

Artefacts, Non-Particulars and Model Particulars¹

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Abstract: The paper comments and elaborates upon five pages of P. F. Strawson's *Individuals* (1959, 230 – 234), together with his 'Entity and Identity' and 'Universals'. The focus is on Strawson's understanding of individual non-particulars as types or universals, and on his contention that the most obvious non-particular entities ('well-entrenched non-particulars') are the broadly conceived artefacts including the works of art. The narrow focus is on the implications of Strawson's suggestion that 'an appropriate model for non-particulars of these kinds is that of a *model particular*—a kind of prototype, or ideal example, itself particular, which serves as a rule or standard for the production of others' (1959, 233). The paper analyzes the relation between Strawson's position and the issue of artefacts and their (largely missing) ontology. It also asks about some less obvious affinities between the problem of the non-particulars (and their entrenchment) and Strawson's concept of a person.

Keywords: P.F. Strawson, non-particulars, model particulars, artefacts, persons.

The following pages strive at disentangling some intricacies proper to the last chapter of P. F. Strawson's *Individuals*. Specifically, they focus on this chapter's second part (1959, 230 – 234), which meets the challenge of nominalism about non-particulars, viz. the nominalist reluctance 'to admit non-particulars as individuals, as logical subjects' (1959, 230). To narrow the scope of my contribution even further, I will deal less with

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logical subjects *per se* than with the surprisingly fuzzy category of objects that can be taken for, broadly speaking, artefacts. The prominence of the latter is perhaps the most apparent feature of these less than four pages of Strawson's text. Still they enter it inconspicuously, through a series of examples that are meant to illustrate the non-particulars' better or worse entrenchment. Here the artefacts are listed among the simplest and most transparent cases of good entrenchment. Yet, I am afraid, they soon risk to swallow the more general argument they were originally meant to illustrate, and thus to infect much of the fabric of *Individuals*. My contribution sets to describe and evaluate this risk.

A second and last preliminary remark is in order: Strawson's artefactual examples and considerations connect to his introduction of certain types, labelled 'model particulars', that are not particulars but broadly conceived individuals susceptible of multiple entrenchments (or, to use the apparently synonymous terms, exemplifications or instantiations). I will argue that while Strawson's focus is on entrenchment of non-particular 'models' in or by specific particulars, he proceeds in a way that opens the door to many non-particular entrenchments of some purely conceptual types (or, indeed, concepts) as well. Here some trouble with Strawson's argument may consist, first, in the fact that *Individuals* tend at moments to offer inventories of cases instead of neat definitions, and, second, in the presence, in our particular passage, of an almost casual Platonism, which is not definitional or *doctrinaire* in any sense of the word. Perhaps, by his treatment of model particulars and their entrenchment, Strawson meant to reflect, to a degree, some natural Platonism proper to our mental outfit: we are in the realm of *descriptive* metaphysics after all. Be that as it may, the difficulties of interpretation make it legitimate to evoke two essays where Strawson tackles the same problem: 'Entity and Identity' and 'Universals'.² Despite quoting some important statements from both *Individuals* and these essays *in extenso*, I assume the reader's familiarity with these texts. This is especially true of Strawson (1959, 226 – 227), where he explains afresh his attitude towards individuals and 'an endless variety of categories of individual other than particulars' (1959, 227). My worry, as I already said, is how, on Strawson's own account, this

² For Strawson's understanding of and critical attitude towards traditional Platonism compare Strawson (1997c, 80 – 84).

variety extends so as to include some types of artefacts, and what the implications of such an extension may be.

Let me first restate that Strawson's 'model particulars' are not sensibly identifiable particulars. In fact, model particulars are particulars *only* in virtue of analogy. In this respect, *Individuals* 230 - 234 revive the question of universals and particulars in the originally Platonic terms of models and the latter's exemplifications. While Strawson is constantly critical of traditional Platonism, in these pages, instead of rejecting Platonic terms altogether, he actually relaxes their definition and *extends* the scope of their original use. The resulting scheme tends to be explanatory of all non-particulars that can be conceived of as individuals *as far as* they can be taken for broadly analogical to some type or model particular.

Strawson's explicit reason for explaining the status of non-particulars in precisely this way is his willingness to oppose the reductionist programme that 'aims at replacing sentences involving reference to non-particulars by sentences involving quantification over particulars' (1959, 230 - 231). Such a programme, he contends, can never work for all types of non-particulars. The reason is that, in a nutshell, 'some kinds of non-particulars seem better entrenched as individuals than others' (1959, 231). It is at this point that Strawson starts to talk about 'being entrenched' or 'entrenchment'.³ Previously, while focusing on assertions (or denials) that concepts have instances, Strawson used the familiar idiom of 'being instantiated' (1959, 229). Now he prefers to employ a new one, without giving any explicit clue as to the nature of this lexical shift. I take it, however, that this shift marks, by and large, a new alertness to distinctions between kinds of objects and, by the same token, between particulars and universals; cf. Strawson (1959, 154).

In any case, whether 'entrenchment' is meant to unload the argument of some heavy Platonic connotations or not, the important thing is that the entrenchment of various non-particulars as individuals is a matter of degree. The introduction of the concept of 'model particular' helps us to understand why certain non-particulars happen to be well entrenched precisely and only in so far as they are *made* to be like (or resemble) their model. In order to guess whether this scheme affects all our thoughts

³ Strawson (1959, 231) marks the very first occurrence of the term. The fact that Strawson offers no general criteria of being well-entrenched was noted in Williams (1973, 117 - 118).

about non-particulars, and whether it even has some drawbacks for our conception of what *individuals* are in the first place, we need to quote Strawson's examples and his evaluation of how poorly or well entrenched they are:

Qualities (e.g. bravery), relations (e.g. fatherhood), states (e.g. anger), even species (e.g. man) seem relatively poorly entrenched. Sentence-types and word-types seem well-entrenched. So do numbers. So do various other kinds of things to which the general title of 'types', often, though rather waveringly, confined to words and sentences, may well be extended. I have in mind, for example, works of art, such as musical and literary compositions, and even, in a certain sense, paintings and works of sculpture; makes of thing, e.g. makes of motor-car, such as the 1957 Cadillac, of which there are many particular instances but which is itself a non-particular; and more generally other things of which the instances are made or produced to a certain design, and which, or some of which, bear what one is strongly inclined to call a proper name, e.g. flags such as the Union Jack (1959, 231; I omit a long footnote on the works of art to which I will return below).

To this Strawson adds that fairly well entrenched as individuals are also non-particulars of a very different kind, namely propositions. I hope to be able to leave propositions aside since if we admit that they are non-particulars entrenched as individuals, and also suppose that our perception and imagination are propositional, then we would probably have to go back to the issue of how to identify *particulars* in the first place (from the last chapter of *Individuals* we would then have to turn back to this book's opening pages). Also, I will leave aside the broad category (or a set of categories) of quite poorly entrenched non-particulars, such as qualities, relations, states, processes or activities. By contrast, I will briefly evoke the problems implied by Strawson's remark on the poor entrenchment of species (such as man).

In all, it is pretty obvious that we are dealing here with a version of traditional problem of universals. This impression is confirmed by two important later texts, 'Entity and Identity' and 'Universals', of which the latter connects to the age-old issue of Platonic or Aristotelian universals. Specifically, it reaches back to the question of how far are we willing to extend the category of well-entrenched non-particulars and whether it can (or should) include various natural events such as instantiations of laws of nature. Instead of struggling with this last problem, let me emphasize once again that Strawson is not outright hostile to Plato's positing of certain universals as proto-types for precisely those entities that

are *not* grasped as *natural* particulars or, in one way or another, as self-sustaining and *originally* mind-independent unities. In other words, it seems that Strawson is willing to borrow certain Platonic universals as a metaphysical anchor for a wide variety of non-particulars.

Still, it must be equally emphasized that his is a much less traditional position that it might appear. In fact, it seems to validate, at least for certain metaphysical contexts, precisely those features of original Platonism that the tradition, starting with Aristotle, has been disparaging as trivial and unworthy of a serious philosophical attention. I suspect that, in this respect, Strawson's previously quoted scale of variously well-entrenched non-particulars may point towards the issue of artefacts as that dimension of *descriptive* metaphysics which reflects the natural Platonism implied in human stance to the world at large. By consequence, it would be Strawson's treatment of artefacts that would, like in Plato's case, imply something *revisionary* to every academically trained reader. Now to make these rather cryptic remarks clearer, I submit to further inquiry the following two points:

- (1) that we may well be unable to properly conceive of non-particulars otherwise than by relating them to – broadly speaking artefacts or the latter's models or prototypes;
- (2) that we do this either directly in the case of the well-entrenched non-particulars such as plain artefacts and works of art, or indirectly in the case of many (although of course not all) poorly entrenched non-particulars.

It is obvious that these two points are impossible to establish analytically, either by some narrow conceptual means or by a patient scrutiny of our linguistic practice. Rather, they reflect the fact that just as most poets derive their fundamental imagery from nature, so philosophers and ordinary language speakers alike are unable to talk about natural individuals (including particulars) without evoking artefacts.⁴ While we do not believe that all individuals including particulars *are* artefacts (this would be madness), we are still inclined to project the artefactual model into our efforts at the generic explanation of particulars, and we tend to do so even there where we strongly and explicitly insist on the natural character of the entities under discussion (see, for instance, Darwin's explanation of the

⁴ This comparison was inspired by the analysis of poetic imagery in Fletcher (2004, 4).

natural species as *analogical* to domesticated breeds in the first chapter of *The Origin of Species*). At the same time, for centuries, artefacts have been tacitly located in an ontological (mostly Aristotelian) limbo, from which they have just started to emerge. Much recent effort went into speculation about their proper – or, fundamentally improper – ways of being and being thought. To this effort belongs the realization that artefacts are intriguing not just in their own right, but as implicit paradigms of our dealing with beings of all sorts, probably ourselves included (artefacts, obviously, are not to be confused with material entities or constituent bodies⁵).

To reread *Individuals* 230 – 234 from this point of view is then a good occasion to ask whether, at the end of the day, Strawson's understanding of well entrenched non-particulars may or not confirm the importance of his notion of a 'model particular' for our most general attitude to individuals. Seen in this light, the previously quoted passage implies not only that those non-particulars that can be conceived of as individuals are *more or less* well entrenched, but also that they include in their range items that, although related to some model particular, are identified by content that is obviously difficult to subsume under any sortal term (movies but also novels, poems and many paintings tend to move in this direction). Still Strawson is willing to defend his approach by explicitly justifying the extension of the title of 'types' to yet 'other cases of *psychologically* well-entrenched non-particulars':

It would be satisfactory, from the point of view of the theory of previous chapters, if the items concerned should satisfy more than the minimum conditions of analogy with particulars. The analogy, in the case of such things as musical compositions, motor-car types, flag types, etc. is in fact peculiarly rich. Indeed one might say that an appropriate model for non-particulars of these kinds is that of a *model particular* – a kind of prototype, or ideal example, itself particular, which serves as a rule or standard for the production of others. The Platonic model for non-particulars in general – an ideal form of which the instances are more or less exact or imperfect copies – is, in these cases, an appropriate model, though it becomes absurdly inappropriate if generalized to cover non-particulars at large. The non-particulars here in question are all such that their instances are artefacts. But the concepts concerned are not just rather broadly functional, like those of other artefacts such as tables and beds. Rather, to produce an instance, one must conform more or

⁵ For this last point and other valid remarks concerning 'artefact-essentialism' and its limits see Denkel (1995). Still worth reading is Dennett (1990).

less closely to more or less exact specifications. Fully to describe a non-particular of this kind is to *specify* a particular, with a high degree of precision and internal elaboration. (1959, 232 – 233)

Strawson immediately warns his readers that ‘not all well-entrenched non-particulars exhibit this kind of relationship to particulars.’ Yet speaking of ‘particulars’ in this context, he still means ‘model particulars’, that is either ‘ideal’ things that invite imitation or reproduction, or the conceptual non-particulars that can be *conceived of as* particulars in virtue of analogy. So that some non-particulars do not have models: for instance numbers and propositions. Still, even in these cases, Strawson allows for *other analogies* between non-particulars and particulars: for instance, analogies of order, ones between more or less autonomous systems ordered in time and space. These analogies are of course built upon complex *logical* relations, not upon the relation of a more or less perfect likeness between two non-particulars of which the more perfect one serves as a special kind of particular (a type). It is this extension that applies to the entrenchment of those ‘types’ that philosophers are fond of, namely words, sentences, and propositions. By consequence, the latter can be grasped in two compatible ways:

The type-word can be thought of, on the one hand, as an *exemplar* for its own physical tokens (particulars), and, on the other hand, as a unit of meaning, a rule-governed member of a language system. (1959, 233 – 234)

This double perspective helps Strawson to insist that particulars are far from being the only logical subjects, yet that making many non-particulars into logical subjects need not lead to Platonism. Thus both radical Platonism and radical nominalism be better avoided. Thirty years later, Strawson will say that

Plato, though right to place universals outside nature, was wrong to seek even a suggestive analogy in nature—for example, copy and original, production-line model and prototype—for the relation of exemplification. The relation of exemplification is not a natural relation and can have no natural analogues. (1997b, 59 – 60)

To which he adds that Aristotle ‘was right to reject the analogy, but wrong to try, if he did try, to locate universals in nature’ (1997b, 59 – 60).

Now the truth is that, despite what you may have learnt in school, Aristotle’s locating of universals ‘in nature’ is far from an unequivocal step since on *his* conception universals may well be immanent to things

yet still they have no direct efficient authority over natural motion, thus over constitution of sensible particulars. This lack of a direct causal power over natural motion presents us with some serious puzzles because it is such a power that *defines*, for Aristotle himself, what it is to be a nature. On Aristotle's own account, his universals are in an important (causal) sense less 'natural' than those of Plato: the latter are not *in nature* yet some of them are explicitly posited as causes of natural processes (but not of the spontaneous generic constitution of kinds of things: the origin of the latter is described by artefactual metaphors only).⁶

More importantly, and this remark goes beyond a purely historical pedantry, we could defend Plato on the grounds that not only he posits universals as separate from nature, but he strongly implies that the former are needed to account for how nature (an ordered universe where particularity and perception can occur at all) came to be in the first place. Platonic 'nature' is not a natural instance but a *product* of exemplification. A striking consequence of this reversal is that there are no natural analogues of exemplification (here Plato would in fact agree with Strawson), but many artefactual analogies that are explanatory of various ways in which we grasp non-particulars.

Now Strawson himself is not averse to using such analogies while introducing the notion of 'model particular'. He certainly issues a warning that this notion would be 'absurdly inappropriate if generalized to cover non-particulars at large', yet one can still ask whether the extension of the *analogy* with particulars to those non-particulars that have no models, can make sense of the latter otherwise than by conceiving of them as somehow artificial structures or parts of artificial structures.⁷ In other

⁶ For a fresh attempt at rethinking nature and artefacts in Aristotle see Kelsey (2003).

⁷ Concerning the previously quoted passage from *Individuals*, we are entitled to ask why not consider numbers, just as words, as parts of complex types, namely equations that would be broadly analogous to propositions. Not only numbers themselves can be taken for types of species-independent quantities, but they easily enter equations as structures that seem to be perfect blueprints or model particulars for 'producing instances' – how else could we, to give the most obvious example, build a bridge or construct an airplane? It is in pretty much the same way that we construe propositions out of words and Strawson himself introduces the former as types beloved of philosophers. After all, to make one more analogical step, items as beds and tables (Plato's and Strawson's trivial examples of well-entrenched non-particulars) become parts of plans at furnishing rooms: the non-particular ensemble of 'bed *and* table' is as well-entrenched as bed and table taken separately.

words, one can wonder whether Strawson, while retaining a rather Aristotelian notion a (sensible) particular, does not incline, in his descriptive exercise, to a more Platonic metaphysical framework.

There seems to be no easy solution to these puzzles, also because Strawson refrains from imposing some narrow typological strictures on non-particulars. In fact, the very label of 'non-particulars' indicates that no such strictures are naturally available, so that the following problem is still with us: if we are able to conceive of great many non-particulars through *analogy* to model particulars, and if a 'model particular' is a conceptual non-particular turned to a particular model in virtue of its relation to perceptible non-particulars, does this explanatory notion of a 'model particular' have some implications for particulars at large? In other words, if we use a given non-particular entity as explanatory of some sensible non-particulars, under what description does this entity turn out as a more or less specific 'model particular'? (Here I take it that Strawson's use of 'particular' in 'model particular' is not a case of pure homonymy, but of a restricted homonymy based on certain shared functions; this should become clearer as we go along.)

For the elements of Strawson's own answer we have to turn to his 1976 essay 'Entity and Identity', which revives the issue and tries to address some worries of precisely this kind; thus it confirms, I trust, that they are more than just a theoretical quibble.

'Entity and Identity' sets to discuss the possible meanings of the apparently well sounding slogan 'no entity without identity'. For our present purpose it should be noted that, in 'Entity and Identity', instead of 'types', Strawson speaks about 'individuating concepts', but the issue is the same: if the field of non-particulars defies any simple classification, but its various instances can be described *as analogical to* (after all) artefacts, are there some possible drawbacks of this situation that would befall the category of particulars?

At the first sight, it might seem strenuous to connect this worry to Strawson's most memorable examples of entities whose identity is in question: the example of a load, a cargo or a consignment that follows its zigzag sort of a path through time and space, and the example of a random camera pan that goes on for about half an hour (1997a, 31). Once we take a closer look at the first example, the connection starts to emerge.

Particular loads or cargoes are endowed with histories in time and space, yet they are difficult to acknowledge as particulars insofar as it

seems impossible to recognize 'a certain general *pattern* or *form*' such that all loads or cargoes would conform to it as their common feature. To say that they are precisely what travels in time and space is obviously insufficient. Which also means that, on their way from port to port, from ship to ship, loads and cargoes can't be grasped as non-particulars related to some model particular. So that, on Strawson's account, they are only describable as a sort of second-order particulars. They are describable in a way parasitic upon more primitive particulars, thus as 'derivative sortals'.

I take it that, in conformity to Strawson's *Individuals*, these derivative sortals should still be broadly *analogical* to primitive particulars rather than derived from these by some other logical means. At the very same time, however, aren't these derivative sortals well-entrenched instances of timetables and charts that are established by a shipping company? After all, they don't decide about their trajectory, but still they are not just drifting through time and space. If then Strawson rightly concludes that their nature is conform to 'more sophisticated concepts of particulars on the basis of more primitive ones', it is perfectly clear that they are also different from how other primitive entities, namely persons, move through time and space. Sailors are not cargoes, although people *can* be – yet probably not *as* persons. So that, already at this point, the slogan 'no entity without identity' seems to point towards agency as the central issue behind identity (and naturalness too), and thus to a complementary slogan according to which there is no identity without *agency*.

Strawson does not turn into this direction. Instead, he offers his second example that delves deeper into the opposite direction of no agency and, at least apparently, no identity. This example, or rather a situation under description, implies a question of how sophisticated can concepts of particulars ultimately become without precluding particulars from continuing to be intuitively distinguishable from non-particulars. Is the simultaneous lack of *both* a type *and* any corresponding sortal term enough for being subsumed under a more sophisticated, much less intuitive concept of particular?

The second example has the form of a thought-experiment; it is clearly not unlike some works of the conceptual art:

Suppose we made a camera pan more or less at random for half an hour through the streets and countryside, and then declared that there was an individual object, lasting half an hour, composed, at any moment, of all and only what, at that moment, was being photographed, taken to a certain speci-

fied depth below the visible surface. Given suitable care in the manipulation of the camera, this object would be a spatio-temporally continuous individual with a striking enough history of development; for it would keep on gaining and losing parts. There could perhaps be other techniques for defining similarly arbitrary individuals, the common aim of all such techniques being that of detaching the idea of a spatio-temporally continuous individual (hence, *a fortiori*, a particular) from that of a covering sortal of any kind. Such individual particulars would resemble waves, or short-lived shifting sandbanks, in their successive occupation of different and overlapping parts of space and their steady loss and compensating gain of parts; but would be covered by no such familiar sortal as waves or sifting sandbanks. (1997a, 31 – 32)

First of all, the shift from the recorded streets and countryside to the waves (where the latter are used as a clarifying *comparandum*) seems problematic in that the waves are characterized by the lack of any intention, whereas the visual record, no matter how random we want it to be, is plainly an artefact. In the same line of thought, one could quite naturally ask about the status of a simple *memory* of a walk we took in exactly the same space and time as those put on record. There is obviously no familiar sortal for such a stretch of memory either, yet memory of this kind is not an artefactual entity in the same sense as visual record of the same external objects and situations. Also, it seems quite easy to make one further step in order to pass from the memory to the status of persons, the latter being hardly conceivable without any admission of the former.

Before I take myself a similar tentative step, I wish to stress that Strawson introduces the example of a random visual sequence in order to maintain that even entities utterly alien to sortal terms, thus the most arbitrary individuals, *cannot* possibly be manipulated so as to undermine his main assertion that '[f]or any (primary) particular there must be such a pattern or form which is sufficient to yield a principle of identification for all particulars that exemplify it' (1997a, 30). The obvious possibility to use the originally random (yet intentionally recorded) sequence as a model to be remade any number of times and thus transformed into a primary particular of sorts (I may intend to sell it to several conceptual art dealers; or I may simply develop the procedure as my signature artistic technique⁸), is not considered relevant to this ontological statement

⁸ Cf. Sherrie Levine's photographic appropriations from the late seventieth to early eightieth, generally taken to problematize the notion of (photographic) reference.

and Strawson is apparently not bothered by its implications.⁹ Instead, he adds that his argument might appear as a theoretical assertion without any *practical* content – and still we are entitled to ask ‘what kinds of concepts of forms must be evolved if there is ever to be the practical possibility of identifying particulars as we do’ (1997a, 30).

This addition may be slightly enigmatic, yet the strong emphasis on the unity of form reminds us that the latter is often used as a criterion of identity of, precisely, *artefacts*. In this respect, Strawson’s description of the recorded sequence as that which ‘would keep on gaining and losing parts’ evokes the Ship of Theseus puzzle, one raised repeatedly in ancient times and discussed with a new verve by modern philosophers ranging from Thomas Hobbes to David Wiggins and others; see, for instance Lowe (1983).

Also, there seems to be a significant affinity between the problem of identity criteria for artefacts and Strawson’s recognition of some problems that pertain to the metaphysics of the so-called natural kinds. Here Strawson offers no attempt at formal definition of the latter; instead, he paraphrases them as ‘*kinds found in nature*’ and submits that some general criteria for establishing natural kinds such as chemical substances or animal-kinds can only follow from systematic expert taxonomies (his examples are mostly of the Linnaean type, see 1997a, 26 – 27). Otherwise, that is without a scientific enquiry, we can only have general criteria of identity for particular things that belong to kinds, but *not* for these kinds themselves.¹⁰ To which should be added that, portrayed by Strawson through their relevance for progress of our knowledge of the world, these scientific enquiries are basically analyses of how various kinds of things came to be and how they continue to come to be. When Strawson concludes that general criteria of identity follow from the historical shift from natural history to natural science, he basically points out the difference between two types

⁹ Strawson (1997a) gives no clue concerning the possible (even if very loose) inspiration of the camera pan example by some actual experimental films from the sixties and seventies. The work of Michael Snow in the period between *Wavelength* (1967) and *La Région centrale* (1971, described by the critic J. Hoberman as a ‘pure epic of camera movement’) would be the best point of reference. In trying to summarize what *Individuals* have to say about the works of art, I will have to leave this intriguing parallel aside.

¹⁰ This does not exclude that Strawson takes the non-scientific kinds for sortal concepts. Cf. Mackie (2006, 120) and her references to Strawson and others. Rather than natural kinds, these concepts could perhaps be labelled ‘kind-ofs’ (or very relaxed designators).

of causal stories. And it is natural *science* rather than the old-fashioned natural *history* that inclines on many an occasion, for the sake of a clear presentation, to conceive of natural kinds – biological species included – as generically different from, yet *analogical to*, artefacts.¹¹

True (scientifically determined) natural kinds are thus not artefacts and the terms that correspond to them possess a specific degree of rigidity.¹² The recognition that the latter are often used as analogues of the former need not blur this distinction, but it certainly makes us even more alert to the independent fact that various forms of artefactuality keep intruding at almost every level of our dealing with the issue of how both particulars and non-particulars relate (or do not relate) to model particulars, types, forms, individuating concepts, blueprints, and so on. In this respect, and more generally, the popular, psychologically compelling notion that artefacts are inanimate objects, whereas the natural kinds are most often or most typically exemplified by living organisms must not mislead us. This is certainly not a valid distinction since many natural kinds are exemplified by inorganic structures whereas many living beings are, generically speaking, artefacts: take roses or dogs (if we take for artefacts those structures whose causal stories imply some strong human intervention, then most of our environment and many parts of ourselves are plainly artefactual¹³). Besides, situations created by scientific experimentation are artefactual. And if taxonomic framework is a prerequisite

¹¹ Most readers will be immediately reminded of Gould – Lewontin (1979); in this case, the *comparans* is indeed a complex work of art. Dawkins (1986) is another recent example. I leave aside the fact that the very concept of a natural kind may reflect philosophy's continuing attachment to natural history rather than contemporary science. In other words, this concept seems indebted to both the Aristotelian metaphysics and the earlier modern biological conception of species (rather than, say, the population genetics). Not to be quite unfair, I admit that biologists and philosophers of (developmental) biology continue to discuss the ontological status of concepts such as 'species'. For a good overview see, for instance, Kitcher (2005).

¹² For more on this issue and the distinction between natural kinds and artefacts, but also general terms like 'games', 'jokes' or 'tale', see Schwartz (1980), with a polemical reaction by Putnam (1982). For a more thorough inquiry into artefacts and natural kinds see Grandy (2007) and Thomasson (2007). For an intriguing account of conceptualization of artefacts and natural kinds in children see Keil – Greif – Kerner (2007).

¹³ These causal stories are not to be simply confused with the above-mentioned Darwin's explanatory analogy between natural and artificial selections. See, among others, Evans (1984), Cornell (1984), Rheinberger (1984).

for such experiments, it still need not specify, in some clean-cut non-pragmatic way, criteria of identity for natural kinds.

If so, there is perhaps a *more general truth* to the statement Strawson makes about the works of art, of which he says that, unless art history and literary history follow the path of natural science, which he takes for unlikely, 'there will never be general criteria of identity for literary or architectural styles' (1997a, 27). At the same time, this claim is not meant to invalidate the previously encountered suggestion from *Individuals*, namely that the works of art and other *types* of artefacts are well-entrenched non-particulars.¹⁴ This need not mean that we can rely on some well-defined, both conceptually and historically stable category of 'work of art', and Strawson himself inserts here a precautionary footnote whereby he acknowledges that to take paintings and sculptures for non-particulars may appear absurd since they are plainly (sensible) particulars. Against this objection, he insists that they only are particulars in a rather superficial sense, namely as those empirical units that are sold, bought, moved around by art dealers. But, he adds,

it is only because of the empirical deficiencies of reproductive techniques that we identify these [sc. paintings or sculptures as particulars] with the works of art. Were it not for these deficiencies, the original of a painting would have only the interest which belongs to the original manuscript of a poem. Different people could look at exactly the same painting in different places at the same time, just as different people can listen to exactly the same quartet at different times in the same place. (1959, 231 n. 1)

No doubt this is puzzling on several accounts. Strawson's other considerations seem to imply that there are no general criteria of identity for the works of art although there are the empirical *genres* of the latter, and that *certain* of these genres are close to empirical types of which the non-particular works offer exemplifications (cf. the conclusion that 'the criterion of identity for compositions is their composition', 1997a, 49). In other words, there is a 'theory' or a 'history' of art, but there is no science of art. In much the same sense, there is no science of non-particular artefacts such as the camera pan through the streets and countryside. If so, and if a musical composition or a novel can be taken for a type entrenched in and by a series of its instantiations much more naturally than a painting, a sculp-

¹⁴ Cf. Strawson (1997a, 48 - 49) for further and more nuanced thoughts on this subject (without the talk about entrenchment).

ture or a photograph (see Lowe 1983, 231 – 232), then music or poetry belong to the same ontological category as, for instance, industrial blueprints, whereas paintings, sculptures, and also photographs appear, at first sight paradoxically, to be closer to personal memories – if only we acknowledge that the latter’s instantiations suffer specific ‘deficiencies’ and are never simply repetitions or, so to say, ‘re-experiences’ of the same.

How, then (and this is a more important though closely connected puzzle), are we to understand the talk about ‘empirical deficiencies of reproductive techniques’, and are there other non-particulars that suffer from similar situation or some analogical defects? Is it possible to reason as if we could get rid of the technical deficiencies, and then consider paintings not as particular artefacts, but as formulas for perception similar to compositions as formulas for performances? But then what about the status of the latter, and what about their recordings? Strawson’s expression ‘exactly the same quartet’ goes to the heart of the problem since, played again in the same concert hall by the same interpreters, no quartet is ever the same and no one seems to take this for a deficient feature of how the composition in music is being entrenched. The differences between individual performances are not (or not always) deficiencies, even if we naturally *value* one performance over the other.

In all, there seems to be no comparison between this situation and the one of a painting whose perfect reproductions would become, on Strawson’s account, that many originals without any corresponding type, more exactly without any relevant difference between a type and a token.¹⁵ At the same time, however, not only a repeatedly experienced painting, but also a reread poem or a musical quartet performed time and again throughout its episodic life as a particular artefact, appear *analogical* to non-particulars of an entirely different sort, namely to the series of recollections that compose *personal* memory.

Of course the analogy is limited and needs to be carefully specified, all the more so because of the primitiveness of the concept of a person in Strawson’s ontology. This concept is primitive in a sense that should differ from the primitiveness of the concept of a particular, yet this very difference opens the conceptual space for many questions about persons.

¹⁵ In this context, the issue of agency returns to the foreground: it is *this* maker’s irreducibly particular *work* that we are ready to appreciate or to buy for precisely this reason. Cf. Lowe (1983, 231).

First of all, in *Individuals*, Strawson characterizes the primitive concept of a person as

the concept of a type of entity such that *both* predicates ascribing states of consciousness *and* predicates ascribing corporeal characteristics, a physical situation &c. are equally applicable to a single individual of that single type.

(1959, 101 – 102)

Here the connection of primitiveness to a *type* accommodates the fact that a person is never simply empirical. Hence its difference from primitive ‘non-model’ particulars. At the same time, the connection of the concept of a person to a ‘single type’ reinforces the impression that there is not (and perhaps that there *should not* be) any possible primitiveness concerning non-particulars including, for instance, purely disembodied consciousnesses (cf. 1959, 102 – 103).¹⁶

On its flip side, however, the person’s primitiveness of such a type seems to imply that it is precisely *as a type* that a person is connected to some non-particulars. Especially, I take it that this is true of *non-particular memories or recollections*. This, after all, is how we account for the person’s experience, at least if we take experience for something irreducible to a series of disconnected situations of which a person would be just one part. If so, we have a primitive single type that equals to (or at least includes) the concept of a person, but we also have non-particular memories or recollections that we ascribe to a person. By consequence, a person, irreducible to either a consciousness or a body, persists in time in a way that makes it an undisputed non-particular individual, yet an individual that, as a non-particular, seems rather poorly entrenched. Most often, we get over this poor entrenchment by taking persons for the only goal-oriented agents among all the individuals (in his chapter on ‘Sounds’, paraphrasing John Locke, Strawson confirms that, for him, ‘the idea of oneself as an agent forms a great part of the idea of oneself,’ indeed perhaps a *necessary* part; 1959b, 83). Even so, it is not always easy to take a person for a conscious *agent* of her or his own temporal continuity while making the latter rely on memories and recollections.¹⁷

¹⁶ This is not contradicted by the explicitly Kantian strain of Strawson’s contention that ‘there is no problem of the principle of unity, of identity, of the particular consciousness’ (1959, 133; cf. 134 on Kant and the analytic unity of consciousness).

¹⁷ Not in the least because memory, probably more than other dimensions of mental reality, obeys involuntary spontaneity (‘it remembers in me’ rather than ‘I remember’).

Given what Strawson says about types and non-particulars including works of art and other artefacts, it is tempting to submit that a person is an entrenched entity in virtue of analogy, in other words by always having, together with perceptions, recollections of *having been* an agent and a patient of various actions and situations. Such a memory based account of person or personhood does not preclude the suspicion that person has a *more or less* strong artificial dimension precisely *as far as* she or he creates and recreates her or his own identity as a personal identity through time. Strawson prefers to side-step this suspicion, and it is an open question to know how far he implicitly follows the path of John Locke, who does not hesitate to explain the unity of organism by reference to the unity of artefacts to which he simply adds the internal rather than external principle of motion (*Essay II, 27, 5*: a traditional Aristotelian step), then goes on to explain personal identity on the basis of consciousness and continuity between conscious states of the mind, but finally rephrases the criterion of personal identity in rather artefactual and quasi-juridical terms:

That with which the consciousness of this present thinking thing can join itself makes the same person, and is one self with it, and with nothing else; and so attributes to itself and owns all the actions of that thing as its own, as far as that consciousness reaches, and no father; as everyone who reflects will perceive. (*Essay, II, 27, 17*)

It is then everybody's guess how much this identity *formally* differs from that of the artefacts, which Locke proclaims to be clearer and less confused to us than natural things because artefacts do not 'depend upon contrivances beyond the reach of our discoveries' (*Essay, III, 6, 40*).¹⁸

All I wish to point out are possible analogies (not similarities) between the primitive concept of a person and the entrenchment of certain (but not all) non-particular artefacts. In both cases, there are no *general* criteria of identity, and in both cases we assume a complex identity

On this spontaneity see Strawson (2008b). I refrain from referring to various analyses of the notion of a person; the list would exceed the length of this paper.

¹⁸ Here I leave entirely aside Strawson's companion premise about persons, namely that 'One can ascribe states of consciousness to oneself only if one can ascribe them to others' (1959, 100), where 'others' are irreducible to states of consciousness but are the latter's possessors. To possess a theory of mind is thus a prerequisite for being properly conscious. The resulting scheme implies a complex spontaneity that is at work in some habitual constructions of bodies as persons. For possible problems with this view see Williams (1973, 121 - 126).

through time, an identity obviously distinct from the scientifically approved general identity of a species or a natural kind. To a degree, such an analogy fits in with Strawson's warning that the scheme of entrenchment whereby *certain* non-particulars such as a bed or a 1957 Cadillac instantiate a model particular (itself a non-particular) is absurd when extended to *all* non-particulars. I don't suggest such an *extension* to persons, but a tentative analogy that amounts to acknowledging that we are only able to grasp some mostly artificial entities as well-entrenched non-particulars because this is how, *formally speaking*, we ultimately grasp ourselves as beings with aims, goals and intentions.¹⁹ That such a *formal* grasp may not be simply natural to us is not a decisive objection. After all, neither is descriptive metaphysics.²⁰

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¹⁹ In a sense, this analogy reverses what Strawson says about the condition of grasping ourselves *as* persons in Strawson (1959, 100), 'a condition for the ascription of states of consciousness to oneself is ability to ascribe them to others' (see previous footnote). While conscious, we take others for well-entrenched (non-particular) instantiations of the type 'person'. On this view, and on Strawson's own criteria, persons are analogical to the art-creating agents manifested through their works of art; they are certainly not instances of any natural kind.

²⁰ Cf. Strawson (2008a, 174 - 175) on natural and language-influenced human reasoning about the object/properly relation.

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