JEFFREY GRUPP

Compresence is a Bundle
A Problem for the Bundle Theory of Objects

ABSTRACT

I discuss compresence: the relation or tie that holds properties together according to the bundle theory of objects. Compresence is widely held to be a special primitive relation or tie. But I find that compresence must be a special bundle: a bundle that has the function of bundling properties.

1. Introduction

Bundle theorists hold that physical things and minds are reducible to bundles of properties. Bundled properties are connected or held to one another by a special relation that is typically called compresence, togetherness, co-instantiation, consubstantiation, collocation, and so on. In this article, (for convenience) I will use the word "compresence".[1] Many varieties of the bundle theory (BT) have been discussed and developed by philosophers since the time of Berkeley, Hume, and Mill, including such early and mid 20th century notables as Bertrand Russell, D. C. Williams, A. J. Ayer, Nelson Goodman, Hector-Neri Castañada, and Keith Campbell,[2] and recent thinkers such as Doug Ehring,[3] Kristopher McDaniel,[4] Dean Zimmerman,[5] John O'Leary-Hawthorne and Jan Cover,[6] James Van Cleve,[7] Albert

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[1] The word "compresence" is often associated with Russell, but it shows up earlier, at least as far back as Husserl, in *Logical Investigation III*, Chapter 1, Section 5 (J. N. Findlay translation, Routledge).

[2] Campbell, 1990, 1981.

[3] Ehring, 2001.

[4] McDaniel, 2001.

[5] Zimmerman, 1997.

Casullo,[8] William Vallicella,[9] Peter Simons,[10] John Lango,[11] Arda Denkel,[12] Francesco Orilia,[13] and Jonathan Schaffer.[14] But few accounts of the special bundling relation (compresence) have been presented or discussed. In this paper, I restrict my focus to this special relation. I do not address the commonly discussed issues in the debate about BT, such as the problem of individuation, the problem of identity over time, the controversy about the identity of indiscernibles, or whether the properties of a bundle are universals or tropes. I want to be clear: I am not discussing issues to do with the nature of the *properties* that are compresent, which is widely discussed.[15] Rather, I discuss *compresence*, which is responsible for bundling properties.

Determining the nature of compresence is important since, as I will discuss, compresence is integral to BT, needed to a void infinite regresses. I will find that, despite the fact that bundle theorists have told us that compresence is a relation or tie, *compresence is a bundle*. To get to this conclusion, I will argue that compresence is not an ordinary member of a bundle (section 2), compresence apparently must have properties (section 3), and if compresence has properties but is not itself bundled, then on the bundle account, compresence is itself a bundle (section 4). I will also discuss in

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[6] O'Leary-Hawthorne and Cover, 1998.

[7] Van Cleve, 2001.

[8] Casullo, 2001.

[9] Vallicella, 2002.

[10] Simons, 2000.

[11] Lango, 2002.

[12] Denkel, 1997.

[13] Orilia, 1998.

[14] Schaffer, 2003.

[15] For a comprehensive and clear discussion of the criticisms bundle theory, see O'Leary-Hawthorne and Cover, 1998. Also see Van Cleve, 2001.

the conclusion that if compresence is a bundle, BT might involve a few hitherto unnoticed problems.[16]

2. Compresence is not Bundled

First I will investigate whether or not compresence is an ordinary member of a bundle: a property, such as a polyadic property (relation), as is commonly maintained by many bundle theorists. Loux (a substance theorist) writes:

> "The account bundle theorists provide invariably involves… appeal to a *special* relation tying all the attributes in a bundle together… *But however it is labeled, the relation is treated in the same way. It is taken to be an unanalyzable or ontologically primitive relation*, but it is explained informally as the relation of occurring together, of being present together, or being located together…"[17] (Emphasis added.)

Loux calls compresence a "tying *relation*". In this section, I will argue that compresence is not a polyadic property (relation), since if it were a polyadic *property*, it would be *bundled* (it would be *a member of a bundle*), which requires that it be *compresent with properties of a bundle*. If compresence is compresent with the properties of a bundle, then the following infinite regress would ensue: the statement "Properties F and G are compresent" describes a bundle L, where if compresence, call it compresence$_1$, was an ordinary member of the bundle, compresence$_1$ would be *compresent with* F and G, where the italicized "compresent with" denotes compresesence$_2$. Compresence$_2$ would bundle F, G, and compresence$_1$, and compresence$_3$ would be needed to bundle compresence$_2$, ad infinitum. Ehring has discussed this issue that I am addressing:

> …[T]he properties included in the bundle are co-instantiated or compresent. The co-instantiation relation, *C*, is not a member of the bundle [i.e., the co-instantiation relation is not compresent with the properties of the bundle it bundles]... If we include *C* without modifying the formulation, then *C* itself is co-

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[16] Some bundle theorists may assert that this paper is not needed since compresence is *primitive*. I rejoinder that it is harmless to simply ask this question: *What is compresence?*, and I assert that if compresence is primitive, my attempt to answer this question will merely reveal the primitivism of compresence.

[17] Loux, 1998, p. 99.

instantiated with the remaining tropes [properties]: co-instantiation is co-instantiated with the [bundle] FGH. But that either makes no sense or lead to infinite regress. An alteration of the original formulation is necessary…[18]

I do not see a way out of the problem addressed by Ehring if compresence is in fact an ordinary member of a bundle (such as an ordinary relation). Phillips straightforwardly discusses why there is a problem with this sort of regress:

> The regress is set up by treating the relation [compresence relation] as a term, as the same sort of thing, logically, as its relata [i.e., relata are also n-edic properties]. Without an argument that a relation is a different sort of critter, it seems that if a third thing is required to relate two things, then the third thing requires equally a fourth and fifth to tie it up with the first two, ad infinitum. The regress is vicious: unlike an infinite series of causes that does not undermine the notion that a preset x has y as its cause, the relation regress does undermine the work proposed for the relator. *The relator, the third thing, cannot relate the two items without help form the fourth and fifth things (ad infinitum) needed to tie it up with the first two.* We can accept, on the other hand, a causal infinite series without threatening the notion that y has caused x: our ability to trace the series will simply flag at some point.[19] (Underlining added.)

For reasons given in this section, compresence is apparently not bundled, and thus cannot be a polyadic property (relation), since properties must be instantiated (bundled) if they are properties of particulars. This is my first point in arguing the conclusion that compresence is a bundle.[20] (I

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[18] Ehring, 2001, 165.

[19] Phillips, 1995, 23.

[20] Some bundle theorists, like Russell, assert that compresence is merely *collocation*—merely being in the same place at the same time. But I think "collocation" is not entirely appropriate to describe compresence, since it appears that, on the BT account, properties might in fact be *held* together, rather than merely located in the same place, as Russell might say. If mere *collocation* is all that is involved in BT's compresence, as Russell appeared to indicate, one might wonder what *holds* properties together, as they do indeed appear *held*, in some sense, for the following reasons. When a lion (bundle) runs through a savanna; all properties move in a uniform manner wherever the lion is moving. It is not the case that when the lion starts running, some properties are left behind: when the lion begins running, the properties *goldenness* and *felinity* move with the motile lion bundle, whereas other properties, such as the properties *having a mane, hunger*, or *sublimity*, are left behind. Thus it appears that there might be a

will hereafter refer to compresences as a non-relational tie, rather than a relation (polyadic property).)

3. Does Compresence have Properties?

In this section, I will argue that if the compresence tie exists, it apparently has properties. If compresence does not have properties, it is unclear that compresence can exist.[21] If compresence is not bundled, and *does not* have properties, then the statement "the compresence that bundles F and G *is a bundler* of F and G", is meaningless, a category mistake, truth-valueless, necessarily false, or perhaps contradictory, since "is a bundler" in the statement denotes a *property* of compresence. The correct statement, if compresence does not have properties, would apparently be "the compresence bundling F and G is propertyless" (where "is propertyless" *somehow* does not denote the property, *propertylessness*). For these reasons, the philosopher who denies that compresence has properties would have to accept that there are *propertyless* entities—*bare* entities. Accordingly, it is *not* true that the compresence *is a bundler*. And without a bundler, *compresence* cannot be a bundler holding F and G together, and it is not true that F and G are compresent.

For these reasons, I will accept that compresence obviously *does have properties* (such as the property, *bundler of properties*), which is my second point in arguing the conclusion that compresence is a bundle.

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holding, or *tying*, of the properties that make up the lion. Such a *holding* would require that compresence is *not merely* collocation, but rather compresence might be responsible for there being a sort of "bonding" or "tying" of some sort of the properties. If this were the case, Russell's description does not involve a *bonding*, *holding*, or *tying* of properties, since "collocation" only denotes spatial unseparatedness, and does not tell us why properties are *held* together. This may leave some philosophers wondering why, according to Russell's description, *all* the properties move together in an apparently uniformly fashion, as when, for example, the lion runs across the savanna. Considering compresence as a *bonder* (as the word "tie" appears to denote), might be a better way of describing compresence than mere *collocatedness*.

[21] It is standard for philosophers to maintain that entities that do not have properties do not exist. Moreland writes: "*...[N]othingness* is just that—nothing. Nothingness has no properties whatever. Things that do not exist have no properties." (Moreland, 2001, 139)

4. Compresence is a Bundle

If compresence is not bundled (is not an n-adic property, is not a member of a bundle), which I concluded in section 2, and if compresence has properties, which I concluded in section 3, then in this section I will argue that *compresence* apparently can only be *a bundle*.

Examples of a few properties possessed by compresence might be the properties *spatial locatedness*, *temporality*, the property, *bundles F and G*, and so on. If, as I have argued, compresence is not bundled, and compresence has properties, then compresence appears to fit the definition of a bundle, describable by the complete proposition: "an entity constituted of compresent properties (a maximal compresence of properties) and which is not borne by another entity."

Typical characteristics of a bundle can be applied to the compresence bundle. For example, the compresence bundle can change in time: For a bundle L, where L=lion, at time t, the compresence responsible for bundling L's properties has both of the contingent properties, *located where L is located*, and *bundling L's properties <u>maleness</u> and <u>eating zebra</u>* (compresence's property is italicized, and properties of L are both italicized and underlined). And at t* compresence has both the contingent properties, *located where L is located*, and *bundling L's properties <u>maleness</u> and <u>drinking water</u>*, where the second property has been replaced from time t to time t* (assume that t and t* are twenty minutes apart).

If the reasoning to this point in the paper is correct, an ordinary physical object would be, on the bundle account of ordinary objects, composed of

(a) a collection of properties that are each interconnected via compresence, and
(b) compresence, which is a bundle (a *compresence bundle*).

Two sorts of bundles compose an ordinary physical thing (bundle), such as lion L: an *ordinary bundle* (L), which is not a bundler of properties, and which is a physical object; and a *compresence bundle* (call it B_C), which bundles the properties of ordinary bundle. An ordinary object is a group or congeries of properties (L) bundled by a compresence bundle (B_C).

5. Conclusion

If my preceding arguments are sound, then compresence is not an ordinary member of a bundle (compresence is not bundled), and compresence itself is a bundle.

   This may lead to problems in BT, however, since if L's compresence bundle B_{C1} also requires a compresence bundle, B_{C2}, B_{C2} requires B_{C3}, and so forth, and a regress that is vicious may ensue, for the following reasons.

   If any bundle is bundled by another bundle, at every stage of the regress, the bundle at one stage is held together by another compresence bundle at the next stage, and each bundle stage depends on the *next* bundle stage of the regress. A bundle is only a bundle because of the existence of a second bundle, where the second bundle is only bundled due to the existence of a third bundle, *ad infinitum*. If properties of any stage of the bundles regress are bundled by the next bundle in the regress, never in the regress is there a point where the properties that are bundled are *not* dependent on other bundles. The lion can be considered the *first* bundle stage in the bundle regress (the lion is the only bundle in the regress that does not bundle another bundle). At any stage, a bundle is composed of infinite compresence bundles, where none of the bundles can be described as being a *last bundling* in the regress.

   It appears there may not be a point in the regress at all where bundling occurs since this regress appears to be an infinite regress that attempts to complete a task by an infinite sequence of steps, where the "completion" "at infinity" in fact never occurs. Chisholm considers this sort of regress vicious; Moreland lucidly writes about Chisholm's position:

> There are at least three forms of infinite regress arguments… [One form] involves claiming that a thesis generates a "vicious" infinite regress. How should "vicious" be characterized here?... Roderick Chisholm says that "One is confronted with a vicious infinite regress when one attempts a task of the following sort: Every step needed to begin the task requires a preliminary step". [Chisholm, 1996, p. 53.] For example, if the only way to tie together any two things whatever is to connect them with a rope, then one would have to use two ropes to tie the two the two things to the initial connecting ropes, and use additional ropes to tie them to these subsequent ropes, and so on. According to Chisholm, this is a vicious infinite regress because the task cannot be accomplished.[22]

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[22] Moreland, 2001, p. 24. In the passage from Phillips above, Phillips also lucidly argues this same point.

If the bundles regress is not completeable, there may be reason to wonder how a regress of compresence bundles is coherent. Each stage of the regress depends on the coherence of a compresence bundle at the next stage, *ad infinitum*. But if there is no last stage, there is no point in the regress that one can point to where that bundle at that stage is clearly bundled in some way.[23] [24]

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[23] Analogous reasoning to the reasoning I have given in this paper might apply to the exemplification tie of the non-bundle substance theory of ordinary objects, where properties are not tied to one another, but rather are tied to (exemplified by) an enduring particular (or, some may say, properties are tied to a perduring particular). On this account, the exemplification tie, which is not itself exemplified, must have properties if it exists. (If the exemplification tie were exemplified, it would have to be exemplified by exemplification tie$_2$, where exemplification tie$_2$ would have to be exemplified by exemplification tie$_3$, *ad infinitum*.) If the exemplification tie has properties, but is not itself exemplified, then it appears that, on the non-bundle substance account of ordinary objects, the exemplification tie of non-bundle theory of substance can only *also be a substance*. If the exemplification tie is a substance, it would be a substance responsible for tying properties to particulars, and this would give rise to an infinite regress analogous to the one I described to do with bundles in section 5 of this paper. If the exemplification tie of non-bundle substance theory is a substance, then there would be another exemplification tie$_2$, that is responsible for tying together the properties of exemplification tie, and an infinite regress would ensue. (There are other problems with the exemplification tie of non-bundle theory of substance which might strengthen the point I am making in this endnote. See Grupp, 2003, 2004, and forthcoming.) (Quinnean nominalism does not avoid the criticisms of property possession given in this paper and in this endnote, since Quinnean nominalism involves the *instantiation* of the polyadic property, *set membership*.)

If the predicating ties of both the bundle theory of substance and the non-bundle theory of substance each were impossible, this would result in fatal problems for the metaphysics of property possession, and for metaphysical realism. If this is the case, then it appears that one of two conclusions would ensue:

1. There are no properties that are possessed by particulars, and blob theory would be the correct theory of reality (blob theory is the theory that there are no properties, or no instantiated properties, and reality is entirely without structure, see Moreland, 2001, 74).
2. Reality is not a blob, but rather there must be an *alternative* to metaphysical realism which provides an alternative explanation of our experience of properties and of our experience of structure in nature, such as, for example, the account given in John Dilworth's recent paper (Dilworth, 2003). (Dilworth clearly points out on page 216 of his article that he is not attempting to show that his theory *replaces* metaphysical realism, but rather his theory is a mere possible

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alternative to metaphysical realism. But if my reasoning in this paper and in this endnote is correct, it provides evidence for the position that only theories *other than* metaphysical realism could be correct, and thus theories, such as Dilworth's, are much more than mere possible alternatives to metaphysical realism: my reasoning could give evidence that they could be the needed replacement for metaphysical realism.)

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