Ideas of a Logically Perfect Language in Analytic Philosophy

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I Metaphysics and Anti-Metaphysics

There is a recurrent opposition within analytic philosophy between those who put forward a metaphysical view and those who oppose all metaphysics, in some cases dismissing it as nonsensical. Among those who employ the tools of modern logic, and related techniques of philosophical analysis, some have sought to use them to discover the true nature of reality; others to use them to banish the idea that there is such a thing to be discovered. Remarkably enough, in the case of two central figures in early analytic philosophy—Frege and Wittgenstein—recent commentators differ as to whether we should read them as metaphysical or anti-metaphysical.

The idea of a logically perfect language, so I shall claim, goes along with the idea of philosophical analysis. In the interest of time, I shall not discuss the disputed cases, or the anti-metaphysical uses of the idea (except for brief mention of Carnap). My focus here, then, is on metaphysical uses of the idea of a logically perfect language, and analogous ideas.

To begin with, I shall discuss that idea as it occurs in Russell's work. This will give us a paradigm with which the work of other philosophers may be usefully compared. I will then briefly consider Carnap, who, in his mature work, is *not* usefully thought of as accepting anything analogous to the idea of a logically perfect language. Seeing why not will help to clarify the idea. It will also prepare the way for a discussion of Quine; in his work, I shall argue, some version of the idea does play an important role. Finally, I will very briefly consider the revival of metaphysics in the wake of Quine's rejection of Logical Positivism. Here too, I shall claim, some analogous idea is often presupposed.

II Russell

We can get a good sense of the idea of a logically perfect language, as I am interested in it here, by looking at a passage from the second of Russell's "Lectures on the Philosophy of Logical Atomism":

> In a logically perfect language the words in a proposition would correspond one by one with the components of the corresponding fact... In a logically perfect language, there will be one word and no more for every simple object, and everything that is not simple will be expressed by a combination of words.... A language of that sort... will show at a glance the logical structure of the facts asserted or denied. The language that is set forth in *Principia Mathematica*.... aims at being that sort of language that, if you add a vocabulary, would be a logically perfect language. Actual languages are not logically perfect in this sense, and they cannot possibly be, if they are to serve the purposes of daily life.　　(*CP*8, p. 176.)

Russell's logically perfect language thus would show us something about the ontology of the world. It has, as I shall say, *metaphysical significance*. The justification for thinking that there is a language of this kind is not clear from this passage, and I shall revert to it shortly. But it is clear that every term in that language corresponds to an entity in the world. Every sentence of that language, if true, corresponds to a fact, and the structure of the sentence shows the structure of the corresponding (putative) fact.

Something of the importance of this can be seen from the example of the reduction of arithmetic to the theory of propositional functions. If we accept the truths of arithmetic, what entities are we thereby committed to accepting as really existing? The answer to this question is

to be found not by taking the sentences of arithmetic as they stand, in ordinary language, but by analyzing them. The point is quite general: almost every sentence, taken as it stands, as it is used in ordinary language, is misleading; taking it at face value gives the wrong account of what we would be committed to if we asserted it. Only when it is fully analyzed—that is, transformed it into a sentence in the logically perfect language—can we read off from it what fact, what entities standing in what relations, would make it true.

The passage quoted indicates two other noteworthy features Russell's of logically perfect language. One is that the logically perfect language will be quite different from the ordinary language which serves "the purposes of daily life".

Another feature is the emphasis on *logic*, which makes the name "logically perfect language" appropriate. It is perhaps only with modern logic that we can formulate a language which is both simple enough and powerful enough to make it plausible that the nature of the world can be read off from the language.

The emphasis on logic also plays a crucial role in making the idea of a logically perfect language plausible. Paraphrasing sentences into the syntax of logic reveals and makes perspicuous many inferential connections which we accept independent of the paraphrase; it makes those connections a matter of an antecedently well-understood logic. This fact, I think, plays a significant role in making it seem as the paraphrased version does indeed capture what the ordinary sentence *really says*.

Is this enough to justify the idea of a logically perfect language? Given that the language is meant to have metaphysical significance then it may seem as if it is not. Certainly Russell himself would not think it was a sufficient answer. Why should the fact that a particular language

best represents our inferential practices guarantee that it accurately reflects the world? The justification that Russell in fact has is bound up with a view of how we can know anything at all about the world; discussing it will require an excursus into his epistemology.

Our only contact with the world, in Russell's view, is through a direct and immediate cognitive relation, which he calls "acquaintance". This is an idea which assumes very great importance in his thought. In *Problems of Philosophy*, for example, he says: "The faculty of being acquainted with things other than itself is the main characteristic of a mind." He continues: "Acquaintance with objects essentially consists in a relation between the mind and something other than the mind; it is this that constitutes the mind's power of knowing things." All knowledge rests on acquaintance, which he takes to be a direct and immediate cognitive relation between the mind and certain entities outside the mind (as well as some entities inside the mind). He takes this relation as unproblematic and as fundamental; there is no room for the question *how* the mind is acquainted with certain things—it just is.

Acquaintance, on Russell's account, is thus the only point of contact between the mind and things outside it. It is thus not only his answer to the question how we can have *true* beliefs about the world; it is also his answer to the prior question: how we can have any beliefs which are *about the world* at all. In other words, it is the basis for his views about meaning and understanding as well as about knowledge. How can my words or my thoughts reach out beyond my own mind to the world, and make claims which are true or false according as the world is this way or that way? Russell's answer is that this is possible only because I am acquainted with entities outside my mind. This enables me to use certain psychic elements to stand for those

entities, and I can then assemble the psychic elements into thoughts. Our sentences express thoughts; a sentence in the logically perfect language mirrors the structure of the thought it expresses and also mirrors the structure of the fact which makes the thought true, if it is true.

This is the point of what I shall call "The Principle of Acquaintance", which Russell sets out in *Problems of Philosophy* and elsewhere (p. 58): "*Every proposition which we can understand must be composed wholly of constituents with which we are acquainted*." (the italics are in both originals). He calls this "the fundamental principle in the analysis". What Russell means by this it is not that we must be acquainted with the *words* in every sentence that we understand but rather that we must be acquainted with the entities for which those words stand. Of course this does not hold for sentences in general; but it does hold for sentences of the logically perfect language (which might, indeed, be thought of as that language for which this principle holds).

The Principle of Acquaintance is thus the requirement that any sentence that a given person can understand must express—and in principle be analyzable into—a sentence of that person's logically perfect language, i.e. a sentence in which every term names an object with which the person is acquainted. This is a principle about *meaningfulness*. It says that a sentence, as uttered by me, say, is only meaningful if it expresses a sentence of my logically perfect language. Otherwise the sentence is *nonsense*.

How stringent is the requirement embodied in the Principle of Acquaintance? It depends, of course, on what entities you think we can be acquainted with. Russell's views on this change over time, but by the time of "On Denoting" he rejects the idea that we can be acquainted either with physical objects or with the minds of other people—in short with most of the things that we

think we usually talk about. He continues to think, however, that we can be acquainted with many abstract objects, such as those involved in logic.

Given this view, the Principle of Acquaintance imposes very severe constraints indeed. Almost no sentences in our ordinary language, other than those about logic, will obey these constraints. I understand the sentence "Socrates was snub-nosed" but I am not acquainted with Socrates. This shows that the sentence is not fully analyzed, is not a sentence in the logically perfect language. It is for this reason that the Principle of Acquaintance is fundamental to analysis: it shows you when further analysis is needed, and when you have completed the process and attained a fully analyzed sentence—a sentence in the logically perfect language. My sentence, "Socrates is snub-nosed", expresses a thought which would be accurately expressed by the fully analyzed sentence, if I could but produce it. The fully analyzed sentence, or the thought which it would accurately express, is what stands behind our ordinary language, so to speak, and underpins the meaningfulness of its sentences. Russell's account of the logically perfect language is thus also an account of what makes what makes language quite generally function as it does.

So Russell's idea of a logically perfect language is bound up with an account of what makes language possible at all. It is for that reason that his logically perfect language goes along with an idea of meaningfulness: only what is expressible in the (given person's) logically perfect language is meaningful (for that person); anything else is nonsense.

III Carnap and Quine

Carnap is a leading exponent of the idea that the use of artificial languages will bring

philosophical clarity and insight to whatever subject is under discussion. He is not, however, an advocate of the idea of a logically perfect language. That idea conflicts with a central principle of Carnap's mature thought, namely what he sometimes calls "the Principle of Tolerance":

"In logic there are no morals. Everyone is at liberty to build up his own logic, i.e. his own form of language, as he wishes. All that is required of him is that, if he wishes to discuss it, he must state his methods clearly, and give syntactical rules instead of philosophical arguments." (*LSL*, p. 52).

We may, of course, find a given language more or less suitable for a given purpose than some other language. But of that concerns the idea that one language may be better than another *for a certain purpose*. There is no room for the idea of a uniquely correct (or perfect) language, hence no room for "philosophical arguments" to establish that one language is the correct one. (Note that Carnap does *not* say that we are to give syntactical rules *as well as* philosophical arguments; he holds that philosophical arguments are altogether out of place in this context.)

The point here is clearest if one focuses on the idea that a logically perfect language has metaphysical significance. This idea presupposes that there is such a thing as the nature of reality, and that the logically perfect language in some way reflects it or corresponds to it. The point of the Principle of Tolerance is precisely to avoid any such metaphysical commitments. Since the notion of correctness does not apply to choice of language, all our claims are language-relative. So any attempt to talk in an absolute way about the structure of reality simply misfires. In Carnap's view, the concepts one might use to make metaphysical claims are relative to the choice of a logic and a language, and that choice is itself not a matter of right or wrong. There are various languages; one may be better or worse than another for this or that task but there is

no one logically perfect language—indeed the very idea of such a language makes no sense. Unlike Carnap, Quine *is* usefully seen as employing something analogous to the idea of a logically perfect language. The crucial difference between the two philosophers, for present purposes, is that Quine rejects anything like Carnap's Principle of Tolerance. That principle is based on the idea that there is a clear distinction between acceptance of a theory within a language, and acceptance of a language. The former is subject to rules of justification and is theoretical, a matter of right or wrong. The latter is not rule-governed but practical, purpose-relative, and not a matter of right or wrong; it is, Carnap says, a pragmatic choice. Quine rejects that distinction. For him, all such acceptances are in principle of the same very general sort: each is justified if it contributes to an overall theory which, taken as a whole, enables us to deal better with experience than any other that we have. There is thus, from Quine's point of view, no more reason to be tolerant about different languages than about different scientific theories within a given language—no reason, that is, to accept anything like Carnap's Principle of Tolerance.

Carnap and Quine agree that our account of what there is is in part fixed by choice of language. This point alone, however, does not give us reason to accept Carnap's view that there is no such subject as ontology. On Quine's view, we should adopt the best language available to us. The adoption will have ontological implications. As he says in"On What There Is": "Our ontology is determined once we have fixed upon the over-all conceptual scheme which is to accommodate science in the broadest sense...." (*loc. cit.*).

For Quine, part of the task of the philosopher and the scientist is to chose the best language. Given that choice, the question of ontology can be answered; since the choice was not a matter of convention, the ontology is not language-relative.

What Quine in *Word and Object* calls "canonical notation" thus functions in some ways analogously to Russell's logically perfect language. Like the latter, it is significantly different from ordinary language. Also, logic is central: first-order logic is the syntax of regimented theory. Regimentation involves transforming sentences so that they use only the vocabulary of logic together with extra-logical predicates; the process will facilitate inference, which contributes to the advantages of regimented theory.

Quine's canonical notation, moreover, has metaphysical significance, at least on a sufficiently broad view of what counts as metaphysics. Most obviously, it has ontological significance. Quine's work is full of what certainly appear to be ontological claims. He accepts that there are sets, for example, but denies that there are properties. What is the status and the basis of such claims in his work? The answer appeals to the idea of what our best and most objective knowledge would look like if clarified and systematized to the greatest possible extent. The process of clarifying and systematizing will involve both what one might call the theory and what one might call the language in which the theory is expressed; both, on Quine's account, are involved in the single scientific and philosophical task. What exists is what that regimented language-*cum*-theory would quantify over. In the case of properties, Quine argues that the cost of including talk of such alleged entities within regimented theory exceeds the benefits—allowing it would make our theory as a whole significantly more complex and less clear. On that basis he excludes such talk from that theory; this, for him, means that there are no such entities.

What is at stake here, for Quine as for Russell, is nothing less than the nature of reality. Quine rejects Carnap's attempt to undercut that issue. He maintains that regimented theory in his sense is the best available guide to the way the world is. Canonical notation, Quine says, is the

language to use when the "ultimate structure of reality" (*Word and Object*, p. 221) is our concern.

For Quine, as for Russell, there are questions of justification: why we should accept that there is a logically perfect language, i.e. a language which has metaphysical significance in this way? and why we should accept his criteria for choosing that language? Quine's regimented theory is, he holds, the best way—the clearest, simplest, and most economical way—to organize and systematize our knowledge. One might, of course, argue that he is wrong on this or that specific point: that the best way of organizing our knowledge should in fact include this or that entity which Quine excludes—that it should, perhaps, be friendlier to mental entities of various sorts. This relatively detailed kind of argument, however, is not my concern here. My concern is rather with the question: why should we accept that the best way of organizing our knowledge, whether it turn out to be Quine's or some other, has ontological significance? Let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that Quine is correct in thinking that the clearest and simplest conceptual scheme has no room for properties. Why, having accepted that, must we also accept that there are no properties? Why is reality constrained by our best conceptual scheme?

Russell's answers to the analogous question relies on acquaintance. In his logically perfect language every term names an object with which I am acquainted; the language has ontological significance because I cannot be acquainted with an object unless it really does exist. Quine, however, rejects any such idea of givenness, of direct and immediate knowledge of entities. He sometimes expresses this denial that any entities are simply given by saying that all entities are *posited* by us, in constructing our theories (see *Word and Object*, p. 22). So how does Quine answer the question of justification?

The answer to this question takes us to the heart of Quine's philosophy—what he calls "naturalism". At one point he sums up that view as "the recognition that it is within science itself, and not in some prior philosophy, that reality is to be identified and described" (*TT*, p. 21). "Within science" here means within the totality of our ordinary and scientific knowledge, organized in the best fashion—that is, regimented within canonical notation. Quine's point here is that this idea gives us the best purchase that we have on the idea of reality. He denies that there is an standpoint external to that of science, in this sense, from which we can make sense of the idea of truth or reality. "Truth is immanent, and there is no higher. We must speak from within a theory...." ("Things and Their Place in Theory", *TT*, pp. 21f.). The result is a view that might be described, in Kantian terms, as "empirical realism" rather than "transcendental realism". Quine himself claims he adheres to "a robust realism" (*op. cit.*, p. 21), for he barely makes sense of the idea of a stronger sense of realism.

One way to make the point is that since no entities are *given* in anything like the sense that Russell assumes, we have no alternative but to accept as real the objects of some theory, stated in some language. But which theory-*cum*-language ?

Here it is crucial that Quine does not take the language in which our knowledge is usually expressed at face value. Regimented theory is not ordinary language. The process of regimenting our knowledge aims at yielding the most objective account of the world that we can attain systematizing and will involves significant—in some cases—drastic—changes. The final product will differ not only from ordinary language but also from the language of working scientists. In the "Scope and Language of Science" he discusses the distorting effect which language is likely to have on our view of the world and comments:

"To some degree...the scientist can enhance objectivity and diminish the interference of language, by his very choice of language. And we [meaning we philosophers, we scientists at the abstract and philosophical end of the spectrum], concerned to distill the essence of scientific discourse, can profitably purify the language of science beyond what might reasonably be urged upon the practicing scientist." (*WP*, p. 235)

So we are justified in assuming that the entities mentioned in regimented theory exist—and that those excluded from it do not exist—because it is the best and most objective theory available to us, and because we must judge of existence and reality from "the standpoint of some theory or other, the best we can muster at the time" (*WO*, p. 22).

At this point, another difference between Russell's logically perfect language and Quine's regimented theory emerges. The former, as I emphasized, goes along with a clear criterion of meaningfulness, and thus of nonsense. A sentence of the logically perfect language is meaningful because it is composed of elements each of which refers to an entity within which we are acquainted. That is the only source of meaning; an ordinary sentence is meaningful only insofar as it expresses a sentence of the logically perfect language. Nothing of the sort is true for Quine. Discussing the idiom of indirect discourse, he says explicitly, indeed, that even though it is not "humanly dispensable" (*WO*, p. 218) it is still not suitable for including in regimented theory, i.e. in the language which should be used when we aim at "limning the true and ultimate structure of reality" (ref.) and at setting down "all traits of reality worthy of the name" (*loc. cit.*).

Quine's regimented theory is a theory-*cum*-language best suited for giving an objective account of the world but it makes no exclusive claims to meaningfulness.

IV Post-Quinean Metaphysics

I've just been arguing that an idea somewhat analogous to Russell's idea of a logically perfect language plays an important role in Quine's thought. I believe that an analogous idea is also presupposed by certain of Quine's more overtly metaphysical successors, and that the justification for their use of the idea is, in many cases, unclear. These are larger claims than can be made out here; still, I shall try to make them plausible. As an example, I shall consider some of the work of David Lewis. Certain remarks he make seem to me revealing, and to suggest broader trends; I am not, however, attempting an accurate account of Lewis's work.

Quine's metaphysics, if we call it such, is constrained by the idea of a theory in which best knowledge is set in the clearest and simplest overall framework; it is, one might say, metaphysics naturalized. This Quinean revival of (what might be called) metaphysics is facilitated by his attack on Logical Positivism and, in particular, by his rejection of the Principle of Tolerance. This aspect of his work also opened the way for a revival of something more like traditional speculative metaphysics. (There is a deep irony here: although Quine's work prepared the way for this revival, nothing could have been less welcome to Quine himself.)

The idea of philosophical analysis plays a crucial role in the work of some of the metaphysically inclined philosophers who were influenced by Quine. Consider, for example, the first two sentences of David Lewis's *Counterfactuals*:

> '*If kangaroos had no tails, they would topple over*' seems to me to mean something like this: in any possible state of affairs in which kangaroos have no tails, and which resembles our actual state of affairs as much as kangaroos having no tails permits it to, the kangaroos topple over. I shall give a general analysis of counterfactual conditionals

along these lines.   (p. 1; italics in the original).

Lewis sees this kind of analysis as having ontological significance, as telling us what entities are involved in the fact represented by the original sentence—just as Russell's analysis of arithmetical truths tells us what entities are really involved in the corresponding facts. In particular, as is well known, Lewis holds that his analysis gives us reason to believe in possible worlds other than our own. The movement of thought here is from some more or less ordinary sentence to an analysis of that sentence to the idea that we have reason to believe in the entities invoked by that analysis. In short, ontological conclusions are drawn from the philosophical analysis of an ordinary sentence.

Let us, then, consider the idea of philosophical analysis—or some of the various ideas that go under that name. The process of philosophical analysis presumably involves going from one sentence, the unanalyzed one, to another, the analyzed version; the two sentences are said to stand in some relation to one another which makes it useful or necessary to replace the first by the second, at least in certain contexts or for certain purposes. But why does transforming the one sentence into the other constitute philosophical progress? What does analysis accomplish?

The least ambitious answer is simply the claim that the analyzed version of a given sentence is clearer—less ambiguous, less vague, generally more efficacious in communication, etc.—than the unanalyzed version. It is hard to see how the idea of analysis, understood in this way, could have any positive philosophical significance. It might, however, have *negative* philosophical significance; some philosophers argue that some or all philosophical problems arise only because our language is unclear or misleading in some other way, and that philosophical analysis shows how we can achieve our (non-philosophical) purposes with a

language in which philosophical questions simply do not arise.

An overlapping answer is that the role of analysis is to reveal inferential relations among our ordinary (unanalyzed) sentences. One might claim that, for our language, there is a unique analysis of each sentence; and that carrying out all the analyses will reveal inferential relations to the maximum possible extent. The result would be what we might call a logically perfect version of *our* language. If the restriction to a single language is genuine, however, then this idea too is fairly modest in its philosophical significance. In particular, it would be hard to argue that a logically perfect language understood in this way has metaphysical significance.

It is, however, easy to move from the idea of clarifying or revealing inferential relations to a far more ambitious conception of analysis. It is easy to think the analyzed sentence does more than facilitate communication on a given occasion, more than reveal inferential relations within a particular language; it is easy to think that it gets at the 'real meaning' of the sentence which is analysed and that it thereby shows the real constituents of the fact which makes the sentence true if it is true. This is how Lewis seems to think of the matter in the passage just quoted. It is here that an analogue of the idea of a logically perfect language is presupposed. Analysis, on this metaphysically loaded conception, is not merely clarificatory; it reveals the way things are. The result of analysis, in any given case, is presumably a sentence which explicitly shows what there must be in the world if the sentence is to be true. The totality of such fully analyzed sentences thus constitutes something like a logically perfect language. Just as in the case of Russell's logically perfect language, a sentence in that language will make it evident what entities make up the corresponding fact.

Again, there is a question of justification. How is a particular instance of philosophical analysis to be justified? If one of the less ambitious conceptions of analysis is in play, the answer is relatively unproblematic. An analysis which is supposed to have metaphysical implications, however, cannot be justified so easily. Analysis of that sort, I have claimed, presupposes the idea of a logically perfect language which would be metaphysically significant in something like the way in which Russell's logically perfect language is. What could justify us in thinking that there is such a language, or in thinking that a given candidate is indeed the logically perfect language?

As we saw, Russell and Quine, give different answers. Russell's answer rests on the idea of acquaintance, understood as direct and unmediated access to reality as it is in itself. Perhaps for some post-Quinean philosophers, though not for Lewis himself, the term "intuition" is meant to play a similar role—rather than meaning merely what we are at first inclined to say. Or perhaps the charm of the word is that it seems to bridge the gulf between the weaker idea and the stronger. However that may be, once we spell out the demands that Russell places on the idea of acquaintance it becomes hard to defend any idea which can play a similar role.

Quine's answer to the question of justification depends on his unqualified scientific naturalism. One aspect here is that, according to Quine, the idea of a theory which sets out our knowledge in the clearest and most objective fashion provides the only grasp that we have on the idea of reality, the way the world is. As we saw, he rejects what he calls "the transcendental question of the reality of the external world". Lewis, like other post-Quinean metaphysicians, seems to aspire to a stronger sense of realism. That fact alone might undercut any attempt to give Quinean answers to the questions of justification. I shall not dwell on this point, however, but will emphasize a second aspect of Quine's answers.

Quine's regimented theory is constructed with the aim of embodying our most objective kinds of knowledge, and that it excludes those whose objectivity is dubious. (It is on these grounds that he argues that the idiom of indirect discourse has no place in regimented theory.) This fact is crucial to the idea that regimented theory is not merely a convenient reformulation of our ordinary knowledge but has metaphysical significance: we are committed to accepting the existence of entities which that theory quantifies over and, perhaps more to the point, we are *not* committed to accepting the existence of entities which that theory does not quantify over.

In some passages, at least, Lewis does not place the same kind of emphasis on objectivity and seems simply to assume that most of what we ordinarily say will have a place in the fully analyzed language. He says that we come to philosophy with "a stock of opinions", and that "the business of philosophy" is "to try to discover ways of expanding them into an orderly system" (*Counterfactuals*, p. 88). In a later work, he speaks, along the same lines, of "improv[ing] the unity and economy of the theory that is our professional concern—total theory, the whole of what we take to be true" (*On the Plurality of Worlds*, p. 4). These passages suggest that Lewis shows a much greater deference towards our pre-philosophical beliefs, taken at face-value, than does Quine. The aim here seems to be something like a systematization of what we already believe. Quine, by contrasty, aims at objectivity and is ready to modify or discard pre-existing views to achieve this end.

The point is illustrated by the idea of the existence of possible worlds. Defending this idea, Lewis says:

> It is uncontroversially true that things might have been otherwise than they are. I believe, and so do you, that things could have been different in countless ways. But what does this

mean? Ordinary language permits the paraphrase: there are many ways things could have

been besides the way that they actually are.... I therefore believe in the existence of

entities which might be called 'ways things could have been'. I prefer to call them

'possible worlds'.   (*Counterfactuals*, p. 83)

Surely most of us would, in most contexts, agree that things might have been different from the

way they are. Lewis suggests that that is enough to settle the matter. For Quine, by contrast, the

mere fact that an idiom is in use does not show that we need to take it seriously for metaphysical

purposes. As we saw, he doesn't even think that an idiom's being humanly indispensable shows

that. Quine would argue that the "might have been" idiom, like the idiom of indirect discourse,

enables us to form sentence the truth-value of which is purpose-relative, context-dependent, and

unfixed; and that this fact gives us reason to exclude such idioms from regimented theory. His

insistence on objectivity here goes along with the idea that regimented theory has metaphysical

implications. A mere systematization of what we ordinarily say, without regard to how objective

the various parts of that discourse are, might be of philosophical interest but it is hard to see how

one could justify taking it as revealing anything about the world independent of us.

      The upshot of this discussion is that it is by no means clear that Lewis can avail himself
of the sorts of reasons that Quine can give for according metaphysical significance to regimented
theory. Nor is it clear what other sorts of reasons Lewis can offer us to think that the results of
his analyses—or the logically perfect language which would supposedly result from all such
analyses—as being metaphysically significant. The same holds, I would claim, of many others
who draw metaphysical conclusions from philosophical analysis. Lurking behind such attempts
is Russell's idea of a logically perfect language, an idea which lingers on after the justification
for it is gone.