Revisiting Moore's Metaphysics

Herbert Hochberg

University of Austin

Abstract

The paper reexamines Moore's early (1890s-1903) metaphysics and critically examines some recent discussion (Bell, MacBride) of both Moore's metaphysics and the significance of the latter for his more well-known works of the early 20th century. In doing so it focuses on (1) the distinction between natural and non-natural properties, (2) problems regarding universals, relations, particulars, "tropes" and predication, and (3) the matter of "intentionality"—both as issues and as they arise in Moore's early writings.

Keywords: universal, particular, relation, trope, existence, proposition, natural.

A topic of Moore's dissertation works in 1897 and 1898 (Moore 2011) on the metaphysical basis of ethics suggests that key ideas in the classic *Principia Ethica* of 1903 can be understood in terms of his metaphysics or ontology of the period. This is especially so with respect to his celebrated claim that value properties are non-natural properties. That suggestion was set out in a 1962 paper examining a perplexing and odd ontology developed by the man later known as a, if not *the*, philosopher of *common sense*—a man celebrated for proving that two human hands exist by holding up both of his hands and, with appropriate gestures, asserting "Here is one hand, and here is another." That became a well-known example employed by one of the founding fathers of the development of the 20th century analytic tradition in British philosophy.

1. The pattern of 1899

While the realistic metaphysics that underlay Moore's widely discussed distinction has been reincarnated on the contemporary scene in a variety of modes, what is of concern here is simply the current revival of interest in Moore's early views. Such views culminated in the attack on idealism that he and Russell developed and sustained in the first quarter of the twentieth century and is now part of that century's history of philosophy. Yet, one of the questions currently being raised is whether Moore was attacking idealism at all, since he is allegedly taken to have derived his views from Franz Brentano and differed in an almost casual way, almost as an afterthought, by not taking a conscious act and its ob-

ject to form an organic whole. To take the act and object to do so would lead one to hold that you cannot have one part of such a whole without the other part. It would be a case of a supposed *internal connection*—a key idea for thinking in terms of the connection of everything with everything else that leads to the idealist's notion of a holistic *Absolute.* Moore started out in 1899 with the view that the ultimate constituents of Reality were concepts—'objects' of thought—that were general ideas or universals grasped by, but neither generated by nor requiring, either minds or acts of mind. He would in 1901 compare such universal concepts to *Platonic Ideas*. On his early view, particular objects of experience, like red circles or experiences of pleasure, not being universal concepts, are not among the ultimate entities. Far from thinking that general concepts are particulars in time (and space, in some cases), as Bell (1999) thinks Moore does, Moore clearly takes the ultimate entities—entities that *are* or *be*—to be universal concepts or meanings. He even explicitly says so. What causes commentators a problem, however, is that only particulars are implicitly said to exist, where a particular is understood to either exist in time or in both time and space. The operational distinction is between what entities have *Being*, but do not exist, and what exists in time (and space). This leads to the basic theme of the present discussion.

A major change, and one most important in the development of 20th century *analytic realism*, took place in Moore's thought in the short interval between his writings of 1897-99 and his 1900-01 paper "Identity." This involves an argument that Moore had developed by the end of 1900. That argument is twofold, and both parts of it are now well known. One part consists of an argument for universals that became, in Russell's 1911 version, the standard argument for the reality of universals in the 20th century. The other part is an argument against individuation by relational difference and the resulting conclusion that numerical diversity could not be reduced to conceptual diversity. The rejection of a form of the *identity of indiscernibles* followed, as Moore noted. This, in turn, involved rejecting a fundamental theme of the 1899 paper. In that paper Moore had taken relations to ground the diversity of objects and had thus held to a simple version of the identity of indiscernibles: *to differ is to differ conceptually* (in a property). The later argument thus became an argument for the existence of basic particulars—entities that differed from each other but were conceptually the same. Such basic particulars, which grounded the diversity of other objects were simply or *numerically* different. For Moore these were tropes, not bare particulars or substrata. The line of argument he developed was that not everything was a universal or complex of universals, and this was in direct opposition to a basic theme of his 1899 paper.

The major shift in Moore's thought can then be seen to have focused on the nature of *diversity*. Thus in 1900-01 he distinguished two kinds of diversity—conceptual difference and numerical diversity. This almost flipped around Peter Abelard's early 12th century distinction between substantial diversity and numerical diversity. For Abelard, numerical diversity amounted to a difference in the application of predicates. Such a difference allowed for diversity to arise in connection with one substance. Thus a wax statue was made of wax, while the *substantially identical* piece of wax that it was made of was not itself made of wax. Abelard was interested in a theological issue where such a distinction could prove useful and, given the times, dangerous to employ. Moore was interested in the case of the universal Redness differing from the universal Yellow-

ness *conceptually*, as they are diverse concepts or "universal meanings," as well as *numerically* diverse. He also took Redness to be conceptually identical with numerous red tropes—instances of the universal that were contained by particular red objects. Such tropes were held to be conceptually identical with each other, as well as with the universal, while differing numerically from the latter and from each other.

In the earlier paper of 1899 Moore had been led by his views on propositions and existence to *implicitly* introduce tropes as complexes of concepts. This requires explanation. Consider a perception of a red circle, A, and a judgment, (J), *that A is red*. For Moore, (J), considered as a proposition, and not as an act of judging, is taken as a complex of concepts, following a pattern reminiscent of F. H. Bradley's having taken such a proposition to be a *complex concept*. Moore also took *the concept of A* as well as *the object A* to be complexes of concepts. Thus objects, as well as complex concepts were complexes composed of concepts. This also followed Bradley's discussions of the problems of subject-predicate judgments, and Moore notes Bradley in his discussion.

> Now to Mr. Bradley's argument that "the idea in judgment is the universal meaning" I have nothing to add. It appears to me conclusive, as against those, of whom there have been too many, who have treated the idea as a mental state (Moore 1899: 177).

He does not note that it also follows Bradley's construal of all predicative judgments as existential judgments.

In Moore's analysis, the details come through in piecemeal fashion. The proposition (J) is a complex of concepts including Redness and other concepts in a connecting relation. This presents an immediate problem as Moore has two opposed ideas guiding his discussion. One is that the truth of a proposition is not based on its relation to anything external to the proposition. He thus explicitly rejects any form of a correspondence theory of truth in 1899 and holds, instead, that truth is a matter of *the way* the component concepts forming a proposition are joined. He thinks in terms of a truth-forming connection and a false-forming connection (or form, relation) that connects the other concepts that make up the proposition.

> What kind of relation makes a proposition true, what false, cannot be further defined, but must be immediately recognized (Moore 1899: 180).

One can also read Moore, as MacBride does, to take there to be, as Moore says, concepts of truth and falsity that are components of propositions. The single proposition forming relation then would be truth-making or false-making in combining one or the other with the remaining concepts in the proposition. As I see it, Moore's discussion better fits taking there to be different truth-forming and fact-forming connecting relations that are internal to the proposition. Such connections are then also "universal meanings" or concepts. That also provides a better account of his taking propositions to be necessarily true or necessarily false.

Moore further thinks that the proposition (J) is true in that Redness is one of the concepts that makes up the complex of concepts that form (J). This is a familiar theme regarding truth and gives rise to a problem. *A*, as a complex of

concepts, is the subject of which we predicate Redness. Moore wants to *deconstruct* such a use of the 'is' of predication into the claim that Redness is one of the concepts that make up *A*. Hence it is like saying that Redness is a *part of A* or that Redness is *in A*. The composite entity that is *A* is what is the 'truth-maker'. Moreover, the truth making connection is blended with the proposition forming relation that also, strangely, appears to form the object, *A*. But that obviously doesn't work out so simply. To see why, we will shift our focus to the proposition '*A exists*'.

Moore holds that existential proposition to be true, in the present case. How does he construe it? Like all propositions, that existential proposition is a complex of concepts. Moreover, one can see why Moore, who takes *Existence* to be a concept among concepts, holds that it contains *Existence* joined to the other concepts that make up *A*. In the process, he also takes a temporal concept, a date variably represented by the concept *Now*, to be a constituent of *A*. (We can neglect the spatial concept that is likely involved.) What then is the difference between the true proposition—*A Exists*—and the object *A*? Moore sees none and *identifies* existent objects such as *A*, which are temporal particulars, with true existential propositions. If you are tempted to ask whether they are conceptually or numerically identical, you must recall that we are considering the 1899 paper which lacks that distinction of a year later. In 1899 Moore holds that to differ is to differ conceptually. That aside, the proposition that *A* exists thus contains the concepts that make up what we might call a complex concept of *A* (*Redness*, *Circularity* and *Now* in the example) joined to the concept *Existence* by a connecting relation that *internally grounds* the proposition's being true, rather than false. That tempts one to say that if *A exists* it does so *necessarily*. This is connected to a general criticism of bundle theories of objects: such theories purportedly turn true subject-predicate propositions into necessary truths.

Such a criticism has a point but is neither clearly put nor viable, as one can argue along the lines of Russell's rejection of that claim during the 1940s. Russell noted that a proposition's being analytic is a matter of logic and, perhaps, of the definition or meaning of terms. The point was that it depends on whether one takes the sign '*A*', referring to *A*, as a logically proper name (primitive descriptive constant of appropriate type) or as an abbreviation. What he was doing was holding that one could use a primitive constant for a complex object, and not as an abbreviation for an expression embodying or reflecting an analysis of the object. However, there is another point.

Even if the sign '*A*' is construed as an abbreviation for a definite description, involving predicates referring to the properties occurring in the object's analysis, we would not have an analytic proposition. Rather, we would have an existential claim that a certain set of properties were conjoined or com-present. Russell, one recalls, had employed such a connecting relation in shifting to a bundle analysis of particulars in the 1940s. For, strange as it seems when now reading the early Moore, Russell had actually reverted to a variant of the view Moore held in 1899. I would also claim, and once did, that Bradley and Bosanquet held a similar view. (They, however, introduced a major addition since they held that all the complexes of concepts that formed true propositions were themselves items in the complex that was the one *Real* entity, *The Absolute*.)

Moore's pattern implicitly brings in another entity that is involved in his analysis. In addition to the object *A* there is (are) the complex concept(s) that is

(are) characterized as being the (a) 'concept of *A'*. It is open to hold that such a concept can join with *Existence* in the truth-forming or false-forming relation that combines concepts into propositions. Alternatively, one can hold that an object, such as *A*, is composed of the ultimate simple concepts (in *the* concept of *A*) joined to a simple concept, *Existence*, that forms the object *A*. We merely take a certain selection of concepts to indicate the object *had in mind* in judging that *A* is red or that *A* exists, as in the familiar case of Bradley's discussion of judgments regarding a piece of sugar being white, sweet, etc. Such a pattern is of special interest in that Russell's celebrated theory of (definite) descriptions was shortly to appear.

2. A major complication and a faulty analysis

Moore went on to consider the proposition that *Redness* exists, which while apparently a simpler existential proposition than the existential proposition about *A*, takes us directly into a major problem for his view. On that view such a simple existential proposition contains only the concept *Redness*, the concept *Existence*, a temporal concept, *Now*, and, perhaps, a spatial location—all connected by the appropriate truth-forming relation.

Aside from all the intricacies and problems of the pattern, one thing clearly emerges: such a complex *cannot be* identified with the simple universal concept *Redness*. It is, rather, a trope of *Redness*—a trope that is not a simple on Moore's pattern, but a complex temporal existent. Such a complex is identified with the existential proposition that *Redness exists now*. The universal *Redness* is not an existent, since it is not such a complex temporal particular, while a trope *in* a specific object A, the *Redness* of A, is a particular existent that is *in* A. Though, for Moore, the universal was a simple while the *Redness*-of-*A* was a complex, Bell confuses the two. Once he does that he can write a paper such as the one he has written. That is the simple point on which Bell's analysis rests—the confusion of the universal quality with its particular trope instances.

Given Moore's pattern it is easy to see that two basic claims Bell makes:

(a) Moore's 1899 paper is derivative from Moore's reading of Brentano
(b) Moore's universal concepts are really temporal particulars

are wrong and misconstrue much of what Moore does and the reasons he does what he does. Bell, understandably, appears to get lost in the web Moore created in his early discussions of concepts, judgments, truth and existence. That is understandable as Moore himself got lost in it when writing Principia Ethica. Bell's misreading is, in part, caused by his seeking to support his claim of (b) in terms of (a). He does this by stressing Moore's use of a variant of the 'act-object' distinction in the widely known classic "The Refutation of Idealism" of 1903. But Moore undoubtedly already had his own variant of Platonic realism, and the theme of the independence of the universal Ideas, from their much earlier Greek origins that he had studied. Even the tropes he implicitly introduces are in Plato, as Moore noted in 1901.

MacBride takes Bell's paper as a foil for setting out his own views, challenging the assertion that Moore's concepts were particulars and that Moore was setting out a type of mereological framework that took philosophical analysis to consist of analyzing complex particulars into constituent parts of the same kind of entity—particulars in this case. Thus, for Bell, the constituent concepts

of particulars must also be particulars. This supposedly is indicated, as Bell reads Moore, by noting that Moore would write that: "A thing becomes intelligible first when it is analyzed into its constituent concepts" (Moore 1899: 182).

According to Bell, what is 'universal' and an 'attribute' does not lend itself to such a *mereological* analysis. He doesn't say exactly why, but one aspect is obvious. A bundle view that takes an object to be composed of qualities as parts does not make use, on the surface at least, of predicative attribution or exemplification. Rather, such a view appears to adopt a pattern of parts and wholes, with a quality being a part of, rather than an *adjective* of, the whole.

The point is clear if one understands its limitations. But the notion of a universal has been construed in different ways in various contexts. If diverse wholes share the same quality as a part, the quality is general or common or, as one says, *universal*. This was one of the senses that Russell had noted, and it is helpful to recall Nelson Goodman's well known and significant work in *The Structure of Appearance*. The mereological calculus Goodman had constructed was construed in terms of elements like *Redness*, and not in terms of diverse tropes of *Redness*. For Goodman, such tropes were complexes of such a common *Redness* and common temporal and spatial qualities. He classified as *nominalist* an analysis (or the formal schema employed in setting one out) that recognized only one kind of basic entity. Whether one started with tropes or with entities like *Redness*, one recognized only particulars so long as there were not entities of diverse kinds or *types* that were taken as *simple*. To get a distinct entity from diverse elements, x, y, etc., one had to compound them in some way. Goodman rejected the generation of a domain of entities from a single entity, x, say, by introducing some operator, such as one that forms classes or properties—'the unit class of x' or 'the property of being x'. He also rejected starting with two types, particulars x, y, etc. *and* properties, f, g, etc., in a predicate calculus style framework along the structural lines of *Principia Mathematica*.

In that sense the entities of Goodman's calculus could be called 'individuals' or 'particulars', even if they were entities like *Redness* and *Yellowness* that were common to more complex entities, like A and B. Goodman's concern was not with what the basic entities were but with not generating entities in the way alternative views allowed, such as classes from things and facts from constituents. This led him to adopt a mereological style calculus of individuals, generating complex individuals from simple ones.

In yet another way of distinguishing particulars from universals that Russell had noted, a universal was an entity that could be exemplified by something else, as well as something that could, in turn, exemplify something (of another Russellian type). A particular could only exemplify and not be exemplified. Universals were thus *predicables* that were also *terms* for other, higher order, *predicables*. On Moore's early view, Redness, being common to various complexes that it was a component of, was a general or common property or *concept* (as in Bradley)—a universal entity for Moore in that sense. It was also an 'abstract' entity in not being temporal, and, hence, like a number, rather than an object like A or a trope. (As a simple, it could not contain a temporal quality.) The tropes of Plato, and perhaps of Aristotle, the individual accidents of some medieval philosophers and the later *moments* of the Austrian tradition are neither common nor abstract elements. The "tallness in *Theaetetus*" was particular to *Theaetetus*, and not something that could be the tallness in anyone else, Greek or

barbarian. It is thus odd to call entities like Redness itself, 'particulars', as Russell did in the version of the bundle view he developed in 1940-1948, He did so precisely because they were not exemplified by, but, rather, 'contained in' the objects they thereby *qualified*. Yet, for Russell, they were clearly "universals" in being common to objects, rather than particularized tropes that were unique to objects. The same is obviously true of Moore in 1899, a time when Russell was thinking of *universals* as being predicables. It was in the 1940 book, where he set out a bundle view, that he clearly and explicitly distinguished between various senses of the term 'universal'. It was clear what and why he said what he did. He replaced standard exemplification of universals by particulars in 1940 by adopting a view recalling Moore's writings of 1899 and 1900-01, since the apparatus of Russell's later bundle view resembles a mereological style calculus and recalls Moore's writings of almost a half-century earlier. It is interesting that Goodman had attended Russell's lectures, at Harvard in the spring of 1940, that were published as *An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth*.

In a way the whole 'issue' can be seen as merely a matter of terminology, if one emphasizes the mark of 'universality' as relying on what is 'attributable' or 'predicable'.

Bell's claims substantially depend on such a simple terminological matter. That matter also led Russell to use the term 'particular' for what was clearly the universal Redness, a common constituent of the circles *A* and *B* in our example. This is transparently clear when we think of Russell's usage in connection with his rejecting, in 1940, the well-known argument for basic particulars that he and Moore had set out many years before. One of the two reasons Russell had for later rejecting the argument was to have the principle of the identity of indiscernibles follow from the ontological analysis of objects. In this he can be seen to have dramatically reversed Moore's early rejection of that 'principle' by removing basic particulars as fundamental elements and taking only universal meanings to be such elements.

Russell's world of 1940 was also a world in which universals were the ultimate entities. Ordinary objects of experience, being compounds of such elements, were themselves common constituents of further complexes. It was a *world of universals*, whatever one calls them, from the basic entities up through partial complexes and to the total complexes of compresence.[1] Specifically, it was so in that, first, the basic entities were apprehended *attributes* that could be common components of objects like *A* and *B*; and, second, all entities were logically of the same kind. Part of the oddity of use is that qualities are common *qualia*, hence specifically not tropes.

Bell is simply reflecting a feature of bundle analyses of objects like *A* when he proceeds to say that Moore's pattern: "inevitably tends to favour the particular and the individual at the expense of whatever is *general or attributive*" (Bell 1999: 205).[2]

That clearly and explicitly mixes the two senses of universal—*being general* and *being attributible*. Bell also cites the concluding summary of "The Nature of

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[1] Questions obviously arise concerning time, relations, implicit facts, events and the fitting of the physical world, its temporal and spatial properties and relations to the basically phenomenalistic realms Russell starts with. These he addressed in some detail in his 1948 *Human Knowledge its Scope and Limits*.
[2] Emphasis added.

Judgment" as apparently conclusive evidence for his argument that Moore is a 'particularist'.

> A concept is not in any intelligible sense an 'adjective'… For we must, if we are to be consistent, describe what appears to be most substantive as no more than a collection of such supposed adjectives (Moore 1898: 192-93).

As Fraser MacBride notes, this quotation hardly supports Bell's claim as it is easily read to simply claim that universal concepts are not "adjectives" of what they qualify since they are components of such objects. As components that in relation form the objects and as ultimate entities in Moore's ontology, such qualities are, in a clear use of 'substance', the substances of the world. One sees again, how the diverse senses of *universal* come into play. If one supplies the context that has been left out of the quotation it becomes even clearer:

> A concept is not in any intelligible sense an 'adjective,' as if there were something substantive, more ultimate than it. For we must, if we are to be consistent, describe what appears to be most substantive as no more than a collection of such supposed adjectives: and thus, in the end, the concept turns out to be the only substantive or subject, and no one concept either more or less an adjective than any other. From our description of a judgment, there must, then, disappear all reference either to our mind or to the world. Neither of these can furnish 'ground' for anything, save in so far as they are complex judgments. The nature of the judgment is more ultimate than either, and less ultimate only than the nature of its constituents—the nature of the concept or logical idea (Moore 1899: 192-93).

Reading this more complete passage carefully, one sees that concepts are taken to be substantive in exactly the sense that Russell will call common qualities 'particulars' in 1940-48. They are not adjectives or predicables of objects but components of such complexes of concepts. However, they are also terms of relations that form both *objects*, such as *A*, and true and false *propositions*. A matter Moore does not explicitly focus on is whether such relations themselves are among the universal concepts. Since he does speak of the concept truth one can take him to recognize, by recognizing a truth-forming relation that is obviously not particular to one true proposition, that they are also universals. This fits with Moore's later persistent puzzling about the way relations were predicable of objects and the way attributes were predicable.

Objects are simply complexes of concepts (true existential propositions) in a relation or in a number of inter-connecting dyadic relations. That is one thing involved in the above quotation. Another is that the concepts, as ultimate entities, are more ultimate than propositions, which in turn are more ultimate than either mind or the world of objects. The reference to the 'world' is of special interest. It was earlier taken in the context of a correspondence theory of truth, which Moore rejected. Such a theory viewed "the world" as the ground of truth of true propositions. In opposing this Moore held to the internal nature of truth—internal to the proposition—and rejected a world apart from a realm of Ideas and propositions as embodying truth and ultimate Being. How closer to Plato could one get at the dawn of the 20th century? Brentano's particularist tropes clearly do not take center stage in Moore's tale of the ascent into the light of the eternal realm of Ideas and propositions. In a way, the tangle of Ideas and

tropes will come to front and center with the apprehension of the Idea—Goodness-in-itself—in 1903 and the distinction between natural and non-natural properties.

Moore's early discussion does not bring in either mental acts or minds. *Truth* not only does not require an external ground of truth—external to the proposition; it is also totally separated from minds or mental acts. The act-object distinction is a relatively trivial consequence of the Platonism. The Ideas, along with the network of their propositional combinations, are there to be apprehended. In 1903 the act-object distinction will play a role, but not a defining role, in a specific and celebrated line of argument offered to refute idealism. Yet it is a part of the argument that has been somewhat overplayed by subsequent admirers and critics alike.

"The Refutation of Idealism" contains more than one argument, and a key argument is not dependent on the act-object distinction but, rather, seems to imply it. That argument is, simply put, that the idea of *Existence* neither contains the idea of *Being Perceived* nor is identical with it. Hence, it cannot follow that what exists must be perceived. What is worth noting is not only how that fits Moore's whole early period but how it especially jibes with the key theme of the other celebrated work published in 1903, *Principia Ethica*. There, recall, a key theme was that *Goodness* (idea, property) neither contained *Pleasure* (idea, property) nor was identical with it. That version of the argument has become too well known and too frequently praised and criticized to require repeating. Hence, like the idealists who were confused about *Existence*, the pleasure theorists were confused about *Goodness*.

3. Reading Moore

Suppose we go back almost a thousand years prior to Moore to the early years of Western medieval philosophy when there was a focus on the problems of individuation and universals. For some, in those years, to understand what a species like humanity is was to understand *its* 'definition'—*being a rational animal*, say. The species was taken by some to be composed of parts—sometimes characterized as the genus or 'matter', *animal*, and the differentia or 'form', *rationality*. They thus employed the familiar model of matter being informed by forms. That pattern was applied to the present case by construing a species in terms of the underlying genus being 'modified' by a limiting form—*rationality*, for example. In other words the parts were understood in terms of being connected by some variant of a form inhering in matter to compose a whole. This has nothing to do with mereology, as one generally understands that—though one can easily use terms like *part* and *whole* in an obvious sense which allows for universals to be parts of other, more complex, universals. One of the most important early debates involved the consequences of what was involved in taking a differentia, *rationality*, to modify or join a genus, *animality* to form a species.

To take ordinary particulars to have properties as parts is not to automatically take such parts to be particulars. Nor is it to automatically take such objects, understood as such complexes, to be complex properties rather than complexes of properties. Those are additional moves that are not entailed by the initial move. But there is another complication. As one reads Moore it becomes perfectly clear that in his early years he takes there to be both the universal properties or concepts, Redness, and the particular instances—the Redness of

circle *A*, as opposed to the Redness of circle *B*. He does not specifically say this in 1899, but he does clearly imply it by what he does say when he holds that "Redness exists." Though such a proposition might appear to contain only the concepts Existence and Redness, on Moore's 1899 analysis. But Moore asserts that:

> If now we take the existential proposition "Red exists," we have an example of the type required. 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. If it is true, it is necessarily true, and if false, necessarily false (Moore 1899: 189-190).

Thus we have an existential proposition that also contains a temporal concept or date, *now*, and perhaps a spatial location as well, *here*, that he simply ignores at this point. Aside from the intricacies and problems of the resulting pattern that is being woven, one thing clearly emerges: the complex entity that we are now talking about, a propositional entity that is a complex composed of the universal concept Redness, a temporal concept, and the concept Existence in a relational connection *cannot be* the simple universal concept Redness (or *of Redness* here— this raises a complication that I ignore but will touch on below). It must be, like a trope of Redness, a temporal entity that is not a simple, but a complex. That complex is identified, not with the universal Idea, Redness, but with the existential proposition that Redness exists now. The universal Redness is not an existent, since it is not in time. It is a specific trope, as the Redness-of-*A*, which is an existent and a particular. Redness, moreover, is simple, while the Redness-of-*A* is a complex. Such features of Moore's pattern indicate that two basic claims Bell makes are mistaken. Those claims are, first, that Moore's 1899 paper is derived from his reading of Brentano, and, second, that Moore's concepts are not universals at all but, like medieval individual accidents, they are the temporal particulars or moments of the Austrian philosophers.

It seems as if Bell gets lost, as one easily does, in the web Moore created *via* his discussion of concepts and existence. The misreading is partially caused by Bell's stressing Moore's employing the 'act-object' distinction in the later "The Refutation of Idealism." That distinction is of course associated closely with Brentano in present discussions. However, Moore undoubtedly already had his variant of Platonic realism, and the independence of the universal Ideas, from much earlier Greek sources. Even the tropes or moments or individual accidents are in Plato, as Moore notes in mentioning Plato's *Phaedo*. We might also recall that Russell, in the 1940s, took common properties, like Redness, as components of objects, but called such components 'particulars'. He did so simply because they were no longer attributed as predicables of objects, but were constituents of such objects. So while they were particulars, they were in a clear sense common attributes of diverse objects. The objects themselves are also, one might note, common properties in that they are logically of the same 'kind' or 'type' as their component qualities. In short, for Russell, complexes of qualities—*complexes of compresence*—were construed as complex qualities.

Concepts are clearly universal qualitative concepts for Moore in the 1898 paper. Problems arise for some, first, due to his introducing, in addition, particular instances in the unclear and implicit way that he does in 1899; second, by his discussion of existence and his holding that existents are composites that contain the concept *existence*; third, by his distinguishing *being* from *existing*; fourth, his using the term 'Redness' to speak of both the universal concept and of particular Rednesses that exist at times; and, fifth, being captivated by the idea that objects like *A* and *B*, as well as temporal, particular Rednesses, are *existential propositions*.

Such things are what led to my speaking, in the early paper on Moore, of there being 'nominalist' aspects in Moore's metaphysics. That was not to say, as I reiterated in two following pieces, that Moore was a nominalist, as some critics had misunderstood. Universal concepts were not existents, for Moore, but they were ultimate constituents of what did exist, according to the ontology of 1899. This distinction between being and existence persisted in his, and Russell's writings, as one especially notes in their almost simultaneously written *The Problems of Philosophy* and *Some Main Problems of Philosophy*.

Existents, for Moore, were taken in nominalist fashion as what existed in time. That is true. This made them particulars, by the conception of the particular-universal distinction that takes a particular to be a temporal existent while a universal concept does not so exist. They are no more temporal than numbers, if one acknowledges such abstract entities. Such eternal things are then sometimes said *to have Being*. The oddity of phrasing was compounded by his perplexing identification of objects with existential propositions—propositions that contained the concepts that composed what one might think of as a description of the object together with the concept *Existence*. One is tempted to speak of the concept of the object being joined with Existence, and Moore does sometimes write as if he is thinking in that way. If so, such a concept would seem to be something like a composite of concepts that give a uniquely indicating description of the object, employing, in cases like that of *A* and *B*, spatio-temporal concepts.[3] Moore did not go into detail about this, and problems obviously lurk in doing so. To tackle it would invite one to speak gibberish in short order. However, it is safe to say that Moore held there to be both temporal moments and spatial locations. Both such moments and locations, however else construed, clearly can be common to various complexes of concepts. It is thus equally clear that a complex composed of Redness and Now could be a complex of concepts that is not an existent particular object, as it lacks the concept of Existence. So one is tempted to think of it as a *concept of* a particular Redness trope that is not itself such a trope. That is as far as I will go into this stew. What is easy to see though, is that for Moore, objects like A and B are particulars, as are their component quality instances, such as the Redness-of-*A*, but, ultimately, both the objects and such instances are themselves composed of common concepts. That is the view of 1899.

I think it worth noting, given Quine's importance in the history of the analytic tradition, that if you believe (along lines recalling Duns Scotus) that there are individuating properties like the property of being-Socrates, *Socratizing* or *Socratizes*, then such a property is sensibly predicated, either truly or falsely, of

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[3] To be "in time", one might suppose, would be to contain both a temporal concept and Existence.

particular things. Particulars, in what I take to be an essential sense of that notion, one Russell emphasized in 1903, are not exemplifiable. On a linguistic variant of that theme, the term 'Socratizes' was treated by Quine as a predicate—which was one point of introducing such an expression in the first place. That was part of Quine's well-known attempt to reprocess proper names into predicates in order to eliminate such indexical signs from a schema. That device helps to separate what goes on in Moore from what Bell thinks must be going on. There is no need to hold that even Moore's individual concepts, such as the concept 'of' Redness are particulars themselves, let alone the clearly universal concept Redness itself. It is the universal that is apprehended when one judges that—Red(ness) ≠ Yellow(ness)—or that Red is darker than Yellow. In fact just consider the judgment that two particular instances of Redness are instances of one and the same universal concept—a type of judgment that will enter explicitly into Moore's 1900-1901 paper "Identity."

What we have in his discussion of Redness in 1899 is something reminiscent of a once much discussed Fregean problem concerning reference to concepts. Recognizing concepts, like being a horse, one oddly did not refer to such a concept by employing the phrase "the concept horse." So, oddly for Moore, recognizing the concept Redness, one does not truly assert its existence when one, perceiving *A*, truly judges that: Redness exists (here, now). What exists in time (and space) is the Redness-of-*A*, and not Redness. Ignoring the distinction or confusing the two, as I thought Moore had sometimes done, a reader can take Moore's concepts as particulars. I thought, in the 1962 paper, that Moore sometimes wrote, in 1898, as if he himself mingled the two—as it easy to do on such a view. Essentially that is what Bell does in his recent paper. Or to put it differently, he avoids literally mixing the two because he collapses the one into the other.

4. Bell's Misreading

Bell's discussion of Moore employs the following declaration:

> Moore's whole/part theory embodies three basic principles. The first is now generally referred to as the *principle of mereological essentialism,* and states that a whole is internally related to its component parts. In other words, if *x* is a part of *W,* then *W* is necessarily such that it has *x* as a part. As Hylton points out, this is the *only* internal relation that was acknowledged by Moore at this time. The second principle is methodological—we might call it the *principle of mereological adequacy.* It states that all forms of complexity (and hence all forms of analysis) involve only whole/part and part/part relations. And, thirdly, at least until 1902, Moore also subscribed to a strong *principle of mereological atomism,* namely, that in any complex whole the parts are detachable: each part could exist independently of any whole in which it happens to participate (Bell 1999: 202-203).

Much in this is simply not true. It is not true that Redness could exist by itself, as Redness does not exist at all.

Moore's later statement in *Principia Ethica* that such color properties can exist by themselves, apart from objects like *A* and *B*, as they are "natural properties," does involve a shift to talk about tropes. That is actually the basis for the distinction between 'natural' and 'non-natural' properties. In 1903 Moore did

mix Redness with the Redness-of-*A*, etc. in *Principia*. Or, at least he was confused, as he later honestly and famously replied to Broad's objection to his claim by saying that he had no idea what he was talking about then.

Moreover, *part-of* is hardly the only internal relation in Moore, assuming it is a relation at all. There are the truth making and false making compositional relations that are specifically held to be internal and formative of propositions and objects, in the case of true existential propositions. There are also the various relations between concepts that compose complexes that are not existential propositions. Part-of, moreover, is clearly construed in terms of the compresence type of relation that provides for a complex of concepts. To say a concept is a component or part of a proposition is to say it enters into one of a set of relations that form the proposition. Totally unlike a mereological system, Moore recognizes what mereologists systematically tend to deny, the connecting relations formative of complexes—the purportedly defined common mereological sign '+' used to signify a sum such as '*A* + *B*'. Moore is philosophically acute in recognizing that, structurally considered, the definition goes the other way. Finally, it is simply not true that for any part of any whole it could exist apart. No universal concept exists at all, and yet they are the ultimate parts of all complexes. Moreover, existents must contain the concept of existence. No complex that does not contain it thereby exists. And so on. Finally, we must recall that there are various relations involved in some way internally in concepts. Moore surely took these as universal concepts of a special kind and, consequently, not as existents.

The act-object dichotomy that Moore employed in "The Refutation of Idealism" —along with the 'act-psychology' of a time—undoubtedly played some role in Moore's writing. Moore and Russell, as is well known, read and wrote about the Austrian philosophers. But it is far more likely that Moore's early pattern of the analysis of objects into universal concepts in relation goes back to Plato and to Moore's familiarity with Bradley. The kind of bundle view he is developing is akin to more local philosophical patterns, those of Bradley's *Appearance and Reality* and Bosanquet's *Essentials of Logic*, than to what occurs in Brentano.

The move to the act-object distinction that is prominent in the 1903 paper is not at all far removed from the simple recognition of universal concepts being independent of the mental experiences that apprehend them. When he moves from Moore's implicitly bringing in Redness tropes in 1899 to taking him to thereby replace the universal concepts he explicitly begins with, as Moore seems to have done in *Principia Ethica*, Bell rearranges what takes place in Moore. In 1903, in trying to articulate an ontological difference of kind between Yellow and Good in *Principia Ethica*, and thus provide an ontological ground for the difference between value and fact, he does appear to confuse trope instances with what he once took to be universal concepts. But that is certainly not to be taken as evidence of the non-being of universals in the 1899 paper, and certainly not, in its development in 1900-01. That is, as one says, crystal clear from the latter paper.

In 1903, Moore said what he did because he was thinking of natural properties as the particular tropes—that exist like atoms of old—and are constituents of objects like *A* and *B*. Non-natural properties were non-temporal universal concepts and relations. To put it more clearly, the natural properties of *Principia Ethica* are the particular instances of the universal concepts of 1899 and 1901. The

universals themselves are not natural properties that exist in time (and space). When we predicate a universal like Redness truly, we have a case where a trope is a constituent of an object and such a trope instantiates the universal Redness. It is a familiar tripartite schema if we recall again the Tallness in *Theaetetus* and the Tallness itself of Plato's *Phaedo*. A universal property like Goodness is emphatically non-natural in that there are no corresponding tropes of such universals. Probably relations are not as well. For Moore continually takes the predication of attributes to be fundamentally different from the predication of relations. And it is not merely a matter of their *addicity*. It is likely a matter of their not having corresponding tropes, as is the case with value properties.

Consider again the beautiful red circles, A and B. They are red in virtue of Red-1 and Red-2 that are particular constituents, respectively, of the circles. Red-1 and Red-2 are of a kind in that, by 1901, they are simple entities that do not contain Redness but *exemplify* it. Beauty is directly exemplified by both *A* and *B* without benefit of an intermediary trope. Hence, the value properties become non-natural while Redness is 'natural' given its trope instances. That is, as in the case of universals and particulars, different distinctions are involved. One distinguishes between a natural and a non-natural property in terms of (1) Being in time and not being in time, (2) being a component of what is qualified and being predicable of what is qualified, (3) being a universal and being a trope, (4) existing as opposed to Being. These various senses mingle and intersect in various ways that further complicates the matter. In any case, Moore arrives at the terminology and its uses via mixing tropes, in time (and space) with their universals in his discussion. Thus while speaking of Yellow he ignores the universal and indicates trope instances in *Principia Ethica*. In the case of Good and Beauty he speaks of the universal. So the difference, natural vs. non-natural, entered the philosophical arena in confusion.

The Moorean confusion is shared by Bell, and he thus arrives at his view of Moore in the 1899 paper. Yet, the picture is more complicated, for regarding the purported role of the act-object distinction in Moore's early paper we might note:

> With this, then, we have approached the nature of a proposition or judgment. A proposition is composed not of words, nor yet of thoughts, but of concepts. Concepts are possible objects of thought; but that is no definition of them. It merely states that they may come into relation with a thinker; and in order that they may do anything, they must already be something. It is indifferent to their nature whether anybody thinks them or not. They are incapable of change; and the relation into which they enter with the knowing subject implies no action or reaction. It is a unique relation which can begin or cease with a change in the subject; but the concept is neither cause nor effect of such a change. The occurrence of the relation has, no doubt, its causes and effects, but these are to be found only in the subject (Moore 1899: 179).

Thus it is the thinker that comes into the relation to the proposition thought or judged about. It is not an act of thought that is focused on. The key move is not so much in terms of act and object here, but, rather, that in order that concepts may "do anything they must already be something." It is the sort of thing that is echoed in Sartre's proof of 'realism' a half-century later. *Being thought* presupposes 'being' and not the reverse. There is a presupposition, but it cannot be the

case that 'being' presupposes being thought. It is a straight-forward rejection of Berkeley. It does not presuppose the analysis of thought in terms of act and object unless all one means by that is a separation of what thinks and what is thought—as we find in Plato. The latter's variant of innate ideas and discussions of various post-Platonic notions of the "active intellect" not withstanding.

Bell throws in odd additions to support the claim that Moore's view is derived from Brentano. In a footnote, after cautioning that he will not discuss Moore's ethics, he cites "six propositions" that he finds in Moore that are also found in Brentano. They are (1) there is one basic ethical concept; (2) it is that of intrinsic value—good in itself; (3) it is objective; (4) it is a non-natural property, i.e. not temporal; (5) fundamental ethical principals are self-evident (perhaps perceived by the mind, after appropriate preparation, by dialectic); (6) aesthetic satisfaction and knowledge are among the higher of many goods.

As to (1) all one need do is recall the role of "The Idea of the Good" in Plato's hierarchy of Forms; regarding (2), one might consider "The Good is Good", "The Beautiful is Beautiful" and various discussions of the Good itself and in itself, in the dialogues as well as in neo-Platonism; (3) one might reread the *Protagoras*, in this connection, and whether man is the measure of all things; as to (4), is it not obvious that the traditional eternal Ideas are held to be atemporal? Regarding (5), one might consider exactly what takes place when a Platonic Idea is grasped, "uncovered" or perceived by the mind, after appropriate preparation, by dialectic, as well as the emergence from the cave into the light of the sun; and, finally, regarding (6), we might suspect that the experience of The Beautiful and beautiful things, as such, are Good—particularly abstract art that does not deceive, as some later art theorists have picked up a theme from Plato and the neo-Platonists. Mondrian is a clear case in point, Kandinsky another. Bell has hardly added to his case for the deciding influence of Brentano rather than Plato.

5. MacBride's Interpretation

In effect, I have agreed with MacBride's reading of Moore (MacBride 2012a and 2012b) by adding some details regarding my understanding of Moore that support his criticisms of Bell. The problems that I find with MacBride's reading have more to do with his handling of propositions and relations than with his rejection of Bell's reading of Moore. MacBride construes Moore as taking propositions to be non-entities in view of their being complexes of the fundamental entities, universal concepts, in relation—in the truth-forming or false-forming relation. Thus, the nature of judgment would turn out to involve the claim that judgments, true or false, are both non-entities and not simply like concepts that are Beings but non-existents. This I think is due to the way MacBride himself construes relations. For him, relations dissolve into their terms—they are, as he once put it, needless posited entities. There are two issues, then. First, does Moore recognize relations? Second, Moore's view aside, do we need to recognize relations? The second takes us to the classical problems regarding universals and the specific case of relational universals. Here I have nothing new to add and it is pointless to reiterate old themes.

Regarding the first, I think it clear that Moore recognizes relations and requires propositions. I have argued earlier (1962, 1978) that his later account of belief and judgment (in cases like someone judging that *this is a pencil*) in *Some*

Main Problems of Philosophy requires propositional entities—either in the form of proposition or in the sense of a special kind of attribute of mental acts—a content property, as one might say—of judgment, belief, etc. In 1899 it seems transparent from the way he talks about judgments, understood as propositions, being independent of minds and mental acts. Moreover, any existent object is itself an existential proposition—in Moore's own words. Removing propositions would oddly, though not paradoxically, remove all the existents from his ontology. Yet, the fundamental entities are universal concepts and these include relations, which are basis for differentiating objects. The type of exception is in the category of universal relations, specifically the truth-forming and false-forming relations.

The material diversity of things, which is generally taken as starting-point, is only derived; and the identity of the concept, in several different things, which appears on that assumption as the problem of philosophy, will now, if it instead be taken as the starting-point, render the derivation easy. Two things are then seen to be differentiated by the different relations in which their common concepts stand to other concepts. The opposition of concepts to existents disappears, since an existent is seen to be nothing but a concept or complex of concepts standing in a unique relation to the concept of existence.

This marks the major difference between the 1899 and 1900-01 papers, as the later sets out the argument for numerical difference as distinct from conceptual diversity as we have already seen. Rejecting it in the paper of a year later, Moore removes the intricate web of the earlier paper. For tropes are explicitly recognized as the constituents of objects. Tropes, as basic particulars that are instances of universals now stand in a unique relation to such universals and no longer contain them. Objects like *A*, *B*, and their individual rednesses are no longer existential propositions. But not only is there Moore's variant of an exemplification relation between tropes and their universals, Moore obviously rejects construing tropes as alike by means of a similarity relation. For, they are of course similar in virtue of being conceptually identical with each other and the same universal, as well as exemplifying the same universal. That is Realism with overkill.

The 1900-01 paper is quite clear about the basic Platonic pattern and the explicit distinction between the basic particular Redness-of-*A* and the universal concept Redness, as well as further non-explicable relation between them.

> On the other hand, we have accepted the principle frequently implied in Plato that the idea in a thing may be different from the idea in itself; and we have still to see whether there is any insurmountable objection to this view (Moore 1901: 111).

> My answer is that something more than this is meant by exact similarity, namely, the fact that each of the things said so to be has a peculiar relation to a third thing, numerically but not conceptually different from them, which they have not to one another. This third thing is the Platonic idea, or, as we may now call it, the universal (Moore 1901: 114).

It is clear that Moore has worked out and clarified the metaphysical view he developed in his thesis and transcribed into *The Nature of Judgment*. He has done so by clarifying the differences and connections between particularized instances of

universal ideas and the Ideas themselves. Over and above the explicit reference to Platonic Ideas, this seems quite in Platonic fashion. He has also clarified his acceptance of both kinds of entities. He has done this on the basis of his argument against the identity of indiscernibles and his explicitly recognizing two types of identity and diversity.

What comes to muddy the waters again in 1903 is the somewhat careless discussion in *Principia Ethica*, that is obviously based on his earlier recognition of both universals (Ideas) and particularized qualities. That distinction and the non-constitutive connections of the Platonic Ideas to their particularized instances and the objects those instances inhere in found the way natural and non-natural properties are distinguished. Natural properties are universals blurred into their particularized instances in 1903. This cannot be read backwards into either the 1899 or the 1900-01 papers.

Since natural properties are thought of in terms of their individual tropes, this yellowness, that experience of pleasure, etc., in 1903, they remain components of the objects that a relevant adjectival expression, such as "is yellow" truly qualifies. Non-natural properties, however, being external to objects and relational patterns among them, are universals that are predicated of wholes. If, for simplicity, we think in terms of a purely aesthetic quality of value, rather than Goodness, and think of a universal concept of Beauty, then we can take, to keep it simple, the red circle *A* to be beautiful, or even ascribe Beauty to the pattern composed of *A* in spatial juxtaposition to B. There would not then be a trope of Beauty involved as there are no such tropes. The universal would be ascribed to a 'whole'—*A*, composed of particularized natural properties or the more complex whole, the pattern formed by *A* and *B*. That raises a question about the connection between such wholes and a non-natural value property: a question Moore would take up about twenty years later.

Later Moore would take value properties to have a unique necessary connection to the complexes they characterized by means of a necessary connection between the properties jointly involved in the composition of the object and the value property. It is no accident that in speaking of this aspect of his view he reverted to clearly taking the natural properties as if they were universals. In short, if *A* was Beautiful, any object with the natural properties of *A* would also be Beautiful. Moore's whole pattern, one might note, is obviously reminiscent of Plato's concern not only with the Ideas but with the details of their connections—Ideas "partaking" of Ideas, as well as with the connection between Ideas and particulars.

Perhaps Moore, in 1903, eager to drive a deep wedge between natural and non-natural properties, simply omitted the non-existent, non-valuative Platonic Ideas that he had so clearly and carefully separated from their particular tropes in 1901, tropes that he had implicitly introduced in 1899 while explicitly recognizing Platonic Ideas in 1899. In 1903 he appears to have simply mixed a universal like Yellow with its tropes and implicitly used the differences between tropes and universals to ground the difference between natural and non-natural properties.

> It seems necessary, then, to regard the world as formed of concepts. These are the only objects of knowledge. They cannot be regarded fundamentally as abstractions either from things or from ideas; since both alike can, if anything is to be true of them, be composed of nothing but concepts. A thing becomes intelligi-

ble first when it is analysed into its constituent concepts…. Even the description of an existent as a proposition (a true existential proposition) seems to lose its strangeness, when it is remembered that a proposition is here to be understood, not as anything subjective-an assertion or affirmation of something but as the combination of concepts which is affirmed. For we are familiar with the idea of affirming or "positing" an existent, of knowing objects as well as propositions; and the difficulty hitherto has been to discover wherein the two processes were akin. 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 (Moore 1899: 182-183).

It is interesting that the problems posed for Moore's 1899 view were considered in some detail by Russell in his 1940-48 view that also construed objects as complexes of qualities. In a given space, say the center or left of the visual field, something can later be where something else was. For Moore, in the early years, as for Russell in the latter years, a temporal moment or span allowed for incompatible properties and diverse objects to be at the same location. But for Moore's early account there is an obvious problem that is an old one: Existence itself. Plato mused about existence existing. Moore does not. Perhaps that is because he sometimes appears to hold no universal concept exists. It would appear to be senseless to take there to be *existents* in virtue of there being tropes of *Existence*. Such tropes would, in turn, have to contain the concept of existence, on Moore's pattern. Alternatively, unlike Plato, he might hold that existence, like other concepts, does not itself exist, but simply 'Is' or 'has Being'.

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