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Philosophical Perplexity

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V.—PHILOSOPHICAL PERPLEXITY.

By JOHN WISDOM.

1. *Philosophical statements are really verbal.*—I have enquired elsewhere the real nature of philosophical requests such as “Can we know what is going on in someone else’s mind?” “Can we really know the causes of our sensations?” “What is a chair?”, and of philosophical answers such as “We can never really know the causes of our sensations,” “A chair is nothing but our sensations,” or “A chair is something over and above our sensations,” “The goodness of a man, of a picture, of an argument is something over and above our feelings of approval and over and above those features of the man, the picture or the argument, which ‘determine’ its goodness.” There is no time to repeat the enquiry here and I have to say dogmatically :

A philosophical answer is really a verbal recommendation in response to a request which is really a request with regard to a sentence which lacks a conventional use whether there occur situations which could conventionally be described by it. The description, for example “I know directly what is going on in Smith’s mind,” is not a jumble like “Cat how is up,” nor is it in conflict with conventional usage like “There are two white pieces and three black so there are six pieces on the board.” It just lacks a conventional usage. To call both “Can $2 + 3 = 6$?” and “Can I know what is going on in the minds of others?” nonsensical questions serves to bring out the likeness between them. But if one were to deny that there is a difference between them it would be an instance of that disrespect for other people which we may platitudinously say, so often damages philosophical work. A disrespect which blinds one to the puzzles they raise—in this instance the puzzle of the philosophical *can* which somehow seems between “Can $2 + 3$

make 6?" and "Can terriers catch hares?" Compare "Can persons be in two places at once?" "Do we have unconscious wishes?" "Can you play chess without the queen?" (W).¹

Even to say that "I know directly what is going on in Smith's mind" is *meaningless*, is dangerous, especially if you have just said that "There are two white pieces and three black so there are six" is meaningless.

It is not even safe to say that "I know directly what is going on in Smith's mind" lacks a use or meaning and leave it at that. For though it has no meaning it tends to have a meaning, like "All whifley was the tulgey wood," though of course it is unlike this last example in the important respect that it does not lack a meaning because its constituent words are unknown. Nor does it lack meaning because its syntax is unknown. This makes it puzzling and makes it resemble the logical case. It is clear that for these reasons it would be even more illuminating and more misleading to say that "God exists" and "Men are immortal" are meaningless—especially just after saying $2 + 3 = 6$ is meaningless.

2. *Philosophical statements are not verbal.*—I have said that philosophers' questions and theories are really verbal. But if you like we will not say this or we will say also the contradictory.² For of course (a) philosophic statements usually have not a verbal air. On the contrary they have a non-verbal air like "A fox's brush is really a tail." (W). And their non-verbal air is not an unimportant feature of them because on it very much depends their puzzlingness.

¹ Wittgenstein has not read this over-compressed paper and I warn people against supposing it a closer imitation of Wittgenstein than it is. On the other hand I can hardly exaggerate the debt I owe to him and how much of the good in this work is his—not only in the treatment of this philosophical difficulty and that but in the matter of how to do philosophy. As far as possible I have put a W against examples I owe to him. It must not be assumed that they are used in a way he would approve.

² I do not wish to suggest that Wittgenstein would approve *this* sort of talk nor that he would disapprove it.

And (b) though really verbal a philosopher's statements have not a merely verbal point. Unlike many statements the primary point of uttering them is not to convey the information they convey but to do something else. Consequently all attempts to explain their peculiar status by explaining the peculiar nature of their subject matter, fail. For their subject matter is not peculiar; their truth or falsity, in so far as these are appropriate to them at all, is fixed by facts about words, *e.g.*, Goodness is not approval by the majority, because "The majority, sometimes approve what is bad" is not self-contradictory. But the point of philosophical statements is peculiar. It is the illumination of the ultimate structure of facts, *i.e.*, the relations between different categories of being or (we must be in the mode) the relations between different sub-languages within a language.

The puzzles of philosophical propositions, of fictional propositions, general propositions, negative propositions, propositions about the future, propositions about the past, even the puzzle about psychological propositions, is not removed by explaining the peculiar nature of the subject matter of the sentences in which they are expressed but by reflecting upon the peculiar manner in which those sentences work. Mnemonic slogan: It's not the stuff, it's the style that stupefies.

3. *The divergence of point from content.*—The divergence of point from content which is found in necessary and near necessary propositions can be explained here only briefly.

Suppose a decoder, though still utterly ignorant of the meaning of both of two expressions "monarchy" and "set of persons ruled by the same king," has after prolonged investigation come to the conclusion that they mean the same in a certain code. He will say to his fellow decoder "'Monarchy' means the same as 'set of persons ruled by the same king'." The translator, and the philosopher also, may say the same. They all use the same form of words because what they say is the same. But the point of what they say is very different. The decoder's point can be got by anyone who knows the meaning of "means the same

as” ; the translator does what he wants with the sentence only if his hearer knows the meaning either of “ monarchy ” or of “ set of persons ruled by the same king ” ; the philosopher does what he wants with the sentence only if his hearer already uses, *i.e.* understands, *i.e.* knows the meaning of, *both* “ monarchy ” and “ set of persons ruled by the same king.” This condition makes the case of the philosopher curious ; for it states that he can do what he wants with the sentence only if his hearer already knows what he is telling him. But this is true in the required sense. The philosopher draws attention to what is already known with a view to giving insight into the structure of what “ monarchy ” say means, *i.e.* bringing into connexion the sphere in which the one expression is used with that in which the other is. Compare the man who says “ I should have the change from a £1 after spending five shillings on a book, one and sevenpence halfpenny on stamps and two and twopence halfpenny at the grocer’s, so I should have eleven shillings and twopence.” This is Moore’s example and I beg attention for it. It is tremendously illuminating in the *necessary synthetic* group of puzzles and in a far, far wider field than this, because it illuminates the use of “ means the same ”—a phrase which stops so many. When on first going to France I learn the exchange rate for francs do I know the meaning of “ worth 100 francs ” or do I come to know this after staying three weeks ?

The philosopher is apt to say “ A monarchy is a set of people under a king ” rather than “ ‘ Monarchy ’ means the same as ‘ a set of people under a king. ’ ” By using the former sentence he intimates his point. Now shall we say “ A monarchy is a set of people under a king ” means the same as “ ‘ Monarchy ’ means ‘ a set of people under a king ’ ” or not ? My answer is “ Say which you like. But if you say ‘ Yes ’ be careful, etc., and if you say ‘ No ’ be careful, etc.”

If we decide to describe the difference between the two as a difference of meaning we must not say that the difference in meaning is a difference of subjective intension, nor that it is a difference of emotional significance merely. For

these are not adequate accounts of the difference between the two. And not an adequate account of the difference between the use of "3 plus 5 plus 8" and the use of "16."

4. *Philosophy, truth, misleadingness and illumination.*—Now that we have seen that the philosopher's intention is to bring out relations between categories of being, between spheres of language, we shall be more prepared to allow that false statements about the usage of words may be philosophically very useful and even adequate provided their falsity is realized and there is no confusion about what they are being used for.

The nature of the philosopher's intention explains how it is that one may call a philosophical theory such as *A proposition is a sentence*, certainly false, and yet feel that to leave one's criticism at that is to attend to the letter and not the spirit of the theory criticized.

The nature of the philosopher's intention explains also how it is that one can not say of a philosopher's theory that it is false when he introduces it in his own terminology, while yet one often feels that such theories are somehow philosophically bad. Thus (W) suppose the word "sense-datum" has never been used before and that someone says "When Jones sees a rabbit, has an illusion of a rabbit, has an hallucination of a rabbit, dreams of a rabbit, he has a sense-datum of a rabbit." One can not protest that this is false, since no statement has been made, only a recommendation. But the recommendation purports to be enlightening and one may well protest if it is, on the contrary, misleading. This particular recommendation is liable to suggest that sense data are a special sort of thing, *extremely* thin coloured pictures, and thus liable to raise puzzles, such as "How are sense-data related to material things?" We can abuse a philosopher as much as we like if we use the right adjectives. *Good is an ultimate predicate* is useless, *A proposition is a subsistent entity* is useless and pretentious,¹ *We can never know the real cause of our sensations* is

¹ Neither of these theories are entirely useless. They are for one thing good antitheses to the naturalistic error.

misleading. And we can praise him although he speaks falsely or even nonsensically. People have considered whether it is true that "an event is a pattern of complete, particular, specific facts and a complete, particular, specific fact is an infinitely thin slice out of an event."²

You may say "How absurd of them since the statement is nonsense." Certainly the statement is nonsense and so, if you like, it was absurd of them. But it was better than saying it was nonsense and ignoring it. Suppose I say "The thoroughbred is a neurotic woman on four legs." This is nonsense, but it is not negligible.³

5. *Provocation and Pacification.*—So far, however, little or nothing has been said to explain what sort of things make a philosophical statement misleading and what make it illuminating. Only a short answer is possible here.

In the first place there is the misleading feature which nearly all philosophical statements have—a non-verbal air. The philosopher *laments* that we can never really know what is going on in someone else's mind, that we can never really know the causes of our sensations, that inductive conclusions are never really justified. He laments these things as if he can dream of another world where we can see our friends and tables face to face, where scientists can justify their conclusions and terriers can catch hares. This enormous source of confusion we can not study now.

Secondly philosophical statements mislead when by the use of like expressions for different cases, they suggest likenesses which do not exist, and by the use of different expressions for like cases, they conceal likenesses which do exist.

Philosophical theories are illuminating in a corresponding way, namely when they suggest or draw attention to a terminology which reveals likenesses and differences concealed by ordinary language.

² *Problems of Mind and Matter*, p. 32.

³ The matter can be put in terms of truth and falsehood. A philosophical theory involves an explicit claim, an equation, and an implicit claim that the equation is not misleading and is illuminating. The explicit claim may be false and the implicit true on one or both counts, or *vice versa*.

I want to stress the philosophical usefulness of metaphysical surprises such as "We can never really know the causes of our sensations," "We can never know the real causes of our sensations," "Inductive conclusions are never really justified," "The laws of mathematics are really rules of grammar." I believe that too much fun has been made of philosophers who say this kind of thing. Remember what Moore said about 1924—words to this effect: When a philosopher says that really something is so we are warned that what he says is really so is not so really. With horrible ingenuity Moore can rapidly reduce any metaphysical theory to a ridiculous story. For he is right, they are false—only there *is* good in them, poor things. This shall be explained.

Wittgenstein allows importance to these theories. They are for him expressions of deep-seated puzzlement. It is an important part of the treatment of a puzzle to develop it to the full.

But this is not enough. Wittgenstein allows that the theories are philosophically important not merely as specimens of the whoppers philosophers can tell. But he too much represents them as merely symptoms of linguistic confusion. I wish to represent them as also symptoms of linguistic penetration.

Wittgenstein gives the impression that philosophical remarks either express puzzlement or if not are remarks such as Wittgenstein himself makes with a view to curing puzzlement.

This naturally gives rise to the question "If the proper business of philosophy is the removal of puzzlement, would it not be best done by giving a drug to the patient which made him entirely forget the statements puzzling him or at least lose his uneasy feelings?"

This of course will never do. And what we say about the philosopher's purposes must be changed so that it shall no longer seem to lead to such an absurd idea.

The philosopher's purpose is to gain a grasp of the relations between different categories of being, between expressions used in *different manners*.² He is confused about what he

See 'different level' in Proc. Aris. Soc. Supp. Vol. XIII p. 66.

wants and he is confused by the relations between the expressions, so he is very often puzzled. But only such treatment of the puzzles as increases a grasp of the relations between different categories of being is philosophical. And not all the philosopher's statements are either complaints of puzzlement or pacificatory. Philosophers who say "We never know the real causes of our sensations," "Only my sensations are real," often bring out these "theories" with an air of triumph (with a misleading air of empirical discovery indeed). True the things they say are symptoms of confusion even if they are not of puzzlement. But they are also symptoms of penetration, of noticing what is not usually noticed. Philosophical progress has two aspects, provocation and pacification.

6. *Example of the pointless doubts: (a) how misleading they are.*—Let us consider this with examples. Take first the philosopher who says to the plain man: "We do not really know that there is cheese on the table; for might not all the sense evidence suggest this and yet there be no cheese. Remember what happened at Madame Tussaud's."

Our assertion with confidence that there is cheese on the table or our assertion that we know that there is cheese on the table raises at least these three puzzles: (1) *the categorial puzzle*, which finds expression in "We ought not to speak of a cheese (of the soul) but of bundles of sense data"; (2) *the knowledge puzzle*, which finds expression in "We ought not to say 'I know there is cheese on the table' but 'Very, very probably there is cheese on the table'"; (3) *the justification puzzle*, which finds expression in "Empirical conclusions are not really justified."

We can not here speak of all these. We are considering (2) the *knowledge* or *pointless doubt* puzzle. There are a group of pointless doubt puzzles including the following: "We don't really know that there is cheese on the table"; "We ought to say only 'It is probable that there is cheese on the table'"; "It is improper to say 'I know that there is cheese on the table'"; "It would be well if we prefixed every remark about material things with 'probably'."

All these suggestions are misleading—they all suggest that it has been discovered that we have been over-confident about material things. They should have slightly different treatment but I have only just *realized* this multiplicity. Let us take the puzzle in the crude form “ Couldn't there be no cheese here although all the sense-evidence suggests there is ? ”

Wittgenstein explains that this sentence though of the verbal form we associate with doubt and though it may be uttered with the intonation, expression and gestures we associate with doubt, is not *used* as a sentence expressing doubt. To utter it is to raise a pseudo doubt. People say “ We ought not to say ‘ There *is* cheese on the table ’ but ‘ Probably there is cheese on the table ’ or ‘ The sense-evidence suggests ever so strongly that there is cheese on the table. ’ For whatever we do we never observe a cheese, we have to rely upon our senses. And we may be suffering from a joint hallucination of all the senses or a consistent dream. Remember how people are deceived at Madame Tussaud's. And we may see and touch cheesy patches, smell cheesy smells, obtain cheesy pictures from cameras and cheesy reactions from mice and yet the stuff tomorrow be soap in our mouth. And then tomorrow we shall say ‘ Yesterday we were mistaken. ’ So our ‘ knowledge ’ today that there is cheese here is not real knowledge. Every one ought really to whisper ‘ Possibly hallucinatory ’ after *every* sentence about material things however much he has made sure that he is right.”

What those who recommend this should notice is how not merely unusual but pointless a use of words they recommend. As language is at present used, I raise my hungry friends' hopes if I say “ There is cheese on the table,” and I damp them if I add “ unless it is hallucinatory.” But this additional clause has its effect only because I do *not always* use it. If a parent adds “ be very careful ” to everything he says to a child he will soon find his warnings ineffective. If I prefix every statement about material things with “ probably ”, this doubt-raiser will soon cease to frighten hungry friends, that is cease to function as it now does.

Consequently in order to mark those differences which I now mark by saying in one case "Probably that is cheese on the table" and in another case "I know that is cheese on the table," I shall have to introduce a new notation, one to do the work the old did. "To do the work the old did"!; that is, to claim what I formerly claimed with "know"!

It may now be said "In the ordinary use of 'know' we may know that that is cheese on the table, but this knowledge is not real knowledge."

This gives the misleading idea that the philosopher has envisaged some kind of knowing which our failing faculties prevent us from attaining. Terriers can not catch hares, men can not really know the causes of their sensations. Nothing of the kind, however. For when we say to the philosopher "Go on, describe this real knowledge, tell us what stamp of man you want and we will see if we can buy or breed one" then he can never tell us.

It may now be said, "No, no, the point is this: There is some inclination to use¹ 'know' strictly so that we do not know that insulin cures diabetes, that the sun will rise tomorrow, because these propositions are only probable inferences from what we have observed. There is some inclination to use 'know' only when what is known is observed or is entailed by something known for certain. Now you do not know in this sense that you will not have to correct yourself tomorrow and say "I was mistaken yesterday, that was not cheese," since nothing you know for certain today is incompatible with this. And if you do not know but what you may have to correct yourself tomorrow you do not know that you are right today."

But what is meant by "certain"? I should claim to know for certain that that is cheese on the table now. And as the objector rightly points out this entails that I shall not have to correct myself tomorrow. I therefore know in the strict sense that I shall not have to correct myself tomorrow.

¹ Another form would be: 'It is proper' as opposed to 'usual' to use 'know' so that, etc.

It will be said that it is not *absolutely* certain that that is cheese on the table. But I should reply that it is.

It will be said that it is not *senseless to doubt* that that is cheese on the table, not even after the most exhaustive tests. I should reply that it is.

But, of course, by now I see what the sceptic is driving at. It is not senseless to doubt that that is cheese on the table, in the sense in which it is senseless to doubt "I am in pain," "I hear a buzzing"—not even after the most exhaustive tests—indeed the exhaustive tests make no difference to this. For, in this sense, it is not senseless to doubt that that is cheese on the table provided only that "He says that that is cheese but perhaps he is mistaken" has a use in English. You see, "He says he is in pain, but perhaps he is mistaken" has no use in English. Hence we may be "absolutely certain" that he is not mistaken¹ about his pain, in the very special sense that "He is mistaken" makes no sense in this connexion.

Thus the sceptics pretended doubts amount to pointing out that, unlike statements descriptive of sensations, statements about material things make sense with "perhaps he is mistaken." And the sceptic proposes to mark this by an extraordinary use of "know" and "probably." He proposes that we should not say that we know that that is cheese on the table unless it is entailed by statements with regard to which a doubt is not merely out of the question but unintelligible, *i.e.*, such that where S is P is one of them then "S is P unless I am mistaken" raises a titter like "I am in pain unless I am mistaken." "That is cheese on the table" is not such a statement and so of course it does not follow from such statements—otherwise a doubt with regard to it would be unintelligible, *i.e.*, it would be absolutely certain in the strict, philosophic sense.

The sceptic's doubts become then a recommendation to use "know" only with statements about sense-experience

¹ Of course he may be *lying*.

and mathematics and to prefix *all* other statements with "probably."¹

This is very different talk and much less misleading. But still it is misleading unless accompanied by the explanation given above of the astounding certainty of statements about sense-experience. Even with the explanation the suggestion is highly dangerous involving as it does a new and *manner* indictating use of the familiar words 'know' and 'probable.' Without the explanation it suggests that there is a difference in degree of certainty between statements about material things and statements about sense data, a difference in certainty dependent upon their subject matter, in a sense analogous to that in which we say "I am certain about what happened in Hyde Park—I was there—but I am not certain about what happened in Spain—I was not an eye-witness." This suggests that I know what it would be like to be an eye-witness of cheese, but am in fact unfortunately obliged to *rely upon the testimony of my senses*.

Now the difference between statements about sense-experiences and statements about material things is not at all like this. The difference is not one of subject-matter (stuff) but of a different manner of use (style). And statements about sense-experiences are certain only because it makes no sense to say that they may be wrong.² Notice the connexion between "He says he is in pain but I think he is mistaken" and "He cries 'Ow!' but I think he is mistaken." The difference between sense-statements and thing-statements cannot be adequately explained here. And consequently the full misleadingness of such a use of "probably" as is recommended in what we may call the last form of the pseudo doubt, cannot be adequately explained here.

¹ Compare the tendency to use 'what ought to be done' irrevocably. People who do this lament thus: "What one ought to do is always for the best, but unfortunately we never know what we really ought to do." Others lament thus: "We can know what we ought to do but unfortunately this does not always turn out for the best."

² This, I realize, stands very much in need of pacifying explanation.

But I hope I have said enough to bring out in good measure the misleadingness of saying such things as "O dear, we can never know the causes of our sensations," and even "It would be philosophically excellent to put 'probably' before all statements about material things."

7. *Example of the pointless doubts: (b) how importantly illuminating they are.*—But though the recommended use of "probably" would be pointless as a cautionary clause and would thus be extremely misleading, the recommendation to use it so is not pointless, is not prompted wholly by confusion, but partly by penetration. The philosopher says to the plain man "You do not really know that that is a cheese on the table." We have pacified those who are opposed to this statement by bringing out the sources of their reluctance to agree with it. But the philosopher must pacify everyone and we must now pacify those philosophers who are pleased with it and complete the pacification of those who are puzzled by it, being tempted to deny it and at the same time tempted to assert it. What is the point behind the misleading statement "We can never know statements about material things"? The answer has been given already by the method of forcing reformulations. But we may now approach the answer by a different route. Under what circumstances are such things usually said?

It is when after considering hallucinations, illusions, etc., one wishes to emphasize (1) the likeness between such cases and cases in which there was "something really there," and to emphasize the continuity between (a) cases in which one says "I think that is cheese on the table," "I believe that is a real dagger," "Probably that is a snake, not a branch" and (b) cases in which one says "That *is* cheese on the table," "I found that it *was* a snake"; and to emphasize (2) the unlikeness between even so well assured a statement as "This is my thumb" and such a statement as "I see a pinkish patch," "I feel a softish patch," "I am in pain."

It is not at all easy at first to see how in being revocable and correctable by others the most assured statement about

a thing is more like the most precarious statement about another thing than it is to a statement descriptive of one's sensations. Ordinary language conceals these things because in ordinary language we speak both of some favourable material-thing-statements and of statements about our sensations, as certain, while we speak of other statements about material things as merely probable. This leads to pseudo-laments about the haunting uncertainty of even the best material thing-statements and pseudo-congratulations upon the astounding certainty of statements about our sensations.

We are all, when our attention is drawn to those cases so often described in which it looks for all the world as if our friend is standing in the room although he is dying two thousand miles away, or in which we think we see a banana and it turns out to be a reflection in a greengrocer's mirror, we are all, in such cases, inclined to say "Strictly we ought always to add" unless it is a queer looking stick and not a banana, or a reflection or an hallucination or an illusion."¹ We do not stop to consider what would happen if we did always add this. Horrified at the deceptions our senses have practised upon us we feel we must abuse them somehow and so we say that they never *prove* anything, that we never *know* what is based on them.

The continuity and the difference which is concealed by ordinary language would be no longer concealed but marked if we used "probably" in the way recommended. But what an unfortunate way of obtaining this result! And in what a misleading way was the recommendation made! I do not really know that this is a thumb. The huntsman's coat is not really pink. A fox's brush is really a tail. (W).

8. *Other Examples.*—Now many other examples should be given. "What is a mathematical proposition?" "Do inductive arguments give any probability to their conclusions?" These other puzzles should be re-created, the temptations to give the answers which have been given

¹ Then every statement would be tautologous but *absolutely* certain!

should be re-created. But this cannot be done in this paper. Without bringing up the puzzles and temptations the following accounts are half dead, but I offer them for what they are worth.

Take "The laws of mathematics and logic are really rules of grammar". With this instructive incantation people puzzle themselves to death. Is it or isn't it true? And if false what amendment will give us the truth? If not rules then what? The answer is "They are what they are, etc. Is a donkey a sort of horse but with *very* long ears?" People are puzzled because of course it isn't true that the laws of mathematics are rules of grammar (more obvious still that they are not commands). And yet they cannot bring themselves to lose the advantages of this falsehood. For this falsehood draws attention to (1) an unlikeness and (2) a likeness concealed by ordinary language; (1) an unlikeness to the laws of hydraulics and an unlikeness in this unlikeness to the unlikeness between the laws of hydraulics and those of aeronautics; for it is an unlikeness not of subject-matter but of manner of functioning—and (2) a likeness but not an exact likeness to the functioning of rules.

Again "Inductive arguments do not really give any probability to their conclusions" gives the misleading idea that the scientists have been found out at last, that our confidence in our most careful research workers is entirely misplaced, their arguments being no better than those of the savage. Nothing of the kind of course. What is at the back of this lament is this: In ordinary language we speak of Dr. So and so's experiment with a group of 100 children whose teeth improved after six months extra calcium as having very much increased the probability of the proposition that bad teeth are due to calcium deficiency. We also say that my having drawn 90 white balls from a bag which we know to contain 100 balls, each either white or black, has very much increased the probability of the proposition that all the balls in that bag are white. We even speak numerically in connexion with empirical probability—we not only argue a priori and say "There

were six runners, there are now only five, we still know nothing of any of them, so it is now 4-1 against the dog from trap 1" but we also argue empirically and say "It was 5-1 against the dog from trap 1; but I hear a rumour that each of the others has been provided with a cup of tea, and I think we may now take 4-1 against him."

The similarity in the way we speak of these cases leads us when asked how empirical arguments give probability to their conclusions to try to assimilate them to the formal cases, balls in bags, dice, etc. But when this attempt is made it begins to appear that the investigation of nature is much less like the investigation of balls in a bag than one is at first apt to think.

At the same time is revealed the shocking continuity between the scientist's arguments by the method of difference and the savage's post hoc ergo propter hoc,¹ between the method of agreement and the reflexes of rats, and struck by the difference and the continuity and how they are concealed by ordinary language we provoke attention to them with "Even the best established scientific results are nothing but specially successful superstitions." We say this although we have made no shocking discovery of scientists faking figures, although the scientist's reasons for his belief in insulin still differ from my landlady's reasons for belief in Cure-all, in exactly the way which, in the ordinary use of language, makes us call the one belief scientifically grounded and the other a superstition. Similarly we may say, having seen a butterfly die or been told the age of an oak "The strongest of us have really only a short time to live," We say this although we have made no discovery of impending disaster, or we may say "Man is nothing but a complicated parasite" when we watch the arrival of the 9.5 at the Metropolis.

¹ See Keynes *A Treatise on Probability*.

CONCLUSION.

The plain man has come to expect of philosophers paradoxical, provoking statements such as "We can never really know the causes of our sensations," "Causation is really nothing more than regular sequence," "Inductive conclusions are really nothing but lucky superstitions," "The laws of logic are ultimately rules of grammar." Philosophers know that the statements are provocative; this is why they so often put in some apologetic word such as "really" or "ultimately."

These untruths persist. This is not merely because they are symptoms of an intractible disorder but because they are philosophically useful. The curious thing is that their philosophical usefulness depends upon their paradoxicalness and thus upon their falsehood. They are false because they are needed where ordinary language fails though it must not be supposed that they are or should be in some perfect language. They are in a language not free from the same sort of defects as those from the effects of which they are designed to free us.

To invent a special word to describe the status of, for example, mathematical propositions would do no good. There is a phrase already, "necessary yet synthetic." It is, of course, perfectly true that mathematical propositions are "necessary synthetics"—it should be true since the expression was made to measure. True but no good. We are as much inclined to ask "What are necessary synthetic propositions?" as we were to ask "What are mathematical propositions?" "What is an instinct?" An innate disposition certainly. But philosophically that answer is useless. No—what is wanted is some device for bringing out the relations between the manner in which mathematical (or dispositional) sentences are used and the manners in which others are used—so as to give their place on the language map. This cannot be done with a plain answer, a single statement. We may try opposite falsehoods or we may say, "Be careful that this expression "mathematical

proposition" does not suggest certain analogies at the expense of others. Do not let it make you think that the difference between mathematical propositions and others is like that between the propositions of hydraulics and those of aeronautics. Do notice how like to rules, etc., and yet, etc."

If you will excuse a suspicion of smartness : Philosophers should be continually trying to say what cannot be said.
