

*The Analogical Argument for Universals*

Jan Dejnožka

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This paper explores Panayot Butchvarov's analogical argument for universals in *Skepticism and Ethics* (1989).<sup>1</sup> After stating counterexamples, I try to improve the argument in various ways. Then I discuss whether the argument is really intended to rely on a formula for fixing a classification based on sufficient analogy, or even to establish realism. I conclude that the argument works better to establish perfect particulars (often called tropes, or particular sensible qualities).

Butchvarov uses "property" and "universal" synonymously in *Skepticism and Ethics*;<sup>2</sup> but I shall use "property" in an ontologically neutral sense, so that I can speak ordinarily about properties without begging the question on universals.<sup>3</sup>

Butchvarov is an "entity if and only if identity" theorist. Thus specific identity would be the ground of specific universals for him. He says that specific identity is:

defensible only by arguing that it is more like the paradigmatic case of identity, that of [ordinary, pre-philosophical] individual identity,...than it is like anything else. And since it is the analogical notion of specific identity that grounds the notion of a specific universal, the latter is a notion of something that can be regarded as a single entity only analogically.

Now the notion of a generic universal is grounded in the notion of generic identity....Clearly, this notion is twice removed from the paradigmatic notion of identity, that of individual identity....But generic identity is still more like identity than like anything else. And the generic property is more like a single entity than like anything else; for example, it is much less like a mere collection of entities....(1989: 67)

This is Butchvarov's main statement of the argument (see also 1966: 170–71; 1989: 69–70, 75, 99–100).

I will be concerned with “defensible,” not “defensible only.” Many other arguments for universals have been given, and if Butchvarov is claiming they are all indefensible, I cannot review them all here.<sup>4</sup> The question for this paper, then, is only whether Butchvarov's argument is defensible at all. But here there is a main ambiguity on how to understand “defensibly.” So to speak, it concerns the *scope* of defensibility. Is Butchvarov concluding that traditional realism of universals is defensible, or merely that the classificatory proposal that properties be understood as universals in our conceptual framework is defensible? This almost Carnapian question has a quick *scholarly* answer—the latter interpretation is correct. But the *philosophical* question which conclusion would best suit the argument is not so easy. I shall defer a detailed discussion of this to the last three sections of the paper. In the earlier sections, the question does not matter to the discussion.

### *1. Initial Analysis of the Argument and of Formula R*

The quoted text may seem very difficult, even cryptic or obscure. But I think the basic idea is very plausible. Namely, if something is more like F's than it is like anything else, then it is defensibly an F. The two main assumptions of the argument are also very plausible, and are well-known views of Butchvarov. Namely, (1) ordinary individuals are paradigmatic entities, and (2) something is an entity if and only if it has an identity, i.e., is identifiable indefinitely many times. The argument, then, is this:

1. *Major premiss.* A property is a universal (a single entity that is or can be common to many things) if it is more like an ordinary individual (such as a tree or stone) than it is like anything else (in particular, more than it is like a name, a class, a set, or a heap of things), with respect to its identity.

2. *Minor premiss.* A property is more like an ordinary individual than it is like anything else,

with respect to its identity.

3. Therefore, a property is defensibly a universal.

While arguments by analogy are generally understood to be merely probable, I believe that many such arguments are in fact informally deductively valid. For example, the primary entities of many early modern philosophers are so much like Aristotle's substances, it is unthinkable that they could be anything but substances, even if they are not Aristotelian substances. Or a new shade of yellow may be so much like our paradigms of yellow that it too is paradigmatic. Here I merely invite the reader to keep an open mind on whether Butchvarov's argument is intended as merely probable.

On its face, the argument is not based on any special characteristic of specific identity or generic identity. But its major premiss is implied by a general thesis which I shall call Formula R:

**R.** x is (defensibly) an F if x resembles F's more than x resembles anything else (with respect to its identity).<sup>5</sup>

The form of the major premiss is R, the form of the minor premiss is the antecedent of R, and the form of the conclusion is the consequent of R. The antecedent is "x resembles F's more than x resembles anything else," and the consequent is "x is an F." R seems obviously, even trivially, true for any x and any F. How could anything not be (defensibly) an F, if it is more like F's than it is like anything else?

My counterexamples to Formula R are: (1) (The ethnic group of) Czechs resemble (the ethnic group of) Slovaks more than they resemble anything else, but are not (the ethnic group of) Slovaks. (2) Germans resemble Austrians more than they resemble anything else, but are not Austrians. (3) (The species of) humans resemble (the species of) chimpanzees more than they resemble anything else, but are not (the species of) chimpanzees. (4) many B+ school grades resemble an A more than anything else, but are not A's. And (5) God is more like the angels than He is like anything else, but God is not a

mere angel.<sup>6</sup> Nor do the parenthetical qualifiers help. It is not defensible that Czechs are Slovaks.

Humans are not best classified as chimpanzees.

It may be objected that it is inappropriate to give counterexamples to an argument by analogy, since such arguments are only intended to be probable.

## *2. Formula R-Necessary*

Can we improve Butchvarov's argument so as to avoid the counterexamples? Perhaps the resemblance condition in R is too loose and external, too contingent. If so, we can easily tighten it into a logically necessary one, or even an essential one. Formula R-Necessary is:

**R-Necessary.** x is an F if it is logically necessary or essential that x resemble F's more than x resembles anything else.<sup>7</sup>

This kills counterexamples (1)–(3). For example, while it happens that Czechs resemble Slovaks more than they resemble anything else, it is logically possible that an intermediate people exist whom Czechs resemble more. Counterexample (4) seems killed, since it is logically possible that B++ be a grade closer to an A than B+ is. We can rescue (4) by restating (4) relative to a limited grading framework within which (4) is logically true, but this seems to relativize an already trivial example.

Counterexample (5) is killed if it is logically possible that there are spiritual beings intermediate between God and the angels.<sup>8</sup>

But counterexamples to R-Necessary abound in mathematics.<sup>9</sup> There are many things which approach indefinitely closely to an asymptote, so that nothing logically or essentially can come closer to the asymptote than they do, but which logically and essentially cannot be the asymptote. In fact, asymptotes always provide counterexamples to R-Necessary, and therefore also to R. For by definition,

an asymptote logically and essentially cannot belong to the series of things which approach it.<sup>10</sup>

Counterexample (6) is this. Nothing logically or essentially can be closer to zero or mathematically function more like zero than the infinitely many infinitesimals which surround zero on the hyperreal number line (Keisler 1994),<sup>11</sup> but infinitesimals logically and essentially cannot be zero.<sup>12</sup> For zero is the asymptote which they approach.

In effect, nominalists and conceptualists treat ordinary individuals as asymptotes, i.e., as entities to which properties logically and essentially must approach through degrees of greater specificity without being entities themselves.<sup>13</sup>

But the heart of the problem is not the special nature of an infinitesimal or an asymptote. Counterexample (7) is that there is nothing a triangle can logically or essentially can come closer to being than a quadrilateral in the polygon series, yet a triangle is not, and logically and essentially cannot be, a quadrilateral. There are no three-and-a-half-sided figures in between quadrilaterals and triangles, nor are there any two-sided figures on the other side of triangles, in the series. Here we have a logically immutable series of items progressively but not indefinitely closely approaching an end member of the series, as opposed to indefinitely closely approaching an asymptote which is not a member of the series. The single end member of the polygon series is the triangle; there is no end member at the other end, but instead an asymptote, the circle.<sup>14</sup>

Counterexample (8) is that a merely member-defined set is logically and essentially more like a significantly property-defined class than it is like anything else (certainly it is in respect of being a group, since these are the only two logical kinds of groups), but it is logically and essentially not a significantly property-defined class. I exclude insignificant “disjunctive properties,” e.g., the property of being identical to member a or b or c. There is no asymptote or infinitesimal here either. At least, *member-defined set* is an end member of the series <member-defined set, property-defined class, property, universal in re, universal ante rem>; and no member of the series is an infinitesimal.<sup>15</sup>

One might object to counterexamples (6)–(8) that their success is relative to the degree of generality of F.<sup>16</sup> While an infinitesimal cannot be a zero, it must be a number. While a triangle cannot be a quadrilateral, it must be a figure. Indeed, it must be a polygon. And while a member-defined set cannot be a significantly property-defined class (it can only be *co-extensive* with such a class), it must be a logical group. By parity of reason, perhaps properties cannot be universals, but perhaps they must be entities, for example, perfect particulars or even class entities.

But the objection backfires. To say that the success or failure of Formula R or R-Necessary arguments is relative to degree of generality of F, or more simply, to choice of F, is to say that their success or failure depends on the truth or falsehood of which *instances* of the formulas we choose. And in the case of universals, this begs the question. That is, an R or R-Necessary argument for universals would be unreliable, since there would be no guarantee that its major premiss is not one of the *false* instances of the formula it relies on. I doubt we could show that it is even more likely than not that its major premiss is a true instance of the formula. Certainly it is not as clear that a property is an entity as it is that a triangle is a figure, even supposing it is logically necessary that properties are more like ordinary individuals than they are like anything else.

One might object that there are no degrees or (more or less general) kinds of zero, since zero is a single, individual number. And I am sympathetic to Frege's demand that numbers are not to be defined piecemeal, but are to be made logically determinate by fixing a determinate truth-value for every statement in which number-names can occur (Frege 1970: 159–72). But we can and do speak of different kinds of number: ordinal, cardinal, rational, real, imaginary, hyperreal. Relative to these different kinds of number, one may speak of different kinds of zero. And there are clearly different kinds of triangle—regular, isosceles, and scalene—as well as different logical kinds of groups. Thus counterexamples (7) and (8) survive the objection, even if counterexample (6) might not. But (6) survives as well. No infinitesimal is identical with the single, individual number zero, nor is any

infinitesimal any degree or kind of zero. But an infinitesimal is a number, just as a triangle is a figure.

Degree of generality of F, or more simply, choice of F, most directly concerns the applicability of the consequent of R, “x is an F.” But there is also relativity to respect of resemblance. Relativity to respect of resemblance concerns the applicability of the antecedent of R, “x resembles F’s more than x resembles anything else.” Similarly for R-Necessary or for any other R-formula.

The consequent of R is the form of the conclusion of the analogical argument. Increasing the degree of generality of F weakens the conclusion and strengthens the argument. Indeed, it can change the conclusion from necessarily false (“A triangle is a quadrilateral”) to necessarily true (“A triangle is a figure”). The antecedent of R is the form of the minor premiss of the analogical argument. (The form of the major premiss is R itself.) Relativity to respect of resemblance affects the antecedent of the argument. Relativity to respect of resemblance is logically more basic to the analogical argument than is degree of generality of F. For in any argument, we cannot infer the truth of the consequent from the truth of the antecedent, if the antecedent is not true in the first place.

Due to relativity to respect of resemblance, it seems impossible to show that the antecedent of any R-formula applies to any interesting x and F’s in a logically determinate manner. For if we change the respect of resemblance, we change the applicability of the antecedent. For example, B+++... logically must resemble C+++... more than it resembles A, with respect to being asymptotic to the next higher grade. The infinitesimal numbers logically must resemble a hyperreal polygon with infinitesimal sides more than they resemble zero, with respect to approaching indefinitely closely to an asymptote. (Such polygons approach the circle.) Even B+++... logically must resemble the infinitesimal numbers more than it resembles an A, in this respect!

Relativity of respect of resemblance does not depend on infinitesimals or asymptotes. Triangles logically and essentially must be more like quadrilaterals than like anything else, with respect to number of sides among polygons. But triangles logically and essentially must be more like tetrahedrons

than like anything else, with respect to having triangular flat surfaces. And triangles logically and essentially must be more like pentagons than like anything else, with respect to being polygons with an odd number of sides.

Thus even in the simplest, clearest examples from mathematics, there is no determinate answer to questions like, Are infinitesimals more like zero than they are like anything else? Are triangles more like quadrilaterals than they are like anything else? What hope then for universals?<sup>17</sup>

On this general level, it is hopeless to offer an R or R-Necessary argument for realism, or for conceptualism or for nominalism. The realist cannot simply argue that properties are necessarily more like ordinary individuals than they are like anything else, and are therefore entities. The nominalist cannot simply argue that properties are necessarily more like collections of ordinary individuals (or more like words) than they are like anything else, and are therefore collections (or words). The conceptualist cannot simply argue that properties are necessarily more like concepts or ideas than they are like anything else, and are therefore concepts or ideas. The realist can only argue that *in certain respects*, properties must be more like ordinary individuals than they are like anything else. The nominalist can only argue that *in certain respects*, properties must be more like collections (or words) than they are like anything else. The conceptualist can only argue that *in certain respects*, properties must be more like concepts or ideas than they are like anything else. The question devolves to assessing the respects, which are incommensurable.

Even if we could use the same respect of resemblance, there is no yardstick by which closeness can be measured here. Yardsticks are cardinal. Butchvarov's series of ostensible kinds of identity is ordinal: <individual identity, specific identity, generic identity, protometaphysical concept of identity>. We can say that specific identity is closer to individual identity than generic identity and the protometaphysical concept of identity are, with respect to genericness. But how close is that? With respect to genericness, is specific identity twice as close to individual identity as generic identity is?<sup>18</sup> Is

it three times closer to individual identity than the protometaphysical concept of identity is?

I agree with Butchvarov that some resemblances can be judged without appealing to respects of resemblance. In *Resemblance and Identity*, his examples are of simple specific universals.<sup>19</sup> In *Being Qua Being*, which distinguishes objects from entities, I think his examples can be either simple phenomenological objects qua objects such as hue-objects, or, in the domain of entities, the simple specific universals such hue-objects may *be*. Also among his ordinary individuals, I think we could truly say that automobiles are more like motorcycles than like bananas without specifying any respects of resemblance. That is not because they are simple entities but because their respects of resemblance are so many and so overwhelming, not to say categorial, that we need not enumerate them. But the cases we are discussing, about universals, numbers, figures, and so on, *are* subject to relativity to respects of resemblance, as my examples show. Thus it is irrelevant to my criticism of the analogical argument for universals that not every resemblance is relative to a respect. In fact, all interesting investigations into resemblances have the problem of relativity to respect of resemblance virtually by definition.

If the reason that nothing can be more like individual identity than universal identity is that there simply are no other categories to compare to ordinary individuals, then the argument by analogy has a bracketing problem. The problem is that we cannot significantly say that universal identity logically must be closer to individual identity than to anything else, if there logically can be nothing else. For then nothing logically can be *further* from individual identity either! The only safe way to argue that properties are universal entities by analogy to paradigm entities is to bracket properties *in between* at least two kinds of paradigm entities. But ordinary individuals are only one paradigmatic kind. So to speak, there is nothing on the other side of properties to be the second bracket for Butchvarov, insofar as he admits only ordinary individuals and universals as entities.<sup>20</sup>

We might try one “core” paradigm bracket and one “perimeter” nonparadigm bracket at the

outer limit of what we accept as entities. The problem is finding a suitable perimeter bracket. Butchvarov's core entities are ordinary individuals, he has no perimeter entities except generic universals themselves, and what his core and perimeter entities bracket are specific universals. Thus, given generic universals, we can get specific universals by bracketing; but this begs the question of generic universals. Perhaps his protometaphysical concepts would do, if they existed (they *stand for* nothing in the world). But we could bracket perfect particulars between ordinary individuals and protometaphysical concepts as easily as we could bracket universals. And his protometaphysical concepts, identity and existence, do not exist for him. His objects are not entities for him either.

Quine suggests using a negative bracket just barely outside the perimeter, then arguing that anything more like the paradigm than like the barely deviant item must be inside the perimeter (Quine 1969: 119–20).<sup>21</sup> Thus we might argue that properties are entities because they are much more like ordinary individuals than like collections of similar ordinary individuals, and much more like ordinary individuals than like words or concepts (as opposed to things), treating nominalism and conceptualism as the negative brackets. Perhaps this is Butchvarov's approach when he says, "And the generic property is more like a single entity than like anything else; for example, it is much less like a mere collection of entities, or even like a collection of entities entering into some relation to one another, as the so-called resemblance theories hold" (1989: 67).

There are several problems with the negative bracket approach besides the problems Quine raises (which I shall not repeat here). First, collections, words, and concepts are already included in the "anything else" in the R-formulas. Second, we must not beg the question against nominalism and conceptualism by merely *asserting* that properties are much more like ordinary individuals than they are like collections, words, or concepts. The real work would remain to be done. Third, how can we tell if collections, words, or concepts are just barely outside the perimeter of entities, or very far outside it? This is the problem of ordinality again.<sup>22</sup>

### 3. Formula R-Relevant

Perhaps the problem is lack of relevance. Relevance of respect of resemblance is the single most important factor in analogical arguments. Relevance is the heart of argument by analogy. This is Butchvarov's approach when he seeks "relevant" (1989: 118), "suitable" (1989: 100), or "significant similarities" (1989: 75), and wishes thereby to achieve the "most appropriate, most illuminating classificatory system" (1989: 99), one which is "adequate" (1989: 118) and "ordered with respect to degree of importance or fundamentality" (1989: 100). At least in general terms, this seems perfectly right. Consider then:

**R-Relevant.** x is an F if it is (logically necessary, essential) that x is more like F's than x is like anything else in relevant respects.

The problem is how not to beg the question against the nominalist and the conceptualist as to what are the relevant respects. Again, the real work would remain to be done. But there is not even an ordinal scale of relevance of respects that the rival theorists will agree on. The parenthetical qualifications are intended to suggest that no blending of the formulas considered so far will improve Formula R, since all are problematic.

In fact, all of my attempts to improve Formula R go in the wrong direction. For R concerns resemblances without limit or qualification, while the improvements consider limited sorts of resemblances: necessary, essential, or relevant resemblances. But how could an analogical argument be anything but weaker if we *limit* the resemblances which x and F's have in common? Thus if R is bad, my reformulations are worse.

The simplest problem with all the various arguments, including the original, is that they are

intuitively *non sequitur*. The consequent does not even seem to follow from the antecedent. Perhaps then we should not be concerned so much with the form of the argument as with its substance. There are deep arguments which are hard to express with any technical precision, and they may be worth more than many arguments which are formally perfect. Many readers may also feel that my critique is too theoretical, too far removed from our ordinary classifications. If a bird looks, waddles, quacks, and acts more like a duck than anything else, we usually classify it as a duck without further ado. What have infinitesimals and asymptotes got to do with it? What has Formula R got to do with it? Indeed, on my critique, all ordinary analogical arguments would seem doomed to failure.

Perhaps Butchvarov has no rigid formula in mind, but merely intends something like the ordinary normative analogical argument, “This is more like a duck more than it is like anything else, therefore it is a duck.” But even if he does not have a formula in mind, his argument still *has* a logical form, and the counterexamples remain the same.

Perhaps Butchvarov is aware of the argument’s form but does not rely on it. That is, perhaps his argument is intended not as formally valid, i.e., valid for all arguments of the same form, but merely as intuitively valid in the case of universals. But the counterexamples cast doubt on the intuitive validity of any argument of that form. Since a triangle is clearly not a quadrilateral, how can we be sure that the argument for universals shows that a universal is an entity? Are we to count all the true instances and false instances of R and offer a frequency probability argument?

Perhaps Butchvarov does not even have proof in mind. Perhaps he means only to conclude that properties are more likely than not to be universals. Indeed, perhaps he means even less than that. Perhaps when he says “defensible,” he merely means reasonable, much as probable cause in criminal law need not rise to the level of more likely than not. Of course, in the realm of analogical arguments, the more we weaken the conclusion, the more we strengthen the argument. But even this does not change the counterexamples. It is not reasonable in the least that a triangle is a quadrilateral.

#### 4. Formula R-Analogous (1)

I think that Butchvarov's conclusion is not just epistemically but also ontologically more circumspect than we might think. From the premiss that specific identity is more like individual identity than it is like anything else, he concludes not that properties are entities, but only that they are *like* entities. More precisely, he admits them as entities only in a sense analogous to the paradigmatic sense in which ordinary individuals are entities. Thus the principle really implied is:

**R-Analogous (1).** x is (at least) an F in an analogous sense if x resembles F's more than x resembles anything else.

I added the parenthetical "at least" to allow for cases in which x actually is an F. R-Analogous (1) would seem to be a trivially, tautologously true version of R, so that using it would seem to make the argument by analogy deductively valid. The only question would seem to be whether the form of the minor premiss, i.e., the antecedent of R-Analogous (1), is true. As we have seen, there is much room for doubt about that. But at least we would seem to have a true, as well as the really implied, principle.

Butchvarov repeatedly states his circumspect conclusion. He says that "a generic universal is an entity only in an analogical sense....It is the notion of entity that is applied to the generic universal analogically" (1989: 116; see 67, 68). But this makes the argument seem circular. It is like saying that if a thing is more like a duck than like anything else, then it is a duck in an analogous sense, or a strong duck-analogue, or, we might say with express circularity, more like ducks than like anything else.

This circumspect conclusion is not even realism. For if properties are only analogous to entities, or are entities only in an analogous sense, then Butchvarov's position is only analogous to realism, or is realism only in an analogous sense. Now, it is standard practice and generally good advice to strengthen

an analogical argument by weakening its conclusion. But Butchvarov has weakened the conclusion so much that it is no longer realism. For his analogical argument results not in probable real entities, but in mere entity-analogues, or neo-realism. This takes *omnis analogia claudicat* (every analogy limps) to an ontological extreme, even as his argument gains epistemic strength by ontologically weakening its conclusion. This is in effect the trade-off he makes.

More deeply, this is the only interpretation that is consistent with Butchvarov's philosophy as a whole.<sup>23</sup> It seems, then, that Butchvarov is a very special sort of conceptualist, which we may call a realist-analogue, or neo-realist. Indeed, it is conceptualists and nominalists who would hold that a property "can be regarded as a single entity only analogically" (1989: 67). They logically can accept the entire argument, including its conclusion. They can agree that properties *resemble* single entities more than they resemble anything else, so long as properties *are* not single entities. They might even appeal to Butchvarov's own earlier view that a specific or generic resemblance is not and cannot be a specific or generic identity: "For, as we have seen, what is meant by 'identity', be the latter specific or only generic, is essentially incompatible with what is meant by 'relation'" (1966: 128). Butchvarov later apparently retracts this, saying: "But these similarities are themselves nothing but generic identities!" (1989: 75, see 68 citing 208 n.28). But I think he would add that generic identities are nothing, so that similarities are nothing. But while he rejects identity for not being a relation, rejects relations for not being universals, and admits universals as entities only in an analogous sense, he admits, or used to admit, relational facts in, I think, an ordinary sense of "fact" (1966). (He is not a fact ontologist in the manner of Russell.) Similarly, I think, for ordinary facts of similarity, even though he rejects resemblances as logically indeterminate unless they are of simple qualities like hues, or we specify a respect of resemblance, or we specify a comparative resemblance, as in the antecedent of R.

Not only can conceptualists and nominalists accept the circumspect conclusion, but in a sense they must. For since they cannot accept that properties are entities, they can accept *at most* that

properties logically and essentially must approach entities asymptotically through indefinitely many degrees of greater specificity (greater closeness to ordinary individuals).<sup>24</sup> That is, they must accept that properties are no *more* than entity-analogues. Of course, they can hold that properties are much *less*, i.e., are not even like entities.

If the argument is meant to conclude that properties are entities only in an analogous sense, it might seem to make sense and be perfectly consistent to argue also that they are classes only in an analogous sense, are concepts only in an analogous sense, and are words only in an analogous sense. Now, properties cannot be more like *each* of these things than properties are like anything else *simpliciter*, but only in different respects. But the respects are incommensurable. That is, we have no yardstick to measure whether Butchvarov's view is closer to realism than to conceptualism or nominalism. That is, the series <nominalism, conceptualism, Butchvarov's theory, realism> is ordinal, not cardinal. Whither then realism? Indeed, do we really even have a realism-analogue? It seems only one analogue among many. Butchvarov might defend his theory by saying that since his view is nearer to realism than it is to anything else, it must be very near the realist end of the ordinal series just described. But I think this "incommensurable respects" argument against Butchvarov misconceives realism and conceptualism, and so does Butchvarov's possible defense. For conceptualism is a default position in the sense that if we reject universals as entities but admit concepts, in any reasonable sense of "concept," then we are conceptualists. That is, since Butchvarov *is* not a realist, then regardless of how far from or near to realism he is, his theory is conceptualism.

Butchvarov's possible defense also has a substantive problem. Namely, his theory is a subtle blend of aspects of realism and irrealism. He says, "The domain of entities is the conceptual result of" "the primary applications of the concept of identity and thus of our whole conceptual apparatus" to "[t]he domain of objects" (1989: 79, texts quoted in reverse order). And he splits the traditional clusters of aspects of realism and irrealism across these two domains as follows. *Objects* as such are unreal in

that they are private, momentary, and not yet organized into an orderly, stable world. For Butchvarov, reality is a matter of classification of objects into an orderly world of entities. And in that classificatory sense of “real,” objects as such are Meinongian, i.e., without any grade or kind of being. For you cannot tell from an object as such whether it is a momentary hallucination or a singling out of an entity. But I think that objects as such are real in at least four other senses. They are real in that they are (1) logically mind-independent and (2) pre-conceptual (1979: 62–63, 253–54). (3) They exist in the Parmenidean sense that to be is not to be nothing, since they are not nothing. (4) They are also more real than entities in that they are a logically prior domain. If there are no objects, then there can be no entities, since entities are organized out of objects. Senses (1), (2), and (4) are classificatory in that they distinguish objects from entities, but (3) is not classificatory if nothing is nothing. Butchvarov’s *entities* are real in that they comprise an orderly, stable, objectively reasonable world. But they are unreal in that they are mere results of conceptual applications (to objects) of fundamental concepts (identity and existence) that do not stand for anything. Thus an entity has no mind-independently real kernel of its own, but only a multi-granular core of objects that are conceptually organized into it, objects which logically could be organized into indefinitely many other entities, however poorly or well.<sup>25</sup> Thus even supposing that properties are more like ordinary individuals than like anything else, how well can it follow that properties are real, if ordinary individuals themselves are real only in certain ways and objects are real in certain other ways? It might even be argued that the senses in which Butchvarov’s objects may be said to be real are more basic to realism than the sense in which his entities may be said to be real. That is, even if properties are more like paradigmatic *entities* (ordinary individuals) than they are like anything else, it does not at all follow that they are more like *real things* than they are like anything else, since his objects are arguably more real than his entities.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, universals are more like his objects than like his ordinary individuals in that only the latter have an “inexhaustible nature” (1966: 37). But perhaps that depends on what is meant by “inexhaustible nature.” The objects that

comprise universals are all of the same sort in a way that the objects that comprise ordinary individuals are not. But even though a specific universal hue is more like a hue-object than like an ordinary individual with respect to being limited to one hue, it is more like an ordinary individual than like a hue-object with respect to being identifiable indefinitely many times.

Is the minor premiss, or antecedent of R-Analogous (1), true of properties? As far as I can see, Butchvarov merely asserts that properties are more like ordinary individuals than they are like anything else. He says “defensible,” not “defended,” in the text quoted at the beginning of this paper. He alludes to a “reason [why properties] are more like single individual things than like collections of individual things” (1989: 69), but as far as I can see, he never states the reason.

I assume Butchvarov is prepared to say that if triangles are more like quadrilaterals than like anything else, then triangles are quadrilaterals in an analogous sense. But I would hesitate. I would find the expression odd. Does “are F’s in an analogous sense” merely mean “are very much like F’s?” If it means more, what more does it mean? Can we use “x is an F in an analogous sense” if x logically and essentially cannot be an F? If we say yes, triangles are quadrilaterals in an analogous sense, does our answer fix a new sense for the expression? If so, then of what cognitive or classificatory value is our answer, as opposed to an arbitrary stipulation for the purpose of greater precision?

### *5. Formula R-Analogous (2)*

Butchvarov also offers a double negative conclusion, namely, that it would be “grossly misleading” *not* to consider properties to be entities (1989: 70). This suggests using instead:

**R-Analogous (2).** It would be grossly misleading *not* to consider x an F if x resembles F’s more than x resembles anything else.

But the “grossly misleading” gambit does not work either. Quite the opposite! It is grossly misleading, not to say obviously wrong, to *call* a Czech a Slovak, a German an Austrian, God an angel, an infinitesimal a zero, a triangle a quadrilateral, or a member-defined set a significantly property-defined class. Butchvarov is absolutely right that there is leeway in reasonable classification. But there is no leeway in the mathematical and logical examples. Triangles simply cannot be quadrilaterals. What leeway then for properties?

### 6. Formula R-Analogous (3)

I would like to suggest my own version, whose conclusion is weaker than those of either R-Analogous (1) or R-Analogous (2):

**R-Analogous (3).** *x* is very much like an *F* (is at least an *F*-analogue) if *x* resembles *F*'s more than *x* resembles anything else.

As before, the parenthetical “at least” is meant to cover the cases where *x* is an *F*. This version may seem to weaken the conclusion so much that the argument is clearly deductively valid. For the consequent seems weaker than, i.e., seems to say less than, the antecedent. R-Analogous (3) may even seem to get rid of the triangle counterexample. For it would seem logically necessary that a triangle is *very much like* a quadrilateral, if a triangle is more like a quadrilateral than it is like anything else. This must not be confused with saying that it is *likely* that a triangle is a quadrilateral. That is not only not likely, it is not even possible. In like manner, we may say that if Butchvarov's view is more like realism than it is like anything else, then it is *very much like* realism, even if it might be not likely or even possible for his view to *be* realism.

But even R-Analogous (3) is problematic. If there are only two categories, ordinary individuals

and universals, then nothing would be more like ordinary individuals than universals, but only because there *is* nothing else. Nothing would be more *unlike* ordinary individuals than universals either. Thus it does not even appear to follow that universals are very much like ordinary individuals, i.e., that they are ordinary individual-analogues. Of course that might still be true, but the argument does not even appear to show it likely. And this suggests that the triangle counterexample is still with us. For it may be that x is more like F's than x is like anything else, but nothing, not even an F, is very much like x.

#### 7. Formula R-Analogous (4)

Nor does weakening the conclusion further by deleting the “very much” help:

**R-Analogous (4).** x is like an F (is at least an F-analogue) if x resembles F's more than x resembles anything else.

This is so weak it is scarcely interesting for neo-realism, yet it still has the two category problem and the triangle problem. If, *per impossibile*, only triangles and quadrilaterals existed, would we not say that triangles are like quadrilaterals, even very much like them? Yes, but only because we actually know (or can conceive) the other polygons (and many other things) after all, and no thanks to R-Analogous (3) or R-Analogous (4). For nothing would be more *unlike* triangles than quadrilaterals either. Instead of skepticism about the real world, we seem to end up with skepticism about analogical arguments.

#### 8. The Argument Rewritten as Concluding for a Traditional Realism of Universals

While Butchvarov concludes with a position only analogous to realism, his argument might be rewritten to *make* it an argument for realism. Let me then consider the argument's conclusion to be that

probably properties are real universal entities, even though that is not Butchvarov's conclusion.

How do we ordinarily argue analogically that something is probably a duck, as opposed to a duck-analogue? Often, there is no express argument or even description at all, though there certainly can be. Often we seem to be nonreflectively treating some family of properties as criterial in the context in question. But that would be a retrospective description of the basis of the judgment, and not reducible to a formula. Butchvarov is perfectly right that often we can only say we are making the best rational, objective judgment we can in the situation at hand.

But if this is what our analogical argument for real universals amounts to, it is not enough to convince anyone not already a realist. For the debate is now reduced to a battle of conflicting intuitions. Conceptualists would find properties intuitively more like concepts than they are like ordinary individuals. Nominalists would find a property more like a set of grains of sand, or like the name of that set, where grains of sand are roughly indiscernible except for spatiotemporal location. A neutral philosopher might find these judgments equally reasonable, since they are based on incommensurable respects. But I would agree with Butchvarov at least in finding that properties are nonverbal and thus not much like names, predicates, or descriptions.

If we set aside all arguments and take a fresh intuitive look at analogies, I think we will find it obvious that a property common to many is very similar to an ordinary individual—but also very similar to a scattered particular, and to a class of ordinary individuals, and also, in other ways, to a description and to a concept. Thus it is far from clear that any one theory is intuitively preferable.

Actually, there is something missing from Butchvarov's ordinal series, <ordinary individual, specific universal, generic universal>. Perfect particulars are more like ordinary individuals than universals are. Butchvarov seems to picture properties as coming ever closer to ordinary individuals, descending in degree of specificity until absolutely simple specific properties are reached. Then there is a sort of jump or *saltus* to ordinary individuals, such that nothing can conceivably fill the gap, so that

properties are necessarily more like ordinary individuals than they are like anything else. But perfect particulars fill the gap. Indeed, they are more like ordinary individuals than either universals or properties are. For ordinary individuals and perfect particulars are particulars, while properties are neutral with respect to being particular or universal, and universals are not particulars. If I am right, then the R-formulas should lead us to conclude that properties are perfect particulars before they lead us to conclude that properties are universals. For properties are more like perfect particulars than they are like anything else, including ordinary individuals, insofar as perfect particulars fill the gap between properties and ordinary individuals. In fact, due to the particularity of both perfect particulars and ordinary individuals, a very reasonable conclusion would be that perfect particulars are not only entities, but individuals. Indeed, “individual” means little if anything more than particular entity.

Butchvarov notes in effect a major dissimilarity weakening our analogical argument for real universals: “For a quality does not have the inexhaustible nature of an individual” (1966: 37). This dissimilarity goes against admitting perfect particulars as much as admitting universals, in the sense of “inexhaustible nature” in which only ordinary individuals have inexhaustible natures. And it equally favors admitting perfect particulars and universals, if identifiability indefinitely many times is meant, since perfect particulars and universals are both identifiable indefinitely many times.

Ignoring perfect particulars, I think the best analogical argument implicit in Butchvarov is for conceptualism: (1) properties are more like ordinary individuals than like anything else; (2) ordinary individuals are really collections of objects held together only conceptually; therefore (3) probably properties are really collections of objects held together only conceptually. To be sure, we are no longer considering ordinary individuals as our paradigms of real entities. But we are considering them as they really are according to Butchvarov’s analysis. It seems to me that if anything, that should result in a stronger argument, since he analyzes universals, too, and all entities across the board as conceptually organized collections of objects. He seems to argue instead that properties are more like ordinary

individuals as they ordinarily seem to be, i.e. more like literal continuants, than like anything else. But it seems to me that his analysis of ordinary individuals as nothing more than indefinitely many materially identical objects, and his analysis of properties as nothing more than indefinitely many specifically or generically identical objects, are more like each other than they are like anything else. In particular, they are more like each other than like ordinary individuals as ordinary individuals seem to be, i.e., than like literal continuants.<sup>27</sup> Of course, my critique in this paper applies to this analogical argument for conceptualism just as well as to the analogical argument for realism, insofar as either argument relies on Formula R or its progeny. Indeed, the arguments are the same, except that now ordinary individuals and universals are regarded as the merely conceptual entities they really are on Butchvarov's analysis. My critique also applies to any Formula R argument for nominalism.<sup>28</sup>

We may put the suggestion of the previous paragraph another way. Suppose that properties are so much like ordinary individuals that it is more reasonable to classify properties, too, as entities, than not. Suppose that we then judge that properties *are* universals, though admitting that other reasonable judgments could have been made. I think this is the gist of Butchvarov's theory, and it could scarcely seem more reasonable. But then how real are his entities? Yes, his universals are "real" entities in the sense that they are part of a stable, orderly, objectively reasonable world. But we could have also reasonably judged the world not to include them. For there is nothing mind-independent about them; they are merely conceptual organizations of the domain of objects. They are really neo-universals.

But even along these lines, it is more reasonable to classify properties as perfect particulars than as universals. Perfect particulars would be conceptual bundles of objects just like universals and ordinary individuals. But unlike universals, they would be individual to the ordinary individuals that have them. That is, perfect particulars and ordinary individuals are particulars, and universals are not. Perfect particulars also fill the gap between properties and ordinary individuals, as explained earlier. Thus, using R-Analogous (1) to argue for mere entity-analogues, and admitting that other reasonable

judgments could be made, the analogical argument for a conceptualism of perfect particulars seems more reasonable than the one for a neo-realism of neo-universals. This theory might be called double conceptualism: not only rejecting universals, but admitting perfect particulars as conceptual entities.

### NOTES

1. An earlier version of this paper was distributed at the symposium “Exploring the Thought of Panayot Butchvarov,” SUNY at Geneseo, April 3-4, 2004. Butchvarov’s reply (2004) is quoted by kind permission here. Butchvarov summarizes his philosophy in his (1994). His (1998) is a crowning synthesis of the phenomenology, ontology, and epistemology in his earlier books.
2. “I shall assume that the metaphysical distinction between concrete entities [ordinary individuals] and *properties* (‘abstract entities’, ‘*universals*’) is legitimate and that goodness is a property, if it is anything at all” (Butchvarov 1989: 13, my emphasis).
3. Here *realism* in the narrow sense is the theory that properties are mind-independently real universal entities. Realism in the general sense is the theory that there exists at least one mind-independently real entity. Universals *in re* exist only in the entities that have them. Universals *ante rem* can exist even if nothing has them. *Perfect particulars* (tropes) are properties ontologically considered as individual to the entities that have them. *Bare particulars* “neither are nor have natures,” and are “only numerically different,” i.e., “mere individuator[s]” (Bergmann 1967: 24–25).
4. Butchvarov himself rejects nominalism as implausible and resemblance theory as incoherent, which might be regarded as an indirect proof of realism, since he seems to consider these three theories to be the only alternatives.
5. The “R” is for resemblance. Those who wish may prefix R with the quantifiers “(x)(F)”.

R must not be confused with the Putnam-Wiggins theory that “x is an F if and only if, given good exemplars of the kind,...the most explanatory and comprehensive true theoretical description of

the kind that the exemplars exemplify would group  $x$  alongside these exemplars” (Wiggins 1980: 79–80). R logically requires no distinction between macro- and micro-structure, or between apparent properties and hidden structure. R is more basic than that.

6. The theological point is merely classificatory and not ontologically committed to God.

7. If F were a species and if  $x$  had *all* the properties logically necessary and sufficient for belonging to that species, then  $x$  would belong to F by definition. But that is not what Formula R-Necessary asserts. And Butchvarov is not arguing that properties are entities by definition, much less that they are individuals by definition. He is offering only an argument by analogy.

8. If we mean by God the one Godhead, then any member of the Trinity would fit the bill, on some Christian theologies.

9. Many issues can be more clearly presented in philosophy of mathematics than elsewhere.

10. My assumptions exclude: (1) closed plane figures not bounded by straight lines, which can approach indefinitely closely to triangles, and (2) open figures, which can approach indefinitely closely to being closed figures, and (3) figures on non-Euclidean planes, where the planes themselves can approach indefinitely closely to being Euclidean planes.

11. One might object that I am conflating closeness in numerical value with resemblance. But surely closeness in numerical position *is* resemblance with respect to numerical position *per se*. Of course, there can also be closeness with respect to kind of position. For example, 2.9 and 3.9 resemble each other in a way they do not resemble 3.

12. I am using Robinson arithmetic. Abraham Robinson gave the first logically consistent definition of infinitesimals, using Skolem sets (Robinson 1996; see 1979, 1979a, 1979c).

13. One need not be a nominalist or a conceptualist to admit counterexamples to the various R-Formulas

14. Surely closeness in the series of Euclidean regular closed plane figures *is* resemblance with respect

to position in the series.

15. Member-defined sets are *extensional*, and property-defined classes are *intensional*, in one of the four classic senses of those terms in *Principia Mathematica* (Whitehead 1950: 23).

16. I use the word “kind” in an ontologically neutral sense, so that I can speak about classifications without presupposing that the items classified or the classifications themselves are entities. Since “kind” normally implies existence, and since Butchvarov denies that identity and existence themselves exist, he would deny that there are any kinds of identity or existence, in an ontologically committal sense of “kind.” Aristotle’s categories have existential import, but the ordinary English word “kind” does not. For example, there is nothing wrong with saying that the two main “kinds” of nonexistents are impossibles and mere possibles. What real distinction is there between a Palomino’s being a horse and Palominos’ being a kind of horse, or between a round square’s being an impossible and round squares’ being a kind of impossible?

Using “kind” in the ordinary, ontologically neutral sense, even Butchvarov may safely speak of kinds of identity. And a good thing too, since he expressly distinguishes specific identity from generic identity, not to mention material identity from formal identity. Now Frege says, “Identity is a relation given to us in so specific a form that it is inconceivable that various kinds of it should occur” (Frege 1967: 129). Butchvarov’s concern is about the ontological use of “kind” in general; Frege’s concern is about the logical (i.e. ontologically neutral) use of “kind” only as applied to identity. Thus Frege’s dictum may seem to apply directly to Butchvarov. But I think that Butchvarov’s terminology is best understood as casual. Strictly speaking, specific identity and generic identity are not different logical kinds of identity, but logical identity as applied to different kinds of items; and material identity and formal identity are logical identity as applied in different kinds of phenomenological situations. *Pace* Butchvarov, speaking of logical identity casually as the kind to which all of his four kinds of identity belong, but strictly as the only logical kind there is, is not only permissible in the ontologically neutral

sense of “kind,” but it is also the only way to rescue Butchvarov from Frege. This must not be confused with the fact that Frege also admits the identity relation as an entity, and that his dictum applies also to identity as an entity. There is nothing wrong with adding that specific identity and generic identity are kinds of universal identity, or that universal identity and individual identity are kinds of material identity, in the ontologically neutral sense of “kind” and casual logical sense of “identity,” where we strictly admit only one merely logical form of identity. Indeed, they could scarcely be anything else.

17. Butchvarov agrees, quoting Nelson Goodman as saying that ““Any number of equally reasonable principles give different [classifications or] similarity-orderings of shapes”” (1989: 118). Butchvarov explains this in terms of the “transcendental” (protometaphysical) nature of the concept of identity (1989: 118). I see no need to reach further than plain old relativity to respect of resemblance.

18. When Butchvarov says “twice removed” (1989: 67), he does not mean twice as far away.

19. “That the color blue is more like the color green than it is like the color yellow is intelligible without specification of the respect of the resemblance” (Butchvarov 1970: 9).

20. The proposed bracketing solution is unfeasible for the problem of universals in any case. For two paradigms can only bracket another paradigm. For example, scarlet and crimson can only bracket other paradigmatic shades of red, not questionable shades. But properties as such are not entities at all, much less paradigmatic entities, since I use “property” in an ontologically neutral sense. Thus even if we had a second kind of paradigmatic entity besides ordinary individuals, we still could not bracket properties. The bracketing solution would work only if the brackets were very different *kinds* of paradigms, so that they logically could bracket something not itself a paradigm belonging to any of the kinds of paradigms involved. Different though overlapping kinds of paradigms might include: ordinary, scientific, natural, achievement (artificially ideal), philosophical, cognitive, epistemic, pedagogic, and Aristotelian (excellent of its kind). Such a “diverse paradigm” bracketing argument for universals might succeed, but it would be beyond the scope of this paper. Perhaps Price has a simpler solution: “What is required

is only that every other member of the class should resemble the class-exemplars *as* closely as [the exemplars] resemble one another” (Price 1969: 21). Exemplars need not be brackets. But Butchvarov still has only one exemplar kind of entities, namely, ordinary individuals.

21. Quine is not discussing the problem of universals specifically, but resemblances generally.

22. This third problem suggests that objects qua objects would be a poor negative bracket, and that protometaphysical concepts, if they do not exist, would be a poor negative bracket too.

23. Butchvarov says, “[M]y position is only analogous to realism....This is true of any position I have defended that might be called realist, i.e., as asserting the reality or existence of certain items”

(Butchvarov 2004: 1–2).

Granted, if identity does not exist, then it follows that *existence* does not exist; but it does not follow that the *world* does not exist, or that nothing is real. Many philosophers deny that numbers exist, but many of them admit it is a real fact that a certain flower has five petals. And numbers are intimately tied to identity and existence. As Frege says, affirmation of existence is equivalent to denial of 0 and to affirmation of at least one.

24. On Kant’s third regulative principle of the reason, classifications logically can become ever more specific, but I do not assume that principle here.

25. Butchvarov’s theory is much like Russell’s view that ordinary things are logically composed out of sensed and unsensed sensibilia. Russell expressly admits unsensed sensibilia as mind-independent (Russell 1952: 115–18, 120, 123, 125ff. 144–47). Butchvarov’s theory is also much like Hume’s view that ordinary individuals are bundles of mind-independent, substantial impressions (Hume 1973: 24–25, 244). Butchvarov’s objects, Russell’s sensibilia, and Hume’s impressions all must be mind-independent, since minds would be constructed out of them, not the other way around. Moore’s argument that sense-data are real (Moore 1903), and Russell’s vicious regress of appearances argument that some appearances must be real (Russell 1945: 129), apply well to Butchvarov’s objects.

26. I believe Butchvarov would never admit this, even though he expressly states that objects as such are mind-independent in the appendix devoted to this question in his (1979).

27. I am told that Formula R is true for ordinary classifications, but not for philosophical classifications, since only philosophical classifications face dialectical difficulties such as those raised here, and since the formula is often applicable for ordinary causal kinds. But R is not a general truth for ordinary kinds, as my initial ordinary counterexamples show. And like all logic, the general principles of analogical argument apply indifferently to every subject-matter, however specific or general.

28. Likewise for hybrid views. Butchvarov suggests that a heap of sand *exists* even if it is not an *entity*. We might argue by analogy that a universal *exists* as a collection of perfect particulars, even if it is not an *entity*. But the problems remain, if we use R or its progeny.

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