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**Fraser  
MacBride**

# **On the Genealogy of Universals**

**The Metaphysical  
Origins of Analytic  
Philosophy**

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of Analytic Philosophy*

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# Preface

I decided to write this book because I'd become convinced that there is far more to find out and far more to learn from the history of early analytic philosophy. Our grasp of the origins of analytic philosophy is based upon far too narrow a base of historical evidence, we're too much in the grip of a certain broad brush stroke picture of what happened, a picture that results from the reading and re-reading of a few standard texts that have become overly familiar to us. And for all the sophistication we've acquired and embroidering we've done during the intervening decades, there are still respects in which the early analytic philosophers were wiser than we are.

This book has as a distant ancestor an M.Phil. thesis I wrote on the history of early analytic philosophy at King's College London supervised by Mark Sainsbury. The high standards Mark set for interpreting and evaluating the texts of Frege and Russell and his own writings still bear an influence. I am conscious of a continuing debt. I have also benefited from many exchanges over the years with Hugh Mellor about Ramsey. He originally suggested that I write a book on Ramsey and universals. Indeed it was his lectures in Cambridge on Ramsey that introduced me to the subject. Shortly afterwards Keith Campbell visited Cambridge and presented his own trope philosophy, subsequently elucidated in his *Abstract Particulars*, as an antidote to Ramsey's puzzlement about the particular–universal distinction. By then I was hooked upon universals. Subsequently Herbert Hochberg encouraged me to engage with the very early writings of G.E. Moore from the late 1890s and early 1900s, whilst Jim Levine pointed me to Russell's early manuscripts written before *The Principles of Mathematics* (1903). Kevin Mulligan encouraged me to think about G.F. Stout's contribution, more generally to think outside the rubric of the cartoon histories of philosophy that have become part of our analytic folklore (see Mulligan (forthcoming) for some of the points he has made to me over the years in the course of our discussions of the present book). Conversations with Ken Gemes inspired me to think about the relationship of philosophy as a discipline to its own history. Discussions with Roger White helped me towards an understanding of the *Tractatus*. Mike Martin helped me towards an appreciation of the development of Moore's views on perception and their relationship to Moore's ontology. E.J. Lowe has also been an encouraging presence over several years, although, of course, he took a very different view of things. His own assessment of Ramsey on universals can be found in his *Four-Category Ontology*. It's a source of great sadness to me that Jonathan died before this book was completed. I am also indebted to another philosopher who is sadly no longer with us and who discussed both in print and in person my work on the particular–universal distinction, namely David Armstrong.

I am immensely grateful to Bill Demopoulos, Jane Heal, Frédérique Janssen-Lauret, and Gary Kemp for reading more or less an entire draft of the book and for illuminating



discussion of the issues raised; and especially Bill and Frédérique for getting me across the finishing line. I am grateful to Bob Stern too for reading the chapter on Kant, amongst other chapters, and for his valuable feedback. Thanks are also due to Philipp Blum for organizing an *Eidos* workshop in Geneva on a draft of the initial chapters and to Gerry Callaghan and a reading group on the manuscript at Waterloo involving Nicholas Ray, Greg Andres, David DeVidi, Nathan Haydo, Windsor Viney as well as Gerry. Kevin Mulligan kindly organized a workshop on the penultimate draft and I'm most grateful to the contributors for their thoughts and suggestions: Guido Bonino, Manuel García-Carpintero, Charles Djordjevic, James Levine, Jimmy Plourde, Maria van der Schaar, Graham Stevens, and José Zalabardo. Two anonymous referees for Oxford University Press also provided valuable feedback and Peter Momtchiloff encouragement and guidance.

For comments and support along the road I'd also like to thank Asunción Álvarez, Helen Beebe, Renée Bleau, Jeremy Butterfield, Stewart Candlish, Sophia Connell, Chris Daly, Julian Dodd, Dorothy Edgington, Kit Fine, Sacha Golob, Ghislain Guigon, Tom Harrison, Katherine Hawley, Keith Hossack, Nick Jones, James Ladyman, Sam Lebens, Alex Oliver, Francesco Orilia, Bryan Pickel, Catherine Pickstock, Chris Pincock, Stephen Read, Stewart Shapiro, Peter Simons, Peter Sullivan, Mark Textor, and Tim Williamson. No doubt I have forgotten someone, for which I'm sorry.

I am grateful to audiences at the universities of Bristol, Cambridge, Geneva, Glasgow, Guelph, Helsinki, Johannes-Gutenberg (Mainz), Manchester, Macerata, McMaster, Oslo, Stirling, Stockholm, Turku, Waterloo, and Zurich, Birkbeck College London, Trinity College Dublin, University of East Anglia, and the Central European University. I have also benefited from interaction with students at the universities of London and St. Andrews where I lectured on Russell and Wittgenstein, and the universities of Cambridge, Glasgow, and McMaster where I lectured on metaphysics, especially Anne Bosse, Luke Newberry, and Lillith Newton.

In this book I draw upon some of my previously published papers: 'Ramsey on Universals', in H. Lillehammer and H. Mellor (eds.), *Ramsey's Legacy* (Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 82–104, 'The Russell-Wittgenstein Dispute: A New Perspective', in M. Textor (ed.) *Judgement and Truth in Early Analytic Philosophy and Phenomenology* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 206–41, and 'The Transcendental Metaphysic of G.F. Stout: His Defence and Elaboration of Trope Theory', in A. Reboul (ed.), *Mind, Values, and Metaphysics: Philosophical Essays in Honour of Kevin Mulligan—Volume 1* (Springer, 2014), pp. 141–58. Although there are substantial emendations, elaborations, and additions, I am grateful to the publishers for their permission to reuse material here.

A draft of the manuscript was completed whilst I was the Visiting Bertrand Russell Professor at the McMaster University where the Russell Archive is kept, and I am also grateful to the Carnegie Trust, the Mind Association, and the Arts and Humanities Research Council for their support.

# Introduction

Should we not distrust the jaunty assurance with which every age prides itself that it at last has hit upon the ultimate concepts in which all that happens can be formulated?

(A.N. Whitehead, *Concept of Nature*, 1921)

This is a new history and a new kind of history of early analytic philosophy. It provides an original perspective upon the origins and development of our subject by examining hitherto neglected texts and figures that have been pushed out of the limelight into the shadows, text and figures that have previously been ignored or dismissed as weak or even as unintelligible, explaining their arguments and revealing their insights. These texts and figures aren't interpreted in isolation from one another. There's an unfolding narrative, the reconstruction of a thirty-year span of dispute and dialogue amongst the most luminous and enterprising philosophers of their day, a narrative whose uniting theme is the understanding and evolution of the intertwined concepts of universal and particular and the distinction between them. This also makes it the first ever history of these concepts in early analytic philosophy. And it's exceptional as a contribution to the history of analytic philosophy, or even analytic philosophy, because it's meant as a *real* genealogy, in a sense Nietzsche would have recognized, rather than a fictional one, as most philosophical genealogies have been. The actual historical account of the concepts of particular and universal is used to reveal that it was far from inevitable that philosophy today should have come to take the particular–universal distinction for granted as a piece of first philosophy.

G.E. Moore and Bertrand Russell are usually credited with being the founding fathers of analytic philosophy—Moore coming first, Russell following closely in his footsteps. But Moore's founding works from the late 1890s are typically overlooked or dismissed as confused or incomprehensible. So even though Russell is supposed to have started from behind, the prevailing impression is that Russell soon overtook Moore, as Wittgenstein was later to overtake Russell. But this is all mistaken. We shouldn't let Russell overshadow Moore in our appreciation, anymore than we should allow Wittgenstein to overshadow Russell. This book provides an account of Moore's early work as perfectly cogent but rejecting the distinction between particular and universal. Of course the famous image of Russell following closely in Moore's footsteps

comes from Russell's own intellectual autobiography but he only came up with it six decades later (1959: 42). It would have been more accurate for Russell to say that he and Moore danced together. Sometimes one led, sometimes the other, on occasion they stepped upon one another's toes. This book goes deeper than ever before into the philosophical as well as historical intricacies of Moore and Russell's dance. It also delivers a new account of the relationship between Russell and Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein is typically cast as having devastated Russell with his criticisms of the multiple relation theory of judgement. But Wittgenstein's criticisms weren't compelling and the picture theory of the *Tractatus* is explained in this book as emerging out of one of Russell's own suggestions.

Whilst Moore and Russell are usually credited with parentage, it's Frege that is usually accorded the honorific 'grandfather of analytic philosophy'.<sup>1</sup> This book builds a novel case that it was an engagement with Kant that lay behind the early efforts of Moore and Russell, so it's Kant rather than Frege that stands behind analytic philosophy as it emerged in the late 1890s. The case isn't merely that at the time they had read Kant but hadn't read Frege, although this is certainly true. What this book brings to light is the fact that Kant himself had problematized the concepts of particular and universal in the *Critique of Pure Reason* as Hume had problematized the concept of causation in the *Treatise*. Otherwise inscrutable passages of Moore and Russell are then made intelligible for the first time as a reaction to Kant's critical treatment of the particular–universal distinction. The real grandfathers of analytic philosophy were A.N. Whitehead and G.F. Stout. Moore and Russell didn't only read them but Whitehead taught Russell and Stout taught both Moore and Russell. So there's no need for an invisible hand explanation to account for the influence of Stout and Whitehead. Their now neglected efforts to undermine the particular–universal distinction are expounded and given their due place here.

The period this book primarily explores and illuminates runs up until 1926, the year that H.W.B. Joseph, F.P. Ramsey, and R. Braithwaite contributed to an Aristotelian Society symposium on 'Universals and the "Method of Analysis"'. Their subject was Ramsey's paper 'Universals', published the previous year in *Mind*. In 'Universals' Ramsey had argued against the a priori division of what exists into two classes, particulars and universals.<sup>2</sup> His paper beguiled and baffled its readers straightaway but nobody really doubted it was an important and challenging paper. Subsequently 'Universals' earned inclusion in the analytic philosophical canon. But what exactly did Ramsey mean? There has been no consensus amongst his commentators. But this is because trying to understand Ramsey's 'Universals' in isolation is like trying to understand the significance of the last few lines of a telephone conversation you've overheard, but only from one end when you don't know what went before. This book approaches 'Universals' in

<sup>1</sup> See Dummett 1994: 26 and Burge 2005: 1.

<sup>2</sup> See MacBride 2005b for alternative arguments, different but complementary to Ramsey's, in favour of scepticism about the particular–universal distinction.

an unprecedented fashion, explaining ‘Universals’ as the closing stage of a conversation that had been going on since the emergence of analytic philosophy in the late 1890s, a conversation inspired by Kant.

The development of the early analytic philosophers’ thinking about particulars and universals, I will argue, has the contours of an unfolding Hegelian dialectic. It’s well known that they advocated ontological pluralism, affirming the existence of many things; they set themselves against ontological monism, the doctrine that there is only one thing. But what’s almost invariably overlooked is that the early analytic philosophers experimented and seriously entertained different answers to the question: how many *categories* of things are there? By ‘categorical dualism’ I will mean the a priori doctrine that there are exactly two categories of things, particulars and universals—where ‘thing’ means a constituent of a fact or a sub-factual ingredient of reality. But by ‘categorical monism’ I will mean not merely the a priori doctrine that there is only one category of thing. I will also mean, more radically, that the category recognized is neither the category of particular nor the category of universal but some category that supersedes them both. So by these lights, neither many varieties of nominalism nor many varieties of realism count as forms of categorical monism. They don’t because either they say that there are things to be found on one side of the particular–universal distinction but not the other or *vice versa*. By contrast, categorical monism rejects the distinction outright. By ‘categorical pluralism’ I will mean the doctrine that there are potentially many categories of thing, their character and number revealed a posteriori as nature is disclosed to us.

As analytic philosophy emerged and advanced *ventre à terre*, each of these doctrines was successively adopted.

*Categorical Monism*  $\Rightarrow$  *Categorical Dualism*  $\Rightarrow$  *Categorical Pluralism*

When Moore burst upon the scene with his ‘New Philosophy’ in the 1890s, he espoused categorical monism, his ontological inventory consisting solely of mind-independent concepts, where concepts are conceived by Moore to be neither particulars nor universals. After this initial revolutionary period, Moore and Russell took a reactionary turn, swinging back to embrace the traditional dualism of particular and universal, that is, categorical dualism. But Moore had his doubts, backed up by Whitehead, and as the early decades of the twentieth century unfolded, analytic philosophy was pushed inexorably towards categorical pluralism, the doctrine that there are potentially many categories, not just one or two. The *Zeitgeist* came to rest with Wittgenstein and Ramsey. They denied the necessity of shoehorning a priori whatever there might turn out to be into any simple-minded onefold or twofold scheme (categorical monism or dualism).

In this book I undertake a task never undertaken before, that of expounding and explaining the intellectual processes whereby this dialectic unfolded. The New Philosophy had its origins in Moore’s second Fellowship dissertation, *The Metaphysical Basis of Ethics*, and Russell’s *An Analysis of Mathematical Reasoning*, both written in

the summer of 1898, works in which Moore and Russell were still influenced by Kant. To set the stage for the emergence of the New Philosophy, I argue in chapter 1 that Kant conceived the particular–universal distinction to be a piece of synthetic a priori knowledge. As a piece of synthetic a priori knowledge Kant recognized that this distinction was no less epistemologically precarious than Hume had found the Principle of Causality to be or the Axioms of Euclidean geometry.<sup>3</sup> I explain how Kant valiantly struggled, but failed, to vindicate the particular–universal distinction as a piece of synthetic a priori knowledge. In the Metaphysical Deduction Kant proposed to derive the categories from the general forms of judgement. But the Metaphysical Deduction wasn't fit for purpose, an especially visible weak spot in Kant's plan for vindicating the a priori status of the categories. This account of Kant isn't offered merely as a reconstruction of a neglected episode in the history of the theory of universals, although it is. Rather because the Metaphysical Deduction failed, the thought becomes available and salient that we cannot validly read off the categories from our familiar manners of thinking and talking about the world. It was recognition that Kant's transcendental idealism had this weakness that provided an important stimulus to the development of analytic philosophy.

Against this backdrop I provide an account of the genesis of the New Philosophy in terms of Moore's rejection of Kant's idealism. The resulting system, examined in chapter 2, emerged from Moore's work on his second dissertation and was published in his 'Nature of Judgment' (1899). In Moore's early system, the world is conceived as the totality of propositions, whether true or false, where propositions and their building blocks, called 'concepts' by Moore, are conceived as maximally mind independent. In chapter 3, I argue that the concepts of Moore's early system are neither particulars nor universals. They aren't because Moore understood the categories of particular and universal as Kant had done, in terms of predication. But Moore doubted that the subject–predicate form belonged to the depth form of our descriptions of reality where concepts are expressed and conjured. As part of his rejection of the idealist outlook, Moore recognized a level of description underneath the level at which Kant applied the categories.

In his *Analysis of Mathematical Reasoning*, Russell had sought to update and extend Kant's classification of judgement forms to reflect the logical variety of mathematical judgements. Nonetheless the *Analysis* was a conservative work insofar as Russell continued in this work to hold onto a version of the particular–universal distinction, indeed putting forward arguments in its favour that were destined to subsequently sway both him and Moore. In chapter 4 I explain how Russell abandoned his Kantian outlook and became a convert to the New Philosophy Moore had put forward in 'The Nature of Judgment'. I show in the subtext to Russell's lectures on Leibniz, delivered in 1899 but published as *A Critical Exposition of the Philosophy of Leibniz* (1900), how

<sup>3</sup> See MacBride 1999 and 2005c for a contemporary working out of Humean scepticism about the particular–universal distinction independent of Kant's framework.

Russell developed his own arguments for categorial monism, significantly arguments based upon the inscrutability of particulars. Indeed his unpublished paper 'On the Classification of Relations' (1899) anticipates the most famous argument of Ramsey's 'Universals' against the particular–universal distinction.

But things didn't stand still—such was the restless energy of the innovators of the New Philosophy. In 1901 Moore reinvented the particular–universal distinction and so categorial dualism supplanted categorial monism as the official doctrine of the New Philosophy. Chapter 5 is devoted to an exposition and explanation of Moore's 'Identity', perhaps the darkest, most baffling paper in the early analytic corpus, the paper in which Moore argued for the categorial dualism he favoured in the early years of the twentieth century. But things didn't ossify there either. Doubts began to creep back into Moore's mind and before the decade was done Moore was wondering whether categorial dualism was really too crude a scheme to accommodate the logical variety of the judgements we truly make about reality. Meanwhile, Whitehead was en route from being a mathematician to being a metaphysician; the philosophy of nature Whitehead developed during the 1910s and 20s led him to a similar conclusion about the particular–universal distinction as Moore had already done in his lectures. For Whitehead, the particular–universal distinction was just a piece of *Weltanschauung*, a fragment of an Aristotelian mind-set that requires us to straitjacket what exists into a simple-minded division between particulars and universals, a binary division that cannot be adequate to the extraordinary manifold diversity nature exhibits. In chapter 6, I explain Moore's change of heart about categorial dualism, as evidenced in his 1910–11 lectures, and I chart the course of Whitehead's intellectual development towards categorial pluralism.

At the same time G.F. Stout was undertaking his own journey from being a psychologist and a philosopher of psychology in the 1890s to being a metaphysician in the 1920s. Like Moore in 'The Nature of Judgment' and Russell in *The Philosophy of Leibniz*, Stout was an opponent of categorial dualism. In the place of the categories of substance and attribute, Stout recommended a metaphysical scheme of abstract particulars or tropes, an alternative version of categorial monism. In chapter 7 I provide a novel account of Stout's pioneering arguments for this one-category scheme. In a famous exchange with Stout in 1923, Moore set himself against abstract particulars and tropes. Whilst Moore's case against Stout was found convincing by a generation of philosophers, it has recently become received wisdom that Moore failed even to grasp the basics of Stout's categorial monism. But I argue, against received wisdom, that Stout's version of categorial monism was crippled by its failure to account for predication in general, a flaw that Moore exposed in his exchange with Stout but Stout could not remedy.

Whilst Moore had come to be doubtful once more of categorial dualism by 1910, Russell continued to espouse categorial dualism in one form or other, advancing from a Kantian to a more Fregean orientation. In chapter 8, I explain how Russell's conception of the particular–universal distinction evolved and deepened as a result

of tandem changes in his thinking about the nature of judgement and the nature of relations. This provides a new perspective upon the dispute between Russell and Wittgenstein about the multiple relation theory of judgement. Russell wasn't confounded by Wittgenstein's criticisms at all—as so many commentators suppose. In chapter 9, I explain how developing the picture theory out of a proto-version Russell had already conjured with in 1906 led Wittgenstein to embrace categorial pluralism in the *Tractatus* (1919/1922). As a consequence of his pictorial conception of representation, Wittgenstein was led to the conclusion that the general propositional form 'such and such is the case' marks the limit of what can be deduced a priori about what we say or judge. But if nothing less general about the form of propositions can be deduced then a fortiori we cannot deduce a priori any more specific forms of judgement. It's then a consequence of Wittgenstein's picture theory that we cannot determine a priori that our judgements will have the specific forms of judgements about particulars and universals. What specific forms our judgements take can only be revealed a posteriori. So Wittgenstein embraced categorial pluralism.

The culmination of this intellectual episode comes with Ramsey's 'Universals' (1925) and his subsequent elucidations in 'Universals and the "Method of Analysis"' (1926). 'Universals' has been almost invariably read in isolation. But 'Universals' is a refraction of so much of the philosophy that was cutting edge in 1920s Cambridge, the philosophy Ramsey had imbibed so much of during his remarkable hothousing education.<sup>4</sup> As a result, Ramsey's critics, as well as philosophers who have thought themselves fellow travellers, have often failed to understand him, their reflections upon him beside the point. In chapter 10, I remedy the defect of reading 'Universals' in isolation. Ramsey's case for categorial pluralism is explained in terms of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, Whitehead's philosophy of nature, and Russell's introduction to the second edition of *Principia Mathematica* (1925).

The perspective that emerges from Wittgenstein and Ramsey's complementary reflections is one whereby questions about what things exist and what categories of things there are cannot be answered separately. Rather, according to Wittgenstein and Ramsey, the existence of things and their categories are progressively revealed together, a posteriori, as the course of nature unfolds. So expressed, Wittgenstein and Ramsey embrace a naturalistic approach to ontology. Naturalism has a familiar ring to us, because we're intellectually downstream from Quine. Categorial pluralism sounds less familiar a doctrine. But if naturalism is congenial to us, should we not embrace Wittgenstein and Ramsey's outlook on ontology too? If we already embrace naturalism, shouldn't we bring our meta-ontology into harmony with our conception of meaning and mind?<sup>5</sup> And if we're not already naturalists, an appreciation of Wittgenstein and

<sup>4</sup> See his sister, Margaret Paul's memoir of Ramsey (Paul 2012).

<sup>5</sup> See MacBride 2014a and MacBride and Janssen-Lauret 2015 for arguments in favour of a naturalist outlook on the categories from a contemporary perspective.

Ramsey's arguments creates an epistemic context in which we cannot continue to accept categorial dualism as an article of metaphysical faith. This book's conclusion also raises a new and surprising question for future work in the history of our discipline. How did analytic philosophy manage to get from the naturalistic perspective achieved in the early decades of the twentieth century to where we are now in the twenty-first, where so many of us take the particular–universal distinction to be a priori?



# 1

## Kantian Prequel

### ‘Idols of the Tribe’

#### 1. Introduction

To understand the themes that the *Zeitgeist* played out through the development of early analytic philosophy we need to get back to the works of Kant, that great sceptic of unrestrained metaphysical speculation. To begin with this will enable us get to grips with the early writings of G.E. Moore, writings where Moore explained and developed his break with idealism. After reading Hegel for his Tripos examinations, Moore had ‘never thought it worth while to read him again’; but he devoted two years (1896–98), whilst working for a Prize Fellowship at Trinity, to ‘puzzling over Kant’s three *Critiques*, his *Prolegomena*, and his *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*’.<sup>1</sup> It was during this period that Moore spent puzzling over Kant that the lines of the New Philosophy were laid down. It’s ironic that by 1899, Moore’s scheme was itself to bear a family resemblance to Hegel’s own metaphysics, akin to absolute idealism. But this isn’t so surprising since in a crucial respect Moore’s critique of Kant recapitulated Hegel’s.

Going back to Kant won’t only provide us with novel insight into aspects of Moore’s early scheme that have hitherto baffled his commentators. Placing Kant at the forefront of our attention will also help us understand what came next and thereafter, and eventually enable us to appreciate the developmental process that culminated in the ontology of Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus* and his conversations with the Vienna Circle. Why so?

The answer lies with an intellectual episode that history forgot. That it was Kant, following hints from Hume, who first problematized the concepts of substance and attribute and the division between them; that in fact Kant argued that the dual

<sup>1</sup> In this chapter I have endeavoured to approach Kant’s text as Moore did, unencumbered by subsequent disputes about the proper interpretation of Kant. However I have made use of three influential English works of the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century: Adamson’s *Shaw Lectures on Kant* (1879), Caird’s two volume study of *Kant’s Critical Philosophy* (1889) and Pritchard’s commentary on the *Critique Of Pure Reason* (1909). We know from the preface to Moore’s 1898 dissertation that Moore consulted both Caird and Adamson during the two-year period that he intensively studied Kant (Moore 1898: 117). Moore’s preface also tells us that he consulted the works of Fischer, B. Erdmann, J.H. Erdmann, Cohen, and Vaihinger; but it is unclear the extent to which Moore was influenced by them.

concepts of substance and attribute (or particular and universal) are no less problematic from a justificatory point of view than Hume had found the concept of causation to be, because fundamental judgements framed in terms of them are neither analytic nor a posteriori but synthetic a priori. That's why Kant placed the concepts of substance and attribute alongside the concept of causation on his table of categories to await transcendental justification—although Kant's commentators typically overlook the significance of the concepts of substance and attribute lying there on the table. The concepts of substance and attribute (particular and universal) were to be deemed no less problematic by the early analytic philosophers.

In this chapter I return to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* and *Prolegomena* to recover what history subsequently forgot: Kant's reasons for problematizing the concepts of substance and attribute and Kant's flawed efforts to justify them transcendentially.

## 2. Synthetic A Priori Principles in Geometry, Physics, and Metaphysics

In *The Critique of Pure Reason* Kant devoted himself to elucidating the difference between concepts, such as *fortune* and *fate*, which have been 'allowed to circulate by almost universal indulgence' and other concepts that perform a genuine and indispensable role in our thinking about the world outside of us (A84/B116). Famously Hume had questioned whether the concept of *causation* could be legitimately employed to describe the external world; so far as Hume could establish, our use of the concept was legitimated neither by experience nor reason. He diagnosed instead that it arose as a non-rational product of association and custom. Kant agreed with Hume's negative conclusion—that the concept of *causation* couldn't be legitimated by either of the familiar vindictory routes Hume had envisaged—but distanced himself from Hume's positive diagnosis. Kant refused to lump *causation* together with *fortune* and *fate* because, he argued, by contrast to them, we do need to employ the concept of *causation* as an instrument to convert the chaotic mass of fleeting data the senses deliver to us into experience of an objective, law-governed world. Accordingly Kant countenanced a third vindictory route for concepts—a transcendental deduction that would establish the legitimacy of a concept by showing that without it experience of the world would be impossible.

Now what has been left out of history is the fact that Kant argued that the concepts of *substance* and *attribute* are no less problematic from the point of view of their justification than Hume had conceived the concept of *causation* to be. Kant appreciated clearly what followed. The concepts of *substance* and *attribute* require no less a transcendental deduction to legitimate their use—if they cannot be vindicated by such a route then *substance* and *attribute* should be thrown in the bucket with *fortune* and *fate*.

What had enabled Kant to achieve this insight was his realization that the particular problem that Hume had raised for *causation* was just an instance of a more general

problem that beset the justification of many other theoretical concepts we deploy in our reasoning. Kant deemed to be both a universal and a necessary law that every event has a cause—the Law of Causality. Kant had learnt a twofold lesson from Hume. That this law cannot be established empirically because experience can only teach us that something is the case 'but not that it cannot be otherwise' (A1/B3). But that it cannot be otherwise cannot be established by reflecting solely upon the concepts that are required for the expression of the law either. The concept of *cause* is neither contained explicitly nor implicitly in the concept of *event* so we do not ensnare ourselves in contradiction if we suppose that some event isn't caused. The upshot: Kant's causal law cannot be justified a posteriori but it isn't analytic either. But how discomfiting. If the law is justified at all, it must be a priori. But how can it be justified a priori if it's only synthetic? What mechanism could possibly enable us to apprehend that concepts that aren't analytically connected cannot break free from their propositional orbits; that concepts that aren't such that one is contained in the other are still such that one invariably tracks the other, however things turn out (A9/B13)? This gives us a sense of just how difficult the general problem was that kept Kant awake at night after reading Hume: how is it possible for necessary and universal synthetic judgements to be justified independently of experience?

For Kant the Law of Causality wasn't an outlier; he found many other examples of judgements that even though they are synthetic he still took to be justified a priori. He believed, for example, that the judgement space has exactly three dimensions and the judgement that the quantity of matter in the Universe is always preserved are synthetic a priori too (B16–18; *Proleg.* §12, 15). More generally he believed that the Axioms of Euclidean Geometry and many of the Principles of Newtonian Mechanics are synthetic a priori. This explains the urgency with which Kant addressed the problem of how synthetic a priori judgements are possible. A solution to the problem was needed straightaway because otherwise the theoretical edifice of eighteenth-century mathematics and science—that Kant deemed to rely upon these judgements—would be jeopardized.

Alongside the Law of Causality, the Axioms of Euclid and all the rest, Kant set forth as further paradigms of synthetic a priori judgements certain metaphysical principles governing substances and attributes in general. According to Kant, the principle that all substances are permanent—that is, can neither come to be nor pass away—is synthetic a priori (*Proleg.* §47). This principle is synthetic rather than analytic because the concept of *substance* doesn't contain the concept of *permanence*, as Kant understood those concepts. He defined a substance as something 'which exists only as a subject, never as a predicate of something else'; correlatively an attribute is something that can exist as a mere predicate (A147/B186). It cannot be drawn out of the concept of a subject which does not itself exist as the predicate of something else—an 'ultimate' subject—that it can neither come to be nor pass away. So we do not contradict ourselves if we suppose a substance, that is, an ultimate subject, fails to be permanent. Still Kant held the Principle of Permanence of Substance to be universal and necessary. Since

experience cannot teach us that something cannot be otherwise the Principle must be *a priori* if it is justified.

The Principle of the Permanence of Substance is liable to strike us today as intelligible but hardly a principle whose recognition is forced upon us. Why shouldn't an ultimate subject be capable of being expunged? We don't contradict ourselves if we suppose one just was. But, of course, this was just Kant's point: that the Principle is synthetic, analysis cannot warrant it; so establishing the Principle isn't going to be a walk in the park. The First Analogy gives us his best shot—where Kant argued that there's no making sense of our experience of temporal passage unless we presuppose that there is something permanent in nature and we need the concept of *substance* to express this presupposition (B224–5). But what Kant appreciated more generally was the fact that other metaphysical principles that are liable to appear more or less innocuous to us are really no more mandated from the point of view of pure reason than the Principle of the Permanence of Substance itself.

For Kant the concepts of *substance* and *attribute* were no more empirical in origin than the concept of *causation* was for Hume. The concepts of *red* and *round* are empirical because we can just see that some things are red and some things are round. But we cannot just look and see whether something is a substance or an attribute—no more than we can just look and see one event causes another. Hume had raised the problem for *causation* that we can literally see that one event and then subsequently see another, but not the necessity with which a given cause gives rise to a certain effect. Kant agreed and added that we cannot see either that something is incapable of being a predicate. Since it is a necessary condition of something's being a substance that it is incapable of being a predicate it follows that we cannot see whether something is a substance or merely an attribute.

But even though we cannot see whether something is a substance or an attribute Kant still held that whatever we see must either be a substance or an attribute. Call this Kant's Principle of Bifurcation. Because the concepts involved aren't empirical, the Principle cannot be established by appeal to experience. But still Kant held the Principle 'forces itself upon us' (B6). Kant invites us to imagine what the results would be of performing a certain sort of metaphysical operation on any kind of empirical object whatsoever: 'if we remove from our empirical concept of any object, corporeal or incorporeal, all properties which experience has taught us, we yet cannot take away that property through which the object is thought as substance or as inhering in a substance' (B6). Take any object you like, you can strip away all of its empirical features, but you won't be able to take away its being a substance or its being something that inheres in a substance (an attribute). We cannot think of it except as a substance or an attribute; the Principle of Bifurcation 'forces itself upon us'. But the Principle isn't analytic. It isn't contradictory to deny that every possible object of experience is either a substance or an attribute. The Principle of Bifurcation is synthetic.

At first glance the Principle might *seem* to be analytic because there are analytic principles in the neighbourhood with which we may be liable to confuse it. For Kant it

is an analytic truth that a substance is an ultimate subject, whereas an attribute is a mere predicate. Since an ultimate subject is defined as something that cannot itself be a predicate of anything else, it follows *analytically* that no substance is an attribute. But it doesn't follow that any possible object, experienced or otherwise, is a substance or an attribute. It's analytic that if something is a substance then it's an ultimate subject. But it's not analytic that anything is an ultimate subject (or an attribute of a substance). Mere analysis of the concepts of *substance* and *attribute*, cannot establish that it is necessary to those concepts to apply to what is given to us. Hence analysis of concepts, 'reason alone' as Kant puts it, cannot provide us with insight into the application of the concepts of *substance* and *attribute*; anymore than, as Hume pointed out, reason alone can provide insight into the application of the concept of *causation* (*Proleg*: §27–8).

In fact Kant had a very clear-sighted appreciation that metaphysics cannot proceed very far through analysis—that 'analytic metaphysics' is a misnomer. Analytic principles are essentially 'explicative', breaking up a concept into its constituent elements. They are useful because they can help us to appreciate clearly what we had confusedly thought all along. But analytic principles are constitutively incapable of enabling us to do more than rehearse what we knew already (albeit sometimes confusedly). So if metaphysics is to lead to a genuine extension of our knowledge then it must eventually rely upon synthetic principles that are 'ampliative', that forge new connections amongst concepts where no amount of analysis could possibly extract one from the other (A10/B14). But since the conjectures of metaphysics are usually understood to be universal and necessary, and experience cannot teach us things could not be otherwise, these synthetic principles must be *a priori*. So no metaphysician who proposes bold and surprising principles to extend our knowledge can ultimately evade the responsibility of explaining how they arrive at knowledge of such synthetic principles *a priori*. Addressing himself to such a metaphysician, Kant issued a challenge that could not be negotiated away, 'You speak through pure reason, and presume as it were to create cognitions *a priori*, not merely by analysing given concepts but by giving out that you are making new connections, which do not rest on the principle of contradiction, and you believe to have insight into them independently of all experience; how do you arrive at all this and how will you justify such pretensions?' (*Proleg*: §5). Kant added that synthetic *a priori* principles aren't any less problematic, if, instead of being bold and surprising, they comport with common sense, 'You cannot be permitted to appeal to the consent of common sense, for this is a witness whose reputation only rests on public humour' (did the youthful Moore sit up in his armchair as he read this passage in the *Prolegomena*?).

The concepts of *substance* and *attribute* are not only problematic for Kant because they are bound up with synthetic *a priori* principles. *Substance* and *attribute* aren't empirical concepts acquired by abstraction from experience. They are rather, as Kant described them, concepts of pure understanding. But precisely because they have no experiential content whatsoever this makes it difficult to understand how it is possible to apply *substance* and *attribute* to what is given in experience. Kant draws a distinction

between concepts that are homogeneous with the objects that fall under them and heterogeneous concepts that aren't. A concept is homogeneous if 'the concept contains something which is represented in the object that is to be subsumed under it' (A137/B176). So the concept of a circle is homogeneous with a circular plate because to understand the concept is straightaway to grasp a rule for applying the concept to the spatial objects experience gives us—we can *see* that it's a circular plate because all the points on its edge are a given distance from a given point, its centre. But the concepts of *substance* and *attribute* aren't homogeneous with the objects that fall under them. Understanding these concepts doesn't supply a rule for settling whether this or that empirical object is a substance or an attribute. Experience of an object doesn't settle whether it fulfils the highly abstract condition of being an ultimate subject: 'Substance... would mean simply a something which can be thought only as a subject, never as a predicate of something else. Such a representation I can put to no use, for it tells me nothing as to the nature of that which is thus to be viewed as a primary subject' (A147/B186–7).

An alternative universe: Kant completes his critical labours at this point. He has established that the traditional Aristotelian metaphysic of substance and attribute rested upon dubious foundations (synthetic a priori) and that the concepts of *substance* and *attribute* lack operational criteria for their application. The Principle of Bifurcation is dropped along with the Principle of Causality. Together with Hume, Kant goes down in history as the great destroyer of metaphysical systems. Subsequently Aristotelian metaphysics went the way of Euclidean Geometry and Newtonian Mechanics.

### 3. The Copernican Revolution

For good or for ill, Kant didn't quit whilst he was ahead. His big idea was to put everything right with a 'Copernican Revolution'. Until Copernicus, astronomers assumed that the heavens revolved around the earth; but with this assumption in place they could make no progress explaining celestial motion. Copernicus's revolutionary hypothesis: it is we, terrestrial observers, who are moving. Equipped with this hypothesis Copernicus successfully accounted for the appearances of the heavens from the earth as the mutual upshot of the earth and the other planets revolving around the sun. It was key to Copernicus's successful explanation of the astronomical appearances that *we* make an integral contribution to those appearances through our own motion. This inspired Kant's own version of a Copernican Revolution. He speculated that no progress had been made explaining how synthetic a priori judgements are possible because it had been assumed that external objects have their nature fixed irrespective of our cognition of them. To make progress he suggested that the Principle of Causality *etc.* force themselves upon us a priori even though they are synthetic because they reflect the unconscious procedures whereby we construct our representations of objects from the crude deliverances of the senses.

It follows from Kant's account of synthetic a priori principles that 'we can know *a priori* of things only what we ourselves put in them' (Bxviii). But doesn't this just amount to the offer of a poisoned chalice to metaphysicians minded to endorse synthetic a priori principles about causation, substance, and attribute? Wasn't Kant just acknowledging that these principles force themselves upon us because they reflect features of our innate cognitive constitution rather than the nature of things outside of us? If so, Kant's defence of the synthetic a priori does nothing to support the Principle of Causality, the Principle of Bifurcation, and so on—at least insofar as those principles are intended to be factual descriptions of a world whose nature is fixed independently of us.

Nonetheless Kant held that the concepts of *causation*, *substance*, and *attribute* aren't anomalous or dispensable features of our cognitive architecture. Experience would be impossible if we didn't make use of these concepts because then our inner lives wouldn't amount to more than a bag of ideas connected by arbitrary laws of association. Kant's Transcendental Deduction is intended to vindicate our employment of these concepts by demonstrating that they indeed have this significance for our cognition.

#### 4. The Forms of Judgement and the Categories

Because it purports to show that these concepts must be employed if experience belonging to a unified consciousness is to be possible at all, the Transcendental Deduction marks the most thoroughgoing and ambitious defence of the concepts of *substance* and *attribute* in history. But there's no need here for us to become entangled in the details of Kant's metapsychology or the relationship between the different versions of the Transcendental Deduction that Kant left us. The historically significant respect in which Kant's overall strategy for vindicating these concepts fell far short can be made out without our having to drop too close to treacherous ground.

One central line of argument that runs through the Transcendental Deduction can be sketched in the following terms. The mental life of a creature capable of keeping track of its own states ('transcendental unity of apperception') cannot consist solely in a succession of representations. It has to take ownership of them, which means being able to appreciate that they are all states of one and the same subject (A116/B131–2). Taking ownership cannot consist in simply being aware that each representation belongs to the same self, because we only ever encounter manifestations of the self, rather than the self itself (A107). Ultimately, Kant held that the ability to take ownership of our representations relies upon the ability to make judgements about them. This is because the ability to comprehend a manifold of diverse representations as one unified whole ('synthesis') is essentially the same as the ability we exercise when we make a single judgement about them (A79/B104–5). As Kant telegraphically made the point in the *Prolegomena*, 'The union of representations in one consciousness is judging' (§22). But, according to Kant, judgement is only possible if we are able to apply what he called



'the pure concepts of the understanding', or 'the categories', to what is given to us to make judgements—where the categories include *causation*, *substance*, and *attribute* amongst other concepts. So it is only possible for a self-conscious creature to keep track of its own states if it has the ability to apply these categories to make judgements about what is given to it (A125/B143). The self realizes its own unity through the application of the categories.

To reach this conclusion Kant draws upon results concerning the nature of judgement that he considered himself to have already established in a preceding section of the *Critique*, the Metaphysical Deduction of the Categories. For Kant all empirical knowledge arises out of co-operation between two mental faculties, *sensibility* and *understanding*, that is, between experiential uptake on the one hand and the application of concepts on the other (A19/B33). It's upon the field of possible judgements that sensibility and understanding play out their respective roles. Objects are *given* to us by means of the 'intuitions' sensibility supplies, that is, singular representations that relate immediately to their objects.

Now Kant made it a controlling assumption about concepts that to apply one is to make a judgement by means of it—every concept may be regarded as a predicate of a possible judgement. A concept is applied to an object given to us when the intuition that represents the object and the concept in question are brought together in a relation whereby the judgement is formed that the object given falls under the concept (A68/B93).

What Kant argued in the Metaphysical Deduction was that when we apply an empirical concept to something given to us to make a judgement, we presuppose the application of a pure concept of the understanding. This is the very general concept (category) that corresponds to the formal manner in which the judgement is built up from its constituent representations. Such a concept is pure in the sense that it is used whenever we make a judgement that exhibits that formal feature, however much the topic may otherwise vary. So if Kant could supply us with an exhaustive inventory of the formal features of judgement then he would have supplied us—if we'd followed Kant thus far—the basis for an exhaustive inventory of the categories. We would have an explanation of 'why just those concepts, and no others have their seat in the pure understanding' (A81/B107). But unless the Metaphysical Deduction succeeds in providing such an inventory the Transcendental Deduction cannot carry through to completion—it cannot establish that experience is only possible if exactly these are the categories applied.

In fact, looking back, Kant was to remain absolutely certain about the completeness of the list of categories he had put together. 'I knew beyond doubt that exactly these, and only so many of them, neither more nor less, could constitute our whole knowledge of things out of pure understanding' (*Proleg*: §39). Kant's certainty arose from his prior conviction that the task of supplying an exhaustive inventory of the logical forms of possible judgements was 'easily done' (A69/B94). But really it is one of the most difficult things to do, perhaps *the* most difficult. The history of early



analytic philosophy might be described as an unfolding realization that the task was impossibly difficult.

Kant's straightforward idea for coming up with an inventory of forms was to abstract from all the empirical content of our judgements; he claimed that what was left behind by the abstraction process were exactly twelve formal features that judgement are capable of exhibiting. Kant classified these formal features under the four headings 'Quantity', 'Quality', 'Relation', and 'Modality' and he maintained that every judgement must exhibit exactly one of the three features that falls under each of these headings. Each judgement must have some form of quantity: it must be universal, particular, or singular. Each judgement must have some form of quality: it must be affirmative, negative, or infinite. Each judgement must have some form of modality: it must be either problematic, assertoric, or apodeictic. It's the third heading that's most relevant to the concepts whose application concerns us. Kant took it that every judgement must have some relation, by which Kant meant that the judgement must either have a categorical, a hypothetical, or a disjunctive form. From these three judgement forms Kant derived the three categories that he labelled 'Inherence and Subsistence', 'Causality and Dependence', and 'Community' (A79/B105).

It's a significant fact that Kant labelled these categories as relational and its significance wasn't lost upon Moore and Russell. The first of these categories Kant also called '*substantia et accidens*', the second, '*cause and effect*' and the third '*reciprocity of agent and patient*' to make perspicuous their binary status as categories of relation. Kant later picked out these categories as 'dynamic' meaning that they are concerned with necessary connexions amongst the elements that these concepts are used to describe (A160/B199–200). What he had in mind was that there is no applying one side of a relational category without (explicitly or implicitly) applying the other; their applications cannot be conceived independently of one another. We cannot judge something to be a cause without presupposing that something else is an effect of it, anymore that we can judge that something is an effect without presupposing that something else is its cause. We cannot judge that something is an agent without presupposing that something is acted upon by it (a patient), anymore than we can judge that something is a patient without presupposing that something acted upon it (an agent). Similarly we cannot judge that something is a substance without presupposing that something else is an attribute of it; anymore that we can judge that something is an attribute without presupposing that something else is a substance that has the attribute in question. Kant thereby continued a tradition of thought about *substance* and *attribute* that he shared with Hume and which can be traced back to Aristotle.<sup>2</sup> One noteworthy consequence is that for Kant it's misleading to talk—as indeed we have done until now—as though *substance* and *attribute* were two separate concepts, capable of enjoying a life independently of one another. It's just as misleading to talk of *cause* and *effect*, or *agent*

<sup>2</sup> See Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Z, 1 and Hume, *Treatise of Human Understanding*, Book I, Sec. IV, 3.

and *patient*, as separate categories capable of a life apart. This made it entirely fitting that Kant recognized one category rather than two for substance and attribute.

## 5. How the Metaphysical Deduction Fell Short

The immediate questions about the Metaphysical Deduction that need to be raised are: (1) Did Kant indeed succeed in providing an exhaustive enumeration of the formal features of judgement? (2) Did Kant succeed in deriving the categories from the formal features he listed? Of course both these questions were to become very pressing for Kant's successors, from Reinhold onward.

Kant claimed that his list of the formal features of judgement was developed systematically from reflection upon the nature of judgement itself. In this way he took himself to have made an advance upon Aristotle (A81/B107). Aristotle's list of categories appears to have arisen from reflection upon the different types of question that one might ordinarily ask about a thing—'What is it?', 'What is it like?', 'How big?', and so on. But Kant's claim to have been more systematic than Aristotle appears overblown. The highly schematic account of judgement that Kant provided, that judgement essentially involves subsuming what is given to us in experience under concepts, doesn't inevitably unfold into the variety of logical features that he lays out for us.<sup>3</sup> This account of judgement and concepts may have been well suited to performing an important *negative* role, helping rule out theories according to which judgements are mere associations of ideas; but it is ill suited to performing the *positive* role of determining just what specific forms judgements must take.

It is perfectly true that we can come up with examples of judgements that behave themselves Kant-wise, exhibiting one feature from under each of Kant's four headings, as Kant's theory predicts. The judgement, for example, that all bodies are heavy is universal, affirmative, categorical, and assertoric. But Kant denied that his inventory of forms could be satisfactorily established by reflecting upon examples that happen to have come our way; such an inductive procedure could never guarantee the completeness of the enumeration at which he had arrived. We can get some intuitive sense of the thinking behind Kant's catalogue of judgement forms if we conceive of what we do when we make a judgement as making a claim about how attributes inhere in substances (relation). In that case when we make a judgement we will either affirm or deny (quality) that an attribute holds of all, some, or none of the substances (quantity) either necessarily, possibly, or actually (modality). This assumes that whenever we make a judgement we are making a claim about how attributes inhere in substances. But don't forget that the whole point of the Metaphysical Deduction is to *demonstrate* that we cannot judge without applying the concepts of *substance* and *attribute* (amongst others) to what is given to us. The Metaphysical Deduction can hardly establish this result if it is already

<sup>3</sup> A concern emphasized by Caird 1889: 308–9 in his treatment of the Metaphysical Deduction. See also Prichard 1909: 152.

assumed at the outset that what we do when we make a judgement is to make a claim about how attributes inhere in substances—however easy it may be for a subject who already thinks in terms of such categories to take that assumption for granted.

Kant himself appears later to have doubted whether he could indeed make good upon his promise in the Metaphysical Deduction to establish the categories 'systematically from a common principle, namely the faculty of judgment', that is, provide a deduction that would explain 'why just those concepts, and no others, have their seat in the pure understanding' (A81/B106). In fact Kant appears to have come to realize that it is simply an ultimate and inexplicable fact about the cognitive make-up of human beings that our judgements have the forms that they do: 'The peculiarity of our understanding, that it can produce *a priori* unity of apperception solely by means of the categories, and only by such and so many, is as little capable of further explanation as why we have just these and no other functions of judgment' (B145–6).

Perhaps this later remark tells us that we shouldn't take too seriously the rhetoric of the Metaphysical Deduction—because Kant only ever meant to assemble the formal features that, as a matter of brute fact, our judgements exhibit. But it doesn't matter how exactly Kant conceived, or came to conceive, the design brief of the Metaphysical Deduction, whether in terms of establishing that such-and-such are all the forms that judgements could ever exhibit, or merely in terms of laying out that such-and-such are the forms our judgements actually exhibit. The insufficiency of Kant's arguments to realize the ambition of the former design, and the modesty of the latter, both open the door to acknowledging the possibility of other creatures endowed with a different cognitive constitution to our own, creatures whose judgements exhibit forms that aren't anywhere on Kant's list—the possibility that the categories aren't inevitable after all.

No doubt Kant was unduly influenced in his actual framing of his catalogue of forms by an ingrained habit of thinking along Aristotelian lines. He infamously remarked that since Aristotle, logic had been 'a closed and completed body of doctrine' (Bviii). But the fact that Aristotle's logic had stood the test of time for over two thousand years does make it intelligible why Kant should have thought that Aristotle had succeeded in laying bare the fundamental operations of thought. Nonetheless Kant's confidence turned out to be misplaced. Aristotelian logic was destined to be overtaken by nineteenth-century developments in logic and mathematics.<sup>4</sup> This logical revolution rendered perspicuous forms of judgement involving generality that Kant's catalogue had failed to adequately represent. But a reader of Kant doesn't need to be abreast of these technical developments in order to notice that Kant's catalogue is deficient because it already fails to distinguish between singular judgements of different forms. It fails, for example, to distinguish attributive judgements (Socrates is pale) from relational judgements (Socrates loves Xanthippe) lumping them together as categorical. But if we distinguish

<sup>4</sup> See Frege (1879) and Peirce (1883) for their treatments of the calculus of relations that overturned Aristotelian logic. Whilst these works are now famous, back in 1898 neither Moore nor Russell had read them. But De Morgan (1847) had already published criticisms of Aristotle and the traditional logic in English and conveniently in Cambridge. No doubt worries about Aristotle's logic were in the air.

between attributive and relational judgement forms then we can't make do with just the concepts of *substance* and *attribute* to correspond to them. It will be necessary to admit more categories when we make judgements that exhibit these different forms—*substance* and *attribute* won't do by themselves.

The upshot so far: the Metaphysical Deduction has come under pressure from two sides. Kant hasn't demonstrated that his catalogue of judgement forms comprises the forms of all possible judgements. Nor has he established that his catalogue includes the forms of all actual judgements. Up until this point we have given Kant the benefit of the doubt and allowed the assumption to pass that he is entitled to derive the categories from the formal features of judgements. Our ultimate concern is with the relational category of *substantia et accidens*. Did Kant succeed in deriving this category from the form of categorical judgements? If Kant failed in this task then he also failed to address his own generalized Humean scepticism about the intelligibility of the concepts of *substance* and *attribute*.

Recall that Kant defined a substance as something 'which exists only as a subject, never as a predicate of something else' whilst an attribute is defined as something that can exist as a predicate (A147/B186)). Since the concepts of *substance* and *attribute* are defined using the formal-grammatical notions in terms of which a judgement is understood to be categorical in the first place, the transition between form and category, at least in this case, is liable to appear more or less immediate. To cognitively assemble a categorical judgement requires us to conceive of something as a subject, as something capable of bearing attributes. Success in assembling such a judgement also requires us to reciprocally conceive of something else in terms of its performing a predicative role, as an attribute capable of being borne by the subject. It follows that the capacity to make a categorical judgement presupposes the capacity to distinguish between a subject and the attributes it bears. The problem for Kant is that this line of reflection doesn't yield the Kantian category of *substantia et accidens*.

The envisaged derivation only tells us that we must distinguish, when we exercise our capacity to make a categorical judgement, between a subject that has attributes and the attributes it has. But it may be questioned whether a subject (so conceived) need be anything over and above its attributes. In other words, even if we accept Kant's account of the abilities that we exercise when we make a categorical judgement, it is still possible to conceive of a subject as a bundle of attributes, thereby dispensing altogether with the concept of *substance* as an integral feature of the *substantia et accidens* package. In *The Nature of Existence* McTaggart pointed out one difficulty with this dispensability argument: when we judge of Lincoln that he is tall, we don't judge that the bundle of his attributes *is* tall—no bundle of attributes *has* the attribute of being tall, but Lincoln does.<sup>5</sup> This makes bundles of attributes ill suited to performing the subject role with respect to categorical judgements about Lincoln et al. But from the fact that we don't conceive of Lincoln as a bundle of attributes when we make a categorical judgement

<sup>5</sup> See McTaggart 1921: §66.