Preface

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Preface

I proceed to state the limitations, aims, principal argument, and likely main objections to the book. I shall begin with the book's five main limitations.

First, much like its worthy predecessors, Michael Dummett's *Origins of Analytical Philosophy* and Benardete's *Metaphysics: The Logical Approach*, the present book is not a historical study in that there is almost no discussion of causal influences of earlier philosophers on the analysts, or of the analysts on each other. If you please, the book is a *proto*-historical study. It is not history of philosophy, but something that must be done prior to that. For the book identifies and analyzes the many different existence-identity connections in the different periods of Frege's and Russell's thought, so that others can then inquire after their causal antecedents and influences. If I had done a historical study of the causal relations of these connections, the book would have been far longer than it is, and would have taken many more years to write. Here I can only briefly state the obvious: Russell read Frege, Wittgenstein read Frege and Russell, and Quine read Frege, Russell, and Wittgenstein. As to influences of the ancients, I shall cite at the moment only Wittgenstein's admission that his objects and Russell's individuals were Plato's primary elements (Pr #46; see *Theaetetus* 201–2). I do, of course, intend the book to be a historically accurate or at least reasonable account of the analysts. But in any case I hope that my helpful glosses and charitable interpretations result at least in a philosophically interesting book.

Johannes Herder defined the ambiguous term "origin" as meaning either cause, source (antecedent), or beginning (first of its kind). This book seeks the beginnings of the ontology of the analytic tradition. I seek to show that the 'no entity without identity' ontologies of the four analysts I discuss are far from the first of their kind. It is hard to make Herder's definition precise. It is not always clear when antecedents end and things of a kind begin. But everything I describe as an origin is a source at the very least.

A second limitation is that I discuss only four analysts. I could not discuss the whole analytic movement in this book.

Third, I treat only Frege and Russell in depth. I hope to supplement and deepen, not compete with, the huge literatures on Wittgenstein and Quine. Even so, my strict concern with the theme of 'no entity without identity' precludes my giving a full ontological portrait of Russell. To see the full portrait, sandwich my "The Ontological Foundation of Russell's Theory of Modality" (Dejnožka 1990) between chapters 4 and 5 and my "Russell's Seventeen Private-Language Arguments" (Dejnožka 1991) between chapters 5 and 6.

Fourth, I may not cite enough literature on Russell to satisfy some specialists. But that is because my book covers virgin territory. I had to devote most of my time to primary Russell literature—nineteen books and many papers by Russell. Still, my bibliography shows that I have read more secondary literature than some others who have written on Russell—or on Frege.
Fifth, it may seem odd that in a book on the origins of analytic philosophy, I do not discuss the pre-1900 Russell. I had enough to do discussing ‘no entity without identity’ in every major published work by the post-1900 Russell. The book would have been far longer had I repeated the fine work Nicholas Griffin did in *Russell’s Idealist Apprenticeship* on identity and difference in the pre-1900 Russell. My book aims to supplement and deepen, rather than compete with, his work.

The recent renaissance in Frege-Russell studies, though including some excellent work, has confined its quest for the origins of analytic philosophy to the nineteenth century. My book goes well beyond Frege-Husserl comparisons and historical studies of Russell’s idealistic upbringing to give a philosophical evaluation of what the analytic movement really amounts to. My thesis is that a single kind of ontology, ‘no entity without identity’ ontology, is fundamental to all of Russell’s major works from 1900 to 1948, to the work of Frege, Wittenstein, and Quine—and also to substance metaphysics, its origin over two thousand years ago. Thus my aim is to show that the analysts, far from ending traditional ontology, at bottom continued and even developed it. I cannot see how our understanding of the pluralistic, diverse analytic movement, not to mention the pluralistic, diverse history of Western philosophy, could be more deeply transformed or unified, if I am right.

My methodology was to read the major books of the analysts, many of their lesser works, and a great deal of the secondary literature, gleaning like Rachel in the field of wheat for anything I could find on ‘no entity without identity’, then to create from scratch new portraits of Frege and Russell as the true analytic progenitors of this kind of ontology.

The specific thesis of my book is that there is a general kind of ontology, modified realism, which the great analysts share not only with each other, but with most great Western philosophers. Modified realism is the view that in some sense there are both real and rational (or linguistic) identities. In more familiar language, it is roughly the view that there are both real distinctions and distinctions in reason (or in language). More precisely, it is the view that there is at least one real being which is the basis for accommodating possibly huge amounts of conceptual relativity, or objectual identities’ “shifting” as sortal concepts or sortal terms “shift.” Therefore I hold that on the fundamental level of ontology, the linguistic turn was not a radical break from traditional substance metaphysics. I also hold that the seeming conflict in the analysts between private language arguments, which imply various sorts of realism, and the conceptual “shiftability” of objects, which suggests a deep ontological relativity, is best resolved by, and is in fact implicitly resolved by, their respective kinds of modified realism. There are many different sorts of modified realism, but all of them share a common general form.

I present Frege as a modified realist with fourteen ‘no entity without identity’ theories. Then I present Russell as a modified realist with forty-four
'no entity without identity' theories. Last, I briefly sketch Wittgenstein and Quine as modified realists, to show that modified realism best merits the title, the ontology of the analytic tradition.

My principal argument is: (1) While in the analytic tradition ontology and philosophy in general are held to be supervenient on language or, more deeply, on logical and conceptual theses, there is enough reformulation and presupposition of ontological themes, and even enough express pursuit of metaphysics through analysis, to allow analogies to some basic theses of the substance tradition. (2) The sufficiency of the analogy to traditional modified realism is ensured by seven criteria of modified realism. Any one criterion establishes a kind of modified realism, and the analysts satisfy most of these criteria as well as substance metaphysicians do. Here I assimilate the analysts' views to Aristotle's metaphysics as the paradigm of modified realism. (3) Therefore the analysts are modified realists. The argument may appear to attack the analytic lion in its own den. For example, did not Russell deride substances as confused and at best a mere linguistic convenience?

Three clarifications are in order.

First, much of stage (1) of my principal argument is familiar ground. That analytic philosophy reformulates ontological insights was argued by Gustav Bergmann (Bergmann 1967: 1-77). That arguments against metaphysics presuppose metaphysics was noted by F. H. Bradley. Either point satisfies stage (1). Thus when I argue in this book that all four analysts admit express vehicles for referring to extra-linguistic reality, I go far beyond what stage (1) requires.

Second, while Quine uses the phrase "'No entity without identity'" (OR 23), many very different kinds of thesis might be appropriately so described, some of which are not only incompatible with each other, but even with Quine's thesis. Throughout this book, when I use that phrase, I do not mean Quine's thesis in particular, but any theory on which some expression, conception, or property of existence is defined, explained, understood, or applied in terms of some expression, conception, or property (or relation) of identity. For instance, I argue that from 1905 on, Russell progressively divorces his 'not always false' existential quantifier from existence, reserving existence for any simple things which may constitute an ultimate interpretation of true existentially quantified sentences. If I am right, then Russell's 'no existential quantification without identity conditions' theory applies to logical fictions as well as to simples. Such a nominal "existence"-identity connection is incompatible with Quine's thesis, since so to speak, it takes the entity out of 'no entity without identity'. Yet on my liberal usage, it counts as a 'no entity without identity' thesis.

I base this liberal usage on my liberal definition of ontology in chapter 1. But while I think that the definition is intrinsically plausible, and justified by the single unifying theme of ontological interest, others may perceive it as so inclusive and eclectic that it sweeps all differences between traditional and analytic ontology under the rug, and the difference between the later Wittgen-
stein and the other analysts as well. Therefore I now further explain and argue for my liberal usage by modifying Peter Geach’s succinct and excellent analysis of ontological analysis. I believe this applies to all four great analysts:

On the face of it, we are committed to recognizing As as a kind of object when we use the logical apparatus [or a criterion] of identity....I further hold that this commitment is only a defeasible one; a thinker may in fact defeat his commitment if he can show, or at least sketch, a method of paraphrasing away the ostensibly identifying...language he uses about As... (Geach 1969: 66). For, as Quine has said, no entity without identity; he and I agree in regarding as entia non grata those philosophically postulated entities for which there is simply no telling whether men are talking about the same thing or not. And again Quine and I would both say: No identity without entity. Nonentities are not there to be the same or different... (Geach 1972: 288)

Geach speaks of the apparatus of identity and quantification, and of identifying and quantifying language; dropping quantification is my modification. I think that if As are identifiable and talk of them cannot be paraphrased away, that alone constitutes their existence. Quantification is a useful but formalistic rubber stamp. Identity is what counts in the practice of all the analysts; and I suspect that this is because at bottom they agree with my analysis of analysis. Anyway, Russell’s purely nominal “existence”-identity connection clearly is a ‘no entity without identity’ connection, on my analysis of ‘no entity without identity’ analysis. Russell holds that logical fictions are not entities; their ontological status is nil. He paraphrases logical fictions away in terms of classes, which he paraphrases away in turn through a contextual definition in Principia. In all this, Russell strictly conforms to ‘no entity without identity’ analysis as I just explained it, and just as much as Quine does, even though Quine admits classes and Russell rejects them, and both quantify over them. Thus my analysis of analysis is quite general. Even the later Wittgenstein is a ‘no entity without identity’ analyst, on my analysis of analysis. Whenever there is any puzzlement about admitting entities, he compares talk of such entities to paradigms of ordinary talk about ordinary phenomena using ordinary criteria of identity. He aims to discover whether talk of the putative entities is sufficiently analogous to paradigmatically correct talk for the putative entities to have sufficiently coherent identity conditions to be said to exist. In general, of course, he rejects talk of philosophically posited entities as so bewitched by simplistic conceptions of grammar that the identity conditions involved are not sufficiently coherent. And surely he would reject nonexistent objects as due to just such a bewitchment of grammar. The second stage of analysis, paraphrase, would consist of any cases where he does find an ordinary use that some talk of philosophical entities might have, to that extent reducing such talk to ordinary talk of ordinary things. While
he admits only ordinary things, it must be realized that it is his profound and subtle ontological theory that only ordinary things exist and are identifiable. What makes it an ontological theory is the philosophical argumentation he gives for it. Thus, in my sense of "analysis," he is just as much an ontological analyst as anyone, due to the great ontological interest of his work.

Third, not only must we examine the intrinsic content of a 'no entity without identity' thesis, but we must also consider the role it plays in a philosophy. Russell illustrates this well. Concerning the intrinsic content of 'no entity without identity', Russell seems closer in 1903 to Quine, and to the Frege of Basic Laws, than at any other time. For the 1903 Russell, Quine, and the Basic Laws Frege alike, cardinal numbers are defined as classes of classes which preserve the identity conditions numbers ought to have, but are merely reduced to classes. Numbers are dropped as a special category, but classes are admitted. The 1910–59 Russell sharply differs from Quine by eliminating numbers. Russell continues to define numbers as classes of classes, but now rejects classes as strictly nothing. Yet from 1927 to 1959, Russell ever more closely anticipates Quine on the role 'no entity without identity' plays in philosophy. For during this period Russell questions and then weakens the analytic-synthetic distinction, adopts a holistic, social, and pragmatic theory of knowledge (if not theory of truth), and assimilates philosophy to science. Thus the 1927–59 Russell is closest to Quine on the role identity conditions play in defining physical events, space, and time. This book explores both the intrinsic contents of 'no entity without identity' theses and their roles in analyzing many specific topics, especially in chapters 3 and 5. I should add that my use of 'no entity without identity' is often better read as 'entity if and only if identity'; I am merely conforming to popular usage.

I expect my argument that the four great analysts are modified realists will encounter tremendous resistance from, and will sow confusion among, orthodox Anglo-American analysts. In fact, it has already done so. That is good, because the ironic point of the book is to achieve a double Copernican revolution: disinverting and setting right what many analysts mistakenly believe is their Copernican revolution from hopelessly Ptolemaic substance metaphysics.

The principal objection offered is that any comparison of two philosophical traditions must be based on an accurate understanding of each tradition in its own right. Otherwise one will find oneself distorting the explained tradition by imposing on it the categories, theses, approaches, methods, and tools of the other. In particular, claiming to find a distinction between real distinction and distinction in reason in any of these four analysts is just such a distortion and just such an imposition. For the analytic tradition understands itself, and these four analysts understand themselves, as holding that philosophy of language is the foundation of all philosophy. In particular, for these philosophers, ontology is supervenient on language. Thus they are anti-ontological in the sense that the entire content of any ontological thesis is exhausted by linguistic considerations.
Or, if you please, the analysts rest all philosophy on logical and conceptual considerations; and for humans, such considerations must be understood in terms of our capacity to use language. (I should perhaps retitle my book more exactly as The Ontology of the Linguistic Turn and Its Origins.) Thus even to consider the analysts’ philosophies in terms of the many sorts of concrete entities, abstract entities, fictions, or phenomena they admit, in abstraction from their meta-philosophical view of ontology as a function of linguistic or, more deeply, logical and conceptual considerations, exhibits a pervasive misunderstanding of their philosophies.

Now, this principal objection is just the principal myth my book aims to explode. One fallacy in it is to assume that the best place to use a category, thesis, approach, method, or tool is necessarily its original home. Indeed, in interdisciplinary cross-fertilizations, the last place such things are used may be the best. It is an experimental question which the principal objection prejudices. Off-hand, we should have better luck understanding two consecutive traditions of Western philosophy in terms of each other than we would applying a car manual or socket wrench to either. Another fallacy is to assume that theses and methods cannot be adapted. A third fallacy is to assume that I am applying the categories, theses, approaches, methods, or tools of either tradition to the other at all. I am simply comparing them. In particular, Kahn and Hintikka argue that modern quantification should not be imposed as a tool to interpret the ancient Greeks. While I do note that Kahn and Hintikka do not seem to understand the modest aims and claims of modern paraphrase, my chief point in chapter 6 is that even accepting Kahn’s and Hintikka’s own anti-Fregean, anti-Russellian portrait of the ancient Greeks, Frege and Russell have far more in common with Aristotle than Kahn or Hintikka suppose. And on the analytic side of the house, consider Russell’s thesis that in respect of their brief duration, his “particulars [sense-data] differ from the old substances but in their logical position they do not” (PLA 204). Are not momentary two-dimensional sense-data wildly different from Aristotle’s material substances? Is not the slim resemblance they do have merely supervenient on the logical position Russell assigns them in language, and not due to any intrinsic nature of their own? —Things look a little different when we learn that Russell’s sense-data are mind-independent and physically real, and have “that sort of self-subsistence that used to belong to substance” (PLA 202). Sense-data look even more like the old substances when we learn that Aristotle’s substances are just as supervenient on logico-linguistic position as Russell’s sense-data are, without any derogation of Aristotle’s physical realism (Categories 1a–4b). In terms of the seven themes characterizing substance with which this book begins, it turns out that only theme (6), persistence through changes, fails to apply to sense-data. And it is widely admitted that mere duration is the least important traditional theme.

In fact the chief problem with the principal objection is that it ignores my principal argument. No flaw has been detected in my principal argument. The
objection may seem wise. Yet it is also wise not to criticize comparisons of traditions until these comparisons are understood in their own right. In particular, my argument is analogical, and my admission of varieties of modified realism is as liberal as my admission of kinds of ‘no entity without identity’. Even those who reject substances in any traditional sense count as modified realists if, according to my seven criteria, they admit sufficient substance analogues or can be interpreted as admitting sufficient analogues to real distinctions and distinctions in reason. Even if it were the case that the ontology of every analyst is arrived at through linguistic, logical, or conceptual considerations, and that the ontology of no traditional ontologist is, this would only make such analogies to traditional ontology deeper and more exciting, since they would persist through such seemingly great differences. Indeed, I agree with Butchvarov that analogy is the deepest form of philosophical understanding.

Thus the principal objection to my book seems a non sequitur. In particular, consider the many realisms of the four analysts as supervenient on their private language arguments. These arguments aim at establishing some minimal extra-mental and extra-linguistic realism of public objects. But they are based on premises purporting to assert common-sense facts which obtain regardless of what we may say or think about them. Now, consider the relativism involved in objectual identities’ shifting as sortal concepts or sortal terms shift. Throughout this book, I use “shift” strictly as a metaphor. Viewing a card deck under the concept card does not literally chop the deck into fifty-two cards as if it were some nonresistant nullity. Sortal concepts simply individuate different but overlapping objects. Nor does an object literally change into a concept when we “shift” logical subject and predicate. Still, objects may seem never given independently of the concepts through which we conceptualize or view them. This relativism may be presented as a linguistic (or conceptual) thesis about objects. Yet the thesis is based on a common sense fact about our sortal terms or concepts, a fact which obtains regardless of what we think or say about it. Now, this realism and this relativism are just the two basic elements of the general modified realism common to the four analysts. Viewing the relativist thesis radically, as precluding realism by making it impossible or meaningless to speak or think about things as they really are, is self-defeating. Piercing the linguistic or conceptual veil reveals a host of assumed facts about language or concepts, facts which are assumed as objective in their own right—and on which the supposedly “supervenient” thesis is based. Thus the supervenience goes in the other direction. Linguistic or conceptual relativism is determined by the facts, not the other way around. All four great analysts, I shall argue, were well aware of this; it was many of their followers who inverted the insight.

Similarly for assertions that two things can exist independently of each other, and that one kind of thing is more real than another. Such assertions can be reconstructed as linguistic or conceptual proposals. Yet the proposals would be reformulations, admittedly often drastic reformulations, of what can only be
called ontological considerations. To illustrate, let me reformulate these two kinds of assertion as they would apply to Frege.

First, then, Frege admits no modal operators in his notation. So how can he define real distinction as a capacity for independent existence? The short answer is that for Frege, being really distinct amounts to being wholly distinct. More deeply, Bergmann reformulates " categorially impossible" as whatever is ill-formed in the canonical notation (Bergmann 1967a: 23–24). As Bergmann well knows, this only hides a core aspect of traditional essence under a linguistic disguise. For Frege, this core aspect of essence is hidden under the disguise of an expression's semantic role or function. For Frege an object or function, and likewise a complete or incomplete sense, can be identified only in terms of an expression's logical role in sentences. It is precisely because of this "supervenience" that Frege can and does describe essential characteristics of objects and functions. This is the whole approach of Aristotle's _Categories_, which is most charitably paraphrased as metalinguistic. For Frege, essence is _shown_, not said, in his canonical notation. This reformulation of essence arguably applies even to Quine's canonical notation. Further, I admit _four_ senses of "real distinction," and I mainly rely on sense (2), the only one which does not require substances or substance analogues. The deepest point is that even traditional ontologists recognized that defining real distinction and distinction in reason in terms of what can or cannot exist independently of each other is not yet philosophically illuminating. The whole problem is to explain this capacity for independent existence, not just rename or reformulate it. The explanation will consist in showing why we admit the metaphysical categories we do, how they interrelate, and why we assign to each category the ontological status we do, such as real being or mutedly real conceptual being. Only then can we fully explain Frege's or Bergmann's approach to such modal distinctions. Though the explanation will be traditional in general form, it may be quite contemporary in content, and may be eliminative of the modal aspects of the distinctions. All this is transparent insofar as Frege's and Bergmann's canonical notations are both intended as ideal languages which reflect the true classification of things. And even outside an ideal language, "wholly distinct" is said in different senses, or is at least explained in different ways, for different categories of entities. So too for the term it glosses, "capable of mutually independent existence."

Second, Frege calls his concrete objects more _wirklich_ than his abstract objects (FA 35, 71). Some say that J. L. Austin translated "wirklich" as 'actual' rather than 'real' because he felt that Frege did not intend the term to have any ontological significance, but only to mark the presence of causal laws governing concrete objects (FA 35). But if that is true of Austin, perhaps then Austin was overly scrupulous. Why does Frege choose _that_ term to mark causation? Is it not because Frege naturally feels that, as Plato put it, in some sense existence is power, and that therefore causation is a mark of reality (see FA 29)? Far from hiding this aspect of the substantive, the word "actual" positively intimates it.
And what about Frege’s *reeller, wirklicher, greifbarer*, which Austin himself translates as ‘more real or more actual or more palpable’ (FA 119)?

Russell was, if anything, even more explicit than Frege in his pursuit of metaphysics through analysis as a vehicle. Just think of his ending “The Philosophy of Logical Atomism” with an *Excursus into Metaphysics*. Russell rejected most traditional metaphysics. But he did not reject metaphysics. Rather, he tied metaphysics very closely to logical analysis. In fact he required that every analysis preserve a robust sense of reality.

My own way of making Russell’s point against the principal objection would be this. Suppose that I make the logical, conceptual, and linguistic proposal in my metalanguage that in my object-language, only certain undefined expressions are to name items having all the characteristics of Aristotelian substances. Far from being some sort of relativistic barrier or hindrance to my realism, my metalinguistic proposal is precisely the vehicle by which I explain how I *can* denote Aristotelian substances. This metalinguistic rigmarole will never prevent me from being exactly the same kind of realist as Aristotle himself. Indeed, it will guarantee that I am, and as soon as I start using the expressions in question.

Jumping through metalinguistic hoops is like moving in Ptolemaic epicycles. Thus I hope I may be forgiven if I follow Frege and Russell themselves in so often using the “material mode” of speech. I am, of course, as aware as anyone that the heart of the linguistic turn is the reconstruction of meanings (or concepts or notions) as linguistic *uses*. In fact, I criticize others for forgetting this point in chapter 6.

Ideal language proposals for reconstructing substantive theses resemble metaphysical systems: “methodological” monism, nominalism, phenomenalism, physicalism. Any test of the adequacy of such reconstructions would seem to beg the question against some substantive thesis. As to ordinary language analysis, I need not repeat the criticisms made by the later Russell or recall Dummett’s observation that the later Wittgenstein had a theory of his own about the nature of language. But I will repeat Richard Rorty’s carefully understated point in *The Linguistic Turn* that there is much interplay between substantive philosophy and meta-philosophy (Rorty 1967: 39).

The principal objection is merely a reformulation of what I call the second revolt against the primacy of metaphysics in chapter 1. Correspondingly, my argument against that revolt is a version of the principal argument of this book.

A determined holder of the principal objection may reply that my daring to criticize the characterization of the analysts leading to the principal objection, and my offering criteria of modified realism as applicable to the analysts, beg the question against the principal objection. But if my argument and criteria are rejected by assuming that the principal objection is correct, who is begging the question? Surely the burden of proof lies with those who make the principal objection. For my principal argument already handles so-called supervenience. Specifically, objectors have to meet three conditions: they must destroy the
analogue argument of this book, they must offer an anti-analogue argument that succeeds where my principal argument fails, and they must develop criteria of the *mere* supervenience of ontology on language or logic, applications of which overrule my applications of my seven criteria of modified realism in much detail to the analysts. Needless to say, they have not met these conditions. Who then is misunderstanding whom? Ironically, the very supervenience of ontology on language or logic is itself a rather substantive thesis about the relationship of ontology to language or logic.

Thus it is not clear to me that the four analysts I discuss would accept the characterization of their work that leads to the principal objection. Their work seems too subtle, too complex, and too thoughtful for that. There seems to be something that is really the case about language and logic, and even the world, in their work.

I shall also argue that identity is not always under a sortal concept for the analysts. A principle of charity calls out for this in light of (i) the vicious regress of classifications implied by the theory that identity is always under a sortal concept; and (ii) the need to explain how we acquire sortal concepts in the first place, i.e. in terms of prior identifications (Butchvarov 1979: 78–81). Russell expressly gives the regress argument (HK 423–24). Quine expressly acknowledges the need to explain how we acquire sortal terms, or “terms of divided reference.” Quine says that to learn verbal responses at all, a child “must have...a prior tendency to weight qualitative differences unequally....In effect therefore we must credit the child with a sort of pre-linguistic quality space” (WO 83). Here Frege and Wittgenstein are the principal charity cases. However, all four analysts actually admit some items which arguably have and must have *given*, though, I admit, not always phenomenologically presented, objectual identities. These include Frege’s phenomena, Russell’s earlier sense-data and later noticed events, Wittgenstein’s phenomena, and Quine's sensory stimulus patterns, if not also his initially posited physical objects. All these items have sortal *properties* which may be called the *basis* of our identifying them (see Butchvarov 1979: 122–23). My argument is only that we may single such items out prior to acquiring any sortal *concepts* or sortal *terms*. The exception to the rule that to be given is to be phenomenologically presented is, of course, Quine’s neural stimulus patterns (and initially posited objects), which Quine presents as strictly physical. As Evan Fales observes, “Those who reject the given or its foundational role are not like sailors attempting plank by plank to reconstruct their leaky boat, but rather like sailors who do not even know they are at sea; nor what can serve as a plank” (Fales 1990: xix). Concerning stimulus patterns, Quine says, “...I do indeed combine foundationalism with coherentism, as I should think it evident that one must” (Quine 1990: 128). In the case of initially posited objects, my charitable gloss that their objectual identities are given to observers prevents Quine’s holistic science from boiling down to circularity (WO 3, 21–23). As we shall see in chapter 7, Frege admits
phenomena which one can single out without using their sortal properties as sortal concepts, and prior to language acquisition. I wholly grant that for Frege concepts are properties. This is only a terminological difficulty for my argument. The question is whether we have to use properties as concepts in order to single out phenomena.

Even when we do use sortal concepts or sortal terms to identify things, I shall argue that no serious relativity is implied. Again, far from being barriers between us and the world, Frege’s senses, Russell’s acquaintance and knowledge by description, the later Wittgenstein’s criteria, and Quine’s theories are all intended precisely as the vehicles by which we learn all we can of a mind-independent, language-independent reality.

Realism versus relativism has seemed to many the issue that most characterizes this “rootless and alienated” analytical century. Radical relativity is “above all ignorant of itself” and its need for a robust realism deeper than itself. We “post-philosophers” need to understand our realist roots in the analysts and in earlier ages. The recent reports of the death of philosophy have been greatly exaggerated.

In 1989, Longwood Academic/Hollowbrook Publishing accepted an early version of this book for publication under the title Being Qua Identity: The Ontology of the Analytic Tradition. I bought back all rights to the book in early 1993 after I learned of Longwood’s financial and legal difficulties, and dismal publication record, from a group of some thirty unhappy authors. That seems to be why Longwood sat on my book for three years despite what were called “unusually strong” pre-publication orders for the book. Longwood got as far as running galley proofs. But not one page of my book was printed; the book was never published. The book was advertised in the January 1993 Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association and elsewhere. I must apologize to anyone who ordered it from Longwood. Since Longwood and its people had some half a million dollars in court-awarded debts already, according to a detective’s report, you will probably never see your money again. I myself lost almost a thousand dollars in book orders, the repurchase of rights, and the legal fee. On the bright side, I consider myself lucky to be one of the authors who escaped, and I am deeply grateful to Rowman & Littlefield for publishing the book in 1996. It was almost continually revised from 1990 to 1995, though with no change in views. It has now been updated to 2003.

On August 11, 1995, as I was about to send the book to press, A. D. Irvine and G. A. Wedeking, eds., Russell and the Analytic Tradition (1993) arrived from California through interlibrary loan. A quick scan showed me that Griffin apparently had arrived independently at some of my major ideas, and some other authors came close to some of my other ideas as well. I decided not to attempt to alter my book at the last minute—no views of mine would change in any case—but I shall offer some comments in the next four paragraphs.
Preface

Griffin sees unity, one of my glosses for identity, as the one topic that unifies all of Russell's philosophical phases. However, he says he cannot carry out the project of showing that to be so in a brief paper, and confines himself to a discussion of Russell's early phases. In contrast, not only have I carried out the project completely, but I extended it to Fregge, Wittgenstein and Quine—and to the substance tradition as well. So there is overlap only concerning the early Russell. And even there the detail of our approaches differs. Also, while we both use the very same term, "modified realist," to describe Russell, we use it differently. For me, a modified realist is one who admits both real things and less than fully real things. For Griffin, an absolute realist holds that every word denotes some entity, while a modified realist holds that not every word denotes some entity. The result is that Griffin deems Principles of Mathematics a work of absolute realism, and sees Russell as moving to a modified realism in "On Denoting," while I deem Principles a work of modified realism, and see Russell as merely moving to a different sort of modified realism. Both of us are right, in our respective senses of "modified realism." In fact, Griffin's modified realists can include my radical realists, i.e., philosophers who admit only real identities and fictitious identities, which are not even mutedly real and lack all ontological status. Still, my compliments on a fine paper. Griffin reports that Francisco Rodríguez-Consuegra has been working along similar lines (Griffin 1993: 185 n.4). It seems that the idea of finding unity in Russell's different philosophical phases, at least, is in the air.

Two other authors in Russell and Analytic Philosophy, R. M. Sainsbury and Bernard Linsky, come close to my views on Russell on modality. "Sainsbury finds a surprising resemblance between Russell's theory of communication and recent theories of rigid designation" (Irvine 1993: x). Bernard Linsky reports that David Kaplan uses Russellian Propositions to explain direct reference, which is circuitously connected to possible worlds as "circumstances of evaluation" (B. Linsky 1993: 193). They might be interested in my more direct arguments that Russell's logically proper names are rigid designators (Dejnožka 1990: 395). However, I am glad for some confirmations of my general view that Russell is more like Kripke than Kripke seems to think.

Finally, "According to Landini, the doctrine of the unrestricted variable, a doctrine which he says entails that there are no types or orders of entities, was never abandoned by Russell—not even in Principia" (Irvine 1993: xiv; see Landini 1993a: 387). Landini says that in Principia individuals within the scope of the individual quantifier include all entities: particular objects (including complex entities), qualities, and relations alike. He observes that individuals included all entities in Principles of Mathematics Appendix B (there individuals also included classes as one, which are rejected in Principia). Note that from 1903 to 1911, Russell held that universals can be indicated by both subjects ("redness") and predicates ("is red") (POM 43–44; RUP 109, 123–24; in 1918 Russell rejects this view, PLA 205–6). Much of Landini's paper is devoted to
showing that in *Principia* individual variables *can* be viewed as unrestricted in this sense; that is of course no argument that they *are* unrestricted in this sense, but only that such an interpretation is technically possible. I hold the more traditional view that in *Principia* individuals include only particulars, since universals are of different types, or at least of different categories. But I think Landini is very close to the truth: namely, for the 1903–12 Russell, qualities and relations are complete entities in themselves, much like individuals. They subsist timelessly and independently of individuals. They are independent of each other too, except for certain *a priori* connections such as that red is a color. If I am right that Russell’s particulars (sense-data) are quality-instances, then one might say that the difference between qualities and individuals is *merely* that qualities are not individuals, but universals. But while most ordinary dictionary words name universals (PP 93), I suggest that in *Principia* universals appear only as determinate constituents of propositional functions. I have four reasons: (i) Russell seems to imply in *Principia* that all variables, even so-called unrestricted variables, are type-restricted or at least categorically restricted (PM 4). (ii) On the very same page Russell gives variables whose values are restricted to men as his example of restricted variables, whereas if Landini were right one would expect the example to be variables whose values are more generally restricted, e.g. to particulars (PM 4). (iii) That universals are determinate constituents of propositional functions is the express doctrine of the 1911 Russell (MAL 216, 220–21). Universals should not have two semantic roles, a subject-role and a predicate-role, in the formal notation; and being determinate constituents of propositional functions is a special sort of predicate-role. (iv) The 1910 Russell wants logic to minimize kinds of entities assumed. Logic without metaphysics is his aim, even aside from epistemic caution. I hold that in *Principia* quantification over propositional functions themselves is purely nominal, since Russell states that propositional functions are not entities themselves. I hold that while Russell admits universals in his metaphysics, he finds he does not need to name them or quantify over them in his formal logic (PM 24, 72, 74 on not needing classes in his logic is somewhat different because Russell does reject classes in his metaphysics). That seems enough to preserve most of Landini’s paper despite our disagreement on whether *Principia* uses unrestricted variables. I might add that Landini’s view that the individual variables are unrestricted is compatible with my view that those variables imply no ontological commitment. But the heart of Landini’s view—that all *Principia* “objects,” including qualities and relations (PM 43), are type 0 order 0 individuals—is just wrong. For Whitehead and Russell expressly say, “The division of objects into types....” (PM 161).

Also, in *Principia Mathematica* Russell’s variables were “absolutely unrestricted” and “any conceivable entity” could be substituted for them, including nonexistent entities such as the Homeric gods (POM 7, 14, 36, 40, 43–44, 89, 91. The variables in *Principia* can hardly be unrestricted in that sense because Russell no longer admits nonexistent entities. Of course, if there
is no such thing as a merely possible entity, then in a certain sense the only possible entities are actual entities; and in that sense Principia variables would range over all possible entities (if not all conceivable entities) if Landini is right. But that is not quite the same thing as absolutely unrestricted variables in the Principles sense. Perhaps that may cast more doubt on Landini’s view.

On August 12, 1995, I acquired Francis Jeffry Pelletier, Parmenides, Plato, and the Semantics of Not-Being (1990). Pelletier notes a widespread agreement that the ancient Greeks used a “fused” sense of “is,” fusing existential, predicative, and veridical uses, if not also the identititative use, of “is” (Pelletier 1990: 19–20). Pelletier “find[s] it implausible to say that Plato did actually make conscious distinctions among an ‘is’ of predication, an ‘is’ of existence, and an ‘is’ of identity. For one thing, he nowhere says he was making such distinctions. For another it is not presupposed by anything he does say” (Pelletier 1990: 94). I find this close enough to Kahn and Hintikka that I need not change anything in chapter 6. Again, suppose we concede for the sake of argument that very much unlike the ancients, Frege and Russell make conscious distinctions among such uses of “is.” That does not really matter to my argument. What counts for my analogical argument is the existence of fusion, not the awareness of it. Frege and Russell fuse the distinct uses of “is” together too. They do it consciously. The concepts of existence, predication, truth, and identity are distinct only in reason for Frege, as are the corresponding meanings-in-use for Russell. For Frege and Russell, logic is a package deal, and so is ontology. That the Frege-Russell fusion differs from that of the ancients by simultaneously preserving the differences only deepens the analogy. That their fusions are deliberate, even formal, looks like the very sort of philosophical progress the analysts claimed to be making.

An ontology is a theory of what there is, or more deeply, of what it is to be. A theory of ontological commitment is a theory of what we say or imply there is, or more deeply, of what we say or imply it is to be. The relationship between the two kinds of theory is different for different theorists. The more you take theory of ontological commitment as a guide to answering ontological questions, the more of an analytic ontologist you are. On my own view, ontology is prior to ontological commitment. We must have some conception of what there is before we can have any conception of what it is to say or imply what there is. Therefore I am not an analytic ontologist. But I retain an analytic orientation in that I find that notations which perspicuously articulate ontological commitments are very helpful in articulating ontologies. Theoretically that is trivial, but in practice it is good dialectical discipline.

From the purely logical point of view, different canonical notations are possible. In particular, not all such notations need treat quantification the same way. Whether the ‘existential’ (individual) quantifier expresses ontological commitment, in my view, should depend only on whether that helps articulate your ontology. Since Frege is a reductionist who reduces numbers to logical
objects which objectively exist, it makes sense that his individual quantifier expresses ontological commitment. Since the 1918 Russell is an eliminativist who analyzes bodies as series of classes and eliminates series and classes as fictions, it makes sense that his individual quantifier does not express ontological commitment. He reserves ontological commitment for logically proper names and quantifications in a theoretically ultimate interpretation. Ordinary bodies would be quantified over in his initial interpretation of our talk of bodies, but certainly not in his final interpretation. While the later Wittgenstein makes existence a second-level quantifier, his discussion is too brief and nondescript to tell us whether he holds it expresses ontological commitment. Probably it does express ontological commitment, at least insofar as he would find taking ordinary talk of “some” nonexistent things as expressing ontological commitment a bewitchment of grammar. Like Frege, Quine insists on the ontological commitment of the individual quantifier, since like Frege, he is a reductionist as opposed to an eliminativist. Butchvarov’s individual quantifier expresses no ontological commitment because he allows it to range over neo-Meinongian nonexistent objects. I myself use the individual quantifier to express ontological commitment because what Butchvarov deems nonexistent objects I deem existent objects of perception or thought (these are my “qualified objects”), and because where others reduce the logically complex to the logically simple, I build the logically complex out of the logically simple and admit both as real. But while we all differ, both in our ontologies and in our theories of ontological commitment, the point I wish to make is that all of us have chosen theories of ontological commitment which are both logically acceptable in themselves and appropriate to our respective ontologies. That is the easy part; the hard part is coming by the ontologies. However, we do best when we understand both ontology and ontological commitment in terms of identity.

I so conceive the relation of ontology to metaphysics that two philosophers might admit the very same metaphysical categories but differ in ontology by each assigning a different ontological status to the same category. For instance, both might admit bodies and minds, while one deems bodies more real than minds and the other deems bodies and minds equally real. Even if you admit only one category and one ontological status, say minds and substantial reality, these are, or ought to be, two different admissions. Categories concern what things are; ontological status concerns how real things are. Categories are contentually differentiated ultimate kinds of things; an ontological status is not a kind of thing but a kind of reality. But while ontology and metaphysics are distinct in concept, they are also intimately related. To deny any ontological status to things of a certain category is to reject that category. And to admit things of a certain category is to require of them the minimal ontological status of not being nothing, though it is not to fix their ontological status fully. Due to this relationship, identity is basic to metaphysics as well.
1

Introduction

What is it to be? In Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, to be is primarily to be a substance. Aristotle emphasizes seven themes: (1) the mind-independence of substances, (2) the forms or natures of substances, (3) the role of substances as ultimate subjects of predication, (4) the logical independence of substances (substances are those things which can exist even if nothing else exists), (5) the primary cognitive identity of substance, or the view that we primarily grasp real things, (6) the persistence of substantival identity through change, and (7) the unity or oneness of substances. Theme (7) is transcategorical; beings of every kind have unity. Unity seems to be identity in a sense more basic than those of cognitive identity or persistence through change.

I am concerned with what may be ironically called the ontologies affirmed by the four great analytic philosophers in their reductions or eliminations of traditional metaphysics. While the ontologies of Frege, Russell, Wittgenstein, and Quine are all different, all hold in one way or another that to exist is to be identifiable. This seems to reduce Aristotle’s seven themes to one: theme (7). Even themes (5) and (6) seem to disappear. Theme (5) seems to vanish in Russell’s view that we know bodies only as logical constructs, and in his later view that bodies are probably real at best and their qualities are unknowable. Theme (6) seems to vanish in Russell’s constructing bodies out of momentary sensible events, and in his later theory of four-dimensional events. None of the great analysts admits traditional substances as a category. They reject theology and anything like Aristotle’s immovable, immaterial divine substance which is the final cause of all motion. Even Wittgenstein rejects theology, despite his mysticism and ideal of Christian love (Pitcher 1964: 6, 11). The great analysts also reject Aristotle’s view that ordinary things such as rocks, trees, and human beings are substances. Thus it seems they radically break from Aristotle.
Introduction

Certain well-known issues arise in the new analytic ontologies:

(i) The Problem of Nonexistents

Are all existents (apples, people, muons) and no nonexistents (hallucinated or dreamed pink rats, fictional characters) identifiable?

(ii) The Problem of Ontological Reduction

When we define or analyze a thing in terms of identifiable elements, are we eliminating it, merely reducing it to another kind of thing, or establishing that it does exist as a structure?

(iii) The Problem of Ontological Relativity

Is every reference to objects intelligible only relative to the identity conditions embedded in some language or conceptual framework? Does the world divide into real objects, or is all talk of objects just a matter of our words or concepts?

(iv) The Private Language Problem

How can other people or I myself communicate about my private inner life in a public language? Do minds, thoughts, and feelings have public identity conditions?

(v) Problems of Physical Entities

If we do not directly perceive bodies, how can we identify them? What identity conditions for physical events are possible in general relativity theory or in quantum mechanics?

The three main contributions of this book are these. First, I show that Frege and Russell were the basic analytic progenitors of ‘no entity without identity’. There are immense literatures on Wittgenstein’s and Quine’s existence-identity connections. Frege and Russell pioneered such connections, but there is virtually no literature to show it. Frege and Russell gave between them no fewer than twenty-nine private language arguments and fifty-eight ‘no entity without identity’ theories. Second, I therefore make all four analysts comparable on existence-identity connections (not: theories of identity) for the first time. In particular, I show that Frege and Russell are even more fundamental to the later analytic developments than has been supposed. This is so even though their influence is already rightly supposed to be tremendous and without parallel.
Third, I show that all four analysts give private language arguments ensuring that there are mind-independent real things which admit of slicing up conceptually or in language. Thus none of the four is a radical relativist; none makes a radical break from traditional modified realism. Indeed, Frege begins the linguistic turn with a core realist private language argument which the later analysts bedeck with further doctrines. These three contributions collectively change our understanding of the analytic movement and constitute a comprehensive, unified philosophical interpretation of it, and of its deepest origins.

It has long been noticed that Frege influenced Wittgenstein and Quine on 'no entity without identity'. Michael Dummett, in his 1967 "Frege," says,

In Grundlagen [Frege]...said that there has to be associated with every object—and therefore with every expression for an object—a “criterion of identity,” a criterion for “recognizing the object as the same again”....This doctrine reappeared in the Investigations as a cornerstone of Wittgenstein’s whole later philosophy. (Dummett 1967: 3/229)

Donald Davidson, in his 1969 “The Individuation of Events,” says,

Quine has quipped: ‘No entity without identity’ in support of the Fregean thesis that we ought not to countenance entities unless we are prepared to make sense of sentences affirming and denying identity of such entities. (Davidson 1985a: 164)

Herbert Hochberg, in his 1978 Thought, Fact, and Reference, concurs:

Following Frege, Quine emphasizes the role of the law of identity in ontological issues. Just as satisfying the predicate “self-identical” was the criterion for being an object for Frege, it is the criterion for being an entity for Quine. (Hochberg 1978: 268)

In my 1982 “Frege: Existence Defined as Identifiability,” I said:

The thesis (T) of this paper is that in Frege’s philosophy existence may be and is best defined as identifiability....If thesis (T) is well substantiated, then we will be rewarded not only with a new understanding of Frege on the most fundamental level, but also with a more secure foundation of his place in history as the forerunner of Wittgenstein, Quine, Dummett, Geach, Castañeda, Butchvarov, and others with respect to discussions of connections between identity conditions and existential quantification or reference. (Dejnožka 1982: 1)

And José Benardete, in his 1989 Metaphysics: The Logical Approach, says:
...if one’s very life depended on successfully summing up in four words the underlying rationale of the new essentialism, one could only be urged to reply, ‘No entity without identity’. That that slogan has been patented by Quine to serve his own ends, among which his anti-essentialism is not negligible, undermines the reply not at all. Devised in effect by Frege, the maxim is tacitly invoked by Wittgenstein at a key point in his famous private language argument, and if it is only Quine who expressly celebrates it as normative for the whole enterprise of ontology, Kripke is to be credited with pressing its modal version, ‘No entity without trans-world identity’. Invoking these august names of analytic philosophy, we can safely say that the maxim expresses the fundamental principle of being as such, or being qua being, as regards the entire movement. (Benardete 1989: 155)

Benardete’s fine statement about the entire analytic movement is immeasurably strengthened by adding the name of Russell to the list. Indeed Russell, not Kripke, is to be credited with pressing the modal version, ‘No entity without trans-world identity’. But all these quotations, good as they are, need much developing. By way of preparation, I shall explain my own basic perspective and concepts in the two sections of this chapter.

Before beginning, I must explain why I do not discuss G. E. Moore, who is surely a fifth great analyst. Moore is a ‘no entity without identity’ ontologist. His *Principia Ethica* opens with an epigram from Bishop Butler: “Every thing is what it is, and not another thing.” This reflects not only his theory that you can say of goodness only that it is goodness, but his rich jungle of categories. Moore finds almost nothing wrong with Russell’s definite descriptions, in which identity and the existential quantifier work together (Moore 1989; see Russell 1989a: 690), and he uses that theory in his own way to speak of his imaginary objects (Moore 1966: 110–12). Moore understands problems of particulars and universals as problems of identity and individuation, and admits that all entities are self-identical (Moore 1966a: 51, 67, 69, 78, 349, 363, 375). His theory of perception basically concerns whether sense-data are ever identical with anything physical, whether this identical sense-datum ever recurs, and whether this very sense-datum might not have existed. He is also what I call a modified realist, since he admits a distinction between real distinction and distinction in reason (Moore 1968: 659; see Ducasse 1968: 226–27; compare Moore 1901). I do not discuss Moore only because I already discuss such topics concerning Russell. Indeed, Moore greatly influenced Russell. Moore converted Russell to realism, specifically to a pluralism of mind-independent sense-data and mind-independent universals; and Moore’s 1901 paper, “Identity,” influenced Russell on identity (Moore 1901; POM 44n, 51n).
Introduction

1. Ontology and Metaphysics

I agree both with those who say the analytic tradition cannot be precisely defined and with those who divide it into three broad phases: the ideal or formal language approach (Frege, Russell, the early Wittgenstein, Quine), the ordinary language approach (the later Wittgenstein), and the present phase of consolidation and diffusion. I define the analytic movement by the very vague thesis that analyzing language is basic to understanding the world. I am not an analyst, since I make ontology and metaphysics prior to philosophy of language.

It is debatable whether Frege and Russell are analysts. Frege seems to some to be an epistemologist first and foremost, and anyway he largely limits his results to mathematics. Russell makes events prior to words, then constructs words out of events, then finds words but a small part of the world. But I count Frege and Russell as analysts because they make paraphrase into their respective canonical notations basic to ontology and metaphysics, as may be ironically implied in Russell’s constructing words from events.

How can there be an ontology of the “anti-metaphysical” analytic tradition? And how can there be a single ontology in such a variegated “tradition”? Such general questions admit of four easy general answers.

First, Rudolf Goclenius introduced the word “ontology” to mean the study of being (Burkhardt 1988: 183). But today this meaning is too restrictive. One may call any study of being, the concept of being, or the meaning or use of the word “being” or its cognates “reality,” “existence,” and “actuality” ontological if it retains sufficient relevance to ontological issues. Clearly many analytic philosophers are ontologists in this broad sense. Similar broad senses have been useful in this century for “metaphysics,” “ethics,” and so on. This is not a definition (it would be circular if it were), but an explanation.

Second, the theory that there is an ontology of the analytic tradition is a pros hen theory of interpretation. Just as we may speak of a healthy human, healthy food, and healthy urine, so we may speak of the 1903 Russell’s entity, being, Quine’s referential apparatus, and even Wittgenstein’s criteria of identity as ontological. The comparison is as follows. Humans are literally healthy. Food which produces healthy humans and urine which is produced by healthy humans are called healthy in virtue of those significant relationships. Russell’s 1903 being is literally ontological. Quine’s referential apparatus and Wittgenstein’s criteria are aimed at producing true existential statements, and are rightly called ontological in virtue of their significant philosophical relationships to the 1903 Russell’s being. If there is a highly generic identity among such things beyond their pros hen relationships, so much the better. As Panayot Butchvarov says, any resemblance at all is a generic identity (Butchvarov 1989: 75, 100).

Third, what I call the ontology of being qua identity, that existence (or the word “exists”) is best understood in terms of identity (or the expression “is
Introduction

identical with”), seems to be the explanatory posit that provides the best philosophical illumination of what each great analyst is really trying to show us.

Fourth, showing how things are is the teleological end of all great philosophies. For each great analyst, ‘no entity without identity’ is the means to this end. It serves as a strategy that provides comprehensive unity to each of their respective outlooks.

Those are the four easy answers to the question, How can we responsibly speak of Frege, Russell, Wittgenstein, and Quine as having the same ontology, or of the later Wittgenstein as having an ontology at all? The long answer is the present book. But many texts provide quick support. For instance, Frege says in his “Dialogue with Pünjer on Existence”:

‘There are men’ means the same as ‘Some men are identical with themselves’ or ‘Something identical with itself is a man’. (PW 62)

In Principia Mathematica, Russell defines membership in the universal class of existents as being self-identical (PM *24.01). In Quiddities, Quine demurs from Hume’s suggestion that existence is not different from identity on the ground that a universally enjoyed property of existence would take \( x \) as argument-place, while (self)-identity takes \( (x,x) \) instead (Quine 1987a: 89–90; contrast WO 116). Quine, the world’s leading advocate of contextual definition, forgets that we can contextually define “\( x \) exists” as ‘\( x = x \)’ (compare Principia *24.01; if \( a \) does not exist, then “\( a = a \)” is neither true nor even a proper instantiation of “\( (x)(x = x) \)”). Quine also forgets that the admittedly less perspicuous ‘is self-identical’ takes only \( (x) \). He even forgets that if we judge that existence is identical with identity, we enforce their indiscernibility with respect to argument-places (Butchvarov 1979: 37, 66–68). But this is only a minor mistake, easily fixed.¹ Quine definitely considers identity a “fundamental idea” (Quine: 1987: 89–90; 1983: 134ff.; 1980: 9–15; 1959: 208ff.; 1961b: 125; 1961c: 85, 95; WO sect. 24). Going deeper than values of variables, Quine says:

The accessibility of a term to identity contexts was urged by Frege as the standard by which to judge whether that term is being used as a name. Whether or not a term is being used as naming an entity is to be decided, in any given context, by whether or not the term is viewed as subject in that context to the algorithm of identity… (FLPV 75–76)

As for Wittgenstein, one may cite Philosophical Investigations as connecting reference with criteria of identity (PI #253, #288, #290, #404). To be sure, such isolated texts, impressive as they are, cannot replace carefully thinking through the analysts’ philosophies. But it seems wise to note even now that all of them accept some form of quantificational logic. Even the later Wittgenstein makes existence a second-level predicate (RFM 186/V #35).
Ontology is intimately related to metaphysics, the theory of ultimate categories of things. Andronicus of Rhodes coined *meta ta physica* as meaning the writings coming “after the physics” in his collation of Aristotle, but metaphysics is really the study with which those writings deal. Some might say that the categories are ultimate differentiations of being and that ontology is the study of undifferentiated being. Now insofar as metaphysics is the study of the nature and existence of broad categories of things, ontology is a branch of metaphysics by logical courtesy. It deals, paradoxically, with the nature and existence of the “category” of undifferentiated being. But strictly speaking, ontology is transcategorial. Of course, if we say, “To be is to be material,” we do equate the study of being with the study of matter. But the equation is transcategorial in its very elimination of all categories other than matter. Of course, some ontologists admit different kinds or degrees of being. But even if every metaphysical category is also a kind of being and *vice versa*, so that the words “metaphysics” and “ontology” are co-extensive, those words are still not synonymous. Certainly when they are used as I have explained them, they are not intersubstitutable *salva veritate* in every context of discussion.

What does the objective world include? Common-sensically, it divides into many objects: the Sun, the Moon, stars, trees, people, and so on. We also speak and think about thoughts, smiles, numbers, and many other things. There are many similarities and differences among all these things, and this makes hierarchies of classifications possible. Leo the lion and Felix the cat are both feline, and so on. Insofar as our classificatory purposes may vary, the genera of one system may be the differentia of another. Humans compared to cats are generically animal and differentially rational; humans compared to angels are generically rational and differentially animal. This has led philosophers like Butchvarov to deny that there is any “true” classification (Butchvarov 1970: 6–11; see Butchvarov 1989: 75–79, 99–100, 118–19).

Any system of classifications, on pain of admitting an infinite series of classifications, will end with *summa genera* or ultimate classifications. This is the level of metaphysical categories. Where change consists of something of a given kind losing old properties and acquiring new ones, nothing can conceivably change in its metaphysical category. It is conceivable that Socrates can fall asleep, learn things, or even change into a rock or tree. But it is not conceivable that Socrates can change into time or into a number. We are not able to describe such transitions because we find nothing generically underlying them to persist through or undergo the transition. Perhaps that is only because such logico-metaphysical substrata have not been found yet in any plausible classificatory system. But I suspect the reason is that our most fundamental classifications are, at least in part, correct.

Fregé divides entities on four levels. Each level is of metaphysical interest. The lowest divides physical from mental objects (ideas, and perhaps minds, can be “taken as” objects). The second divides concrete from abstract objects. The
third divides objects (particulars) from functions, including "concepts" (i.e. properties) and relations. The highest divides references of names from: \textit{senses}, which are roughly connotations of names; \textit{forces}, which sentence forms "contain," and which include assertion, question, and command; and emotive \textit{tones}, which we may express when we use sentences to communicate.

Frege’s highest level is of ontological interest as well. As we shall see in chapters 2 and 3, every entity can be "represented" as an object with properties and relations, that is, represented as an object which is nameable by names which express senses and occur in asserted statements. I shall argue in those chapters that "the sense of expression A" ought to refer to an object for the same reason that Frege says "the concept \textit{horse}" refers to an object. Similarly for "the force of sentence $S$" and "the tone of $S$."

For Frege identity, determinacy, and essence might seem equally deep ontological studies. For identity and determinacy arguably presuppose each other in Frege’s principle of the identity of indiscernibles. And if references are not to be arbitrarily fixed in the matricial manner Frege’s \textit{The Basic Laws of Arithmetic} gives (BL vol. 1, sect. 29), that is, if a \textit{principle} of identity is to determine identity for each kind of entity, then essence seems equally implicated. But the notion of identity is really the most illuminating one in ontology both for Frege and in general. The identity of an entity fixes its essence, and also its determinacy, and even its existence. (I mean the essence of an \textit{existent}’s existence; I am not suggesting an "ontological argument" that to have an essence is to exist. Frege derides such arguments.) A comparison to Aristotle will help show this.

Aristotle’s five requirements for adequate definition by genus and differentia are helpful here, even if all the definitions I shall consider in a moment are contextual or implicit definitions of the existential quantifier. Several kinds of definitions of existence arguably satisfy most of Aristotle’s requirements equally well. These formulations of them are perhaps as good as any:

\begin{enumerate}
\item (3x) =Df $\neg ([F] \neg Fx)$ Property Possession Definition
\item (3x) =Df $(F)(Fx \lor \neg Fx)$ Determinacy Definition
\item (3x) =Df $(F) \neg (Fx \land \neg Fx)$ Consistency Definition
\item (3x) =Df $(y)(x = y) \lor \neg (x = y)$ Identity Definition
\end{enumerate}

(We may insert modal operators in (1)–(4) to form myriad Essence Definitions.) It seems that definitions (1)–(4) are neither too broad nor too narrow, are noncircular, are not negative where they could be affirmative (though each contains at least one negation sign), and do not use ambiguous, obscure, or figurative language (Copi 1978: 154–58). But Aristotle’s most important requirement, best considered last, is whether any of (1)–(4) state what it is to exist. That is a difficult question, since (1)–(4) arguably all state essential attributes of existence, and arguably presuppose each other.
Introduction

Aristotle held that the most general description of a thing gives the best explanation. For instance, two lines intersecting a third line at right angles in the same plane are parallel not because the angles are both 90°, but because the angles are the same. One might therefore hold that (2) is better than (4), since (4) is an instance of the law of excluded middle as expressed in (2). But in this case I would overrule Aristotle. For (4), which is a modern version of theme (7) of unity, is more illuminating than the others of what it is to cognize something that exists. What seems most important to our understanding of a thing as existing is its capacity to be singled out indefinitely many times in indefinitely many contexts. And (4) expresses that feature. This is not to infer what is basic to things from what is basic to our cognizing and understanding them, but to acknowledge that the unity of a thing is basic to our understanding of its existence. Frege expressly reasons in much the same way. Frege says in The Foundations of Arithmetic, "If we are to use the symbol $a$ to signify an object, we must have a criterion for deciding in all cases whether $b$ is the same as $a$..." (FA 73). This is not to infer what is basic to things from what is basic to our naming them, but to acknowledge that the identity of a thing is basic to our understanding of its existence. I shall elaborate this thesis in chapter 3. But there is a second reason for the priority of identity to essence in Aristotle and Frege.

In the Aristotelian tradition, identity is prior to essence insofar as essence is determined by a process of division of features into genera and differences, features presupposed as having identities (Posterior Analytics II 13; Topics I 5). For Frege, identity is prior to essence in much the same way. For Frege, essence is determined by fixing the sense of an identity, by establishing a principle of identity. This is done by specifying mappings of arguments by functions onto values, a process that always presupposes the identification of some entities (BL vol. 1 sects. 29–30). And Fregean identifiability can in principle always be fixed directly by consistently assigning a truth-value to each relevant individual identity statement. In this manner, even totally arbitrary functions can be defined as sets of individual mappings of level $v$ values onto level $a$ arguments.

Quine rejects traditional essences (WO 199–20). Nonetheless Quine says, "We cannot know what something is without knowing how it is marked off from other things" (OR 55). Quine’s point is not epistemic ("know...knowing") so much as ontological ("what...how"). Thus Quine too makes identity prior to what things are, and in that sense to essence. There is every reason to believe that Russell and Wittgenstein would agree with Frege and Quine in this priority.

Third, definitions (1)–(3) presuppose the identity of properties, and definition (4) presupposes the identity of the identity relation. Definitions (1)–(4) also presuppose the identity of brackets and logical operators as signs at the very least. But (1)–(4) scarcely presuppose our understanding the essential nature of properties, identity, or negation, or our understanding them in their full determinacy. This sets identity apart as basic.
Frege's and Russell's definitions of existence respectively as denial of the number zero and as not always being unsatisfied do not expressly construe existence as identifiability. Likewise for Quine's view that the existential quantifier expresses existence. Nonetheless, 'no entity without identity' is at the bottom of the connection Frege and Russell pioneered between the numbers zero and one (more accurately, "at least one") and the purely logical quantifiers none and some respectively. This is also a helpful gloss on Quine.

The later Wittgenstein arguably would have rejected the whole approach of definitions (1)-(4) on the grounds that there is no necessary or sufficient condition of any expression's reference, and that there is no one use of words like "exist" or "refer." However, there seems to be an analogous view in Wittgenstein's equation of a satisfied criterion of identity with "warranted reference" in some sense (the term is not Wittgenstein's). Call it a warranted reference-identity criterion connection. And even the later Wittgenstein makes existence essentially a second-level predicate in Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics (RFM 186/V #35).

What, then, is identity? David Wiggins argues that it is indefinable because there is no one way to count things as the same or to "assemble aggregates" into unities (Wiggins 1970: 310-11). This is a non sequitur. There is nothing inconsistent about Quine's view that identity is a very general relation, and that the real work of individuation is done instead by the many different sortal terms (TT 12; WO 91, 116). And the mere fact that identity is a very general relation does not entail that it is indefinable. There is as yet no unified theory in physics of the strong unity of the nucleus, the weak unity of the atom, the electromagnetic unity of a field, and the gravitational unity of the Earth. Yet all these have something definable in common: being physical unities. This is not to mention the possible identity of identity with some equally general property such as indiscernibility. What do the various colors have in common, besides being kinds of color? Yet color is easily defined as a general sort of wavelength. Frege's argument that identity is indefinable is better: since every definition expresses an identity, identity itself cannot be defined. I accept a similar argument: 'no entity without identity' requires existing definitions to have identities themselves. Perhaps Wiggins meant that a very general relation of identity cannot be found, and therefore cannot be defined. But that conclusion would be a non sequitur too, and for much the same reasons.

One might object that definitions define beings, and being is prior to identity, since the identity relation itself needs being. But the being of the identity relation is its identity. It is the identity of identity.

One might object that in this century we have learned that there can be several logically necessary and sufficient conditions of a thing which mutually imply each other, so that they are interdefinable; none seems more primitive than the others. Being identifiable, being determinate, and being capable of being a value of a variable might seem to be just such conditions of existence.
Russell says, "The whole theory of definition, of identity, of classes, of symbolism, and of the variable is wrapped up in the theory of denoting" (POM 54). Quine says, "The whole apparatus [of "objective reference: our articles and pronouns, our singular and plural, our copula, our identity predicate"] is interdependent" (WO 53). Quine says that a child's learning how to refer to objects is like scrambling up "an intellectual chimney, supporting himself against each side by pressure against the others" (WO 93). If that is so, I would argue that order of logical priority as such is not the order at issue here. What is at issue is philosophical understanding. Thus the order at issue is the order of explanation.

My contention is really that among the many ostensibly necessary and sufficient conditions of existence, identity is the one which best illuminates what it is to exist. Identity conditions are the decisive consideration even for Quine. Just look at his most famous arguments. Why are there no meanings?—Because there is no clear notion of sameness of meaning (OR 20–32). Variables are not even mentioned until Quine moves on to discuss Rudolf Carnap's artificial language (OR 33). Why are there no attributes?—Because there is no clear notion of sameness of attribute (WO 244; TT 100–1). Why are there no possible fat men in the doorway?—Because they have no identity conditions (WO 245, OR 4). On the other hand, why are there physical objects and classes?—Because they do have clear identity conditions, and cannot be paraphrased away (TT 100). Variables are not even mentioned. I am not saying that variables play no role in formalizing some of these arguments; sometimes they do. I am saying that all the arguments turn on identity conditions. Variables may help clarify the issues but they rarely if ever decide the issues, even for Quine.

Time and again, Quine's official 'pronominal' test of being the value of a variable is never actually used. Time and again, ontological decisions are based on identity conditions, and variables are never even mentioned. Thus it would appear that the pronominal test is a mere rubber stamp for identity conditions in Quine's actual practice of ontology. If items of a certain kind have identity conditions and if talk of them cannot be paraphrased as talk of items of some more basic kind, then everything else Quine officially requires for ontological commitment to them just seems to fall into place. Now, I suggest that the reason identity conditions emerge as the determining factor, the secret power behind the throne of variables, is that existence is best understood in terms of identity—and Quine is aware of that. Certainly the rubber stamp has a clarificatory and thus even a genuine confirmatory value. But Quine is no mere logician. He almost always cuts through the red tape of variables when ontological decisions must be made. And that is how it should be. I endorse Quine's sense of perspective on the matter completely.

In fact, as we shall see in chapter 6, even variables are best understood in terms of identity. Similarly for sortal concepts, which Russell argues involve a vicious regress of classifications if taken as needed for every identification (HK
Sortal concepts or sortal terms cannot even be acquired unless identity is already understood (Butchvarov 1979: 76–81). That is why objectual identity is not and cannot be always “under a sortal concept” (pace Wiggins’ Thesis of the Sortal Dependency of Individuation, 1980: 16). That is why charity frowns on our saddling the great analysts with a thesis of sortal dependence, and smiles on our finding that they admit “primary identifications” which do not depend on our use of sortal terms of concepts. I do not deny that objects must have sortal properties, but only that we must always use sortal concepts to identify objects.

I can now return to the order of logical priority and argue that insofar as logical priority is explanatory priority, explanatory priority is logical priority. I am saying only that if the notions of, e.g., existence, essence, and accident must be understood in terms of identity, but the converse is not so (following Butchvarov 1979: 40–41, 123), then identity must be assigned logical priority over those other notions as well. However, so far as interpreting the great analysts is concerned, I shall be content if identity is merely first in the order of explaining their various ontologies.

I am told that I make ontology prior to logic for Quine; I make it sound as if Quine first identifies entities, and only then sets up his logic so that variables range over these entities. It should be clear from the last three paragraphs that this is a misunderstanding. I make identification prior in the order of explanation to both employment of variables and ontological commitment. I merely infer that insofar as explanatory priority is logical priority, identification is also logically prior to both. Even as we scramble up the chimney, all the sides being necessary and sufficient conditions of learning reference, one side, identity, illuminates all the other sides and therefore the whole chimney as well.

Who would explain identity in terms of existence, or illuminate identity in terms of variables? Bringing technical sharpness to a formal notation is one thing. Asking which notions really need explaining the most is quite another (see Butchvarov 1979: 40–41).

Due to its fundamental character, identity seems indefinable in any case. But I wholly agree with Wiggins that much can be said to elucidate it. Specifically, I agree with him that the most basic use of “to identify” is to single out; the secondary use is to single out again, that is, to re-identify. I agree that the most basic form of ‘no entity without identity’ is that “if there were no singling out by anyone at any time, it seems there could be no referring” (Wiggins 1980: 5).

I agree again with Wiggins that one may distinguish between direct and indirect identifications, where direct identifications are of perceived things, and indirect identifications are of unperceived things if I know which thing I am thinking of (Wiggins 1970: 315–16; Wiggins 1980: 5). This gives us a four-part matrix: direct singling out, direct re-identification, indirect singling out, and indirect re-identification. The matrix enlarges on Aristotle’s themes (5)–(7) about substance.

Besides the identity of things, there are thoughts and judgments of identity, and also statements of identity in language. The subject-terms of identity
Introduction

Statements may be either referring ("this cat") or denoting ("the cat on the mat, whichever cat it may be"). But I do consider reference prior to denoting, since on pain of vicious regress, reference to some attribute must be possible before any description can be used attributively. That is, "naming is a preparation for description" (PI #49). Descriptions simply are referring general terms that are used to describe. (This does not make properties prior to the objects that have them.) Identity conditions are the truth-conditions of identity judgments and statements. Identity criteria are the criteria warranting the making or assertion of identity judgments or statements. I use the word "criterion" casually; the notion of a nonlogically sufficient condition seems confused (Butchvarov 1970: part 4).

Enriching the matrix, there are at least ten senses of the word "identifiable." "Identifiable" may mean: (1) capable of being singled out by conscious beings (the cognitive sense); (2) recognizable as the same item singled out before (the memorial sense); (3) knowable as a certain individual (the epistemic sense); (4) being an item of a certain kind or species (the essential sense); (5) having a criterion of individuation (the criterial sense); (6) being such that every identity statement about it has a determinate truth value (the identitative sense); (7) being self-identical (the reflexive sense); (8) having unity (the unitative sense); (9) being factually based (the factually informative sense); and (10) being able to be given to us in a new way (the novelty or phenomenologically informative sense). Senses (1) and (2) are from Wiggins; both admit of direct and indirect variants. But when I discuss 'no entity without identity' or "To be is to be identifiable," I shall be mainly concerned with sense (6), the identitative sense. Perhaps all ten sorts of identifiability are necessary and sufficient conditions of existence assertions. But I hold that sense (6) is philosophically the most illuminating necessary and sufficient condition of existence, and that all four great analysts presuppose that fact if they do not state it outright. This includes the early Wittgenstein; but the later Wittgenstein makes the criterial sense basic. Senses (7) and (8) might be even more fundamental. But sense (7) is included in sense (6), so that sense (6) gives a more general or full condition. And the traditional Aristotelian sense (8) is vague. Sense (8) needs explication in terms of a more precise sense such as (6) or (7). Sense (7) is the logical complement of sense (9), since factual identity is just nonreflexive identity.

Factually informative identity is a precondition of novelly informative identifiability. Even in a chaotic world or a mystically experienced world where everything is new, nothing can be novelly informatively identified if it cannot be factually informatively identified.

The identitative sense captures and reflects both senses (7) and (9) in language. The totality of identity statements about a thing is just all the reflexive (self-identical) and nonreflexive (factual) identity statements about that thing. The essential and criterial senses of "identifiable" provide guidance. They make the totalities of identity statements intelligible outlines of things instead of
indefinitely long mere lists. That in turn allows feasible accounts of the
cognitive, epistemic, and memorial identifiability of things. One qualify-
ing of the identititative sense: on the face of it, totalities of identity statements need
not exist for things to exist. Indeed, since statements need identities themselves,
that would lead to a vicious regress of totalities of identity statements. Such
totalities are just a pedagogic device: if there were such totalities, they would
capture what I mean by identititative identifiability.

But a list of ten senses of “identifiable,” even with some main relationships
sketched out, scarcely constitutes an adequate ontology. That is because ontology
has at least three fundamental levels concerning the implications of identity for
realism, and these levels have not yet been explained.

First, existence is most primitively unitive or reflexive identifiability. For
only the self-identity of a thing completely coincides with the thing’s existence.
That is because only self-identity is the complete coincidence of a thing with
itself. To be self-identical is to be oneself, and that is to be something as
opposed to nothing. Perhaps the argument is strictly a non sequitur, since as
Wiggins says, coincidence is a metaphor. But the argument seems more
convincing the more you think about it. It also identifies the actual with the
possible, since it leaves no middle ground between being something that is and
being nothing.

Self-identity seems identical with difference from (any) other (possible)
things. But not so. How can either obtain without the other?—Difference is
impossible without identity. If entities are different, then each must have its own
identity. But identity is possible without difference. If there were only one entity
having an identity, there would be nothing to be different from it. Difference is
not identity. Difference is the negation of identity. If items are not identical,
then they are different. In Principles of Mathematics section 429 Russell says,
and I agree, that the being of an entity is not its difference from other entities,
but “is simply its being,” which is a precondition of its difference from other
entities. Similarly for the self-identity of an entity. Those last two facts
conjointly support the view that to be, in the most basic sense, is to be self-iden-
tical.

Many from Hegel to Butchvarov have held that the notion of self-identity
is useless. Not so. Its basic uses are (i) pronominal, including pronouns,
variables, and multiple places of variables, and (ii) repetitional, including
nestings and iterations of names, and the forming of new sentences using old
names. Uses (i) and (ii) are basic to formal inference as we understand it, and
to sentential language as we understand it. Pronominal reference, which is given
or stipulated noninformatively as reference to the very thing in question, is
Quine’s test of ontological commitment. There is a sense in which a pronominal
reference in a complex sentence may be informative to some people, but that is
a different sense which is nonstipulative, and which is relative to ability,
alertness, and other factors affecting our detection of reference stipulations.
Introduction

Here we already begin to see how variables are to be explained in terms of identity, specifically in terms of self-identity. Perhaps variables cast back some reflective technical light on the logical capacities of self-identity. But it should be clear which notion is more illuminative of the other.

Self-identity’s two basic uses are basic to quantification for Frege, Russell, and Quine. Even Quine’s “Variables Explained Away” merely reconstructs these two uses (Quine 1966a; FLPV 104). Ironically enough, Wittgenstein’s diatribe against self-identity in Investigations #215–16 is bewitched by a picture of a thing’s identity as its trivially fitting into its own spatial shape, and overlooks the basic uses. He forgets that the pronominal game can be very seriously played! In any case, it should be clear that variables and quantification must be understood in terms of identity, not the other way around.

Two classic difficulties with ‘no self-identity without entity’ are that many apples are the same as many apples, and nothing is the same as nothing; yet neither, so to speak, is an entity (see Plato, Parmenides 129, 162–64). Frege admits classes as objects; the Principia Russell assays them as fictions, literally not self-identical. Frege admits not anything as a representatively self-identical, second-level concept; the Principia Russell assays quantifiers as fictions. Frege seems right that the relevant truths are about something; at least that is the natural presumption about all truths.

A third difficulty is whether self-identity is realist or relativist, or simply indifferent to that debate. Benardete makes self-identity the basis of his realism. To understand an entity qua itself (e.g. Smith qua Smith) is the absolutist use of “qua,” as opposed to its use relative to some concept (Smith qua citizen). But another philosopher might advocate a thesis of sortal dependence and reject the absolutist construal of “Smith qua Smith” by inferring that some sortal term or concept must be tacitly involved, leading to a thoroughgoing relativity. Yet a third philosopher might hold that self-identity is a precondition of real and relative items alike. If all things were real, they would be the same as themselves. Beauty would be beauty. And if, per impossibile, all things were relative, they would still be the same as themselves. Beauty in the eye of the beholder would be beauty in the eye of the beholder. Thus self-identity might seem logically prior to the realism-relativity dispute.

“The Eiffel Tower is itself” or “The Eiffel Tower is its own being” might be somewhat colloquially taken to mean the same as “The Eiffel Tower is real (nonrelative).” In that case, either of the first two sentences deductively implies the third. But here “itself” and “its own being” are only synonyms of “real.” Such redundancies employing the merely copulative “is” are of no interest.

Still, I side with Benardete. Inferring a realist entity from self-identity is a non sequitur. Following Moore, “X is self-identical, but is it real?” is an open question. But the inference remains reasonable, and seems more convincing the more you think about it. Benardete is extremely close to strict deductive validity; all he needs is the manifestly reasonable postulate that if “a is self-identical” is
true, and if its predicate is an absolutist *qua*, then *a* is real, i.e. nonrelative, i.e. determinately something as opposed to nothing. There is an interesting parallel in Quinean ontological relativity: Quine says, "if we choose as our translation manual the identity transformation,...the relativity is resolved" (PT 52).

Thus on the level of self-identity, I would eliminate relativity altogether as manifestly unreasonable. But relativity might be reformulated in a less radical but more intelligible way on a less basic level of ontology.

Second, existence is, on the next most basic level, factually informative identifiability, of which self-identity is a precondition. Existence connotes more coherence than does mere self-identity. It connotes being internally coherent as opposed to chimerical. More than that, it connotes being part of a stable, orderly world—the common-sense world of causally interacting things, as opposed to some isolated phantom or hallucination, however well-integrated with itself. The connotation is old. It leads to an existent's being 'intellectually visible', so to speak, in indefinitely many ways due to its relationships with other things, and also due to its own coherence as an item with different aspects. It also allows modality to enter ontology more fully in the form of combinatorial possibilities.

The inference from a stable, orderly world to a real world is strictly speaking another *non sequitur*. It raises the question of degree of coherence needed to be real, not to mention questions of logical constructionism. But the more you think about it, the more the inference seems to help explain what we mean by "real" (see Butchvarov 1979: 34–35, 40–43).

On this level, the realism-relativity question emerges again. One might argue that factually informative identity is incompatible with relativity because a true factually informative identity statement describes an objective relational fact. Or one might hold that every factually informative identity is relativist because every factually identified item must be viewed through at least one medium, such as a description. Or one might hold that this level is prior to the realism-relativity dispute, since both real and relative items seem to have factually informative identities. The real beauty of a certain sunrise may be factually identified with the first real beauty I see one morning. The relative beauty-in-my-eye of a sunrise may be just as easily factually identified with the first beauty-in-my-eye one morning. I believe that since a factually informative identification is an objective fact, we must seek a viable sense for the term "relative" at a still less basic level.

The third level concerns the logical structure of existence judgments and statements. All four analysts make the word "exists" a second-level predicate of predicates. Beings and their identities emerge as the truth-conditions for judgments and statements of existence and identity. So to speak, things must be sufficiently real and have sufficient identity to serve thus. For instance, if skyscrapers are only logical fictions, then one can truly say, "There are skyscrapers in New York City," only in a purely nominal sense. This level concerns realism as opposed to idealism, conceptualism, nominalism, and
relativity. It is the level at which relativity finally may be admitted as a meaningful issue concerning what categories of things to admit, counterbalanced by how seriously one intends one’s existential quantifier. Relativity may be admitted by admitting values of variables which overlap each other, and some of which are real in some sense and others of which are less than real in that sense. The real objects may be said to have real identities. And the less than real objects may be said to have identities relative to those of the real objects, in that their identities are just different conceptual or linguistic slicings of the real objects. Note that this is my first appeal to variables to illuminate something in a genuinely positive way. What they illuminate is not realism or ontological commitment, but how we can intelligibly and safely introduce a limited amount of ontological relativity. And this, on the lowest level of my ontology. Indeed, I need not have appealed to values of variables even here. I could have spoken directly of the overlapping of real and less than real objects. But I wanted to show how quantification figures into the issue of realism versus relativism. In fact, once again it is really variables which are being illuminated.

I shall argue shortly for a real-relative distinction that requires both self-identity and factually informative identifiability for each real and each relative item alike, but allows the introduction of a limited amount of ontological relativity in the way I just explained. Only such a modified realism (or modified relativity) will be coherent and stable, but it will be on this low third ontological level. I show in chapter 2, section 4 that Frege’s and Russell’s accounts of factually informative identities do not commit them to any significant ontological relativity. Similar arguments apply to Quine’s account, which is virtually Russell’s, and to the later Wittgenstein’s account in terms of criteria. In chapter 7 I apply seven criteria to show that all four analysts are modified realists whose real and less-than-real categories surely all admit of both self-identity and factually informative identifiability.

All three levels help illuminate the respective ontologies of the great analysts one way or another. And all three have old origins. The origins of the first level are Parmenides, Plato, and Aristotle on connecting being and unity. The origins of the second level are Plato’s conception of reality as stable and rational (Theaetetus 181b–183c), which goes back to Heraclitus’s logos, and Plato’s conception of existence as power (Sophist 247; see Butchvarov 1979: 34–35, 40–43, 109, 112). The origin of the third level is Thomas Aquinas (Geach 1969: 45–46), if not earlier traditional logic rightly understood (Angelelli 1967: 72–73, 124–25).

There were two great revolts against the primacy of ontology and metaphysics in philosophy. The first was the epistemological revolt started by René Descartes. The second was the linguistic revolt started by David Hume and rekindled by Fregé. I shall now argue that both revolts were failures.

The epistemological revolt consisted of the claim that only metaphysics which we know to be true, or at least have some evidence for, is worthwhile,
together with the claim that most or all metaphysics is not known to be true, or is beyond (a new sense of meta) any evidence we might have. The new first philosophy concerned the nature and existence of knowledge and evidence, and our nature and existence as human knowers. But such concerns are essentially metaphysical concerns. As Gustav Bergmann says, epistemology is "the ontology of the knowing situation" (Bergmann 1964: 126). And as F. H. Bradley says, "The man who is ready to prove that metaphysical knowledge is wholly impossible...is a brother metaphysician with a rival theory of first principles" (F. Bradley 1969: 1). At most, the epistemological revolt shows the primacy within metaphysics of metaphysical questions about knowledge and evidence and knowers. Ontology remains more fundamental than any metaphysics, concerning as it does what it is to be at all.

The linguistic revolt consisted of the claim that only metaphysics which is cognitively meaningful is worthwhile, together with empirical criteria of meaningfulness on which metaphysics on the whole is meaningless. This revolt may seem somewhat deeper than the first. For we cannot know a theory to be true or give evidence for it if we do not know what it means in the first place. The later Wittgenstein seems to find epistemological problems, like all philosophical problems, to be grammatical illusions. Frege rekindles the linguistic turn by answering Kant's epistemic question, How are numbers given to us?, with a definition of number-words (Dummett 1991: 111, 181; Dummett 1993: 5). But meanings and uses are worthless if we do not know them, or at least have evidence for them. Thus the meaning of "knowledge" and the knowledge of meaning may seem equally deep, if not mutually implicative, studies. But I suggest the following order of priority: language has epistemic presuppositions, and epistemology has cognitive presuppositions. Plato taught us that perception is not yet knowledge; I add only that knowledge is not yet verbalization.3

In any case, questions about the nature and existence of meanings or uses of words, or perhaps more deeply, questions about the nature and existence of logical or conceptual proposals, are by definition metaphysical questions. Therefore the linguistic revolt shows at most the primacy within metaphysics of questions about meanings or uses, or about logical or conceptual proposals. To echo Bergmann and Bradley, theory of meaning is the ontology of the meaning situation. And the man who is ready to prove that metaphysics is unmeaning is a brother metaphysician with a rival theory of first principles. Likewise for anyone who is ready to prove that metaphysics is supervenient on language or logic. I cannot repeat here Bergmann's long argument in The Metaphysics of Logical Positivism that ideal language and ordinary language methods alike merely reconstruct core aspects of metaphysics, and therefore are implicit metaphysics (Bergmann 1967: 1-77).

Thus both revolts showed inadequate self-reflection. For they did not see their own metaphysical presuppositions. They also showed this lack in a second
sense. Descartes’ theory of knowledge is unknowable on his own theory of knowledge. I do not mean only that Descartes’ arguments for hypothetical doubt are themselves subject to hypothetical doubt. I mean that the very possibility of hypothetical doubt is itself subject to hypothetical doubt. Likewise, Hume’s view that the meaning of a word is always an idea copied or derived from impressions is itself a metaphysical theory that cannot be confirmed by our sense-impressions. Similarly, logical positivism’s principle of verifiability is cognitively meaningless on its own showing. The principle, stated “The meaning of a statement is the method of its (empirical) verification,” is empirically unverifiable. Thirdly, the revolts failed in an ordinary professional sense. They failed to show in detail that metaphysics is unknowable or unintelligible. Indeed, such accusations are almost impossible to prove. On the face of it, subjects debated in great detail publicly for millennia are subjects we understand at least a little. But the skeptics and the logical positivists did not even attempt to analyze two thousand years of discussion to show its unknowability or unmeaning, or else its empty analyticity or tautologousness, in full detail.

Surely the burden of proof lies with the revolts. For the primacy of metaphysics over theories of knowledge and meaning is only common sense. That is because it is hard to picture how the world might have consisted only in epistemic or linguistic or, perhaps more deeply, logical or conceptual facts. On the face of it, the world includes some epistemic situations and languages, but mainly consists of nonepistemic and nonlinguistic facts. We do not even know of any epistemic or linguistic facts beyond our solar system. Russell carries the warfare even further into the enemy camp with a second common-sense argument:

Language consists of sensible phenomena just as much as eating or walking, and if we can know nothing about facts we cannot know what other people say or even what we are saying ourselves. (MPD 110)

George D. Romanos added in 1983:

…the antimetaphysical stance of the positivists, and of many analytic philosophers of the succeeding generation, puts the greatest burden on this sort of linguistic absolutism. Conceding that there is no way the world really is, they continue to adhere to the view that there is a way we really say it is or conceive it to be, and that this absolute or determinate conceptual content or meaning of language may properly be subjected to something of the piercing philosophical vision usually associated with the efforts of metaphysicians…. [T]heir… acceptance of the analytic conception of language involves assumptions about the nature of linguistic inquiry that parallel the pretensions of speculative
metaphysics regarding our access to extralinguistic reality. (Romanos 1983: 39–40)

I wholly agree with Bergmann, Bradley, Russell, and Romanos.

Later I go beyond talk of presuppositions and reconstructions to argue that Frege’s senses, Russell’s descriptions, Wittgenstein’s criteria, and Quine’s theories are positively intended as vehicles of reference to things in a physicalist world. If I am wrong, I can always fall back on Bergmann and Bradley to explain why the two revolts failed, and also to provide the basis of the principal argument of this book that the analysts are enough like substance metaphysicians to count as modified realists.

The failed revolts arguably establish at least a reorganization of priorities within metaphysics. Namely, within metaphysics it is advisable to pursue theory of knowledge and theory of meaning first, and only then categories such as space, time, matter, mind, number. At least one should do this as much as one can, since all these categories are dialectically related. Ontology remains prior to such metaphysical categories, though again there are dialectical relationships. Also, theories of verificationism which reduce “cognitive meanings” to methods of empirical knowing can find their proper task in regulating language use in the empirical sciences. Thus both revolts can enjoy at least some success.

In view of the two revolts’ attempts to replace ontology with a new first philosophy, it is worth noting that both revolts took pains to preserve existence-identity connections appropriate to what they considered primary. The early modern philosophers made individuation, in the form of clear and distinct perceptions, or at least really distinct impressions, basic to their epistemologies. Following suit, phenomenologists found certain primitive identities to be presented. And devotion to ‘no entity without identity’ permeates the analytic tradition. Thus on the level of ‘no entity without identity’ ontology, the division of history of philosophy into traditional metaphysics, early modern epistemology, phenomenology, and the analytic tradition already seems artificial.

The failure of the two great revolts is in general the failure of theories of thoroughgoing relativity. For the first revolt in effect made our perception of the world relative to the nature of knowledge and to our nature as human knowers. The second revolt in effect made our discourse of the world relative to the nature of language and to our nature as human speakers. Insofar as this is so, both revolts took the three great pratfalls of relativity. Namely, any kind of relativity presupposes as objective facts: (1) something to be viewed in a relative way, (2) someone to do the viewing, and (3) some medium or relation between (1) and (2) which constitutes or effects the relativity. (Even if Protagoras is right that man is the measure of things, presumably there are at least acts of judgment which effect the relativity.) For instance, for linguistic relativity to be the case, linguistic relativity must itself be an objective fact, and not merely a view relative to language. There must be (1) a world to be viewed relative to lang-
usage, (2) people to view the world in such a way, and (3) languages through which such a relativity is achieved. All these must be objective facts. Even if people and the world are mere constructs, it must be an objective fact that such constructs are related as described by (1)–(3).

The two revolts also faced in effect the three questions concerning any rational case for relativity. (i) What is the rational case, or evidence? (ii) Is the rationality of the case, or the evidence for the case, itself an objective fact? (iii) Is the case any better or worse than the case for any objective facts concerning the matter in question? Questions (i)–(iii) show there must be an objective case for any theory of linguistic relativity if it is to merit our belief.

The three pratfalls and three questions alike show the self-defeating character of any thoroughgoing relativity. The three questions also undermine what may be called almost thoroughgoing relativities. For instance, suppose somebody holds that everything is relative except the existence of language-games, economic conditions, or Kuhnian scientific paradigm of the age to which everything (else) is relative, and except for the fact that the relativity obtains. Such a relativity is not self-defeating. But one may well question why such esoteric items alone might have the right to be called objective facts. For instance, is the evidence that Benjamin Lee Whorf’s hypothesis of the linguistic relativity of Western substance versus Hopi process “metaphysics” describes an objective fact any better than the evidence that Western physics provides for objective physical facts? Or is it worse? I suggest that in general, if there is objective evidence that some kind of relativity is an objective fact about X, there is better evidence that there are instead (or at least also) objective facts about X.

Some dismiss the criticism that any thoroughgoing relativity is self-defeating as old and worthless. Such thinkers assert their own relativisms as if they were almost objectively true, and argue for them in an almost objective manner. Joseph Margolis’s “robust relativism” replaces truth with “a weaker set of many-valued...truth-like values” in The Truth About Relativism. This would have, in Russell’s phrase, all the advantage of theft over honest toil if no objective reasons for the replacement could be given. But Margolis gives some reasons:

The essential insight is this: order does not require or entail unconditional variance....The inherent discontinuities of history and method and rational policy cannot be overcome or rendered neutral by such formal strategies as clinging to excluded middle. (Margolis 1991: ix, 160, italics mine)

It seems Margolis is starting his own substance tradition, resplendent with essential insights, inherent discontinuities, and a whole parade of determinate assignments of determinate truth-like values. Any radical relativity worth its salt would preclude all of this—but of course this is a robust relativism. Likewise for
Peter Davson-Galle's imposition of Tarskian truth-levels on Protagoreanism (Davson-Galle 1991: 176). The idea is that relativity cannot defeat itself because no view can be about itself. I agree that since Protagoras says everything is relative, his view is best paraphrased as systematically ambiguous across all truth-levels. For any truth-level \( t \), Protagoras will say on level \( t + 1 \) that all truths on level \( t \) are relative. But this approach presupposes that every truth determinately has some determinate truth-level. It also ignores the literature. Hartry Field has long warned of the presuppositions of Tarskian disquotation (Field 1972: 372–73), and Hilary Putnam has repeated the warning (Putnam 1991: 3–4). Tarski himself presents disquotation as a determinate function mapping determinate truth-conditions onto determinate sentences (Tarski 1956: 156 n.1, 161). And relativity is as self-defeating as ever, since for any truth-level \( t \), the statement on level \( t + 1 \), “All truths on level \( t \) are relative,” is itself condemned as relative by the statement on level \( t + 2 \), “All truths on level \( t + 1 \) are relative.” By parity of reason, Quine cannot use his theory of truth as disquotation to safeguard his famous theses of translational indeterminacy, referential inscrutability, and underdetermination of theory from the charge that they are all self-refuting (and refute each other).

However, theory of truth is one thing, realism another. Quine would be the first to tell us not to question his robust realism on the basis of those three famous theses. Quine makes disquotation “an immanent standard of truth,” but deems such immanence a “holophrastically” realist correspondence theory (Quine 1990a: 229; 1987d: 316; 1970: 10). Wittgenstein too seems a holophrastic realist with a disquotational theory of truth as immanent in languag-games. For Wittgenstein and Quine, private language arguments ensure the mind- and language-independence of things.

I follow Quine in speaking of relativity where many speak of relativism. I trust nobody will confuse philosophical theories of relativity with Einstein’s theories of relativity, which is the usual reason offered for revising the meaning of “relativism.” For many years The Oxford English Dictionary has defined “relativism” as “The doctrine that knowledge is only of relations.” This remains the preferred meaning today. Relativism in this sense is not even an ontological doctrine, but an epistemological one on which knowledge, relations, or unknown things logically can be real.

The problem of realism versus relativity is perhaps the philosophical issue of the twentieth century. But ethical, cultural, and even “literary” relativity have taken the spotlight. Few today discuss the underlying ontological issues to which we now turn. In this dark night of the philosophical soul, few see that even supposing oneself lost in an abyss of irrealism presupposes an abyss, a self, and a relation, or that to be lost is in this sense to be found.
2. Modified Realism and Radical Relativity

Among problems (i)-(v) with which this introduction began, problem (iii), the problem of ontological relativity, may now be discussed in some detail. I shall discuss it in terms of what I call three main historical kinds of being qua identity theory. I adopt Butchvarov’s definition of metaphysical realism (here I follow popular usage; strictly, this is of ontological realism; see page xxvi):

Very roughly, I shall mean by...realism with respect to x the view that (1) x exists and has certain properties, a nature, and (2) that its existence and nature are independent of our awareness of it, (3) of the manner in which we think of (conceptualize) it, and (4) of the manner in which we speak of it. (Butchvarov 1989: 3)

Concerning the reality of persons, minds or ideas, clauses (2)—(4) must be restricted to the awareness, thoughts, and words of “other” minds. One’s own mind arguably cannot exist independently of one’s own awareness of it, or of the manner in which one thinks or speaks of it, yet should not be thought of as less real than other minds on that account. I reject Dummett’s view that realism is a “truth-conditional theory of meaning resting on a...two-valued semantic theory” (Dummett 1981a: 441–42). As Quine rightly says, “The profound difference between Russell’s atomism and my view is...that the rest of the truths are not compounded somehow of the observation sentences, in my view, or implied by them” (TT 181). And while what Quine calls his robust realism might not succeed due to some sort of relativity, it is wrong to condemn it as not realism merely because it is not truth-conditional. 6

Four parameters or glosses are in order for our purposes. The three expressions we are concerned with are “being,” “identity,” and “qua.” First, then, being may be glossed as being-in-itself, reality, existence, actuality, substance. Second, identity may be glossed as unity or numerical oneness. Third, following Benardete, “qua” may be used in two senses, absolute or relative. Glosses of “qua” include “as,” “conceived as,” and “viewed as.” Fourth, relativity may be relativity to a concept, conception, conceptual framework, context, description, formula, idea, linguistic convention, sense, or background theory. For instance, if every identity is ontologically relative to some sortal mental idea, then all things have being merely relative to our ideas.

While all four glosses are sets of verbal cues to help us interpret or assimilate technical philosophical theories to my own framework, they are based on common sense notions and ordinary ways of speaking. For instance, Hector-Neri Castañeda used to deride “qua” as obscurantist. But The Oxford English Dictionary defines “qua” as the perfectly ordinary “In so far as; in the capacity of.” And whether a technical use is obscurantist depends on the care and skill of the individual philosopher. When I say that the present book is about being
Introduction

qua identity, I mean only that it is about being in so far as being can be understood, characterized, or defined in terms of identity.

Before stating the three main kinds of being qua identity theories, I must state three distinctions. In each case, the distinction is between one kind of identity common-sensically construed and metaphysically construed. Here one may appeal to a philosophical distinction between the ordinary language use and some special philosophical use of the word "identity" (and also "exists"). The special use may even have a common-sensical "core." But I shall explain the distinction between common sense and metaphysics as our ordinary distinction between seeming and reality. Common sense concerns what seems to be the case; metaphysics concerns what is the case. I can ground all three distinctions in such blatant metaphysics because the great revolts against metaphysics failed. In view of the common fact that we are sometimes mistaken as to what is the case, the burden is on those who wish to show that such distinctions are nonsensical or unknowable. For, to improve on Bernard Williams, knowing that a mistake has been made presupposes knowing both what seemed to be the case and what is the case, and also presupposes knowing that they are different (Williams 1967: 2/346). Let then one who is unaware of mistake cast the first stone.

The first distinction is between ordinary conceptual relativity and ontological relativity, or an ontological theory of conceptual identity. Conceptual relativity is a common sense datum. Frege’s examples include the fact that one card deck is also fifty-two cards and the fact that one pair of boots is two boots. I think everybody would admit that conceptual relativity exists. It is another thing to admit an ontological theory of merely conceptual identity, and to assess which items have merely conceptual identities.

The second distinction is between the common sense datum that there are some objectual identities "out there" in the world independently of our concepts, for instance the identities of lions, and an ontological theory of real identity. Note that common sense conflicts with itself in ontology as much as elsewhere. Which items have real identities? Both cards and card decks common-sensically seem to have real identities. But cards and decks alike are subject to common sense conceptual relativity as well.

The third distinction is between the common sense datum that some identities are linguistic (as in Antoine Arnauld’s examples of Augustus’s finding Rome brick and leaving it marble, and the church that burned down ten years ago and is now rebuilt elsewhere), and an ontological theory of linguistic identity.

Insofar as we allow descriptions and concepts as glosses of each other, it is hard to distinguish conceptual identity from linguistic identity. This makes it correspondingly hard to tell whether an identity is real in a limited sense or literally fictitious. Prima facie, a conceptual identity is real in perhaps some very muted sense, while a fictitious identity (not: fictional identity, as for storybook
Introduction

heroes) is not real at all. Conceptual identity may be argued to be fictitious or unreal, and linguistic identity might possibly be argued to be real in a muted sense, say, "based" on reality. In that case, we may be forced back to a bald distinction between a "fictitious logical entity (ens rationis ratiocinantis)" and a "rational entity (ens rationis ratiocinatae)" (Kant 1982: 141; see Alanen 1986: 243 n.16 on Suárez). But a case that conceptual identity and linguistic identity are different, conceptual identity being real in a muted sense and linguistic identity being fictitious, might be made as follows.

Frege's verdict that a dog set upon by another dog as opposed to a pack is aware only of the "physical difference" (FA 42) is scarcely the last word in theory of animal cognition. Flying birds may single out a copse as one obstacle, while nesting birds have singled out individual trees in the copse. Birds can even be trained to correlate the number of spots on a box lid with the number of grains of corn in the box (Koehler 1956: 10-11). Surely such cognitive ability and concept formation ability make language learning possible, not the other way around. Thus, conceptual relativity is prelinguistic and even prehuman. It is this prelinguistic, prehuman relativity which is the main common-sense and scientific datum against the real identity of things. It is surely also the basis of the conceptual identities in traditional modified realism. Now birds are, in singling out trees, concerned with the real world. But birds are unconcerned with what are prima facie linguistic identities. At least it is hard to see why they would think of a building that burned down ten years ago and a new building on a distant site as the same church. The best explanation of this is that conceptual identities are real in some sense, while linguistic identities are not. Dogs become very experienced in classifying things that concern them. Language cannot explain that. But perhaps concepts can. Even if avian and canine image imprints and behavior-releasing mechanisms are not concepts, my argument remains a reasonable argument by analogy.

I shall now define three principal kinds of being qua identity theory. First, there is the theory of radical (metaphysical) relativity, on which all identities are conceptual. Protagoras resembles a radical relativist. Second, there is radical (metaphysical) realism, on which some identities are real and the rest are unreal or fictitious. Parmenides is a paradigm of radical realism if his One is real and his Many are unreal. This must not be confused with the recent "radical realism" of Edward Pols, which concerns the mind-independence of the directly known, and which is at most a limited species of radical realism in my sense (Pols 1992). Third, there is modified (metaphysical) realism, on which some identities are real and some identities are real in a muted sense. Historically, modified realism is a sort of golden mean. It may be called modified relativity with equal justice. Aristotle is a modified realist (see the preface to chapter 6).

Since these three theories are ontological theories, we may classify any entities admitted according to their kind of identity, e.g. real beings, conceptual beings, linguistic beings, beings in a muted sense, or fictitious or unreal beings.
Introduction

(For me, all conceptual beings are beings in a muted sense, and all linguistic beings are fictitious beings.) Fictitious beings may be so called merely out of logical courtesy, or they may have an extremely low ontological status. They may also be mere objects beyond kinds of being, though they are not Meinongian nonexistents. The Rome Augustus turned from brick to marble is not nonexistent in the way Meinong's (Hume's) fabled golden mountain is.

What are the "muted" cases in modified realism? The answer would be more familiar if, instead of real identity, I spoke of real distinction. Then the muted cases would include distinctions in reason, modal distinctions, and even formal distinctions. That is, they would include identities in reason, modal identities, and formal identities. For convenience, I shall treat all these as conceptual identity.

There are other kinds of being qua identity theory. Extreme realism is the view that all identities are real identities. Perhaps some New Realists held such a view. Extreme linguisticism is the view that all identities are linguistic. Perhaps Carnap held such a view. Common sense realism is the view that there are some real, some conceptual, and some merely linguistic identities, roughly corresponding to the ordinary data, but adjudicating the conflicts internal to common sense. This is my own view. It is compatible with, and is a refinement of, modified realism. I see Quine as a common-sense realist, admitting both real physical objects and less real abstract classes, and paraphrasing away numbers, at least from his 1960 Word and Object (1975) to Theories and Things (1981).

Radical relativity is like Quine's ontological relativity in one way. Any medieval philosopher could have told you that Quine's rabbits are distinct in reason from their temporal stages and undetached rabbit parts. More accurately, if Quine is a relativist, then he would be an extreme linguist. He deals with words, not concepts, in "Ontological Relativity." But I allow either conceptual distinctions or linguistic distinctions as ontological essays of "distinctions in reason." And I shall argue in chapter 7 that Quine is a modified realist, and neither a radical relativist nor an extreme linguist in my sense. What he calls ontological relativity is merely what he calls inscrutability of reference, which is a thesis only about language and methodology, and not about the world (TT 19–21; PQ 459; PT 51–52).

Real distinction and the substance tradition go hand in hand. Radical relativists, however, must find the notion of a real distinction inapplicable. We may say that two entities are really distinct if and only if (1) either can exist independently of the other and (2) each has the ontological status of a real being. Many philosophers may think that requiring both conjuncts is needless. In a sense they are right. In traditional philosophy, the conjuncts would seem to imply each other. I emphasize conjunct (2) as a separate condition because without it the position of many earlier philosophers will be misunderstood. For them, many items which can exist independently of each other are not really distinct because they are not real things with real identities, but are merely parts
or collections of real things. Their individuation consists merely of the concept we choose to "slice up" the real things before us. For instance, card decks can exist independently of each other as easily as individual cards can. But if cards are real things and card decks are mere collections, then many would hold that card decks are not really distinct from each other. Compare as theoretically susceptible to this kind of ontological analysis: Spinoza's water as one of extension's many modes, extension being in turn one of God's many aspects; Leibniz's body composed of many monads; Berkeley's city of many houses, and house of many walls and windows; Bolzano's, Reid's, and Hobbes's ship of many timbers (the rebuilt ship of Theseus); Hegel's book of many chapters and pages; Bradley's silk stockings reknitted with worsted; Husserl's melody of many tones; Heidegger's collection of many coins; Sartre's group of three men conversing; Frege's card deck; Russell's army of many regiments, and Russell's and Reid's regiment of many soldiers; Wittgenstein's composite broom and chessboard; Quine's rabbits, undetached rabbit parts, and temporal rabbit-stages; and Butchvarov's bicycle and amoeba.

There are at least three further senses of "real distinction." (2) Conjunction (1) may be used alone, and held not to imply conjunction (2). Now, really distinct things can have conceptual identities. This sense may correspond with contemporary usage better. (3) Conjunction (2) may be used alone. This has the merit of allowing things that cannot cease to exist to be real things. Here, conjunction (1) might be reintroduced in a per impossibile sense. Namely, if two things could, per impossibile, cease to exist at all, then if either could exist without the other, then they are really distinct. (4) One might add to conjunction (2) the proviso that a thing is real if and only if it can exist even if nothing else exists. I find this fourth sense of "real distinction" very hard to apply to cases. The reason is that the sense of "else" is too unclear. As John Stuart Mill noted in his System of Logic, a thing cannot exist without its properties, and a property seemingly cannot exist without belonging to a thing. And what about relations among things? Russell gives the clearest statement of the fourth sense I know: Each particular "does not in any way logically depend upon any other particular. Each one might happen to be the whole universe; it is a merely empirical fact that this is not the case" (PLA 202). But even such particulars might logically depend on properties. On the whole, I shall ignore this ancient and troubling fourth sense, which is best suited to God or a monistic One. The applicability of conjunction (1) alone is enough to ensure the existence of an objective fact. So that in insisting on conjunction (2), I am going beyond the call of realist duty to set up a safety margin. However, the per impossibile sense of "real distinction" is a valuable extension of that notion, and is defensible by being explicated in terms of the notion of independent content. E.g., the timeless Platonic forms horse and dog are, per impossibile, really distinct, because their conceptual contents are thinkable independently of each other. Another good explication is
that those forms are really distinct if their respective instances would be. The four kinds of real distinction intimate four kinds of real identity.

All four kinds of real distinction are nonreflexive and nontransitive. For purity, they must also be symmetric. That is, really distinct items are really distinct from each other. All four kinds of real identity are reflexive, transitive, and symmetric. Thus all eight relations are equivalence relations.

Real beings can occur as real “parts” of a conceptual being. This would occur, for instance, if cards were real beings and card decks were conceptual beings. And conceptual beings can occur as conceptual “parts” of a real being. For instance, the round thing and the hard thing would be conceptually distinct but really one stone, if stones were real beings and round things and hard things were conceptual beings. This may be called the combinatorial interpenetrability of the real and the relative. Real things can still be simple in the sense of real indivisibility—or not, if you allow real things to compose real things, perhaps bricks and mortar to compose a wall. I am not concerned now with fine details. There are as many kinds of part-whole relation as there are pairs of overlapping categories.

A conceptual framework relativist such as the later Hilary Putnam might object, “We would only expect what you call real distinctions to occur among real things, once we determine within our framework what to call real things. That is not realism.” My reply is that the mutual independence of really distinct things is framework-independent. Take two sticks and burn one. Does the remaining stick’s ability to continue existing depend on our conceptual framework? If not, that gives us sense (2) of “really distinct.” Our assessment of which level of the world’s structure has the most real unities partly depends on our framework. Yet the strong unity of an atomic nucleus probably is more real, in some sense, than the gravitational unity of the Earth. That gives us senses (1) and (3) of “really distinct” as well. It is only common sense to hold that framework changes often yield real improvements in ontological analysis. Aristotle held that a tree with natural unity is more real than a chair with artificial unity. Trees held together better. But in the present era of superglue, the artificial unities are winning. This recalls Plato’s suggestion that existence is power (Sophist 247; see Butchvarov 1979: 109).

Naturally, the substance tradition is full of modified realists. Aquinas says in Summa Theologiae:

There is nothing to stop things being divided from one point of view and undivided from another (numerically divided, for example, yet divided in kind), and they will then be from one point of view one, and from another many. If a thing is simply speaking [un]divided (either because undivided in essentials although divided in non-essentials, as one substance having many accidents; or because actually undivided though potentially divisible, as one whole having many parts), then
such a thing will be simply speaking one, and many only in a certain respect. On the other hand, if things are simply speaking divided though in a certain respect undivided (as things divided in substance although undivided in species or in causal origin), then they will be simply speaking many, and one only in a certain respect... (Aquinas 1969: 159–60)

No subtle exegesis is needed to see that Aquinas is a modified realist. Aquinas even repeats the point (Aquinas 1969: 161; see 155–56).

Francisco Suárez, in his Disputationes Metaphysicae, accepts a distinction among real distinction, modal distinction, and mental distinction. He speaks expressly of “real identity” as the complement of real distinction. He also says that a real distinction can be made only between real entities, between thing and thing. This is conjunct (2) of our first kind of real distinction. Suárez follows Aristotle, Posterior Analytics, book 2, chapter 14 in making distinction (and identity) prior to grasping essence, as essence is determined by a process of division of features into genera and differences. Suárez follows Aristotle, Metaphysics, book 4, text 4 and text 5, and book 10, text 11 in finding that “whatever beings exist in the actual order prior to mental activity are either really identical or are really diverse, as otherwise there would be a middle ground between ‘the same’ and ‘other’...” (Suárez 1947: 22). This is a reductio ad absurdum of radical relativity based on the law of excluded middle. Suárez is a modified realist, with both real identities and identities in modal and mental respects (Suárez 1947: 16–17, 20, 22, 31, 35).

Descartes, in Principles of Philosophy, may seem to be a radical relativist. He says that order and number “are only the modes under which we consider these things” (Descartes 1969: 241). But Descartes follows Suárez. Descartes says:

But as to the number in things themselves [italics mine], this proceeds from the distinction which exists between them; and distinction is of three sorts, viz. real, modal, and of reason. The real is properly speaking found between two or more substances... (Descartes 1969: 243)

Thus Descartes, too, is a modified realist. His real distinction is our first kind of real distinction, since his second sentence expresses conjunct (2).

Arnauld, in The Art of Thinking, may seem to be a radical relativist. For he considers Aristotle’s categories to be “entirely arbitrary” and practically worthless classifications which often are a hindrance to science (Arnauld 1964: 42–45). But he also desires to find the “true classification” of things—and he does admit substances (Arnauld 1964: 39, 59). What is more, he says:
If two things succeed each other in one place, men tend to speak of these two things as if they were one. When speaking metaphysically, men may well distinguish the two things; but in ordinary discourse, especially when the two things in question are not perceptibly different, the two will be thought of as one. To refer to the two things as one is to emphasize their similarity but to obscure their differences. (Arnauld 1964: 144)

Arnauld proceeds to give several examples. We say the air that was cold (yesterday) is now warm, the river that was muddy is now clear, the animal’s body that was composed ten years ago of certain particles is now composed of different ones. We say that Augustus found Rome brick and left it marble, but in fact there were two really distinct Romes with different substantival characteristics. We even say that this church which burned down ten years ago is now rebuilt. That this bread is really identical with the body of Christ, though it does not at all seem to be, shows that the reverse sort of confusion of identity may also occur. I classify Arnauld as a radical realist. He seems to treat identities other than real identities not merely as less real, but as literal mistakes or confusions (Arnauld 1964: 144–47).

Franz Brentano, in *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, beautifully states what I call the meta-theoretical thesis of modified realism: that at some level of world structure there must be real things with real identities, even if it is beyond our power to know which level that is. He says:

It is impossible for something to be one real thing and a multiplicity of real things at the same time. This was asserted by Aristotle (*Metaphysics* Z, 16) and since then it has been insisted upon repeatedly, and rightly so. We can, of course, group together a multiplicity of objects and call their sum by one name, as when we say “herd” or “the plant world.” The objects thus grouped, however, are not thereby one thing. What the name designates is not a thing, but what we might call a collective. A city, indeed each house in a city, each room in the house, the floor of each room, which is composed of many boards, are also examples of collectives. Perhaps the boards themselves are collectives composed of many elements, whether points, or invisible atoms or larger units. It is not our concern here to investigate this question. One thing, however, is certain: without some real unities there would be no multiplicities, without things there would be no collectives. (Brentano 1973: 156)

The last sentence implies a transcendental argument that there must be some real things, on pain of there being no pluralities. This is just my point that for conceptual slicing of the world into objects, there must be something to be
sliced. Brentano does not specifically say at which level of structure we find the real unities. For instance, he does not say here that there are ultimate simple entities. But insofar as all multiplicities or complex items are collectives having conceptual identities, Brentano seems to imply that real things are simple, and in any case opposes conceptual identity to real identity, and is thus a modified realist (Brentano 1973: 157–62).

The later Brentano develops a "version of Aristotelian realism" (Nagel, 1956: 242) on which only things (realia) exist. Entia rationis are discarded for what are entia linguae at best. This suggests a radical realism not far from Arnauld's (Brentano 1971: 72–73, 84–85). This nominalistic version of Aristotelian realism is William of Occam's. Occam interpreted Aristotle as a radical realist with real substances and entia linguae in all other categories.

One must not confuse Geach's theory of relative identity with the theory of radical relativity defined above. Geach's theory is that logically complete identity statements are of the form, "a is the same F as b," where F is a sortal concept. That is, he holds that only such identity statements have determinate truth-values. Even if true, Geach's theory seems irrelevant to modified realism. Suppose that a statement of substantival identity must specify the concept of some substance. Now, the reality of substances simply outweighs the reality of all other categories of entities. Traditionally, the most paltry substance, even a grain of sand, is incomparably more real than everything in all the other categories put together. As Russell once said of his substantival particulars, "Each one might happen to be the whole universe" (PLA 202). Accordingly, just one true statement of substantival identity would be incomparably more reflective of reality than all true statements of nonsubstantival identity put together. Nor does this imply a single "true" classification of substances. It concerns only the bottom level of individual substances. That a is the same substantival whale as b leaves it entirely open whether whales are fish or mammals.7

Jonathan Lowe says "that an adherence to [Geach's] relativist conception of identity should carry with it an implicit commitment to a relativist conception of existence" (Lowe 1989: 57; see also Müller 1991: 189). This is correct but misleading. Geach's theory of relative identity is only about the logical structure of identity statements. It is the linguistic theory that identity statements are "incomplete" unless they specify some sortal term. But the theories of radical relativity and extreme linguicism are ontological. They are not theories about the logical structure of identity statements, though they may be based on such theories. Likewise, rejection-of-Geach's-theory, which rejection I shall name "R," is also linguistic. An R-theorist, as such, is not a realist. An R-theorist may consistently accept any of the ontological theories I defined. The only "relative existence" Geach's theory implies is that there should be a plurality of category-restricted existential quantifiers corresponding one-one to the many relative identity relations (Geach, 1972: 144–58).
It is not even manifestly reasonable to infer “a is relative” from “a is the same F as b” on my third level of ontology. The very expression “F” provides an escape clause, in that F might be a substantival form implying the real being of a. If it is any consolation, it would be more probable than not that, a is relative, given that “a is the same F as b” is true, if more F’s than not were forms of conceptual beings. But “F” provides no converse escape clause in the inference of “a is real” from “a = a” on my first level of ontology, even where F would be a form of mere conceptual beings. “F” does not even occur in the Benardetean inference. The absolute use of “Smith qua Smith” carries over to “Smith qua Smith is Smith,” or “Smith is the same Smith as Smith,” bearding Geach’s theory in its own den of logical form.

The distinction between theories of ‘relative’ and ‘absolute’ identity statement forms must in turn not be confused with the distinction between multivocal and univocal theories of the sense or reference of “is identical with” or even of “is the same F as.” Nor must either of these distinctions be confused with the distinction between various ontological kinds of identity. For instance, a modified realist must admit two kinds of identity, real and conceptual, but may distinguish between the sense and the reference of the word “same,” and be committed both to a multivocal reference theory and to a univocal sense theory of the word “identity.” That is, a modified realist may hold that the word “identity” always expresses the same sense, but sometimes refers to real identity, sometimes to conceptual identity. (I do not speak specifically of Fregean senses or references.) Such a modified realist may or may not agree with Geach’s theory of the logical structure of identity statements.

The basic argument for radical relativity is that if objectual identities shift as concepts shift, then every entity is both one and many; but a contradiction cannot exist in reality. A second argument is that whatever is is one and cannot be many; but every entity would (also) be many. Some might support the second argument by arguing that what is real cannot pass away; therefore it cannot be decomposed; therefore it cannot be many. But while so viewing reality as durability may have merit, there are deeper levels of realism. One better supports the second argument by arguing: Being an entity implies being one, and being one implies not being many. Neither argument can succeed because of radical relativity’s self-defeating pratfalls. But this does not explain why the arguments go wrong. One might attempt to do that by showing that some things are one and real but not many (e.g. wholes qua wholes, simples, or actual infinitesimals), or that something can be one, many, and real after all. On the latter option one might argue that collectives or classes are one in a sense and many in another sense, and that they are real in some sense. But Russell simply inverts the argument when he argues that classes cannot exist because they would be both one and many (Russell’s argument applies also to Brentano’s collectives). Russell’s resolution is:
Introduction

The philosophy of arithmetic was wrongly conceived by every writer before Frege.... They thought of numbers as resulting from counting, and got into hopeless puzzles because things that are counted as one can be equally counted as many.... The number that you arrive at by counting is the number of some collection, and the collection has whatever number it does have before you count it. It is only \emph{qua} many instances of something that the collection is many. The collection itself will be an instance of something else, and \emph{qua} instance counts as one in enumeration. We are thus forced to face the question, 'What is a collection?' and 'What is an instance?' Neither of these is intelligible except by means of propositional functions. (MPD 53)

Thus number-predications become predicated of propositional functions as opposed to objects or collections. Frege gives a similar solution in \textit{Foundations}, where \emph{is a unit} is a second-level concept. Thus, far from "relativizing" numbers to concepts or propositional functions, Frege and Russell actually give number-predicates fixed and determinate logical subjects. The problem that a property, concept, or propositional function can in turn be viewed as one or as many, e.g. in the problem of universals or in definition by genus and difference, may seem only to postpone radical relativity. But for Frege, concepts and objects provide reciprocal identity conditions for each other, ironically in a way ensuring that many objects are really distinct from each other. And concerning determinacy of objectual identities, we need not know whether the concept \emph{card of deck D} is a single complex universal, many simple universals, many complex particular properties (one per particular card), or very many simple particular properties, in order to know that exactly 52 objects fall under that concept.

But even granting this Frege-Russell logico-ontological sort of solution, (i) that we cannot \emph{say} of objects that they are numerically one or many, since numbers belong to concepts, and (ii) that each object and each concept metaphysically \emph{is} one, the arguments for radical relativity are scarcely defused. Even ignoring the seeming conflict between (i) and (ii), which Frege resolved by allowing the term "unit" both a numerical and a metaphysical sense (FA 42–43, 50–51, 62, 66–67), the problem is that objects in the world still overlap. Fifty-two cards still are, in some sense, one deck. That is the basic problem. I believe that the analysts were aware of it, and solved it by (iii) modified realism. I describe their different versions of modified realism, and explain the fallacies in the two basic arguments for radical relativity, in chapter 7.

A colleague criticizes the problem of radical relativity I raise as unreal, and my solution of it as therefore of no interest. I am pleased by this reaction because I take it as a sign that I am working on the right ontological level. For the two arguments for radical relativity I shall try to dismantle would be right at home in Plato’s \textit{Parmenides}. The problem of one and many which is central to the \textit{Parmenides} is either the deepest puzzle in philosophy or it is nothing. For
instance, George Pitcher is right that the *Parmenides* would appear to later Wittgensteinians as bewitched by a false picture of forms as "kinds of ghostly particulars" (Pitcher 1964: 203–11)—though with a little charity one might argue that Plato is pointing out the bewitchments. No doubt the problem of radical relativity would appear meaningless to verificationists as well. And long before such contemporary schools, even traditional scholars were hopelessly divided on the merits of Plato's *Parmenides*. Some regarded it as "Plato's profoundest philosophy" (Leibniz) or even as "the greatest masterpiece of ancient dialectic" (Hegel, Speiser), while others dismissed it as a joke—perhaps even a deliberate joke (Tenneman, Apelt, Wilamowitz) (see Cornford 1939: vi–ix).

The same colleague very kindly suggests that the logical clarity of Geach's relative identity thesis might be used to help explain and render my problem of radical relativity more intelligible. I am grateful for my colleague's helpful intent, but I am afraid that this suggestion will not work.

It should already be clear that the thesis of radical relativity is ontological, while Geach's thesis of relative identity is merely about the logical structure of identity statements. Geach is no radical relativist. He is a modified realist who admits mind-independent and language-independent entities including ordinary physical things, people, actual changes, actual mental acts, and God. He roughly follows Aquinas in admitting a real distinction between forms and individuals and also a logical distinction between subjects and predicates. He admits overlapping individuals following McTaggart and Polish mereology. He admits abstract entities such as numbers and linguistic entities such as predicables (Geach 1991: 253–57, 270; Geach 1969: 41, 61–64, 66–74). And Geach is justified in having a modified realist ontology. Broadly speaking, he accepts Quine's theory of ontological commitment and Frege's distinction between the actual and the objective (Geach 1969: 65–66). So that broadly speaking, he is as justified in being a modified realist as they are. Geach believes names refer to things as much as anyone; he merely differs on how to construe the associated identity criteria (Geach 1973: 295).

Geach's discussion of relative identity is always on the level of logical structure of language. (i) Geach's chief argument only concerns limiting predicables, or what most of us call predicates (Geach reserves the term "predicate" for actual occasions of use of a predicable) by a hierarchy of truth-levels to deal with semantic paradoxes. (The argument is weak; such paradoxes are only local problems not needing a big semantic regimentation.) (ii) Geach's discussion of "surmen" (men with the same surname count as the same surman) and other examples is on this level. (iii) When Geach connects his relative identity thesis with ontological relativity, he has only a version of Quinean ontological relativity in mind. And as I indicated earlier, that boils down to Quine's thesis of the inscrutability of reference (PQ 459; PT 51–52). The only "ontological relativity" Geach admits to is that within a language L, our ability to differentiate objects in the universe of discourse is limited by the number of
predicables in L; a language allowing more differentiations could always be just around the corner. And this is the same modest relativity of identity Quine himself admits (Geach 1972: 238–49; Geach 1973: 287–302; Quine 1973: 59, 115–16). The only implication for metaphysics Geach finds in the relative identity thesis is that bare or featureless entities are precluded. Or more precisely, Geach believes that such entities are made possible only by the absolute identity thesis that things have self-identities “logically prior to having any characteristics” (Geach 1973: 289–90).—As if “a is the same featureless entity as b” did not conform perfectly to Geach’s relative identity theory!

Let us try a daring way to apply Geach anyway. Pretend for the sake of the argument that Geach* (pronounced Geach-star) believes that the relative identity thesis logically entails that there is no single general identity relation which every entity has to itself, but instead many specific identity relations which different kinds of entities have (compare Geach 1972: 249). Statues have statue-identities; the materials they are made of have material-identities. Rivers have river-identities; the waters that pass down them have water-identities. We might object that the relative identity thesis ought to apply to all these specific identity relations as well. We might argue that there is a vicious regress of identity relations, and conclude that specific identity relations cannot have absolute existence or identity any more than statues or rivers can. We could surname these identity relations and make Geach**’s own surname argument. And there is no reason why the semantic paradoxes or the ontological relativity that figure so much into Geach**’s thinking should be affected as we move from the relative identity of statues to the relative identity of statue-identity. We might then conclude that Geach**’s relative identity thesis logically precludes him from saying how anything is in the world, since it commits him to a highly sophisticated form of radical relativity. (More accurately, since Geach* talks of predicables, not concepts, it commits him to a form of extreme linguisticism.) This argument could even be based on my own ontology as expounded earlier. Geach* would just be taking a typical relativist pratfall. I would not give this argument myself, since it is most uncharitable not to admit that there can be sorts of realist ontology other than my own. But we are only pretending Geach* has this problem so as to illuminate radical relativity.

Even more simply, one might pretend that Geach* believes that the relative identity thesis logically entails a form of extreme linguisticism on which the ontological locus of every identity relation is in relative identity statements. Perhaps Geach* doubts that (at least accidental) extralinguistic relations would have clear identity conditions (Geach 1969: 69).

However, not even the problem with Geach* is the problem of radical relativity this book is concerned with. Or more accurately, there is at most an overlap that backfires. To show this, consider how we might apply Geach, and then Geach*, to Frege.
Frege upholds the identity of indiscernibles. Now, Geach argues that indiscernibility is relative to the predicables of language L (Geach 1972: 240–41). And Wiggins argues that an absolutist identity of indiscernibles is incompatible with the relative identity thesis, given an innocuous assumption or two (Wiggins 1980: 18–20). This has been hotly disputed (Noonan 1980: 3). But let us pretend that the incompatibility exists for the sake of the argument.

Does Frege say anything committing him to the relative identity thesis, and therefore conflicting with his absolutist principle of the identity of indiscernibles? The test would be whether for Frege one and the same object a can be the same F as object b but not the same G as object b. It would appear that Frege passes this test. Frege says, “One pair of boots may be the same visible and tangible phenomenon as two boots” (FA 33). Thus one pair of boots is the same phenomenon as two boots, but surely not the same boot(s) as two boots. Wiggins tries to brush this off:

[T]here is at least one really bad argument here if Frege really meant to suggest that, holding my gaze constant upon one external phenomenon, I can subsume the very same something first under the concept copse and then under the concept trees....Obviously a copse is trees. But the copse itself is not identical with any tree or with any aggregate of trees. (The copse tolerates replacement of all its trees...) (Wiggins 1980: 44)

Whether Frege really suggests this requires an interpretation of Frege’s phenomena. Wiggins does not give one. My interpretation of Frege’s phenomena, offered in chapter 7, is that they are indeed objects. Thus far our attempt to paraphrase the problem of radical relativity in terms of Geachian relative identity seems sharp and clear. It also makes the problem apply to all physical phenomena in Frege’s metaphysics. The overlap of Geach*’s problem of ontological relativity and my problem of radical relativity is that both threaten to overwhelm all physical phenomena.

However, I shall argue in chapter 7 that phenomena are crucial to Frege precisely because they are objects which present their objectual identities to us independently of our using any sortal concepts at all. Their sortal properties cause us to grasp their metaphysical unities as objects even before we come to learn to use any such properties as concepts. Thus the objectual identity of a phenomenon is totally independent of our use of sortal concepts, much less of linguistic predicables. Phenomena are the basis of Frege’s realism, not of any radical relativity. Therefore the overlap backfires. Presented real identities always trump radical relativity.

That leaves the pair of boots and the two boots. That is where Geach and Geach* must apply if they are to explain my problem of radical relativity. Crucial as I think phenomena are to Frege’s realism, Frege’s remarks on
phenomena are few and far between. One might never miss them in his overall philosophy. Frege’s objects as such are our true concern.

But here Geach and Geach* do not apply. Wiggins is right that for Frege a copse is *not* the same object as any tree, nor even the same object as the aggregate of trees constituting it at any given time. However, my problem of radical relativity does apply. As Wiggins himself admits and as anyone can see, in some sense a copse *is* trees after all. The problem is not whether “is” is ambiguous here, but explaining the ambiguity. I wholly grant Frege and Wiggins the sense of “is” in which a copse is *not* trees. The problem is to give an account of the sense in which a copse *is* trees. As to the intelligibility, nay clarity, of the problem, we just saw Wiggins himself call this latter sense of “is” obvious. There is even a problem with the identity of indiscernibles, since if a copse *is* trees, it is also both one and many. But the main point is that radical relativity threatens not because the copse is the same $F$ as the trees in Geach’s relative sense, but because it is *the same as* the trees in an absolute sense, “absolute” meaning ‘not relative in Geach’s sense’. The absolute sense in which the copse is not the trees is unable to trump radical relativity, since it is opposed to another absolute sense in which the copse is the trees. Thus the dilemma for realism arises on the level of two conflicting absolute senses of identity. This conflict cannot be analyzed in terms of relative identity.

We may call the absolute sense of identity in which a copse is not its trees the individuative sense, and the absolute sense of identity in which a copse is its trees the unitative sense. We may even say with Frege, “One pair of boots is not the same concrete object as two boots (individuative sense), but is the same physical phenomenon as two boots (unitative sense).” Despite the surface grammar of that sentence, it would be incorrect to analyze the sentence as a conjunction of two relative identity statements. That is because both uses of “is” express absolute senses of identity. Thus the sentence would be merely Frege’s careful way of saying that though in a sense the objects are different, in a sense they are the same. Geach admits that Frege rejects the relative identity thesis since Frege says “it is inconceivable that various forms of [identity] should occur” (Geach 1972: 238). Worse, *concrete object* and *physical phenomenon* are not even sortal concepts. They are classificatory concepts, since it is logically possible either that some objects or that no objects fall under them. But they are not sortal concepts; we cannot directly associate determinate numbers of objects with them, since they lack individuative capacity. We cannot count how many concrete objects as such or how many physical phenomena as such there are in a room, only how many tables or chairs. Such mere classificatory concepts cannot generate the conflict (Geach 1972: 238 correctly requires count nouns).

So here we finally find a logical formulation of the problem of radical relativity as threatening Frege. Namely, Frege must admit an absolute sense in which a copse is its trees. This seems to saddle him with two conflicting forms of absolute identity, the individuative and the unitative—and it is inconceivable
that various forms of identity should occur. The two arguments for radical relativity arise not because of relative identity but because of a conflict of two senses of absolute identity. The arguments for radical relativity are purely negative: realism itself seems to be unraveling due to an internal conflict.

The arguments for radical relativity raised the problem of one and many. One necessary condition of the problem is two or more sortal concepts, say copse and tree, such that copses and trees overlap. Even then the problem will not arise if we apply only the individuative sense of absolute identity and say that copses and trees are different kinds of objects. I think that all commentators before me simply assumed that this was Frege’s solution to any problem of radical relativity. And that is why they have seen no problem. But what they see as the solution is only the second necessary condition of the problem, which has not even arisen yet. The third and final necessary condition which ignites the conflict is the recognition of a second and conflicting sense of absolute identity in which the copse and trees are one and the same. As Wiggins says, “Obviously a copse is trees.” Without that unitative second sense, the problem of one entity’s being absolutely both one and many cannot arise.

Frege, speaking as he does of physical phenomena, ignites the conflict and faces the threat of radical relativity. I think all the great analysts were tacitly aware of the problem. At the end of this book, the reader must decide how much charity is really involved in thinking so.

Far from posing the problem, Geach arguably offers a solution. Geach aims to achieve a very conservative desert realism which avoids a proliferation of unwanted kinds of overlapping entities by reducing them to the ideology of language L (Geach 1972: 243–45). But if that is so, it is not Frege’s solution but Geach’s. And this is not a book about Geach. The solution I propose is modified realism. I propose that the individuative and unitative senses are not different and conflicting absolute identity relations. I propose that the “is” of identity always denotes the same identity relation, but that some true identity statements reflect real identities in the world while others do not. The question then becomes which true identity statements reflect real identities and which do not.

While the problem of radical relativity serves as a framework of this book, in fact most of the book would survive the problem’s nonseriousness or even unintelligibility. Only this chapter and the last deal directly with it. The intervening chapters are preparatory in the sense of a grand tour of everything of interest in Frege and Russell as ‘no entity without identity’ ontologists, and they are contributions in their own right.

The general plan of the book is this. Chapters 2–5 explore Frege’s and Russell’s existence-identity philosophies in depth. Chapter 6 discusses Aristotle as a paradigm modified realist and begins to compare Frege and Russell to him. Chapter 7 uses seven criteria of modified realism to argue that all four analysts are analogous enough to Aristotle to be classified as modified realists too.