1. One over Many

According to Armstrong, the One over Many argument is the main argument in favor of realism. And it is a problem, he claims.

Armstrong argues that Devitt (and Quine) is faced with a dilemma. That is, he must accept one of two claims—both of which lead him back to the problem of the One over Many:

(i) If Devitt is happy to talk of a and b being of the same type (e.g., red), then he must explain what this sameness of type consists in. This shows that the problem of the One over Many is indeed a problem.

(ii) If Devitt gives up all talk of ‘sameness of type’, then he can’t hold his own position! Devitt claims that the conjunction of ‘a is red’ and ‘b is red’ captures the meaning of (1) from the last handout. But ‘is red’ is a predicate-type. So, Devitt cannot avoid type-talk and, as a result, is led back to the question of sameness of type—i.e., the problem of the One over Many.

2. Universals Again

Armstrong asks us to consider a statement that meets the following three conditions:

1. It makes ostensible reference to universals;
2. We consider it to be true;
3. It is impossible to find a satisfactory paraphrase of the statement in which this reference to universals is eliminated.

According to Armstrong, either side of the debate would allow that, if (1)-(3) are satisfied, we ought to include universals in our ontology. And, according to Armstrong, there are no satisfactory paraphrases. Consider some cases of abstract reference (like we dealt with on the first handout):

i. **Humility** is a virtue.

ii. **Redness** is a sign of **ripeness**.

Quine suggests that (ii) can be paraphrased as:

ii’ Red fruits are ripe.

But, if we are to take this example as our lead (which, as Armstrong notes, it is questionable whether we should), (i) is adequately paraphrased as:

i’ Humble persons are virtuous?

Armstrong thinks not. (i’) is compatible with there being humble persons who are not virtuous. As a matter of fact, (i’) is compatible with no humble persons being virtuous. **Question:** how is this so, exactly?

Much worse, according to Armstrong, (i’) is compatible with humility not being a virtue. **Question:** how so?

These are all **bad results**. Nominalism must be flawed, then.

3. Armstrong’s Non-Relational Realism

Still, Armstrong owes us an account of how his version of realism avoids the regress problem. We know that he doesn’t think that instantiation is a relation. Rather, particulars and universals are bound together in a “metaphysical unity”. But, what does this mean?
According to Armstrong, “bare particulars and uninstatiated universals are vicious abstractions from what may be called states of affairs” (168, my emphasis).

For Armstrong, the basic constituents of the universe are not particulars and universals. They are states of affairs: particulars-having-universals. Particulars and universals only exist within states of affairs. States of affairs are ontologically basic.

Particulars and universals cannot ‘live alone’. They require completion by an item from the corresponding ontological category. Because both universals and particulars are ‘incomplete’ entities, they are not capable of entering into relations. Hence, non-relational realism. Still, to say that they cannot ‘live alone’ is not to say that they do not exist. They are simply always together. If we think of there being any atomic constituents in the universe, then, they are the states of affairs.

The fundamental tie between particulars and universals is simply the ‘being together’ of particulars and universals in states of affairs. (There’s our “metaphysical unity”.)