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## *Resemblance Nominalism and counterparts: reply to Bird*

GONZALO RODRIGUEZ-PEREYRA

1. In my *Resemblance Nominalism* I argued that the truthmakers of '*a* and *b* resemble each other' are just *a* and *b* (2002: 115). The truthmakers of a sentence are those entities in virtue of which the sentence is true. If entities  $E_1, \dots, E_n$  are the truthmakers of a sentence then there is no possible world where those entities exist and the sentence is not true. Since truthmaking has been traditionally associated with entailment, I accepted the following principle (2002: 39):

(T\*\*) If  $E_1, \dots, E_n$  are joint truthmakers of '*S*' then ' $E_1$  exists & ... &  $E_n$  exists' entails '*S*'.

The content of this principle, as I meant it and as I said I meant it (2002: 34, 39–40), was that there is no possible world where  $E_1, \dots, E_n$  exist but in which '*S*' is not true. If there is a possible world where those entities exist but in which '*S*' is not true, then those entities do not suffice for the truth of '*S*' and so they are not the truthmakers of '*S*'.

When I said that the truthmakers of '*a* and *b* resemble each other' are *a* and *b* I recognized an immediate objection, namely that '*a* exists and *b* exists' does not entail '*a* and *b* resemble each other'. In other words, the objection is that there are possible worlds where *a* and *b* exist but '*a* and *b* resemble each other' is not true. I met this objection by invoking an idea of Counterpart Theory, to which I had already committed myself (2002: 101–104). For in Counterpart Theory *a* and *b* exist in only one world, and so if they resemble each other in that world, there is no possible world where they exist and where they don't resemble each other, so that '*a* exists and *b* exists' entails '*a* and *b* resemble each other'.

In his paper 'Resemblance Nominalism and counterparts' Alexander Bird objects to my position that *a* and *b* are the truthmakers of '*a* and *b* resemble each other'. The main points of his paper are: (a) that my defence of the entailment of '*a* and *b* resemble each other' by '*a* exists and *b* exists' leaves me 'in no position to support let alone establish the truth of [my] truthmaking claim' (2003: 228); (b) that I have done nothing to undermine my critics's *intuition* that '*a* and *b* resemble each other' cannot be true merely in virtue of the existence of *a* and *b* (2003: 228); and (c) that my position is committed to a contradiction and that I can defend the entailment of '*a* and *b* resemble each other' by '*a* exists and *b* exists' only on 'an idiosyncratic view of how entailment should be understood within

Counterpart Theory' (2003: 228). I shall take these and related points in turn.

2. Bird's first claim reveals a misunderstanding of the role of my defence of the entailment of '*a* and *b* resemble each other' by '*a* exists and *b* exists'. I did not use the entailment to *establish* that *a* and *b* are the truthmakers of '*a* and *b* resemble each other'. On the contrary, once I had established that *a* and *b* are the truthmakers of '*a* and *b* resemble each other', I had to meet the objection that this is wrong because (T\*\*) requires that '*a* exists and *b* exists' entails '*a* and *b* resemble each other' and this does not seem to be the case.<sup>1</sup> To meet this objection I went on to argue that '*a* exists and *b* exists' does entail '*a* and *b* resemble each other'.

To put it succinctly, the point of my defence of the entailment (which Bird calls 'the Counterpart Argument') is not to *establish* my truthmaking claim but to *defend* it. Not only is this the role of my defence of the entailment, it could not have been otherwise. For I explicitly rejected the view that entailment is sufficient for truthmaking and restricted myself to claim only that it is necessary for truthmaking (2002: 34).

At one point Bird compares my use of Counterpart Theory to defend the entailment with what I said about anyone who used Counterpart Theory to support Ostrich Nominalism. Against this I argued that this could only work if the relevant entailment was sufficient for the relevant truthmaking claim. And I rejected the sufficiency of entailment for truthmaking. Bird gets all this right, but then he goes on to say:

But by the same token, the fact that the existence of *a* and *b* entails '*a* resembles *b*' is not enough to establish that *a* and *b* are joint truthmakers for '*a* resembles *b*'. And so we have no more reason to suppose that Resemblance Nominalism has provided a satisfactory answer to the Problem of Universals than Ostrich Nominalism did. (2003: 225–26)

Here Bird again gets the role of my defence of the entailment of '*a* and *b* resemble each other' by '*a* exists and *b* exists' wrong. But the passage of Bird's I have just quoted also suggests that I argued that Ostrich Nominalism is an unsatisfactory solution to the Problem of Universals *because* it would require the sufficiency of entailment for truthmaking, which I rejected. However, although I thought that the argument from Counterpart Theory to Ostrich Nominalism did not work, I did not think this was the

<sup>1</sup> Bird unnecessarily complicates matters by changing the nomenclature of my principles. He calls my (T\*\*) '(T)', my (T) '(X)', my (T') '(Y)'. Since he does not say what is wrong with my nomenclature, I shall stick to it (indeed he does not say there is anything wrong with it and does not even mention he is changing it, yet he attributes his nomenclature to me).

reason why Ostrich Nominalism is not a satisfactory solution to the Problem of Universals. The reason why I rejected Ostrich Nominalism as a solution to the Problem of Universals was that it cannot do justice to the multiplicity of properties particulars have (2002: 46). And this, as I said, was independent of any considerations about what entails what (2002: 45–46).

What I have said so far does not meet a demand that is implicit in the passage of Bird's I quoted above. The demand is that reasons be given why *a* and *b* are the truthmakers of '*a* and *b* resemble each other'. I shall now meet that demand.

The reason why *a* and *b* are the truthmakers of '*a* and *b* resemble each other' is that, given Resemblance Nominalism's ontology, *a* and *b* are the most plausible candidates for truthmakers of '*a* and *b* resemble each other'. For giving the truthmakers of '*a* and *b* resemble each other' is giving the entities in virtue of which *a* and *b* resemble each other. Now the ontology of Resemblance Nominalism consists of particulars and classes (sets). So could any classes be that in virtue of which *a* and *b* resemble each other? That would be an absurd thing to suggest. Slightly less absurd but equally wrong would be the suggestion that *a* and *b* resemble each other in virtue of belonging to some same class or in virtue of their ordered pairs belonging to the class of all pairs of resembling entities (2002: 113–14). Thus, that in virtue of which *a* and *b* resemble each other must be one or more particulars. And what particulars, if not *a* and *b*, could they be? Indeed to suggest that *a* and *b* resemble each other in virtue of just *a*, or in virtue of *c* and *d* would be as implausible as to suggest, in Realism about Universals, that *a* is red in virtue of *redness* alone or in virtue of *b*'s being green. Thus, that *a* and *b* are that in virtue of which they resemble each other, and therefore that they are the truthmakers of '*a* and *b* resemble each other', is the only plausible option for a Resemblance Nominalist.

3. Bird's second claim is that I have done nothing to undermine my critics's *intuition* that '*a* and *b* resemble each other' cannot be true merely in virtue of the existence of *a* and *b* (2003: 228). But, as I shall now explain, I have done enough to undermine such a claim, whether it is based on an intuition, as Bird suggests, or not.

It is true that I did not give positive arguments against the contention that the truthmakers of '*a* and *b* resemble each other' must include something else apart from *a* and *b*. But, as I explained at the beginning of the book, the nature of my project was not to argue directly against the opposition, but to develop Resemblance Nominalism to the point that all objections against it were properly met and answered (2002: 6). Once Resemblance Nominalism had been developed to this point, I devoted the whole of chapter 12 to explaining why Resemblance Nominalism

was superior to theories postulating universals and tropes. Basically Resemblance Nominalism's superiority lies in that, unlike theories postulating universals or tropes, it does not postulate ad hoc entities, i.e. entities the only or main reason to believe in which is that they solve a certain theoretical problem, namely the so-called Problem of Universals (2002: 211, 217). Thus, by fully developing a philosophical theory that takes *a* and *b* to be the sole truthmakers of '*a* and *b* resemble each other', and then showing this position to be superior to the alternative ones, I had thereby undermined my critics's claim that the truthmakers of '*a* and *b* resemble each other' cannot be just *a* and *b*.

Now Bird suggests that the claim that *a* and *b* cannot be the sole truthmakers of '*a* and *b* resemble each other' is based on intuition. But if intuition is all they have to offer in support for their claim, then so much the worse for my critics. For with metaphysical theories about the basic structure of the world, like Resemblance Nominalism, Trope Theory and Realism about Universals, there is no reason to expect that our intuitions will be true. Intuitions are the product of evolution and so metaphysical intuitions, which have little if any survival value, are unlikely to lead us to metaphysical truth.

Thus the contention that *a* and *b* are not the sole truthmakers of '*a* and *b* resemble each other' would be better supported by systematic considerations and arguments than by intuitions. But whatever the arguments that might be offered in its support, I had undermined such a contention by arguing that Resemblance Nominalism is superior to its alternatives.

4. Bird thinks that what I say about entailment and counterparts leads me to a contradiction. How is this? I said that, given Counterpart Theory's idea that things exist in only one world, '*a* exists and *b* exists' entails '*a* and *b* resemble each other' if it is the case that *a* and *b* resemble in the single world in which they exist. But I also said that this does not make *a* and *b* resemble necessarily. Bird thinks that this leads to a contradiction, for entailment is necessary implication, so that if '*a* exists and *b* exists' entails '*a* and *b* resemble each other', it is necessary that if *a* and *b* exist they resemble each other.

At this point Bird suggests a possible way out: to discern two classes of modal concepts and treat them differently. The concepts belonging to one such class would require consideration of counterparts, the other concepts (entailment among them) would not require consideration of counterparts. But Bird thinks this leads nowhere, because my critics would finesse such a move by restating their position in terms of necessary implication rather than entailment and claiming that what *they* mean by (T\*\*) is:

(T†) If  $E_1, \dots, E_n$  are joint truthmakers of '*S*' then necessarily, if  $E_1$  exists & ... &  $E_n$  exists then *S*. (2003: 227)

(T†), Bird says, should be understood in terms of counterparts, so that *a* and *b* are not the truthmakers of '*a* and *b* resemble each other'.

But Bird's point that my critics could claim that what they mean by (T\*\*) is (T†), which has to be understood in terms of counterparts, misrepresents the dialectical situation. If they are criticizing me, what matters is what I meant by (T\*\*). And what I meant by (T\*\*) is that there is no possible world where  $E_1, \dots, E_n$  exist but in which '*S*' is not true (2002: 34, 39–40, 116). But since this is what I meant, there is no need to consider *a*'s and *b*'s counterparts to assess whether '*a* exists and *b* exists' entails '*a* and *b* resemble each other': all one has to do is see whether there is any possible world where *a* and *b* exist but in which they do not resemble each other.

Thus it was open to me to evaluate the entailment claim (i.e. that '*a* exists and *b* exists' entails '*a* and *b* resemble each other') without reference to *a*'s and *b*'s counterparts. But was this legitimate? Or was it merely an ad hoc move? What is the difference between saying that '*a* exists and *b* exists' entails '*a* and *b* resemble each other' and saying that *a* and *b* are such that they necessarily (or essentially) resemble each other? After all, both claims are modal claims, so why treat them differently?

To see what the difference is I need to introduce a distinction between *de re* and *de dicto* modality. Let *de dicto* modality be the attribution of necessary or possible truth to a sentence or proposition (a *dictum*) and let *de re* modality consist in attributing to a thing (a *res*) or things the property of being *necessarily* (possibly) *F*, or the relation of *necessarily* (possibly) *bearing R to something*. I shall call this *de re/de dicto* distinction the *canonical distinction*.

Entailment is a relation between sentences, or propositions. If a sentence, '*A*', entails another, '*B*', there is a third, the conditional 'If *A* then *B*', that is true in every possible world. If one says that this conditional is necessary, the necessity in question is *de dicto*, since it is attributed to a sentence. The necessity predicate is here a semantic or metalinguistic predicate.<sup>2</sup>

So it is one thing to say that the sentence 'If *a* exists and *b* exists then *a* and *b* resemble each other' is necessary, and a different thing to say that *a* and *b* are such that they necessarily resemble each other. In the first case the necessity is *de dicto*, in the second case it is *de re*. In the first case we say that a certain sentence is necessary, or necessarily true, and in the other we say that two things, *a* and *b*, bear to each other the modal relation of necessarily (essentially) resembling each other.

While I affirm the *de dicto* claim, I deny the *de re* claim. Since these claims are not identical, no immediate contradiction follows from affirm-

<sup>2</sup> Thus the *de dicto* in the canonical sense coincides with Quine's first grade of modal involvement (see Quine 1976).

ing one and denying the other. But even if they are not identical, the *de dicto* claim might entail the *de re* claim, in which case a contradiction would ensue. Is this the case?

On a non-counterpart theoretic treatment the entailment of '*a* and *b* resemble each other' by '*a* exists and *b* exists' requires that *a* and *b* be such that they necessarily resemble each other. For such an entailment requires the *de dicto* necessity of 'If *a* exists and *b* exists then they resemble each other'. Thus there is no possible world where *a* and *b* exist without resembling each other. But then *a* and *b* are such that they necessarily resemble each other, for on a non-counterpart theoretic treatment this *de re* claim is true if and only if *a* and *b* resemble each other in every possible world in which they exist.

But avoiding this sort of consequence is precisely the point of Counterpart Theory. In general Counterpart Theory allows a thing be *F* in all possible worlds where it exists (only one) without its being necessarily *F*. In particular, it allows *a* and *b* to resemble each other in every possible world in which they exist (the same unique one) without their being such that they necessarily resemble each other. Thus on Counterpart Theory the *de dicto* claim does not entail the *de re* claim and so affirming the former and denying the latter does not involve any contradiction.

But even if there is no contradiction, why treat them differently? Why consider counterparts when evaluating the *de re* claim and not when evaluating the *de dicto* claim? Contrary to what Bird suggests, the answer is not that entailment is not necessary implication. For if '*A*' entails '*B*', 'If *A* then *B*' is true in every possible world. The answer is that Counterpart Theory is a theory of *de re* modality, not of *de dicto* modality.

That Counterpart Theory is a theory of *de re* modality is emphasised by David Lewis (1968: 122, 1973: 40, 1986: 194) and by many authors on the subject (Chihara 1998: 61; Divers 2002: 122; Forbes 1985: 57–58; Sainsbury 2001: 319). However, it might be objected that although Counterpart Theory is a theory of *de re* modality, it is far from clear that Lewis's *de re/de dicto* distinction is the canonical one I have been using here. But even if there are two distinctions here, this can be an objection only if what I classify as *de dicto* must be evaluated in terms of counterparts, or if what I evaluated in terms of counterparts is not classified as *de re* by Lewis and so counterparts are irrelevant to it.

So what is Lewis's *de re/de dicto* distinction? In the main texts where he discusses Counterpart Theory (1968, 1986: 192–263) he does not draw the distinction explicitly. Nevertheless it is clear that there are points of contact between what Lewis has in mind and the canonical distinction. For instance, a sentence attributing a modal property to a thing would count as *de re* both by the canonical distinction and Lewis's (Lewis 1968: 121). Yet there is evidence that Lewis's distinction is not the canonical one.

Indeed he has in mind a distinction according to which a sentence in which a description has narrow scope with respect to a modal operator is *de dicto* (Lewis 1968: 120). Thus those who discuss Counterpart Theory tend to use a syntactic distinction along these lines: a modality is *de re* if and only if it contains a modal operator which has within its scope either an individual constant, or a free variable, or a variable bound by a quantifier not within its scope; otherwise, a modality is *de dicto* (Forbes 1985: 48). This syntactic distinction can be used as a test for which sentences should have truth conditions involving counterparts. Thus a sentence's truth conditions involve counterparts if and only if it is *de re* according to the syntactic distinction (or, since the syntactic distinction is formulated with reference to the formal language of first-order quantified modal logic, if and only if its translation into first-order quantified modal logic is *de re*).

That there is a disparity between the verdicts of the canonical and the syntactic distinction should be clear. For instance, the syntactic distinction counts as *de dicto* sentences that the canonical distinction does not classify as such.<sup>3</sup> But this disparity is no problem. All it shows is that the canonical and the syntactic distinctions are different distinctions. But there is no reason why they should compete with each other. It is only one of those distinctions, the syntactic distinction, which determines which sentences have truth conditions that make reference to counterparts. So what matters is whether the claim I evaluated by reference to counterparts counts as *de re* according to the syntactic distinction, so that evaluating that claim by reference to counterparts was correct. And it also matters whether the claim I did not assess by reference to counterparts does not count as *de re* according to the syntactic distinction.

Now, the sentence I evaluated by reference to counterparts was: *a* and *b* necessarily resemble each other. This sentence attributes to two things, *a* and *b*, the modal relation of necessarily resembling each other. Thus it counts as *de re* according to the syntactic distinction, since when translated

<sup>3</sup> An example is 'Necessarily, all cyclists are bipeds'. This sentence counts as *de dicto* according to the canonical distinction only if it is read as attributing necessity to the sentence 'All cyclists are bipeds'. But 'Necessarily, all cyclists are bipeds' can be read simply as claiming that there could have been no cyclists who were not bipeds. On this reading the sentence is not *de dicto* according to the canonical distinction, since it does not attribute necessity to a sentence. (One could even argue that the canonical distinction makes this reading of the sentence *de re*, since it claims of all possible things that they have the property of being such that necessarily they are bipeds if they are cyclists. But I shall leave this open and content myself with the more modest claim that the canonical distinction does not make the sentence, under this reading, *de dicto*.) But on this reading the sentence is *de dicto* according to the syntactic distinction, since on this reading the sentence should be formalised as follows:  $\Box \forall x(x \text{ is a cyclist} \supset x \text{ is a biped})$ . So the truth conditions of this reading of the sentence do not make reference to counterparts.



into the language of quantified modal logic it will contain individual constants within the scope of a modal operator. So I was right in taking the truth of this sentence to depend on what happens to *a*'s and *b*'s counterparts. And the claim I did not assess by reference to counterparts was the following one: '*a* exists and *b* exists' entails '*a* and *b* resemble each other'. This is a modal claim, since it is equivalent to: 'If *a* exists and *b* exists, *a* and *b* resemble each other' is necessary. But this sentence, when read as intended, i.e. when read in such a way that it comes out as *de dicto* according to the canonical distinction, does not count as *de re* according to the syntactic distinction. For that sentence, being about a sentence rather than about *a* and *b*, and containing a modal predicate rather than a modal operator, does not count as *de re* according to the syntactic distinction (and, as we saw, the *de dicto* claim is not even equivalent, under assumptions of Counterpart Theory, to the *de re* claim that *a* and *b* are such that they necessarily resemble each other).

5. Bird made three principal claims in his paper: (a) that my defence of the entailment of '*a* and *b* resemble each other' by '*a* exists and *b* exists' leaves me 'in no position to support let alone establish the truth of [my] truth-making claim' (2003: 228); (b) that I have done nothing to undermine my critics' *intuition* that '*a* and *b* resemble each other' cannot be true merely in virtue of the existence of *a* and *b* (2003: 228); and (c) that my position is committed to a contradiction and that I can defend the entailment of '*a* and *b* resemble each other' by '*a* exists and *b* exists' only on 'an idiosyncratic view of how entailment should be understood within Counterpart Theory' (2003: 228). I have here countered these allegations. The first reveals misunderstanding of the point and role of my defence of the entailment of '*a* and *b* resemble each other' by '*a* exists and *b* exists'. The second ignores a whole chapter of the book and seems to be based on wrongly equating not giving direct arguments against a certain claim with doing nothing to undermine the claim in question. The third misses what I meant by the entailment claim, the *de re/de dicto* distinction, and that Counterpart Theory is a theory of *de re* modality.

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## *Newcomb's paradox and Priest's principle of rational choice*

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Priest (2002) gives an intriguing analysis of Newcomb's paradox. He argues that the Newcomb situations, situations described to present the paradox, are *rational dilemmas* – namely, situations in which rationality requires you to do two incompatible things. In this paper, I aim to show that the argument fails because there are good reasons for rejecting the principle of rational choice that it rests on.<sup>1</sup> In doing so, I distinguish the disputed principle from an intuitively plausible principle and argue that one cannot identify them without assuming a wrong analysis of the notion of *consequence* of action. I think that the discussions in this paper point to a resolution of Newcomb's paradox, but I leave it for another occasion to spell it out.

1. Consider the Newcomb situation that Priest describes as follows (call the situation *N*):

There are two boxes, *a* and *b*, and you are to choose between taking either the contents of both boxes, or the contents of just one box, box *a* (the aim being to maximize your financial gain). *b* is transparent, and you can see a \$10 note inside. You do not know what is in box *a*, but you do know that money has been put inside by someone who knows exactly what you are going to do, a perfect predictor, *p*. That is, if you

<sup>1</sup> Priest (2002: 13f.) also discusses versions of the prisoner's dilemma situations and argues that they are also rational dilemmas. This argument, too, rests on the disputed principle.