

EXISTENCE AND POTENTIALITY

THE so-called "problem of universals" rests, at least in part, on a confused identification of concepts, such as logical terms, with ontological entities. Discourse does indeed have an ineluctable reference to real being, and logical systems are in some sense applicable to *what is*. But this does not mean that there is any one-to-one correspondence between terms of discourse and existential reality, or that logical relations can be identified with ontological relations.¹

In this article we are deliberately putting to one side the problem of the relationship of logical discourse to its object, being, fundamental as that problem is for philosophy. So far as possible our discussion will be limited to the ontological problem of the status and relationship of the characters which are universal in the sense of being common to a plurality of individual existents. We are assuming that there are individual existents; that, while each of these is unique and irreducible, it has properties common to other individuals and sustains relationships which are also universal in that they are repeatable.

Every ontological theory rests upon accepted distinctions of kinds, or modes, of being. But the real business of the ontologist is not merely the making of these distinctions and the attempt to exhibit them as ultimate and irreducible — or even as merely phenomenal. It is rather, having established his distinctions, to show how the kinds, or modes, of being are related to one another. The monist has, of course, always argued that the constraint which the pluralist is under to put his broken Humpty Dumpty together again is conclusive evidence of the fundamental oneness of whatever is. And the pluralist, on the other hand, has found the converse equally conclusive: to hold with the monist that the manifest diversity of things is merely phenomenal and not real is to admit an unaccountable distinction between the real and the phenomenal. In some sense phenomena *are*, even if only as illusions in finite minds. We may indeed classify ontological theories as monist, dualist, or pluralist, as materialist or idealist, or in other equally valid

¹ Paper read before the Fullerton Club, April, 1950.