

COMPOSITION IS IDENTITY

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## ABSTRACT

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COMPOSITION IS IDENTITY

(Under the direction of: William G. Lycan, Keith Simmons, C. D. C. Reeve,  
Dorit Bar-On, and John Roberts)

Unrestricted Mereologists claim that whenever we have two things,  $x$  and  $y$ , there is a further thing,  $z$ , which is their 'mereological fusion'. One complaint against unrestricted mereology is that its ontological costs are too high: for any two (non-overlapping) things in our universe, the mereologist will claim that there is a third (its fusion). And once we add fusions, we can also add fusions of fusions, and so on.

To escape the charge of ontological extravagance, many mereologists have insisted that their view is ontologically *friendly*. One way to do this is to advance Composition is Identity (CI), which claims that the fusion of  $x$  and  $y$  is not a third thing, distinct from  $x$  and  $y$ , but is *identical* to  $x$  and  $y$ . But, we might wonder, how could the fusion of  $x$  and  $y$  fail to be a third thing, distinct from  $x$  and  $y$ ? Much of the current philosophical literature on mereology and composition is dedicated to criticisms of CI.

In my dissertation, I proceed systematically, taking on the objections to CI one by one, showing how this view can be defended and plausibly developed. Common to most of these objections, I argue, is that they all fail to take into account two important resources available to the proponent of CI. First, many ignore the availability of a plural logic and language, complete with plural quantifiers, plural predicates, and (perhaps most importantly) a plural/singular hybrid identity predicate. Second, none of them considers what I call "plural counting," whereby our "counts" of objects are not constrained by singular quantification and singular identity statements. I show how these two resources can bolster a strong defense of CI, securing that mereology *is*, after all, ontologically innocent.

In addition, I show how CI has the advantage of providing elegant solutions to an array of problems in philosophy: perception puzzles, problems of prevention and causation, shadow puzzles, and Frankfurt puzzles about moral responsibility. I also introduce a metaphysics of objects that, together with CI, addresses modal worries, including issues concerning CI and mereological essentialism.

To my Mom and Dad,  
for their unconditional love and support.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES.....X

### CHAPTER

|                                                |          |
|------------------------------------------------|----------|
| <b>1. PARTS AND WHOLES .....</b>               | <b>1</b> |
| Motivation: Why worry about parthood .....     | 1        |
| Parthood: Composition and Mereology .....      | 7        |
| Composition .....                              | 7        |
| Mereology .....                                | 8        |
| Composition is Identity: Three Varieties ..... | 11       |
| Weak Composition Thesis (WCT).....             | 7        |
| Strong Composition Thesis (SCT) .....          | 7        |
| Stronger Composition Thesis (RCT) .....        | 7        |
| A Quick Note About Nomenclature .....          | 17       |
| Rejecting WCT and RCT .....                    | 17       |
| Rejecting WCT.....                             | 18       |
| Rejecting RCT .....                            | 23       |

|                                                              |           |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| A Few Quick Words About Methodology .....                    | 26        |
| <b>2. COUNTING AND CI: INTRODUCING PLURAL COUNTING .....</b> | <b>30</b> |
| Introduction.....                                            | 30        |
| Logic Book Counting vs. Plural Counting.....                 | 33        |
| Logic Book Counting.....                                     | 33        |
| Plural Counting .....                                        | 38        |
| A Comparison: Plural Counting and Relative Counting .....    | 44        |
| Relative Counting .....                                      | 44        |
| Three Worries for Relative Counting.....                     | 47        |
| First Worry: Defining ‘sortalhood’.....                      | 48        |
| Second Worry: Logical Inferences .....                       | 57        |
| Third Worry: Conceivability.....                             | 60        |
| Lesson Learned.....                                          | 62        |
| Plural Counting (Again) .....                                | 65        |
| Back to the Counting Objection .....                         | 69        |
| <b>3. FOUR ARGUMENTS AGAINST CI AND RESPONSES .....</b>      | <b>75</b> |
| Introduction.....                                            | 75        |
| Four Common Arguments Against CI.....                        | 75        |
| Argument 1: The Indiscernibility of Identicals .....         | 75        |

|                                                                                                 |            |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Argument 2: The Principle of Ontological Parsimony.....                                         | 78         |
| Argument 3: The Substitutivity of Co-referential Terms .....                                    | 80         |
| Argument 4: CI and <i>is one of</i> .....                                                       | 82         |
| Defensive Strategy .....                                                                        | 94         |
| Plural Language.....                                                                            | 94         |
| Singular and Plural variables, constants and quantifiers .....                                  | 96         |
| Plural predicates, distributive and non-distributive predicates .....                           | 97         |
| A singular/plural hybrid identity predicate .....                                               | 101        |
| An analysis of <i>is one of</i> .....                                                           | 103        |
| A Review of Plural Counting .....                                                               | 106        |
| Addressing the Four Arguments .....                                                             | 111        |
| Responding to Argument 1 .....                                                                  | 111        |
| Responding to Argument 2 .....                                                                  | 121        |
| Responding to Argument 3 .....                                                                  | 129        |
| Responding to Argument 4 .....                                                                  | 133        |
| <b>4. CONSTITUTION, LUMP THEORY, MERELOGICAL<br/>ESSENTIALISM AND THE MODAL OBJECTION .....</b> | <b>133</b> |
| Introduction: The Modal Objection and Constitution .....                                        | 145        |
| Composition and Constitution: Deflating the Difference.....                                     | 149        |
| Four Puzzles of (Material) Constitution.....                                                    | 158        |



|                                                                                    |            |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| The Marriage Paradox .....                                                         | 158        |
| Ship of Theseus.....                                                               | 161        |
| Tib and Tibbles .....                                                              | 165        |
| Goliath and LumpI.....                                                             | 171        |
| CI and Solving the Constitution Puzzles .....                                      | 175        |
| Does CI entail Mereological Essentialism? .....                                    | 175        |
| Embracing Mereological Essentialism: the Lump Theory .....                         | 184        |
| Back to the Puzzles .....                                                          | 207        |
| Back to the Modal Problem.....                                                     | 218        |
| <b>5. ADVANTAGES OF CI .....</b>                                                   | <b>227</b> |
| Introduction.....                                                                  | 227        |
| Some Taxonomy.....                                                                 | 229        |
| Four Puzzles.....                                                                  | 233        |
| Shadow.....                                                                        | 234        |
| Eclipse .....                                                                      | 249        |
| Prevention .....                                                                   | 258        |
| Perception .....                                                                   | 263        |
| Concluding Thoughts: Broader Applications and<br>Overdetermination in General..... | 281        |
| REFERENCES .....                                                                   | 290        |

## LIST OF FIGURES

|                |     |
|----------------|-----|
| FIGURE 1 ..... | 234 |
| FIGURE 2 ..... | 249 |
| FIGURE 3 ..... | 258 |
| FIGURE 4 ..... | 264 |
| FIGURE 5 ..... | 265 |
| FIGURE 6 ..... | 278 |
| FIGURE 7 ..... | 279 |