

Realism

1909 | Meaning Pragmatism [R] | CP 1.27 n.

It must not be imagined that any notable realist of the thirteenth or fourteenth century took the ground that any “universal” was what we in English should call a “thing,” as it seems that, in an earlier age, some realists and some nominalists, too, had done; though perhaps it is not quite certain that they did so, their writings being lost. Their very definition of a “universal” admits that it is of the same generic nature as a word, namely, is: “Quod natum optum est *praedicari* de pluribus.” Neither was it their doctrine that any “universal” *itself* is real. They might, indeed, some of them, think so; but their realism did not consist in *that* opinion, but in holding that what the word *signifies*, in contradistinction to what it can be truly said of, is real. Anybody may happen to opine that “the” is a real English word; but that will not constitute him a realist. But if he thinks that, whether the word “hard” itself be real or not, the property, the character, the predicate, *hardness*, is not invented by men, as the word is, but is really and truly in the hard things and is one in them all, as a description of habit, disposition, or behavior, *then* he *is* a realist.