

Same but Different*

Talk of “tropes” dates back to D. C. Williams’s (1953) articles on the elements of being, although theories similar to the one proposed by him certainly existed long before that.¹ Williams’s tropes were no instant success however, and a debate of today’s kind and calibre would have to wait until the publication of the first contemporary book entirely devoted to trope theory (Keith Campbell’s *Abstract Particulars* (1990)). Since then, however, discussion has been lively with the number of trope proponents increasing. Those who have joined in the effort to bring the theory to its most developed expression include, among others, John Bacon, Peter Simons, Kevin Mulligan, Käthe Trettin, and myself.²

Although the formulation of positive accounts of, and arguments *for*, trope theory took quite some time to emerge after Williams’s first mention of “tropes”, arguments *against* the theory surfaced much sooner. Herbert Hochberg, in particular, soon seized upon the theory and, although he did not appreciate it, found it worthy of serious scrutiny.³ In a recent article (“Relations, Properties and Particulars” (2004a)) Hochberg once again challenges trope theory with his keen and thought-provoking critique.⁴ This time his particular target is my own view on tropes and on how a theory of tropes ought to be developed as described in *If Tropes* (2002).

In his article he treats almost every aspect of the book in depth and detail and some of his objections I now believe to be accurate.⁵ Sometimes Hochberg’s critique even manages to point “beyond” my text, as, for instance, when he identifies problems facing trope theory not noticed by myself (and, at least as far as I know, largely unnoticed in general). Hochberg

¹ Early proponents of such a theory that included trope-like entities are, e.g.: (Stout, 1921; Segelberg, 1999, and; Husserl, 1970). Aristotle and Ockham also count among the theory’s very first proponents.

² See, e.g.: (Bacon, 1995; Simons, 1994 and 2000; Mulligan, 1998; Trettin, 2004a, 2004b; and Maurin, 2002). The list could be made much longer.

³ Hochberg’s trope-critical publications include (1965; 1988; 1992; 2002 and 2004a).

⁴ All page references in the text will refer to this article.

⁵ As, for example, when he points out that my treatment of truth-maker theory (which forms part of my theoretical framework) leaves something to be desired.

asks (p. 37): If universals are taken to be nothing but classes of exactly similar tropes, then *why* is there not also such a unity of any *subset* of tropes that are exactly similar (adding countless universals to each similarity set)? The trope theorist must, he continues, answer this question in one of two possible ways: she must stipulate, either that there cannot be such subset-unities (and then she must add this as one more axiom to her trope theory); or she must admit that, for every subset there is indeed a distinct universal. The first option, says Hochberg, suffers from its *ad hoc* nature,⁶ the second, he adds, from being indefensibly “ontologically promiscuous”. I have not seen this point made before, but it is certainly a point worth making. I doubt if it presents the trope theorist with a serious problem however. For, why should the promiscuity entailed by accepting the second alternative deter us here? Hochberg seems to think that it is counter-intuitive for, as he points out (p. 37), “oddly enough, you then have more universals than you have particular tropes.” Given the “watered-down” nature universals are accorded by the trope theorist, I fail to see what is so odd about that.

Apart from identifying and discussing *new* problems, Hochberg’s rich text also brings up old ones. Problems, which he rightly points out, have not yet received the treatment they deserve and so remain serious threats to the development of a theory of tropes. To this category of problems belongs the issue of space and time. Fitting space and time into your metaphysical framework is certainly problematic no matter *what* the framework, but there is some reason to believe that space and time might prove especially problematic if the framework is one of tropes.⁷ However, some of the critique offered by Hochberg is mistaken and it is to the discussion of where and why these mistakes occur that this article is devoted. This will require us to look deeper into the nature of the trope – a complicated yet central issue for the proper development of the theory. First, though, a few comments on an issue that is very close to *my* heart but not perhaps central to trope theory in general.

⁶ As well as from further burdening the theory with new axioms.

⁷ Hochberg mentions some of the problems he believes will face a trope-theoretical treatment of space and time in: (Hochberg, 2004), pp. 41-42. I mention some in: (Maurin, 2002), pp. 175f. I have, to date, no solutions to offer, nor have I any comprehensive understanding of exactly what form these problems will take or where they will occur. All I have is, as indicated, the conviction that space and time *must* at some point be trope-theoretically treated and that such treatment might (or, I think, *will*) prove very problematic.

Misused assumptions

According to Hochberg, I *misuse my assumptions*. For, he claims, throughout the book important issues are with their help “prejudged” in ways that to begin with disqualify even the most pertinent and important critique. These are serious charges indeed. Charges, I will now argue, that rest partly on misunderstanding and partly on deep substantive disagreement. I will return to the disagreement below and focus here on why I think Hochberg’s charges are (partly) the result of misunderstanding.

To understand the role played by my assumptions one must first appreciate that the investigation conducted in *If Tropes* is hypothetical. That is, it aims to develop as far as possible a theory for tropes. It does *not* aim to defend the existence of tropes, *nor* does it aim to argue for trope theory against its rivals. This is why the book is called *if tropes*. Although seemingly puzzled, Trettin actually captures the mood in which the book is written very well when she points out that:⁸

Somehow one gets the impression that Maurin has, so to speak, a rather aloof affair with tropes. She doesn’t love them wholeheartedly. On the other hand, she takes great care in defending her theoretical construction.

True, although I may not love tropes wholeheartedly I certainly find them worthy of a fair hearing. Trope theory *will* have its cost (as my hypothetical investigation soon reveals). To some it will be too high. To others, such as myself, whether or not the cost is acceptable will depend on what the cost and/or benefit of rival theories is, because, as always in metaphysics, cost must be balanced against profit. With this in mind, it is nevertheless futile, I believe, to make any kind of cost/benefit analysis until it has been shown that the theory *can* be developed (under its own assumptions) in the first place. It is such a first development, rather than a full-on endorsement, that is attempted in *If Tropes*.

If the project’s hypothetical character is not appreciated, misinterpretation will be the unavoidable consequence. Such misinterpretation is, to some extent, represented in Hochberg’s text, and can (again, partly) account for his charging me with misuse of assumptions. One example of how misunderstanding the general purpose of investigation will affect argument is Hochberg’s treatment of my discussion of the distinction between (what Campbell once dubbed) the A-

⁸ (Trettin, 2004a), pp. 152-153.

tween (what Campbell once dubbed) the A- and B-questions.⁹ Hochberg objects to my claim that since all the classical theories of properties answer these questions *in the same way*, they have also, and illegitimately, assumed (consciously or unconsciously) that the questions *must* be identically answered.¹⁰ This assumption seriously prejudices the issue against trope theory. The reason: trope theory, unlike all other property theories, is such that the A- and the B-question will receive *different* answers. A trope is a particular quality; this means that nothing other than the existence of *it* (not the “similarity circle” to which it belongs) is required to account for the nature of a particular object (or, basically, a trope), i.e. to answer the A-question. To the question of what makes it true that a particular trope is, say, red, we can never obtain a more informative answer than one asserting: “*it is red because it is red, or because it is what it is*”.¹¹

For an adequate answer to the question of what makes two objects (or, ultimately, two tropes) *the same* – to answer the B-question – on the other hand, requires more. Answering the B-question will also require an account of what it is that makes the objects (or, basically, the tropes) “the same”, and to do this similarity may very well have to be invoked.¹² Trope theory, consequently, must distinguish not only between the A- and B-questions, but also between their *answers*.

It is important to note that, apart from making it possible for trope theory to avoid critique traditionally directed against nominalism in general, the fact that trope proponents must hold that the A- and B-questions should receive different answers is by no means to their advantage.¹³ On the contrary, classical theories of properties, that can answer two questions

⁹ The A-question: What makes it true that *a* is F? The B-question: What makes it true that *a* and *b* are the same F? (Campbell, 1990), p. 29.

¹⁰ That is, all the classical property-accounts answer *both* the A- and B-question by postulating one and the same entity (property or logical construction) suitably related (by, e.g. instantiation or membership) to the concrete particulars both having *and* sharing a property. “Classical theories of properties” are here taken to include the whole range of alternatives; e.g. Universal realism (Platonism and Aristotelianism), as well as Concept-, Class- and Resemblance Nominalism.

¹¹ (Maurin, 2004), p. 64.

¹² Giving rise to all sorts of problems and discussions, none of which I will take up here, but see my: (Maurin, 2004), chapter 5 in particular.

¹³ (Armstrong, 1978), pp. 28-43 seems to think that most of his arguments against classical nominalism are also arguments against trope theory. Given that the trope theorist distinguishes between her answers to the A- and B-questions, this is not true (Maurin, 2004), pp. 68-77.

for the price of one, appear both simpler and theoretically more economical (not to mention respectful of linguistic form). The point of emphasising that the two questions are in fact distinct is not, then, to argue that trope theory's structural difference from rival theories makes it in any way the superior theory. Still, this seems to be how Hochberg, wrongly, interprets it. He points out that (p. 31):

The questions go together [for universal realism] because one naturally develops arguments for universals by starting with two things of the same kind. /--- / If one looks at the history, perhaps from a different perspective than Maurin's, one finds her attempt – which follows a common strategy in philosophical disputes – to show that the realist isn't clear about the difference between different questions – is misguided.

It is true, naturally, that if you hold, e.g. a universal realism then, although the A- and the B-question will be offered the same answer, this does not entail that they are not recognised as essentially distinct. Yet as well as recognising that the questions are distinct, one ought to recognise that so are possibly their answers. It is unwillingness to recognise *this*, which characterises much critique directed against trope theory. Critique that is therefore wrongfully based on the assumption that trope theory, *as* other theories of properties, must provide identical answers to the A- and the B-question. An example of critique of this kind is in fact offered by Hochberg just a few pages further on, where he continues (pp. 35-36):

...the focusing on the A and B questions being different is misleading. For, if one is serious about the problem of universals, one faces the B question as soon as one answers the A question. That is why we cannot forget that Russell assumed the tropist's answer to the A question – that qualities were particulars – in order to argue against the tropist's view by then raising the B question.

Hochberg's general charge of my misusing my assumptions is to a great extent based in his particular dissatisfaction with some of the assumptions used. This is obvious when he objects that (p. 18):

Of course one must start somewhere and cannot offer arguments for everything. The questions that arise are about where we start and how we employ the postulates we start from. Furthermore, to postulate or assume something does not license merely repeating the assumption in response to an objection – especially an objection that claims that while one postulates that tropes are “simple” entities they are employed in ways that indicate they are not really simple.

Hochberg is not the only one suspicious of how I make use of the particular “assumption” that tropes are simple entities. In a recent review, Trettin argues:¹⁴

The pronounced hypothetical or even constructivist framework seems to be more problematic, because it can have an immunising function concerning critique: At times Maurin just reminds possible critics of their ‘obligation’ to respect the assumptions of her theory. Of course, some assumptions have to be laid down to start any theory, but these should be good enough to be respected by all without comment. If some of those belong to the core of controversial debates, it simply is not a good enough assumption or axiom of one’s theory, *as is the case with whether tropes are simple or complex*.

Apart from the fact that I believe that *no* assumption can “be good enough to be respected by all without comment”, the above objections indicate my failure to communicate the following: the simplicity of the trope is *not* assumed – it *is* argued for. The existence of *tropes* is assumed and I must admit that I do *say* that, thereby, the existence of something that is *abstract, particular* and *simple* is assumed. The reason for this, however, is that (in a sense to be explained): to hold that tropes exist *must be* to hold that something that is abstract, particular *and* simple exists. For trope theory would not constitute an original theory, a novel alternative to pre-existing views on properties, if tropes were not simple entities. This is why: to an entity characterised as being both abstract and particular two options are open: it is either complex or it is simple. The relevant question here is what the alternative according to which the “abstract particular” is complex entails in terms of ontology. According to Chris Daly, to be a complex “abstract particular” is to be (or is at least compatible with being) a *substrate instantiating a universal* (or, as Armstrong would call such an entity, a *state of affairs*).¹⁵ States of affairs, I agree, may very well be characterised as *abstract particulars* – especially considering what Armstrong has had to say about the “victory of particularity”.¹⁶ Nevertheless, if being a complex “abstract particular” amounts to being a substrate instantiating a universal then, also, tropes cannot be complex. For, obviously, to hold that there are substrates instantiating universals is not, first, to hold that “tropehood” is a fundamental category. Rather, it is to hold that there are *two*

¹⁴ (Trettin, 2004a), p. 152, my italics.

¹⁵ (Daly, 1997), pp. 141 f. Daly also argues that any argument for simple tropes will be an argument for complex tropes so that there will exist no rational reason for holding that there are simple tropes. I argue against this in: (Maurin, 2004), pp. 12-14.

¹⁶ (Armstrong, 1978), p. 115.

fundamental categories (substrates and universals), which join to constitute a further category (of states of affairs). Second, theories of universals, theories of substrates and theories of states of affairs already exist as well developed theories. What would be gained by now referring to these theories as “trope theories”? Obviously nothing. Is there any other way in which to ontologically characterise a complex abstract particular that avoids these consequences? Yes, one such alternative would be to hold that tropes are complex in the sense that they consist of more than one simple abstract particular. But this merely postpones characterising the trope as a simple entity – for, ultimately, the nature of these complex tropes will boil down to the nature of their ultimate constituent simple tropes. A third, and I believe final, alternative is this: the trope is complex in that it consists of a substrate instantiating a particular quality. Now, *this* does seem to present a novel theory of what we might call “complex tropes”. Disregarding here the familiar problems associated with the “nature” of substrates, this alternative, it seems to me, still does not get rid of simplicity. For, what is the nature of the particular quality instantiated in the substrate? It must be qualitative (or abstract) in order to be able to “nature” the substrate. It must be particular, or we are back with Daly’s alternative. It must be simple, or we will end up in endless regress. Simple tropes have sneaked in the back door! A trope, therefore, if it exists, exists as a simple entity.

To Hochberg, though, the trope’s tripartite nature is a mystery comparable perhaps to that of the holy trinity. Consequently, much of his critical efforts have been aimed at disproving the possibility of thus characterising it. I am very well aware of, and take seriously, the doubts and objections occasioned by the special nature of the trope. Yet I hold that these are not conclusive objections. Rather – and here Hochberg might want to claim that I once again misuse my assumptions – I claim that these objections arguably beg the question against trope theory by departing from, and treating as obvious, principles the acceptance of which prematurely disqualify even the possibility of tropes. Here, consequently, Hochberg’s reasons for charging me with misusing my assumptions are based on beliefs with which I strongly disagree, rather than in mere misunderstanding. In the following sections, I will explain how and why.

What is so problematic about the special nature of tropes? Simply put; tropes, on my account, are (and *must be*) simple – yet, according to Hochberg, they are (and *must be*) employed in ways which require them to be complex. This is *not* the linguistic problem identified by Trettin:¹⁷

¹⁷ (Trettin, 2004a), pp. 155-156.

But are tropes really ‘simple’? Isn’t the tripartite characterisation of tropes as ‘simple’, ‘particular’ and ‘qualitative’ – already to be found not only in Maurin, but in many others – a puzzling indication of non-simplicity? Unfortunately, trope theorists have done a lot to give the impression that tropes are more than just one quality, especially by talking about ‘tropes and their natures’ or about the trope’s particularity on the one hand, and its quality, on the other. No wonder that critics take this loose talk as evidence for their objections.

No wonder, *I* say, that such linguistic confusions arise. For “loose talk”, when it comes to tropes and trope theory, is *unavoidable*; given the nature of tropes it is impossible for trope talk to “respect” linguistic form.¹⁸ If the problem discussed by Hochberg were only one of confusing linguistic usage with ontological character then there would be no problem left once these confusions were discovered and disentangled. Unfortunately, it is much more serious than that. Hochberg’s problem should also be distinguished from another “problem”, identified by Eric Funkhouser in a recent review. He asks:¹⁹

...she [Maurin] claims that tropes are qualitatively simple/.../But this fails to convince. Why *can’t* tropes have qualitative parts – e.g. color-tropes have hue-parts, saturation-parts, and brightness-parts?/.../And if no parts are ‘proper parts’ of other tropes, how are we to understand mereological sums of tropes?

The questions posed by Funkhouser are, I believe, clearly misguided. First, because if tropes are qualitatively complex in the sense imagined by Funkhouser they must, as I argue above, be regarded as complexes of *more fundamental tropes*. Of course, complexes of this kind we may call *tropes* – but they are tropes only in a secondary sense. I therefore prefer to call them *complexes of tropes* (or *compresent tropes*) although I do not think much hinges on our choice of terms here. Second, even if “no parts are ‘proper parts’ of other tropes”, mereological sums of tropes will pose no special problem. Mereological sums of tropes are just that: mereological sums of tropes. Again, one might choose to call also mereological sums of tropes

¹⁸ For another example of how trope theory necessarily “disrespects” linguistic form, consider: “*a* is F” which, according to the theory, is made true by the existence, “in” *a* of *particular* trope f_1 . Some think that this is a high price to pay for trope theory, but I actually consider it, not so much a cost as in fact (at least to some extent) a benefit. See my (2004), chapter 4 (on how I regard the relation between linguistic and ontological form).

¹⁹ (Funkhouser, 2004).

“tropes” but this is merely a question of terminology. No matter what we call Funkhouser’s complex tropes, we will still have to admit the existence of the kind of simple tropes that presumably give rise to the problem we may now refer to as the “problem of unholy trinity”.

The unholy trinity of tropes

So why does Hochberg think that simple tropes *must* be treated as if complex? A first answer is this: If tropes are abstract, particular *and* simple then two exactly similar tropes are numerically distinct and qualitatively the same, yet neither distinction nor sameness is separately grounded *in* the tropes. Hochberg finds nothing odd in general about a variety of basic facts being true of one simple entity; it is with this particular combination he struggles. He says (pp. 23-24):

In short, though I willingly grant the assumption that diverse tropes are simply different – what I fail to see is how diverse tropes are of the same kind if they are said to “be their natures.”

That tropes should be such that they can be “just different” yet “just the same” is, according to Donald Brownstein (another early critic of tropes) “the central mystery and dogma” of trope theory.²⁰ Before explaining how and why this appears mysterious, as well as how and why I think appearances may here be deceiving, I want to consider two ways in which, perhaps contrary to first impression, the “mystery” *cannot* be dissolved.

First (and, given my previous claims, naturally) you will not be able to avoid mysterious trinities by retracting the claim that tropes are simple entities; trope theory *must* include simplicity among the trope’s characterising traits.²¹ Furthermore, you will not be able to dissolve the mystery by holding that the sameness of tropes must not be grounded in some particular “constituent” *in* them in order to acquire a ground separate from that of their distinction, since the sameness of tropes may be distinctly grounded

²⁰ (Brownstein, 1973), p. 47.

²¹ However, looking at standard introductions to trope theory this might look like a promising alternative – such introductions often stress that trope theory is original in as much as it introduces an entity that combines *particularity* with *abstractness* in a manner never previously thought of. It is by combining characteristics that have normally been considered apart that the theory is said to solve or avoid many long-standing problems in the property-philosophical debate (such as the introduction of “mysterious” universals or “blobby” concrete particulars). Simplicity is almost never discussed in these circumstances.

in some *relation* holding between tropes that are the same. It cannot be dissolved in this way for there is ample reason to hold that the sameness of tropes cannot thus reside “outside” of tropes that are the same. I have discussed these reasons in detail elsewhere, and space does not permit me to repeat myself here.²² There is space enough, however, to state without argument why sameness must be grounded *in* tropes that are the same. Sameness (or, perhaps better, resemblance) is an internal relation, i.e. a relation the existence of which follows necessarily given the nature of the entities related. Since tropes are *simple* entities, furthermore, their resemblance will follow necessarily merely given their existence (tropes, remember, *are* their nature rather than have a nature). Resemblance may be understood in one of two ways: either as a pseudo-addition or as a genuine relation-trope. Understood as a pseudo-addition, resemblance is seen as a “free lunch”, i.e. it is considered as something we need not add to our ontological inventory list.²³ If resemblance is a pseudo-addition, consequently, the sameness of tropes (as well as their distinction) remains grounded *in* the related tropes. Understood as a trope, resemblance will generate infinite and, many say, *vicious* regress. Contrary to popular opinion, I do not think that the resemblance regress facing trope theory is necessarily vicious, but whether or not it is makes no difference here. For whether or not the resemblance of two tropes entails the existence of a resemblance-trope (or even an infinity of resemblance-tropes), their resemblance will be ultimately determined by their nature (i.e. their existence). Resemblance, once again, will be grounded *in* the tropes and the problem of “unholy trinity” can be formulated after all.

The problem can now be formulated as a kind of *reductio*, as follows:

(Exactly similar) tropes exist.

That is, something that is particular, abstract *and* simple exists.

Therefore, exactly similar tropes are (must be) such that similarity and distinction, respectively, lack separate grounds.

But this is *not* possible.

(Exactly similar) tropes do not (indeed cannot) exist.

²² For a detailed argument, see my: (2004), chapter 5.

²³ Hochberg points out that there is something strange about non-existent pseudo-additions. If exact resemblance is a pseudo-addition, he queries (p. 35) “what is it that is composed of exactly similar tropes – nothing?” Basically, I believe that how one regards free lunches in ontology will boil down to how strong one’s sparse ideals are and, more importantly, what one’s views on truth-making are.

An argument of this kind, I claim, will always rest on holding as necessarily true some general principle. Historically we find at least two principles that in this way prohibit the existence of tropes: “Leibniz’s principle” which holds that “*Indiscernibility implies identity*” and “Bradley’s principle” according to which “*Distinction implies difference*”.²⁴ If these principles are true, trope theory must be false, for each principle *requires* the existence of separate grounds *in* the tropes for their distinction as well as for their unity. Both of these principles are, however, plausibly disputable in at least two ways: the trope proponent may inquire, first, on what grounds the principles are said to be *necessary*, or she can, second, argue that the most plausible interpretation of the principles is, contrary to first appearances, one that is *compatible* with the existence of tropes.

The first option involves demonstrating that the principles are necessary because they are a necessary consequence of the truth of certain substantial theses concerning the nature of individuals and the nature of properties – theses that are contrary to those on which a theory of tropes rests. Here the theses of interest are: (i) properties are universal, and; (ii) individuals are bundles of properties. For, as noticed by Armstrong, it is only if individuals are bundles of universals that “Leibniz’s (as well as Bradley’s) principle” is a necessary truth.²⁵ However, Armstrong continues, “on no interpretation does it appear to be a necessary truth”. Armstrong, who is convinced of the truth of (i), therefore goes on to deny (ii). The trope theorist, on the other hand, will have to deny (i), but can accept (ii) (although she does not have to). It may be objected that it is not the principles that presuppose the truth of these theses but rather the other way around (i.e. it is the nature of individuals and properties that is a consequence of the truth of the principles). If so, this would have the unhappy consequence of making properties necessarily universal and individuals necessarily bundles – a consequence few metaphysicians would want to accept. Moreover, if not these ontological theses, then *what* supports the necessary truth of the principles? Unless some independent support can be identified, the only alternative left seems to be to hold that the principles are self-evidently true,

²⁴ (Leibniz, 1956) § 26f. (Bradley, 1922), pp. 662-667. Bradley’s and Leibniz’s principles are equivalent although Leibniz seems to have intended his principle to be interpreted as an ontological principle while Bradley intended his as epistemological. I have no real quarrel with the epistemological version of the principle; it is its ontological reading that is relevant here.

²⁵ (Armstrong, 1978), p. 91.

which they are obviously not. If they were, we would be unable so easily to imagine the existence of exactly resembling tropes.

The second option was to argue that the most plausible interpretation of the principles is one that is *compatible* with the existence of tropes. The interpretation in question should here be one that includes not only “internal” but also “external” characteristics among the kinds of quality which, if “the same” entail identity.²⁶ Once again, the *reductio* will thereby fail and it seems as if neither principle can be used as the basis for an argument against the possible existence of exactly resembling yet distinct tropes.

There is, however, a third principle that is not as easily dismissed. This principle plays a vital part in what Hochberg refers to as a “formidable” argument against trope theory (p. 39).^{27, 28}

Let a basic proposition be one that is either atomic or the negation of an atomic proposition. Then consider tropes *t* and *t** where “*t* is different from *t**” and “*t* is exactly similar to *t**” are both true. Assume you take either “diversity” or “identity” as primitive. Then both propositions are basic propositions. But they are logically independent. Hence they cannot have the same truth makers. Yet, for a trope theory of the type Maurin espouses, they do and must have the same truth makers. Thus the theory fails.

²⁶ Adopting this alternative would unfortunately force the trope theorist to accept as necessarily true that, although for the most part distinct tropes may occupy the same space-time region, this is not true for exactly similar tropes. Hochberg points out, in discussing this “axiom”; “It would of course be redundant to have two red tropes com-present, but why is it not possible?” I agree that it is unhappy to have to add this as an axiom to the theory – for that reason I prefer the first option discussed above.

²⁷ Other versions of the argument appear also in (Hochberg, 1988 and 2001). (Campbell, 1990), pp. 68-70 refers to and attempts to answer a similar version of the argument which he attributes to (Moreland, 1985). An argument based on, yet slightly different from, Hochberg’s has recently been presented by Armstrong (forthcoming).

²⁸ A few comments on how Hochberg chooses to express his argument: First, Hochberg expresses the propositions in terms of “difference” and “similarity”. This is unhappy; I would prefer using “distinction” rather than “difference” to express the first proposition (“difference” is too qualitative to express what it is meant to express). Second, I fail to understand what is meant by pointing out that, if we (p. 39) “take either “diversity” or “identity” as primitive. Then both propositions are basic propositions.” I agree that the propositions are both *basic*. But am I to take Hochberg’s comment to mean that they are basic because one is atomic and the other is its negation? If so, no wonder they cannot have the same truth makers. I take both propositions to be basic (in Hochberg’s sense) because they are both *atomic* – not because one is atomic and the other is its negation. However, pointing this out does not affect the strength of the argument.

Again, Hochberg claims, refusing to provide separate grounds for distinction and sameness respectively gives rise to problems. The trope theorist *must* say that what makes true “t is different from t*” and “t is exactly similar to t*” is the same thing: tropes t and t*. This is problematic, as it seems to imply that the trope theorist must violate the following principle:

“Hochbergs Principle”: Logically independent basic propositions must have distinct truth makers.

As stated, this principle looks more than reasonable, and so Hochberg has set the trope theorist a serious challenge indeed. A challenge that I believe can be met although at considerable cost to trope theory.

Hochberg rightly points out that at least some of the things I have had to say about his argument in the past have been misguided. At one point, for instance, I say:²⁹

Notice also that even on the alternative according to which logically independent propositions *can* have the same truth-makers it is essentially a verbal question whether we wish to continue treating them as logically independent. If ‘being logically independent’ means ‘having distinct truth-makers’ then surely they are not logically independent.

But, says Hochberg, to hold that “it is a verbal question as to whether the sentences are logically independent” because “it is a matter of deciding whether ‘being logically independent’ means ‘having different truth-makers’” is simply false. I agree – this is truly not a *verbal* question and so my earlier treatment of Hochberg’s argument has, at least in this sense, failed to appreciate exactly how substantial the argument in fact is. The “rub” is, of course, “Hochberg’s principle”. Must the trope theorist give up this principle altogether? If yes, with what justification? If no, how exactly does she propose to keep it?

Mulligan, Simons and Smith seem to be giving up the principle altogether when they claim that:³⁰

We conceive it as in principle possible that one and the same truth-maker may make true sentences with different meanings: this happens anyway if we take non-atomic sentences into account, and *no arguments occur to us which suggest that this cannot happen for atomic sentences as well.*

Hochberg is violently opposed to this suggestion for, as he exclaims (p. 39):

²⁹ (Maurin, 2002), p. 115.

³⁰ (Mulligan, Simons and Smith, 1984), p. 296 (my italics).

In fact it is demonstrably false on a standard use of “logically.” Given basic two propositions having the same truth makers, it is not logically possible for one to be true and the other false.

Therefore, he continues, “ t is different from t^* ” and “ t is exactly similar to t^* ” are not logically independent. Given the intuitiveness of “Hochberg’s principle”, the burden of proof is now on the trope theorist, and it is not enough to say that the principle should be rejected since “no argument occurs to us” for why it should not. More is definitely needed. The best explanation of why trope theory may, with justification, reject “Hochberg’s principle” in general and still embrace a modified version of it has been provided by Fraser MacBride in a different context. MacBride hits Hochberg with something I am sure he knows will hurt – he hits him with Russell.³¹

Russell famously exhorted us to maintain a ‘robust sense of reality’ when engaged in ontological enquiry. This attitude is evidenced here when Russell insists that it is the same “external fact” that makes “ A is before B ” and “ B is after A ” true /.../ [This] suggests that Russell – far from being guided by Hochberg’s principle that logically independent statements require distinct truth-makers – in fact rejects this conception. For the statement that “ B is after A ” no more logically follows from “ A is before B ” (without the aid of an additional meaning postulate) than “ $S(b,a)$ ” logically follows from “ $S(a,b)$ ”.

The fact that Russell here refers to a “robust sense of reality” does, I think, clearly indicate the direction in which a solution to the problem should be sought. For basically, I suggest, whether or not one believes that there is some way in which trope theory can be consistently formulated will depend on one’s fundamental views on how the logical form of language relates to the ontological form of the world. MacBride clearly illustrates this in his discussion of the notion of logical independence employed in “Hochberg’s principle”. For, he argues, Hochberg seems to conceive of this notion in a purely *formal* sense. In a *material* sense “ $S(a,b)$ ” and “ $S(b,a)$ ” are *not* logically independent. For, MacBride notes:³²

...it is not possible for “ $S(a,b)$ ” to be true and “ $S(b,a)$ ” false, nor for “ $S(a,b)$ ” to be false and “ $S(b,a)$ ” true.

Formally “ $S(a,b)$ ” and “ $S(b,a)$ ” are logically independent: to formally deduce “ $S(a,b)$ ” from “ $S(b,a)$ ” the further conditional premise “ $(\forall x)(\forall y)(S(x,y) \supset S(y,x))$ ” is also required. Materially, on the other hand,

³¹ (MacBride, 2004), p. 189.

³² Ibid.

they are *not*: it is *not* possible for it to be true that *a* is before *b* while, simultaneously it is false that *b* is after *a*. The burden of proof has now shifted to Hochberg. It is he who now needs to justify the assumption that it is statements that are logically independent in the *formal* rather than material sense that require distinct truth makers. This now seems to be the *less* plausible view, given that:³³

...whereas the former notion concerns the kinds of transition that may be effected between sentences by the substitution of expressions, the latter notion appeals to what is possible quite independently of language.

Translated into the currently relevant context, “*t* is different from *t**” and “*t* is exactly similar to *t**” are formally independent: for, as for before and after, to formally deduce “*t* is different from *t**” from “*t* is exactly similar to *t**” would require the further conditional premise “ $((\forall x)(\forall y)(“x$ is exactly similar to $y”) \supset “x$ is different from $y”))$. Materially, on the other hand, the propositions are arguably not independent. According to trope theory, logical and ontological form must therefore here come apart. As MacBride adds:³⁴

Insofar as truth-makers are conceived as inhabitants of the world, as creatures that exist independently of language, it is far from evident that logically independent statements in the formal sense are compelled to correspond to distinct truth-makers.

Hochberg, in his answer to MacBride, has interestingly little to say on this matter (fundamental as it would seem that it is). Hochberg says:³⁵

MacBride challenges a principle that I employ – holding that logically independent basic sentences require diverse grounds (or makers) of truth /.../ I simply note that the connection between a basic sentence and its truth ground is established by a Carnap-style semantic rule. It is thus logical or formal in that sense /.../ If two logically independent basic sentences have the same truth ground then we allow one to be true and the other false while the truth ground that makes both true obtains or exists. The formal-material distinction does not change that, given that Carnap-style rules are involved.

What Hochberg says here makes it apparent that the problem is indeed, as suspected by both MacBride and myself, one of how one should regard the relation between the logical form of language and the ontological form of the world. Exactly how much does logical form reveal (how much must it

³³ Ibid., pp. 189-190.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 190.

³⁵ (Hochberg, 2004b), p. 206.

reveal) about the ontological form of the world? Hochberg's willingness to use what he calls "Carnap-style semantic rules" to draw ontological conclusions tells me that he thinks the answer is "very much indeed". I must admit however, that my understanding of Hochberg's statement is seriously impeded by my failing to understand the exact nature of the rule to which he here refers. Particularities to one side, however: suppose Hochberg is right. That is, suppose that formally independent propositions *must* have distinct truth makers and that, given the involvement of Carnap-style rules, the formal-material distinction will do nothing to change that. This is *not* to say that; logically independent propositions must have distinct truth makers *tout court*. It is to say that; *given* that you believe that what can or cannot make true certain propositions must be established by a "Carnap-style semantic rule", logically independent propositions must have distinct truth makers. Accepting the conclusion of Hochberg's argument, that is, not only implies accepting "Hochberg's principle" but also some very fundamental theses about what, how and why things can be said about the world based on our knowledge of language and linguistic form. There may be very good reasons to accept these theses, still the theses are undeniably much more controversial and open to debate than was the principle with which we began.

Hochberg's argument, we can now see, is truly "formidable" because it manages with great precision to pinpoint something of utmost importance. If you wish to argue that the world is a world of tropes, you must also accept as true a number of fundamental and highly substantial theses in metaphysical methodology. Put very generally, you must, to stay true to trope theory, become a rather quite radical "revisionary" metaphysician. To Hochberg, and many with him, this in itself might be enough to earn the argument the status of a *reductio*. To my mind, however, such a conclusion would require substantial additional argumentation. What is so inherently absurd about a revisionary approach to metaphysics? Nothing, I would say. The revisionary approach in fact strikes me as the most reasonable one. Embracing it is, however, not without complication. It requires the setting up of clear boundaries for what can and cannot be said or argued – no metaphysician wants to be charged with making up incredible, although admittedly consistent, fairytales! The tools required for setting up such a "not-too-speculative" revisionary metaphysics might already exist. There is some reason to believe that modern truth-maker theory and a keen appreciation of and respect for some of the boundaries set up by our best sciences could be some such tools. Much, very much, remains to be done

though, and work in metaphysical methodology of this kind promises both reward and frustration. Whether joining the revisionary camp is a punishment or a blessing therefore remains to be seen. Important here is that this is not an open choice to the trope theorist. Trope theory, therefore, is theoretically burdened to say the least, and anyone wishing to join its ranks should be aware of this.

End

Here I have only been able to discuss a very small portion of all the interesting and problematic issues brought up by Hochberg and others. The subject of infinite regress – an issue integral to trope theory – in particular, has generated a host of comments that deserve in-depth treatment. Trettin's comments on my proposed solution to the Bradley regress deserves special mention here.³⁶ Time and space force me to deal with these matters elsewhere.

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³⁶ (Trettin, 2004b)

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