"Mere Predicates, Non-Existent Objects, and Platonism Reconceived: The Real Story of *Principia Ethica*'s Non-Naturalist Ontology"

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#1: "But the [correspondence] theory must be rejected as an ultimate one, because not all true propositions have this relation to reality. For example 2 + 2 = 4 is true, whether there exist two things or not. Moreover it may be doubted here whether even the concepts of which the proposition consists, can ever be said to exist. We should have to stretch our notion of existence beyond intelligibility, to suppose that 2 ever has been, is, or will be an existent." (Moore, "Nature of Judgment" p. 180)

#2: "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." (Ibid., p. 193)

#3: Definition of what is meant by 'Naturalism'.

[…]

By 'nature,' then, I do mean and have meant that which is the subject-matter of the natural sciences and also of psychology. It may be said to include all that has existed, does exist, or will exist in time. If we consider whether any object is of such a nature that it may be said to exist now, to have existed, or to be about to exist, then we may know that that object is a natural object, and that nothing, of which this is not true, is a natural object. Thus, for instance, of our minds we should say that they did exist yesterday, that they do exist to-day, and probably will exist in a minute or two. We shall say that we had thoughts yesterday, which have ceased to exist now, although their effects may remain: and in so far as those thoughts did exist, they too are natural objects.

There is, indeed, no difficulty about the 'objects' themselves, in the sense in which I have just used the term. It is easy to say which of them are natural, and which (if any) are not natural. But when we begin to consider the properties of objects, then I fear the problem is more difficult. Which among the properties of natural objects are natural properties, and which are not? For I do not deny that good is a property of certain natural objects: certain of them, I think, *are* good; and yet I have said that 'good' itself is not a natural property. Well, my test for these too also concerns their existence in time. Can we imagine 'good' as existing *by itself* in time, and not merely as a property of some natural object? For myself, I cannot so imagine it, whereas with the greater number of properties of objects—those which I call the natural properties—their existence does seem to me to be **independent** of the existence of those objects. They are, in fact, rather **parts** of which the object is made up than **mere predicates** which attach to it. If they were all taken away, no object would be left, not even a bare substance: for they are **in themselves substantial** and give to the object all the substance that it has. But this is not so with good. If indeed good were a feeling, as some would have us believe, then it would exist in time. But that is why to call it so is to commit the naturalistic fallacy. It will always remain pertinent to ask, whether the feeling itself is good; and if so, then good cannot itself be identical with any feeling.

#4: "If instead of answering these questions [about the origin of our alleged idea of mental substance], any one shou'd evade the difficulty, by saying, that the definition of a substance is something which may exist by itself; and that this definition ought to satisfy us: Shou'd this be said, I shou'd observe, that this definition agrees to every thing, that can possibly be conceiv'd; and never will serve to distinguish substance from accident, or the soul from its perceptions. … [S]ince **all our perceptions** are different from each other, and from every thing else in the universe, they are also distinct and separable, and may be consider'd as separately existent, and **may exist separately, and have no need of any thing else to support their existence**. They are, therefore, substances, as far as this definition explains a substance." (Hume, *Treatise* 1.4.5.5)

#5: "A speculative reasoner concerning triangles or circles considers the several known and given relations of the parts of these figures; and thence infers some unknown relation, which is dependent on the former. But in moral deliberations, we must be acquainted, before-hand, with all the objects, and all their relations to each other; and from a comparison of **the whole**, fix our choice or approbation. No new fact to be ascertained: No new relation to be discovered. All the circumstances of the case are supposed to be laid before us, ere we can fix any sentence of blame or approbation. … In all the sciences, our mind, from the known relations, investigates the unknown: But in all decisions of taste or external beauty, **all the relations** are before-hand obvious to the eye. … [T]he beauty is not in any of the parts or members of a pillar, but results from **the whole**." (Hume, 2nd *Enq*. App. I)

#6: "[T]he difference between goodness or value and such attributes as yellowness is that **whereas the latter are *differentiae* (i.e. fundamental or constitutive attributes) of their possessors, the former is a *property* (i.e. a consequential attribute) of them**. … Valu[e] seems quite definitely to be based on certain other qualities of its possessors, and not the other qualities on the value. … [W]hile mathematical (i.e. spatial, temporal, and numerical) properties follow from part of the intrinsic nature of their possessors, value follows from the *whole* intrinsic nature of its possessors. If a patch of colour is in shape an equilateral tri-angle, it will be an equiangular triangle, whatever be its size or colour[.] … These attributes which are based on some single element in the nature of their possessors may be called parti-resultant properties. In contrast with these, **value is a toti-resultant property, based on the whole nature of its possessors**. And this is true not only of 'good', the adjective which expresses intrinsic value, but also of 'right' and 'beautiful'" (Ross, *The Right and the Good*, Ch. IV, pp. 121–22).

#7: "[T]hough both yellowness and beauty are predicates which **depend only on the intrinsic nature of what possesses them**, yet while yellowness is itself an intrinsic predicate, beauty is not. Indeed it seems to me to be one of the most important truths about predicates of value, that though many of them are intrinsic kinds of value, in the sense I have defined, yet none of them are intrinsic properties, in the sense in which such properties as "yellow" or the property of "being a state of pleasure" or "being a state of things which contains a balance of pleasure" are intrinsic properties. … I can only vaguely express the kind of difference I feel there to be by saying that intrinsic properties seem to ***describe* the intrinsic nature of what possesses them** in a sense in which predicates of value never do. If you could enumerate *all* the intrinsic properties a given thing possessed, you would have given a *complete* description

of it, and would not need to mention any predicates of value it possessed; whereas no description of a given thing could be *complete* which omitted any intrinsic property." (Moore, *CIV* (1922))

#8: The term 'metaphysical' is defined as having reference primarily to any object of knowledge which is not a part of Nature—does not exist in time, as an object of perception; but since metaphysicians, not content with pointing out the truth about such entities, have always supposed that what does not exist in Nature, must, at least, *exist*, the term also has reference to a supposed 'supersensible reality':

§66. In this chapter I propose to deal with a type of ethical theory which is exemplified in the ethical views of the Stoics, of Spinoza, of Kant, and especially of a number of modern writers, whose views in this respect are mainly due to the influence of Hegel. These ethical theories have this in common, that they use some *metaphysical* proposition as a ground for inferring some fundamental proposition of Ethics. They all imply, and many of them expressly hold, that ethical truths follow logically from metaphysical truths—that Ethics should be based on *Metaphysics*. And the result is that they all describe the Supreme Good in *metaphysical* terms.

What, then, is to be understood by 'metaphysical'? I use the term, as I explained in Chapter II, in opposition to 'natural.' I call those philosophers preeminently 'metaphysical' who have recognised most clearly that not everything which *is* is a 'natural object.' 'Metaphysicians' have, therefore, the great merit of insisting that our knowledge is not confined to the things which we can touch and see and feel. They have always been much occupied, not only with that other class of natural objects which consists in mental facts, but also with the class of objects or properties of objects, which certainly **do not exist in time**, are not therefore parts of Nature, and which, in fact, **do not *exist* at all**. To this class, as I have said, belongs what we mean by the adjective 'good.' It is **not *goodness***, but only the things or qualities which are good, which **can exist in time**—can have duration, and begin and cease to exist—can be objects of *perception*. But the most prominent members of this class are perhaps numbers. It is quite certain that two natural objects may exist; but it is equally certain that *two* itself does not exist and never can. Two and two *are* four. But that does not mean that either two or four exists. Yet it certainly means *something*. **Two *is* somehow, although it does not exist.** And it is not only simple terms of propositions—the objects *about* which we know truths—that belong to this class. The truths which we know about them form, perhaps, a still more important subdivision. **No truth does, in fact, *exist***; but this is peculiarly obvious with regard to truths like 'Two and two are four,' in which the objects, *about* which they are truths, do not exist either. It is with the recognition of such truths as these—truths which have been called 'universal'—and of their essential unlikeness to what we can touch and see and feel, that metaphysics proper begins. Such 'universal' truths have always played a large part in the reasonings of metaphysicians from Plato's time till now; and that they have directed attention to the difference between these truths and what I have called 'natural objects' is the chief contribution to knowledge which distinguishes them from that other class of philosophers—'empirical' philosophers—to which most Englishmen have belonged.

But though, if we are to define 'metaphysics' by the contribution which it has actually made to knowledge, we should have to say that it has emphasized the importance of objects which do not exist at all, **metaphysicians** themselves have not recognised this. They have indeed recognised and insisted that there are, or may be, objects of knowledge which do not *exist in time*, or at least which we cannot perceive; and in recognising the *possibility* of these, as an object of investigation, they have, it may be admitted, done a service to mankind. But they have in general supposed that **whatever does not exist in time, must at least *exist* elsewhere, if it is to *be* at all—that, whatever does not exist in Nature, must exist in some supersensible reality**, whether timeless or not. Consequently they have held that the truths with which they have been occupied, over and above the objects of perception, were in some way truths about such supersensible reality. If, therefore, we are to define 'metaphysics' not by what it has attained, but by what it has attempted, we should say that it consists in the attempt to obtain knowledge, by processes of reasoning, of what exists but is *not* a part of Nature. Metaphysicians have actually held that they could give us such knowledge of non-natural existence. They have held that their science consists in giving us such knowledge as can be supported by reasons, of that supersensible reality of which religion professes to give us a fuller knowledge, without any reasons. When, therefore, I spoke above of 'metaphysical' propositions, I meant propositions about the existence of something supersensible—of something which is not an object of perception, and which cannot be inferred from what is an object of perception by the same rules of inference by which we infer the past and future of what we call 'Nature.' And when I spoke of 'metaphysical' terms, I meant terms which refer to qualities of such a supersensible reality, which do not belong to anything 'natural.' I admit that 'metaphysics' should investigate what reasons there may be for belief in such a supersensible reality; since I hold that its peculiar province is the truth about all objects which are not natural objects. And I think that the most prominent characteristic of metaphysics, in history, has been its profession to *prove* the truth about **non-natural *existents***. I define 'metaphysical,' therefore, by a reference to supersensible *reality*; although I think that the only **non-natural objects**, about which it has *succeeded* in obtaining truth, are objects which do not exist at all.

#9: "On our view, then, the distinction between 'what ought to be' and 'what is' is not such as to justify a fundamental division of Philosophy or of the Reason into the two parts 'Theoretical' and 'Practical'. … In fact the distinction between 'what ought to be' and 'what is' is not as great as **the distinction between what is and what exists**; and the 'practical' is so far from representing 'what ought to be' that it is inextricably bound up with mere existence. … So far therefore as general philosophical scheme goes, the standpoint here taken up seems to agree most with that of Plato. **The 'good' is to be considered as an Idea ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας perhaps**—(the meaning that can be attached to such a phrase will be subsequently considered): but **the really essential distinction is between ὄντα and γιγνόμενα** and the 'practical', by its very notion, belongs to the latter class." (Moore, 1897 and 1898 Dissertations, "Introduction")

#10: "Well then, the metaphysical philosophers have recognised **this peculiar kind of being which belongs to concepts as such**[.] And that, I think, is the great merit of metaphysicians. They have proved it is not true that nothing *is* but that which we can touch and see and feel, even though it may be true that nothing else exists. This, I think, is the chief significance of **Plato's doctrine of Ideas**, of which you all have heard. They are not ideas in the sense in which we commonly use the word. The Greek word for

them is εἶδος or ἰδέα which just means 'form'. And they are what I have called **concepts, something which *is* whether it exists or not**, the only thing which can be known with absolute precision.

"But **neither Plato nor the other metaphysicians have been content with this**. They have also wished to assert of certain concepts, not only that they are but that they do exist, and exist not in space and time, but in another world which is not temporal but eternal. And this other world has been called reality, as opposed to nature, which is condemned as mere appearance. The arguments for the existence of this other world, this truly real world, are too long and complicated for me to discuss them here. I can only say that none of them appear to be convincing. The most convincing appear to me to rest on **the confusion of these very notions of being and existence, which metaphysics has once for all distinguished**. Such is the ontological argument, both in the old form, which Kant refuted, and in the new form which Hegel gave to it." (Moore, 1898 "Elements of Ethics" lectures, Lect. V)

#11: Thomas Reid:

- "The nature of every species, whether of substance, of quality, or of relation, and in general every thing which the ancients called an universal, answers to the description of **a Platonic idea**, if in that description you **leave out the attribute of existence**." (*Intellectual Powers*, 4.2)
- "When we say that they are in the mind, this can mean no more but that they are conceived by the mind, or that they are objects of thought. The **act** of conceiving them is no doubt in the mind; the **things conceived** have no place, because they have not existence." (Ibid., 4.3)
- "The natural prejudice of mankind, that what we conceive must have existence, led those ancient Philosophers to attribute existence to ideas; and by this they were led into all the extravagant and mysterious parts of their system. When it is purged of these, I apprehend it to be the only intelligible and rational system concerning ideas." (Loc. cit.)

#12: Hermann Lotze:

- "We have undoubtedly a conception of affirmation or 'position' in an extremely general sense[.] … We may express it in our own language by the term Reality [*Wirklichkeit*]. For we call a **thing** Real [*Wirklich*] which **is**, in contradistinction to another which is not; an **event** Real which **occurs or has occurred**, in contradistinction to that which does not occur; a **relation** Real which **obtains**, as opposed to one which does not obtain; lastly we call a **proposition** Really true which **holds or is valid** as opposed to one of which the validity is still doubtful. This use of language is intelligible; it shows that **when we call anything Real, we mean always to *affirm* it, though in different senses** according to the different forms which it assumes, but one or other of which it must necessarily assume, and of which no one is reducible to or contained in the other. For we never can get an Event out of simple Being, the reality which belongs to Things, namely Being or Existence, never belongs to Events—they do not exist but occur; again a Proposition neither exists like things nor occurs like events; that its meaning even obtains like a relation, can only be said if the things exist of which it predicates a relation; in itself, apart from all applications which may be made of it, the reality of a proposition means that it holds or is valid and that its opposite does not hold. … [W]e must not ask what in its turn is meant by Validity, with any idea that the meaning which the word conveys clearly to us can be deduced from some different conception[.] … As little as we can say how it happens that anything is or occurs, so little can we explain how it comes about that a truth has Validity; **the latter conception has to be regarded as much as the former as ultimate and underivable, a conception of which everyone may know what he means by it, but which cannot be constructed out of any constituent elements which do not already contain it**." (*Logic*, §316)
- "Now **Ideas**, in so far as they are present in our minds, possess reality in the sense of an Event,—they *occur* in us: for as utterances of an activity of presentation they are never a Being at rest but a continual Becoming; their **content** on the other hand, so far as we regard it in abstraction from the mental activity which we direct to it, **can no longer be said to occur, though neither again does it exist as things exist, we can only say that it possesses Validity**." (Loc. cit.)
- "While Plato by thus describing the Ideas, takes security for their independent validity, he has at the same time abundantly provided **against the confusion of the validity thus implied with that wholly distinct reality of Existence** which could only be ascribed to a durable thing. When he places the home of the Ideas in a super-celestial world, a world of pure intelligence (νοητός, ὑπερουράνιος τόπος), when again more than this he expressly describes them as having no local habitation, such language makes it abundantly clear to any one who understands the mind of Greek Antiquity, that they do not belong to what we call the real world. To the Greek that which is not in Space is not at all, and when Plato relegates the Ideas to a home which is not in space, **he is not trying to hypostasize that which we call their mere validity into any kind of real existence**, but on the contrary he is plainly seeking to guard by anticipation against any such attempt being made." (Ibid., §318)

#13: Bernard Bolzano:

- "By objective idea I mean the certain something which constitutes the immediate matter [*Stoff*] of a subjective idea, and which is not to be found in the realm of the actual. An objective idea does not require a subject but **subsists** [*bestehen*]**, not indeed as something existing, but as a certain something** even though no thinking being may grasp it." (*Theory of Science*, §48)
- "One attribute which all ideas have in common is that they do not have actual existence. … No one will doubt the correctness of this claim once he understands from our usage what concept we connect with the words existence, actuality and actual existence. Whoever understands us when we say that God has actual existence, that the world is something actual, but that a round square is nothing existing, etc., will readily grant that ideas in themselves belong to the class of things that have no actuality. **Thought ideas, i.e., thoughts, certainly have existence** in the minds of those who think, and insofar as all ideas are grasped by God's infinite intelligence, there is not a single idea in itself to which there does not correspond a thought, and thus an actual (indeed eternally actual) idea in God's understanding. **But these thought ideas must not be confused with their matter, the ideas in themselves. The latter have no existence.**" (Ibid., §54)
- "Now you see how I can then differentiate between ideas that have no existing object and those that are completely objectless. Otherwise, for example, the two ideas "supreme moral law" and "a proposition that has neither a subject nor a predi-

cate" could no longer be distinguished. **The object that corresponds to the first is a certain truth in itself (perhaps one that is still unknown to us); thus not something existing, yet nevertheless something.** The second idea, however, has, or rather can have, no object at all, for every proposition must have both a subject and a predicate." (*Bolzano-Exner Correspondence*, 9 July 1833)

#14: G. F. Stout:

- "Whatever we can in any way perceive or think has a being and nature of its own independently of the processes by which we cognise it. We do not create it, but only become aware of it in the process of cognition. The number two, the fact that 2 + 1 = 3, the validity of a syllogism in Barbara, the necessity or the arbitrariness of the transitions in Hegel's *Logic*, a symphony of Beethoven, the moral law, all these are **possible objects of our cognition**, and all these, inasmuch us they are objects, possess a being and nature of their own, whether anyone is actually thinking of them or not. But **their independent being and nature differs profoundly from that of material things**, because it does not consist in independent persistence and change in time and space." ("The Common-Sense Conception of a Material Thing," 1900-01)
- "Now I do not see how it can be denied that there is **a system of evidently true propositions which are not directly concerned with actual existence**. Further, it seems clear that truths cannot be true of nothing. They must express what in some sense has being. We cannot know and yet know nothing. Nor will it do to say that what we are dealing with is a creature of thought. It may indeed be true that all being, including actual existence, is relative to mind, in the sense that it could not be without mind. But what is here suggested is that the process of knowing may make or produce its own object, that the being of a concept may consist of being conceived. This seems a quite untenable position, and has in fact been sufficiently refuted by Plato. To think is to think something; thought, therefore, cannot exist prior to what is thought of; it cannot therefore make or produce what is thought of. The subject-matter of logic and pure mathematics has a nature of its own which our thinking simply discovers and does not, in any sense, create. ... **There is then a region of being, of vast extent and importance, distinct from that of actually existing particulars.**" (1919/1921 Gifford Lectures)

#15:

and by 'metaphysical Ethics' I mean those systems which maintain or imply that the answer to the question 'What is good?' *logically depends* upon the answer to the question 'What is the nature of supersensible reality?' All such systems obviously involve the same fallacy—the 'naturalistic fallacy'—by the use of which Naturalism was also defined.

§67. I have said that those systems of Ethics, which I propose to call 'Metaphysical,' are characterised by the fact that they describe the Supreme Good in 'metaphysical' terms; and this has now been explained as meaning that they describe it in terms of something which (they hold) does exist, but does not exist in Nature—in terms of a supersensible reality.

[…]

To hold that from any proposition asserting 'Reality is of this nature' we can infer, or obtain confirmation for, any proposition asserting 'This is good in itself' is to commit the naturalistic fallacy. And that a knowledge of what is real supplies reasons for holding certain things to be good in themselves is either implied or expressly asserted by all those who define the Supreme Good in metaphysical terms. This contention is part of what is meant by saying that Ethics should be 'based' on Metaphysics. It is meant that some knowledge of supersensible reality is necessary *as a premise* for correct conclusions as to what ought to exist. This view is, for instance, plainly expressed in the following statements: 'The truth is that the theory of Ethics which seems most satisfactory has a metaphysical basis . . . . If we rest our view of Ethics on the idea of the development of the ideal self or of the rational universe, the significance of this cannot be made fully apparent without a metaphysical examination of the nature of self; *nor can its validity be established except by a discussion of the reality of the rational universe*.'[1] The validity of an ethical conclusion about the nature of the ideal, it is here asserted, cannot be established except by considering the question whether that ideal is *real*. Such an assertion involves the naturalistic fallacy. It rests upon the failure to perceive that any truth which asserts 'This is good in itself' is quite unique in kind—that it cannot be reduced to any assertion about reality, and therefore must remain unaffected by any conclusions we may reach about the nature of reality. This confusion as to the unique nature of ethical truths is, I have said, involved in all those ethical theories which I have called metaphysical. It is plain that, **but for some confusion of the sort, no-one would think it worth while even to describe the Supreme Good in metaphysical terms**. If, for instance, we are told that the ideal consists in the realisation of the 'true self,' the very words suggest that the fact that the self in question is *true* is supposed to have some bearing on the fact that it is good. All the ethical truth which can possibly be conveyed by such an assertion would be just as well conveyed by saying that the ideal consisted in the realisation of a particular kind of self, which might be either real or purely imaginary. 'Metaphysical Ethics,' then, involves the supposition that Ethics can be *based* on Metaphysics; and our first concern with them is to make clear that this supposition must be false.

One cause of this supposition seems to be the logical prejudice that all propositions are of the most familiar type—that in which subject and predicate are both existents.

§73. What, then, are the chief reasons which have made it seem plausible to maintain that to be good must *mean* to possess some supersensible property or to be related to some supersensible reality?

We may, first of all, notice one, which seems to have had some influence in causing the view that good must be defined by *some* such property, although it does not suggest any *particular* property as the one required. This reason lies in the supposition that the proposition 'This is good' or 'This would be good, if it existed' must, in a certain respect, be of the same type as other propositions. The fact is that there is one type of proposition so familiar to everyone, and therefore having such a strong hold upon the imagination, that philosophers have always supposed that all other types of propositions must be reducible to it. This type is that of the objects of experience—of all those truths which occupy our minds for the immensely greater part of our waking lives: truths such as that somebody is in the room, that I am writing or eating or talking. All these truths, however much they may differ, have this in common that in them both the grammatical subject and the grammatical object stand for something which exists. **Immensely the commonest type of truth, then, is one which asserts a relation between two existing things. Ethical truths are immediately felt not to conform to this type, and the naturalistic fallacy arises from the attempt to make out that, in some roundabout way, they do conform to it.** It is immediately obvious that when we see a thing to be good, its goodness is not a property which we can take up in our hands, or separate from it even by the most delicate scientific instruments, and transfer to something else. It is not, in fact, like most of the

[1] Prof. J. S. Mackenzie, *A Manual of Ethics*, 4th ed., p. 431. The italics are mine.

predicates which we ascribe to things, a *part* of the thing to which we ascribe it. But philosophers suppose that the reason why we cannot take goodness up and move it about, is not that it is a different *kind* of object from any which can be moved about, but only that it *necessarily* exists together with anything with which it does exist. They explain the type of ethical truths by supposing it identical with the type of scientific laws. And it is only when they have done this that the naturalistic philosophers proper—those who are empiricists—and those whom I have called 'metaphysical' part company. These two classes of philosophers do, indeed, differ with regard to the nature of scientific laws. The former class tend to suppose that they mean only 'This has accompanied, does now, and will accompany that in these particular instances': they reduce the scientific law quite simply and directly to the familiar type of proposition which I have pointed out. But this does not satisfy the metaphysicians. They see that when you say 'This would accompany that, *if* that existed,' you don't mean only that this and that have existed and will exist together so many times. **But it is beyond even their powers to believe that what you do mean is merely what you say. They still think you must mean, somehow or other, that something does exist, since that is what you generally mean when you say anything. They are as unable as the empiricists to imagine that you can ever mean that 2 + 2 = 4.** The empiricists say this means that so many couples of couples of things have in each case been four things; and hence that 2 and 2 would not make 4, unless precisely those things had existed. The metaphysicians feel that this is wrong; but they themselves have no better account of its meaning to give than either, with Leibniz, that God's mind is in a certain state, or, with Kant, that your mind is in a certain state, or finally, with Mr Bradley, that something is in a certain state. Here, then, we have the root of the naturalistic fallacy. The metaphysicians have the merit of seeing that when you say 'This would be good, if it existed,' you can't mean merely 'This has existed and was desired,' however many times that may have been the case. They will admit that some good things have not existed in this world, and even that some may not have been desired. But what you can mean, except that *something* exists, they really cannot see. Precisely the same error which leads them to suppose that there must *exist* a supersensible Reality, leads them to commit the naturalistic fallacy with regard to the meaning of 'good.' Every truth, they think, must mean somehow that something exists; and since, unlike the empiricists, they recognise some truths which do not mean that anything exists here and now, these they think must mean that something exists *not* here and now. On the same principle, since 'good' is a predicate which neither does nor can exist, they are bound to suppose either that 'to be good' means to be related to some other particular thing which can exist and does exist 'in reality'; or else that it means merely 'to belong to the real world'—that goodness is transcended or absorbed in reality.

> But ethical propositions cannot be reduced to this type: in particular, they are obviously to be distinguished […]

§74. That such a reduction of *all* propositions to the type of those which assert either that something exists or that something which exists has a certain attribute (which means, that both exist in a certain relation to one another), is erroneous, may easily be seen by reference to the particular class of ethical propositions. For whatever we may have proved to exist, and whatever two existents we may have proved to be necessarily connected with one another, it still remains a distinct and different question whether what thus exists is good; whether either or both of the two existents is so; and whether it is good that they should exist together. To assert the one is plainly and obviously *not* the same thing as to assert the other. We understand what we mean by asking: Is this, which exists, or necessarily exists, after all, good? and we perceive that we are asking a question which has *not* been answered. In the face of this direct perception that the two questions are distinct, no proof that they *must* be identical can have the slightest value. That the proposition 'This is good' is thus distinct from every other proposition was proved in Chapter I[.]

Timeline of individuals

Malebranche (1638–1715)
Leibniz (1646–1716)
Cudworth (1617–1688)
Samuel Clarke (1675–1729)
Richard Price (1723–1791)
Reid (1710–1796)
Dugald Stewart (1753–1828)
William Whewell (1794–1866)
W. G. Ward (1812–1882)
Henry Calderwood (1830–1897)
Sidgwick (1838–1900)
James Ward (1843–1925)
G. F. Stout (1860–1944)
Russell (1872–1970)
Moore (1873–1958)
Bolzano (1781–1848)
Lotze (1817–1881)
Brentano (1838–1917)
Anton Marty (1847–1914)
Carl Stumpf (1848–1936)
Frege (1848–1925)
Meinong (1853–1920)
Husserl (1859–1938)
Twardowski (1866–1938)

Review: Failure of definitions has epistemic implications, not (major) ontological implications

Two ontological doctrines: Doctrine of the Mere Predicate, Doctrine of Non-Existential Being

Sales pitch: why, even though this is often ignored and dismissed, we should care about it

Moore's background metaphysics: the world is formed of concepts

Doctrine #1 (DMP): Natural properties (substantial parts) vs. Good (mere predicate)

- Why NPs can exist alone: bundle theory, subject-predicate breakdown, extreme existential atomism (Hume)
- Why Good cannot: analogies (truth, existence), running theme (Hume, Ross, Moore), proposed argument
- Problems: horse objection, adjective problem

Doctrine #2: (DNEB): Good has timeless being, but does not and cannot exist

- Origins of being/existence: classics, earlier non-existential Platonism (Reid, Lotze, Bolzano), Austrian irrealia, Stout
- Puzzle of timeless existence: structural account, epistemic account, causal account
- Arguments or advantages: positive argument vs. indirect considerations, ontological modesty, two advantages (independence from existence, avoiding metaphysical precariousness)