

UNIVERSALS AND METAPHYSICAL REALISM

'The point of philosophy is to start with something so simple as not to seem worth stating, and end with something so paradoxical that no one will believe it.'

—Bertrand Russell, *The Monist* (1918)

The late Friedrich Waismann once remarked that, while you may confute and kill a scientific theory, a philosophy dies only of old age. The realist theory of universals, which G.E. Moore and Bertrand Russell revived in the brilliant fifteen years which preceded the first World War,¹ seems to have aged more rapidly than its authors, and to have died, or fallen into oblivion, during the 'forties. In the United States, the very different conception of realism propounded by Professors Quine and Goodman,² and nicknamed by Quine 'Plato's Beard', has displaced it, leaving Professor Bergmann almost alone to defend it.³ In Britain, a polished essay by Mr. Pears seems to have been

¹ G. E. Moore, 'The Nature of Judgment', *Mind*, 8 (1899), esp. pp. 178-83; 'Identity', *Proc. Aris. Soc.*, 1 (1900-1), esp. pp. 105-15; *Some Main Problems of Philosophy* (London, 1953), hereafter cited as *Main Problems*, pp. 301-5, 312-77 (composed in 1910-1); and Bertrand Russell, 'On the Relations of Universals to Particulars' (composed 1911) in *Logic and Knowledge*, ed. Robert C. Marsh (London, 1956); *The Problems of Philosophy* (London, 1912), chs. 8-10.

² W. V. Quine, *From a Logical Point of View* (Cambridge, Mass., 1951) chs. 1, 6; Nelson Goodman, *The Structure of Appearance* (Cambridge, Mass., 1951) ch. 2.

³ Gustav Bergmann, *Meaning and Existence* (Madison, Wis. 1959), esp. chs. 4, 13. My debts in this essay to Professor Bergmann, particularly in what I say about the attempts of Professors Quine and Goodman to shave Plato's Beard, are heavy and obvious, though no doubt he would reject most of my conclusions.

received as its epitaph.⁴ In this paper I propose to re-examine Moore's and Russell's principal argument for the reality of universals, in order to determine whether any spark of life remains in it. Is it truly dead, or only neglected?

I

Russell's *The Problems of Philosophy* is a convenient and familiar point of departure. Lucidly and simply, it states the position which Moore and Russell held, and their reason for holding it. In its eighth chapter, Russell wrote this:

'Suppose, for instance, that I am in my room. I exist, and my room exists; but does "in" exist? Yet obviously the word "in" has a meaning; it denotes a relation which holds between me and my room. This relation is something, although we cannot say that it exists *in the same* sense in which I and my room exist. The relation "in" is something which we can think about and understand, for, if we could not understand it, we could not understand the sentence "I am in my room."'⁵

The conclusion that we are to investigate is that the relation denoted by 'in' is, or is real. Russell's distinction between being and existence, according to which the relation denoted by 'in' has being (*is* or *is real*) but does not exist, is notoriously difficult, and we shall defer investigating it. Yet, even apart from that distinction, Russell's argument and conclusion are puzzling.

⁴ D. F. Pears, 'Universals', in *Logic and Language*, 2nd series, ed. Antony Flew (Oxford, 1953).

⁵ Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy* (London, reset edn. 1946), hereafter cited as *Problems*, p. 90.

His reasoning seems to have been as follows:

- (i) Some propositions of the form ' x is in y ', where ' x ' and ' y ' deputize for names or descriptions of things which in a familiar sense exist, can be thought about and understood.
- (ii) They could not be thought about or understood unless the word 'in' were thought about and understood; *i.e.* 'in' is not redundant.
- (iii) Some propositions of the form ' x is in y ' are true. (I take this to be presupposed in Russell's opening injunction: 'Suppose, for instance, that. . .')
- (iv) The non-redundant elements of true propositions denote things that are real or have being, if not things that exist.
- (v) Therefore, 'in' denotes something which *is* or *is real*, if not something which exists; and since if 'in' denotes anything at all it is a relation, it follows that at least one relation *is* or *is real*.

If relations are real, then universals are real: for 'a *universal* will be anything which may be shared by many particulars';⁶ and at least two pairs of particulars, namely, Russell and his room, and Moore and his room, may share the relation denoted by 'in'.

Neither Russell nor Moore believed that all universals were relational. In *The Problems of Philosophy* Russell had much to say of justice and whiteness, which he considered to be non-relational qualities; and in *Some Main Problems of Philosophy* Moore strove to demonstrate that in some sense *whiteness* is a universal which is neither a

⁶ Russell, *Problems*, p. 93; *cf.* Moore, *Main Problems*, p. 304.

relation (like *in*) nor a relational property (like *in Russell's room*). Yet both Moore and Russell considered the being of relations and relational properties to be far more evident than that of non-relational (qualitative) universals; and both ascribed the nominalist tendencies in the work of Berkeley and Hume to their error that, unlike qualities, relations are evidently the work of the mind.⁷ Russell plainly agreed with Moore that 'it is. . . comparatively easy to distinguish universals of both these two sorts [relations and relational properties]; and if it were quite clear that they were the only sorts, the whole question about universals would be . . . comparatively simple.'⁸

Simple or not, it is the question we are to investigate. In doing so, I shall assume that Moore and Russell were in the right when they declared that whether or not there are qualities which are irreducible to relational properties has not the slightest bearing on whether or not there are universals.

Despite Russell's lucidity, there are obscurities in his argument as I have analysed it. It only applies to expressions which are non-redundant, i.e. which must be thought about and understood if the meaning of the sentences in which they occur is to be thought about and understood. Clearly if, instead of saying 'I am in my room', Russell had added some expletive to 'room', e.g. 'God-forsaken', that expletive would have been redundant, and his argument would not have shown that there is something which 'God-forsaken' denotes. To show that, it would be necessary to produce a true statement in which 'God-forsaken' was not redundant. But is it enough to exclude redundant expres-

sions? Some expressions, for example in mathematics, are rigorously defined. If the definition of 'triangle' were substituted for the word 'triangle' in a theorem of Euclid, the meaning of that theorem would remain unchanged. Are we to interpret Russell's argument as showing that there is a universal denoted by 'triangle', *as well as* those denoted by 'figure', 'plane', and 'three-sided'? In his later work Russell construed his argument as applying only to expressions which are primitive. Hence, the fact that you can think about and understand the expression 'in' shows *either* that 'in' denotes something that is real or has being, *or* that 'in' is definable, and that the primitive expressions by which it is ultimately to be defined denote things that are real or have being.

Even after this clarification, the scope of Russell's argument remains obscure. Suppose that the sentences with which Russell began were, 'You are *or* I am in my room' or 'I am an *individual* (or a *particular*).' The expressions 'or' and 'individual' (or 'particular') are, in Russell's own view, not redundant. Once more, we must turn to his later works for guidance. If all logical connectives such as 'and', 'or', 'if. . .then' be interpreted truth-functionally, then they must be excluded from the fundamental propositions from which compound propositions are constructed. It must be conceded that a difficulty remains about the sentence, "'I am in my room" is true'. To understand that sentence, it is necessary to understand the expression 'true'; and if truth-functional analyses of the logical connectives are to be admitted, such sentences must be indispensable. However, Russell might plead that the expressions 'true' and 'false', which signify, not properties of objects, but properties of propositions about objects, call for separate elucidation and interpretation. I shall there-

⁷ Russell, *Problems*, pp. 95-7; Moore, *Main Problems*, pp. 305, 313-4.

⁸ Moore, *Main Problems*, p. 353; cf. Russell, *Problems*, pp. 93-4, 97.

fore assume that his argument applies neither to them nor to their derivatives.

Expressions like 'individual', 'particular', and 'universal' must also be treated separately. Frege's technique of quantification enables us to dispense with them as they most commonly occur, in such sentences as, 'Some individual both took office under Caesar and conspired to murder him', by replacing them with variables, *e.g.* 'For some value of "x", "x took office under Caesar and x conspired to murder Caesar" is true'. As for sentences which cannot be so analysed, *e.g.* 'Brutus is an individual', what they say is *shown* by allowing certain expressions, *e.g.* 'Brutus', to be substituted for certain variables, *e.g.* 'x' in the above function; and it may be expressed in the formal mode by such sentences as, 'The expression "Brutus" is a legitimate value of the variable "x".' Russell was to accept Wittgenstein's view that expressions like 'individual', 'particular', and 'universal', which can be eliminated by such devices, signify formal concepts,⁹ and should not be mistaken for predicates signifying properties which a thing may or may not possess.

These elucidations affect only the scope of Russell's argument. What of its nature? If our analyses and clarifications are sound, it asserts that the reality of the universal *in* follows from three facts: (i) that the sentence 'I am in my room' can be thought about and understood; (ii) that on the occasion when Russell wrote it he expressed a true proposition; and (iii) that the word 'in' is neither a logical connective nor signifies a formal concept, and is predicable of many particulars (henceforth I shall call such expressions 'primitive predicates'). That universals are real is

⁹ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London, 1922), 4.126-4.12721.

held to follow from these facts by the general principle that the non-redundant elements of true propositions denote things that are real or have being. That principle, however, applies to proper names as well as to predicates. Russell's argument requires only a narrower principle, which I shall henceforth call 'the Realist Principle'; namely, that primitive predicates occurring non-redundantly in true propositions denote real things, or, as Moore liked to say, 'real constituents of the world'. It is plain why Russell and Moore adhered to this Principle. They could not conceive how otherwise propositions containing primitive predicates could state facts about the world.¹⁰ And certainly this consideration is weighty. If the ultimate non-logical and non-formal constituents of true propositions refer to nothing in the world, in what can the truth of such propositions consist?

Before proceeding to consider objections to Russell's argument one more elucidation is called for. While it presupposes that there are true propositions containing expressions which stand for universals, it does not stipulate that those propositions must assert that those universals are exemplified. In his example Russell laid it down that the relation *in* was supposed to be exemplified; for he invited his readers to suppose that he was in his room. But, since 'in' is as much a constituent of the negative proposition 'Russell is not in his room', as of the affirmative one, 'Russell is in his room', the reality of the relation *in* would seem to follow from the truth of either one.

This point can be generalized. Let '*. . .R. . .*' signify a relational expression, and let the only true propositions containing '*. . .R. . .*' be of the form $\sim R(x,y)$ or ' $\sim xRy$ '.

¹⁰ Russell, *Problems*, pp. 90 (cf. 80-8), 97-8; Moore, *Main Problems*, pp. 303-5.

In other words. let it be true that $\sim(\exists x,y) xRy$. Six years after writing *The Problems of Philosophy*, Russell stoutly maintained the possibility that there are negative facts, *i.e.* that there are facts expressible by propositions of the form $\sim fa$, which cannot be reduced to facts expressible by propositions that contain no sign of negation.¹¹ If that is possible, then it is logically possible that the only true propositions containing a given predicative expression, whether 'F. . .', or 'R(. . ., . . .)' or some other, should be negative. By Russell's argument, such an unexemplified universal would have exactly the same claim to being or reality as exemplified ones.

Both in *The Problems of Philosophy* and 'The Philosophy of Logical Atomism' Russell avoided admitting this by adopting the Principle of Acquaintance, namely, that 'in every proposition that we can apprehend (*i.e.*, not only in those whose truth and falsity we can judge of, but in all that we can think about) all the constituents are really entities with which we have immediate acquaintance.'¹² It follows that we cannot think about any proposition the primitive expressions in which do not stand for constituents with which we are acquainted; and we can be acquainted with the constituent denoted by a qualitative or relational expression only if that constituent is exemplified and we are acquainted with an instance of it. In short, we cannot even think about a negative proposition containing '. . . R. . .', *e.g.* ' $\sim aRb$ ', unless we have been acquainted with a state of affairs asserted by a proposition of the form ' xRy '.

¹¹ Russell, *Logic and Knowledge*, pp. 211-6, esp. 213.

¹² Russell, *Problems*, p. 58; *Logic and Knowledge*, pp. 195, 270-80. For a criticism of the Principle of Acquaintance see Max Black, *Language and Philosophy* (Ithaca, 1949) pp. 130-4.

The metaphysical problem, however, cannot be dodged in that way. First, the question whether universals have being or are real is quite distinct from the question whether every universal of which we have formed a concept has been exemplified somewhere at some time. Nothing in Russell's argument confines its application either to affirmative propositions, or to propositions we know. Of course, he might stipulate that its application be so confined; but such an arbitrary stipulation would carry no weight. Secondly, the problem of unexemplified universals can be propounded even if the Principle of Acquaintance be accepted. That Principle entails neither that any given language, English say, contains expressions for all exemplified qualities and relations, nor that speakers of English are acquainted with instances of all of them. It cannot, therefore, forbid a speaker of English to opine that two objects, say the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans, stand to each other in some relation with which he is not acquainted. It follows that somebody who said, in English, ' $(\exists R)$ the Atlantic Ocean R the Pacific Ocean, and I am not acquainted with R ', would make an intelligible statement.

Now if you can opine that a pair of objects exemplifies a relation with which you are not acquainted, you can equally opine that it does not. For example, you might intelligibly say:

- (1) ' $(\exists R) \sim R$ (the Atlantic Ocean, the Pacific Ocean) and I am not acquainted with R .'

Having said that, you might generalize it:

- (2) ' $(\exists R)(x,y) \sim R(x,y)$ and I am not acquainted with R .'

If (2) were true, an infinite number of statements of the form $\sim R(x,y)$ would be true, in each of which the value of the variable ' R ' would signify an unexemplified rela-

tion. The Principle of Acquaintance entails, not that there is no such relation, but that no language contains a predicate denoting it. Although the limits of my language may be the limits of *my* world, they are not the limits of *the* world.

Since I am not tempted to endorse any metaphysical Principle of Plenitude, I am inclined to think the proposition (2) above to be true. If it is, then there are innumerable negative facts which, if the Principle of Acquaintance be true, nobody will ever know. From that, if Russell's argument is sound, it follows that an unexemplified relation is a real constituent of the world. Those who countenance Russell's argument can escape this conclusion in only two ways: either by demonstrating that unexemplified universals are impossible (not merely that they cannot be directly known), or by demonstrating that all negative propositions are reducible to affirmative ones. Up to now, neither has been established.

II

Realist arguments like Russell's have been rejected for such a variety of reasons that I cannot here examine them all. I shall, therefore, select those few which I judge to be cardinal. I cannot even justify my selection; for to do so it would be necessary to show that none of the objections I do not discuss has more weight than any of those I do.

The four objections I have selected are: (1) the classical difficulty, with which Plato struggled, that the very concept of a unitary universal which is 'shared by' many particulars appears to be self-contradictory; (2) that although some realist principle may be true, the Realist

Principle which Russell held is false; (3) that Russell's argument depends on features peculiar to certain languages, which may be dispensed with in an artificial language, and perhaps is in some natural languages; (4) that Russell's theory of universals, as a whole, is 'circular and uninformative'.

(1) *The Classical Difficulty*. In the *Philebus* Plato drew attention to two difficulties in his theory of forms: if there are many things in which a form may be said to be present, it would seem that 'we must think [either] that [the form] is dispersed and has become many', or 'that it is still entire and divided from itself, which latter would seem to be the greatest impossibility of all' (*ibid.* 15B). Russell's theory appears to avoid the first difficulty, but not the second. He recognized a universal denoted by 'in' which may be 'shared' or, to avoid metaphor, 'exemplified' by, many pairs of particulars, *e.g.* by Russell and his room, and by Moore and his. However, he did not think that only part of the universal *in* would be exemplified by each pair that exemplifies it: that is, he did not think that it could be 'dispersed' among those pairs, and so 'become many'. A universal remains unitary. Yet, since Russell did think that Moore could be in his room at the very same time as he was in his, the two rooms being necessarily at different places, he could not avoid concluding that at the same time the unitary universal *in* could be exemplified at different places. Does that not imply what to Plato seemed 'the greatest impossibility of all', that it is 'still entire and yet divided from itself'?

A tempting way out of this difficulty is to deny that because the *in* is exemplified by Russell and his room, both of which are at a certain place, the universal itself must be at that place, or at any place. Yet that way lies destruc-

tion. It is true that the question form, 'Where is the universal?' has no established use in non-philosophical discourse. But then, neither has the term 'universal' such a use; and questions of the impugned form naturally arise out of Russell's theory. Moreover, there is a strong reason for thinking that if universals are exemplified in space and time, they are where they are exemplified. You can verify the statement that Russell is in his room by looking into it and seeing him there. When you look, you see not only him and his room, but also that he is in it. It is true that it is not good English to say that you see *in*, along with Russell and his room; but, as the late J. L. Austin once pointed out, neither is it good English to say that you do not see it, or that you intuit it. 'I [see] what in English is described by means of two demonstrative pronouns and an adverbial phrase. To look for an isolable entity corresponding to the latter is a bad habit. . .'¹³ Now, if what you see includes what is described by the adverbial phrase '. . . is in. . .', *i.e.* a universal, must it not be where you are looking? And if one man was to see that Russell was in his room at the same time as another was to see Moore in his, would it not follow that the universal *in* was in the two different places where the two were looking? If so, would not the universal *in* be both 'entire and yet divided from itself'?

At this juncture, realists should act on the principle that the best defense is attack, and protest that *by its very nature* a universal is the sort of thing that can be exemplified by particulars in different places at the same time. To say that it is 'entire and yet divided from itself' is objectionable, because it presupposes that to be exemplified in

two different places at once implies being divided. It is true that a *particular* can only be in two places at once if one part of it is at one place, and another part at the other; but, by their very nature, universals are not divisible into parts. Exasperated, the Platonic Mephistopheles may retort that what is seen to be exemplified at two different places is seen at those places; and that, since what is seen at one place is not what is seen at the other, the *in* which is seen to be exemplified in Russell's room cannot be the same as the *in* which is seen to be exemplified in Moore's room. In his turn, a realist may reply that the second premise of this argument, namely that what is seen at one place is not what is simultaneously seen at the other, holds for particulars but not for universals. If he is asked how that can be, he need not hesitate to reply that you cannot explain what is fundamental. At a certain time Russell is in his room and Moore is in his; and one and the same relation, namely that denoted by 'in', is a constituent of both facts. If that is impossible, then all discourse is impossible.

Even this resounding affirmation may not exorcise the Platonic imp. We have supposed that realists may avoid metaphorical expressions like 'share' and 'participate in' when speaking of the connexion between particulars and universals, and have employed instead the non-metaphorical 'exemplify'. But what does 'exemplify' denote? In his 1911 essay 'On the Relations of Universals and Particulars', Russell wrote that,

. . . according to the theory which assumes particulars, there is a specific relation of subject to predicate . . . [O]rdinary sensible qualities will be predicates of the particulars which are instances of them . . . Predication is a relation involving a fundamental logical difference between its two terms . . .

¹³ J. L. Austin, *Philosophical Papers* (Oxford, 1961) p. 18.

[T]he question whether predication is an ultimate simple relation may be taken as distinguishing the two theories [*i.e.* that there are particulars and that there are not]; it is ultimate if there are particulars (*Logic and Knowledge*, p. 123).

Plainly Russell's 'predication' has the same sense as our 'exemplification' ('exemplification' is better because it is convenient to reserve 'predication' for the relation between a linguistic expression and what it is predicated of); and Russell is saying that predication (or exemplification) itself is an 'ultimate simple relation'.

In the first of his articles on Plato's *Parmenides*, Professor Ryle showed that there cannot be such a relation.¹⁴ By Russell's own exposition, it would be anomalous. Whereas ordinary relations relate particulars (John is *to the left of* James) or universals (Being yellow *implies* being coloured), exemplification is supposed to relate particulars *to* universals. Suppose, nevertheless, that there is such a relation. Applying this supposition to Russell's example, exemplification will relate the two particulars, Russell and his room, to the relation *in*, and the two particulars, Moore and his room, to the same relation. It follows that exemplification is a universal. For, although Russell defined a universal as 'anything which may be shared by many particulars', by explicitly acknowledging that 'predicates themselves may have predicates'¹⁵, *i.e.* that there may be universals which are exemplified only by universals, he showed that he considered it a sufficient condition of universality that a thing be predicable of or exemplifiable by many other things whether particulars or not.

¹⁴ Gilbert Ryle, 'Plato's *Parmenides*', *Mind*, 48 (1939) pp. 137-8.

¹⁵ *Logic and Knowledge*, p. 123; cf. *Problems*, pp. 102-3.

The ultimate simple relation of exemplification is then a constituent of each of the two facts:

- (i) The relation *in* is exemplified by Russell and his room;
- (ii) The relation *in* is exemplified by Moore and his room.

It follows that,

- (ia) The relation of exemplification is exemplified by Russell, his room, and the relation *in*,

and that,

- (iia) The relation of exemplification is exemplified by Moore, his room, and the relation *in*.

But the facts (ia) and (iia) are stated in sentences which contain the expression 'is exemplified by'. What does that expression denote? It cannot denote the relation of exemplification which is said to be exemplified, because a relation cannot relate anything to itself. It must therefore denote either nothing at all or a second-order relation of exemplification. It cannot denote nothing at all, if the first-order relation of exemplification is genuine, as it must be if universals are related to what they exemplify by an ultimate simple relation. Hence it must denote a second-order relation of exemplification. Manifestly, this regress is interminable and vicious. For, since second-order exemplification must in turn be a genuine universal, exemplified by Russell, his room, the relation *in*, and first-order exemplification, there must be a third-order relation of exemplification, and so *ad infinitum*.¹⁶

¹⁶ Ryle truly observed that his regress is not the same as F. H. Bradley's celebrated regress of relations, 'though reminiscent of it' (*loc. cit.* p. 138). The question which generated Bradley's regress, namely, How can 'a more or less independent' relation relate its terms? arises from Bradley's doctrine that a relation between *A* and *B* 'implies really a substantial foundation within them' (*Appearance and Reality* (Oxford, 1946) pp. 17-18). Neither Russell nor Ryle saw any difficulty in the 'independence' or externality of relations.

Since vicious infinite regresses cannot be stopped, they must not be allowed to start. Once you concede to the Platonic imp that particulars and universals need a further universal, and an anomalous one at that, to relate them, you cannot deny that that further universal requires yet a further one, and so *ad infinitum*. Nor will it help to plead that the relation of exemplification is unique. It is *not* unique in the only respect that matters: namely, that many sets of universals and particulars share it or exemplify it.

Why did Russell postulate a relation of exemplification at all? Presumably because he perceived that even if he and his room are real particulars, and the relation *in* a real universal, it does not follow that he is in his room, any more than it follows that he is not in his room. The relation *in* is a constituent of both the positive and the negative fact. What is the difference between those facts? It is natural to suggest that in the positive fact the relation *in* is tied to Russell and his room by an ultimate simple relation, and that in the negative fact it is not. But by accepting that suggestion, you generate Ryle's regress.

The only possible escape is to deny that the statement 'Russell is in his room' asserts any relation, whether ultimate or not, between the relation *in* and the particulars it is said to relate. The relation *in* may relate Russell and his room, or it may not; but, supposing it does relate them, it does not follow that some further relation relates it to them. In the same way, a certain rose may be red or not; but, supposing it is red, it does not follow that *being red* is related to it.

Ryle's regress can only be forestalled by conceiving the exemplification of a universal by a particular or set of particulars as non-relational. Language inevitably mis-

leads us here. Having recognized that expressions like '*. . . is red*' and '*. . . is in . . .*' denote constituents of facts, it is tempting to think that the difference between the facts asserted by the pairs of sentences:

'*a is red*' and '*a is not red*',

'*a is in b*' and '*a is not in b*',

must be found in the presence or absence of some further constituent, the relation of exemplification. That would be a mistake. The fact, if it be a fact, that *a* is red, has exactly the same constituents as the fact, if it be a fact, that *a* is not red. There is an ultimate difference between the two facts, but it is not a difference in their constituents.

I have argued: (1) that Plato's objection to the realist theory of universals does not arise if it is presupposed that a universal may be simultaneously exemplified by many particulars without being divided from itself; and (2) that Ryle's regress cannot begin if it is presupposed that the difference between the facts asserted by propositions of the forms $f(x)$ and $\sim f(x)$ is not a difference in their constituents, *i.e.* is not a relational difference. Neither presupposition seems to me to be inconsistent. Whether or not Russell's Realist Principle is true, Plato's objection does not refute it.

(2) *Even if some realist principle is true, must it be Russell's?* It is well-known that, ever since the Nominalist controversy vexed the medieval Schools, most of those who have claimed to be realists have adopted a position less extreme than Russell's.

The most familiar form of 'moderate' realism is that commonly ascribed to Aristotle. According to it, while something in the world must correspond to a true proposition, that correspondence need not be point for point. As Aquinas urged, '*Alius est enim modus intellectus in*

intelligendo quam rei in essendo. If 'Russell is in his room' is true, then something in the world must correspond to that proposition; but there need not be a constituent in the world for each constituent of the proposition. If we take the true propositions 'Socrates is a man', and 'Plato is a man', there must once have been something in the world corresponding to each of them. But it was not that the particulars Socrates and Plato each exemplified the universals denoted by the primitive predicates into which 'is a man' is supposedly analysable. (Nor was it that the particulars of which the complex particulars Socrates and Plato are supposedly composed exemplified the universals denoted by certain primitive predicates.) Rather, it was that the essence *man*, which in itself is neither universal nor particular, was *in rerum natura* individuated in Socrates and Plato, as well as in other men. *In rerum natura* the same essence may therefore be multiplied. However, when somebody forms the proposition that Socrates is a man, or that Plato is a man, he does so by abstracting the individuated essence both from the different parcels of matter which it informed and from the accidents with which it was associated. Since the abstracted essence of Socrates is the same as that of Plato or of any other man, it is universal. It follows that an essence exists in two distinct ways: *in rerum natura* as a many, and in the mind as a one. The universal term 'man' stands for the essence *man* as it exists in the mind abstractly. The essence itself, being neutral with respect to universality and particularity, can exist *in rerum natura* as individuated in Socrates, Plato, and other men.¹⁷

¹⁷ The traditional Aristotelian doctrine is clearly explained by Henry B. Veitch in *Intentional Logic* (New Haven, 1952) pp. 105-13, esp. 111-3. Fr. Joseph Owens, C.Ss.R., has argued that the 'Aristotelian' doctrine really was Aristotle's:

Against this theory, Russell would presumably argue that it is unintelligible to suppose that a neutral essence should be capable of existing both as many individuals, and as an abstract unitary universal. In what sense can the same neutral thing exist as both a many and a one? An Aristotelian would retort that this seems absurd only because of the dogma that everything is either universal or particular. If Russell may protest that universals are unitary and yet exemplified by many things, why may not an Aristotelian protest that essences, while neither universal nor particular, may exist in the world as many particulars and in the mind as unitary universals?

Set against Russell's, the Aristotelian theory has two drawbacks. First, it postulates not merely one problematic entity, as Russell's does, but one problematic entity and two problematic forms of existence for it. By Ockham's Razor, Russell's theory, if tenable at all, is preferable. Secondly, the question cannot be suppressed: If the essence *man* is individuated in Socrates and Plato, are Socrates and Plato nothing but two individuals? Are they not both men? And if they are both men, can you stop short with saying that the essence *man* is individuated? Must you not add that the individuals, Socrates and Plato, exemplify the same thing, namely man?

A very different criticism of Russell's Realist Principle has been made by Goodman and Quine.¹⁸ Like Russell, they hold that in some way true statements correspond in their structure to the structure of the world, but they altogether reject Russell's doctrine that there must be

see *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics* (Toronto, 1957) pp. 242-3.

¹⁸ W. V. Quine, *From a Logical Point of View*, pp. 9-14, 102-129, esp. 122-4; Nelson Goodman, *The Structure of Appearance*, pp. 33-41.

real universals which correspond to the primitive predicates of true propositions. In their view, only one part of any statement carries ontological commitment: its quantified variables. To find out what a man's ontological commitments are, you must find over what variables the statements he believes to be true compel him to quantify. 'Entities of a given sort', Quine wrote, are ontologically assumed by a theory 'if and only if some of them must be counted among the values of the variables in order that the statements affirmed in the theory be true'.¹⁹

On this view, if in the proposition, 'Russell is in his room', you permit 'Russell' and 'his room' to be replaced by the non-predicative name variables 'x' and 'y', and those variables to be quantified, i.e. if you assert that $(\exists x, y) x$ is in y ', you commit yourself to a world containing individuals, but not to the reality of the relation *in*. It is true that in ' $(\exists x, y) x$ is in y ', you use the word 'in', and presuppose that it has meaning. But Quine has insisted that 'there is a gulf between *meaning* and *naming*'.²⁰ In the same spirit, Goodman has defined nominalism as 'the refusal to countenance any entities other than individuals', while at the same time allowing 'the nominalist's language' to contain 'one-place and many-place predicates of individuals'.²¹ He can consistently do so, because, like Quine, he does not consider predicates to stand for any entity.²² In the opinion of both Goodman and Quine, then, a philosopher would commit himself to rejecting nominalism only if he were to allow '. . . is in. . .' to be replaced by a variable, and that variable to be quantified, as in ' $(\exists R) \text{Russell } R$

¹⁹ Quine, *op. cit.* p. 103.

²⁰ *Ibid.* p. 9.

²¹ Goodman, *op. cit.* pp. 33-4.

²² *Ibid.* pp. 34-5.

his room'; for only by doing so would he expressly assert that there is some relation (and relations are universals) in which Russell stands to his room.

This position can be assailed from several directions. Professor Sellars, for example, has forcibly argued that to quantify over a variable does not commit you to accepting the values of that variable as denoting anything real.²³ Russell would approach the matter from another quarter. Holding, as he does, that what you quantify over has no special ontological significance, he might nevertheless urge that the alleged gulf between admitting predicates of individuals and quantifying over predicate variables is imaginary. Of course a logician may for his own convenience eschew such quantification. Russell himself discovered that unrestricted quantification over predicate variables generates the paradox which bears his name, nor could he deny force to Quine's charge that 'our precautions against [such] contradictions [*e.g.* Russell's Theory of Types] are *ad hoc* devices, justified only in that, or in so far as, they seem to work'.²⁴

Yet he might rejoin that to prohibit *all* quantification over predicate variables because unrestricted quantification gives rise to contradiction would be a remedy worse than the disease. Quine himself admits such facts as that more than one dog is white, and that roses and sunsets are red. Well, if it is true both that Fido is white and that Rover is white,

²³ W. S. Sellars, 'Grammar and Existence: A Preface to Ontology', *Mind*, 69 (1960), esp. pp. 499-503, 507-17. Although my position in this paper is reactionary while his is revolutionary, my debt to Sellars' writings and conversation is too great to be indicated in detail: in particular, his criticism over many years at Minnesota showed me that realism is still an issue, and that Russell's and Moore's views deserve serious consideration.

²⁴ Russell did not, however, plead guilty. 'The theory of logical types', he wrote, '. . . has also a certain consonance with common sense which makes it inherently credible' (*Principia Mathematica* (2nd ed., Cambridge, 1927) p. 37.)

must it not also be true that there is some colour which Fido and Rover both have? More generally, if Fa and Fb are both true, must it not be true that $(\exists f)fa$ and fb ? It will not do for a logician to say: in my system, quantification over predicate variables is forbidden. The device of quantification is not private property; and any logician may be called upon to answer whether the result of a particular quantification is or is not true. *Prima facie*, that Fido and Rover are both white is a sufficient condition of the truth of the proposition $(\exists f)f(Fido)$ and $f(Rover)$; and if any proposition expressed by means of quantification over predicates is true, then *some* quantification over predicates is legitimate, and no considerations of elegance or convenience can justify prohibiting it.

By arguing against Quine in this way, Russell would not surrender to Quine's criterion of ontological commitment. He might continue to hold the Realist Principle that the primitive predicates of true propositions must each denote something real. He would overcome Quine's criterion by showing that, rightly employed, it yields exactly the same results as his own. If by asserting the truth of a proposition containing a primitive predicate you oblige yourself to assert the truth of a proposition containing a quantified predicate variable, then quantified variables are not unique in disclosing ontological commitments.

Yet Quine has another argument. 'We may say', he wrote, 'that some dogs are white and not thereby commit ourselves to recognizing either doghood or whiteness as entities. "Some dogs are white" says that some things that are dogs are white; and in order that this statement be true, the things over which the bound variable "something" ranges must include some white dogs, but need not

include doghood or whiteness'.²⁵ Russell of course knew that in the proposition 'Something is white', the bound variable 'something' does not range over a class of things which includes whiteness; and wisely, he did not couch his argument in terms of abstract nouns like whiteness or doghood. His rejoinder to Quine would be: If some things that are dogs are white, is there not some quality which things that are dogs have? Otherwise how do white dogs differ from those which are not white? How can it be a fact that this dog and that are white, if the predicate '. . . is white' does not stand for something which dogs can either be or not be?

(3) *Does Russell's argument depend on features peculiar to certain languages?* Russell began by defining a universal as 'anything which may be shared by many particulars'. Now it is manifest that in English, as in all modern European languages, innumerable true propositions can be expressed by joining predicative expressions like verbs, adjectives, and common nouns, to proper names or demonstrative pronouns; and that in many of the sentences so constructed the same predicative expression, used in the same sense, is joined to a variety of proper names and demonstrative pronouns. Inasmuch as those propositions are faithfully reflected in English (or French, or German, or Italian) sentences which express them, there must by the Realist Principle be universals corresponding to those predicative expressions. Russell evidently recognized this; for he wrote that, 'broadly speaking, proper names stand for particulars, while other substantives, adjectives, prepositions, and verbs stand for universals'.²⁶

²⁵ Quine, *op. cit.* p. 13.

²⁶ Russell, *Problems*, p. 93.

But what if the very same propositions which are expressed in English by predicative expressions can be expressed in some other language, whether artificial or not, without them? A suggestion with which Russell toyed in *An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth* is to the point here. Imagine a language in which what is expressed in English by 'That wall is white' is expressed, not by a predicative expression corresponding to '. . . is white', but by a proper name, say 'White', which is taken to be the name of a spatially and temporally discontinuous particular. This particular can be said to be wherever any part of it is, much as a salesman can be said to be in a house if he has his foot in the door. Instead of saying, as in English, 'That wall is white', speakers of our imaginary language would say 'White is there', pointing to that wall (or possibly, 'White and Wall are there').

In *An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth* (London 1940), Russell proposed a similar interpretation of many statements in modern European languages. 'I wish to suggest', he wrote, 'that "this is red. . ." is not a subject-predicate proposition, but is of the form "redness is here"; [and] that "red" is a name, not a predicate. . .' (p. 97). In *Three Philosophers*, Miss G. E. M. Anscombe attributed an apparently similar view to Aristotle. 'It would be closer to [Aristotle's] view,' she wrote, 'if we ascribed to him an alternative that Plato proposes: namely, that a single form is divided up and becomes many. . . Thus if there were only one large lump of [gold] in the world, the division of it would make gold, which had been only one thing, become many' (pp. 31-2).

Prima facie, an expression like 'White' in this imaginary language would not denote anything which may be shared by many particulars. It is not shared by many

places; for while White is in many places, a different part of it is at each of them. And although it would seem very strange to us to speak of In, say, as being where Russell and his room are, it is not obviously impossible that a language could be constructed in which even relational predicates like '. . . is in. . .' would be replaced by proper names of discontinuous particulars. If this could be done, there would be no reason to suppose that there are any constituents of reality which may be exemplified by many particulars. That supposition would be dismissed as an illusion created by the structure of certain languages. It could not survive the discovery that non-predicative structures are possible.

Unfortunately, not even in imaginary languages can predicative expressions be completely replaced by names of particulars. Suppose there to be a language in which everything said in English about what is white or not white is said by means of a proper name 'White' of the kind I have described, *i.e.* the name of a spatially and temporally discontinuous particular. We may then inquire how saying that this particular is in two places is synonymous with saying that two different regions are white. Obviously, if the discontinuous particular 'White' were many-coloured, the two could not be synonymous. 'The particular White is both here and there' could express the same proposition as 'This region and that region are white', only if the particular White were of one colour, and that colour were white. But that condition cannot even be stated in our imaginary language. Manifestly, to introduce a further discontinuous particular, Albus say, and to lay it down that Albus is wherever White is, would only put off the evil day; for the regions where Albus is need not be white unless Albus itself is white all over.

Neither the belief that predicative expressions could be replaced names of discontinuous particulars, nor Russell's notion that logically 'This is white' is 'not a subject-predicate proposition, but is of the form "[Whiteness] is here",'²⁷ would be tempting were not the predicative expression itself, or one of its derivatives, used as the name of the discontinuous particular. Suppose that particular to be named 'Jack'. The proposition 'Jack is here' can only express the same proposition as 'This is white' if Jack fulfills certain conditions. Those conditions can be stated in English, by means of the predicative expression, '. . . is white'; but I cannot conceive how they could be stated except by predicative expressions or their equivalents, *i.e.* by combining the same linguistic element used in the same sense with a number of other linguistic elements, in order to say the same thing about the things for which those other linguistic elements stand. The nature of the elements and the modes of combining them fall within the province of grammar, and Russell placed no limitation on their variety. He presupposed only that any language in which what can be said in modern European languages can be said, must contain predicative expressions or their equivalents. That presupposition has not been shown to be false by any argument known to me.

(4) *The objection that Realism is 'circular and uninformative'*. Having survived, bloody but unbowed, the objections of candid friends like Plato, and nominalist foes like Goodman and Quine, it would be an anti-climax if realism should succumb to the objection, not that it is inconsistent, but that it is trivial. Yet Mr. D. F. Pears has put that objection vigorously:

²⁷ Russell, *An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth*, p. 97.

[R]ealism is necessarily a circular explanation of naming. . . [U]ltimately there must be some exit from the maze of words, and, whenever this exit is made, it will be impossible to give an informative reason except by pointing. . . [It is true that] at the place where the exit is made it is always possible to give a detailed reason like 'we are able to call things red because they are red', . . . [but that] is too obviously circular to look informative. . . What philosophers who propose the existence of universals do is to propose a general reason which looks informative because it shifts to another level, but unfortunately it is not. It merely marks time. . .²⁸

The form of realism which Pears chose to attack is not precisely Russell's. Russell's premise was not that we are able to call things red, but that some propositions containing the primitive predicate '. . . is red' are true; and his argument did not purport to explain such truths, but only to exhibit a necessary condition of their existence. However, it is beyond doubt that Pears would be willing to adapt his objection to Russell's theory.

In one respect, Pears is less than clear. He accuses realists like Russell of proposing a 'reason which looks informative because it shifts to another level, but unfortunately it is not'. Literally, this means that, because it shifts to a new level, Russell's reason *looks* informative, although in fact it is not. In other words, Russell argued that a necessary condition of the truth of propositions of the form 'x is red' is that the universal *red* be real: this 'shifts to another level', *i.e.* shifts from the level of words like '. . . is red' to the level of real beings, and so looks informative. Pears, however, contends that it is not. But if Russell's argument does shift to a new level, is it not informative? To be told that real beings correspond to the primitive

²⁸ D. F. Pears, 'Universals' in *Logic and Language*, 2nd series, ed. Antony Flew (Oxford 1953) pp. 53-4.

predicates of true propositions—is not that information?

A second interpretation of Pears' objection is possible. If the clause 'because it shifts to another level' falls within the scope of the verb 'looks', then what Pears meant is that Russell's 'reason' only *seems* to shift to another level, and so is not informative, although it seems so. Pears' example of a detailed realist 'reason' supports this interpretation: 'it is always possible to give a detailed reason like "We are able to call things red because they are red".' Observe that he does not write, 'we are able to call things "red" because they are red'; for, if he had, he could not have added that this 'is too obviously circular even to look informative'. By placing quotation marks around the word 'red', he would have shown that his realist is looking to a fact about the world to explain a fact about language, i.e. that he does 'shift to another level'.

Pears did not leave the matter there. He went on to dismiss as vain all realist efforts to escape from the maze of words by postulating real entities corresponding to primitive predicates, on the ground that entities so postulated would be no more than 'shadows' of their corresponding predicates.²⁹ Realism is 'like a dream'—a dream the 'manifest content [of which] is little more than a harmless caprice, but . . . [the] latent content [of which] is a serious error'.³⁰ I doubt whether I understand what Pears meant by this simile; but I interpret him as meaning that a universal is like a dream-object, an unreal image constructed in the realist's mind, which, since it merely reproduces a fact about the objects from which it has been derived, i.e. that they are called by the same name, 'taken

²⁹ *Ibid.* p. 54.

³⁰ *Ibid.* p. 58.

literally . . . seems to be of little importance'.³¹ Its manifest content is therefore harmless. But, since it easily passes over into full-blown Platonism, thus becoming both important and false, its latent content is dangerous.

This criticism is odd, not because it affirms anything paradoxical, but because it affirms nothing (so far as its 'manifest content' goes) which Russell need deny. Russell himself would reject full-blown Platonism,³² i.e. the doctrine that only universals are real, and that objects in the world of sights and sounds are 'between unbeing and being'. Nor would he deny that universals are 'shadows' of primitive predicates in the sense that the reality of universals is inferred from the fact that primitive predicates are irreducible components of true propositions. Of course he would deny that universals are shadows of primitive predicates in the sense that if the predicates had never been conceived, then the universals would not be real. That universals are in that sense shadows is the harmful latent content of Pears' simile.

Let it be conceded that the latent content of realism is false: to Russell, that was never in question. Is its manifest content, Russell's theory as I have elucidated it, also false? Pears' only objection to that manifest content, namely, that it is circular, that it only seems to escape from the maze of words, I think I have shown to be false. Realism asserts that something in the world corresponds to, and in that sense is a shadow of, every primitive predicate; but that assertion is neither circular nor uninformative.

³¹ *Ibid.* p. 58.

³² 'These mystical developments [i.e. Platonism] are very natural, but the basis of the theory is in logic, and it is as based in logic that we have to consider it' (Russell, *Problems*, p. 92).

III

Wise philosophers defer to plain men; but a plain man who has accompanied us so far will hardly contain his derision. To swallow the doctrine that universals are constituents of the world, just as a certain morsel of flour is a constituent of a pudding mixture, is painful, even when it is stipulated that the universals in question be exemplified. But that unexemplified universals are as much constituents of the world as exemplified ones! Is not that as though you were to say that flour is a real constituent of ice-cream because it is true that ice-cream is *not* made of it?

Should our plain man turn for aid and comfort to Moore's *Some Main Problems of Philosophy*, he would be confirmed in his outrage. Moore there invited his readers to distinguish two kinds of objects we can think about: 'those which do have *being*, and those which simply have not got it, are purely imaginary, and don't belong to the Universe at all'. To the second class he assigned 'pure fiction[s]' like griffins and chimaeras. He then proceeded:

If you fix clearly in your mind the sense in which there certainly are no such things as griffins and chimaeras, . . . it seems to me quite plain . . . that universals are not in any way to be classed with griffins and chimaeras; that, on the contrary, there is *the* most fundamental difference in the world between the two, a difference ever so much more important than that which separates universals from particulars (p.373).

At this, any plain man who has learned a little Russellian logic will protest: 'The fictitiousness, the non-being, of griffins and chimaeras consists in the fact that nothing is a griffin or a chimaera; but in your argument that universals are real you don't even attempt to show that they are all exemplified: in fact, it has been urged that your argu-

ment proves that unexemplified universals are as much constituents of the world as exemplified ones.'

Such a protest is certainly justified. Moore himself, in his essay 'The Conception of Reality', later accepted Russell's and Frege's view that the question whether or not griffins and chimaeras are real is the same as the question whether or not the predicates '. . . is a griffin' and '. . . is a chimaera' are each truly predicable of something.²³ And it is quite clear that the Realist Principle on which Russell's argument for the reality of universals depends, namely, that primitive predicates occurring non-redundantly in true propositions denote real constituents of the world, does not mean that such predicates are truly predicable of something. To show this, it is not necessary, although it is sufficient, to demonstrate that nothing in Russell's argument precluded its application to negative facts involving unexemplified universals. One need only point out that Russell began by supposing that he was in his room, *i.e.* that the relational predicate '. . . is in . . .' was truly predicable of something, namely, himself and his room. It follows that if by his conclusion that the relation *in* is a real constituent of the world he had meant no more than that it is exemplified, then his argument would have been a gross *petitio principii*. To attribute such a blunder to Russell would be ridiculous.

Moore, then, was simply wrong when he implied that the sense in which realists claim to prove that universals are real constituents of the world is the sense in which griffins and chimaeras are not. Whether universals are real or have being in the sense of Russell's (and Moore's)

²³ G. E. Moore, *Philosophical Studies* (London, 1922) p. 212.

proof is a question altogether distinct from the question whether they are or are not exemplified.

We may go further. Expressions like 'real constituent of the world', and descriptions of the task of Philosophy or Ontology as being 'to give a general description of the whole of the Universe, mentioning all the most important kinds of things which we know to be in it',³⁴ inevitably suggest that philosophers are looking for the ingredients of which the world is composed, much as a chemist looks for the ingredients of a chemical mixture, or perhaps a zoologist for the species of fauna inhabiting a given region. Plain men are led to expect that philosophers will place before them a list of distinct ingredients or species, like flour and sugar, or lions and antelopes, although of course it is not required that they be material or even observable. And indeed some philosophers, for example the neo-Platonists and Aristotle and his medieval followers, with their hierarchies of beings, have done something like that. For example, Aquinas's catalogue—God or *Esse subsistens*, the Separate Substances or pure subsisting forms, and material substances or beings whose forms actualize matter—together with his account of their ordering with respect to one another, is in the ordinary sense a general description of the whole Universe, mentioning all the most important kinds of things which Aquinas believed he knew to be in it.

Since the sense in which Aquinas believed God and the Separate Substances to be 'in the Universe' (he would not, of course, have used that phrase) is the same as that in which Moore believed griffins and chimaeras *not* to be in it, namely that the predicates '. . . is God' and '. . . is a

³⁴ Moore, *Main Problems*, p. 1.

Separate Substance' are each truly predicable of something, we have already shown that Russell did not even profess to prove that universals are real in that sense. In what sense, then, did he profess to prove it? According to his Realist Principle, the non-redundant primitive predicates of true propositions denote things that are real or have being: but how are the expressions 'things that are real', 'things that have being' to be understood? If Moore, who in 1910 was as close to Russell as any man was, nevertheless misunderstood, have we any hope of doing better?

Wittgenstein once alleged that 'Nothing is more likely than that the verbal expression of the result of a mathematical proof is calculated to delude us with a myth';³⁵ and whether he was right or wrong about mathematics, his remark holds good of Russell's proof of the reality of universals. Wittgenstein's prescription for getting rid of such delusions was to look at the proof. '[T]he sense of the result is not to be read off from [the result] by itself, but from the proof.'³⁶

Why did Russell accept his Realist Principle? What proof did he give of it? He seems to have thought that a proof of it would fall into two parts. First, it would be necessary to show that predicative expressions could not all be analysed into non-predicative ones. Both Russell and Moore held that traditional nominalism, e.g. that of Berkeley and Hume, had attempted such analyses, and had failed, because it had not been able to dispense with the relational predicate '. . . is similar to. . .'.³⁷ Secondly, it would be necessary to show that whether or not a proposi-

³⁵ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* (Oxford, 1956), II, 26 (p. 77).

³⁶ *Ibid.* II, 25 (p. 76).

³⁷ Russell, *Problems*, pp. 95-7; Moore, *Main Problems*, pp. 313-7.

tion is true depends on how the world is, and not on how anybody, plain or scientific, chooses to think about it. If 'F' and 'G' are primitive predicates, then what 'Fa' says about the world is different from what 'Ga' says about it. The difference in what they say can only arise from the difference of their predicates. Suppose both to be true: then the world is as they say it is, and what they say it is depends in part on their predicates. Suppose either or both to be false, then the world will be as the negatives of either or both say it is, and that too depends in part on their predicates. This argument does not show that any bit of the world is named by 'F' or 'G'; for it is not about the elements or ingredients of the world in the way in which a chemical analysis is about the elements or ingredients of a chemical compound or mixture. But it does show that 'F' and 'G' refer to the world in the sense that they are descriptive and not merely formal parts of statements about it, the truth of those statements being determined by how the world is. And since, for any predicate 'f' and any individual 'x', it is true neither that fx or that $\sim fx$, every primitive predicate must be a descriptive and not merely a formal part of a true full description of the world, the truth of that description being determined by how the world is. That, if anything, is what Russell's proof proves; and that is what I think he meant when he asserted that a universal like *in* 'is something, although we cannot say that it exists *in the same sense* in which I and my room exist'.³⁸

Russell confirmed this interpretation of his theory of universals in an almost mocking remark in his 'Reply to Criticisms' in P. A. Schilpp's *The Philosophy of Bertrand Russell*.

³⁸ Russell, *Problems*, p. 90.

If it is true [he wrote], as it seems to be, that the world cannot be described without the use of the word 'similar' or some equivalent [i.e. without the use of predicates], that seems to imply something about the world, though I do not know exactly what. This is the sense in which I still believe in universals (p. 688).

In this passage, Russell took the realist theory of universals to consist in repudiating two errors: the nominalist error that predicates can be dispensed with in a true description of the world; and what we may call the 'idealist' error that the repudiation of the nominalist error implies nothing about the world, because the truth of a description depends, not on how the world is, but on how thinkers think.

Even if I have interpreted Russell's theory correctly, I have not shown that it is true; for I have proved neither that predicates cannot be dispensed with in a true description of the world, nor that whether a description of the world is true depends on how the world is. However, Moore's and Russell's criticism of Berkeley and Hume, and the difficulties I have pointed out in the proposal to replace qualitative predicates by the names of discontinuous particulars, show how difficult it is to carry out the nominalist programme. As for what I have called 'the idealist error', like Moore and Russell I consider it to merit exposure rather than refutation.

A plain man might accept all my explanations, and yet object that the realist theory of universals, although true, is of little importance. In one respect, he would be right. The major questions of metaphysics are either about the substance of the world (e.g., what sorts of individuals does it contain? What are the space and time in which some, if not all, of them exist? Do they persist through time? Are they substances or processes? Are any or all of

them phenomenal?) or about mind and knowledge (e.g., what is a mind? How are minds related to bodies? Is thinking a physical process? How can we think of individuals, their kinds, and their properties? How is thinking related to perceiving?). The realist theory of universals does not lead to a solution of any of these problems. Its importance, like its character, is negative. If you reject it, that is, if you accept the nominalist or the idealist theories that conflict with it, you cannot avoid serious errors when you try to answer the major questions. Although negative, it is fundamental.³⁹

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³⁹ Although I doubt whether any of them will agree with most of my conclusions, this essay originated in conversations with my colleagues Herbert Hochberg, Reinhardt Grossmann, Henry B. Veatch and Roger C. Buck, and both in design and in particular points is heavily indebted to them.

MEMORY AND THE PAST

I

I begin by quoting some well-known remarks by Russell in *The Analysis of Mind*:

In investigating memory-beliefs, there are certain points which must be borne in mind. In the first place, everything constituting a memory-belief is happening now, not in that past time to which the belief is said to refer. It is not logically necessary to the existence of a memory-belief that the event remembered should have occurred, or even that the past should have existed at all. There is no logical impossibility in the hypothesis that the world sprang into being five minutes ago, exactly as it then was, with a population that "remembered" a wholly unreal past. There is no logically necessary connection between events at different times; therefore nothing that is happening now or will happen in the future can disprove the hypothesis that the world began five minutes ago. Hence the occurrences which are called knowledge of the past are logically independent of the past; they are wholly analyzable into present contents, which might, theoretically, be just what they are even if no past had existed.

I am not suggesting that the non-existence of the past should be entertained as a serious hypothesis. Like all sceptical hypotheses, it is logically tenable, but uninteresting. All that I am doing is to use its logical tenability as a help in the analysis of what occurs when we remember (London 1921, pp. 159-160).

We must not be misled by Russell's remark that his "hypothesis" is not to be taken seriously. He was perfectly serious when he said that there is no logical impossibility in it, that it is "logically tenable." In later books he ex-