algebraic Logic and Predicate Functors*. Very roughly, the peculiarity of language G can be summarized as follows:

- i. it can mimic first-order quantification in a way that does not seem – at least *prima facie* – to bring in problems concerning whether or not one is quantifying on a domain of individuals. Since there are no quantifiers, and the element of G that mimics them does not take any argument, there is no question as to 'what ranges over what', so to speak;
- ii. it does not treat properties as predicates but as terms – so there is no question as to whether predicates apply to individuals either;
- iii. all of its syntactic symbols apply to such terms for properties – so that, again, there seems to be no space for a mention of individuals in G's formulas.

Without getting into technical details, I will just show as an example a formula of G that the algebraic generalist may use to represent what is going on in Black's world – by mentioning qualitative facts alone:

(A.G.)  $cc (F^1 \wedge pF^1 \wedge \neg I^2)$  obtains

(where 'F' conveys a complete qualitative description of each sphere – for simplicity, I will assume that such a description

captures not only the *intrinsic* qualitative properties of each sphere, but also the relational ones).

Very roughly, the formula may be understood as saying something like ‘the fact that *it F-izes, and it F-izes, and it numerical-difference-izes* obtains’.<sup>124</sup> The two ‘c’ at the beginning of the formula stand for as many applications of the ‘cropping operator’: its role is to cancel an argument-place in a given property’s adicity. As a result, from an *n*-adic predicate that we would naturally think as applying to *n* individuals we can get to have a term that seems to stand by itself. This seems to confirm that we can describe Black’s world through G by assuming properties alone *and* without taking the two spheres to be one and the same. Intuitively, an application of the cropping operator in G is, by the same token, what mimics an existential quantification of first-order logic.<sup>125</sup>

I said that, according to Algebraic Generalism, at the fundamental level properties are arranged in a structure that may be described through formulas of G. It may have sounded more natural to say that, through G, we can combine properties in order to construct more complex properties – and, *via* them, qualitative facts. However, I suggest that this would fail to effectively mirror the fundamental reality as conceived by Dasgupta’s metaphysics. In effect, according to Dasgupta, the best form of Qualitativism – Algebraic Generalism – naturally

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<sup>124</sup> It would feel much more natural to talk about the fact that *there is F-ness, and there is F-ness, and there is numerical difference*, instead – but this would not fit Dasgupta’s aims because, under such a description, that fact would turn out to look like a quantificational one.

<sup>125</sup> Language G plays a crucial role in Dasgupta’s theory and I did not do justice to its subtleties at all. For details, see in particular Dasgupta (2009): “Appendix on language G”, and of course Quine (1976).

goes with both a structuralist and a radically holistic conception of reality. In a nutshell, if one aims to accept Algebraic Generalism without taking an eliminativist stance towards non-qualitative facts, one should accept (Dasgupta says):

- Structuralism about individualistic facts. An account of one individualistic fact is by the same token an account of all of them.<sup>126</sup>
- Radical Holism. The world is fundamentally a single whole. At rock bottom, the only fundamental fact is that a single complex state of affairs that characterizes the whole world obtains. Distinct atomic facts may still hold, but they are not fundamental; they obtain in virtue of that sole one fundamental fact.<sup>127</sup>

I will not focus on the reasons why Generalism entails Radical Holism here.<sup>128</sup>

As for Structuralism, the point should be connected to another crucial feature of Dasgupta's metaphysics – in particular, to his conception of grounding for individualistic facts. According to Dasgupta, if Qualitativism is right then the individualistic facts are *plurally and non-distributively* grounded in the qualitative facts: the plurality of the individualistic facts that obtain is, collectively, grounded in the plurality of the qualitative facts

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<sup>126</sup> See Dasgupta (2014): 10-11.

<sup>127</sup> See Dasgupta (2009): 55-56, 58.

<sup>128</sup> For Dasgupta's very neat argument to this end, see Dasgupta (2009): 55-56.

that obtain, though no individualistic fact, considered by itself, has a qualitative ground of its own.

Of course, this turns into a *modus ponens* by Dasgupta's lights, for the argument from danglers was supposed to show us that Qualitativism is right indeed. As a consequence, Dasgupta rejects Singularism about ground: according to his view, not only the grounds of a fact, but also what is grounded can be a plurality.<sup>129</sup> Roughly, his argument for this move is the following.

Suppose Qualitativism is right. Consider then some non-qualitative fact, say – in line with Dasgupta's own suggestion – the fact that *Obama exists*; call it *S*. Given Qualitativism and the mainstream assumption that, although what grounds can be a plurality of facts, what is grounded is always *one* single fact – given, that is, Singularism about ground – we would expect there to be some collection of qualitative facts *Q* that collectively ground *S*. However, note that Dasgupta assumes the following constraints on grounding:

- a. Necessitation. “[T]he grounded is metaphysically necessitated by its grounds”.<sup>130</sup>
- b. Whole relevance. “[A]ll parts of an explanation must be explanatorily relevant: if the *Xs* ground the *Ys* and *x* is one of the *Xs*, then *x* is *explanatorily relevant* to the *Ys* in the sense that *x* plays at least some role in making it the case that the *Ys* obtain”.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> See Dasgupta (2014): 3-4; Dasgupta (2017): § 4.

<sup>130</sup> Dasgupta (2014): 4. For an opposite take on this, see Leuenberger (2014) and Skiles (2015). Cf. also Loss (2017).

<sup>131</sup> Dasgupta (2014): 4.

Now, according to Dasgupta, nothing short of the collection of all the qualitative facts obtaining at our world – if anything – will be enough to necessitate the fact that Obama exists.<sup>132</sup> Yet even that collection (call it ‘*Big Q*’) will fail to ground *S*. For of course not every part of *Big Q* will be relevant to an explanation of *S* – there are of course qualitative facts about galaxies far, far away that would be irrelevant to an explanation of Obama’s existence, and yet such facts are, indeed, part of *Big Q*.

More generally – so the thought goes – there is no way to save both Necessitation and Whole Relevance if we aim to argue that every non-qualitative fact is grounded, *by itself*, in some collection of qualitative facts.<sup>133</sup>

However, there is an easy way out if we accept that grounding can be plural and non-distributive. Consider again *Big Q*. We said that *Big Q* fails to ground *S* because parts of the former are not relevant for an explanation of the latter. This seems to openly contradict the qualitativist *credo*: there are, one would say, individualistic facts that do not have a qualitative ground – *S* is one of them. Yet this is not the whole story. In effect, *S* is

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<sup>132</sup> Dasgupta’s point here is roughly the following. Suppose we start looking for qualitative grounds of the fact that Obama exists. We may start by considering the facts that such-and-such a man exists (say, one that is tall and smart and has a contagious smile), that he at some point in his life is a lawyer, that he at some later time becomes president of a huge federal republic, and so on. None of this seems sufficient to necessitate that Obama exists – unless, of course, a strong version of PII holds. Even considering all of the qualitative facts forming the story of our solar system would not seem to suffice: the world could have contained a solar system indiscernible from ours but numerically different from it, and a man indiscernible from Obama but numerically different from him. However, we are working under the hypothesis that Qualitativism is true, so the collection of all the qualitative facts obtaining at our world *must* suffice to necessitate that Obama exists. See *ibid.*: § 3.

<sup>133</sup> Cf. *ibid.*: 8-11.

a counterexample to Qualitativism only inasmuch as Qualitativism is held together with Singularism about ground – that is, only if one assumes that every individualistic fact must *by itself* be grounded in the qualitative.

By contrast, if what is grounded – and not only what grounds – can be a plurality of facts, accepting that *S* by itself fails to be grounded in the qualitative may pose no deep problem to the qualitativist.

Intuitively, what the qualitativist needs to exclude is that some aspects of reality are neither part of *Big Q* nor settled by it, so to speak. Now, consider a further collection of facts: the collection of all the individualistic facts that obtain – call it ‘*Big S*’. As opposed to what happened with *S*, it is easy to ascribe a qualitative ground to *Big S* without contravening either Necessitation or Whole Relevance: *Big Q* will be said to be such a ground. Every part of *Big Q* will of course be relevant for explaining some part of *Big S*. In effect, there is a sense in which the two collections may be taken to ‘describe’, as it were, exactly one and the same portion of reality: *Big Q* captures a complete qualitative description of our whole world, while *Big S* captures a complete individualistic one.

Moreover, given Qualitativism and given that *every* qualitative feature of our world is part of *Big Q*, every part of reality that is not part of *Big Q* must be grounded in – hence, also necessitated by – it. (It may be relevant to recall that Dasgupta’s point here is a conditional one: “*if* the world is fundamentally qualitative, *then* the individualistic facts are plurally grounded in the

qualitative”.<sup>134</sup> The reasons for accepting Qualitativism in the first place should be sought elsewhere – according to Dasgupta, in the argument from danglers).

Consider now *S* again. By claiming that *Big Q* grounds *Big S*, the qualitativist does exclude that any part of reality can fail to be either part of *Big Q* or settled by it. For every part of reality that is not part of *Big Q* is part of a plurality that is grounded in *Big Q* – i.e., of *Big S*. Even *S* is part of *Big S* – hence, its not having a qualitative ground of its own need not pose a problem to the qualitativist *credo*. For by being part of a plurality that is grounded in *Big Q*, *S* itself is, so to say, indirectly settled by *Big Q*.<sup>135</sup>

(We may also wish to say that if plural grounding is accepted, then the notion of ‘fundamental’ should be modified. Under Singularism, a fact counts as fundamental iff it is ungrounded. Under Pluralism, a fact counts as fundamental iff it is ungrounded *and* it is not part of a plurality of facts that is grounded).

### **3.3. Individuation: Individual Essences**

For reasons that I will provide in the next chapter, I think that a proper framework of the present debate must appeal to the notion of primitive thisness. More precisely, it must characterize anti-Haecceitism about the *Ks* as a view that holds that every *K* must be qualitatively individuated, so that none of

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<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*: 2-3.

<sup>135</sup> More precisely, Dasgupta talks of a sense in which *Big Q* would “account for” *S*, by grounding a plurality (the one I am labelling *Big S*) that has *S* as a logical consequence. See *ibid.*: 11.

them possibly has primitive thisness. This claim, in turn, commits one to the idea that every *K* has a qualitative individual essence. In what follows, I will characterize the latter idea by properly defining the notion of a qualitative individual essence that is relevant to the framework I defend (§ 3.3.1) and argue that in order to rule it out that any of the *K*s may have primitive thisness one must indeed ascribe to each one of them an individual essence of that sort (§ 3.3.2).

### **3.3.1. Purely Qualitative Minimal Individual Essences**

An individual essence of Richard Burton is (roughly) an essential feature of Richard Burton that is also an *individuating* feature of him. It is, in the spirit of Alvin Plantinga (in particular 1974; 1976), a property of Richard Burton, or a collection thereof, that is both essential to him and essentially unique to him.<sup>136</sup>

The debate about such properties in metaphysics was a significant one long before Plantinga's systematic treatment, though: Aristotle famously addressed the question whether each individual substance has a non-trivial individual essence in this sense, and answered it in the negative.<sup>137</sup> (The sense of 'trivial' and of related notions that is relevant here will be clear in due course). By contrast, as I already mentioned, an influential interpretation of Leibniz's modal metaphysics has it

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<sup>136</sup> While the notion of a property being *essentially unique* to something may sound obscure, I am mentioning it here in view of how important the thought of Plantinga, who made use of it, was for this topic. Nothing of what follows will theoretically rest on the exact meaning of this particular phrase.

<sup>137</sup> See references in fn. 78 above.

that his doctrine of complete individual concepts amounts to the claim that each individual substance has an individual essence – and, as a matter of fact, a purely qualitative one.<sup>138</sup> Issues about individual essences are nowadays complicated by the fact that the problem of how to understand essentialist notions of any sort is itself an intensely debated one. In particular, the once-standard approach that analyses essentialist notions in terms of modal ones was shown to face what look like serious counterexamples by Dunn (1990) and most famously by Fine (1994).

Plantinga himself did accept, in the works I am considering, that approach. He had it that the essential properties of a thing are those that the thing has necessarily – where to have a property *necessarily*, in turn, is to have it *in every possible world in which one exists*.

(As has become customary, I will call the idea that the essential properties of a thing are those that the thing could not possibly exist without an endorsement of the ‘existential-modal’ account of essentialist notions).<sup>139</sup>

Accordingly, Plantinga characterized the notion of an individual essence as follows:

*E* is an **individual essence**<sub>*P*</sub> =<sub>df</sub> “there is a world *W* in which there exists an object *x* that (1) has *E* essentially

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<sup>138</sup> See references in fn. 49 above. Cf. also Mackie (2006): 22.

<sup>139</sup> Cf., among others Roca-Royes (2011); see also Robertson and Atkins (2018). Gorman (2005), Wildman (2013), Torza (2015) and others employ the label ‘modalism’ for any view that analyses essentialist notions in modal terms, but since the same had been used to name forms of primitivism about the meaning of modal operators, I find it desirable to adopt a different one.

and (2) is such that there is no world  $W^*$  in which there exists an object distinct from  $x$  that has  $E$ ".<sup>140</sup>

(Here and in what follows, and as has also become quite customary, I use the phrase 'individual essence' where Plantinga himself would speak simply of an 'essence' instead. This choice helps avoiding, I think, some serious confusions. For instance, many are willing to deliver claims that entail there to be something such as the *essence* of Richard Burton, or of Socrates – where 'essence of  $a$ ' and 'nature of  $a$ ' are commonly taken as synonymous – without thereby committing to the idea that either of RB and Socrates has an *individual* essence in the sense that is presently relevant, or at least a non-trivial one. The point will be further clarified in due course).<sup>141</sup>

But we may as well assume an understanding that is neutral as to how modal notions are to be construed. A first approximation to the one I favour is the following: a property  $E$  is taken to constitute an individual essence of an entity  $a$  if and only if having  $E$  (or: being  $E$ ) is a condition that is necessarily both necessary and sufficient for being  $a$ . This understanding was employed by Penelope Mackie in her very neat treatment of

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<sup>140</sup> Plantinga (1974): 72. For Plantinga's views on individual essences, see also Plantinga (1979), which discusses Chisholm (1976)'s treatment of the notion.

<sup>141</sup> See also Adams (1981): fn. 1 for warning against a further potential confusion. An explicit endorsement of both the significance of the essentialist labels I have in mind – of phrases such as 'the essence of  $a$ ' and 'the nature of  $a$ ' – and the idea that things have individual essences is defended in Lowe (2008).

the topic (and, in particular, of Forbes's modal views).<sup>142</sup> It is easy to see that, if necessity is understood as truth in every possible world, then this construal is equivalent to the one by Plantinga considered above.

As I anticipated, though, it is clear that those who reject the modal-existential account of essentialist notions will also deny that this one in particular – the notion of an individual essence – may be exhaustively understood in those terms. For the arguments presented in Fine (1994), if sound, show that not every property that an entity could not exist without is essential to it. The converse, though, would still hold: every essential property of a thing would be one that the thing could not possibly exist without.

As concerns the notion I am engaging with here, this would mean that conditions such as those invoked by Plantinga, Mackie, and others, since cashed out in existential-modal terms, are necessary, but not sufficient, for a property to qualify as an individual essence of a given thing.

As a matter of fact, Fine's important case concerning Socrates and his singleton may itself be rephrased in terms of individual essences. Fine's point in this regard is, in a nutshell, the following. On the one hand, the recognition that the property of *having Socrates as one's sole member* is one that singleton Socrates could not exist without seems to be legitimately accompanied by the intuition that such a property is also essential to that singleton. On the other, the property of *being the sole member of singleton Socrates*, despite being such that

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<sup>142</sup> See Mackie (2006): 19, ff. Cf. also Forbes (1985), (1994): fn. 23; Rosenkrantz (1993): 43-44; Mackie and Jago (2017).

Socrates could not exist while lacking it, does not seem to pertain to Socrates in as intimate a way. In Fine's own words:

Strange as the literature on personal identity may be, it has never been suggested that in order to understand the nature of a person one must know to which sets he belongs. There is nothing in the nature of a person, if I may put it this way, which demands that he belongs to this or that set or which even demands that there be any sets. (...) [C]an we not recognize a sense of nature, or of "what an object is", according to which it lies in the nature of the singleton to have Socrates as a member even though it does not lie in the nature of Socrates to belong to the singleton?<sup>143</sup>

But I think that – if the point is accepted of course – something stronger may be claimed. The property of *having Socrates as one's sole member* is necessarily both necessary and sufficient for being singleton Socrates, as *being the sole member of singleton Socrates* is for being Socrates. The former property may well be said to be an individual essence of the singleton in question. For having exactly certain things as members is widely taken to be – *via* the axiom of extensionality – all it takes in order for some set to be a given set in particular, as opposed to every other: *having Socrates as one's sole member* is then an individuating property of singleton Socrates. *And* the same property is indeed – even for those who reject the modal-

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<sup>143</sup> Fine (1994): 5.

existential account – an essential one of the singleton. However, if Fine is right then *being the sole member of singleton Socrates* is not essential to Socrates, hence *a fortiori* not an individual essence of him, *although* it is necessarily both necessary and sufficient for something to possess that property in order for it to be Socrates.

Given these worries, I will label the notion we may draw from glosses such as Plantinga's and Mackie's 'minimal individual essence'. Similarly to what Mackie does, I will assume the following definition:

*F* is a **minimal individual essence** of *a* =<sub>df.</sub> Necessarily, for any *x*, *x* has *F* if and only if *x*=*a*.

The following definition, by contrast, appeals to an essentialist notion that is left unanalysed:

*F* is an **individual essence** of *a* =<sub>df.</sub> *F* is a property of *a*, or a collection thereof, that (i.) is essential to *a* and (ii.) necessarily, for any *x*, if *x* has *F* then *x*=*a*.

It may then be accepted, I suggest, by those who are led by Fine's argument to endorse primitivism about essentialist notions.

(I assume that the primitivists about essence would take it as unproblematic that (ii.) is cashed out in modal terms, as long

as (i.) guarantees that any property satisfying the definition is indeed essential to *a* in the sense they favour).<sup>144</sup>

The claim that *F* is an individual essence of *a* will then just amount to the claim that *F* is a minimal individual essence of *a* in the mouth of someone who accepts the existential-modal account. By contrast, the primitivist will have it that if *F* is an individual essence of *a*, then *F* is a minimal individual essence of *a* – but she will deny that the converse is the case.

As I said, forms of anti-Haecceitism about the *K*s that respect the two *desiderata* of identity-explanation and distributiveness must rule it out that any one of the *K*s may have primitive thisness. In order to do so, I said, such views must ascribe some qualitative individual essence to each one of the *K*s.

The latter claim may now properly be qualified: my point is that the views in question must ascribe to each one of the *K*s some *minimal* individual essence that is purely qualitative. If the anti-Haecceitist of the sort I have in mind is also a primitivist about essence and essentialist notions, she may or may not have reasons for claiming that each one of the *K*s has a qualitative individual essence in the stronger sense that the notion conveys by her own lights. Whether and why she should do that is an issue that lies beyond my present aims.

The notion of a thing's having a *qualitative* individual essence may be immediately appreciated if the qualitative distinction is taken to be one that applies to properties – as it is under one of the strategies I have considered in § 1.5 above.

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<sup>144</sup> Thanks to Fabrice Correia and Alex Skiles here.

Indeed, if the qualitative distinction is one that applies to properties, then to say that  $a$  has a qualitative individual essence is to say that there is some property or some collection of properties  $F$  such that (i.)  $F$  is an individual essence of  $a$  and (ii.)  $F$  (or: every property that is part of the collection  $F$ ) is qualitative.<sup>145</sup> *Mutatis mutandis* for the notion of  $a$  having a qualitative minimal individual essence.

That is:

$a$  has a **qualitative individual essence\*** =<sub>df</sub> For some qualitative property or collection of qualitative properties  $F$ , (i.)  $F$  is essential to  $a$ , and (ii.) necessarily, for any  $x$ , if  $x$  has  $F$  then  $x=a$ .

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<sup>145</sup> This, however, brings back to one of the problems that made me sympathize with the idea of avoiding a qualitative distinction that applies to properties in the first place. For given the picture I provided in the second chapter, a given thing,  $a$ , has primitive thisness iff there is no qualitative property  $P$  such that for something to be  $a$  is for it to have  $P$ . And I am about to argue that the claim that  $a$  fails to have primitive thisness entails that  $a$  has at least a *minimal* individual essence that is purely qualitative. As already mentioned, ascribing some qualitative individual essences to every individual substance was exactly Leibniz's way to rule it out that individual substances may have primitive thisness – hence, also that they may give rise to cases of primitive identity. However, according to some, something stronger holds in Leibniz's metaphysics. Not only would  $a$ 's qualitative individual essence convey conditions that are necessarily both necessary and sufficient for having  $a$ 's thisness (where  $a$  is an arbitrary individual substance):  $a$ 's qualitative individual essence would literally *be* the thisness of  $a$ . (Cf. Leibniz's *Discourse on Metaphysics*: 8). Yet as we saw, the qualitative distinction, if applied to properties, urges us to count every thisness as non-qualitative. How could then any thisness be identical to an individual essence that is qualitative instead? The fact that under this approach  $a$ 's qualitative individual essence may be a *collection* of qualitative properties, and still could not be identified with  $a$ 's thisness because of the way the qualitative distinction has been characterized would seem to frustrate Adams's effort to allow for the claim he ascribes to Leibniz by accepting that thisnesses may be complex suchnesses. Cf. Adams (1979): 8-9 and *supra*, § 1.5.

And:

$a$  has a **qualitative minimal individual essence\*** =<sub>df</sub> For some qualitative property or collection of qualitative properties  $F$ , necessarily, for any  $x$ ,  $x$  has  $F$  iff  $x=a$ .

But alternatives that do not appeal to properties can also be provided.

As above (§ 1.5, § 2.1, § 2.4), second-order non-objectual notions may again be employed.<sup>146</sup> The result would be:

$a$  has a **qualitative individual essence** =<sub>df</sub>  $\exists F$  such that (i.)  $F$  is a qualitative way for something to be, (ii.) it is essential to  $a$  that  $Fa$  is the case, and (iii.) necessarily, for any  $x$ , if  $Fx$  then  $x=a$ .

$a$  has a **qualitative minimal individual essence** =<sub>df</sub>  $\exists F$  such that (i.)  $F$  is a qualitative way for something to be, and (ii.) necessarily, for any  $x$ ,  $Fx$  iff  $x=a$ .

And, in terms of predicates:

$a$  has a **qualitative individual essence<sub>pred.</sub>** =<sub>df</sub> For some qualitative predicate ' $F$ ', (i.) satisfying ' $F$ ' is essential to  $a$ , and (ii.) necessarily, for any  $x$ , if  $x$  satisfies ' $F$ ' then  $x=a$ .

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<sup>146</sup> The reference is, again, Rayo and Yablo (2001).

$a$  has a **qualitative minimal individual essence**<sub>pred.</sub> =df  
For some qualitative predicate ‘ $F$ ’, necessarily, for any  $x$ ,  
 $Fx$  iff  $x=a$ .

The idea is in any case intuitive enough: if not all, at least most things come with a qualitative profile of their own. Given an entity,  $a$ , if and only if there is some part of its qualitative profile – some ‘being so-and-so’ – such that being so-and-so is necessarily both necessary and sufficient in order to be  $a$ ,  $a$  has a minimal individual essence that is purely qualitative: being so-and-so plays such a role. More generally, if and only if being so-and-so (again: to be read as a part of  $a$ ’s qualitative profile) is essential to  $a$  and such that necessarily, anything that is so-and-so is  $a$ ,<sup>147</sup> being so-and-so is a qualitative individual essence of  $a$ .

And as I argued in § 2.2, nominalists need not in general deny that things are qualitatively a certain way – say, that Richard Burton is tall and talented. Inasmuch as they have a way to embed the claim that RB is tall and talented, they can also claim that he is *essentially* so. By the same token, they can have it that being tall and talented is what individuates RB – which would at least entail that, necessarily, if something is tall and talented then it is RB. Hence, nominalists may embed the notion of a qualitative individual essence.

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<sup>147</sup> See Roca-Royes (2011) for the notion of a sufficient-for-existence property and its role in characterizing an individual essence.

### 3.3.2. Non-Primitive Thisnesses Require Purely Qualitative Minimal Individual Essences

It is important to see why in order to exclude that a given thing has primitive thisness one must ascribe to it a minimal individual essence that is purely qualitative.

A way to make this point draws on the notion of generalised identity, which I have employed in order to define primitive thisness. As I said, denying that *a* has primitive thisness is to argue that *for something to be a is for it to be F*, for some qualitative *F*. Now, a principle that is taken to govern claims of generalized identity is the following:

If to be *F* is to be *G*, then necessarily, for any *x*, *x* is *F* if and only if *x* is *G*.

It follows straightforwardly from that principle and from the claim that *for something to be a is for it to be F* that *being F* is a minimal individual essence of *a* as per my definition.<sup>148</sup>

And there are alternatives, in case one is reluctant to make the point rest this heavily on the principles that govern generalised identity.

One draws on the notion of a principle of individuation. I said that if for something to be *a* is for it to be *F*, then *a*'s being *F* is what individuates it, at least in the sense of making it be the very thing it is.

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<sup>148</sup> The principle is explicitly accepted in Correia and Skiles (*forthcoming*)'s treatment of generalised identity; see *ibid.*: 5. See also Rayo (2013): 49, 66; Dorr (2016): 40. Cf. Linnebo (2014).

But then clearly *being F* must be a sufficient condition for being *a*: the idea that something may be *F* without being *a* contradicts the claim that *being F* is what makes *a* be the very thing it is (that is, *a*) in the first place.

Under many conceptions of what a principle of individuation is, *being F* will then also be a necessary condition for being *a*: it will be excluded that *a* could possibly fail to have the feature (*being F*) that makes it be the thing it is.

The definition of a minimal individual essence also requires that such two conditions themselves hold as a matter of necessity: it has to *necessarily* be the case that something is *a* if and only if it is *F*.

To see that the last condition must indeed hold if *being F* is what makes something be *a* – and if the claim that that is the case is supposed to ensure anti-Haecceitism about *a* – we may consider the anti-Haecceitist's rationale once again. The ultimate aim of my target here is still the one I have ascribed her in Chapter 1 above: i.e., it is the aim to exclude that the entities of a given class may give rise to cases of primitive identity and of haecceitistic difference.

Let me focus for the moment only on cases of the latter sort. We have seen that differences of the relevant sort may arise (although they should not, says the anti-Haecceitist) also among things in different possible worlds – which is what is unacceptable by Leibniz's own lights. The condition I am presently considering has exactly the result of excluding that cases of haecceitistic difference may arise that involve things in different possible worlds – or, if modality is not analysed in terms of possible worlds, in different maximal possibilities. For

if being *F* is *necessarily* a necessary and sufficient condition for identity with *a*, then no two things may differ trans-worldly merely as to their being identical or different from *a*: any two things that thus differ must also differ in their being *F* or failing to.

The point leads to a further way to appreciate why an anti-Haecceitist must commit to *a*'s having a qualitative minimal individual essence in order to exclude that *a* has primitive thisness.

Given some arguments from Mackie (2006) that I have already touched upon, substantial or non-trivial individual essences must be ascribed to things lest cases of bare identity and difference across possible worlds involving such things are allowed. But if we focus on trans-world differences alone, the bare differences in question are in a way special cases of the sort of haecceitistic differences that we saw Leibniz argue against: they are cases in which the trans-world difference in the identity of some entities are not only unaccompanied by any *qualitative* difference, but also not accompanied by *any* further difference. If the foe of bare differences must ascribe to things non-trivial individual essences that may nonetheless be non-qualitative, the anti-Haecceitist will then have to ascribe them a non-trivial individual essence that is also purely qualitative. I will get back to this point in § 5.1.1 and § 5.1.3 below.

As concerns my point about individuation – that by holding that being *F* is what individuates *a* the anti-Haecceitist commits to the claim that being *F* is a minimal individual essence of *a* – a worry may be raised to the effect that weaker views about

individuation have been defended, and that such views would fail to support my point.

In particular, under some theories of individuation what individuates a thing may fail to pertain to it necessarily. This would allow for it to be the case that being *F* is what makes something be *a* *although* being *F* is not necessary for something to be *a*. In that case, being *F* would individuate *a* without qualifying as a minimal individual essence of it.

Something like this seems to be true in Aristotle's metaphysics: having denied individual substances to have non-trivial individual essences, Aristotle committed to the idea that each individual substance is the one it is – as opposed to others that may share with it every qualitative essential feature – by virtue of being composed of that given chunk of matter that happens to compose it. However, under this view it is *not* necessary to being a given individual substance (say, to being Aristotle himself) that one is composed of a certain chunk of matter in particular – and this despite the fact that being thus composed is what individuates Aristotle, the individual substance in question!

(The point is particularly interesting for the present debate. For, according to many interpreters, one of the reasons that led Scotus to resort to *haecceitates* was his discontentment with Aristotle's theory of individuation for individual substances. In particular, Scotus would have found it unacceptable that an

individual substance be individuated by such an accident as being composed by a given chunk of matter).<sup>149</sup>

In reply to this, one may call attention to the fact that most conceptions of individuation – at least among those that are commonly accepted nowadays – do require stronger conditions than the ones that Aristotle’s strategy is able to satisfy.

For instance, it may be highlighted that identity criteria for entities of a given kind are customarily taken to provide necessary and sufficient conditions for identity to hold between the referent(s) of two expressions that stand for entities of a certain kind.<sup>150</sup>

And inasmuch as principles of individuation are taken to demand for something else than what identity criteria provide, they are in a sense taken to demand for *more*. Sometimes the quest for identity criteria is taken to be an epistemic one, while only the one for principles of identity is invested of metaphysical significance; principles of individuation are commonly taken to be such that they should hold trans-worldly, and not only about things of a certain kind within a given possible worlds, while the same is not required of identity criteria; sometimes it seems that principles of individuation are indeed taken to be after a question of what confers identity with a given thing in particular (what I would call ‘identity in the sense of thisness’), as opposed to identity criteria, which would regiment claims of identity or difference between items of a certain kind *whichever*

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<sup>149</sup> See references in fn. 58 above.

<sup>150</sup> See, among many others, Davidson (1969); Williamson (1986); Lowe (1989); (1991); Noonan (2009); Fine (2016).

*those items may be* – or, to use a phrase whose legitimacy in the context was defended by Fine, where such items are picked arbitrarily.<sup>151</sup>

It then seems safe to assert that the anti-Haecceitist's claim that being *F* is what individuates *a*, with the entailment that being *F* is a minimal individual essence of *a*, would fit these notions of what a principle of individuation is. The claim would be one of metaphysical force, stating conditions for identity with a certain entity in particular, *a* (i.e., for having *a*'s thisness) that are not only necessary and sufficient, but also necessarily so.

Whether right or wrong, considerations such as these would hardly be exhaustive in making the point that an anti-Haecceitist must commit to things' having minimal individual essences in order to exclude that they have primitive thisness. For the issue is not so much what most philosophers take a principle of individuation to convey, either in the contemporary debate or in some other stage of philosophical investigation. The point is, rather, what a claim concerning the individuation of a certain thing is supposed to convey in the mouth of the anti-Haecceitist, given her own philosophical aims.

As I said, the anti-Haecceitist is, in the present predicament, someone who denies entities of a certain sort to have primitive thisness in order to exclude that they may give rise to cases of primitive identity.

Given this aim, the anti-Haecceitist is committed to the idea that each entity of the relevant sort is such that for something

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<sup>151</sup> See Fine (2016). Cf. also Fine and Tennant (1983); Fine (1985).

to be identical to *that* thing is for it to be *F* – where being *F* is some qualitative way for something to be.

But being identical to a given thing, *a*, just is to have *a*'s thisness. And having *a*'s thisness certainly is a minimal individual essence of *a*. For (trivially enough), it is necessary that *being a* be a necessary and sufficient condition for *being a*. Thus, in order to claim that for something to have *a*'s thisness is for it to be *F*, one must certainly commit to the idea that being *F* and being *a* have one and the same modal profile – hence, also to the idea that being *F* is, necessarily, a necessary and sufficient condition for being *a*.

There are two ways to appreciate the point in even more detail, if so is needed.

First, since the claim I have ascribed to the anti-Haecceitist is one of generalised identity, such a claim literally says that *for something to be a* and *for it to be F* are one and the same. Clearly though, if they are one and the same then they cannot differ in any way – not, in particular, in their modal profile. Second, a brief point I made in § 2.1 may be worth recalling here. Roughly, the idea was that each fact of the matter that may be described as '*a* is *F*' may be made to rest on a further one to the effect that 'the thing that is *G* is *F*', if it is the case that for something to be *a* is for it to be *G*. This is, in a nutshell, the reason why claiming that *a* does not have primitive thisness allows the anti-Haecceitist to rule it out that *a* may give rise to cases of primitive identity. But whatever exactly is meant by the idea that each fact of the matter of the former sort 'may be made to rest on' one of the latter, for such a condition to hold it must at least be the case that each fact of the former sort is without fail

accompanied by one of the latter. Hence, *being G* must pertain to *a* just as intimately as *being a* does: it must be a feature such that necessarily, something is *G* if and only if it is *a*. That is, it must be a minimal individual essence of *a*.

(One may argue that something stronger may actually be claimed: inasmuch as a difference is acknowledged between the two notions, the thisness of a thing, *a*, is arguably not only a minimal individual essence of *a*, but also an individual essence of *a* tout court. For it would go against the very spirit of essentialism to deny that, say, *being Richard Burton* is both essential to Richard Burton and such that, necessarily, if something ‘has it’ then it is RB.<sup>152</sup> If so, there would be some pressure on the anti-Haecceitist about the *Ks* who rejects the existential-modal account of essence to accept that each one of the *Ks* has a qualitative individual essence proper – not only a minimal one. Still, that each of them has a qualitative *minimal* individual essence would follow from the latter claim – which is what I will need in order for my argument against anyone who denies that things may have primitive thisness to go through).

In light of the above, I suggest that we conceive of anti-Haecceitism (better, of forms of anti-Haecceitism that respect both identity-explanation and distributiveness) about the *Ks* as the claim that every *K* has a qualitative minimal individual essence. Being a Haecceitist about the *Ks* will then be to deny such a tenet – that is, to hold that at least some of the *Ks* fail

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<sup>152</sup> Again, *modulo* Denby (2014)’s opinion.

to have a minimal individual essence that is purely qualitative. Some clarifications still need be made, but I will postpone them to Chapter 6, where I will characterize in detail my Haecceitistic position and defend it from some objections.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Desiderata for a Framework**

A doctrine that properly does justice to the case for anti-Haecceitism I have spelled out in the first chapter does not boil down, I have argued, to modal anti-Haecceitism as defined by Lewis, nor, it seems, to other claims of supervenience. I have considered two ways to adequately characterize such a doctrine: Dasgupta's one in terms of grounding and my own in terms of individual essences.

This chapter is meant to give reasons to favour the latter. I will start by making a point I already touched upon – one to the effect that, against what most of the literature has so far assumed, anti-Haecceitism need not have a problem with *individuals* as opposed to entities of some other kind (§ 4.1). For reasons that are crucially related to that point, I will argue, Dasgupta's account of the debate is significantly problematic as it stands (§ 4.2). There is no way to fix its fallacies, I will contend, without either embedding in anti-Haecceitism the claim that no fundamental entity has primitive thisness or turning the view into a much more controversial one – one that the case for anti-Haecceitism itself does not support.

Far from concerning Dasgupta's view alone, such a morale is utterly general: any form of anti-Haecceitism properly conceived must indeed deliver a claim in terms of primitive thisness. More precisely, it must at least exclude there to be fundamental things with primitive thisness (§ 4.3).

#### **4.1. Is the Appeal to Individuals Mandatory?**

On the background of what has been said so far, the present chapter is meant to settle the definitional aim of this dissertation.

The upshot will be the following: in order to adequately fulfil the rationale behind anti-Haecceitism (see § 1.3, § 1.4), a doctrine must either deny there to be any fundamental entities or exclude that any of them has primitive thisness.

However, the former option (what in recent literature is sometimes labelled ‘Ontological Nihilism’, or something close to it) is much stronger than anti-Haecceitism *per se* – what is worse, the case for anti-Haecceitism does not support it. Hence, a proper phrasing of the debate on Haecceitism must indeed appeal to the notion of primitive thisness.

As concerns grounding, by contrast, things are less straightforward. Needless to say, an appeal to such a notion will be welcome by those who wish to characterize their anti-Haecceitism as a claim about what is fundamental and to construe fundamentality in terms of ungroundedness. Yet we should be wary of what one can as a matter of fact gain from such an appeal – and aware of what one *cannot* gain.

Crucially, as I will argue, talk of non-qualitative facts and of their being grounded in qualitative ones may accompany, but cannot *substitute* (as Dasgupta’s strategy presumes) talk of entities and of their thisnesses being non-primitive. Since the presumption that it can instead is critical for Dasgupta’s attempt to defend anti-Haecceitism without committing to PII, making this point will play a decisive role in my whole

argument. For my main charge against the anti-Haecceitist – to stress once more – is that, overtly or covertly, she does have to commit to such a controversial Principle.

Yet Dasgupta's view does look like an anti-Haecceitistic metaphysics that is not committed to PII. Hence, if I am right, something is wrong with it. While exposing what I think is wrong with it, I will now make a general point also – one that I have touched upon several times already.

The point is very roughly the following: as opposed to what has been widely assumed in the debate, it is not the case that *individuals* can in principle offend against the anti-Haecceitist's rationale while entities of some other category cannot. As will be clear shortly, the erroneous assumption that that *is* the case is pivotal to Dasgupta's phrasing of the debate; indeed, it allows the Generalist to misrepresent her view as one that can exclude all cases of primitive identity without banning primitive thisnesses (hence without committing to PII).

The following considerations should help get a clearer grasp on why this point is crucial for my case against Generalism.

Consider the aim, on the part of the anti-Haecceitist, to rule it out that cases of haecceitistic difference involving some fundamental entities may arise.

If the only ways to properly fulfil such an aim are the ones I mentioned above, that is:

- a. to hold that no fundamental entity has primitive thisness,

or:

- b. to hold that there are no fundamental entities whatsoever,

this is very bad news for the anti-Haecceitism who is not willing to commit to PII. For, as I said:

- the rationale for anti-Haecceitism does not support the latter option, and:
- the former option entails that every fundamental entity has a qualitative minimal individual essence (cf. § 3.3.2 above). And as I will argue in the next chapter (§ 5.1.1), the claim that every entity of a certain class has a qualitative minimal individual essence entails, in turn, that all such things respect strong PII.

(Note that I am working under the hypothesis that the anti-Haecceitist aims to rule it out that any *fundamental* entities may give rise to cases of haecceitistic difference, but the scenario is even more problematic for one who aims to exclude *all* cases of haecceitistic difference whatsoever. For at least *prima facie*, if I am right, then such an anti-Haecceitist would have to either hold that *every* single entity respects strong PII or deny that there are entities *simpliciter*!)

Yet this is exactly the scenario we should expect.

Or, rather, it is the one we should expect unless it is the case that the entities of certain sorts can in principle give rise to cases of haecceitistic differences *while others cannot* – quite independently from whether the latter have primitive thisness. For in that case, the anti-Haecceitist could hold together all of the following claims:

- there are fundamental entities (hence, Ontological Nihilism is false);

- such entities need not have qualitative minimal individual essences, nor need they respect strong PII. They cannot possibly give rise to cases of haecceitistic difference for reasons quite independent from whether or not they have primitive thisness.

I will argue that Dasgupta's strategy rests on an assumption such as the one I just mentioned – i.e., the assumption that only the entities of a certain class (individuals) may in principle offend against the rationale for anti-Haecceitism. By proving that assumption wrong, I will make the case that his strategy does not allow the anti-Haecceitist to escape the scenario I depicted. Any view that satisfies the rationale for anti-Haecceitism must ultimately commit to either a. or b. above.

Let me now introduce in some more detail the assumption I will be arguing against – I shall call it “the Individuals Assumption”. The Individuals Assumption has it that when it comes to Haecceitism something theoretically significant hinges on those allegedly special entities that are taken to deserve the label of *individuals*, in at least the following two ways.

- i. Only (so-called) individuals are taken to be relevant as the scope of an (anti-)Haecceitist theory, so that either defending or rejecting Haecceitism is to take a stance as concerns whether the identity of such things (and only of them) is qualitatively determined or ‘explained’.

Fine clearly seems to have this in mind when he claims that “metaphysical Anti-Haecceitism is a doctrine concerning the

identity of individuals. It states that the identity of individuals – or, at least, of certain individuals – is to be explained in terms of their purely qualitative features or in terms of their qualitative relations to other individuals”.<sup>153</sup>

- ii. Such things alone – individuals – may give rise (if anything at all may) to haecceitistic differences.

This latter idea in particular, I think, led some to infer that anti-Haecceitism is incompatible with there being fundamental individuals, and naturally comes with a fundamental ontology of sole universals instead.

Thus, Dasgupta himself first introduced his Qualitativism as the view that “[f]undamentally speaking, there are no such things as individuals”.<sup>154</sup> The idea is less outlandish than one may think: more generally, we tend to assume that claiming that reality is fundamentally qualitative is to claim that qualities – however they are conceived of – are what fundamentally exists, while the existence of individuals is in some way derivative on theirs. Accordingly, Fine (2005) has it that, at least “very roughly”, anti-Haecceitism “is a version of the bundle theory (‘there is nothing to a particular over and above its properties’) while metaphysical Haecceitism is a version of the doctrine of ‘basic particulars’”.<sup>155</sup> And although he himself does not seem to take such associations very seriously, the hint seems to come from the intuition I am talking about: the intuition that if anti-Haecceitism is true then only

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<sup>153</sup> Fine (2005): 31. See also, among others, Ujvári (2013) and Russell (2017).

<sup>154</sup> Dasgupta (2009): 35.

<sup>155</sup> Fine (2005): 31. See also Armstrong (1989): 59.

(qualitative) properties are fundamental existents, while individuals (if such things there be) must in some sense be ‘built’, so to speak, out of them.<sup>156</sup>

As should by now be clear, though, haecceitistic differences are nothing but special cases of primitive identities. They are still cases of non-qualitative features of reality that fail to be settled by the qualitative. So the idea that only so-called individuals may (again, if anything may at all) give rise to cases of haecceitistic differences and of primitive identity more generally seems to follow trivially from a further aspect of the Individuals Assumption.

The point is that, following Adams, we tend to define the qualitative distinction in terms that are not generally acceptable unless the Assumption is indeed right. As I said (§ 1.5), a property counts as non-qualitative in Adams’s framework if and only if it consists in being in some way related to a certain *individual* in particular, and every property that is not non-qualitative in this sense is purely qualitative – a ‘suchness’.

Consistently with such a framework, I contend, we thus tend to define the qualitative distinction in terms that crucially depend on the notion of an individual – more in particular, in such a way as to make it so that only individuals may be involved in non-qualitative features of reality. Hence, *a fortiori*, it turns out that only individuals may be involved in those peculiar non-qualitative features of reality that are not settled by the qualitative (if such features there be).

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<sup>156</sup> Cf. Introduction and § 2.2 above.

Yet Adams's choice in that sense was merely motivated by his own theoretical interests – i.e., by his being “concerned (...) principally with the question whether the identity and distinctness of *individuals* is purely qualitative or not”.<sup>157</sup> He himself mentioned – and did not exclude – that there may be properties that are analogous to thisnesses, but such that each one of them consists in being identical with a certain entity in particular – where such an entity is not an individual. He considered, in particular, “the property of being identical with the quality red”.<sup>158</sup> He kept silent, though, about whether also concerning such ‘quasi-thisnesses’, so to speak – properties of being identical with a given entity in particular, where such an entity is not an individual – the question whether they are qualitative or equivalent to qualitative properties may have some relevance. But unless our interests mirror Adams's own ones, it is such a question that we should address, *before* defining the qualitative distinction in such terms as to directly imply that a non-qualitative feature of reality – hence, *a fortiori*, one that is not settled by the qualitative – must be such by virtue of involving a certain *individual* (not a certain *entity*, more generally intended) in particular.

A number of historical reasons lie behind, I suggest, the widespread acceptance of the Individuals Assumption. By looking at them, I contend, it can be appreciated that once a series of contingent idiosyncrasies are removed – as they should be – there is good grounds to doubt that solid *theoretical* reasons do support the Assumption.

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<sup>157</sup> Adams (1979): 6; italics mine.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*

First, although contemporary Haecceitism is not the claim that each individual has a *haecceitas* (see § 2.3 above), it does have one of its historical roots in such a view.<sup>159</sup> But Duns Scotus meant *haecceitates* as a solution to the problem of individuation, which in his days was taken to have two aspects. A principle of individuation was then supposed to answer both the question of what makes something qualify as an individual (as an entity belonging to such a kind, in general) *and* that of what makes that same thing be a certain individual in particular, as opposed to every other.<sup>160</sup>

The former question is not taken to be part of the problem of individuation as it is approached in the contemporary debate, though. Also, once duly generalized, the latter question – the question of what makes a thing of a certain kind be the very one it is, as opposed to every other – is one we often attempt to answer about entities that many would not label ‘individuals’, such as, for instance, tropes. So if the connection to Scotus’s *haecceitas* is one of the reasons why the issue about Haecceitism has been taken to bear some special tie to the notion of an individual (as I suggest it is), we would better take it to be a merely historical – and theoretically not relevant – reason for that.

Second, many of those involved in the debate on Haecceitism have been taking Lewis's definition of the doctrine as landmark. As I said (§ 3.1), the Lewisian Haecceitist claims, and the Lewisian anti-Haecceitist denies, that worlds may differ “in what they represent *de re* concerning various *individuals*”

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<sup>159</sup> Cf. Carrara and Morato (2007).

<sup>160</sup> See again references in fn. 58 above.

without differing “in their qualitative character; or, for ersatz worlds, in the qualitative character they ascribe to the concrete world”.<sup>161</sup> But in providing such a definition Lewis was interested in representation *de re* so as it is treated in *On the Plurality of Worlds* – i.e., *via* counterparts. Under that approach, the only entities that are eligible for having something represented *de re* of them by having such-and-such counterparts are, indeed, individuals.<sup>162</sup>

Yet again, this is specific to (a certain bit of) Lewis’s view. We may need to abandon the presupposition that the only way for worlds to differ in what they represent *de re* is for them to differ in what they represent *de re* of some individuals, in particular (and not of some entities in general) in order to discuss modal Haecceitism in other frameworks, and even more may we need to reach a related generality of scope in order to discuss metaphysical Haecceitism, which is what is at stake here.

Third, we should consider Adams’s influence in this sense as well – about which enough has been said already.

These and possibly further historical motivations, I suggest, lie behind the Individuals Assumption. By contrast, I contend, one may well doubt that solid theoretical reasons do support the Assumption.

On the face of it, it seems that one may be a Haecceitist (or an anti-Haecceitist of course) about things that are *not* individuals.

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<sup>161</sup> Lewis (1986): 221; the latter italics is mine.

<sup>162</sup> *Contra* Lewis (2009), Guigon (2016) argues that Lewis himself should have endorsed a counterpart theory for properties as well. For further stances on the debate about Quidditism, see Black (2000); Schaffer (2005); Locke (2011); Curtis (2016); Smith (2016).

Otherwise, no theory that accepts haecceities *à la* Scotus and uses them to construct a principle of individuation would be tenable. For in order to perform the metaphysical work they are supposed to instead of turning out to be redundant additions to one's ontology, such entities would better not be qualitatively individuated. As a matter of fact, they *cannot* be qualitatively individuated. For they themselves lack any intrinsic feature and whatever can be positively said about a haecceity in purely qualitative terms – that is, without mentioning which individual possesses it – is true as well about any haecceity whatsoever. But a haecceity cannot be individuated in terms of the individual it belongs to, either – otherwise, we would be running in a circle. Finally, haecceities cannot themselves *be* individuals – they are supposed to belong to some other category and to be such that the individuals depend on them for their identity.<sup>163</sup> More generally, some views about individuation have held that each individual is individuated in virtue of being related to a determinate entity that is not an individual, where the latter entity has strongly primitive thisness – i.e., its being the very thing it is is to be taken as a brute fact.<sup>164</sup> Haecceities are not the only instance: the matter that composes a given individual substance in Aristotle's metaphysics is a further example. As anticipated, Aristotle had it that the matter composing a given substance is what differentiates that

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<sup>163</sup> Cf. Rosenkrantz (1993) for a contemporary defence of Scotusian haecceities that clearly takes haecceities to have primitive identity. See also Plantinga (1976) and the discussion in Adams (1981).

<sup>164</sup> I am presently using the term 'individuation' so as it is intended in the contemporary debate and as I have developed it in Ch. 1 and Ch. 2 – i.e., as I argued above, under a construal that embeds only part of the *Medieval* problem of individuation.

substance from every other belonging to the same *genus*. But this should not be read as the claim that each substance is different from every other by being composed of a chunk of matter that differ qualitatively from the one that composes any other. Otherwise, it would turn out that every substance must be qualitatively different from every other – an idea that Aristotle explicitly denied.<sup>165</sup>

And the relevant examples are not confined to ancient and medieval philosophy or to theories of individuation for individual substances. As I said, several contemporary theorists of the notion take *tropes* to be primitively individuated. And tropes, albeit particular, are commonly taken not to be individuals: individuals would be, in this perspective, either bundles of tropes or further entities by which tropes are instantiated.

These are all examples of entities that are not individuals, and yet they are conceived as such that they would possibly give rise to cases of primitive identity. In order to make room for the tenability of at least one of such views, we should indeed admit, I argue, that the Individuals Assumption gets things wrong. That is to say, it is not the case that individuals should be thought to threaten the anti-Haecceitist's *dictum* in ways that entities of other kinds cannot.

And it would indeed be surprising to find out that all these views are untenable: we certainly would need some very robust theoretical reasons in order to think they are. Yet as a matter of fact, it is hard to see reasons for thus thinking that are

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<sup>165</sup> For references, see fn. 78 above.

independent from the very assumption that only individuals are eligible for possibly having facts of the matter concerning their identity not settled by the qualitative. And we are yet to be shown that there is a reason to think that only they *are* indeed such.

Nevertheless, persuaded by the Individuals Assumption some take anti-Haecceitism to be incompatible with there being fundamental individuals, and to naturally come with a fundamental ontology of sole universals instead. Dasgupta's approach is no exception: he clearly states that "(t)he generalist's ontology consists of a domain of properties" and that "(l)ike the bundle theorist, our generalist thinks of these properties as universals rather than sets of individuals or tropes".<sup>166</sup> Moreover, as will be clear shortly, the genuinely metaphysical difference between the facts that the Quantifier Generalist and the facts that the Algebraic Generalist take as fundamental (respectively) is that the former, but not the latter, seem to entail the existence of some individuals.

I think that this idea is mistaken. As a matter of fact, I shall argue that assuming a fundamental ontology of universals alone is both too strong and too weak a theoretical move if one's aim is to exclude Haecceitism. In particular, it is neither necessary nor sufficient in order to exclude cases of primitive identity. As I will now set forth to argue, this causes trouble to the project of rephrasing the issue of Haecceitism in terms of grounding in the way – and with the motivations – that the Generalist set forth.

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<sup>166</sup> Dasgupta (2009): 52.

## 4.2. Is the Appeal to Grounding Mandatory?

As I said (§ 3.2), Dasgupta takes his own arguments against Haecceitism to entail that we should not take there to be fundamental individuals. However, I think that by looking closely at his own case for anti-Haecceitism one may most conveniently appreciate that such a stance is wrong: the issue of whether there are cases of primitive identity and that of whether there are fundamental individuals are distinct and orthogonal.

Consider, in particular, Dasgupta's case to the effect that 'primitive individuals' are danglers. Mere differences in the identity of the individuals involved in a given observation are, Dasgupta says, empirically undetectable and explanatorily redundant according to any physical theory from NGT onward. Since a lot has already been said about Dasgupta's case for the claim that such differences are explanatorily redundant (§ 1.3), I will now focus on the case for their being undetectable. Here is what Dasgupta says to that end:

[I]magine a situation in which (...) a primitive individual is placed in front of you. Depending on what sorts of things primitive individuals are (or would be, if they were real!), this might be a situation in which you are in front of a chair, or an electron, or perhaps something else. To fix ideas, let us suppose without loss of generality that it is a chair. And now imagine a situation in which everything is exactly the same except that a different primitive individual is in front of you. Suppose this different

individual has exactly the same qualities as the actual chair in front of you: imagine it were colored the same, shaped the same, and so on. (...) [T]he situation would look and feel and smell exactly the same to you: we cannot tell the difference between situations that differ only in their individualistic facts.<sup>167</sup>

On the face of it, what such considerations seem to target are not the entities of a given sort *per se* – either individuals or something else, but some sorts of *differences*: differences in the identity of the entities involved in some given situation that are not accompanied by any qualitative difference. That is, once again, the anti-Haecceitist's concern arises from the possibility that there might be cases of what I called 'haecceitistic differences'.

If some entities should also be taken as problematic in the light of such considerations, they must presumably be those entities that may (at least in principle) give rise to such differences. But we are yet to be told why we should think that only entities of a certain sort in particular – individuals – are such that they may give rise to those (allegedly problematic) differences. Even less should we feel persuaded, I contend, that all entities of that given sort should be held not to be fundamental existents.

My point may perhaps be made, from a slightly different perspective, as follows. Let us still concede, for the sake of discussion, that such arguments as Dasgupta's, if sound, do

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<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*: 42.

give us reason to exclude a certain category of entities (or ban them from the fundamental ontology at least). If so, the category at issue should at most be taken to be, I contend, that of *primitive individuals* in Dasgupta's sense – i.e., those entities that may be characterized as follows:

For any  $x$ ,  $x$  is a primitive individual iff<sub>df.</sub> some non-qualitative fact  $F$  (i.) is such that whether or not it obtains depends on how things stand with  $x$ , and (ii.) is not grounded in qualitative facts.<sup>168</sup>

And, it should be kept in mind, what has been singled out as unacceptable about such things is that they may give rise to haecceitistic differences.

Why should we think that such entities are also the entities that belong to a certain category – that of *individuals*, though? A pretty obvious answer may be given insofar as Dasgupta's own perspective is concerned: somewhat in line with the qualitative distinction that was provided by Adams as applied to properties, Dasgupta *defines* the qualitative distinction, as applied to facts, in terms that crucially depend on the notion of an individual. More precisely, he tells us that a fact is non-qualitative if and only if it is such that whether or not it obtains depends on how things stand with a given *individual*.

Yet this may well be to put the cart before the horse. For as I remarked earlier, the choice was motivated, in the former case, by Adams's own theoretical interests. Yet it is not clear how to

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<sup>168</sup> Cf. § 3.2 above.

justify the definitional choice in the latter case, if not by declaring, there too, that one's interests are confined to facts of the matter concerning the identity of some special entities – individuals – alone.

But then it would be really hard to see how one can legitimately move from an argument against haecceitistic differences such as Dasgupta's to his alleged conclusion that there are no fundamental individuals. The proper outcome of the argument from danglers (if sound) would merely be that haecceitistic differences involving individuals are danglers – where the only special thing about individuals would be that they were chosen as scope of the argument from the start.

By contrast, if whether or not individuals fundamentally exist is supposed to be what one may conclude by examining arguments such as Dasgupta's and related ones, then the qualitative distinction should be defined in terms that are neutral with respect to the Individuals Assumption. (More precisely, in drawing the distinction one should not make assumptions as to which sorts of entities are allowed to be involved in non-qualitative features of reality). One would then have to define the notion of a haecceitistic difference on that basis, and only afterwards inquire as to whether there being fundamental individuals results in there being some such differences.

For the question whether a given entity may give rise to cases of haecceitistic differences, and of primitive identity more generally, is orthogonal to the question whether that very entity

belongs to the category of individuals.<sup>169</sup> This is true, I contend, even under the assumption that the entity in question is taken to be a fundamental one.

Hence, all four combinations are possible – in particular, there may be metaphysics that embed fundamental individuals while having it that reality is fundamentally qualitative and hence excluding any case of primitive identity, and others that exclude fundamental individuals, yet such that entities that are not individuals do give rise to cases of primitive identity. Thus, excluding fundamental individuals not only is not necessary in order to make sure that the fundamental level of reality is indeed a purely qualitative one, as Boris Kment (2012) has rightly remarked.<sup>170</sup> It is also, I contend, not sufficient for that aim. Yet given a framework such as Dasgupta's, the claim that the fundamental is purely qualitative is critical in order for one

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<sup>169</sup> Andrew Bacon recently got to an akin conclusion: “Those who reject individualistic theories because they posit invisible differences should take caution: removing individuals from your theories doesn't always remove the invisible differences (...) nor does having individuals automatically generate invisible differences”; see Bacon (2019): 260. The relevant ‘invisible differences’ would roughly be, in the context of his investigation, haecceitistic differences *à la* Lewis. However, Bacon still takes it that holding reality to be fundamentally qualitative is to hold that “reality is [not] determined (...) by the pattern of properties and relations that holds between individuals” (*ibid.*: 259). I am arguing that this is just part of the story, and that talk of *thisness*, as opposed to talk of individuals, is what really matters when it comes to the present debate. Moreover, I engage with the issue of *haecceitistic differences* in a broader sense than Bacon's.

<sup>170</sup> Kment made the point that those who think that reality is fundamentally qualitative “are free to accept that individuals exist. They may even include individuals in their fundamental ontology (...). The view could perhaps be stated by saying that even fundamentally speaking, there are indeed individuals, but there are no fundamental facts about which individual any one of them is”; cf. Kment (2012): 579. To see that Kment's point was not duly appreciated, consider that Turner (2017) openly opposes to Dasgupta's arguments for Generalism the idea that we cannot, after all, “do without fundamental individuals”. Part of what I am trying to argue is that the *primitive individuals* that are Dasgupta's target not only are not *fundamental* individuals: they may even fail to be *individuals* in the first place.

to safely claim that, if everything else is grounded thereof, then reality embeds no *primitive* individuals, and indeed it cannot possibly face us with haecceitistic differences.

Individuals may well exist, I contend – even at the fundamental level!, in a metaphysics that does not accept ‘primitive individuals’ in the sense that should be relevant for Dasgupta’s considerations above (i.e., in the sense of entities that may give rise to haecceitistic differences).

I think that Leibniz’s metaphysics – or one in the vicinity – may well be seen as a view of this sort. On the one hand, the entities that Leibniz calls ‘individual substances’ arguably *are* individuals under any understanding of the term that has been considered to this day. At least under a certain interpretation, such entities are indeed part of the fundamental ontology in Leibniz’s system.<sup>171</sup> On the other hand, it seems that something like Dasgupta’s argument from danglers would be harmless against Leibnizian fundamental individuals. For any fact of the matter as concerns their identity is completely settled by the qualitative – *via* complete individual concepts that are purely qualitative; each one of them corresponds to exactly one individual substance and, so to speak, fixes its identity by completely characterizing its nature.

To put it in different and perhaps less controversial terms, Leibniz’s individual substances satisfy a strong version of PII – one that has it that no numerically distinct such things perfectly resemble one another. Hence, they certainly cannot give rise to cases of haecceitistic difference. For every difference

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<sup>171</sup> See, among others, Mates (1986), O’Leary-Hawthorne and Cover (1999), Di Bella (2005), and Rodriguez-Pereyra (2014).

with respect to which one of them is involved in given situations is necessarily accompanied by a difference as concerns how the individuals involved in those situations qualitatively are, because, necessarily, every individual is qualitatively different from every other.<sup>172</sup>

(Note that while by Leibniz's lights any two individual substances must be such that God can discern between them, it might be that two or more such things are *empirically* indiscernible to us as humans. Hence, it might be – for all I have said so far – that some situations that differ as to which individual substance they involve, respectively, are empirically indiscernible to us. Still, I contend, this would not, by itself, make Leibnizian individual substances unacceptable in view of Dasgupta's argument from danglers. For the differences that argument qualify as unacceptable must also be explanatorily redundant. And what the argument points out as a mark of redundancy, about haecceitistic differences, is that they do not result in any qualitative difference. But as I said, any two situations that differ as to which Leibnizian individual substance is involved in them must indeed differ qualitatively themselves).

Things are slightly complicated here by the fact that, in Dasgupta's dialectic and quite commonly in the current debate,

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<sup>172</sup> For a somewhat similar contemporary view of individuals – one that ascribes to each one of them a purely qualitative individual essence – see Ujvári (2013). Ujvári (2017) contends that things may have a qualitative individual essence without respecting strong PII. The next chapter will cast doubt on such a tenet.

‘fundamental’ is understood as ‘ungrounded’ and facts (not such entities as individuals, universals or the likes) are taken to be eligible for being – or failing to be – grounded. No such understanding is literally ascribable to Leibniz, though. Indeed, it seems that Leibniz never clearly distinguished between causation and something like grounding or metaphysical explanation.<sup>173</sup> It is nevertheless clear that by Leibniz’s own lights an individual substance is a fundamental, ‘ultimate’ entity in the sense of being something whose existence is independent from that of anything else but God.<sup>174</sup>

If a notion of ‘fundamental entity’ and of cognate ones in terms of grounding is nonetheless desired, here are two suggestions. First, as was mentioned by Kment, one may be taken to accept some entities as fundamental in case she holds that while stating the fundamental facts we need to quantify over those entities, where the fundamental facts are construed as the ungrounded ones.<sup>175</sup>

A further suggestion is the following.

$x$  fundamentally exists (or, which is the same,  $x$  is a fundamental entity) =<sub>df</sub> there is no  $y$  such that  $y$  is numerically different from  $x$  and the fact that  $x$  exists is partially grounded in the fact that  $y$  is  $F$ , for some  $F$ .<sup>176</sup>

Although such a notion in itself cannot literally be ascribed to Leibniz for the reason mentioned above (i.e., because he failed

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<sup>173</sup> See Frankel (1986). I am grateful for this point to Ghislain Guigon.

<sup>174</sup> See references in fn. 171 above.

<sup>175</sup> Cf. Kment (2012): 579.

<sup>176</sup> I owe this suggestion to Fabrice Correia.

to distinguish between grounding and causation), the resulting view would still be one that can accept Leibnizian individual substances as fundamental entities without allowing any haecceitistic difference to arise.

Hence, assuming a fundamental ontology that embeds no individuals is not necessary in order to exclude haecceitistic differences.

But such a move is not sufficient for that aim either.

Consider, in effect, a metaphysics that includes no fundamental individuals – in particular, one that, like Dasgupta's, accepts only universals as fundamental entities. Such commitments are, by themselves, insufficient as a means to rule out haecceitistic differences. For the anti-Haecceitist will still have to assume something like PII about the entities she takes as fundamental – because she needs to exclude that some of them may be qualitatively indiscernible though numerically different. Otherwise, some fact concerning their identity would fail to be fixed by the qualitative, hence giving rise to primitive identities.

To make the point vivid, consider the two systems that Dasgupta depicts in order to support his claim that primitive individuals are explanatorily redundant – the one where Peter is propelled up in the air by a slingshot, and the one where Paul is thus flung (cf. § 1.3 above). However Dasgupta may wish to define the qualitative distinction, it seems clear that there being two such systems would lead to a case of haecceitistic difference even if Peter and Paul happened to be two

indiscernible *universals*, as opposed to two indiscernible *individuals*.<sup>177</sup>

The same point may even more directly be made, *mutatis mutandis*, about Dasgupta's case for the idea that differences between primitive individuals are undetectable – where we are asked to compare the observation of a chair with that of a second one, indiscernible from the first.

And although the idea that something like PII is almost trivially verified by such entities as universals has been more or less taken for granted in the general debate, it has recently been challenged, with quite convincing reasons, by Rodriguez-Pereyra.<sup>178</sup> I will get back to this point in the next section, where I will argue that any form of anti-Haecceitism must rule it out that there may be fundamental things with primitive thisness. As will be clear in due course, that will conclude my case for the claim that an appeal to grounding cannot by itself spare the anti-Haecceitism from committing to PII.

Before that, a last remark on grounding and its role in the anti-Haecceitist's project is in order.

Recall the recipe that Dasgupta offers to the anti-Haecceitist in order to make sure that no haecceitistic difference may arise, though *not* committing to PII. The idea was to bypass individuals, focus on the qualitative facts alone, and claim that such facts are sufficient to in some way ground the non-qualitative ones. Given this project, the way the distinction between qualitative and non-qualitative facts is drawn is

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<sup>177</sup> For a different point to the effect that things that are not individuals (in particular, relations) may turn out to be danglers in Dasgupta's Generalism, see Turner (2017).

<sup>178</sup> See Rodriguez-Pereyra (2017a). See also MacBride (2005): 609, fn. 41.

crucial: for the recipe to succeed, it must be the case that if those facts that are singled out as qualitative ground all the other facts, then reality is fundamentally qualitative also in the sense that no haecceitistic difference can possibly arise.

However, if my case against the Individuals Assumption goes through, then the distinction between facts that Dasgupta has set forth is deeply problematic as it stands.

First, note that Dasgupta does not provide us with a properly clear-cut distinction between the two alleged categories of facts – although, as should by now be clear, the very notion of a primitive individual crucially depends upon it.<sup>179</sup> At most, we are given an extensional criterion: all those facts that may be expressed in first order logic with identity but without constants are qualitative, while any other fact is non-qualitative.<sup>180</sup>

Yet importantly – as I said (§ 3.2) – this cannot be the end of the story by the Generalist’s own lights: for, given a widely accepted principle, existentially quantified facts are grounded in their instances and cannot, therefore, be fundamental. Hence Dasgupta’s resorting to the algebraic language  $G$ . But this move would better be more than just a formal artifice: after all, every sentence of first-order logic without constants but with identity has a translation in  $G$  *and vice versa*. Some independent theoretical reason should be given to think that the right description of *the qualitative* is provided by  $G$  and not by first order logic.

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<sup>179</sup> See the definition of a primitive individual I have set forth in § 3.2.

<sup>180</sup> Note that one may already be quite dissatisfied with this criterion: for indeed, any fact can be expressed in first order logic without constants by using the sentential letter ‘ $p$ ’. I owe this point to Fabrice Correia.

To put it differently: we were told that the facts that can be expressed in a certain language may be taken to coincide with the qualitative facts, but also that they cannot *be* the qualitative facts, because they are not good candidates for being fundamental. Then we were given a translation for all the sentences that express those facts, and we were told that in such new clothes those facts can be said to be fundamental instead. But what makes them qualify as *qualitative* in the first place is still unclear.

On the face of it, it looks like the main *theoretical* hallmark of G concerns the ontological commitment it seems to bring forth: as opposed to their counterparts of first order logic, the sentences of G are thought to mention only qualities, and they do not seem to demand for a domain of individuals at all.

(Note that strictly speaking, the semantics of first-order logic does not in general demand for a domain of *individuals* either: a model for first order logic is given by a domain of *objects* and an interpretation function. Those who hold there to be universals will then admit that there are models whose domains are exclusively constituted by such entities. So perhaps Dasgupta's point in this regard should be, rather, that first order logic *is compatible* with semantics that take domains of individuals while G is not).<sup>181</sup>

Now, given this picture, perhaps the facts that we were brought to identify as qualitative – the facts that can be expressed in G

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<sup>181</sup> Thanks to Fabrice Correia for pushing this point.

– are eligible to be fundamental indeed. And yet, I argue, it is far from clear that by claiming that *they* are the only fundamental facts one does get rid of haecceitistic differences. For at its core, the idea that if all and only the facts that entail the existence of universals alone are fundamental then no haecceitistic difference can arise depends on the conjecture that haecceitistic differences cannot possibly arise in a metaphysics that excludes fundamental individuals. Yet as I have tried to show, such a conjecture is wrong-headed (more on this in the next section).

Once it is appreciated that the conjecture – along with other aspects of the Individuals Assumption – is wrong, the problem arises as to how the anti-Haecceitist can rephrase the distinction between qualitative and non-qualitative facts in order to still apply Dasgupta’s recipe. I have no answer in this concern. One may perhaps follow the same strategy I adopted in the first chapter while setting forth my take on the qualitative distinction, and just substitute ‘entity’ for ‘individual’ in all the relevant definitions.

Given one of Dasgupta’s glosses, we would then have to classify as non-qualitative any fact such that “whether it obtains depends on how things stand with” one or more *entities* in particular.<sup>182</sup> Under this hypothesis, I personally would find it hard to see how a fact may *fail* to be non-qualitative.<sup>183</sup> But

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<sup>182</sup> See Dasgupta (2014): 5.

<sup>183</sup> Generalised identities, if conceived as having a ‘factual counterpart’, may provide a counterexample to my present point. For instance, suppose that there is a fact that *to be a vixen is to be a female fox*, and that such a fact is not the same as the fact that *necessarily, for any x, x is a vixen iff x is a female fox*. One may then say that the former fact is *not* such that whether it obtains depends on how things stand with some given entities in particular. However, a Qualitativist who wished to identify the qualitative

then again, this is likely to simply amount to my being a Haecceitist!<sup>184</sup>

What is worth noting here is that even if my points against Dasgupta's project go through, the anti-Haecceitist is not left without a way to phrase her position in terms of fundamentality as ungroundedness. She can perfectly well do so by claiming that none of her fundamental entities has primitive thisness (what she has to do anyway, as I am about to argue) and then characterize the notion of a fundamental entity in terms of grounding – possibly, in one of the two ways I have suggested above.

This would guarantee that no fundamental entity can give rise to haecceitistic differences. If the anti-Haecceitist aims at a metaphysic where no things whatsoever can give rise to such differences, she will have to integrate in her view some further claims to this effect.

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facts with facts of generalised identity would then be committed to the idea that such facts are sufficient to ground all other facts about reality. This would seem like an uphill battle. Thanks to Fabrice Correia for the counterexample.

<sup>184</sup> Still, I think what has been said should urge the Generalist to provide what Dasgupta has refrained from providing so far – that is, a clear metaphysics of facts that may fit in her proposal; cf. Dasgupta (2014): 4. For she will have to exclude that, as a piece of reality (so to speak), existentially quantificational facts simply *are* their instances; see Correia (2016), where facts, “understood as worldly items”, are labelled ‘situations’ – *ibid.*: 103. For in that case, arguably any such fact would turn out to be non-qualitative in light of the gloss I just considered; the sentence that describes one such fact in first order logic without constants would merely ‘hide’ that whether or not the fact obtains does depend on how things stand with some given entities. The appeal to language G would then look less and less helpful in this context!

### **4.3. Is the Appeal to Primitive Thisness Mandatory?**

I said that the question of Haecceitism and the question whether there are fundamental individuals are distinct and orthogonal – hence, that all four combinations are possible. And I presented Leibniz’s view (or something in the vicinity) as an example of an anti-Haecceitistic metaphysics that embeds fundamental individuals. Dasgupta’s Algebraic Generalism is a metaphysics that excludes both fundamental individuals and Haecceitism. A view that takes tropes to be the only fundamental entities, and accepts that there be indiscernible tropes, would be one that accepts Haecceitism while excluding fundamental individuals. Analogously, *mutatis mutandis*, a view that assumes a fundamental ontology of sole universals and allows for some of them being indiscernible. If I read him correctly, Adams’s view is one that accepts both Haecceitism and fundamental individuals – and so is my own, although it is no part of my aim here to defend the latter tenet.

Now, as I said, the Generalist has to exclude indiscernible universals in order to make sure that her metaphysics is indeed one where no haecceitistic differences that involve fundamental entities (‘fundamental haecceitistic differences’, for short) can possibly arise. No matter how seriously one is to take the possibility of indiscernible universals, I contend that this motivates a serious reassessment of the Generalist’s project.

Recall that the major reason Dasgupta gave us for taking the Generalist’s strategy – for bypassing individuals, building anti-Haecceitism as a claim about the status of non-qualitative

facts, and so on – was the alleged desirability of excluding haecceitistic differences *without committing to PII*.

Yet Generalism – even in its Algebraic variant – is not, strictly speaking, a view that does not commit one to PII. At most, it is a view that (at least inasmuch as it really does justice to the case for anti-Haecceitism) commits one to PII only as concerns entities that are usually taken to respect the Principle anyway. Compare it, for instance, with the sort of Leibnizian view I have considered above. The two square equally well in getting rid of fundamental haecceitistic differences.

(As a matter of fact, one may even doubt that the former view will square as well as the latter in this respect at the end of the day. For as I said, if the Individuals Assumption fails, the Generalist owes us a new story as to how the distinction between qualitative and non-qualitative facts is to be characterized. And her whole recipe does rest on that distinction).

*Both* views are committed to PII as concerns the entities that are taken as fundamental.

It seems to me that the main edge of Generalism over the Leibnizian view should at this point be recognized to be vanishingly small. True, assuming that universals respect PII may sound less controversial than assuming that individuals do. Yet if Rodriguez-Pereyra is right, this may turn out to be merely an advantage in intuitiveness.

Such an advantage does not come for free: it comes at the cost of ruling out any way towards some form of nominalism about

universals. Yet as should by now be clear, getting rid of fundamental haecceitistic differences does not mandatorily come at such a cost. Moreover – assuming that anti-Haecceitism is what one wants – some features of Algebraic Generalism such as Pluralism about ground, Structuralism and Radical Holism are hardly less controversial than the idea that individuals fulfil PII!

But I would like to draw a more general conclusion here – one of meta-theoretical significance. The Generalist's recipe promised the anti-Haecceitist a way to exclude haecceitistic differences without respecting the desiderata of either distributiveness or identity-explanation (see § 2.1 above) – that is, without having to also rule it out that some things might have primitive thisness. And yet, I contend, that was just part of the story.

True, an anti-Haecceitist may bypass individuals, focus on grounding non-qualitative facts and so on and so forth. But as long as she does take there to be entities of some kind or another at the fundamental level, it looks like she will still have to rule it out that any of those entities have primitive thisness, just as the Algebraic Generalist overtly or covertly does by excluding the possibility that there may be indiscernible universals.

The claim that fundamentally, there are no entities whatsoever is sometimes labelled *Ontological Nihilism*.<sup>185</sup> I take this to be too strong a stance to take if one's aim is merely to exclude every case of haecceitistic difference – either fundamental ones

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<sup>185</sup> See O'Leary-Hawthorne and Cortens (1995); Turner (2011); Diehl (*forthcoming*).

or all of them altogether. More importantly, such cases for anti-Haecceitism as Leibniz's and Dasgupta's do not support it.

As a consequence, at least until a proposal comes along that *does* provide a conclusive way to exclude cases of primitive identity without also banning things with primitive thisness (at least from the fundamental ontology), I argue that any form of anti-Haecceitism – hence, every account of the debate about it – will have to appeal to the issue of primitive thisness.

To conclude this part – and to reinforce the points I made – I will now approach the question of how the notion of an individual should be characterized.

The reader may have been surprised – even puzzled – by seeing that I have not addressed the issue so far. Note that given my stance, I am not strictly speaking required to provide an answer to such a question. Rather, my target, i.e., those who accept the Individuals Assumption and draw consequences from its *dictum*, should provide a clear understanding of what such special entities – individuals – are. For presumably, it is in such an understanding that one could find – if at all! – reasons for accepting the Individuals Assumption in the first place. Yet no clear-cut notion of what an individual is supposed to be is widely agreed upon in the debate about Haecceitism.

(This is, incidentally, what drove me to doubt that the notion need in general be appealed to while defining Haecceitism after all).

Thus Adams (1979) and Dasgupta (2009) provide somewhat elusive, and presumably not equivalent, characterizations of what they respectively mean by the term.<sup>186</sup> By contrast, there are approaches that take seriously the aim of defining *individuality* and fulfil the task in such terms as to qualify individuals as entities that cannot possibly give rise to cases of primitive identity at all. The view defended by Márta Ujvári, who ascribes to each individual a purely qualitative individual essence, is an instance (*mutatis mutandis*, what I said about the broadly Leibnizian metaphysics above applies to this view as well).

The most systematic attempt towards defining individuality in the contemporary literature is arguably due to Jorge Gracia (1988).<sup>187</sup> According to such an account, *noninstantiability* constitutes a condition that is both necessary and sufficient for individuality – more precisely, anything is an individual if and only if it is a noninstantiable instance of some universal. The notion of noninstantiability, in turn, is taken as primitive, for “any definition or analysis of it would, in order to be complete, have to make reference to instantiation, instance and/or

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<sup>186</sup> More on this in due course.

<sup>187</sup> It is worth mentioning Goodman (1956)’s claim that (roughly) anything may count as an individual (hence be acceptable under a certain strain of nominalism) as long as it is treated as an individual in a system – that is, taken as a possible value “of the variables of lowest type in the system” (Goodman 1956: 17). The only things that would not be treatable as individuals would then be ‘classes’ – roughly, things that may mutually differ albeit having the same members. This treatment of individuality could hardly justify one’s acceptance of the Individuals Assumption. Note also that the considerations in Strawson (1959), which are concerned with our language and conceptual schemes more than with reality itself, are not ones that the defender of the Assumption should appeal to either.

instantiables, that is, to the relation between the universal and the individual, to the individual, and/or to the universal”.<sup>188</sup>

To my knowledge, no one has embedded such a conception into one’s stance on Haecceitism. I myself cannot assume it without betraying the spirit of my proposal – since much of my effort here consists in vindicating an account of the debate that is compatible with even the strongest strand of nominalism about universals.<sup>189</sup>

More generally, I think that Gracia’s account of individuality could not easily fit with the way the notion is commonly approached when it comes to Haecceitism.

For instance, one of the few hints Dasgupta gives as to what individuals are supposed to be is that that they must be *things*.<sup>190</sup> By contrast, both something like individual things and their properties are taken by Gracia to satisfy his definition of ‘individual’.

A proposal that was advanced in Dorato and Morganti (2013) is also worth mentioning here. As a contribution to the debate on the identity and individuality of quantum particles, Dorato and Morganti set forth a pluralistic approach towards the notion of individuality. Roughly, this proposal allows that the entities that are, respectively, studied by different scientific theories satisfy different and mutually irreducible notions of individuality – where all such notions would be equally

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<sup>188</sup> Gracia (1988): 51.

<sup>189</sup> Note, however, that Gracia himself does not literally hold that universals *exist*: he has it that universals “are neutral with respect to existence; existence is a category that does not apply to them” (*ibid.*: 235).

<sup>190</sup> Cf. Dasgupta (2009): 35.

respectable. Individuality would then come in grades of diverse strength.

It is particularly interesting, I think, that such a suggestion came from an area – the metaphysics of physics – where something like the Individuals Assumption I have argued against is particularly influential when it comes to the issue of haecceitistic differences and related ones. In particular, many take the fact that (roughly) quantum statistics cannot tell apart hypothetical cases of haecceitistic difference involving indiscernible particles as tantamount to such particles ‘not being individuals’, in some allegedly relevant sense.<sup>191</sup>

Now, to sum up, several conceptions of the notion of an individual are available. What is important for my aims here is that such conceptions do not support, by themselves, the Individuals Assumption and its alleged consequences unless by confirming my present point – i.e., that what the anti-Haecceitist should properly exclude from the fundamental ontology are those entities that may have primitive thisness. On the one hand, there is a family of very strict, substantial conceptions: something is an individual in this sense if and only if it is an individual substance – where the notion is construed more or less in line with the Aristotelian tradition. Adams seems to take a stance of roughly this sort:

By ‘individual’ here I mean particulars such as persons, physical objects, and events. It is assumed that numbers

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<sup>191</sup> See French (2015) and references therein; cf. in particular French and Krause (2006).

and universals are not individuals in this sense, and that particular places and times are individuals if they have an absolute being and identity independent of their relation to particular physical objects and events.<sup>192</sup>

But there are views that accept fundamental individuals even in this strong sense, and still hold that reality is fundamentally qualitative – at least in the sense that haecceitistic differences cannot possibly arise. As I argued, the broadly Leibnizian metaphysics considered above is an instance.

On the other hand, the notion of an individual may be given a very loose characterization – so as to make it coincide with that of a countable thing. Yet the anti-Haecceitist would better not exclude individuals in *this* sense from the fundamental level, lest she is ready to buy into Ontological Nihilism, or at least into some form of Stuff Ontology.<sup>193</sup>

(Dasgupta seems to get close to this option when he tells us that individuals “are things, such as my laptop and the particles that compose it, that we describe as being propertied and related in various ways when we describe the material world around us”.<sup>194</sup> However, he also is implicitly taking particularity to be a necessary condition for individuality, so that he can still, consistently with his claim that fundamentally there are no individuals, take there to be fundamental entities of some sort – i.e., universals. Yet again, as I have argued, if

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<sup>192</sup> Adams (1979): 6.

<sup>193</sup> For Ontological Nihilism, see fn. 185 above. For Stuff Ontologies, see Steen (2016) and references therein; a recent defence is in Markosian (2015).

<sup>194</sup> Dasgupta (2009): 36.

one's aim is that of ruling out fundamental haecceitistic differences, then the assumption that universals are the sole fundamental entities is by itself both dispensable and inconclusive).

As I already pointed out, though, the rationale for anti-Haecceitism does not by itself support either of such moves. At most, it does so if accompanied by the idea that taking the fundamental entities to respect PII is an unaffordable price. But I still doubt that a fundamental ontology of things that respect PII is more expensive than one completely devoid of things *simpliciter*.

Finally, if being a particular is taken to be a necessary condition for being an individual, and if particulars are conceived of as those things that do not mandatorily respect PII, then it is true that excluding *them* from the fundamental ontology may play a relevant role in building up a metaphysics that excludes fundamental cases of primitive identity.<sup>195</sup> Yet if this is what the claim that there are no fundamental individuals boils down to, I take it to confirm my point. The anti-Haecceitist has to rule it out that there be (fundamentally at least) things with primitive thisness. The Generalist's appeal to grounding has not so far provided her with a way to sidestep such a requirement on her view.

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<sup>195</sup> I am grateful for this point to Fraser MacBride. See MacBride (2005): 609, fn. 41 and references therein.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Against Anti-Haecceitism**

At least under the best understanding of the issue so far achieved, I have contended, the anti-Haecceitist has no adequate way to rule it out that entities of a given kind (the *Ks*) may give rise to cases of primitive identity without respecting the *desiderata* of identity-explanation and distributiveness. Hence, she has to do so by denying that any of the *Ks* may have primitive thisness. I have also argued that in order to rule it out that any of the *Ks* may have primitive thisness one must ascribe to each one of them a minimal individual essence that is purely qualitative.

After recapitulating such results (§ 5.1), I will argue that, if each one of the *Ks* has a qualitative minimal individual essence then such things respect a strong version of PII (§ 5.1.1). Though I do not have any new argument against the form of PII at issue, I will be content with proving the truth of such a Principle to be an actual commitment of anti-Haecceitism properly conceived. I will also present some reasons to think that such a commitment is a *cost* – not a virtue – of anti-Haecceitism (§ 5.1.2).

The rest of the chapter will be devoted to casting doubts on some strategies that the anti-Haecceitist may try to employ in order to avoid the commitment to PII.

Still in the area of individual essences, I will draw on a case by Penelope Mackie concerning Graeme Forbes's metaphysics of modality in order to argue that the option of ascribing non-

trivial, yet non-qualitative minimal individual essences to entities is ultimately ineffective (§ 5.1.3).

My argument for the idea that a proper form of anti-Haecceitism cannot legitimately sidestep the *desiderata* of identity-explanation and distributiveness largely rested on my contention against Dasgupta's Generalism. One may protest that there might be other ways to build a form of anti-Haecceitism that does not respect those *desiderata* – ways that do not fall prey to the same difficulties that Generalism faces. After contending that my points against Dasgupta's strategy are likely to generalize (§ 5.2), I will argue against two further foreseeable options: those that appeal, respectively, to non-distributive individuation (§ 5.2.1) and to some form of eliminativism (§ 5.2.2).

### **5.1. Against Anti-Haecceitism with Individual Essences**

In Chapter 2 (§ 2.1), I have defined the two *desiderata* of identity-explanation and distributiveness as follows.

**Distributiveness.** There are no cases of primitive identity involving some *Ks* because each and every 'which is which'-issue concerning a *K* is settled by the qualitative reality. Hence, not only all cases of primitive identity are excluded: they are excluded one by one – i.e., each one of them is.

**Identity-explanation.** There are no cases of primitive identity involving some *Ks* because the *Ks* are individuated

by the way they are, qualitatively. As a result, a situation's involving some *Ks* in particular is always a matter of how the *Ks* involved in that situation qualitatively are. That is why 'which is which'-issues concerning the *Ks* are always settled by the qualitative reality.

I have then pointed out that a form of anti-Haecceitism that excludes that entities of a given kind (the *Ks*) may give rise to cases of primitive identity by respecting both *desiderata* is also one that denies that any of the *Ks* has primitive thisness. I have also argued, in Chapter 3 (§ 3.3.2), that in order to exclude the possibility that any of the *Ks* may have primitive thisness one must ascribe to each one of them a minimal individual essence – let me leave to one side for a moment the idea that such an essence should be purely qualitative. Finally, I have contended in Chapter 4 that, at least under the best understanding of the present debate so far achieved, a form of anti-Haecceitism about the *Ks* must indeed respect both of the *desiderata* I defined.

A view that does so by ascribing to each one of the *Ks* a minimal individual essence that is purely qualitative is a form of anti-Haecceitism of exactly the sort that Haecceitism about the *Ks*, as I conceive of it, denies. As anticipated (§ 1.4), where the *Ks* are taken to be the individual substances, this is the sort of view that I take Leibniz to have defended. Just as Leibniz's metaphysics, any such view (as I will point out shortly) is committed to the claim that the *Ks* respect a strong version of PII – i.e., that no two *Ks* may perfectly resemble one another.

Are there ways to rule it out that the *Ks* may give rise to cases of primitive identity by respecting the two *desiderata* albeit not committing to such a strong form of the Principle? Ascribing to each one of the *Ks* a minimal individual essence that is non-trivial – roughly: one that is eligible for non-trivially individuating the *K* at issue – and yet is not purely qualitative may look like a worthwhile option.

I will now consider these two strategies and argue that both must rely on strong PII in order to satisfy the rationale for anti-Haecceitism.

#### **5.1.1. Qualitative Individual Essences and PII**

The idea that each one of the *Ks* has a qualitative minimal individual essence provides with a very neat way to fulfil the rationale for anti-Haecceitism about the *Ks*.

As opposed to Algebraic Generalism, which rests on Pluralism about grounding, Structuralism, and Radical Holism, the resulting view does not force on us any quite as unexpected stance concerning the structure of reality.

By making a claim concerning the *Ks* themselves, the view does not face the problem of having to come up with an adequate ‘individualistic distinction’ such as the one that the Generalist has to provide at the level of facts.

Relatedly, it does not by itself force on us an ontology of facts at all, nor a metaphysics that is incompatible with nominalism. Thus, supposing she has independent reasons to accept the *Ks* in her ontology and, further, reasons to hold that such things should not give rise to cases of primitive identity, the anti-

Haecceitist of this fashion can simply ascribe to each one of *them* a minimal individual essence that is purely qualitative. For she does not need to count on some disputable principle such as I argued the Individuals Assumption to be.

She can for instance have it that the entities she takes as fundamental are the ones that should not be allowed to possibly give rise to cases of primitive identity. For, as opposed to some variations on Generalism I considered in Chapter 4, her view need not turn into some fundamentally things-less metaphysics at all.

The elegance of views of this sort surely comes at a price. For those who defend them are committed to the claim that each one of the *Ks* respects a strong version of PII. According to such a form of PII ('strong PII', henceforth) no two *Ks* are qualitatively just alike – no two of them perfectly resemble one another.

There can be little doubt that if each one of the *Ks* has a qualitative minimal individual essence then each one of them respects strong PII.

For I defined the notion of a thing's having a qualitative minimal individual essence in Chapter 3 (§ 3.3.1) as follows:

*a* has a **qualitative minimal individual essence** =<sub>df.</sub>  $\exists F$  such that (i.) *F* is a qualitative way for something to be, and (ii.) necessarily, for any *x*, *Fx* iff *x=a*.

(Where '*F*'s is a non-committal second-order predicate and the second-order existential quantifier is to be read as non-objectual).<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> For the sake of simplicity, I recall only one of the formulations provided in § 3.3.1 here. See § 3.3.1 and Appendix for alternative formulations.

But if something,  $a$ , is qualitatively indiscernible from a different thing,  $b$ , then  $a$  and  $b$  have the same qualitative profile. Still *via* second-order non-objectual quantification, this can be expressed as follows:

(i.) For all  $F$ , if  $F$  is qualitative, then  $Fa$  iff  $Fb$ .

Suppose this is the case and suppose for *reductio* that ‘ $G$ ’ expresses a qualitative minimal individual essence of  $a$ . That is:

(ii.)  $G$  is qualitative and necessarily, for any  $x$ ,  $Gx$  iff  $x=a$ .

Given (i.) and the first conjunct of (ii.), it follows that:

(iii.)  $Gb$

Given (iii.) and the second conjunct of (ii.), it follows that:

(iv.)  $b=a$

Being under the hypotheses that  $b$  is numerically different from  $a$  and that (i.) holds, we are then forced to reject (ii.).

Hence, nothing can have a qualitative minimal individual essence *and* perfectly resemble something else. In other words, things with a qualitative minimal individual essence must respect strong PII.

### 5.1.2. The Commitment to PII

How much of a cost does the acceptance of strong PII bring forth? This is a complicated question – one that can hardly receive, I suggest, a univocal answer. Indeed, the stance one should take in this concern will largely depend on (1.) what one has to gain by accepting strong PII, and (2.) which further costs one may avoid by doing so – still in view of such a gain.

The answer is likely to also depend, at least in part, on considerations as to what sort of entities one is targeting – that is: to what the *Ks* at issue are, and to whether *they* can reasonably be taken to satisfy strong PII. For instance, as I said, while aiming to exclude cases of primitive identity, Dasgupta still refrains from accepting that individual objects such as spheres respect strong PII.<sup>197</sup> By contrast, he takes the claim that *universals* do as unproblematic. Yet the latter claim gives him a way to effectively exclude primitive identities (if at all) only when accompanied by further ones that are themselves contentious. There is actually no evidence that those are less contentious, I have suggested, than the claim that individuals such as spheres respect PII itself.

Having to claim that individual objects respect PII may look like no cost whatsoever to some broadly Leibnizian philosophers – and perhaps to those who have not read Black (1952) and Adams (1979).

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<sup>197</sup> As I said, Dasgupta claims that Generalism can embed the possibility of a ‘Black’s world’, thus having an important edge on other forms of Qualitativism.

(As Rodriguez-Pereyra (2017b) remarks, the ‘argument from almost indiscernibles’ in the latter paper is supposed to enforce the outcome of the former.<sup>198</sup> While Black merely contends that a world with indiscernible individual objects is possible, Adams supports such a contention by arguing that a world with almost indiscernible individual objects is possible and that, if so, then a world with perfectly indiscernible individual objects is as well.<sup>199</sup> Rodriguez-Pereyra then goes on to argue that Adams’s argument is either ineffective or unnecessary. For, inasmuch as one can infer that there can be indiscernibles from the possibility of *almost* indiscernibles indeed, the hypothesis of almost indiscernibles turns out to be dispensable in view of a case against strong PII).<sup>200</sup>

Some might even protest that a view’s commitment to strong PII should be seen as a *virtue* of the view in question – not, as I have been suggesting, as a *cost* of it.

To make the point vivid, consider Leibniz’s philosophy again. Together with the Principle of Contradiction, Leibniz’s containment theory of truth entails his doctrine of complete individual concepts. The latter entails, in turn, that no two possible individual substances can perfectly resemble one another – hence, that any two such things must respect strong

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<sup>198</sup> Although Black’s dialogue is the *locus classicus*, a further counterexample to PII that also relies on the possibility of perfect symmetry is due to Ayer (1953): Chapter 2.

<sup>199</sup> For a slightly different reconstruction of the argument, see Forrest (2016), where it is labelled ‘continuity argument’. Cf. also Della Rocca (2005): 483. For a thorough discussion of counterexamples to PII and their faults and merits, see Hawley (2009).

<sup>200</sup> For a different discussion of Adams’s argument, see Baber (1992).

PII.<sup>201</sup> This commitment is desirable by Leibniz's own lights since in the framework of his metaphysics it entails that:

- i. no merely possible individual substance perfectly resembles any actual individual substance;
- ii. no merely possible world perfectly resembles the actual world.

And if i. and ii. were false – so Leibniz had it – God's will would have violated PSR and the Principle of the Best when She created the actual world. For in doing so, She would have chosen between indifferent options.

However, in the case just considered a reason for seeing the commitment to strong PII as a virtue is provided that is independent from the claims that bring forth that commitment themselves. Even ruling out certain possibilities (i.e., any maximal possibilities that are qualitatively indiscernible from the one that God has chosen to actualize at least) is justified in view of the claims about God's will that such a move helps one safeguard.

It is far from clear that every anti-Haecceitistic view can also provide independent reasons for seeing the commitment to strong PII as palatable – especially in view of the seeming possibilities that such a Principle demands one to rule out.

As a matter of fact, that many see strong PII – at least as applied to individual objects, and perhaps to individual entities of any sort<sup>202</sup> – not as a virtue but as a cost is apparent if we consider:

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<sup>201</sup> Cf. Look (2017).

<sup>202</sup> See Diekemper (2009) for the claim that individual *events* at least should be taken to violate strong PII. Cf. Ayer (1953): 32-33.

1. the efforts that have been devoted to show that metaphysics of individual objects seemingly committed to strong PII, such as the bundle theory of universals, can allow for the possibility of a ‘Black’s world’ after all;<sup>203</sup>
2. how eager anti-Haecceitist metaphysicians of diverse fashions typically are to prove that their views do not entail strong PII for individual objects. Dasgupta is not the only case: among the modal anti-Haecceitists, Lewis is also an example.<sup>204</sup>

The situation is interestingly different among philosophers of physics. Quite notoriously, identical quantum particles are widely taken to violate PII in any of its non-trivial readings.<sup>205</sup> And, as a matter of fact, several philosophers of physics take this as yet another reason to think that quantum particles are not individuals, in some allegedly significant sense of the term – or even for their not being objects.<sup>206</sup>

At least since Saunders (2003; 2006a), the contention that quantum particles can still be regarded as individuals or “*bona*

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<sup>203</sup> See in particular Hacking (1975); O’Leary-Hawthorne (1995) and Zimmerman (1997). See Calosi and Varzi (2016) for arguments to the effect that none of the strategies proposed in said articles does allow one to defend strong PII *and* embed the possibility of a Black’s world. For a different discussion of Black’s dialogue, cf. Cross (1995). See also Rodriguez-Pereyra (2004), where it is argued that the bundle theory is compatible with the falsity of PII.

<sup>204</sup> See Lewis (1986): 224-225, where Lewis declares that his modal anti-Haecceitism “does not imply any doctrine of identity of indiscernibles” and is indeed compatible with there being qualitatively indiscernible worlds. Cf. also *ibid.*: 157, where he explicitly allows for the possibility of there being “many indiscernible individuals”, as there would be in a world of two-way eternal recurrence – for the latter notion, see *ibid.*: 63.

<sup>205</sup> See in particular French and Redhead (1988); French (1989).

<sup>206</sup> See French and Krause (2006); French (2015), and literature therein. Cf. Quine (1976b).

*fide* objects”<sup>207</sup> as long as any two of them are at least weakly discernible is among the most intensely discussed in this concern.<sup>208</sup> Things are weakly discernible in the relevant sense if they stand in a relation that is symmetric and irreflexive.<sup>209</sup> Saunders (2006a) first argued that this is the case for maximally entangled fermions and the result was then extended to bosons (Muller and Seevinck, 2009). Some do take it that such results vindicate the truth of PII for the quantum realm (Muller, 2015). However, whether such a stance is justified rests on several issues. Some obviously have to do with the details of the relevant physical theory and need not concern us here. Some have to do with which version of PII one is attempting to vindicate. In this regard, I would just like to point out that, as far as the strong version of PII I have been considering is concerned, the option of weak discernibility had already been mentioned by Black:

A. (...) Let me try to make my point without using names. Each of the spheres will surely differ from the other in being at some distance from that other one, but at no distance from itself – that is to say, it will bear at least one relation to itself – *being at no distance from*, or *being in the*

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<sup>207</sup> Saunders (2006a): 52.

<sup>208</sup> See, among many others, Saunders (2006b); Hawley (2006); Saunders and Muller (2008); Dieks and Versteegh (2008); for an overview, see Bigaj (2015a; 2015b).

<sup>209</sup> One might remark that numerical distinctness is a symmetric and irreflexive relation itself. However, advocates of weak discernibility implicitly appeal to the fact that certain quantum particles stand in some symmetric and irreflexive relation *other than numerical distinctness*. Indeed, Saunders (2003)’s starting point is exactly an inquiry as to how identity should be analysed in terms of other properties and relations when interpreting a physical theory.

*same place as* – that it does not bear to the other. And this will serve to distinguish it from the other.

B. Not at all. Each will have the relational characteristic *being at a distance of two miles, say, from the centre of a sphere one mile in diameter, etc.* And each will have the relational characteristic (if you want to call it that) of *being in the same place as itself*. The two are alike in this respect as in all others.<sup>210</sup>

Just like B in Black's dialogue, I think that the two spheres in the example are qualitatively indiscernible and violate strong PII notwithstanding their being in the symmetric and irreflexive relation of *being at two miles from*. Hence, while it may be that quantum particles hold to one another symmetric and irreflexive relations that do make up for a qualitative difference between them, it is yet to be shown, I think, that weak discernibility can provide a vindication of strong PII as applied to individual objects in general.

As anticipated, I have no new argument to propose against strong PII. As a matter of fact, I could not possibly have one at this stage, since, as I said, the proper stance to take towards strong PII will depend at least in part on which sort of entities one is supposing to respect said Principle. I am content with proving that the truth of strong PII is indeed a commitment of any form of anti-Haecceitism properly understood. Given a form of anti-Haecceitism that takes every *K* to have a qualitative

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<sup>210</sup> Black (1952): 157.

minimal individual essence, hence to respect strong PII, Haecceitism about the *Ks* will then be a natural choice for those who maintain that at least some *Ks* should be taken to violate the Principle.

Note, however, that the case of quantum particles points to an important observation. The contention that a commitment to strong PII might be desirable after all can simply be dismissed in case the things that a theory must take to respect the Principle actually turn out to violate it. In other words, no matter how desirable strong PII might theoretically be, a theory that must embed it is certainly to be rejected if PII is *false*.

Note, finally, that quantum particles are exactly those things that are most widely taken to support a reasonably uncontroversial case against haecceitistic differences *from contemporary physics*. Hence, inasmuch as one is moved to the idea that anti-Haecceitism must be true by considerations about contemporary physics, it seems that one must certainly be an anti-Haecceitist about quantum particles. Yet if anti-Haecceitism about quantum particles entails the truth of strong PII about such things, those who think that anti-Haecceitism is to be defended in the light of contemporary physics are in a quandary. They must either give up on such a contention or defend a claim that is widely taken to be false – i.e., the claim that quantum particles respect strong PII.

I take this to further establish the importance of the point I am arguing for – i.e., that anti-Haecceitism about the *Ks* is committed to strong PII about the *Ks*.

### 5.1.3. Non-Qualitative Individual Essences and PII

The anti-Haecceitist about the  $K$ s who aims to respect the *desiderata* of identity-explanation and distributiveness, and yet is unwilling to rule it out that two or more  $K$ s can perfectly resemble one another, may attempt to ascribe to every  $K$  a minimal individual essence that is not purely qualitative.

If the resulting view is to satisfy the rationale for anti-Haecceitism, the minimal individual essences in question will have to be non-trivial. This would mean, at least, that if every  $K$  has a minimal individual essence of this sort, then the  $K$ s respect a version of PII that is, again, non-trivial, albeit not as strong as to exclude that any two  $K$ s perfectly resemble one another.<sup>211</sup>

For a further way to get at least a rough understanding of the relevant ‘non-triviality condition’, we may recall the notion of something’s having strongly primitive thisness that I introduced in § 2.4, that is:

**$a$  has strongly primitive thisness** =<sub>df</sub> it is not the case that  $\exists F$  such that  $\Psi(F)$  and for something to be identical to  $a$  is for it to be the case that  $Fx$  (for  $\Psi$  a condition such that  $\Psi(F)$  just in case: (i.) it is not the case that  $F \cong$  is identical to  $a$ , and (ii.) it is not the case that  $\exists G$  such that  $F \cong (G \&$  is identical to  $a)$ ).<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> See again Rodriguez-Pereyra (2006) for an important insight into which properties one should not quantify on when stating the weakest non-trivial version PII.

<sup>212</sup> For the sake of simplicity, I recall only one of the formulations provided in § 2.4 here. See § 2.4 and Appendix for alternative formulations.

Suppose that for something to be *a* is for it to be *F*. It follows that *being F* is a minimal individual essence of *a* – i.e., that *being F* is a condition that is necessarily both necessary and sufficient for being *a*.<sup>213</sup> (Recall the principle I mentioned in § 3.3.2: if to be *F* is to be *G*, then necessarily, for any *x*, *x* is *F* if and only if *x* is *G*).

Suppose, moreover, that since for something to be *a* is for it to be *F*, *a* does not have strongly primitive thisness. It follows from the latter claim that *being F* is a non-trivial minimal individual essence of *a* – although not mandatorily a qualitative one.

Thus, if *being Richard Burton* is the only minimal individual essence of the Welsh actor, then Richard Burton does have strongly primitive thisness. For even supposing that not only *being Richard Burton* is a minimal individual essence of Richard Burton, but that for something to be Richard Burton is for it to be Richard Burton – which seems to be blatantly true – such a claim cannot make for a non-trivial principle of individuation for Richard Burton. *Ditto* for the feature of *being Richard Burton and famous*.<sup>214</sup>

By contrast, as I said (§ 2.4), if for something to be Richard Burton is for it to have married Liz Taylor twice (which would entail that *having married Liz Taylor twice* is a minimal individual essence of the actor), *having married Liz Taylor twice*

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<sup>213</sup> I am presently ignoring issues related to property-talk as opposed to a nominalistic-friendly formulation such as the one I favour. The point can easily be made in terms of either.

<sup>214</sup> However, the claim that *for something to be Richard Burton is for it to be Richard Burton and famous*, if true, would not be trivially so. Cf. Correia and Skiles (*forthcoming*).

could well serve as a non-trivial individuating feature of Richard Burton – but not as a qualitative one.<sup>215</sup>

Consider now the claim that each one of the *Ks* has a minimal individual essence that is non-trivial, albeit not purely qualitative. The claim does not, by itself, result in excluding all cases of primitive identity and of haecceitistic difference involving the *Ks*. For instance, even supposing that *having married Liz Taylor twice* is a minimal individual essence of Richard Burton, two otherwise indiscernible situations may still differ haecceitistically in that one involves Richard Burton and Liz Taylor, while the other involves an indiscernible doppelganger of the actor and one of his twice former wife.

A form of anti-Haecceitism about the *Ks* that ascribes to each one of the *Ks* a non-trivial, non-qualitative minimal individual essence would also strictly speaking fail to respect the *desideratum* of identity-explanation so as I stated it – that is, as requiring that each one of the *Ks* is *qualitatively* individuated.

However, we may play along, and perhaps decide to loosen that definition, if, taking the claim that every *K* has a non-qualitative minimal individual essence that is non-trivial as a start, one could build on it a metaphysics that ultimately fulfils the anti-Haecceitist's rationale.

(The new *desideratum* would in that case look roughly as follows:

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<sup>215</sup> See Mackie (2006): § 2.2 for more on how to define non-trivial (or 'substantial') minimal individual essences.

**Identity-explanation\***. There are no cases of primitive identity involving some *Ks* because the *Ks* are non-trivially individuated. As a result, a situation's involving some *Ks* in particular is always a matter of how the *Ks* involved in that situation are. That is why 'which is which'-issues concerning the *Ks* are always settled by some further feature of reality).

What I aim to argue here is that inasmuch as a project such as this succeeds, it will end up committing to the same strong version of PII I considered in the last section.

In order to make this point, I will draw on Mackie (2006)'s case against Forbes's metaphysics of modality. According to the latter view, many individuals – i.e., all biological organisms at least – have non-trivial minimal individual essences that are non-qualitative.<sup>216</sup>

Now, as anticipated (§ 2.4), Forbes's reason for holding that this is the case is significantly different from the anti-Haecceitist's general aim. First, while the cases of primitive identity and of haecceitistic difference that the anti-Haecceitist rejects may be intra-world, Forbes is concerned with *transworld* identities and differences alone. Second, Forbes has it that any transworld identity or difference must somehow consist in something else – i.e., to recall his own terminology, no such identity or difference can be 'bare'. He allows, though, that transworld identities and differences can consist in something else *that is*

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<sup>216</sup> See *ibid.*: 54 for the idea that Forbes should consistently with his own arguments extend such a claim to artefacts as well. Cf. Forbes (2002) and Mackie (2002).

*not purely qualitative.* (For instance, when two worlds differ in the identity of some biological organism they contain, such a difference must be produced by, or at the very least supervene on, some further difference. Yet the latter may be a difference in the identity of some further biological organisms as well).

Hence, as I said, every bare identity in Forbes's sense is a case of primitive identity in my sense (*ditto* for bare differences and haecceitistic differences), but not *vice versa*.

Like Saul Kripke, Forbes defends a thesis of the essentiality of origin for biological organisms, which he formulates as follows:

“ $\Box(\forall x) \Box(\forall y) \Box(\text{Prop}(x, y) \rightarrow \Box(\text{Exists}(y) \rightarrow (\text{Prop}(x, y))))$ ”.<sup>217</sup>

‘Prop( $x, y$ )’ in the formula above is short for ‘ $x$  is a propagule of  $y$ ’, where “ $x$  is a propagule of  $y$  iff  $x$  is one of the entities which grew or developed into  $y$ ”.<sup>218</sup> For instance, for any human being  $h$ ,  $h$ 's sole propagule is, in Forbes's theory, the zygote that  $h$  developed from. A zygote  $z$ 's sole propagules are, in turn, the sperm and egg from which union  $z$  sprang.<sup>219</sup>

Furthermore, Forbes has it that if the  $X$ -s are all the propagules of  $y$ , then *having the  $X$ -s as one's sole propagules* is not only an essential feature, but also a minimal individual essence, of  $y$ .<sup>220</sup>

That is to say,  $y$  could not have existed and failed to originate

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<sup>217</sup> Forbes (1980): 353.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.* In biology, a propagule is the part of an organism that can be propagated or act as an agent of reproduction.

<sup>219</sup> Cf. *ibid.*: 353-354. See also Forbes (1985): Ch. 6.

<sup>220</sup> Capital signs stand for plural terms here, as usual in plural logic. For an introduction, see Oliver and Smiley (2016).

from any of the *X*-s, *and* nothing other than *y* could have possibly originated from the *X*-s.<sup>221</sup>

Consider a given zygote  $z_m$  – the one zygote, let us suppose, that developed into me. According to Forbes, *having  $z_m$  as one's sole propagule* is a minimal individual essence of me. If so, then I cannot possibly give rise to cases of bare transworld identity or difference. In effect – to focus for the moment on bare transworld *differences* alone – every transworld difference involving me will be accompanied by a difference with respect to *having  $z_m$  as one's sole propagule*.

In slightly different terms, no two worlds will differ merely in that I exist in one and not in the other. More generally, no two worlds will differ merely in what they represent *de re* of me.

For no two possible individuals will differ solely in that one is me and the other is not. Any two possible individuals that thus differ will also differ in that one does, and the other does not, have  $z_m$  as their sole propagule.

Note that, at this stage, Forbes's solution still allows for worlds that differ, solely, as regards some identities – mine, so to speak, plus some others. For instance, two worlds can still differ merely in that both  $z_m$  and I exist in the one but not in the other.

(Compare with the case I made above: under the hypothesis that *having married Liz Taylor twice* is a minimal individual essence of Richard Burton, two situations may still differ solely

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<sup>221</sup> The notion of an individual essence (with no further qualification) that is used by both Forbes and Mackie is not different from the one I called '*minimal individual essence*'. See Mackie (2006): 18-19 and § 2.3.1 above.

inasmuch as one involves Richard Burton and Liz Taylor, while the other involves two individuals that are numerically different yet indiscernible from them, respectively).

This should come as no surprise in the light of (1.) the difference between Forbes's No Bare Identities thesis and the anti-Haecceitist's rationale (supposing for the moment that the latter too is restricted to transworld cases), and (2.) the ways I characterized the non-qualitative distinction. I will recall those characterizations here for the sake of convenience:

***P* is a non-qualitative property** =<sub>df</sub> For some things  $b_1, b_2, \dots, b_n, n \geq 1$ , and some  $n+1$ -ary relation  $R$ , the property  $\lambda x Px$  is identical to the property  $\lambda x R(x, b_1, \dots, b_n)$ .

Every property that is not non-qualitative is qualitative.

***P* is a non-qualitative way for something to be** (or, formally:  $\Phi P$ , where  $\Phi$  is an operator that takes a predicate to form a sentence) =<sub>df</sub> For some things  $b_1, b_2, \dots, b_n, n \geq 1$ , and some  $n+1$ -ary  $R, P \cong$  is  $R$ -related to  $b_1, b_2, \dots, b_n$  (in this order).

Every way for something to be that is not non-qualitative is qualitative.

***P* is a non-qualitative predicate** =<sub>df</sub> For some designators  $b_1, b_2, \dots, b_n, n \geq 1$ , and some  $n+1$ -ary predicate  $R$ , the predicate  $P$  and the predicate  $R_, b_1, \dots, b_n$  are synonymous.

Every predicate that is not non-qualitative is qualitative.

However, note that, if this were the end of the story by Forbes's own lights, then nothing would prevent  $z_m$  from possibly giving rise to cases of bare transworld identity and difference. Well aware of this, Forbes ascribes a minimal individual essence not only to each biological organism, but also to every propagule of one. This is done, again, by appealing to the identities of such a thing's propagules.<sup>222</sup> Thus, he takes *having  $x_m$  and  $y_m$  as one's sole propagules*, where  $x_m$  and  $y_m$  are the egg and sperm from which union  $z_m$  sprang, to be  $z_m$ 's minimal individual essence.

More generally, in order to avoid cases of bare transworld identity involving biological entities, Forbes ascribes to such things minimal individual essences that consist in having certain things as one's sole propagules. In order to avoid cases of bare transworld identity involving such propagules, he then ascribes to each one of them a minimal individual essence of having certain things as one's sole propagules, in turn.<sup>223</sup> Each propagule of some biological entity's propagule has a minimal individual essence of the same type, and so on.

Each one of these ascriptions is made in order to exclude cases of bare transworld identity and difference involving individuals of a certain kind. But if all minimal individual essences thereby ascribed are non-qualitative – if one does not at some point ascribe a *qualitative* minimal individual essence to some entity, one will just keep on accounting for some entity's identity in terms of some other entities' identity.

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<sup>222</sup> See Mackie (2006): § 3.2.

<sup>223</sup> For the problem that Forbes's view would face in the case of propagules that are generated by cell division, see *ibid.*: 53. Cf. Forbes (1997); (2002).

And, what is worse for my anti-Haecceitist, cases of haecceitistic differences will get no less possible than they were at the first step. Recall again the two situations I pictured – where one involves Richard Burton and Liz Taylor, while the other involves two indiscernibles of them. Situations that differ merely in the identity of  $n$  things of the same sort are unacceptable by the anti-Haecceitist's light, no matter what number  $n$  stands for.

But let me get back to Forbes's view in order to conclude my present point. Given his tenets I introduced above, the risk of a potential infinite regress easily comes to mind.<sup>224</sup>

Now, one may wish to concede<sup>225</sup> that the concept of a regress is not highly problematic in itself. If it is not, Forbes can perhaps help himself to a view according to which every biological entity has a minimal individual essence that consists in having some given things as one's sole propagules, *and* the series by which every individual's identity thus rests on some fact of the matter concerning the identity of its propagules has no end.

However, Forbes' aim is to exclude every case of bare transworld identity involving any biological entity – either actual or possible. Hence, for his proposal to go through, the assumption that reality is regressive in the way just said must be true of every possible world that contains biological entities – and, if Mackie (2006) is right, of every possible world that contains

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<sup>224</sup> Cf. Mackie (2006): 43.

<sup>225</sup> And some have argued: see, among others, Bliss (2013); (2014); Tahko (2014); and Morganti (2015).

artefacts as well. The claim that reality is regressive in every such world would then be a consequence of Forbes' view (under this construal). And this may seem to be too high a price to pay – arguably, even to those who sympathize with the idea that reality is *possibly* regressive.

As a more worrisome difficulty, note that said view would also entail that:

- (1.) there are infinitely many material entities in every possible world that contains biological entities;
- (2.) there are infinitely many propagules in every possible world that contains biological entities.

It is not clear, though, that a philosophical argument should be allowed to decide whether (1.) and (2.) are the case. (2.), in particular, (i.) is likely to be contradicted by biological knowledge about the actual world, and (ii.) is incompatible with the possibility of there being a beginning of time – granted that the time interval between two contiguous propagules in a series cannot be arbitrarily small.<sup>226</sup>

Or perhaps the series ends up forming a circle instead of an infinite regress. However, I do not see how this could have any plausibility within Forbes's view. For, as I said, Forbes ascribes to each biological entity a minimal individual essence *of having some given things as one's sole propagules*. Hence, for a circle to arise in the resulting series it should be the case that some propagules have a minimal individual essence of having developed into a given biological entity in particular – or: of

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<sup>226</sup> Thanks to Claudio Calosi and Fabrice Correia here.

having developed into a biological entity that developed into another that developed into another... that developed into a given biological entity in particular.<sup>227</sup>

But this would seem wrong. Even if  $z_m$  actually developed into me, it could certainly have failed to do so because of some accidents occurred in the process of my generation; *ditto* for  $x_m$  and  $y_m$ , which union could have failed to generate  $z_m$ , and so on and so forth.

By contrast, if reality is neither regressive nor circular, the series that Forbes led us to consider has an end. If this is the case, there must be a last entity,  $e$ , to which Forbes would ascribe a minimal individual essence. For only if such an entity  $e$  has a minimal individual essence,  $e$  cannot possibly give rise to cases of bare transworld (non-)identity. And if Forbes' solution is effective, the series can end only when there is no further entity  $f$  such that, unless  $f$  has an individual essence,  $f$  can itself give rise to cases of bare transworld (non-)identity.

Now,  $e$ 's minimal individual essence must be either qualitative or non-qualitative.

If it is non-qualitative, then it will still consist in being in a given relation with a further entity  $f$ . And if this is the end of the series indeed, no further story as to what supports cases of transworld identity and non-identity involving  $f$  will be provided. Yet this would mean that  $f$  can possibly give rise to cases of bare identity and difference.

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<sup>227</sup> As remarked by Mackie (2006): 52, Forbes has it that the relation of generating, which holds between a propagule and the biological entity that sprang from it, is intransitive. Cf. Forbes (1985): 133.

If *e* has a minimal individual essence that is purely qualitative, instead, then obviously *e* is a thing that respects strong PII.

If so, however, it is not clear how to escape the consequence that the other entities in the series do so as well. For the version of PII at issue is not one that excludes that things may be qualitative duplicates – i.e., have one and the same *intrinsic* qualitative character. Rather, it rules it out that things may be qualitative indiscernible – that is, have one and the same qualitative character *simpliciter*.<sup>228</sup> A thing's qualitative character in this sense includes its extrinsic qualitative features.

Thus, if *e* has a minimal individual essence that is purely qualitative (say: *being so-and-so*), and if some entity *d* has the minimal individual essence of *having e as one's sole propagule*, it seems hard to deny that *d* has a qualitative minimal individual essence as well – that of *having a thing that is so-and-so as one's sole propagule*. Analogously, *mutatis mutandis*, for the entity *c* that was ascribed the minimal individual essence of *having d as one's sole propagule*. And so on. (As seen above, the propagules of a thing can be a plurality. However, I am here considering examples of things that have only one propagule for the sake of simplicity).

Now, being concerned only with cases of *transworld* identity and difference, Forbes has a way to avoid such a predicament. In effect, he resorts to a branching conception of possible worlds, where branching worlds are taken to literally share a common initial segment. He takes it that cases of identity and

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<sup>228</sup> Cf. Lewis (1986): 63-64.

difference within the common segment may be taken as unproblematic – even if not supported by further facts of the matter.<sup>229</sup>

However (and whatever the merits of such a proposal), I am not interested here in evaluating Forbes's view, but in what we can learn about anti-Haecceitism by looking at it.

In particular, we can now approach a question I have anticipated above, that is: can one take the claim that every *K* has a non-qualitative minimal individual essence as a start, and build a metaphysics that ultimately satisfies the anti-Haecceitist's rationale out of it?

Not, I argue, unless one is willing to eventually accept that the *K*s respect strong PII after all. For:

1. in the series considered above, the claim that the last entity one is to consider, *e*, has a *non*-qualitative minimal individual essence results in allowing for the possibility of cases of bare identity and difference (which are also cases of primitive identity and of haecceitistic difference in my sense);
2. while the option of accepting an infinite regress could, at least in principle, satisfy Forbes's aims, it cannot satisfy the anti-Haecceitist's. Indeed, at no step of the series described above the possibility of a haecceitistic difference is excluded – although at every step the possibility of *bare* differences involving a given entity is. For as I said, situations that differ in the identity of *n*

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<sup>229</sup> See Forbes (1985): Chapter 6, § 6.

things they involve do differ haecceitistically in the way the anti-Haecceitist finds unacceptable – whatever number  $n$  may stand for.<sup>230</sup> Analogous considerations would apply to the option of accepting that the series ends up forming a circle.

If the anti-Haecceitist is unhappy with the idea that the  $K$ s she has taken as a target satisfy strong PII – if she wants to hold that numerically distinct  $K$ s can perfectly resemble one another – she may ascribe to each one of them a non-qualitative minimal individual essence that consists in being in some way related to a certain thing in particular that is not a  $K$  but, say, an  $L$ . The  $L$ s, she may contend, have minimal individual essences that are purely qualitative; hence, they do respect strong PII, whereas the  $K$ s do not. (We are here to suppose that the anti-Haecceitist has reasons to hold that taking the  $L$ s to respect strong PII is less problematic than taking the  $K$ s to do so).

The problem is that the resulting view would not be a form of anti-Haecceitism about the  $K$ s. It would be a form of anti-Haecceitism about the  $L$ s.

I conclude that the anti-Haecceitist about the  $K$ s must ascribe to each one of them a minimal individual essence that is not only non-trivial, but also purely qualitative. Hence, she has to commit to the idea that every  $K$  respects strong PII.

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<sup>230</sup> See Mackie (2006): 43-44 for an analogous consideration, to the effect that the sort of regress considered above is compatible with modal Haecceitism.

## **5.2. Against Anti-Haecceitism without Individual Essences**

Some may protest that I was too quick in drawing the conclusion above. True, a form of anti-Haecceitism about the *Ks* that respects the *desiderata* of identity-explanation and distributiveness must hold that every *K* respects strong PII. However – so the thought would go – there may be ways to fulfil the anti-Haecceitist’s rationale without satisfying those *desiderata*; ways, in particular, that are immune to my objections against Algebraic Generalism.

Now, of course I have no way to exclude that some such strategy might be developed.

However, I argue that my points against Algebraic Generalism – and in particular my meta-theoretical points against Dasgupta’s approach to the present debate – are likely to generalize.

For Dasgupta’s view is but one application of a general recipe – one that proved, I think, ineffective. To stress once more, the anti-Haecceitist about the *Ks* has a problem with the idea that situations may differ merely with respect to which *Ks* are involved in them. Focusing on the *Ks* themselves, and trying to deliver the claim that they cannot possibly be such as to give rise to such differences, traditionally led anti-Haecceitists to hold that every *K* is qualitatively individuated. Such a stance brought them to accept that every *K* has a qualitative minimal individual essence – hence, that such things fulfil strong PII.

As we saw, however, even many anti-Haecceitists find the commitment to strong PII disturbing (at least when it comes to

individuals). As a solution, Dasgupta explored a strategy that sidesteps the entities at issue altogether and makes a claim about some propositional-like entities<sup>231</sup> instead – in the case of his view, about facts.

However, no matter which propositional-like entities one takes as one's target, I think that the problem will still arise of defining a suitable qualitative distinction that applies to them. We saw that – faced with such a problem – the Generalist has three options.

First, she may rely on something like the Individuals Assumption, as Dasgupta himself does. Yet I proved this option to be deeply problematic.

Second, she may try and duly generalize the qualitative distinction as one that is not partial to individuals (or to any class of entities) anymore. Yet in the case of Generalism, this strategy led one to gain too much by turning anti-Haecceitism into something dangerously close to ontological nihilism.

Finally, she may use a distinction that *is* partial to entities of a given sort – that is, to those entities that fail to have qualitative minimal individual essences. Yet avoiding such a theoretical move is among the benefits that Dasgupta's recipe had promised to provide.<sup>232</sup>

I see no reason to expect that by framing the debate at the level of some propositional-like entities *other than facts* one would avoid such difficulties. Indeed, by doing so one would even lose the chance to phrase the issue in terms of grounding, hence

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<sup>231</sup> I came to appreciate this notion thanks to – and I borrow this label from – Alex Skiles.

<sup>232</sup> Cf. Chapter 4 above.

clearly accounting for the connection between anti-Haecceitism and fundamentality as ungroundedness. For the relata of grounding relations are usually taken to be facts.

And while facts, as relata of grounding relations, are construed by some as obtaining states of affairs and by others as true propositions, I think that the points I made apply to them under either construal.<sup>233</sup>

More generally, the anti-Haecceitist who phrases the debate in terms of propositional-like entities other than facts will also need to appeal to some suitable relation holding between the qualitative and the non-qualitative among them, and it is unclear which one would fit.

(Given what I just said, such a relation cannot be grounding; as I argued in § 3.1, there is reason to doubt it can be supervenience either).

As things stand, we have reason to doubt that one can effectively exclude cases of primitive identity while sidestepping the entities that are eligible for giving rise to such cases.

In what follows, I will consider two further strategies that one may attempt to pursue in order to fulfil the anti-Haecceitist's rationale while not committing to strong PII. Since I know of no actual attempt to pursue either of them, I will focus on pointing out the theoretical problems that such hypothetical attempts are likely to face.

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<sup>233</sup> Audi (2012) is an instance of the former approach. Rosen (2010) is an instance of the latter. Fine (2001) and Correia (2010) mention the viability of denying that true grounding statements ascribe a relation, and thus that there are items related by a grounding relation in the first place.

### 5.2.1. Non-Distributive Individuation

Giving up on the idea of sidestepping the non-propositional entities that she fears may give rise to cases of primitive identity – say, the *Ks*, the anti-Haecceitist may attempt to set forth a view that respects the *desideratum* of identity-explanation without respecting that of distributiveness.<sup>234</sup>

The idea would presumably be, roughly, the following. The *Ks* cannot possibly give rise to cases of primitive identity because they are qualitatively individuated. However, there is no entailment to the idea that every *K* is qualitatively individuated on its own, hence none to the claim that each one of them respects strong PII. *They* are qualitatively individuated – in some plural and non-distributive way.

It is not easy to see what this could mean, exactly. However, we can try and think of it by analogy with the way Dasgupta asked us to think of grounding for non-qualitative facts.

The anti-Haecceitist who respects both *desiderata* has it that to be *a* (where *a* is an arbitrary *K*) is to be *F*, for some qualitative *F*.

By contrast, the anti-Haecceitist who respects identity-explanation alone would perhaps claim that for some things *X* to be *a* and *b* and *c*... and *n* (where *a* and *b* and *c*... and *n* are a plurality of *Ks*) is for them to be *F*. ‘*X*’ would be a plural variable, and ‘*F*’ a qualitative predicate that applies to plural variables.

She would then insist that even when a claim like the one just mentioned is true, it is not the case that for something to be *a*

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<sup>234</sup> For the problems that an anti-Haecceitist would face if she were to respect the latter but not the former instead, see Dasgupta (2014): § 3.

(or *b*, or *c*,... or *n*) as opposed to any other member of the plurality is for it to be *G*, for some qualitative *G*.

Even supposing that all of the *Ks* are qualitatively individuated *via* plural, non-distributive claims of this sort, it is hard to see how this would guarantee that the *Ks* cannot possibly give rise to cases of primitive identity.

Compare again with a form of anti-Haecceitism that respects both *desiderata* – and let me focus on cases of haecceitistic difference for the sake of simplicity. If every one of the *Ks* has a minimal individual essence that is purely qualitative, then any two situations that differ as to which *Ks* are involved in them will also differ in how the *Ks* involved in them are, qualitatively. Hence, any two such situations will differ qualitatively themselves. This is what guarantees that under such a view the *Ks* cannot possibly give rise to haecceitistic differences.

However, the ‘every-talk’ is abandoned altogether in the hypothesis of a plural, non-distributive theory of individuation for the *Ks*. It is not strictly speaking the case that *every one* of the *Ks* is qualitatively different from any other. If so, however, it is not clear that *every* two situations that differ with respect to which *Ks* are involved in them must also differ qualitatively in some way.

As an example, consider two *Ks* – *a* and *b*. Suppose neither of them can be qualitatively individuated on its own, and yet *they* can be qualitatively individuated together. In particular, suppose that for some things *X* to be *a* and *b* is for them to be *F*, but there is no qualitative *G* such that for something to be *a* is for it to be *G*. *Mutatis mutandis* for *b*.

I see no reason to exclude that some situations may involve either of *a* and *b* and nothing else. Consider then now two situations: *S*, which involves *a* alone, and *S\**, which involves *b* alone instead. How to make sure that any two situations that thus differ will also differ qualitatively in some way?

As far as I can see, there is no way to do so without imposing that *a* and *b* must somehow differ qualitatively from one another. But since we made no hypothesis about *a* and *b* whatsoever, except for taking that they are qualitatively individuated together while none of them is qualitatively individuated on its own, this means that the same will hold of any two *Ks*: no two of them can perfectly resemble. Which means that the *Ks* must fulfil strong PII after all.

Perhaps the anti-Haecceitist can still escape such a predicament by claiming that no situation can be such as to involve one single *K*; *Ks* enter in situations only as pluralities. Absent an independent justification for such a claim, the form of anti-Haecceitism I have been considering would seem highly unpalatable. For such a view would come at the cost of a quite unorthodox theory of individuation for the *Ks* – where by paying such a cost one would not even succeed in allowing that the *Ks* may violate strong PII.

### **5.2.2. Eliminativism?**

One might suggest that the anti-Haecceitist who seeks to avoid the commitment to strong PII still has the option of taking an eliminativist stance.

But I argue that this is not a viable option given the way I have framed the debate.

Eliminativism would perhaps be a viable option if the present debate were phrased in terms of thisnesses as literally existent properties. The anti-Haecceitist could then attempt to claim that she does not need to provide conditions that are necessarily necessary and sufficient for something to have a given thisness. For – so the thought goes – she could contend that there are no thisnesses to begin with.

Or, if she follows Dasgupta in framing the issue in terms of qualitative and non-qualitative facts, she could attempt to claim that there are no facts of the latter sort whatsoever.

However, my characterization of the debate does not appeal to either literally existent thisnesses or facts. As a matter of fact, it is not phrased in terms of entities of any sort other than those that lack qualitative minimal individual essence themselves.

Clearly, being an eliminativist about *those* would not spare the anti-Haecceitist a commitment to strong PII. Indeed, such a move would entail that every single existent respects the Principle – for absolutely everything would have a minimal individual essence that is purely qualitative.

I conclude that, given the way I have phrased the present debate, there is no meaningful eliminativist stance that the anti-Haecceitist can take in order to avoid the price of strong PII.

Perhaps the anti-Haecceitist may still try to adopt a form of error theory, by saying that it is never the case that a given thing in particular is involved in a given situation. It is not the

case that *Richard Burton married the same woman twice*, although it is the case that *a so-and-so actor married the same woman twice*. Because the latter is true, we can move around successfully in the world with the belief that *Richard Burton married the same woman twice* – what is strictly speaking false.

(Note however that, absent the tenet that *being a so-and-so actor* is a minimal individual essence of Richard Burton, there is no guarantee that the description ‘a so-and-so actor’ singles out *one* entity alone. And that is of course a tenet that the anti-Haecceitist who rejects strong PII will refuse to uphold).

Such an approach would presumably have interesting – and some may well say problematic – consequences for certain issues about personal identity.

For instance, consider a suitable enrichment of John Perry (1979)’s case – one where Perry at some point gets to know everything there is to be known about the qualitative profile of the messy shopper he is chasing around the supermarket, and still does not realize that *he* himself is the messy shopper. It seems that, according to the sort of error theory I am considering, we should think that at that point Perry has nothing else to find out about the shopper. Or, at least, nothing *true* to find out: for the content of the belief he gets to entertain when he finally thinks ‘*I am the messy shopper*’ would strictly speaking be false.

Still, the faults and virtues of such a view would have to be assessed once its details are duly spelled out. What is at best hard to see, in particular, is whether this stance could indeed

allow the anti-Haecceitist to exclude all cases of primitive identity without accepting strong PII.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Austere Haecceitism**

I have argued that a form of anti-Haecceitism about the *Ks* must include the claim that every *K* has a qualitative minimal individual essence. In this chapter, I will state Haecceitism about the *Ks* as the denial of such a claim (§ 6.1).

As should by now be clear, being a Haecceitist about something does not commit one to ascribing to that thing some sort of haecceity, a property it depends upon for its identity. The claim that something has strongly primitive thisness, in particular, is at odds with the idea that such a thing depends on something else for its identity – hence, that it has a haecceity in the relevant sense. One may even say that the former stance plainly contradicts the latter.

(As I already said, Haecceitism does not entail that there are things with strongly primitive thisness. However, as I will suggest, such a claim would contribute to building a particularly elegant Haecceitistic metaphysics; § 6.2).

Any view that holds that (i.) some of the *Ks* have primitive thisness and (ii.) none of the *Ks* has a haecceity, I will call ‘Austere Haecceitism’ about the *Ks*.

Haecceitism as I myself defend it as true about at least some *Ks* is indeed a form of Austere Haecceitism in this sense. Moreover, it is also ‘austere’ in a further sense since it is not committed to properties of any sort whatsoever, nor to an ontology of facts. (Strictly speaking, this is true of any Haecceitistic claim that is stated in the terms I have been proposing).

I will conclude by addressing some potential objections to Austere Haecceitism (§ 6.3). I will contend, in particular, that such a view is neither ontologically (§ 6.3.1) nor metaphysically (§ 6.3.2) redundant, that it does not openly contradict any unquestionable interpretation of contemporary physics (§ 6.3.3) and that it does not amount to a metaphysics that excludes individuality (§ 6.3.4).

### **6.1. Entities without Qualitative Individual Essences**

Haecceitism about the *Ks*, as I propose to conceive of it, is the denial of the thesis, which anti-Haecceitism about the *Ks* must accept, that every *K* has a qualitative minimal individual essence.

This may seem too weak. Unless ‘*K*’ singles out some gerrymandered class of things – one may protest – either every *K* has a qualitative minimal individual essence, or none of them does. Hence, so the thought goes, Haecceitism about the *Ks* should be taken to hold that *none* of the *Ks* has a qualitative minimal individual essence, instead.

Roughly, the idea would be that the members of classes that are not gerrymandered – the members of classes that are singled out by some proper sortal predicate – should be taken to be alike in their essential behaviour in some relevant sense.<sup>235</sup>

However, I would rather stick to my weaker characterization for two reasons.

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<sup>235</sup> For the idea that a sortal conveys the essential profile of the things it applies to, see Grandy (2016) and references therein.

First, there may well be some class of things that is neither gerrymandered in a way that makes it irrelevant for the present debate nor such that all of its members should be assumed to be alike in their essential behaviour.

Suppose, for instance, that the *Ks* are the actual entities and recall the general rationale for anti-Haecceitism – i.e., the suspicion against cases of primitive identity, and of haecceitistic difference in particular. One may have reasons to think that the actual entities, and only them, should be allowed to possibly give rise to such cases.<sup>236</sup> If so, then one may wish to deny that anti-Haecceitism about the actual entities is generally speaking true. And still, the idea that all of the actual entities should either have or lack a qualitative minimal individual essence – that it cannot be the case that some have and some lack one – seems dubious.

Second, it may be that no *K* has a minimal individual essence that is purely qualitative, and still not all *Ks* are alike in their essential behaviour in that some have a minimal individual essence that is non-trivial, albeit non-qualitative, and some do not.

For instance, suppose that the *Ks* are the material objects, whether atomic or mereologically complex – assuming, of course, that there are both atomic and mereologically complex objects indeed. A mereological essentialist may consistently hold that all atomic objects have strongly primitive thisness – hence, that none of them has any non-trivial minimal individual

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<sup>236</sup> Skyrms (1980) defends modal Haecceitism for actual entities and modal anti-Haecceitism for merely possible ones. A similar position is endorsed in Adams (1981).

essence, while every composite object has a non-trivial, non-qualitative minimal individual essence that consists in having some things in particular as one's proper parts. (The resulting view would of course entail mereological extensionality). This seems to undermine the intuition that Haecceitism about the *Ks* must claim that *none* of the *Ks* has a qualitative minimal individual essence *because* the members of any non-gerrymandered class must all be alike in their essential behaviour.

Haecceitism about the *Ks* is *not*, strictly speaking, the claim that there *are* cases of haecceitistic difference involving some *Ks* – although it does entail that such cases at least *possibly* arise.

Haecceitism about the *Ks* has it, rather, that the only conclusive means to exclude any such case as either actual or possible – i.e., the tenet that every *K* has a qualitative minimal individual essence, hence that every such thing respects strong PII – is wrong. Or, at the very least, the Haecceitist thinks that such a stance is a very expensive one, and that the gain sought for by the anti-Haecceitist is not worth it.

One may have diverse reasons for being a Haecceitist about the *Ks*.

To start, the *Ks* might be things that appear to *actually* violate strong PII – as is most commonly taken to be the case for quantum particles.<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> More precisely, identical quantum particles are taken to violate all interesting versions of the Principle – and strong PII among them. Cf. § 5.1.2 above.

Even when this is not the case, the Haecceitist may be convinced that cases where indiscernible yet numerically distinct *Ks* would exist are at least possible, and that no attempt to deny that they are is successful. Several such cases have been proposed in the literature.<sup>238</sup> As I said, many anti-Haecceitists are not at ease with the idea of excluding, in particular, the possibility of a Black's world. A further interesting example that is far less often considered is that of a world of two-way eternal recurrence as depicted in Lewis (1986). A world of this sort would be one in which time is linear and an infinity of qualitatively indiscernible, yet numerically different epochs recur one after another – with no first and no last such epoch.<sup>239</sup>

A Haecceitist may also take a related, but slightly weaker stance. Without positively claiming some such cases to be possible, she may nonetheless contend that deeming them all impossible is a serious cost – that one should not be willing to pay that much for the sole aim of excluding cases of primitive identity.

(To use a nice label, one may say that bearing that cost is to fall prey to a questionable form of 'modal blindness'.<sup>240</sup> Note that, faced with cases such as the ones mentioned above, deeming them altogether impossible is not the only form of modal blindness that the anti-Haecceitist may adopt in order to

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<sup>238</sup> Cf. in particular Adams (1979): 13-17. For a general assessment of arguments for modal Haecceitism that draw on thought experiments and conceivability claims, see Cowling (2017).

<sup>239</sup> See Lewis (1986): 63. Cf. *ibid.*: 157; 227-228.

<sup>240</sup> Thanks to Thomas Sattig, whom I owe the phrase.

safeguard her tenet. Consider for instance Lewis's world of two-way eternal recurrence. The anti-Haecceitist might say that in any world significantly similar to that, one and the same epoch would recur over and over again – and that time would, against what we have been assuming, be circular).<sup>241</sup>

As a matter of fact, the Haecceitist refuses to concede that a view that excludes cases of primitive identity is generally speaking more palatable than one that allows for them.

This is not to say that the Haecceitist would dismiss any argument to the effect that, for instance, haecceitistic differences involving entities of some sorts in particular are undesirable – or even that they should be banished altogether.

A Haecceitist who accepts immanent universals, for example, may be persuaded by Lewis (1999)'s and Ehring (2011)'s point against indiscernible universals and hold that there are no such things – hence, that universals cannot possibly give rise to haecceitistic differences.<sup>242</sup>

Note that this would not prevent her from allowing that some possible worlds exhibit two-way eternal recurrence in the sense depicted above. A world like that could still be possible, and while universals would recur, numerically identical, in every epoch, a thing that is not a universal could in principle still be

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<sup>241</sup> An interesting parallel may be drawn between this latter theoretical move and the arguments in Hacking (1975). Hacking warns us that putative spatiotemporal counterexamples to PII are inconclusive inasmuch as the cases they advance can with equal legitimacy be described as either violating or respecting PII. By contrast, the anti-Haecceitist's stance I just considered has it that there is only one right way to describe such cases – i.e., the one that leaves PII unharmed.

<sup>242</sup> Cf. also Lewis (1986): 84. See Rodriguez-Pereyra (2017a): § 4 for discussion.

allowed to exist in exactly one epoch, though having an indiscernible doppelganger in every other.

Or, consider identical quantum particles again. As is well known, quantum statistics does not take into account haecceitistic differences involving identical quantum particles in a system. To oversimplify things, consider a system involving two identical quantum particles and two possible states, both of which are in principle equally accessible to either particle; suppose one is making an observation on such a system. Two possible outcomes of such an observation that differ merely as to which particle is in which state – i.e., two possible outcomes of the observation that differ haecceitistically – count as only *one* possible outcome under quantum statistics. Now, some see this as the basis of powerful arguments for the need to somehow rule it out that quantum particles are things that may give rise to haecceitistic differences in the first place – in the actual world and in worlds that are just like it physics-wise at least.

Again, I do not mean to suggest that the Haecceitist must be deaf to such arguments.

However, absent an independent argument to the effect that some things in particular should not be allowed to give rise to haecceitistic differences (in some well-defined circumstances such as observational systems as the one sketched above or in general), the Haecceitist does not see such differences as problematic in themselves. For it is in the spirit of Haecceitism to think that when (if at all) two situations differ merely with respect to the identity of some of the things they involve or to

‘which is which’ in them, respectively, this is (or would be) a respectable difference on its own.

Haecceitism rejects the idea that any such actual, possible, or even merely hypothetical predicament would face us with what is sometimes labelled ‘a distinction without a difference’. Two epochs in a world of two-way eternal recurrence do differ not only numerically, but also in the identity of at least some of the things that exist in them, respectively, while not differing qualitatively in any way. And two states of a two-particles system that differ merely in that *this* particle is *so* while *that* particle is *thus* in the one, vice versa in the other, do differ in exactly this way.

By the Haecceitist’s lights, these are genuine differences – while there may be reasons to exclude them, no such reason can merely consist in the conviction that they are not.

## **6.2. Entities with Strongly Primitive Thisness**

I am a Haecceitist about concrete particulars: I hold that at least one of them fails to have a minimal individual essence that is purely qualitative.

As a matter of fact, my own take on such things is stronger than Haecceitism itself: I hold that *no* concrete particular has a qualitative minimal individual essence.<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> I decided not to argue for this point mainly for two reasons. First, much of my effort here has been devoted to reaching a clear-cut understanding of Haecceitism. And as I said, I do think that the claim that no *K* has a qualitative minimal individual essence is stronger than Haecceitism about the *Ks* proper. Second, as interesting as particular essentialist claims are, when arguing for or against them we often end up affirming or denying those claims on the sole basis of our intuitions. Thus, Aristotelians would say that Myrrha and Gregor Samsa are essentially human, while Ovid and Franz

For reasons that lie beyond the scope of the present inquiry, I also hold that every existent, either actual or possible, is a concrete particular. Hence, if I am right then no entity whatsoever has a qualitative minimal individual essence.

Note that even this form of Haecceitism across-the-board does not commit me to holding that some things have strongly primitive thisness. Consistently with the tenets I just mentioned, I could still hold that every thing is non-trivially, albeit non-qualitatively, individuated.

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Kafka apparently saw no conclusive reason for thus thinking. Nor does the defender of extreme modal Haecceitism as defined by Lewis, who thinks that I could have been a poached egg – see Lewis (1986): 239-248; the view is defended in Mackie (2006). Kripke has it that Queen Elizabeth II could not have been born from different parents than her actual ones – which under his approach amounts to her essentially having been born from those two people; see, in particular, Kripke (1980): 110-113. But it would be hard to be convinced by Kripke's claims in this concern unless one already agrees with them. And as strange as it may sound, I heard excellent philosophers protesting to Fine (1994) that Socrates certainly belongs to his singleton essentially.

In a nutshell, it seems to me that arguments for or against particular essentialist claims either are indirect or tend to rely too heavily on one's intuitions.

At least some of Forbes's arguments for the essentiality of origin are, I think, of the former sort. Having argued that we need individual essences in order to get rid of bare identities and having singled out a thing's origin as the most likely candidate for being a thing's non-trivial individual essence, he set forth such a case (among others) for the essentiality of origin.

My main point against forms of anti-Haecceitism is also of the former sort. It relies on the thought that (1.) anti-Haecceitism about the *Ks* is committed to the idea that the *Ks* fulfil strong PII; (2.) unless the *Ks* are universals, the claim that they fulfil strong PII is very controversial; (3.) at least the fundamental things should respect strong PII if the anti-Haecceitist is to satisfy the general rationale for her own view; (4.) the rationale for anti-Haecceitism does not strictly speaking support the claim that all fundamental things are universals.

Unfortunately, my point for the idea that no concrete particular has a qualitative minimal individual essence is of the latter sort instead. Hence my reluctance to argue the point.

Moreover, at least when it comes to persisting objects, I do not have much to add to Mackie (2006)'s case for the idea that such things should not even be taken to have non-trivial individual essences. See Mackie (2006): 55-64.

In the resulting view, every thing would have primitive, non-qualitative thisness, although none would have strongly primitive thisness. As a consequence, every thing would have at least one non-trivial, non-qualitative minimal individual essence. And still nothing would have a qualitative minimal individual essence.

I already considered a view of this sort while assessing Forbes's theory of individual essences (§ 5.1.3). *Mutatis mutandis*, some considerations I made in that concern will apply to the view I am presently considering as well.

In particular, unless one allows that there be at least some things with strongly primitive identity, the view will have to be one that postulates either an infinite regress or some circularity in the individuation of things.

For, as should be clear from what I said in that occasion, to hold that something, *a*, is not qualitatively individuated and still fails to have strongly primitive identity is to commit to a buck-passing claim about the individuation of *a* – one that accounts for *a*'s thisness in terms of the thisness of some other things.

More precisely, suppose that *a* does not have any qualitative minimal individual essence, and that yet it fails to have strongly primitive thisness. This entails that for something to be *a* is for it to have *F*, for some *F* such that (i.) *F* is not the same property as *being identical to a*, (ii.) there is no *P* such that for something to have *F* is for it to be identical to *a* and have *P*, and (iii.) *F* is

not a qualitative property.<sup>244</sup> Hence, *having F* is a minimal individual essence of *a*.

Since *F* is non-qualitative, for *a* to have it will be for it to be in some relation to a given thing, *b*. Furthermore, it will have to be the case that *a* and *b* are not one and the same thing.

(This is not to say that *a*'s minimal essence of being in some relation to *b* need be a trivial one in case *b* is identical to *a*. If *R* is not the identity relation, and if *being in relation R with a* is indeed a minimal individual essence of *a*, it might well be a *non-trivial* one. For instance, if *loving Richard Burton* were a minimal individual essence of Richard Burton then it certainly would be a non-trivial one, too.

However, consider the claim that for something to be *a* is for it to be in relation *R* with *a*. Suppose, further, that being in relation *R* with *a* is all it takes to make something be *a*. Again, it would be understood that *R* cannot be the identity relation – otherwise, *a* would have strongly primitive identity after all. While the resulting view would strictly speaking be consistent, it would hardly be one that provides an informative principle of individuation for *a*. Indeed, a defence of this view would sound particularly odd if coming from someone who aims to exclude that things may have strongly primitive thisness.

Moreover, suppose the claim is to be generalised to all the things that belong to the same kind as *a*, so that *being in relation R with b* is what makes something be *b*, *being in relation R with c* is what makes something be *c*, and so on. Unless *R* is

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<sup>244</sup> While my official approach is nominalistic-friendly, I use property-talk here for the sake of simplicity.

identity after all, it would be quite hard to single out a relation that would meet the requirements for playing its role.

Compare:

1. under Forbes's view, if *a* is a biological organism, then *having all of a's propagules as one's sole propagules* does count as a minimal individual essence of *a*. However, what prevents *a* from giving rise to bare identities is its being related to some entities *other than itself* – i.e., its propagules;
2. under a form of mereological essentialism that accepts mereological extensionality, if *a* is mereologically complex then *having all of a's proper parts as one's sole proper parts* does count as a minimal individual essence of *a*. However, the claim that for something to be *a* is for it to have all of *a's* proper parts as one's sole proper parts does not make for an informative principle of individuation for *a*. The claim that for something to be *a* is for it to have *b*, *c*, ..., *n* as one's sole proper parts, where *b*, *c*, ..., *n* are all of *a's* proper parts, does).

What has been said about *a* must be true, *mutatis mutandis*, of *b* as well. That is, for something to be *b* is for it to have *G*, for some *G* such that (i.) *G* is not the same property as *being identical to b*, (ii.) there is no *P* such that for something to have *G* is for it to be identical to *b* and have *P*, and (iii.) *G* is not a qualitative property. Hence, *having G* is a minimal individual essence of *b*.

Since *G* is non-qualitative, for *b* to have it will be for it to be in some relation to a further thing, *c*. And so on and so forth.

The predicament is very similar to the one I described with regard to Forbes's view.

However, in that case I assumed that the option of allowing for things with strongly primitive thisness was a non-starter. For a thing that has strongly primitive thisness is one that may give rise to cases of bare transworld identity, and Forbes cannot admit those.

In this case, by contrast, I am assuming that allowing for things with qualitative minimal individual essences is a non-starter (I will say more on this shortly).

In both cases, by ascribing non-qualitative minimal individual essences to a number of entities one accepts a series of buck-passing accounts for the thisness of those things.

In the case at hand, I argue that unless one allows for some things with strongly primitive thisness, one has to postulate that the series ends up forming either an infinite regress or a circle.

Importantly, the idea that *nothing whatsoever* has a qualitative minimal individual essence is not required in order for the predicament to arise within a form of Haecceitism.

To see the point, consider a form of Haecceitism about the *Ks* which accepts that some other things – the *Ls* – have qualitative minimal individual essences. Suppose the *Ks* are the things in the series considered above: *a*, which has the minimal individual essence of being in relation *R* with *b*; *b*, which has the minimal individual essence of being in relation *R* with *c*, and so on.

The Haecceitist cannot hold that at some point in the series we have a *K*, say, *d*, which has the minimal individual essence of

being in relation  $R$  with one of the  $L$ s – say,  $e$ . For, while this would prevent the series from forming an infinite regress or a circle, it would contradict the claim that  $d$  fails to have a qualitative minimal individual essence.

(To recall a point I made in § 5.1.3, if *being so-and-so* is a qualitative minimal individual essence of  $e$ , and if  $d$  has the minimal individual essence of *being in relation  $R$  with  $e$* , it seems that  $d$  will have a qualitative minimal individual essence as well – that of *being in relation  $R$  with a thing that is so-and-so*).

Thus, the Haecceitist about the  $K$ s who holds that none of the  $K$ s has strongly primitive thisness has three options. She may:

1. hold that the series at issue ends up forming an infinite regress;
2. hold that the series at issue ends up forming a circle;
3. hold that at some point in the series at issue there is a thing, say,  $f$ , that has the minimal individual essence of being is some relation to a further thing,  $g$  – where  $g$  has strongly primitive thisness.

As I said in § 5.1.3, holding that the  $K$ s give rise to a series such as the one described above *and* that such a series is regressive or circular would be of no use for the anti-Haecceitist about the  $K$ s. By contrast, either of 1. and 2. can consistently be endorsed by a Haecceitist about the  $K$ s who holds that no  $K$  has strongly primitive thisness.

Endorsing 1. is to commit to the claim that reality is regressive in every world that contains some *Ks* (note, moreover, that every such world would contain an infinity of things). Endorsing 2. is to commit to the claim that reality is circular in every world that contains some *Ks*. Endorsing 3. is to commit to the claim that, in every world that contains some *Ks*, at least one thing has strongly primitive thisness.

Again, there may be good reasons to think that reality is possibly regressive or circular. However, absent an argument to the effect that the *Ks*, in particular, are individuated through a regressive or a circular series, I would rather endorse 3. and allow for things with strongly primitive thisness.

### **6.3. Objections and Replies**

#### **6.3.1. Haecceitism Is Not Ontologically Redundant**

Some think that Haecceitism is ontologically redundant – that it commits one to the idea that things have *haecceities*, i.e., literally existing properties that contribute nothing at all to their qualitative profiles and that are responsible for their individuation.

Now, it is true that accepting haecceities is generally speaking an option for the Haecceitist. For instance, one may endorse all of the following claims:

- none of the *Ks* has a qualitative minimal individual essence;

- every  $K$  has a non-trivial, non-qualitative minimal individual essence of having a given haecceity (e.g.,  $a$  has  $b$  as its haecceity,  $c$  has  $d$  as its haecceity, and so on);
- every haecceity of a  $K$  has strongly primitive thisness.

The resulting view would count as a form of Haecceitism both about the  $K$ s and about their haecceities.

However, the Haecceitist is *in no way committed* to positing haecceities. The Haecceitist about the  $K$ s is indeed committed to the claim that at least some  $K$ s fail to have qualitative minimal individual essence. This entails, in turn, that those very things – call them the  $K^*$ s – have primitive, non-qualitative thisness. Yet a  $K^*$  might still well:

1. have only one non-trivial minimal individual essence – one that does not consist in its having a given haecceity (but, say, in *having some given things as one's sole propagules*, like a biological organism in Forbes's theory), or:
2. have strongly primitive thisness.

Neither option is compatible with the idea that the  $K^*$  in question has a haecceity.

Concerning 1., the point is that if a  $K^*$ , say,  $a$ , has a haecceity, say,  $b$ , then *having  $b$  as one's haecceity* is a non-trivial minimal individual essence of  $a$ . This contradicts the claim that the *only* non-trivial minimal individual essence of  $a$  does not consist in its having a given haecceity.

Concerning 2., the point is the following. As I said, the haecceity of a thing is supposed to be responsible for the individuation of that thing. More precisely, the haecceity-defender holds that if *a* has *b* as its haecceity, then having *b* as one's haecceity is what makes something be identical to *a*. This contradicts the claim that *a* has strongly primitive thisness – i.e., that nothing at all makes something be identical to *a*.

More precisely, *a* has strongly primitive thisness if and only if there is no *F* such that for something to be *a* is for it to have *F*, where (i.) *F* is not the same property as *being identical to a*, and (ii.) there is no *P* such that for something to have *F* is for it to be identical to *a* and have *P*. But if *a* has *b* as its haecceity, then there is indeed an *F* that fulfils both (i.) and (ii.) – i.e., *having b as one's haecceity*.

Consider now a view that holds together the following two claims:

- at least some of the *Ks* fail to have a qualitative minimal individual essence;
- none of the *Ks* has a haecceity.

I call a view such as this a form of *Austere Haecceitism* about the *Ks*.<sup>245</sup> It should by now be clear that there is absolutely no reason to think that such a view is generally speaking less

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<sup>245</sup> Locke (2012) calls *Austere Quidditism* a form of Quidditism that denies that properties have quiddities. My theory is different, though. For Quidditism is not a form of metaphysical Haecceitism: it is, rather, a theory that holds about properties what *modal* Haecceitism holds about individuals.

ontologically parsimonious than any form of Anti-Haecceitism about the *Ks*.

As a matter of fact, Austere Haecceitism is *more* ontologically parsimonious than at least some forms of anti-Haecceitism. Consider:

- a view that sees individuals as bundles of universals and holds that every individual has a qualitative minimal individual essence. As opposed to such a form of anti-Haecceitism, Austere Haecceitism about individuals is not committed to there being universals;
- Dasgupta's Generalism. As opposed to any such view, Austere Haecceitism, so as I characterized it, is not committed to an ontology of facts at all.

### **6.3.2. Haecceitism Is Not Metaphysically Redundant**

One might contend that even if Austere Haecceitism is not ontologically redundant, it still is *metaphysically* redundant. I see four potential rationales behind this contention. I will list them along with my replies here below.

1. By denying that the *Ks* respect PII, Haecceitism excludes our best chance towards analysing claims of numerical identity and difference concerning the *Ks*. Hence, it is committed to an ideological primitive more than any form of anti-Haecceitism about the *Ks* – that is, to identity.

I do not have a conclusive argument against this point. However, I argue that the four following considerations do seriously undermine it.

First, as I said in § 1.2, neither the identity relation *in itself* nor the question whether such a relation is *ideologically* primitive are among the topics of the present debate. Haecceitism is a claim concerning identity *in the sense of thisness*. It argues that at least some facts of identity in this sense are *metaphysically* primitive merely in the sense that at least some things have primitive thisness. Haecceitism is silent about whether the relation of identity, as a piece of ideology, can be somehow analysed in further terms.

Second, it is not obvious that accepting PII is part and parcel of one's best possible strategy towards an analysis of the identity relation.

Third, even supposing that PII and its converse are both true, it is far from clear that they *can* provide an analysis of the identity relation. In other words, the following might be nothing more than a very interesting universal generalization:

$$\forall x \forall y (x=y \leftrightarrow \forall F (Fx \leftrightarrow Fy))$$

And even if it were to give us an analysis, it would not be obvious that what is on the left of the main biconditional would have to be the *analysandum* instead of the *analysans*.

Finally, it is not the case that every form of anti-Haecceitism allows for an analysis of the identity relation. For instance, facts of numerical identity and difference are explicitly taken to be

fundamental under Dasgupta's Algebraic Generalism (cf. Shumener 2016).

2. Versions of Haecceitism that accept that some *Ks* have strongly primitive thisness entail that there are brute facts of individuation for such things.

By itself, this merely restates the view of the Haecceitist who holds that at least some *Ks* have strongly primitive thisness. In order to advance a proper objection on this basis, the anti-Haecceitist will have to set forth an argument to the effect that one among the following options is more palatable than defending that view:

- claiming that all the *Ks* are ultimately individuated in terms of their qualitative profiles;
- claiming that all the *Ks* are individuated in non-trivial, albeit non-qualitative, terms, and the series by which they are forms an infinite regress;
- claiming that all the *Ks* are individuated in non-trivial, albeit non-qualitative, terms, and the series by which they are forms a circle.

The objection will have to be evaluated once such an argument is set forth – that is, once it is turned into a proper objection. Moreover, as I said above (§ 6.2), the latter two options are viable for the Haecceitist about the *Ks* while they are not for the anti-Haecceitist about the *Ks* (see also § 5.1.3).

3. By denying that the qualitative character of a world is all that matters in determining what that world represents *de re*, the Haecceitist is committed to mysterious non-qualitative makers of differences in *de re* representation.

This is not an objection against any form of metaphysical Haecceitism. It is an objection against modal Haecceitism so as it was characterized by Lewis (1986). However, metaphysical Haecceitism about the *Ks* can be held together with modal anti-Haecceitism about the *Ks*. Where the *Ks* are taken to be individuals, Lewis's metaphysics itself is an instance of such a combination of views. For Lewis held (consistently, indeed) that:

- modal representation *de re* for individuals works *via* counterpart theory, where every counterpart relation is specified in terms of qualitative similarity, *and*:
  - individuals do not have qualitative minimal individual essences (this is clear from his accepting worlds of two-way eternal recurrence; see § 6.1 above).
4. Haecceitism is metaphysically redundant in that it allows for haecceitistic differences, and haecceitistic differences are really distinctions without a difference.

The significance of this claim depends on what exactly one means by 'distinction without a difference'. I see three options in this sense. I will list them along with my replies below.

- The objector is assuming that ‘difference’ is just short for ‘qualitative difference’ – or, at least, for ‘difference that is either qualitative or accompanied by a qualitative difference’. Thus, she is claiming that Haecceitism allows for haecceitistic differences – i.e., for distinctions without a difference that is qualitative or accompanied by a qualitative difference.

If so understood, the claim is not an objection at all. The objector is merely restating one of the tenets of Haecceitism – i.e., that it is *not* the case that all differences need be qualitative or at least accompanied by a qualitative one.

- The objector is *not* assuming that ‘difference’ is short for ‘qualitative difference’ or at least for ‘difference that is either qualitative or accompanied by a qualitative difference’.

In this case, the objection misfires: Haecceitism does not accept distinctions without a ‘difference’. For differences that are neither qualitative nor accompanied by a qualitative difference do qualify as *differences* – even according to the objector!

- What the objector really means is that every difference whatsoever *must* be either qualitative or at least accompanied by a qualitative one.

If the objector does have an argument for that claim, then she does not need to contend that Haecceitism is metaphysically redundant after all. For she can argue that Haecceitism is *false*. Leibniz thought he had a powerful argument for the falsity of Haecceitism. Yet Leibniz's case rests on several assumptions concerning God, the process of Her creating the world, the idea that She cannot make choices that do not maximize the best, *et cetera*.

Arguments against Haecceitism that rely on less controversial grounds are typically drawn from a certain interpretation of contemporary physics. I will address such arguments in the next section.

### **6.3.3. Haecceitism Is Not Directly Excluded by Physics**

As I already mentioned, quantum particles are most commonly taken to violate any interesting form of PII. However, it is widely thought that Haecceitism is incompatible with contemporary physics in general, and with quantum mechanics in particular. Diverse considerations might be taken to support the thought. In what follows I will focus on only one argument – the one that draws on issues of quantum statistics.

The main idea is one I already mentioned above: *quantum statistics does not take into account haecceitistic differences involving identical quantum particles in a system*. That is, given an observation on a system involving two identical quantum particles and two possible states, both of which are in principle equally accessible to either particle, two possible outcomes of such an observation that differ merely as to which particle is in

which state count as only *one* possible outcome under quantum statistics. Hence, so the thought goes, quantum particles should be taken to be things that cannot give rise to haecceitistic differences – in the actual world and in worlds that are just like it physics-wise at least.

More precisely, consider two classical particles and consider a property that can take only two values – say, up and down. For the two-particle system, there are four possible states:

- 1C. first particle up, second particle up;
- 2C. first particle down, second particle down;
- 3C. first particle up, second particle down;
- 4C. first particle down, second particle up.

According to classical statistics, 3C. and 4C. count as *two* different states. Indeed, such states differ merely as to which particle is up and which one is down – that is, they differ haecceitistically.

This is not so in the quantum case.

In the case of a two-boson system, there are only three available states:<sup>246</sup>

- 1Q. both bosons up;
- 2Q. both bosons down;
- 3Q. one boson up, one boson down.

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<sup>246</sup> The case of fermions differs even more dramatically from the classical case, in that the only available state is the fermionic counterpart of 3Q.

Hypothetical cases that would mirror 3C. and 4C. are ‘conflated’, so to speak, into one (3Q.) according to quantum statistics: the haecceitistic difference is ‘washed away’.

A first answer to this is the following. A Haecceitist can allow for things that have qualitative minimal individual essence – hence, that cannot possibly give rise to haecceitistic differences. For instance, as I said above, one can be a Haecceitist about individuals such as persons, trees, and spheres while being an anti-Haecceitist about immanent universals. Faced with the argument from quantum statistics, the Haecceitist about the *Ks* (where the *Ks* are not quantum particles) can then simply accept that every quantum particle has a qualitative minimal individual essence, while not every *K* does.

It is important to see that this is a bad answer.

For as I said, quantum particles are widely taken to violate any interesting version of PII – and strong PII among them.

In particular, when a two-boson system is in the following state (leaving normalization constants aside):

$$|\text{up}\rangle_1 |\text{down}\rangle_2 + |\text{down}\rangle_1 |\text{up}\rangle_2$$

it can be proved that the two bosons share all the quantum properties (i.e., all ‘observables’).<sup>247</sup>

More precisely, the probability of a certain observable having a certain value is the same for both bosons. Hence, the two bosons are taken to violate PII.

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<sup>247</sup> The *locus classicus* is French and Redhead (1988).

(Note that the state above is exactly the one representing case 3Q. of quantum statistics).<sup>248</sup>

Hence, quantum particles are widely taken *not* to have a qualitative minimal individual essence. And still they are also widely taken to be such that they cannot give rise to haecceitistic differences. Thus, the objector might contend that there is something wrong with the very way I framed the present debate.

A number of assumptions lie behind this contention. In particular, for it to stand it must be the case that:

- a. given the way I framed the debate, things that fail to have a qualitative minimal individual essence possibly give rise to haecceitistic differences;
- b. things that possibly give rise to haecceitistic differences do give rise to haecceitistic differences in the actual world, or at least in some worlds that are like the actual one physics-wise;
- c. if quantum particles give rise to haecceitistic differences in worlds that are like the actual one physics-wise, then they give rise to haecceitistic differences in observational systems such as the one described above;
- d. if quantum particles give rise to haecceitistic differences in observational systems such as the one described above, then quantum statistics is sensitive to such differences.

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<sup>248</sup> Thanks to Claudio Calosi here.

Among the claims above, a. is undisputable.

b. is not: it might in principle be the case that quantum particles give rise to haecceitistic differences in some worlds, although none of the worlds where they do is either actual or just like the actual one physics-wise.

However, as a Haecceitist, I would rather not defend my view by relying on such a consideration. I am no physicist; all I know about quantum particles is what I am told by people who study such things within the theoretical framework of a physical theory – i.e., quantum mechanics. For all I know, quantum particles are exactly the things that have the features the theory ascribes to them, and that behave in the way the theory describes them as behaving. If asked to consider a world that is not like ours physics-wise – in particular, one where quantum mechanics does not hold, or is different in certain ways – I simply have no grip on what can or cannot be true of those things in such a world. Depending on how different from ours the world in question is, I would not even be sure that quantum particles do exist in it!

I think that c. and d. are the most contentious among the claims above.

As for c., recall the case of a world of two-way eternal recurrence. Consider a world of eternal recurrence,  $w$ , that is just like our world physics-wise. There would then be two options for quantum particles in  $w$ . It could be that:

- quantum particles recur numerically identical in every epoch, or:

- quantum particles do not recur numerically identical in every epoch. Each one of them exists in exactly one epoch, though having an indiscernible doppelganger in every other epoch.

If the latter is the case, then any two indiscernible quantum particles that exist in two different epochs would give rise to haecceitistic differences. But these would not be haecceitistic differences *within a system of the sort that is relevant for the argument from quantum statistics*.

We could imagine that every epoch of  $w$  is inhabited by *one* quantum particle alone. If so, then no such particle would ever take part in an observational system such as the ones that are relevant for the argument from quantum statistics. In such a world, quantum particles would then give rise to haecceitistic differences, but not to haecceitistic differences *within a system of the relevant sort*.

Now, perhaps the world I described is not a possibility *vis-à-vis* quantum physics. If so, a further counterexample to c. will have to be provided.

However, I think that the case helps appreciate a further important point: it is not the case that all haecceitistic differences involving some quantum particles whatsoever are incompatible with contemporary physics in the light of quantum statistics. Indeed, I see no reason why one cannot grant the argument from quantum statistics *and* allow for haecceitistic differences between quantum particles such as the ones that different epochs in the world described above would bring forth. Those would not be haecceitistic differences between quantum particles in an observational system of the

sort that is relevant for the argument from quantum statistics. As far as I can see, such an argument is silent about them.

Finally, d. is not undisputable either.

One way to resist it would be of course to take an anti-realistic stance towards quantum mechanics – in particular, about the quantum state. For instance, according to Harrigan and Spekkens (2010) quantum states do not inform us about reality, but merely about our knowledge of reality.

And there are strategies that do not rely on anti-realism at all. The one that was recently defended by Matteo Morganti is particularly interesting in this context, since it explicitly endorses the idea that quantum particles have strongly primitive thisness. Orthodoxy has it that such a stance plainly contradicts quantum physics because things that have strongly primitive thisness are apt to give rise to haecceitistic differences, and quantum statistics is insensitive to such differences (as occurring in the relevant observational systems at least). Morganti's strategy explains away such a contention by appealing to the workings of quantum theory itself.

The thought is that there is something about the inner workings of quantum mechanics that 'hides', so to speak, haecceitistic differences involving identical particles in a system.

This has to do, crucially, with the way quantum mechanics treats many-particle systems and their properties.

In particular, according to Morganti, for "quantum many-particle systems of identical particles (...) the statistics only describes what measurement results are possible for what systems. And, crucially, this description concerns inherent,

pre-measurement holistic (...) properties that contain no information about the individual particles”.<sup>249</sup>

*Inherent* properties of the total system would be those that are “irreducible (...) to a ‘sum’ of properties of the system’s component parts” – in this case, of the particles.<sup>250</sup>

Since *this* is all that quantum statistics describes, there is no reason to expect it to encode differences in the identity of the particles. As Morganti goes on to explain, “for (...) many-particle systems and state-dependent properties particle exchanges do not give rise to new arrangements (i.e., the identities of the particles are not statistically relevant) *not* because particles (...) do not have well-defined identities”, so that it makes no sense to ask ‘which is which’. The reason is, rather, that “*the particles’ identities do not play any role in the determination of the states that are described by the statistics*”.<sup>251</sup>

#### **6.3.4. Haecceitism Does Not Exclude Individuality**

Some think that a metaphysics such as the one I endorse – one where nothing whatsoever has a qualitative minimal individual essence – cannot allow for there being *individuals*.

(The remark was made to me in conversation, but the idea seems to be among the assumptions of Ujvári, 2013).

The thought would be, roughly, that while particulars may fail to have qualitative individual essences, *individuals* in a somehow more robust sense cannot.

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<sup>249</sup> Morganti (2009): 228.

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*: 227. The technical term was introduced by Paul Teller; see Teller (1986); (1989).

<sup>251</sup> Morganti (2009): 228.

As it stands, the remark is unclear: one should spell out what one is meaning by ‘individual’. As far as I can see, two main options are relevant here:

- what one is meaning by ‘individual’ is really ‘Leibnizian individual’ (i.e., roughly, ‘what counts as an individual substance under Leibniz’s characterization in the *Discourse*’);
- what one is meaning by ‘individual’ is not ‘Leibnizian individual’ in the sense above, but something broader or in any case different.

If the former is the case, then this is no objection at all: the objector is merely restating my view. For Leibniz characterizes an ‘individual substances’ in the *Discourse* exactly as a thing that has a complete individual concept, where such an individual concept conveys a qualitative minimal individual essence of the substance at issue.

By contrast, if the latter is the case, the objector still has to specify what she *does* mean by ‘individual’. For her contention to stand still, it must be the case that having a qualitative minimal individual essence is a necessary condition for being an individual in the relevant sense. And still the notion of individuality the objector is assuming would better convey something more than that – otherwise, she would be either just restating my view again or begging the question.

I know of no such notion. As I said, I am content with endorsing a metaphysics of concrete particulars. While I am happy to call such things ‘individuals’, I would not mind too much dropping

the term if provided a reason for so doing. As things stand, I do not see any.

## Conclusions

I introduced the issue of metaphysical Haecceitism and argued that the extant characterizations of such a topic suffer from serious difficulties. In particular, I provided reasons to think that the issue would better be approached by defining anti-Haecceitism about the entities of a certain class (the *Ks*) first, and then stating Haecceitism about the *Ks* as the denial of such a thesis.

In order to properly ascertain what anti-Haecceitism about the *Ks* commits one to, I considered two arguments that I take to be emblematic of the typical rationale behind such a stance. Such a rationale, I argued, consists in the aim to rule out what I have called cases of haecceitistic differences involving the *Ks*. Diverse forms of anti-Haecceitism about the *Ks*, I said, may be classified with respect to whether or not they satisfy two *desiderata* that I labelled ‘distributiveness’ and ‘identity-explanation’.

A metaphysics that does justice to the rationale for anti-Haecceitism about the *Ks* by satisfying both *desiderata*, I contended, must rule it out that any of the *Ks* has primitive, non-qualitative thisness. The claim that none of the *Ks* has primitive thisness in the relevant sense entails that each one of the *Ks* has a minimal individual essence that is purely qualitative.

Claiming that *a* has a qualitative minimal essence is to claim that (roughly) there is a certain qualitative profile such that having that qualitative profile is a condition that is necessarily both necessary and sufficient for being *a*.

It follows that if I am right then the anti-Haecceitist about the *Ks* must hold that all of the *Ks* respect a strong form of the Identity of Indiscernibles – that is, that no two of them can possibly be qualitatively just alike. As I said, I take Leibniz’s views about individual substances to be an example of anti-Haecceitism as I conceive of it.

As I pointed out, some anti-Haecceitists have attempted to phrase the issue otherwise. A major aim of such attempts is exactly that of avoiding the commitments that anti-Haecceitism about the *Ks* so as I characterize it incurs – most notably, the one to strong PII for the *Ks*. In line with the general picture I provided, the versions of anti-Haecceitism thus phrased must fail to satisfy at least one of the *desiderata* I mentioned above. By focusing on Dasgupta’s proposal in terms of grounding, I argued that such attempts have significant shortcomings. As they stand, and interestingly enough, they share with certain traditional, rough takes on the present debate some assumptions that I proved to be wrong-headed. Against such assumptions, I contended that:

1. the issue of metaphysical Haecceitism is not the issue of whether or not only qualities are fundamental existents, so that the existence of individuals is in some sense derivative on the existence of qualities;
2. it is not the case that *individuals* – as opposed to entities of some other sort – need offend against the anti-Haecceitist’s *credo*. Nor is it the case that individuals need do so in case they are taken to be fundamental existents.

1. teaches us, among other things, that a commitment to a fundamental ontology of properties cannot be motivated by appeal to an alleged need to defend anti-Haecceitism. By arguing the point, I also contended that the present debate should be one that may be approached by realists and nominalists about properties alike. My account, as opposed to most others, is one that fulfils such a *desideratum*.

While dispelling the consequences of 2., I argued that the only entities that really need offend against the anti-Haecceitist's rationale are those things that have primitive thisness. And as I showed, a thing that fails to have primitive thisness in the relevant sense is a thing that has a qualitative minimal individual essence. Hence, it is a thing that fulfils strong PII.

Dasgupta's strategy has it that one might avoid taking a stance about such things altogether and make a claim about some propositional-like entities instead – in the case of his view, about facts. But I argued that such a strategy either relies on assumptions that contradict 2. or turns anti-Haecceitism into a form of Ontological Nihilism (or at least into a stuff ontology of some sort).

Given that the case for anti-Haecceitism does not support either of said views, and given my case for 2., I concluded that anti-Haecceitism about the *Ks* is indeed committed to strong PII about the *Ks*.

I then characterized the form of Haecceitism I hold to be true about at least some *Ks* and defended it from some foreseeable objections.

As any view that holds that at least some *Ks* have primitive thisness and that none of the *Ks* has a haecceity, my view is a form of what I call ‘Austere Haecceitism’.

As I mentioned, the following is, in a nutshell, my main point for Austere Haecceitism:

*1. anti-Haecceitism about the Ks is committed to the idea that the Ks fulfil strong PII; 2. unless the Ks are universals, the claim that they fulfil strong PII is, at best, very controversial; 3. at least the fundamental things should respect strong PII if the anti-Haecceitist is to satisfy the general rationale for her own view; 4. the rationale for anti-Haecceitism does not strictly speaking support the claim that all fundamental things are universals.*

Further tenets of my own view that I did not defend in the present work are: (i.) the claim that nothing whatsoever has a qualitative minimal individual essence – hence, that every possible thing has primitive thisness, and (ii.) the claim that in every possible world at least some things have strongly primitive thisness.

Given the general framework I provided, several ‘first-order’ questions about metaphysical (anti-)Haecceitism may now be addressed in prospective research. I will conclude by mentioning a few of them below.

- i. I defined Haecceitism and anti-Haecceitism *about the Ks* – without focusing on any class of things in

particular. There seems to be a partial consensus on the idea that anti-Haecceitism about universals is less problematic than anti-Haecceitism about individuals. However, the point is somewhat vague. As I pointed out, it seems that this opinion and related ones do not even rest on an agreement as to what should be meant by 'individual'. The notion of a universal seems to be less problematic, but one may challenge some assumptions about it, such as the idea that there cannot be indiscernible universals. It would be interesting to figure out what the grounds of said consensus are, and whether extant notions of what an individual and a universal are, respectively, do support the opinion.

- ii. I said that an anti-Haecceitistic metaphysics must take at least *the fundamental entities* to have qualitative minimal individual essences. It is not clear, though, that the latter claim can do justice to specific cases for anti-Haecceitism. Consider, for instance, the aim to rule out haecceitistic differences involving any entity whatsoever. The claim that every single entity has a qualitative minimal individual essence would certainly result in ruling out all such differences. However, it is an extremely strong claim. It would be worth enquiring whether one could get to the same result by taking some less demanding strategy.
- iii. A lot has been said about the difficulties that Algebraic Generalism faces. It would be important to figure out whether some different claim in terms of grounding

can still do justice to the rationale for anti-Haecceitism.

- iv. Some think that Weak Discernibility vindicates strong PII. However, if what I said in § 5.1.2 (and what B says in Black, 1952) is correct, it does not: the machinery of Weak Discernibility can only discern between the two spheres in Black's dialogue by appealing to their non-qualitative features. Inasmuch as it appeals to their qualitative ones alone, it can indeed formally prove that there are two, but it cannot show they are discernible. The debate about this point seems to be at a stalemate, and it would be highly desirable to set forth a way to revive the discussion about it.
- v. A form of Haecceitism that takes some things to have strongly primitive thisness clearly seems to be consistent. Yet it is not easy to see which things could be thought to have strongly primitive thisness indeed. This point, too, seems worth exploring.

## Appendix

*A case of primitive identity.*

A case in which there is a fact of the matter as concerns the identity of the entities involved in some given situation, and such a fact of the matter cannot be made to rest on further features of reality that may as well be characterized without making reference to the identity of any entity at all.

*Haecceitistic difference.*

Situation  $S_1$  and situation  $S_2$  **differ haecceitistically** =<sub>df</sub>  $S_1$  and  $S_2$  differ merely as concerns the identity of some of the entities they involve, respectively.

*Desiderata that a form of Anti-Haecceitism about the  $K$ s may satisfy or fail to.*

**Distributiveness.** There are no cases of primitive identity involving some  $K$ s because each and every ‘which is which’-issue concerning a  $K$  is settled by the qualitative reality. Hence, not only all cases of primitive identity are excluded: they are excluded one by one – i.e., each one of them is.

**Identity-explanation.** There are no cases of primitive identity involving some  $K$ s because the  $K$ s are individuated by the way they are, qualitatively. As a result, a situation’s involving some  $K$ s in particular is always a matter of how the  $K$ s involved in that situation

qualitatively are. That is why ‘which is which’-issues concerning the *Ks* are always settled by the qualitative reality.

*Qualitative and non-qualitative properties.*

**P is a non-qualitative property** =<sub>df</sub> For some things  $b_1, b_2, \dots, b_n, n \geq 1$ , and some  $n+1$ -ary relation  $R$ , the property  $\lambda x Px$  is identical to the property  $\lambda x R(x, b_1, \dots, b_n)$ .  
Every property that is not non-qualitative is qualitative.

*Qualitative and non-qualitative ways for something to be.*

**P is a non-qualitative way for something to be** (or, formally:  $\Phi P$ , where ‘ $\Phi$ ’ is an operator that takes a predicate to form a sentence) =<sub>df</sub> For some things  $b_1, b_2, \dots, b_n, n \geq 1$ , and some  $n+1$ -ary  $R, P \cong$  is *R-related to*  $b_1, b_2, \dots, b_n$  (in this order).

(Where: ‘ $R$ ’ is a second-order variable; ‘ $\Phi$ ’ is a third-order operator; ‘for some  $n+1$ -ary  $R$ ’ is a non-objectual second-order quantifier; ‘ $P$ ’ is a non-committal second-order predicate; ‘ $\cong$ ’ is an equivalence operator that takes a pair of predicates to make a sentence. The intuitive meaning of ‘ $F \cong G$ ’ is that ‘ $F$ ’ and ‘ $G$ ’ express the same way for something to be).

Every way for something to be that is not non-qualitative is qualitative.

*Qualitative and non-qualitative predicates.*

**P is a non-qualitative predicate** =<sub>df</sub> For some designators  $b_1, b_2, \dots, b_n, n \geq 1$ , and some  $n+1$ -ary

predicate  $R$ , the predicate  $P$  and the predicate  $R$ ,  $b_1, \dots$ ,  $b_n$  are synonymous.

Every predicate that is not non-qualitative is qualitative.

*Primitive, non-qualitative thisness.*

**$a$  has primitive (i.e., non-qualitative) thisness\*** =<sub>df</sub> It is not the case that there is some qualitative property  $F$  such that for something to be  $a$  is for it to have  $F$ .

**$a$  has primitive (i.e., non-qualitative) thisness** =<sub>df</sub> It is not the case that  $\exists F$  such that  $Q(F)$  and for something  $x$  to be  $a$  is for it to be the case that  $Fx$ .

(Where ' $F$ ' is a second-order variable,  $Q$  is a third-order condition that captures qualitiveness, and the second-order existential quantifier must be read as non-objectual).

**$a$  has primitive (i.e., non-qualitative) thisness<sub>pred.</sub>** =<sub>df</sub> It is not the case that for something to be  $a$  is for it to satisfy ' $F$ ', where ' $F$ ' is a qualitative predicate.

*Strongly primitive thisness.*

**$a$  has strongly primitive thisness\*** =<sub>df</sub> It is not the case that for some  $F$  such that  $\Psi(F)$ , for something to be identical to  $a$  is for it to have  $F$  (for  $\Psi$  a condition such that  $\Psi(F)$  just in case: (i.\*)  $F$  is not the same property as *being identical to  $a$*  (under the relevant conditions for property sameness) (ii.\*) there is no  $P$  such that for

something to have  $F$  is for it to be identical to  $a$  and have  $P$ ).

**$a$  has strongly primitive thisness** =<sub>df</sub> It is not the case that  $\exists F$  such that  $\Psi(F)$  and for something to be identical to  $a$  is for it to be the case that  $Fx$  (for  $\Psi$  a condition such that  $\Psi(F)$  just in case: (i.) it is not the case that  $F \cong$  is identical to  $a$ , and (ii.) it is not the case that  $\exists G$  such that  $F \cong (G \ \& \text{ is identical to } a)$ ).

(Where: ' $F$ ' is a second-order predicate;  $\Psi$  is a third-order condition; the second-order existential quantifier must be read as non-objectual; ' $\cong$ ' is an equivalence operator that takes a pair of predicates to make a sentence. The intuitive meaning of ' $F \cong G$ ' is that ' $F$ ' and ' $G$ ' express the same way for something to be).

**$a$  has strongly primitive thisness<sub>pred.</sub>** =<sub>df</sub> It is not the case that for something to be identical to  $a$  is for it to satisfy ' $F$ ' (where (i.) ' $F$ ' is not synonymous with 'is identical to  $a$ ', and (ii.) ' $F$ ' is not a conjunctive predicate of the form ' $G$  and  $H$ ', where ' $G$ ' is synonymous with 'is identical to  $a$ ').

*Individual essence.*

$F$  is an **individual essence** of  $a$  =<sub>df</sub>  $F$  is a property of  $a$ , or a collection thereof, that (i.) is essential to  $a$  and (ii.) necessarily, for any  $x$ , if  $x$  has  $F$  then  $x=a$ .

*Minimal individual essence.*

$F$  is a **minimal individual essence** of  $a$  =<sub>df</sub> Necessarily, for any  $x$ ,  $x$  has  $F$  if and only if  $x=a$ .

*Qualitative individual essence.*

$a$  has a **qualitative individual essence\*** =<sub>df</sub> For some qualitative property or collection of qualitative properties  $F$ , (i.)  $F$  is essential to  $a$ , and (ii.) necessarily, for any  $x$ , if  $x$  has  $F$  then  $x=a$ .

$a$  has a **qualitative individual essence** =<sub>df</sub>  $\exists F$  such that (i.)  $F$  is a qualitative way for something to be, (ii.) it is essential to  $a$  that  $Fa$  is the case, and (iii.) necessarily, for any  $x$ , if  $Fx$  then  $x=a$ .

(Where ' $F$ ' is a non-committal second-order predicate and the second-order existential quantifier is to be read as non-objectual).

$a$  has a **qualitative individual essence<sub>pred.</sub>** =<sub>df</sub> For some qualitative predicate ' $F$ ', (i.) satisfying ' $F$ ' is essential to  $a$ , and (ii.) necessarily, for any  $x$ , if  $x$  satisfies ' $F$ ' then  $x=a$ .

*Qualitative minimal individual essence.*

$a$  has a **qualitative minimal individual essence\*** =<sub>df</sub> For some qualitative property or collection of qualitative properties  $F$ , necessarily, for any  $x$ ,  $x$  has  $F$  iff  $x=a$ .

$a$  has a **qualitative minimal individual essence** =<sub>df</sub>  $\exists F$   
such that (i.)  $F$  is a qualitative way for something to be,  
and (ii.) necessarily, for any  $x$ ,  $Fx$  iff  $x=a$ .

(Where ' $F$ ' is a non-committal second-order predicate and  
the second-order existential quantifier is to be read as  
non-objectual).

$a$  has a **qualitative minimal individual essence<sub>pred.</sub>** =<sub>df</sub>  
For some qualitative predicate ' $F$ ', necessarily, for any  $x$ ,  
 $Fx$  iff  $x=a$ .

*Austere Haecceitism about the Ks.*

Any view that holds that (i.) some of the  $K$ s have primitive  
thisness and (ii.) none of the  $K$ s has a haecceity.

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