

THE PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW.

THE EXISTENCE OF THE WORLD AS A PROBLEM.

OF the two parts of this paper the first is the significant one. As a study in formal analysis, it attempts to show that there is no problem, logically speaking, of the existence of an external world. Its sole point is to show that the very attempt to state the problem involves a self-contradiction: that the terms cannot be so stated as to generate a problem without assuming what is professedly brought into question. The second part is a summary endeavor to state the actual question which has given rise to the unreal problem and the conditions which have led to its being misconstrued. So far as subject-matter is concerned, it supplements the first part; but the argument of the first part in no way depends upon anything said in the second. The latter may be false and its falsity have no implications for the first contention.

I.

There are many ways of stating the problem of the existence of an external world. I shall make that of Mr. Bertrand Russell the basis of my examinations, as it is set forth in his recent book *Our Knowledge of the External World as a Field for Scientific Method in Philosophy*. I do this both because his statement is one recently made in a book of commanding importance, and because it seems to me to be a more careful statement than most of those in vogue. If my point can be made out for his statement, it will apply, *a fortiori*, to other statements. Even if there be those to whom this does not seem to be the case, it will be admitted that my analysis must begin somewhere. I