CHAPTER VIII

EXISTENCE AND LOGICAL FORM

"Whatever may be the true nature of things and of the conceptions which we have of them . . . . , in the operations of reasoning they are dealt with as a number of separate entities or units," the English mathematician A.B. Kempe noted in 1885 in his 'Memoir on the Theory of Mathematical Form,' a neglected work much admired by Peirce, Royce, Whitehead, and Woodger, among others. "These units come under consideration under a variety of garbs— as material objects," Kempe continues,

intervals or periods of time, processes of thought, points, lines, statements, relationships, arrangements, algebraical expressions, operators, operations, etc., etc. - occupy various positions, and are otherwise variously circumstanced. . . . The units which we have to consider exhibit endless variety; thus we may have a material object dealt with as one unit, a quality it possesses as another, a statement about it as a third, and a position it occupies in space as a fourth. The task of specifying the units which are considered in an investigation may in some cases be one of considerable difficulty, and mistakes are likely to occur unless the operation is conducted with great care.

How modern this admirable passage is. Kempe’s "units" are the individuals constituting the universe of discourse or ontology of a given system. They may, of course, be subdivided into many kinds, and note how catholic the list is—material objects, times, mental processes, mathematical objects, linguistic objects, relationships, qualities, positions, circumstances. Whatever "the true nature of things" is, Kempe notes, these various kinds of entities presumably must be regarded as units so far as concerns "the operations of [our] reasoning." As philosophers we should be concerned surely with both the true nature of things, with the operations of our reasoning, and, above all perhaps, with the operations of our reasoning concerning the

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units that make up the true nature of things. Nothing less than a reasonably full account of this latter will satisfy a logico-metaphysician worth his salt. To give such an account of existence and logic is the task before us.

In following the new way of words in its most sophisticated form, but not neglecting the old way of things, we should assay first an account of the logical structure of the sentences employed to state our metaphysical view. And this has turned out of course to be enormously difficult. To succeed, no less than the whole totality of sentences needed must be subjected to exact logical analysis and logical forms or linguistic structures for them supplied. The variety of kinds of sentences needed, even just declarative ones, is very great, and logicians to date have been concerned with only a few of them of quite simple structure. A considerable expansion of the usual logic (first-order quantification theory with non-logical predicates) must take place before we can gain a suitable instrument for linguistic and metaphysical analysis.

The metaphysical form of a sentence should be distinguished from its deep structure or linguistic form. To give the latter, in principle, for all sentences, and to formulate the full theory concerning them, is, roughly, the task of structural linguistics. But this science is not concerned, at least not primarily or especially, with "the true nature of things." The structural linguist will do his job pretty much the same whatever metaphysical view he might be sympathetic to—should he happen to be sympathetic to any. Once the structural linguist has provided a form, the logico-metaphysician will wish to go a step further and study how that form may be made to harmonize with his conception of, and ways of talking about, the true nature of things. Whatever these latter may be, 'existence' will still be allowed to apply to the individuals or units arrived at at the earlier stage of analysis. They may not constitute the "really real," or the fundamental ground of all being, but still they should be allowed to exist, it would seem, in the way in which we ordinarily use that word. The metaphysician should not be allowed to flaunt ordinary usage in this respect.

To gain a system of sufficient breadth to provide logical forms for a very extensive set of sentences of natural language, let us proceed as follows. To the ordinary quantification theory with non-logical predicates, let us add the calculus of individuals (essentially Leśniewski's