

# Existence

1887-1888 | A Guess at the Riddle | W 6:209; CP 1.411

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The existence of things consists in their regular behavior.

1894 [c.] | The List of Categories: A Second Essay | CP 1.329

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It is to be noted that existence is an affair of blind force. "The very hyssop that grows on the wall exists in that chink because the whole universe could not prevent it." No law determines any atom to exist. Existence is presence in some experiential universe - whether the universe of material things now existing, or that of laws, or that of phenomena, or that of feelings - and this presence implies that each existing thing is in dynamical reaction with every other in that universe. Existence, therefore, is dyadic; though Being is monadic.

1896 [c.] | Logic of Mathematics: An attempt to develop my categories from within | CP 1.433

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There are different kinds of existence. There is the existence of physical actions, there is the existence of psychical volitions, there is the existence of all time, there is the existence of the present, there is the existence of material things, there is the existence of the creations of one of Shakespeare's plays, and, for aught we know, there may be another creation with a space and time of its own in which things may exist. Each kind of existence consists in having a place among the total collection of such a universe. It consists in being a second to any object in such universe taken as first. It is not time and space which produce this character. It is rather this character which for its realization calls for something like time and space.

1896 [c.] | Logic of Mathematics: An attempt to develop my categories from within | CP 1.461

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Existence, though brought about by dyadism, or opposition, as its proper determination, yet, when brought about, lies *abstractly and in itself considered*, within itself. It is numerical identity, which is a dyadic relation of a subject to itself of which nothing but an existent individual is capable. It is to be observed that numerical identity is not empty verbiage, as the identity of a quality with itself is, but is a positive fact.

1896 [c.] | Logic of Mathematics: An attempt to develop my categories from within | CP 1.457

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Existence is that mode of being which lies in opposition to another. To say that a table exists is to say

that it is hard, heavy, opaque, resonant, that is, produces immediate effects upon the senses, and also that it produces purely physical effects, attracts the earth (that is, is heavy), dynamically reacts against other things (that is, has inertia), resists pressure (that is, is elastic), has a definite capacity for heat, etc. To say there is a phantom table by the side of it incapable of affecting any senses or of producing any physical effects whatever, is to speak of an imaginary table. A thing without oppositions *ipso facto* does not exist.

1897-8 | Abstracts of 8 Lectures | NEM 4:135

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What then does the logic of events require? What is required, as an objectively hypothetic result, is that an arbitrary selection of them should crowd out the others. This is *existence*, the arbitrary, blind, reaction against all others of accidental combinations of qualities. [—]

But existence is continuous as far as the nature of the case admits. At every point of it, it reunites all qualities each in some degree. The thisness of it consists in its reacting upon the consciousness and crowding out other possibilities from so reacting.

It has often been said that the difference between the real world and a dream is that the real world coheres and is consistent. Undoubtedly this is the principal characteristic. The real events conspire as it were against the unreal ones, because there is not room for all. But observe that the logical analysis of this statement is that existence has its root in *pairing*. As soon as duality appears, as in contrast between the quality and the feeling of the quality, there is already an adumbration or prophetic type of real. But it is the composite of pairing in exclusion of another pair with the banding or pairing together of such exclusive pairs which produces *thisness*.

1901 | Individual | CP 3.613

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...whatever exists is individual, since existence (not reality) and individuality are essentially the same thing...

1902 | Minute Logic: Chapter IV. Ethics (Logic IV) | CP 6.349

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Existence [...] is a special mode of reality, which, whatever other characteristics it possesses, has that of being absolutely determinate.

1903 | Lowell Lectures on Some Topics of Logic Bearing on Questions Now Vexed. Lecture III [R] | MS [R] 460:13-14; CP 1.21

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The modern philosophers - one and all, unless Schelling be an exception - recognize but one mode of being, the being of an individual thing or fact, the being which consists in the object's crowding out a place for itself in the universe, so to speak, and reacting by brute force of fact, against all other things.

I call that Existence.

1904 | Firstness, Secondness, Thirdness, and the Reducibility of Fourthness [R] | MS [R] 914:6

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...P. holds, with Hegel, that existence consists in the blind reaction of the existent with the rest of the universe in which it exists...

1904 [c.] | Draft of Nichols Review [C] | CP 8.191

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The method prescribed in the maxim [of pragmatism] is to trace out in the imagination the conceivable practical consequences, - that is, the consequences for deliberate, self-controlled conduct, - of the affirmation or denial of the concept; and the assertion of the maxim is that herein lies the *whole* of the purport of the word, the *entire* concept. [—] This maxim once accepted, - intelligently accepted, in the light of the evidence of its truth, - speedily sweeps all metaphysical rubbish out of one's house. Each abstraction is either pronounced to be gibberish or is provided with a plain, practical definition. The general leaning of the results is toward what the idealists call the naïve, toward common sense, toward anthropomorphism. Thus, for example, the *real* becomes that which is such as it is regardless of what you or I or any of our folks may think it to be. The *external* becomes that element which is such as it is regardless of what somebody thinks, feels, or does, whether about that external object or about anything else. Accordingly, the external is necessarily real, while the real may or may not be external; nor is anything absolutely external nor absolutely devoid of externality. Every assertory proposition refers to something external, and even a dream withstands us sufficiently for one description to be true of it and another not. The *existent* is that which reacts against other things.

1904-10-12 | Letters to Lady Welby | CP 8.330

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The stone's actually falling is purely the affair of the stone and the earth at the time. This is a case of *reaction*. So is *existence* which is the mode of being of that which reacts with other things.

1905 | Letters to Mario Calderoni | MS [R] L67

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That mode of being which we call existence, the reaction of everything in the universe against every other, the crowding out of a place for itself, acting most on things near, less on things far, but brutally insisting on a place is *Secundan*. I say "brutally", because no law, so far as we know, makes any single object to exist. Law only determines in what way things shall behave, once they do exist.

This passage has been obtained from the transcription provided by the Peirce Study Group at the University of Navarra

1905 [c.] | Pragmatism, Prag [R] | CP 5.503

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...*reality* means a certain kind of non-dependence upon thought, and so is a cognitionary character, while *existence* means reaction with the environment, and so is a dynamic character...

1905 [c.] | The Basis of Pragmaticism | MS [R] 280:36-7

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...the term *existence* is properly a term, not of logic, but of metaphysics; and metaphysically understood, an object *exists*, if and only if, it reacts with every other existing object of the same universe. But in the definition of a logical proper name, *exist* is used in its logical sense, and means merely to be a singular of a logical universe, or universe of discourse.

1905-07 [c.] | Considerations concerning the Doctrine of Multitude | MS [R] 27:30

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...existence consists in the blind reactions between objects in one universe. No mere *law*, no “would-be”, can make that exertion of blind strength.

1906 | Prolegomena to an Apology for Pragmaticism | CP 4.541

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...existence means precisely the exercise of compulsion.

1906 [c.] | Answers to Questions about my Belief in God | MS [R] 645:2; CP 6.495

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I will also take the liberty of substituting “reality” for “existence.” This is perhaps overscrupulosity; but I myself always use *exist* in its strict philosophical sense of “react with the other like things in the environment.” Of course, in that sense, it would be fetishism to say that God “exists.”

1907 | The Fourth Curiosity | CP 6.343

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A brute force, as, for example, an existent particle [...] is nothing for itself; whatever it is, it is for what it is attracting and what it is repelling: its being is actual, consists in action, is dyadic. That is what I call *existence*.

1907 | The Fourth Curiosity | CP 6.335-336

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All to which the senses normally testify without room for critical reasoning is usually and properly said to be “experienced”; and all that is truly experienced is, in the epistemological sense, *existent*. [—]

In the metaphysical sense, *existence* is that mode of being which consists in the resultant genuine dyadic relation of a strict individual with all the other such individuals of the same universe.

1909 | Meaning Preface | MS [R] 637:27

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...Real is the proper contrary of Illusion, Delusion, or Figment, while to *exist* means, by virtue of the *ex* in *existere*, to act upon, to react against, the other things that exist in the psycho-physical universe.

1909 | Meaning Preface | MS [R] 637:28

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...existence [...] may be used in a wider or a narrower sense. In its wider sense it is a synonym for Actual, and is such Being as is both Definite and in all respects Determinate; while in its narrower sense it is a Substance, or substratum, which acts on, and is acted on by, the Universe of Substance.

From variant pages.