PARTICULARS, POSITIONAL QUALITIES, AND INDIVIDUATION*

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In this paper I attempt to show that an argument offered by Bergmann and Hausman against positional qualities and for bare particulars as individuators is unsound. I proceed by giving two ontological assays of an ordinary thing and showing that the entity that individuates on one assay—a bare particular—does not provide deeper ontological ground of individuation than the entity that individuates on the other assay—a positional quality. Since the argument for particulars is based on the premise that only particulars can ground individuation as deeply as is required, it follows that Bergmann and Hausman have not proved particulars are necessary and that positional qualities are insufficient for individuation.

Gustav Bergmann and Alan Hausman have argued that bare particulars are the only entities that can provide a dialectically adequate solution to the problem of individuation ([2], [8]). On their analysis an adequate solution requires that the ground of individuation be categorial, i.e., in the formation rules of an ideal language (IL). They also maintain that only bare particulars can provide a categorial ground of individuation and thus they argue that an analysis without bare particulars cannot ground individuation as deeply as is required. However, their argument fails to convince, since either the strict requirements they set for an adequate solution to the problem of individuation are not even satisfied by bare particulars, or if they are satisfied by bare particulars then they are also satisfied by positional qualities. This situation shows that either (i) their requirements of individuation are too severe, or (ii) they cannot reject an analysis of an ordinary thing without bare particulars because it does not ground individuation as deeply. The main task of this paper is to explain (i) and defend (ii). I shall proceed to do so as follows: First, I shall describe two attempts to solve the problem of individuation: one with particulars, the other without particulars. Then I shall argue against Bergmann's and Hausman's claim that bare particulars are

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needed for individuation because no other entity can ground individuation as deeply.

The problem of individuation is usually stated in the following way. Consider two spots, presented simultaneously, which have the same color, same size, the same shape and so on; in other words, two spots, which have all their nonrelational qualities in common. The spots are two and not one. The problem is to ontologically ground this twoness or numerical diversity of the spots. To demand such a ground is to ask for an ontological analysis of a thing1 (a list of its simple constituents) which contains for any two things, at least one constituent in which they differ. To illustrate, suppose we represent the analysis of a thing by a list of its constituents in brackets, e.g., (f_1,\ldots,f_n) . Then the numerical diversity of two things, A and B is grounded if there is an element on the list associated with A which is not an element on the list associated with B, e.g., $(f_1, \ldots, f_i, \ldots, f_n)$, $(f_1,\ldots,f_i,\ldots,f_n)^2$

An analysis of things which introduces particulars to solve the individuation problem is the particular-universal analysis. According to it an ordinary thing consists of a bare particular joined to universals

¹I shall use "ordinary thing" and "thing" as equivalent expressions.

²In a recent paper Hector-Neri Castañeda argues that the problem I have described is the problem of individual differentiation and not the problem of individuation. For him, the problem of individuation consists in "describ[ing] that ingredient or structure in Nous-A that makes Nous-A an individual, i.e., constitutes the individuality of Nous-A" ([5] p. 132). I agree that there are two problems here, but their difference makes no difference to the argument of my paper because on both analyses to be discussed the entity used to differentiate is also used to individuate.

Besides his own view of individuation, the most important contribution made by Castañeda in his paper is both his formulation of and his arguments supporting the formulation of seven criteria for a fully satisfactory solution to the problem of individuation. The last four criteria are particularly important. They are:

- (4) what individuates a certain individual makes it exactly the same in individuality as any other individual;
- this suggests that, especially since individuators are assumed to be ultimate, or absolutely simple, perhaps it is one and the same individuator that makes all individuals individuals;
- (6) since properties, whether relational or not, differentiate, but do not individuate, the individuator is not a property or a set of properties;
- an individuator is not itself an individual, unless every ordinary individual is its own individuator ([5], pp. 138-139).

If Castañeda is right, then criteria (4), (5), and (7) rule out the bare particular solution; and criteria (4), (5), (6) rule out the positional quality solution, even if Bergmann's and Hausman's arguments against the latter are inconclusive.

One misgiving I have with Castañeda's paper is that he does not really discuss the Russell-Goodman solution to his problem of individuation. For when he argues that spatiotemporal properties cannot account for the individuality of individuals he construes such properties to be relations and not the nonrelational properties that Russell and Goodman intend them to be.

by the ontological tie (nexus) of exemplification. Thus the analysis of an ordinary thing, say, a red round ball, would consist of certain universals, a particular and exemplification. If a quality can be "in" more than one thing, it is a universal. If, on the other hand, it can be "in" only one thing, it is a (perfect) particular. Both the particular-universal and the alternative "Bundle" analysis construe qualities as universals. In the particular-universal analysis, the diversity of two things is accounted for by the analysis of each containing a different particular. In this analysis, particulars ground the numerical diversity of things. And it is argued that they can do this because it is "impossible" for a bare particular to be "in" more than one thing. "

An alternative analysis of a thing which dispenses with bare particulars is the Bundle analysis. On this view, an ordinary thing is a bundle of nonrelational qualities, perhaps joined by one or more nexus. Then, given two different things, what makes them two, according to the Bundle analysis, is that there are different universals in each. Thus the Bundle theory denies that two things can have all nonrelational qualities in common. To this, it has been objected that, at least at the phenomenological level there certainly are things with all their nonrelational qualities in common. At this point the proponents of the Bundle analysis have added an interesting twist. In addition to such ordinary qualities as red and round, to be at a certain position in the visual field is a nonrelational quality had by all things in that field. Thus a thing would be a bundle of ordinary and positional qualities e.g., (f_1, \ldots, f_n, P_l) . In recent years variations of this proposal have been made by Russell and Goodman. Consider first Russell.

For my part, I hold that a 'thing' is nothing but a bundle of qualities, and that, therefore, two different things cannot be exactly alike. But I hold this only because I regard position in space as defined by means of certain qualities not usually recognized as such. . . . Consider first the space of your momentary visual field. If you keep your eyes fixed upon a stationary scene, some of the things you see are in the center of your field of vision, some are above or below the center, and some to right or left of it. The visual objects that compose your momentary visual field have different qualities according to their position . . . [And] When we take account of these qualities it is impossible that

³This sense of "impossible" and two others will be discussed below, p. 481.

two things simultaneously should be exactly alike ([10], pp. 24, 27).

Russell is denying that there might be a this and a that which were exactly similar, and yet two. That is, he denies that there are bare particulars. It is by means of positional qualities that different things are individuated, or, synonymously, acquire particularity. Positional qualities ground individuation for one such quality cannot be "in" two or more discrete things at the same time by the synthetic a priori laws of space (cf. [11], pp. 310-320, and [12], pp. 89-101).⁴

One objection to the Bundle analysis with positional qualities as a ground of individuation comes from Alan Hausman. I shall quote it at length because it implicitly exemplifies the claims that individuation requires bare particulars and that nothing else can ground individuation as deeply as bare particulars.

As the locution is used, a bare particular is just that entity which is a constituent of one and only one ordinary thing. Thus it accounts for the difference between any one ordinary thing and all others. This shows an important difference between bare particulars and spatial and temporal properties. If Goodman were right, there would be no reason except for the synthetic a priori laws of space and time why two spots appearing at the same time could not have the same place as a common constituent. Or, to say the same thing differently, these laws are, in his ontology, the ground of individuality. In the ontology which I accept, the difference is categorial. [No bare particular] . . . can possibly be a constituent of more than one ordinary thing in a sense of "possible" that lies deeper than either the synthetic a priori laws of space and time or the logical principle of noncontradiction ([8], pp. 45-46. Cf. p. 41).

To see what is involved in Hausman's argument let us first distinguish several senses of the word "possible." In the most fundamental sense, the formation rules of a language purporting to represent our world tell us what is possible. Formation rules tell us which sequences of signs are well-formed and which are not according to the shape and order of those sequences. The sequences which are well-formed formula correspond to possible, state of affairs, those which are not do not. In another sense, logic tells us what is impossible, (analytically false or contradictory). In a third sense, synthetic a priori propositions tell us what is impossible₃. Hausman is maintaining that it is merely

⁴For Goodman's version of the Bundle analysis see [7], especially pp. 189-211.

impossible₃, i.e., false *a priori*, for a positional quality to be "in" two or more discrete things (at the same time) while it is impossible₁ for a bare particular to be "in" two or more discrete objects. Bergmann calls attention to the same distinction concerning these two solutions to the individuation problem:

It is impossible, for a bare particular to be "in" more than one ordinary thing. That is their particularity. For a coordinate quality, we remember, it is merely impossible, to be "in" more than one thing. That is a rather striking difference between these two solutions to the individuation problem. The second grounds individuality more deeply (a priori false versus ill-formed) ([2], p. 24).

Thus, Bergmann and Hausman in opting for bare particulars, are, at least implicitly, maintaining that the ground of individuation or, synonymously, particularity, must be categorial, i.e., in the formation rules of an improved language. To ground particularity merely in the laws of the synthetic *a priori* would not be deep enough. But then, positional qualities cannot provide a ground of individuation because it is not categorially (nor logically) impossible for two ordinary objects to have literally the same place as a constituent.

However, the requirement that the ground of individuation must be such that it is categorially impossible for two objects to share it is much too strong. Moreover, it cannot even be satisfied by bare particulars. Consider the following question: "Why cannot a bare particular be a constituent of more than one ordinary thing?" Bergmann and Hausman reply by maintaining that the state of affairs depicted by an expression that would assert that two ordinary things contain the same particular would be categorially impossible. They would say that in their IL the same particular being in more than one ordinary thing would have to be represented by an ill-formed expression and so could not depict a possible state of affairs. This answer will not suffice, for they cannot claim with regard to any expression about an ordinary thing that it is ill-formed since in their IL there are no ordinary things. There are signs for particulars, qualities, facts, etc., but there are no signs or sequences of signs that represent ordinary things. For, that in the analysis which corresponds to a temporal cross-section of an ordinary thing is not itself a thing but a fact. The point is, since Bergmann and Hausman explicate the notion of categorial impossibility in terms of ill-formedness of expression in the IL, and since they have no expression in the IL to represent an ordinary thing, they cannot maintain that it is categorially impossible for either a particular to be in more than one thing, or for a particular

to be in one and only one thing. They cannot show that any expression about ordinary things is ill-formed or well-formed since on their analysis there are no ordinary things.

A critic may think that the above argument may be undermined simply by noting that some unusual expressions for ordinary things are to be found in any philosopher's formal language, including Bergmann's. This reply, however, misses my point. I said that the claim that "a bare particular cannot be a constituent of more than one ordinary thing" cannot be a categorial truth. My reason is that while there is just about everything else in Bergmann's ontology there are no ordinary things. Thus I cannot see how either the statement "a bare particular cannot be in more than one ordinary thing" or its converse "more than one ordinary thing cannot contain one bare particular" can be a categorial truth. How can there be a categorial truth about something that does not belong to any category?

My rhetorical question and the argument preceding it leaves my critic unimpressed. For he observes that my argument is unsound because it rests on the claim that the syntax of Bergmann's IL must contain expressions for ordinary things, and not expressions which could serve as the explication of expressions for ordinary things. This reply gives rise to several questions that lead us once again to the point at issue: First, what are the expressions in the Bergmann-Hausman IL that serve as the explication of expressions for ordinary things? Second, what is their explanation of categorial impossibility? Third, can they establish that it is categorially impossible for a bare particular to be a constituent of more than one ordinary thing? In what follows I shall show that their answers to the first and second questions do not allow for an affirmative answer to the third.

Recall, on Bergmann's essay, a temporal cross-section of an ordinary thing, say, a red round ball, is identical with the fact that a bare particular exemplifies the universals red and round. Hence, in answer to the first question we can infer that expressions in the IL which represent facts serve as the explication of expressions which represent ordinary things in ordinary language. Turning to the second question, the quotations on pages 481 and 482 show that Bergmann and Hausman are not entirely clear in their explanations of categorial impossibility. All they tell us is that the formation rules determine what is impossible, or possible.. Let us initially assume that formation rules and categorical truths are purely syntactical notions. Then the argument against bare particulars providing a categorial ground of individuation would go as follows. Suppose Bergmann and Hausman introduce in the IL a device for representing ordinary things. Suppose, for example, they represent two molecular facts that are (temporal) cross-sections of two different ordinary things in the following way:

$$[f_1(a) \& f_2(a)]$$
 and $[f_3(b) \& f_4(b)]$.

According to their interpretation ' f_1 ', ' f_2 ', and so on, refer to different simple properties; each occurrence of 'a' refers to one bare particular, and each occurrence of 'b' refers to one other bare particular. Furthermore, in their IL both expressions are well-formed. But notice, that even if we change the interpretation rules so that 'a' and 'b' refer to the same entity (particular) the expression will remain well-formed. For the interpretation rules are independent of the well-formedness of an expression. It follows that we could represent a bare particular being a constituent of two (cross-sections of two) ordinary things by a well-formed expression. Hence, even if Bergmann and Hausman do represent ordinary things in their IL the ground of one thing being diverse from another would not be categorial.

A critic might respond to this argument by claiming that it rests on my failure to see that individual constants are to be interpreted syncategorematically. To see what is involved in this objection we must first determine what is meant by the term 'syncategorematic.' One meaning of 'syncategorematic' is explicated by Bergmann (cf. [3]). Consider the well-formed sentence (sequence of signs) $f_{i}(a)$. In that expression, f_1 names a property, 'a' names an individual, and the juxtaposition (spatial arrangement) of the individual and property sign show that the individual exemplifies the property. Exemplification is thought of as a syncategorematic entity because there is no primitive sign that names it. More generally, to interpret something syncategorematically is to deny that it has a name in the language, and to assert that the syntax (geometrical arrangement of the signs) of the language shows that is is a feature of reality. To connect this notion of 'syncategorematic' with the critic's objection, it might be argued that the syncategorematic interpretation of individual constants is such that the occurrence of two primitive individual constant signs shows that there are two particulars represented. Thus, it would be categorially impossible for 'a' and 'b' in $f_1(a)$ and $f_1(b)$ to represent the same particular. Similarly, if there are two (cross-sections of) ordinary things whose analysis yields $[f_1(a) \& f_2(a)]$ and $[f_3(b) \& f_4(b)]$, then, assuming the syncategorematic interpretation of individual constants, it would be categorially impossible for the same bare particular to be in both ordinary things.

However, if 'categorial impossibility' is explicated in terms of syntax alone then I do not think that either of the two conclusions just drawn is true. For the fact that there are two different primitive signs does not show that there are two different particulars represented

unless we decide to interpret each individual constant as representing a different particular. That is, we must distinguish two senses of the word 'primitive.' A sign is syntactically primitive if and only if it is undefined in the language. A sign is semantically primitive if and only if it refers to only one entity, and no other sign refers to the same entity. Given this distinction, we cannot infer that in $f_1(a)$ and $f_2(b)$, 'a' and 'b' refer to different particulars because 'a' and 'b' are "primitive signs." For 'a' and 'b' may be syntactically primitive and yet semantically refer to the same particular. To assert that 'a' and 'b' must refer to different particulars is to make a claim about the semantical features of the language; it is not to make a claim about its syntactical features. Thus, if categorial impossibility is explicated in terms of syntax alone, then it is not categorially impossible for two primitive individual constants to refer to the same entity.

There is another related sense in which the signs for bare particulars may be said to be syncategorematic. Consider a universe consisting of one green spot and one red spot which have the same size and shape. The possible descriptions of this universe are the following:

Proposition 1:
$$[f_1(a) \& f_3(a)]$$
 and $[f_2(b) \& f_3(b)]$
Proposition 2: $[f_1(b) \& f_3(b)]$ and $[f_2(a) \& f_3(a)]$

The critic notes that by a synthetic a priori law, the conjunction of the two propositions is false. However, he says that it does not matter whether we say that Proposition 1 is true and the other false or that Proposition 2 is true and the other false. In other words, signs for bare particulars are syncategorematic. That is, 'a' and 'b' do not denote any specific bare particular; they merely signify that there are two bare particulars involved and that while each sign stands for one of them, it can stand for either of them. Because of the syncategorematic character of signs for particulars it follows, according to the critic, that it is categorially impossible for the Bergmann-Hausman IL to have expressions which purport to represent the same bare particular in two ordinary things.

The critic's argument is invalid, but it is interesting because it lends support to my thesis that we cannot reject the positional qualities because they do not ground individuation as deeply as bare particulars. The argument is invalid because the syncategorematic interpretation of signs for bare particulars requires the use of interpretation rules. It is true that these rules are nonspecific, i.e., 'a' and 'b' do not denote any specific entity, but rather some entity or another from the class of particulars. But even the use of nonspecific interpretation rules would preclude the ground of individuation being categorial (i.e., syntactical). Furthermore, the argument is invalid because the syncategorematic interpretation does not eliminate expressions purporting to represent the same particular in two things. For, assuming Propositions 1 and 2 are true, and assuming the syncategorematic interpretation of 'a' and 'b', we still have two well-formed expressions. Thus, even on the syncategorematic interpretation of individual constants a single bare particular being "in" more than one ordinary thing is not categorially impossible.

This observation leads us back to our original question: "Why cannot a bare particular be "in" more than one ordinary thing?" Or, to put the question in terms of our possible universe: "Why cannot Proposition 1 and Proposition 2 both be true representations of a universe consisting of two spots?" The critic supplies us with the answer for he says that by a synthetic a priori law, the conjunction of the two propositions is false. That is, it is impossible 3 for a particular to be in two ordinary things. But then, positional qualities cannot be rejected as individuators because they do not ground individuality as deeply as is required. For they ground individuality in a sense as fundamental as the sense in which particulars do, namely, in the laws of the synthetic a priori.

The preceding arguments have assumed that categorial impossibility is to be explicated in terms of formation rules and that the latter are purely syntactical. Perhaps this assumption is mistaken and we ought to include both semantical (interpretation) and syntactical rules in the notion of well-formedness. In other words, suppose the formation rules are to include the rule that syntactically primitive individual constants are also semantically primitive, i.e., each differently shaped individual constant sign refers to a different bare particular. Can this richer notion of formation rules enable Bergmann and Hausman to ground individuation as deeply as they require? I do not think so and in what follows I shall offer a new argument to show that particulars cannot provide a categorial ground of individuation.

Consider two sequences of signs representing a bare particular being a constituent of two ordinary things:

$$[f_1(a) \& f_2(a)]$$
 and $[f_3(a) \& f_4(a)]$

Bergmann and Hausman would have us believe that it is impossible for these expressions to represent a single particular in two things. In some sense of "impossible" they are right, but what is at issue is the sense of "impossibility" involved. They would say that if there are really two ordinary things then there (categorially) must be two different bare particulars. Clearly, if one identifies ordinary individual

things with bare particulars then it is categorially impossible for one particular to be in two things because the above sign sequences cannot represent two things. 5 However, for Bergmann and Hausman such an argument is not available because they identify ordinary things with facts and not with bare particulars. But then, it is hard to see why it would be categorially impossible for one particular to be in two things since we cannot understand how the formation rules could prevent it. That is, even the richer notion of formation rules cannot show that the above sequences are ill-formed or categorially impossible.6

Perhaps proponents of bare particulars could admit that particulars do not provide a categorial ground of individuation and still maintain that they provide a deeper ground than positional qualities. They might say that whereas it is only impossible, (false a priori) for one place to be in two ordinary things (at the same time), it is impossible, (logically impossible) for one particular to be in two ordinary things. The notion of logical impossibility is also syntactical. That is, we can syntactically distinguish a subset of well-formed formulas which, upon interpretation, become contradictions. But if we consider two sequences of signs representing two objects: $[f_1(a) \& f_2(a)]$ and $[f_1(a) \& f_2(a)]$, even though the same bare particular is in both sequences no formal contradiction ensues. One might claim that a contradiction would follow from a case in which a single particular was in two objects that have different qualities, e.g., $[f_1(a) \& f_2(a)]$ and $[f_3(a) \& f_4(a)]$. Then one could infer $[f_1(a) \& -f_1(a)]$. But notice that this would be a formal contradiction only if $(x)[f_3(x)]$ $\supset \sim f_1(x)$], which, assuming that f_1 and f_3 are simple properties, is a synthetic a priori truth. Thus, once again, if we return to the original question, "Why cannot a particular be "in" two ordinary things?" the strongest remaining answer is that it is impossible₃.

A final effort to show that bare particulars provide a deeper and dialectically more preferable solution to the individuation problem is based on the observation of the symmetry of expressions for ordinary things in the Bundle analysis and the asymmetry of expressions for ordinary things in the Bergmann-Hausman analysis. Ontologically, the asymmetry of expression for ordinary things in Bergmann's analysis shows that exemplification 'ties' entities of different ontological

⁵R. Grossmann is the only one I know of who identifies bare particulars with ordinary individual things ([9], pp. 104-107).

⁶This point can also be seen if we consider a representation of three things persisting through time: $[f_1(a_1) \& f_1(b_1)]$ and $[f_1(b_2) \& f_1(c_1)]$ and $[f_1(a_1) \& f_1(b_2)]$. Here we have 'a₁' and 'b₂' representing particulars which are constituents of two different ordinary things and there is nothing impossible, about it.

categories, and that the lower type (category)—the particular—exemplifies the higher type (category)—the universal. In the formalism the asymmetry is shown by the fact that, say, $f_1(a)$ is well formed, but $(a) f_t$ is not. Ontologically, the symmetry of expression for ordinary things in the Bundle theory shows that exemplification holds between entities of the same type, namely, universals. In the formalism the asymmetry is shown by the fact that the order of signs within the parenthesis makes no difference to the well-formedness of the expression. All this is true, but from it we can only infer that the bare particulars of the Bergmann-Hausman analysis and the positional qualities of the Bundle analysis belong to different ontological categories. In other words, the only conclusion that Bergmann and Hausman are entitled to infer from the symmetry of expressions in Bundle analysis and the asymmetry of expressions in their analysis is that bare particulars and positional qualities provide categorially different solutions to the problem of individuation. It does not follow that only bare particulars provide a categorial solution and it does not follow that bare particulars provide a deeper and dialectically more preferable solution than positional qualities. It only follows that they provide a different solution, but what is different is not necessarily preferable.

It might be argued, however, that if we compare the two views within a larger framework, then the bare particular view can be shown to be more preferable than the positional quality view. For instance, one might suggest that the bare particular view is superior in that by not individuating by means of spatial positions it can allow that in some change of position the very same individual really just changes position, and is not destroyed and replaced at another position with another individual very similar to it. Unfortunately, a Bergmannian cannot gain support for bare particulars from this "fact" because according to Bergmann, there are no continuants, i.e., individuals that remain literally the same through change ([4]). Hence, for Bergmann, as well as for the view he is attacking, the very same individual never changes its spatial position.

There is another context in which it has been argued that the bare particular view is superior to the positional quality view. The context is acquaintance and the argument is Bergmann's:

The dialectic is one thing. Phenomenology is quite another. I have never been acquainted with a coordinate quality. Nor, for what they tell us, have many others. We have once more reached the point at which direct argument ends ([2], p. 56).

Bergmann accepts the principle of acquaintance. This principle reflects

the idea that the simple elements of an ontology must be entities with which we are acquainted. Since, according to Bergmann, bare particulars do, and coordinate qualities (i.e., positional qualities) do not satisfy this requirement, the former are superior to the latter.

Arguments from acquaintance are difficult at best. 7 Goodman even gives an argument that we are acquainted with positional qualities:

. . . to say a concretum is located at the center of the visual field is quite as positive as to say that is has a certain red color; arbitrary referents are no more needed in the former case than in the latter. It is true that while we have a number of different color names we have a few non-relative terms for spatial position. But this is largely because the phenomenal positions of ordinary things change so rapidly and so continually that we are seldom practically concerned with other than relative objective location ([6], p. 196).

Goodman, like Russell, is maintaining that location in the visual field is as positive a visual quality as, say, the color green. And it does seem that given a succession of phenomena, one can recognize that a patch is in the same part of the visual field as a previous one just as one can recognize that it is the same color as the previous one. Hence, an appeal to acquaintance cannot be used to establish the superiority of the bare particular view.

Within the frameworks considered, Bergmann and Hausman have not established that the bare particular solution to the problem of individuation is either dialectically more profound or epistemologically more preferable than the positional quality solution. I conclude, therefore, that they have not proved that particulars are necessary and that positional qualities are insufficient for individuation.8

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⁷Compare, for example, the discussion between Clatterbaugh and Allaire, with the former arguing that we are not acquainted with bare particulars, and the latter arguing that we are acquainted with them ([6], [1]).

⁸In fairness to Bergmann it should be pointed out that his latest book contains other subtle and provocative arguments against Goodman's view and for bare particulars ([2]). A discussion of them is, however, beyond the scope of this paper.

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