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Fraser MacBride. *On the Genealogy of Universals: The Metaphysical Origins of Analytic Philosophy.*

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Reviewed by Landon D. C. Elkind

## **Review: *On the Genealogy of Universals: The Metaphysical Origins of Analytic Philosophy*, by Fraser MacBride**

Landon D. C. Elkind

Fraser MacBride's recent book is a welcome and substantial contribution to the history of analytic philosophy. Its focus is metaphysics: MacBride supplies a genealogy of the universal-particular distinction as it evolved from Kant, early Moore, early Russell, Stout, middle Moore and Whitehead, middle Russell, the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus*, and Ramsey (each chapter focuses on one of these figures or sub-figures, and the chapters occur in that order).

Some altogether praiseworthy features of the text include its detailed consideration of underutilized texts, like Moore's 1898 dissertation and Russell's 1898 "Analysis of Mathematical Reasoning". Another plus is its careful tracing of Moore's and Russell's breaks from idealism, which were not sudden: they happened in jerks and starts, with reversals and returns, and in a more piecemeal fashion than Moore's and Russell's own recollections might suggest. The topic is of abiding interest: universals have not fallen out of fashion, even from immutable Platonic heaven, and trope theories are now enjoying more specialized attention. There are not a few reasons to pursue the origins of the universal-particular distinction in our recent pasts among figures who are still widely influential today. It is actually some wonder that this specifically genealogical project has not been done already, and MacBride deserves particular and universal credit for engaging in it so fruitfully, much to our benefit.

MacBride's book, as should be expected from him, is excellent and worth reading. It covers much ground in just 263 pages while still developing many plausible and thorough reconstruc-

tions of the texts considered. Even this lengthy review does not fully do it justice.

In the next section, I summarize the book's genealogical project and overall argument. Then I discuss each chapter in more detail.

### **1. The Project**

Lapointe and Pincock (2017, 13–15) recently offered a provisional but nonetheless helpful list of six overlapping and mutually supporting tasks that historians of philosophy undertake. One of these is *genealogical narrative*:

Genealogical narratives fulfill an important role in the shaping of one's identity as a philosopher. Their purpose can be diagnostic or therapeutic; they can also play a direct or indirect role in canon-formation. As such, the kinds of questions that guide genealogical narratives often serve existential concerns, i.e., concerns about the meaning, essence or prospects of a discipline or the place of a given concern or endeavor within it. One may want to learn about the significance of current efforts in light of past developments. Or one may try to explain how a given problem has come to be understood and handled in some precise way. (Lapointe and Pincock 2017, 15)

MacBride accurately bills his study as a genealogical undertaking: "it's meant as a *real* genealogy, in a sense Nietzsche would have recognized" (1). The idea is to take the opaquely familiar universal-particular distinction and trace its evolution in the writings of well-known analytic philosophers, including the changes in their views that made developments of this distinction possible. It is thus a history of the very ideas, *universal* and *particular*. As might be expected of a book on these notions, *predication* and *instantiation* of course enjoy something close to eternal recurrences throughout the book.

Why is a genealogy of philosophical ideas interesting to a historian of philosophy and, indeed, complementary to typical recent histories of philosophy? Foucault (1978, 154) puts the point well: genealogy is particularly apt for those interested

in “effective history” that “deals with events in terms of their most unique characteristics, their most acute manifestations”. In Foucault’s contrast, “traditional history” aims at smoothing over events to make their eventual outcomes appear almost as “immutable necessities” (Foucault 1978, 155). Histories of philosophy sometimes fall into the fruitful trap of perusing dead philosophers’ works for the origins of their present. Genealogy, because it pursues the past for its own sake, can give scholars a fresh look at ideas by attending to the messier features of dead philosophers’ development.

MacBride is animated by the genealogical impulse throughout this book, as when MacBride describes Moore here: “After two years spent in the bathtub of idealism debating with Kant, Moore decided it was time to get out” (24). And again here:

Unfortunately, Moore himself lost sight of the descriptive strength possessed of a system of existential propositions. This was an oversight that was to result in the belated and mistaken introduction of the substance-attribute dualism into the New Philosophy. (55)

MacBride does not just note the departure and move to the next step, but attempts to retrace the path that dead philosophers walked, even where that path is circuitous, doubles back, or dead ends. The book thus feels to this reviewer like a healthy change of pace and a real genealogy. Again, this is complementary to typical histories of philosophy and is not a replacement: origins-driven history has a place. But genealogy gets us out of our own bathtub. Whether we have been in longer than Moore or not, that is just good hygiene.

In the course of doing genealogy for the universal-particular distinction, the book’s argumentative arc is that categorical monism, dualism, and then pluralism were adopted by the philosophers considered in the book as analytic philosophy developed from the 1890s to the 1920s (3). *Categorical monism* is the view that there is just one ontological category; in contrast, *categorical dualism* is the view that there are two ontological cat-

egories, and *categorical pluralism* is the view that there are more than two ontological categories (3). These positions are not to be confused with *ontological* monism, dualism, and pluralism, respectively the views that there are one, two, and more than two entities: one could maintain that there is one kind of entity but that many existing entities fall under this category.

MacBride’s book consistently looks at philosophers without imposing our own understandings of the universal-particular distinction on others. The result is that this book generates many insightful proposals about how to understand the philosophers considered. In particular, past thinkers sometimes develop ontological views cutting across our usual way of understanding (and teaching) the universal-particular distinction, as MacBride shows.

This historical datum should suggest to us that these ontological categories are more philosophically problematic than they are often taken to be. Developing a cogent understanding of ontological categories is like reconstructing the fossil record: we have a small portion of the total specimens in the universe, but even on this partial basis, we nevertheless strive to weave together an account covering them all. It is unsurprising that the result, then and now, is repeatedly rewriting the narrative as we struggle with uncovering new issues.

Consequently, as MacBride says, the universal-particular distinction “can’t be declared to be just obvious, nor a matter of so-called ‘intuition’”:

The particular-universal distinction may be something we now learn as part of our ABC of our philosophical educations. But history shows this outcome wasn’t inevitable. And it isn’t distant history that shows this either—although that may also be true.

(234)

MacBride also suggests this historical datum casts some aspersions on attempts to justify metaphysical categories *a priori*. In this book, MacBride does not directly argue for the view that ontological categories are not knowable *a priori*. Still, just as with

*a priori* proofs of god's existence, one grows suspicious of the attempt after witnessing enough failures. The book at best gives indirect evidence against our *a priori* knowledge of ontological categories.

This suggests to MacBride that ontological categories may be discernible *a posteriori*:

We should open our minds to the possibility that the unity and structure arises from the mutual interaction of several things and allow nature to disclose whether these things belong to one or more kinds. (237)

The indirect genealogical evidence would seem to equally support the view that we have no knowledge of ontological categories, or, more radically, that there just are no ontological categories. MacBride's careful genealogy does not impose a moral for modern metaphysics, which seems like the mark of good genealogy. However, in light of MacBride's book, many possibilities are much more open to us.

## 2. Chapter 1: MacBride's Kant

Of the figures that MacBride considers, the one exception to the genealogical character of his book is Kant. By design, the slim chapter on Kant, appropriately titled "Kantian Prequel", is just stage-setting for subsequent consideration of Moore and Russell.

As MacBride notes, Kant finds the substance-attribute distinction deeply problematic (8–9). To save these and other categories for the understanding from Hume's critique, Kant attempts to justify them as synthetic *a priori* (10–11). The problem then is how to account for our synthetic *a priori* justification and for our ability to apply pure concepts of the understanding like substance and attribute to experience (12–13). As Kant says in a 21 February 1772 letter to Marcus Herz:

In my [1770] dissertation I was content to explain the nature of intellectual representations in a merely negative way, namely, to

state that they were not modifications of the soul brought about by the object. However, I silently passed over the further question of how a representation that refers to an object without being in any way affected by it can be possible . . . as to how my understanding may form for itself concepts of things completely *a priori*, with which concepts the things must necessarily agree, and as to how my understanding may formulate real principles concerning the possibility of such concepts, with which principles experience must be in exact agreement and which nevertheless are independent of experience—this question, of how the faculty of understanding achieves this conformity with the things themselves, is still left in a state of obscurity. (quoted from Rohlf 2020, §2)

MacBride focuses on Kant's Metaphysical Deduction for the remainder of the chapter (14–23), where Kant defends the pure concepts of the understanding, including *substantia et accidens* which Kant purports to derive from categorical judgments. MacBride's reading of Kant is that he fails to establish that the metaphysical category of substance and attribute (*accidens*) is not necessarily imposed upon us by the very form of categorical judgments:

The envisaged derivation [of the substance-attribute category from the logical form of subject-predicate judgments] only tells us that we must distinguish, when we exercise our capacity to make a categorical judgment, between a subject that has attributes and the attributes that it has. But it may be questioned whether a subject (so-conceived) need be anything over and above its attributes. (19)

MacBride holds that what Kant describes as intuition and conception are "two different styles of representation", but denies that we can validly infer a difference of subject-matter: it does not follow that there are two different categories, substance and attribute, from the fact that some stuff is represented as an object whereas other stuff is represented as a predicate correctly applied to it (20).

If Kant's conclusion is that there are quasi-permanent substances that underlie changes in attributes, then MacBride has my full agreement about the invalidity of this reasoning for that

conclusion. Yet there seems to be a slightly more charitable way to read Kant. MacBride concedes that all Kant needs is that there are two distinct modes of representation. This is also all that Kant defends in his proof of the First Analogy of Experience:

In all change of appearances substance persists . . . *Proof* All appearances are in time, in which, as substratum (as persistent form of inner intuition), both *simultaneity* as well as **succession** can alone be represented . . . However, the substratum of everything real, i.e., everything that belongs to the existence of things, is *substance*, of which everything that belongs to existence can be thought only as a determination. Consequently that which persists, in relation to which alone all temporal relations of appearances can be determined, is substance in the appearance, i.e., the real in the appearance, which as the substratum of all change always remains the same. (Kant 1999, A182/B225)

Kant is claiming here that substance is a necessary condition of our experience. This is because persistence is one of three represented conditions required for experience: “Experience is possible only through the representation of a necessary connection of perceptions” (Kant 1999, A176/B218). Substance is the stuff represented as persisting, without which experience would not be possible. But that does not imply that the object so-represented as a fundamental unit in a given experience is a fundamental unit of reality. As Kant (1999, A186/B129) says, “This persistence [of substance] is therefore nothing more than the way in which we represent the existence of things (in appearance).”

MacBride might say that, if this reading of Kant is right, then so much the better for Kant. The difficulty is that it may be the worse for MacBride. Indeed, from Kant’s point of view, the metaphysical twists and turns of the New Philosophy pioneered by Moore and Russell are just as ill-conceived as the old Lockean or Aristotelian metaphysics. This is because New Philosophers like early Moore and Russell reject the distinction between things in themselves and appearances. That distinction is the real source of strength in the Kantian position to which MacBride alludes:

So if Kant is right many familiar forms of nominalism and realism make no sense, because we cannot make sense of something lying on one side of the substance-attribute distinction without admitting something else lying on the other. (23)

MacBride’s reading of Kant is too Aristotelian: Kant’s real basis for the misguided character of many old and current metaphysical disputes is the insensibility of the subject-matter, things-in-themselves. In contrast, Kant’s pure categories of the understanding like *substantia et accidens* are, allegedly, necessary conditions of any sensibility.

The upshot is a metaphilosophical standoff. If you take Kant’s side and make this distinction, the allegedly open-ended inquiry in the metaphysically necessary categories of universal and particular that New Philosophers (and MacBride in this book) pursue so fruitfully are doomed by their faulty starting point. If you take the New Philosophers’ side, then Kant’s method and conclusions are easily resisted.

Supposing we agree with the New Philosophers and reject Kant’s distinction between things-in-themselves and appearances, we should still know the subtle Kantian picture that we are thereby rejecting. Where MacBride seems to misread Kant is in his suggestion that Kant’s intended conclusion is “the posit of a permanent, underlying substance” rather than merely stuff represented as a substance, that is, as persistent through changes.

Still, MacBride’s Kant is a terribly useful foil for interpreting the early Moore and Russell. Indeed, MacBride’s Kant seems to be how early Moore and Russell understood Kant. This chapter thus primes the stage perfectly for the New Philosophy.

### 3. Chapters 2–3: Early Moore

MacBride’s next two chapters chart the early Moore’s revolt into the New Philosophy. They form an interpretative arc (25). So I discuss them together.

Chapter 2 begins with Moore's 1898 dissertation, the conceptual or textual source for some of his widely influential pieces, including his 1899 "The Nature of Judgment", his 1903 "Refutation of Idealism", and his 1903 "Kant's Idealism" (25–26). Moore criticizes Kant's Copernican Revolution on two grounds: first, that we have no access to things-in-themselves in Kant's view, so his philosophy makes it impossible for us to ever determine that they conform to the pure categories of the understanding; second, because the pure categories of the understanding are features of our cognitive architecture, there is no basis for claiming that they are necessary conditions of experience.

MacBride rightly notes (27–28) how bold Moore's position was, given the times, when it appeared publicly in his 1903 "Refutation": Moore's position precludes the very question, "how do we know things outside of us?" This is not an open question for Moore: we do know them because in every cognitive act they are *presented* rather than represented. The act-object analysis of experience is at the heart of this dialectical move against Idealism.

One crucial thesis Moore defends is the mind-independence of propositions:

In the preceding investigation the word 'proposition' was used as an ultimate term. This word, it may be admitted, does naturally imply a mental formulation, if not an actual expression in words. Both these implications were meant to be entirely excluded, and the word was nevertheless used, because there seems no better term to express the meaning intended. . . . Our object will be now to show that, whatever name be given to it, that which we call a proposition is something independent of consciousness, and something of fundamental importance for philosophy. (Moore 1898, 161–62)

As this passage shows, a metaphysics of propositions-as-entities was not necessary to the New Philosophy. The crucial point was that we have access to mind-independent reality; the proposition was that point of contact with reality in Moore's early philosophy (29–30). This basic point from the 1898 dissertation, and much

textual material, was extracted and published as "The Nature of Judgment", as Baldwin and Preti's excellent editorial introduction indicates (Baldwin and Preti 2011, §VIII.2). The New Philosophy is independent of a metaphysics of propositions-as-entities, as MacBride rightly notes.

In fact, propositions are not created by mental acts for Moore in 1898–1899. Propositions, true or false, are worldly entities composed entirely of concepts (Moore 1899, 180). On this ontological picture, concepts came in (non-propositional) simple varieties and in (propositional and non-propositional) complex varieties (30–32). A propositional complex of propositions has "a specific relation" between its constituent concepts, one that is indefinable (Moore 1899, 180).

These mind-independent propositions are also objectively true or objectively false, but MacBride argues that this point against the Idealists is just a corollary of the real ambition of Moore's ontological posit (33–35). Moore wanted to account for propositions being tied to our *intelligible* experience of the world. It has been held that perception is of, or caused by, non-propositional (or non-complex) stuff, and then we judge something to be the case on that basis. Some philosophers believe this picture deeply problematic because it puts what is not truth-apt, perceptual experience, at the epistemological basis of whatever is truth-apt, like judgments or beliefs. For example, McDowell wrote in *Mind and World*:

when we enjoy experience conceptual capacities are drawn on *in* receptivity, not exercised *on* some supposedly prior deliverances of receptivity. . . . It sounds off key in this connection to speak of *exercising* conceptual capacities at all. That would suit an activity, whereas experience is passive. (McDowell 1996, Lec. I, §5)

The result, it is argued, is a gap between truth-inapt experience and truth-apt propositions.

MacBride argues in an insightful way that Moore was similarly concerned with ensuring that what we experience is truth-apt,

such that our chain of inferences and perceptions is truth-apt stuff all the way down. This explains Moore's peculiar suggestion that "an existent is seen to be nothing but a concept or complex of concepts standing in a unique relation of the concept of existence" (Moore 1899, 183). Moore writes also, "All that exists is thus composed of concepts necessarily related to one another in specific manners, and likewise to the concept of existence" (Moore 1899, 181). Note that Moore's view is that some but not all propositions are in the spatiotemporal world around us rather than abstract entities such that existential propositions could be experienced (Moore 1899, 190–91). This view may seem quite strange to us. They are definitely unnecessary if Moore's only concern is to underwrite ontologically the methodology of the New Philosophy. Most posits of objective entities such that we have access to would serve that anti-Idealist purpose.

On MacBride's reconstruction, Moore holds that your existing is just the concepts of you, of existence, of space, and of time all suitably related. This makes some sense if everything is concepts or complexes of them. But MacBride rightly points to Moore's remarks about making what is given in experience intelligible to the understanding:

It now appears that perception is to be regarded philosophically as the cognition of an existential proposition; and it is thus apparent how it can furnish a basis for inference, which uniformly exhibits the connexion between propositions. Conversely light is thrown on the nature of inference. For, whereas it could not be maintained that the conclusion was only connected with the premisses in my thoughts, and that an inference was nothing, if no-body was making it, great difficulty was felt as to the kind of objectivity that belonged to the terms and their relation, since existence was taken as the type of objectivity. This difficulty is removed, when it is acknowledged that the relation of premisses to conclusion is an objective relation, in the same sense as the relation of existence to what exists is objective. It is no longer necessary to hold that logical connexions must, in some obscure sense, exist, since to exist is merely to stand in a certain logical connexion. (Moore 1899, 183)

To use McDowell's phrase, Moore can explain our "experiential uptake" readily because what perceptual experience delivers to the understanding is existential propositions. Moore can also explain the objectivity of inferential relations since these exist among existential propositions apart from our cognition of them.

MacBride then explains how change is possible on Moore's view given that concepts and propositions are immutable (35–37). MacBride also notes that Moore's view implies *primitivism* about truth, the view that truth cannot be defined (37–39).

For MacBride's project, the most interesting feature of Moore's early view is that it is a species of categorical monism. Moore's view has only one ontological category: concepts are the only kind of posit, since Moore holds that propositions are complexes of concepts. Moore's all-is-concepts view is an ontological pluralism because there are many things, even though there is only one kind of thing (43).

Chapter 3 continues this treatment of early Moore's concept-only view by discussing his arguments against the universal-particular (substance-attribute) distinction. Some commentators have argued that Moore retained a categorical dualism while arguing that there were no substances at all. For example, Hochberg writes:

Thus we have [on Moore's view] four possible kinds of entities: existent particulars, existent universals, non-existent particulars, non-existent universals. But in *Principia*, only three of these possibilities are realized. There are no existent universals . . . Moore's view [is] that an (existent) composite particular contains its natural properties rather than exemplifying them. (Hochberg 1962, 373)

MacBride argues that this is mistaken: Moore only has one ontological category, that of concepts. Scholars have been misled by their attempt to understand Moore in terms of the universal-particular distinction familiar to them. MacBride argues (45–47) that this gets Moore wrong: Moore is rejecting the very categorical dualism, not positing concepts and understanding them within that distinction. A key reason for this is that Moore in

1898–1899 still accepted Kant’s claim that substance and attribute are “coeval—we must speak of them in the same breath or not at all” (48). MacBride points here to Moore’s remark, “But in any proposition of this simple categorical form the notion of substance and attribute is already involved” (Moore 1899, 185). Notice the singular “notion”—this strongly suggests that Moore, like Kant, saw substance and attribute as two sides of the same categorical coin, as MacBride argues.

MacBride’s interpretation implies that Moore rejected the view that existential propositions are categorical in form: they rather involve a relation between various concepts, one being the concept of existence (49–50). The text supports MacBride’s reading:

take the existential proposition “Red exists,” . . . It is maintained that, when I say this, my meaning is that the concept “red” and the concept “existence” stand in a specific relation both to one another and to the concept of time. I mean that “Red exists now,” and thereby imply a distinction from its past and future existence. And this connexion of red and existence with the moment of time I mean by “now,” would seem to be as necessary as any other connexion whatever. (Moore 1899, 189–90)

Given that we also perceive propositions, this elimination of the universal-particular category clears Kantian categories from Moore’s way. And this has the corollary that we can make objective judgments about the world, but we do so without, as MacBride does and Moore would put it, imposing categories: “Existential propositions (in Moore’s sense) are thus objects of judgments of perception (in Kant’s sense)” (51).

The remainder of Chapter 3 is devoted to motivating us into seriously entertaining this reading as a view, despite our vision being theory-laden through categorical dualism, and to arguing that Moore is best understood in dialectic with Kant despite the importance of Bradley, Brentano, and Stout (55–62). Overall, MacBride’s reconstruction is well-supported by Moore’s 1898 and 1899 works. The scholarly discussion around Moore and the history of early analytic philosophy may well shift momentarily

thanks to MacBride’s insightful, careful job on these texts and his Kantian contextualization of them.

#### 4. Chapter 4: Early Russell

MacBride’s next chapter treats the early Russell, focusing on his underutilized 1898 manuscript *An Analysis of Mathematical Reasoning* and on his 1900 *The Philosophy of Leibniz*. This is a good place to pause and recall that the argumentative arc of MacBride’s book is that categorical monism, dualism, and then pluralism were successively adopted as the analytic philosophy aged from the 1890s to the 1920s (3). Given Moore’s one-category ontology, the first claim in the triad is true, and doubly-so given that MacBride’s Chapter 4 argues that early Russell moved from categorical dualism to categorical monism (63). Interestingly, Russell initially pushed Moore to reintroduce categorical dualism.

Why did Russell do this? In the 1 December 1898 letter in question, he wrote:

I have read your dissertation—it appears to me to be on the level of the best philosophy I know. When I see you, I should like to discuss some difficulties in working out your theory of Logic. I believe that propositions are distinguished from mere concepts, not by their mere complexity only, but by always containing one specific concept, i.e., the copula “is”. That is, there must be, between the concepts of a proposition, one special type of relation, not merely some relation. “The wise man” is not a proposition, as Leibnitz [*sic*] says. Moreover, you need a distinction of subject and predicate: in all existential propositions, e.g., existence is predicate, not subject. “Existence is a concept”, is not existential. You will have to say that “is” denotes an unsymmetrical relation. This will allow concepts which only *have* predicates and never *are* predicates—i.e., things—and will make everything except the foundations perfectly orthodox. (Russell 1992, #80, 186)

The overarching point is that Russell raises worries about whether Moore’s ontology is complex enough to account for

propositional structure. Neither the concept *the wise man* nor the list of concepts *human, exists, now* is a proposition. Russell argues the copula indicating subject and predicate must be matched by the relational structure of propositions.

This does not necessarily imply categorical dualism in the ontological sense, but only in a logical sense. That is, while Moore is focused on metaphysical categories, Russell's underlying point is that Moore's *ontological* categorical monism runs aground against the *logical* categorical dualism of subject and predicate. Regardless of whether there are things or substances, or concepts that only occur in subject-position, some subject-predicate structure is required in Russell's view. Some concepts might never be predicated of others ever, or perhaps all concepts could occur in subject or in predicate position in a proposition.

Logical categorical dualism should be distinguished from ontological categorical dualism because various views as to the relation between them are possible. On some methodologies, as in formal ontology, the connection between logical and ontological categories is quite close (Cocchiarella 2007, 3). Russell seems to have held as much at least from the 1899 "Analysis of Mathematical Reasoning" through his 1948 *Human Knowledge*: Russell repeatedly argues on the assumption that there is a close connection between accepting the ontological categorical dualism of universal and particular, on the one hand, and the question of whether the logical categorical dualism of subject and predicate is eliminable on the other.<sup>1</sup>

This early letter is a case in point: Russell seems to be telling Moore that ontological categorical dualism is inescapable if logical categorical dualism is ineliminable. This is quite natural if Russell views logical categorical dualism and ontological categorical dualism as intimately related, which is not to say that one can be read off the other.

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<sup>1</sup>See, for example, Russell (1912, 170), Russell (1918a, 177–78, 182–83), Russell (1940, 129–30), and Russell (1948/1967, 310–12, 320–21).

This distinction between logical categories and ontological ones supports MacBride's narrative. As the index shows, MacBride mentions incomplete symbols and their ontological importance many times (258). Why, though? Why should the symbols we use for stuff have any bearing on ontology? The answer is that all the figures that MacBride discusses attend to logical form. Hence MacBride is absolutely right to note Moore's sensitivity to logical form in doing ontology. Distinguishing between logical and ontological categories enables us to understand these philosopher's view of the relationship between them. This is a separate project that would complement the one that MacBride undertakes here.

MacBride then discusses Russell's analysis of mathematical claims into their logical forms (67). Russell held that Kant's taxonomy was wrong, although he stuck to Kant's subject-predicate distinction (68–70). While writing his 1900 book on Leibniz, Russell became discontented with two categories of entity (73–76). Russell's Leibniz held that all propositions have subject-predicate form corresponding to the ontological dualism of substance and attribute. Some relational propositions are counterexamples because they lack subject-predicate form. So there is a third category of relations. His view "cuts across" the usual universal-particular distinction (69–70).

In his 1900 Leibniz book, Russell rejects substances and attributes (76–82). Because a subject can be understood as a series of states, we can eliminate unknowable substances altogether; this also eliminates attributes conceived of as inhering in substances. Although MacBride uses the locution "the notion of a logical subject  $x$ " in this connection, MacBride is not claiming that Russell is rejecting the logical categorical dualism of subject and predicate. MacBride is only claiming that Russell's argument is that no logical subject-term  $x$  could be meaningful if it picked out an attribute-less object like a substance.

MacBride closes the chapter with a discussion of Russell's 1899 "The Classification of Relations" lecture to the Cambridge Moral

Sciences Club (82–86). MacBride argues against the Meinongian misreading of Russell, unhelpfully propagated by Quine, that Russell naïvely trusted language to straightforwardly indicate propositional constituents prior to discovering that descriptive phrases are incomplete symbols. On the contrary, Russell is happy to define away quality-subject claims like “this is red” using relation-subject ones like “red is predicable of the chair” and explicitly warns against the potentially distorting influence linguistic form. Importantly, Russell argues against metaphysical categorical dualism in this paper without thereby rejecting the logical categorical dualism of subject and predicate. He argues that concepts are picked out by both subject and predicate terms, embracing a Moorean concepts-only view: “Thus, on the whole, there would seem to be only one kind of diversity, which may be described as material diversity of concepts” (Russell 1899/1990, 85). Thus, Russell briefly embraces categorical monism. Russell also argues against the identity of indiscernibles (70–71). Perhaps ironically, these Kantian arguments were important factors in leading Moore to embrace categorical dualism.

## 5. Chapter 5: The Universal-Particular Distinction

Chapter 5 discusses Moore’s 1901 paper “Identity” wherein Moore endorses categorical dualism (90). MacBride’s main claim in this chapter is that Moore moved towards categorical dualism because he believed that the logical form of ordinary judgments could not be accommodated by categorical monism (92). This claim is underwritten by his reconstruction of Moore’s arguments in “Identity”, which is as follows.

Moore first argues that identity is not reducible to indiscernibility: he asks whether, on his all-is-concepts ontology, indiscernible concepts might nevertheless have what MacBride calls “extra-conceptual difference”, or, as Moore puts it, “numerical difference” (93–94). On the all-is-concepts ontology, if difference consists in some concept holding of one concept and not another,

then indiscernible concepts are identical. Reflecting on Russell’s Leibniz book manuscript, Moore realized that the ordinary judgment that  $a$  and  $b$  are indiscernible does not have the same logical form as the ordinary judgment that  $a$  is identical to  $b$  because they seemingly are not contradictory claims: this led Moore to reject the identity of indiscernibles, thereby demanding tropes (not particulars) to be difference-makers between two entities who fall under the same concepts (universals) (95–96). Moore’s ontology now embraces tropes (instances of universals) and universals, and so accepts categorical dualism. MacBride stresses that Moore’s posits show that the universal-particular distinction by itself does not impose upon us an ontology of universals and particulars in any specific sense (96–97). For instance, one could embrace *ante rem* universals and bare particulars, or *in rebus* universals and thick particulars, and so on. The ontological roles carved out by the universal-particular distinction can be matched with various different posits to play those roles on each side of the distinction.

According to MacBride, Moore accepts as a constraint on his philosophical view “that it be capable of modelling ordinary judgments about things, that is, categorical judgments that exhibit subject-predicate form” (99). This constraint led him to abandon his categorical monism. Moore could not defend his all-is-concepts ontology without rejecting ordinary judgments, which he was not willing to do.

MacBride’s reconstruction goes like this. Moore considers two entities,  $a$  and  $b$ . Assume that difference is discernibility. Then for some concept  $C$ ,  $a$  has  $C$  and  $b$  does not. Without loss of generality, suppose  $a$  and  $b$  both have any other concepts that one of them has. Then the entities  $a$  and  $b$  are really just the concepts they both have,  $C_1, \dots, C_n$ , plus  $C$  in  $a$ ’s case only. On the all-is-concepts view, the categorical judgment  $a$  is different from  $b$  has the form  $(C, C_1, \dots, C_n)$  is different from  $(C_1, \dots, C_n)$ . But this is not a categorical judgment at all: we are now saying of a group of concepts that one is different from another, which

is a claim groups of entities and not  $a$  and  $b$ . But we cannot identify  $a$  or  $b$  with any single concept in these bundles, nor with any group of them. So we are struck abandoning the ordinary categorical judgment or with accepting difference even between indiscernible concepts.

MacBride's reconstruction explains why Moore does not leverage difference of times and place in defending categorical monism. It seems *prima facie* plausible to say that  $a$  and  $b$  could differ even despite being composed of the same concepts because  $a$  may be at one time or place, and  $b$  at another. However, existential propositions do not have subject-predicate form. So propositions involving spatial and temporal concepts cannot be leveraged to explain why indiscernible concepts  $a$  and  $b$  may differ. This reading also explains the singular "*it*" that Moore italicizes, and his explicit concern that the entities  $a$  and  $b$  with which we began turn out to be three (Moore 1901, 108). It also makes Moore diachronically consistent since this very argument is raised in his 1910–1911 lectures: the all-is-concepts view is rejected because it contradicts the datum that "Everybody commonly talks as if there were other particulars besides times and places; and even those who hold this theory do so" (Moore 1953, 343).

MacBride's reading of Moore's argument for it is consonant with the value he long placed on ordinary judgments. It is plausible and supported by a close reading of the text.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Chapter 5 raises the following possibility for a categorical monist accepting the all-is-concepts view: suppose we had two indiscernible entities,  $a$  and  $b$ , having identical concepts  $\langle C_i \rangle$ . Might we explain their difference by appealing to different spatial or temporal locations? That is,  $a$  and  $b$  are different would be understood as  $\langle C_i \rangle$  at  $t$  and  $l$  is different from  $\langle C_i \rangle$  at  $t'$  and  $l'$ . This sort of view has in fact been briefly defended with respect to sense-data (Forrest 2005, 629–30). For discussion, see Elkind (2017, §2).

## 6. Chapters 6: Moore and Whitehead

Chapter 6 focuses on Moore's and Whitehead's separate critiques of categorical dualism.

MacBride begins (107–108) with Moore's difficulties over characterizing of universals in his 1910–1911 Morley College lectures, later published as *Some Main Problems of Philosophy*. Moore accepted categorical dualism by this time, so indicating that Moore was troubled with this position is MacBride's first step.

In these lectures, Moore embraces an ontology of facts and propositions plus a taxonomy of various kinds of universal (110–11). In response to Bradley's regress, Moore had accepted that a relation's relating of its terms is a primitive notion not needing an explanation in terms of some other relation's obtaining: thus, the analysis of a fact like  $R(a, b)$  only reveals the constituents  $R$ ,  $a$ , and  $b$ , and not some fourth relation  $I$  binding them together (112–13). Having accepted this view, Moore then becomes more than perplexed as to the distinction between  $R$  relating  $a$  to  $b$  and  $a$  having the property of being related by  $R$  to  $b$ . Moore thinks that  $R$  and  $Rb$  are different relations (113–14). Thus, there are now three ontological categories: particulars like  $a$  and  $b$ , relations like  $R$ , and relational properties like  $Rb$  (115).

Moore's argument would surely not be compelling to any reader of *Principia*. As \*30 shows, we can define "the term  $x$  having such and such relation to  $y$ " as

$$*30\cdot01. \quad R'y =_{\text{Df}} (\exists x)(xRy),$$

where the *definiens* is eliminable using *Principia's* definitions for relations in extension and definite descriptions. Indeed, *Principia* even proves that if there exists some term having the relation  $R$  to  $y$ , then the term  $a$  has the relation  $R$  to  $y$  if and only if  $aRb$ :

$$*30\cdot4. \quad \vdash \cdot \exists ! R'y \cdot \supset \cdot a = R'y \cdot \equiv \cdot aRy.$$

Thus, Moore's perplexing relational property can be eliminated entirely: it can be analyzed away in terms of relations like  $R$  since

we always have  $aRy$  given  $R'y$ .<sup>3</sup>

Naturally, Whitehead was familiar with \*30. He argued against categorical dualism on more compelling grounds. MacBride rightly draws our attention to the fact that when Russell wrote “On the Relations of Universals and Particulars”, he was in dialogue with Whitehead; Ramsey also cites Whitehead as confirming his view (115–17).

Whitehead’s argument against the categorical dualism seems to have been a nuanced naïve realism regarding everyday objects and posits of scientific investigations: he wants parity between the contents of sensory experience and the entities we do not, and perhaps cannot, experience (118–20). As compared with Kant, Whitehead’s starting point is quite different: he holds that there is no “Bifurcation of Nature” into mental or physical stuff. Everything is part of nature:

For natural philosophy everything perceived is in nature. We may not pick and choose. For us the red glow of the sunset should be as much part of nature as are the molecules and electric waves by which men of science would explain the phenomenon.

(Whitehead 1920, 29)

the first principle [is this:] We must avoid vicious bifurcation. Nature is nothing else than the deliverance of sense-awareness. Our sole task is to exhibit in one system the characters and inter-relations of all that is observed.

(Whitehead 1920, 185)

The upshot of this first principle is that only the coherence of scientific knowledge is problematic. As Whitehead (1920, 29) puts it, “What we ask from the philosophy of science is some account of the coherence of things perceptively known.”

Whitehead’s starting point of avoiding bifurcation also requires categorical monism. Whitehead embraces an ontology of events. Events are not analyzable into particulars and uni-

<sup>3</sup>A similarly eliminative analysis is available for multiple terms having the relation  $R$  to  $y$  and, conversely, for multiple terms to which  $R$  relates to  $y$ ; see Whitehead and Russell (1925/1957, \*32)

versals but are the fundamental entity in Whitehead’s ontology: everything is an event, or a complex of them. But one could try to interpret Whitehead as a categorical dualist such that his events, rather like facts, have constituents fitting into the universal-particular distinction. In the remainder of Chapter 5 (121–28), MacBride convincingly argues against this reading, noting how Whitehead consistently rejects any bifurcation whatever. The most interesting part of this section was the discussion of Whitehead’s Russell-like rejection of predication as a harmful holdover from Aristotelian logic:

Aristotle asked the fundamental question, What do we mean by ‘substance’? Here the reaction between his philosophy and his logic worked very unfortunately. In his logic, the fundamental type of affirmative proposition is the attribution of a predicate to a subject. Accordingly, amid the many current uses of the term ‘substance’ which he analyses, he emphasizes its meaning as ‘the ultimate substratum which is no longer predicated of anything else.’ . . . Personally, I think that predication is a muddled notion confusing many different relations under a convenient common form of speech.

(Whitehead 1920, 18)

Whitehead’s co-author doubtless agreed with Whitehead’s take on the traditional logic (Russell 1968, 38). Yet Whitehead’s attack on predication and on preserving the notion of a logical subject as Aristotelian baggage explains Russell’s apologetic remark in the offending 1911 essay “On the Relation of Universals and Particulars”, as MacBride notes (116).

Whitehead seemingly did not embrace categorical pluralism. But MacBride only claims that his skeptical take on predication and the universal-particular distinction invited philosophers like Ramsey to seriously consider ontological pluralism. MacBride is right.

## 7. Chapter 7: Stout

Chapter 7 focuses on Stout's case against the universal-particular distinction and Moore's subtle criticisms of Stout's view, which was a species of categorical monism. Stout held that predicate expressions pick out "abstract particulars" or "particular characters":

The word "particular" bears for me precisely the same sense when applied to predicable characters and to the things they characterize. Concrete things are diverse from each other in a way which cannot be resolved into difference of kind. They are numerically distinct, independently of their similarity or dissimilarity. In just the same way I maintain that one quality or relation may be numerically diverse from another, though both are precisely of the same sort.

(Stout 1923, 114)

MacBride argues that, like early Moore, Stout rejected the universal-particular distinction after investigating the "conditions of possible experience" (130–31). In response to Bradley's regress argument against relations, Stout took the complex unity of a relating relation and its terms as primitive (132–33). Having done this, Stout held that this obviated the need for universals because particulars already stand united with their relating abstract particular without them (134–35). When we say, "Stout has a nose", Stout argues that this does not imply that he has a repeatable property *having a nose*, but understands such statements as elliptical for "Stout is a member of the class of things endowed with noses" (Stout 1923, 115). Stout calls this *distributive* unity:

To say that it is a certain sort of thing is more accurately expressed by using what is in ordinary language an equivalent expression and saying that it is a thing of a certain sort. This means that it is a constituent of a complex having a unique and ultimate form of unity, the *distributive* unity of a class or kind as opposed to all collective or synthetic forms of unity.

(Stout 1915, 348)

As MacBride puts it, Stout is interpreting general terms, what

Stout calls "abstract nouns", as picking out particular characters (plural) rather than a universal (singular) (137).

Stout criticized the notion of a determinable attribute like color or shape:

Let us next consider what I should call a generic kind of quality, for example, shape in general. Here again it would seem that for Mr. Moore shape in general is not the name of a highly general class of qualities, but of a single quality numerically identical in round shapes and square shapes. I find this a frightfully difficult view to understand. If it is right, we ought to be able to discern in a square shape two qualities, squareness and shape. Speaking for myself, I can do nothing of the sort. The squareness is identical with the shape. There is not squareness and also—shape.

(Stout 1923, 117–18)

Stout instead analyzes claims like "this figure has a shape" into the claim, "this figure has some particular instance of some special sort of shape, e.g., roundness or squareness" (Stout 1923, 118). Speaking for myself, I find Stout's position and argument difficult to understand. Given that he has already analyzed general terms into distributed unities of particulars, why not say that so-called determinable characters are distributed unities of larger collections of particulars? This avoids the problematic locution of "instances" and uses no more than Stout already posits. Also, one could maintain that we can identify determinable and determinate characters in one and the same experienced stuff. Russell has a helpful anecdote:

Some American students took me walking in the spring through a wood on the borders of their campus; it was filled with exquisite wild flowers, but not one of my guides knew the name of even one of them.

(Russell 1930, 54)

To pick on myself: when I experience a tree, I confess that the difference between a birch and a beech evades me. I just experience the determinable character of being a tree. Now I can see that an evergreen is very different from deciduous trees that I

have seen, but these are determinable characters. In this case, I do not experience any species-level determinate character of a tree, but I definitely experience its determinable character.

Stout could reply that what I really experience is a bundle of other determinate characters, like having leaves or needles, having a trunk, and so on. However, this assumes that we know which characters are determinable and which are determinate. That has its own serious difficulties, especially for Stout. His analysis of general terms into classes that could always (by Separation) be further refined into proper subclasses leads to the only determinate characters being my particular characters, so that all general terms pick out determinables.

This gives one part of Moore's argument against Stout. As MacBride reconstructs it (144–52), Moore holds these two claims are inconsistent:

(C) Every character characterizes one thing only.

(Pred) Whatever is predicable of something else is a character.

We gave an argument for (C) above. Stout's view is crucially committed to (Pred). And our language necessarily involves predicating of multiple things. So Stout's view is contradictory.

Stout would reply that this is precisely his point. All general terms pick out distributed unities: there are just particular characters. Stout then has to offer an alternative semantics for claims like "Clifford is a dog" and "Spot is a dog" such that the predication of "is a dog" is different for each animal. Stout (1923, 118) attempts to do just this in responding to Moore.

This chapter also includes a discussion of Stout's criticisms of bare particulars (137–39). Stout argued that we cannot characterize a bare particular because such entities are necessarily devoid of properties. We can only characterize them through the complexes in which they occur, which is just to say that we cannot characterize them:

What then is the subject itself as distinguished from its attributes? It would seem that its whole being must consist in being that to which

its attributes belong. But how can the whole being of anything consist in being related to something else? (Stout 1915, 350)

Stout's criticism is subtle and anticipates some later discussions of bare particulars. One available reply is to insist that complexes or relational facts are fundamental. On that line, particulars are to be characterized in terms of their ontological roles and constituency in complexes: this would imply that no particulars are ever bare in fact even though particulars are bare-ly characterized, apart from their relating relations. Another response is to insist that we can become aware of bare particulars (Bergmann 1960, 609).

MacBride's job on Stout's criticisms of the universal-particular distinction and on Moore's critique of Stout's trope theory is thorough. This chapter also helpfully orients the reader to Stout's philosophical bent by indicating how Stout's earlier work in psychology made him unsympathetic to universals and particulars (130).

## 8. Chapter 8: Russell's Theory of Judgment

Chapter 8 aims to "explain how Russell's conception of the universal-particular distinction evolved under pressure from both his thinking about the nature of judgment and the nature of relations" (153). MacBride says his reading focuses on metaphysical concerns rather than logical ones:

I advance an interpretation that identifies metaphysical concerns as the primary drivers of Russell's development—centrally concerns about the unity of complexes and the direction of relations . . . Other interpretations logical-mathematical concerns as the active forces in Russell's development. (153)

Logic and ontology are coeval for Russell. MacBride does not deny this, but, as I read him, only means to stress his reconstruction around ontological issues in connection with relations and

judgment are more charitable reconstructions than their logical-mathematical ones that point to preventing nonsense judgments, type theory, and the like.

On MacBride's reading (157–58), Russell is concerned with three questions about judgment, relations, and concepts: (1) Are judgments binary or multiple relations? (2) Do relations have direction or are they (in some cases) neutral? (3) Can concepts occur as logical subjects or are they essentially predicative? In his 1903 *Principles*, Russell holds concepts can occur as logical subjects and argues against Frege on this point (161–62). Frege thought that Russell's argument fallaciously confused function-names and functions (Frege 1980, 29 June 2902, 135–36).

In 1903, Russell also held that relations had direction:

By difference of sense I mean, in the present discussion at least, the difference between an asymmetrical relation and its converse. It is a fundamental logical fact that, given any relation  $R$  and any two terms  $a$ ,  $b$ , there are two propositions to be formed of these elements, the one relating  $a$  to  $b$  (which I call  $aRb$ ), the other ( $bRa$ ) relating  $b$  to  $a$ . (Russell 1903, §218)

Russell further accepts that any relation has a converse: "Hence, it would seem, that we must admit that  $R$  and  $\check{R}$  are distinct relations" (Russell 1903, §219). MacBride argues (162–64) that Russell is "troubled by the need to commit to converse relations" as distinct entities differing solely in their direction. In §219 of *Principles*, Russell does not seem particularly troubled by this need, and indeed he argues that the logical difference between asymmetric relations and their converses requires this posit.

MacBride then helpfully distinguishes the unity of propositions from that of judgments (164–66). MacBride rightly notes that Russell's multiple-relation theory of judgment treats propositions, the apparent "object" of judgment, as incomplete symbols, and Russell rejected propositions-as-entities by 1910. So there is no unity of propositions to explain on his view. Still, on his view there remains a difference between truth-apt com-

plexes and truth-inapt lists of entities. The unified act of judging is truth-apt without propositions.

In the 1913 *Theory of Knowledge* manuscript, Russell attempts to use neutral position relations, meant to indicate an entity's place in a relational complex, to eliminate the posit of converses despite admitting that relations have an order (166–70). Russell wants to distinguish  $aRb$  and  $bRa$  without positing a converse relation (Russell 1913/1983, 86). Russell holds " $aRb$ " and " $bRa$ " are not identical in form: their true forms are

$$(\exists\gamma)(aC_1\gamma \ \& \ bC_2\gamma) \quad \text{and} \quad (\exists\gamma)(bC_1\gamma \ \& \ aC_2\gamma),$$

where " $\gamma$ " indicates the complex and  $C_i$  relates a term to a position in  $\gamma$ .

Russell then abandons this view, according to MacBride (171–76), because in his account of truth, two different kinds of judging acts pull Russell in incompatible directions. Russell distinguishes *permutative* and *non-permutative* judging acts. The former are such that permuting their constituents does not result in a different judgment, as in the judging act that " $a$  is identical to  $b$ " whereas the latter are such that permuting their constituents does result in a different judgment, as in " $a$  is taller than  $b$ " (Russell 1913/1983, 144).

This raises what MacBride calls "the problem of externality". As Russell puts it:

Owing to the above construction of associated non-permutative complexes, it is possible to have a belief which is true if there is a certain permutative complex, and is false otherwise; but the permutative complex is not itself the one directly "corresponding" to the belief, but is one whose existence is asserted, by description, in the belief, and is the condition for the existence of the complex which corresponds directly to the belief. In the case we took, if I have a belief whose objects appear verbally to be  $R$ ,  $x_1$ ,  $x_2$ , . . . ,  $x_n$ , there really are other objects, expressed by inflections, order of words, etc., and what I am really believing is: "There is a complex  $\gamma$  in which  $x_1C_1\gamma$ ,  $x_2C_2\gamma$ , etc." . . . The actual complex  $\gamma$  itself, whose existence

is affirmed by description in our associated molecular complex, cannot be directly named, and does not directly correspond with our belief, or with any possible belief. (Russell 1913/1983, 148)

On MacBride's reading, the worry is about permutative judgments such as involve asymmetric relations. Russell wants to distinguish "a is taller than b" from "b is taller than a" without presupposing the notion of order. His solution is to use neutral position relations associated with the complex  $\gamma$ . This complex described by position relations is non-permutative, eliminating the need to distinguish  $aRb$  and  $bRa$  in terms of a relation's sense or order.

Russell then raises a worry for his account of truth:

Where permutative complexes are concerned, our process of obtaining associated non-permutative complexes was rather elaborate, and no doubt open to objection. One special objection is that, in order to regard the associated complexes as non-permutative, we have to regard its atomic constituents,  $x_1C_1\gamma$ ,  $x_2C_2\gamma$ , etc., as really its constituents, and what is more, we have to regard the corresponding propositions as constituents of the proposition "there is a complex  $\gamma$  in which  $x_1C_1\gamma$ ,  $x_2C_2\gamma$ , etc."

(Russell 1913/1983, 154)

As MacBride reads him, Russell is worried about reintroducing objective falsehoods. This happens as follows. The non-permutative complex  $\gamma$  associated with the act of judging that  $a$  is taller than  $b$  has constituents  $a$  in  $C_1$  and  $b$  in  $C_2$ . Because "a is taller than b" is permutative, the act of judging that  $b$  is taller than  $a$  is associated with a different complex  $\eta$  having constituents  $b$  in  $C_1$  and  $a$  in  $C_2$ . One of these judgments is false because they are contraries. But both associated complexes  $\gamma$  and  $\eta$  must exist to differentiate the true act of judgment from the false one. For the two complexes have the same non-logical constituents— $a$ ,  $b$ , and tallness. Further, order was to be explained using neutral position relations  $C_i$ , so that cannot be invoked to distinguish these two permutative acts of judging. It thus seems that the only solution is to say that the various complexes exist even when the act

of judging is false. Problematically, this reintroduces objective complexes when one judges falsely.

Given that Russell abandons neutral relations and retains the multiple-relation theory of judgment in the 1918 logical atomism lectures, MacBride holds that these difficulties led Russell to reconsider claim (3) above: MacBride argues that Russell embraced the view that concepts necessarily have only predicative occurrences (176–82).

Notably, this by itself does not commit Russell to categorical dualism. Russell (1918a, 178) holds that any genuine proper name occurs only in subject position and no other piece of language can stand for a particular: "You can see at once for yourself, therefore, that every other part of speech except for proper names is obviously quite incapable of standing for a particular." As such, one can never put a predicate (picking out a concept or universal) in place of a proper name (picking out a particular). Russell (1918a, 180) holds also that there may be no particulars: "I think it is perfectly possible to suppose that complex things are capable of analysis *ad infinitum* and that you never reach the simple." If so, then assuming concepts or universals are simple, this would be a species of categorical monism, an all-is-facts ontology. As Russell (1918a, 180) says about the view that everything is complex, "I do not think it is true, but it is a thing that one might argue, certainly."

## 9. Chapters 9: Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*

In Chapter 9, MacBride argues that Wittgenstein's picture theory in the *Tractatus* led him to embrace categorical pluralism (183–84). MacBride suggests (184–88) that Russell entertained a proto-picture theory in the 1906–1907 "On the Nature of Truth", according to which the belief that  $A$  is  $B$  is the ideas of  $A$  and  $B$ , plus these ideas being related together in one's mind, but not "a single complex idea" that is the idea of  $A$ -is- $B$  (Russell 1907, 46). The mere fact that Russell entertains belief being constituted

by multiply-related psychological ideas seems insufficient to call it a Wittgensteinian proto-picture theory. By that logic, Locke and probably many others had a proto-picture theory (Locke 1690/1894, Book II, Chapter XXXII, §1, §19). Additional *Tractatus* views seem necessary to distinguish a proto-picture theory from the sensible-sounding suggestion that beliefs have psychological constituents, like logical form being shared between picture and pictured, picturing being in the ambient logical space, or picture elements corresponding one-one with pictured elements (Wittgenstein 1922, 2.13, 2.2, 2.202).

MacBride's real interest in the picture theory is that it can be developed "without so much as mentioning the categories of particular and universal" (188). MacBride argues that Wittgenstein's claims that objects are simple and "hang one in another, like the links in a chain" in atomic facts as indicating Wittgenstein's rejection of both the universal-particular dichotomy and of *a priori* insight into what ontological categories there are (188–97). Wittgenstein is thus a categorical pluralist because he allows the epistemological possibility of many different varieties of simple object to hang one in another in atomic facts.

MacBride's insight recasts Wittgenstein's reticence to speak as to what simples are—how many kinds there are, and what each kind is—in a plausible and more positive light. One might wonder how MacBride's Wittgenstein can explain the predication in elementary propositions like " $fx$ " and " $\phi(x, y)$ " consistent with his *a priori* agnosticism (Wittgenstein 1922, 4.24). Here a distinction between logical categories and ontological ones is helpful and supports MacBride's interpretation: Wittgenstein allows distinguishing logical subject and predicate, but does not insist that these correspond one-one to ontological kinds. This distinction is implicit in MacBride's argument that Wittgenstein transcends the nominalist-realist debate by separating the grammatical need for a predicate from our inquiry into ontological categories (197–202). This is an insightful reconstruction of

Wittgenstein's ontology, or principled lack of an *a priori* one, in the *Tractatus*.

As MacBride reconstructs it, Wittgenstein's picture theory is accompanied by openness to empirical scientific investigation of ontological categories. This attitude is contrasted with MacBride's Russell who "described analytic philosophy as an *a priori* discipline whose subject matter concerns propositions that can be neither proved nor disproved by empirical evidence". This contrast is not necessary to MacBride's argument, which is good, because it is a mistake. Russell explicitly denies that we can be sure there is such a logical form *a priori* and affirms that empirical investigation can settle the matter by supplying an example:

In the question of this logical form that involves two or more verbs you have a curious interlacing of logic with empirical studies, and of course that may occur elsewhere, in this way, that an empirical study gives you an example of a thing having a certain logical form, and you cannot really be sure that there are things having a given logical form except by finding an example, and the finding of an example is itself empirical. Therefore in that way empirical facts are relevant to logic at certain points. (Russell 1918a, 193)

Russell goes on to say that establishing the categories is theoretically possible, but not practically possible for beings in our epistemic position. But this criticism does not affect MacBride's reconstruction of ontology's categories and methods in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*.

## 10. Chapter 10: Ramsey

MacBride argues that Ramsey similarly accepted Wittgenstein's separation of logical categories from ontological ones and embraced categorical pluralism (203–10). While subject-predicate linguistic forms are involved in communicating, they do not, in

Ramsey's view, imply categorical dualism because these linguistic forms cannot be used to deduce the ontological structure of what we communicate about: "Hence there is no essential distinction between the subject of a proposition and its predicate, and no fundamental classification of objects can be based upon such a distinction" (Ramsey 1925, 404).

Ramsey then argues against complex universals on the grounds that any analysis of propositions must be unique. But if there are complex universals like *being wise unless Plato is foolish*, then a proposition has multiple analyses. The proposition  $aRb$  has three analyses:  $a$  has  $Rb$ ,  $b$  has  $aR$ , and  $a$  has  $R$  to  $b$ . Ramsey concludes, "So the theory of complex universals is responsible for an incomprehensible trinity, as senseless as that of theology" (Ramsey 1925, 406). MacBride defends this argument against criticisms from Anscombe, Geach, and Dummett that multiple analyses of propositions are possible (211–14). MacBride suggests that Ramsey's claim is not about linguistic expressions being variously analyzable, but about taking distinct decompositions to correlate each piece to an entity.

On MacBride's reconstruction, Ramsey's rather compelling argument is that the defender of complex universals is committed to freely term-forming (naming) from a given formula. Given a formula " $aRb$ ", we can take " $Rb$ " as a term designating a genuine entity, just as we can for " $R$ " and " $b$ ". Because each expression is a term designating a (simple or complex) entity, we get more than three entities as constituents of the complex picked out by a formula like " $aRb$ ". Ramsey says this absurd, so complex universals are to be rejected.

MacBride's further spin on Ramsey's argument is that it falls out from his Humean philosophy of logic (214–20). According to MacBride, Ramsey was influenced by the *Tractatus* to eschew necessary connections between entities. This led to a rejection of complex universals as follows. Take the tautology  $aRb \equiv aRb$ . If the left and right side can be analyzed differently, as the defender of complex universals allows, then there is a necessary

connection between distinct entities. This is intolerable to Ramsey, who rejects "necessary facts" of logic and logical objects, insisting, "The conclusion of a formal inference must, I feel be in some sense contained in the premisses and not something new" (Ramsey 1927, 161). For Ramsey, the sense in which logical truths are necessary is that they are tautologies in Wittgenstein's sense (Ramsey 1927, 166). This precludes necessary connections among entities derived from logic alone. MacBride's reading helpfully illuminates the connection between Ramsey's ontology and his philosophy of logic here. In the remainder of Chapter 10, this pattern is exhibited again as MacBride reconstructs Ramsey's argument against universals by relating it to *Principia's* second edition (221–30).

## 11. Coda

MacBride holds that Wittgenstein and Ramsey embraced categorical pluralism partly for methodological reasons (230–37). They wanted empirical investigation, if anything, to reveal what kinds of things there are: "They denied any kind of a priori blueprint for how the world is assembled or how we should think of it" (235). It seems like a leap to say that they thereby embraced categorical pluralism: this claim about our knowledge of categories is consistent with categorical monism or dualism.

What, then, is the difference between what we might call categorical agnosticism, the view that we do not yet know how many categories there are, and categorical pluralism? It seems that the latter view requires endorsing that there are at least three categories of entity to distinguish categorical pluralism from dualism. This is consistent with categorical agnosticism about any number of categories beyond three. If empirical investigation is one's basis for claiming that there are at least three categories, then this seems consistent with the methodological openness that MacBride seems to support. Still, Wittgenstein and Ramsey are perhaps more accurately described as categorical agnostics

given that they do not definitively say that there are at least three categories.

Russell has a pessimistic take on the notion of a metaphysical category:

What, exactly, is meant by the word “category”, whether in Aristotle or in Kant and Hegel, I must confess that I have never been able to understand. I do not myself believe that the term “category” is in any way useful in philosophy, as representing any clear idea.

Russell (1945/1967, 222)

In this book, MacBride has shown that Russell had plenty of company. It might even have been universal—and still may be today. Accordingly, and fittingly for a genealogy, in this book MacBride does not explain what a category is. It seems at least this much is true: there are different notions of category—linguistic, logical, and ontological at least—to be distinguished and interrelated according to the philosophical methodology of a past (or present) philosopher. In developing these distinctions and applying them to past figures like the ones MacBride considers, or to ourselves, one should reckon with this particular book.

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