The Problem of Universals

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This study explores the problem of universals from different perspectives identified by Armstrong (1989:18). According to Armstrong, practically all contemporary philosophers accept the distinction between token and type; different things, and different particulars can be of the same type. The main philosophical problem is whether two different things, and different particulars (tokens) are of the same type. What is the meaning of sameness? Do two tokens have the same property? The Realist believes that two different tokens are strictly identical and the Nominalist believes that there are no strict identities. Armstrong identifies six different positions related to properties (e.g. the property of whiteness). These six positions are discussed, together with their ontological point of departure and its meaning for a Christian perspective.

1. Introduction

Various situations exist where the following three elements can be observed: *things* with *properties* in *relation* with other *things* (Hart, 1984:1). There is a wide agreement among philosophers with regard to this ontology, but there is also a widespread disagreement on how the ontology is to be worked out. The problem relates to the following question: how is it possible that things cohere with other things but differ as well? This problem relates not only to entities, but also to functions and relations. Whatever exists is unique, but belongs to a certain type. Typical entities become visible in the arrangement of their functional complexities and relations, in the arrangement of their properties (or qualities) and their interrelations. Even functions can be divided into sorts (types). Bricks, roses, and other items have the same colour. Relations, for instance friendships and distances, are the same in sort (Hart, 1984:2).

How is it possible that the world is populated with different individual entities, but that the same things can be said of them? Different answers exist with regard to this question. It seems that that resemblances and differences, coherence and variety, universality and individuality form the basis for the answers to these questions. How can the ontology of

universals be approached, what is the fundamental relation of universals and how can we know them? Do universals exist at all?

To answer the above questions, the way universals are related to the hypothesis, namely: "…things with properties stand in relation with other things" will be scrutinised.

2.   The characterisation of universality

What kind of reality can be associated with universals? One attribute related to universals is the *all relationship* in which they appear. Universals deal with all things, at all times and all places. An individual horse remains a horse, founded in the tautological truth that all horses are indeed horses.

What relationship do universals have with regard to the "all"? Are universals themselves the all? This question implies an important distinction between universals and the whole-part relation. Universals have nothing to do with a whole-part relation, but do resemble it with regard to different entities between which a universal relationship can be identified (Hart, 1984:13).

2.1 Foundational relations underlying the problem of universality: The token and type theory

Armstrong, in following Pierce, made a distinction between token and type. Multiple tokens are always from the same type (Armstrong, 1989a:1). Armstrong also believed that the differences between Nominalism and Realism are related to their different views on sameness. Realism perceives sameness of tokens as synonymous with "strong identity". Nominalism rejects "strong identity". "Type identity" might be more relative and the choice of types determines whether the tokens are of the same type. This relativity of identity of types is foundational for the concept of "attribute", because two tokens consist of properties that cohere, but also differ. Realism postulates that these properties exist in the world and will regard their sameness, where different things have the same attribute, as an issue of strict identity. Nominalism disapproves of the existence of properties as strongly identical with regard to tokens (Armstrong, 1989a:2, 7).

Armstrong formulates the problem as follows: "What distinguishes the classes of tokens that mark off a type from those classes that do not?" (Armstrong, 1989a:13). There are six different theories and the first one is primitive natural classes.

Within the primitive natural class theory, predicates involve properties and classes. For each general term that is used in a predicative way, there exists a correlational attribute with a specific meaning as well as a class that indicates the expansion of the circumference of a correct application of the attribute. For the predicate red, the attribute redness as well as the class of red things correlates. For each predication, there is a corresponding attribute and a class.

There are also relations between predicates, properties and classes. A general picture of these relations is that propositions are included within classes and predicates within propositions. There are different kinds of classes, e.g. natural classes that correspond with properties or groups of co-extensive properties. Specialised properties correspond with predicates of groups of synonymous predicates (Quinton, 1957:33, 34).

Against the nominalist view, which rejects the existence of properties and identifies it with classes, Quinton said, "I shall argue that 'there are properties' must be accepted, at least in the sense that there are natural classes as well as arbitrary ones, though not in the sense that properties are objects" (Quinton, 1957:35).

To say that properties exist, is the same as saying that a general word could be used to characterise the things that have those properties. General words can therefore be used to denote a multiplicity of things. One problem of general words is repeated application. This means that there are enough examples of the word. This kind of class, where the parts are in this way representative of the whole, is denoted as a natural class. Not all classes are natural (Quinton, 1957:35).

A distinction needs to be made between natural classes and contingent classes. General terms correspond with natural classes. Plural words correspond with contingent classes and not with natural classes. Contingent classes function only as the names of aggregates and can only be used as the names of aggregates, and are only involved within the sum of contingent things.

This distinction between natural classes and non-natural classes is, according to Quinton, a pseudo-distinction. Contingent things are also a class, namely the class of contingent things. The general term contingent relates to a variety of contingent things and denotes therefore a class as well as an attribute, namely the attribute of contingency. Consequently, contingency is not a plural word. This distinction must be understood against the background of the extreme individualistic (atomistic) view of the nominalist. Quinton also attempted to bring semantic criteria to the

foreground, measures that refer to relations between language and the world. The world is perceived as strictly individual; therefore, contingent things cannot be regarded as a natural class. Quinton says: "They are simply the names of aggregates and could only be introduced by enumeration of the things included" (Quinton, 1957:37).

The critical question is again: why do general terms such as contingency not correspond with the contingency of things that is an attribute of things?

Armstrong indicates that the idea of the degree of naturalness is also problematic. A class with a higher degree of naturalness is a class with a greater unity (that is, a more specific class). A class with a lower degree of naturalness is a more general class with a lower unity (Armstrong, 1989a:23, 24). Quinton stated: "To say that where pins have a common property, games have only a family resemblance is to say that the class of pins is more natural than the class of games …" (Quinton, 1957:58).

The problem persists, because the most general class, namely the class of contingent things, is not more natural as a class. Non-natural classes is a contradiction: "Naturalness of class is supposed to be a primitive" (Armstrong, 1989a:24).

Quinton is convinced that properties exist, but not as objects. He regards properties as "… to be merely another way of affirming that there are meaningful classificatory terms" (Quinton, 1957:45).

Quinton also rejects the existence of relations and properties (in the sense of abstract objects). Relations are "cumbrous repetition". This is the reason why Armstrong refers to the natural class theory of Quinton as a "blob theory". A question that Quinton could be asked is whether it is possible, viewed from his ontological position – namely that natural classes exist in the world and that these natural classes can be recognised (a psychological thesis) as individual objects – that classes are relative with no structure? That is why Armstrong asked himself whether a thing is a kind of a thing, because it is an element of a class, or whether the thing (as element) determines the class itself.

If a thing is a kind of thing, because it is an element of a class and because the thing (as element) determines the class, Quinton's psychological thesis is still unanswered. Armstrong (1978:48) agrees with Quinton that natural classification is the correct place to start with the identification of properties and relations.

Finally, Armstrong indicates that the natural class theory cannot account for relations: "Class nominalist, ... has identified relations with classes of

objects. So all that nominalist got in the world is <a,b> and <b,a> or else {{a},{a,b}} and {{b},{a,b}}. But if it is arbitrary which of these constitutes a's preceding b and which a's succeeding b, has not the clear-cut difference between a's preceding b and a's succeeding b leaked away?" (Armstrong, 1989a:32).

2.2 *Resemblance nominalism*

The resemblance nominalism approach focuses on the concept of a natural class, but analyses it in terms of the relation of resemblance between individual elements of the class. Grades of resemblance are recognised and there exists a theoretical upper level of exact resemblance and a lower level of no resemblance. A natural class exists only if every element of that class correlates with all the elements of another class. This "relation of coherence" is an internal relation. A relation is internal if "the relation of coherence" exists between given terms with a specific nature. Internal relations exist for each possible world that has these terms and where these terms have these properties. Such a necessity does not exist in an external relation.

Resemblance nominalism, according to Armstrong, does not sufficiently account for these relations. To understand individual tokens as foundational, everything has to cohere with everything and this implies the existence of external relations. The solution for the problem is that resemblance within things is not universal, but individual. If 'a' has a certain attribute and 'b' has a certain attribute and both the properties are individual, except that 'a' resembles 'b' to a certain degree, then these properties in each possible world end up at the particular essence of things. The particular essence of things forms the basis for the relation of resembles (Armstrong, 1989a:45).

The problem again is that the existence of relations and properties is negated. Relations and properties are reduced to the relation of coherence. Price formulates the problem as follows: "For what we ordinarily call 'relations' (as well as what we call 'qualities') are themselves founded upon or analysable into resemblances" (Price, 1953:25). He explains further: "For example, the relation 'being inside of' is founded upon the resemblance between the Jonah-whale complex, the room-house complex ..., etc" (Price, 1953:25, 26).

Both the resemblance 'nominalism' and 'natural class nominalism' have denounced the existence of relations and properties ending up in contradictions.

2.3 Substance-attributes and the bundle theories

Substance-attributes and bundle theories recognise the existence of properties and relations between them. The question raised in this regard is whether properties and relations are repeatable (universals) or non-repeatable (individuals). The two ontologies related to the question are the substance-attribute ontology and the bundle theory, where relations exist between bundles (Armstrong, 1989a:63).

Russell believes in a fundamental relation (a relation that cannot be further analysed) which he calls *gelijktijdige tegenwoordigheid.* He explains this relation as follows: "Wanneer ik iets zie, en tegelijkertijd iets anders hoor, hebben mijn visuele en gehoorservaringen een betrekking tot elkander, die ik gelijktijdige tegenwoordigheid noemen" (Russell, 1950: 293). Russell also believes in the relation of "complex of equal presence", meaning that each member of the group is equally present with each other member of the same group. All elements of the complexity of equal presence may appear repeatedly if 'A' is such a group and 'A' presupposes 'B'. In this regard there exists no reason to accept that 'A' and 'B' are identical. An exact repetition of total experiences of the moment is, according to Russell, empirically unlikely. In such a case, the full complex of the simultaneous presence of a person's experience consists of formal properties based on contingencies. When 'A', 'B' and 'C' are complexes of simultaneous presence, 'A' and 'B' will not be identical if 'A' presupposes 'B' (Russell, 1950:294).

It is also possible that groups of properties will be formed with the following characteristics: (a) all members of the group are simultaneously present; (b) given something that does not belong to the group, then it is not part of the group that is not simultaneously present. Each simultaneously present group forms a concurred wholeness that is determined when the elements form a unity and not a group. These groups exist, not because they consist of coherent parts, but because of the structure of simultaneous presence. When such a structure consists of spiritual factors, then this structure can be denoted as total instantaneous experience (Russell, 1950: 296).

This brings us to the concept of "event". An event of an attribute is a complex of simultaneously present characteristics of which the relevant attribute forms a part. The combination of properties is that which makes an event unique. Each person is determined through a combination of properties in which humaneness is only one attribute (Russell, 1950: 297).

An individual can therefore be associated with a complete complex of simultaneous properties. This description raises the problem that if an

individual can be associated with a complete complex of simultaneous presence, it does not provide a complete explanation of what an individual is. According to Armstrong, there are examples of complete present simultaneousness that do not account for individuals and therefore cannot provide a complete account of individuals (Armstrong, 1989a:72).

2.4 Universals as attributes

If the bundle theory of universals is not accepted, it seems that the theory that individuals instantiated universals which stand in relation to each other need further consideration. The central question is whether the principle of instantiation is acceptable or not. Is it possible that each universal are instantiated and that each relation is a relation between two individuals? Uninstantiated universals are, according to Armstrong, Platonism, because universals and relations have to exist in a super sensual (transcendent) world. Russell indicates that: "…thoughts and feelings, minds and physical objects exist. But universals do not exist in this sense; we shall say that they subsist or have being, where 'being' is opposed to 'existence' as being timeless" (Russell, 1912:156). This remark refers to instantiation, because it deals with relations between universals and individuals in their different spheres. This distinction can also be understood as *universalia ante res* (universals before things). For naturalism, such a view is unacceptable, because the only reality is space-time reality. The existence of universals is rejected (Armstrong, 1989:76). Grappling with this problem, Armstrong provides an important point of view: "It is not the thing's having some internal feature, but rather its having a relationship, the instantiation relationship, to certain universals or Forms in another realm" (Armstrong, 1989a:76).

The problem arises again. If an entity (thing) has no internal properties, then the classification of the entity is impossible.

What about universals *in rebus*? According to Armstrong, this means that the properties of a thing constitute the thing and that these properties are universal. Relations are called *universalia inter res*, that is, universals between things. Instantiated universals can therefore be related to universals *in rebus* and universals *inter res*. Uninstantiated universals exist in so far as they can be instantiated; it is possible, but not actual. An important question to ask is what makes universals or instantiated universals possible.

It seems that it is not only uninstantiated universals that need to be rejected, but also disjunct-attribute universals and negative universals.

With regard to disjunctive universals, universals need to be identical in their different instantiations and that the resemblance of universals is normally a matter of their having a common (identical) part. Such a part of a property will be a property itself, and it cannot be disjunctive if the resemblance of the original properties is real. The consequence of this argument (e.g. that disjunctive and negative universals do not exist) implies that predicates cannot *per se* be associated with universals, e.g. to have a load 'C' and a mass 'M' is a good predicate. It can be applied or be true about both these objects, but it does not mean that something universal correlates with the predicate.

Loux's reaction against this argument is that predicates do have a reference relation with universals. Subject predicate sentences can be replaced by sentences in which the original predicate-term is replaced by an expression that incorporates a singular term, which refers to something universal (Loux, 1978:33).

If predicates cannot be regarded as universal, with what can they be associated? It seems that it is not about semantic considerations. To argue from predicates to a universal correlation with that predicate is, for Armstrong, unempirical, and he refers to this as *a priori* realist. Armstrong regards himself as an *a posteriori* realist. He believes that physics is the fundamental science with properties such as mass, loading, extension, time-space, duration, etc. as true monadic universals. Causal relations is a true multiple relation. Other types, such as "red", horse, and others are regarded as rough and ready classifications of reality. Armstrong further said, "In what I have just been saying I have been trying to combine a philosophy of universals with Physicalism" (Armstrong, 1989a:88)

Against Armstrong's physicalism is the phenomenological point of view of Klemke and Aaron. In Klemke's ontology, sensual data are the fundamental undefined primitive (descriptive) terms that refer to what exists. The term "individual" is used with regard to the existence of a certain type, e.g. the particular. If the Principle of Acquaintance is applied in a phenomenological point of view, then universals cannot be applied in this ontology. The theory of instantiation (the instantiation of universals) can still be used, because it is the quality that is not regarded as universal. A specific quality, e.g. "red", cannot be confronted with a universal red. There is also no further basis on which somebody can say that he/she is trusted with red when a red quality is anticipated (Klemke, 1959:256).

Both the phenomenologist and physicalist believe in the instantiation of universals and it is a popular point of view shared by many philosophers.

For Hart (1984:6), certain adjustments must be made by realism in the combination between a reality and a world order on the one hand and a traditional historical problem of universals on the other hand.

Hart does not regard himself as a nominalist, because he believes in the reality of properties, characteristics, relations, species, standards and social structures. Reality encompasses more than existence. Against realism, he does not believe in the existence of universals. Being a universal does not exist. It is nowhere instantiated (Hart, 1984:6).

Armstrong also regards uninstantiated universals as problematic. Suppose "a is F" where "F" denotes something universal, or that "a" stands in a certain relation "R" to "b" and "R" is a universal. Both the attribute and relation form part of Armstrong's ontology and he denotes those as "state of affairs". The existence of an individual "a" and the attribute "F" does not mean that "a is F". It is the "state of affairs" which is "a is F". "A" and "F" constitute states of affairs and must be distinguished from mereologic perceptions that say that if "a" and "F" exist, then the mereological sum "a+F" exists. Constituencies where "a" is an "F" do not exist automatically.

Armstrong arrives at an important conclusion: "The constituents are essentially aspects of, abstractions from, the state of affairs" (Armstrong, 1989b:43). He further says, "The obtaining of the states of affairs entails the existence of the constituents, but the constituents could exist in the absence of that states of affairs" (Armstrong, 1989b:43). "Bare individuals" and "uninstantiated properties" are not acceptable (Armstrong, 1989b:43).

The fundamental tie in the problem of universals is, for Armstrong, the bringing together of particulars and universals in states of affairs. (Armstrong, 1989a:110). Individuals and universals can only exist within states of affairs. Through the principle of instantiation of universals, it is possible to perceive universals as identical elements present within certain "states of affairs". The universal makes a thing it sorts. Universals can also be regarded as ways of being. Properties are the way things are. Relations are the way in which things stand in relation with other things (Armstrong, 1989a:94).

How is it possible to identify universals as ways of being? Before answering this question, the trope theory will be analysed.

2.5 The trope theory

The trope theory accepts properties and relations, but regards them as individual. Both the substance attribute theory as well as the bundle theory

can be associated with the trope theory. Within the bundle theory, individuals are reduced bundles of similar present tropes. Tropes relations can link bundles.

The advantage of the individual bundle theory above the universal bundle theory is that the individual bundle theory is transitive and symmetrical, because an abstract individual is not identical over different individuals such as the universals bundle theory. The trope is a unity within an individual (Armstrong, 1989a:114).

The difference between universals and tropes can be denoted as follows. If "a" has a "P'" and "b" has a "P''" then "P'" and "P''" are two exactly coherent tropes. According to trope theory is it possible for "P" to have a higher order "Q" whereas "P" does not have an exact coherent order property "Q". This is possible, because the tropes are regarded as individuals.

It seems that most philosophers regard tropes as individual. Martin states: "Rather, in each case it is something in particular (and different) about the object that makes each statement true. The predicates are built to pick that out" (Martin, 1980:9). Williams also states: "Socrates is a concrete particular. The component of him which is his wisdom is an abstract particular or trope …" (Williams, 1966:82). Williams also talks about a correspondence universal. A word or a sentence as a specific instantiation is called a trope. The same word in many applications is the correspondent universal. A trope is a case of a universal while the universal is the sort of the trope (Williams, 1966:90). This view is shared by Wolterstorff when he distinguishes between an attribute or action on the one hand and the case of the attribute or action on the other hand (Wolterstorff, 1970:130).

2.6 The problem of regression

Russell believes that resemblance nominalism struggles with a regression problem. If universals such as "whiteness" or "triangulateness" are ignored, then an individual white spot or an individual triangle must exist against which anything white or triangle resembles. However, the outcome is still universal, because there are many white things, and a resemblance between these pairs of white things exist which is nothing but the attribute of universality. It does not make sense to state that each pair has different resembleness, because then the resemblances must resemble each other (Russell, 1912:150-151). The problem is clear: if resemblance cannot be regarded as universal, then there exists a regression. The token of a certain type repeats itself in the conclusion.

Armstrong emphasises that al solutions with regard to the problem of universals use a fundamental relation. The "resemblance nominalist" uses the relation of "resemblance"; the "natural class nominalist" uses the relation "class-membership"; and the "principle of instantiation" uses the relation "instantiation". A regression is present at all of the above-mentioned perspectives if Russell's viewpoint is taken seriously (Armstrong, 1989a:54).

The problem is that the resemblance relation is always presupposed and cannot escape the universality of this relation (Loux, 1978:44 - 45).

It is important to realise that a universal order of succession is present in the structure of a regression. The regression can only be stopped if the resemblance relation is "multiplicative example elucidatory". If infinite cases of attribute resemblances exist, then Russell's argument is valid, namely, that resemblance nominalism implies an infinite hierarchy of coherence relations.

Given an n-number of objects that are "multiplicative example elucidatory" implies that these objects have resemblance individual properties. Nominalism will indicate that a pair of these individual properties coheres with another pair of individual properties. It has no relevance for the original attribute resemble. The original case of attribute-resemble does not presuppose the new case of attribute-resemble (Loux, 1978:46).

The last mentioned argument denotes the necessity of the word "resemblance". Predicate terms cannot be ignored. These terms are used in the statement "an object is an f" (where f is a contingent predicate term) if it coheres with a chosen standard or example. To eliminate a given predicate term, the relation predicate "resemblance" is used. Resemblance suppositions are incomplete: "a coheres with b" is always incomplete. A definitive meaning is only possible if there is a reference to a universal or a set of universals, which denotes these objects conjointly: "a" and "b" cohere with regard to weight is an example of a specific relational reference which is present in two objects. These two objects cohere with mass. Two conditions can be derived from this example:

- The question of how "a" and "b" cohere, must always be asked.

- Universals cannot be changed into individuals. Universals (as modal functions) cannot be individualised, but will most likely be specified. Universality can only be specified by an entity. Entities therefore function on both the concrete individual side as well as the concrete (typical) universal (specific universal) way

within the different (universal) aspects of reality (Strauss, 2003: 39; 1990:112).

The real problem of regression is that a token of a certain type cannot be regarded as individual. Russell emphasises this statement as follows: "The relation of resemblance therefore, must be a true universal and having been forced to admit this universal, we find that it is no longer worthwhile to invent difficult and implausible theories to avoid the admission of such universals as whiteness and triangularity" (Russell, 1912:150 - 151).

Therefore, tropes cannot be regarded as pure individual and can only be regarded as a form of specified universality.

3. The problems of universals and the Philosophy of the Cosmonomic Idea

Within Christian Philosophy, the problem of universals is associated with the distinction between *order of* and *order for* the reality as well as with the structural order of and for groups of individuals that in spite of their uniqueness, display common traits.

Another important distinction is the distinction between the modal dimension referring to the modal aspects of reality and the entity dimension, which refers to concrete things, actions and community relations. Universality is involved in both these dimensions. Dooyeweerd formulated modal universality as follows: "The universality of each modal aspect within its own sphere ..." (Dooyeweerd, 1984: 331). The presence of the modal aspects is everywhere, both on the law side and the factual side of reality. The modal aspects involve all entities as well as the relevant structural laws. The reflection on the structure of the modal aspects in their underlying coherence is the "foundation" for the reflection of concrete things, events and community relations which function according to their mode of existence in the modalities and therefore participate in the universal meaning coherence. The modal aspects have conditioned (in a transcendental-boundary way) our experience of and reflection on reality (Ouwendorp, 1994: 50). There is a distinction between typical laws and modal laws. Type laws are limited to specific types of entities and the modal laws are structured into a modal order.

In the Reformational philosophy, the following modal aspects of reality are identified: The numerical aspect, spatial aspect, kinematical aspect, physical aspect, biotical aspect, sensitive psychological aspect, logical aspect, historical aspect, lingual aspect, social aspect, economical aspect, juridical aspect, ethical aspect and the faith aspect. Each aspect reflects

every other aspect and therefore the whole universum. Each aspect is present everywhere. Realism and nominalism do not work with this distinction between the modal and entity dimension. Properties, qualities, and others are, according to the Realist, not present all over (such as redness). Redness has a contingent character in the sense that an individual phenomenon does not necessarily have the properties or qualities (Ouwendorp, 1994: 49, 50).

Entities cannot be viewed as a bundle of modal aspects. This would have been a variation on the bundle theory. The existence of a substance which is the bearer of the modal aspect is also rejected. The reason for this is that nothing exists in itself, because of the creational meaning character of the universe.

The meaning totality of the Cosmos exists in the religious relation of dependence with regard to the absolute existence of God. It cannot be regarded as an *eidos* according to the speculative metaphysics of Platonism, viz. that what exists, does not exist in itself. The meaning totality of the cosmos is the existential meaning character of everything in reality, which refers to God as the origin of all things (Dooyeweerd, 1984: 100).

The substance concept is therefore not associable with the naïve experience of things. Dooyeweerd emphasised that our naïve experience of an individual unit (for instance, a tree) is only possible through the modal aspects of reality. The uniqueness and unity of an entity (that is, the individuality structure) implies that the aspects (of reality) imply the role of a qualification function that determines the structure of the type of entity involved. The modal and entity dimensions of reality can be distinguished from one another, but are intertwined in a typical way in the experience of concrete things. The qualification modal aspect specifies different subtypes in a declinable order from radical type to genotype and variable type (Dooyeweerd, 1984: 93).

At this stage, it seems that the difference between token and type cannot provide a satisfactory explanation of modal universality. The distinction between token and type theory might refer to structural or typical laws that are applicable to types of entities or classes of subject.

The individualisation problem seems to be problematic. Universals cannot be individualised through specialisation. The way in which typical structures are functioning in the modal aspects of reality is in a specified, universal way. A modal aspect cannot be individualised, neither can a particular function of an entity; it can only specify universality.

Individualisation can be rejected without rejecting the acknowledgement of the individuality of an entity. The distinction between a horse and this specific horse refers to the universal side (being a horse) as well as the individual side of this entity (that is this horse).

The concrete universal way in which entities function within the modalities, makes it possible for us to talk about a particular function of an entity. It specifies the universal modal structure and can also be explained as entity-specific universal modal properties of a particular entity subject-function in the different modal aspects.

4.   Conclusion

It seems that the problem of universals surrounds the question of how individuals are associated with universals. The solution of the problem refers to fundamental relations. The most suitable relations are the relation of instantiation, the relation of resemblance and the relation of abstract reference.

Another important result is that things (entities) have a universal side; if not, relations disintegrate. Resemblance relations presuppose a *multiplicity of example entities* and it is not reducible to the last-mentioned entities. The regression problem occurs when resemblance relations are reduced to a *multiplicity of example entities.* Resembles presuppose identity, because identity is a quality of every entity.

Furthermore, the problem of universals presupposes an ontological point of view, for instance, the (empirical) physicalism and phenomenalism as well as a Christian point of view.

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