

6 Prescott Hall
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My dear Royce,

In regard to the fallacy you think you see in my argument, I venture to guess it is that you suppose me to argue that because any one of a class of propositions is possible they are all possible together. But that is not exactly my reasoning. My principle is that if every one of a class of propositions may under all circumstances (with regard to the others) be true without conflicting with /2/ certain conditions, then all may be true at once without conflicting with those conditions.

How are you ever going to be able to say that all of a general class of propositions is possible unless you say that if each one is possible regardless of how the rest are, all are possible?

Here are a lot of dogs & there are a lot of boys. No dog can belong to two boys. Now let us imagine all possible distribution of the dogs among the boys. If among all these distributions there is not one which does not leave some boy dog-less, then in any one of these distributions any one of the pluralist body can deal out all his extra dogs to dogless /3/ boys but must still leave some boys dogless. This is so in every one of the distributions in regard to any one of the pluralist boys. Therefore, on the above principle, all the pluralist boys can deal out their extra dogs to the dogless boys and there will be different boys owning any two dogs and all dogs will be owned.

There are half a dozen other ways of stating the principle that occur to me, any one of which seems to be satisfactory. But let me begin by asking whether you can put your finger on a flaw here. Two things are said to be both contradictory at once (that there should be a dog for each boy & that there should be a boy for each dog). But I say that both cannot be contradictory at once. Then there seems to be a certain fairness in demanding /4/ that the precise nature of the two conditions, -- their nodi [problems], -- should be clearly pointed out.

very faithfully
C Peirce

Suppose that at the outset one boy owned all the dogs. Imagine all the possible ways in which he could provide dogless boys with dogs. If each of these leaves him with extra dogs on hand with which he could provide any dogless boy with a dog, then the different boys that he could supply with a dog each under all possible circumstances can each be so supplied, no matter what others are so supplied; and therefore all could be supplied, at once.