METAPHILOSOPHY

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A new field of investigation, which goes under the name "metaphilosophy", is emerging and is even beginning to attract some attention. By any large, however, it would seem that philosophers prefer the word to the deed, because although the word "metaphilosophy" has won unexpected popularity, the special investigation it was coined to refer to has been left in the background where it is lavished with neglect. Nevertheless, the investigation does now exist, and it is making itself felt, even to the point of doing some subterranean work in the thinking of philosophers who studiously avoit it. Metaphilosophy is the investigation of philosophical utterances, with the special aim of reaching a satisfactory understanding of what it is in their nature which permits the intractable disagreements which invariably attach to them. To an onlooker they might well appear to have built-in undecidability, and the assurance of the opponents to be nothing more than delusive states of mind.

A character in a television play remarked: "It would seem that to mortal minds philosophical problems can never be brought to an end." History abundantly supports this remark, but the idea that it might be the case cannot be welcome to philosophers. Some even seem to suffer from the fear that the investigation which attempts to discover what prevents their solution by mortal minds will make philosophy itself disappear. One philosopher has declared that on the metaphilosophical view I have developed over the years, metaphysics is "the mescalin of the elite", which

makes understandable the general attitude toward the meta-investigation of philosophy. A recent paper contained the newly coined term " 'meta'-evaporate", the suggestion of the word being that somethnig is evaporated in consequence of a certain kind of scrutiny. We may permit ourselves a a speculation about the determinants which entered into the formation of that word. Wittgenstein sometimes said in lectures that philosophical problems have no solutions but only *dissolutions*. The implication is that the clear understanding of a philosophical question removes its problem aspect. It is not a wholly idle speculation to suppose that the word " 'meta'-evaporate" was sired by the term "metaphilosophy" and Wittgenstein's word "dissolve", the background idea being that metaphilosophy dissolves philosophy. My private aphorism for some time now has been that metaphilosophy is the grain of sand in the philosophical oyster. So far the visible thing that the oyster has produced is interest in a word (a new journal now calls itself "Metaphilosophy"), and it has perhaps been instrumental in the coining of a graphic verb.

The classical image of the philosopher is that of the Platonic investigator of reality in its ultimate aspects, who by the power of his thought is able to survey "all time and all existence". This description applies to empiricist philosophers as well as to rationalists, which is why the investigations of neither require them to leave their study. There can be no doubt that this also is the secret self-image of the linguistic analyst, the philosopher who seems farthest removed from metaphysics. Scratch the surface of the linguistic philosopher and you will find the metaphysician or the Anselmic theologian underneath. It is safe to say, quite in general, that it is the image of the omnipotent thinker which binds philosophers to their subject. Odin, whose omnipotence of thought was symbolized by the raven Hugin, paid with one of his eyes for the privilege of gazing into the well of knowledge, and one may wonder what a philos-

opher pays for his knowledge.

The answer is not far to seek. Without arguing the matter here, the fact that there is no explaining philosophical disagreements on any of the usual ways of understanding the nature of philosophical theories and arguments make it clear that the theories and arguments are misconceived. And the glaring fact that philosophers have little or no enthusiasm for looking squarely at the astonishing permanence of the disagreements shows that they have no wish to understand the nature of their activity. They pay for their omnipotence, or more accurately, for the spurious gratification of the wish for intellectual omnipotence, with blindness to the nature of thier pronouncements. Like a dreamer who is able to obtain certain gratifications by keeping the meaning of his dream hidden from himself, the philosopher is able to gain satisfactions from his work by keeping it at a distance from his understanding. He pays with an inhibited intellect, in stronger words, with a weakened sense of reality, for his subjective sense of power.

Wittgenstein has remarked that philosophical propositions are not empirical, which is to say that they are not the kind of propositions to the acceptance or rejection of which experience is relevant; and it must be granted that all the external evidence attest to the correctness of his remark. It cannot have escaped the attention of anyone that in the long history of philosophy no philosopher has attempted, nor even expressed the wish for, an experiment which would provide evidence for or against a view. The reason for this is that philosophy has no use for experiments; even those who take philosophy to be a kind of science of reality would feel the absurdity of describing it as in any way being an experimental science. In his *Scientific Thought* C. D. Broad distinguishes between analytical philosophy, which according to him is concerned solely with the clarification of concepts, and speculative philosophy, which employs a method or methods other than analysis. In his words, the object of

the latter is "to take over the results of the various sciences, to add to them the results of the ethical and religious experiences of mankind, and then reflect upon the whole. The hope is that, by this means, we may be able to reach some general conclusions as to the nature of the Universe, and as to our position and prospects in it."[1]

The nature of the philosophical reflection on material gleaned from religion and the sciences which is to lead to general conclusions about the universe is left a mystery. It is not an analytical activity, on Broad's own account. Neither are the speculations about the universe the sort of speculations which might be confirmed or discredited by special experiments, comparable to those which have led scientists to their conclusions. The only method left open to the synoptic philosopher would seem to be observation. This is a possibility which needs to be looked into; for philosophers do sometimes give the impression of resorting to meticulous scrutiny, although it hardly needs to be remarked that they have no use for such perceptual aids as microscopes. Thus Hume appears to resort to careful observation in his investigation of the question as to whether a thing is a substance in which experienceable attributes inhere. He describes himself as carefully examining an object, such as an orange, and making an inventory of what each of his senses reveals to him. By sight he is made aware of a color and a shape, neither of which is a substance, and so on for the other senses.[2] The apparent outcome of his investigation of what his senses reveal to him is that in no case of perceiving a thing do they reveal a substance. This reminds us of A. J. Ayer's claim that all that our senses reveal to us are sense data. It looks like a generalization that issues from an examination of instances, an examination in which objects which are not sense data are never found. But it cannot be this; for it is not linked with the description of a theoretical

[1] P. 20 (Harcourt, Brace & Co., New York).
[2] *A Treatise of Human Nature,* Book I, Part I, Section VI.

counter case, of a case occurring in which something is revealed to us by our senses but is not a sense datum. The philosophical words "is revealed by the senses but is not a sense datum" have been given no descriptive use.

It is not difficult to see that Hume's inventory is not the empirical activity it is pictured as being. He represents himself as looking for an impression of substance, which he reports he never finds. It is easily seen, however, that he could not have been looking for anything at all. For according to his own maxim that there is no idea which is not a copy of an impression, he had no idea of anything he might be described as seeking. His putative search could be no more than the imitation of a search. Hume puts himself in the case of someone who looks for an object named by a word which has not been made the name of anything. Whatever Hume's investigation was, it could not have been a search for an object. It can also be seen that his statement that colors and shapes are not substances is not the outcome of an examination of colors and shapes. He did not come to the conclusion that they are not substances by subjecting colors and shapes to a special scrutiny. The statement that colors and shapes, as well as odors, tastes, and the like, are not substances is not an induction generalization based on an examination of instances, a generalization which could in principle be upset, for example, by a color turning up which *is* a substance. It thus seems reasonable to conclude that the statement that a color is not a substance makes an entailment-claim, in which case the sentence "No color is a substance" would be restatable as "Being a color entails not being a substance".

A curious feature of the putative entailment-claim that neither a sound, taste, nor color is a substance should be noticed, as it throws the claim into an unexpected and enigmatic light. According to Hume, the conclusion to be drawn from his search for substance in the manifold of his sense contents is that we have "no idea of substance, distinct from

that of a collection of particular qualities, nor have we any other meaning when we either talk or reason concerning it".[3] It is quite clear that Hume's supposed search for substance was not a search for "a collection of particular qualities"; it was a search for something *in addition* to such a collection, something, moreover, he confessed he did not find. Thus, the implication of his words is that the name of what it was looking for, in the English language the term "substance", has no literal sense, that it is a meaningless word like "crul", and was not the name assigned to something for which he might look. The expression "searches for an impression of crul", and the supposed entailment-statement that neither a color nor a shape is a substance turns out to be no more than the spurious imitation of an entailment-statement. Since, on Hume's own account the word "substance", as it is used by substratum philosophers like Locke or Descartes, is devoid of literal sense, there can be no entailment between the meaning of a color —or shape— word and *the meaning* of the word "substance". The sentence "Being a color entails not being a substance" no more expresses an entailment-claim than does the sentence "Being a color entails not being a crul". Both would seem to be equally nonsensical. Nevertheless, there is an important difference between the sentences, which we might express by saying that *in some way* we do understand Hume's claim while not understanding the other, that *in some way* "Being a color entails not being a substance" is not senseless, in the way in which the other is. Hume's statement presents us with an enigma which nevertheless we understand.

To return to Hume's description of himself as taking a careful inventory of the various contents of his sense-experience, what it shows is that a philosopher is capable of seriously misdescribing his procedure, i.e., the method he employs in his investigation. He uses, naturally and certainly without conscious guide, the language of observation and

[3] *Treatise*, Book I, Part I Section VI.

empirical search, behind which he does work of an entirely different sort. Taking Hume's description at face value, the kind of activity it refers to is *logically* different from the kind of thing he does. And in general it is clear that technical, academic philosophy which uses lines of reasoning to support its theories, is no more an observational science than it is an experimental one. Broad's distinction between analytical and speculative philosophy puts the philosopher who reaches "general conclusions about the universe" in the position of someone who is not qualified by his special training for his speculations: he unwittingly assumes the role of amateur —who rushes in where angels fear to tread. If we look soberly at the views about the universe which cosmological philosophers like Descartes, Spinoza, and F. H. Bradley have advanced, we can easily realize that they are supported by the kind of reasoning on concepts we are familiar with in philosophy. Wittgenstein's remark that the propositions of philosophy are not empirical makes understandable the fact that they are not supported by empirical evidence, either experimental or observational.

Now, it is natural to think that if the propositions of philosophy are not empirical, they are *a priori*, i.e., either logically necessary or logically impossible. But what is natural to think about propositions outside of philosophy may, nevertheless, not be true of propositions *in* philosophy. For philosophy is a subject that is shrouded in mystery. Until an explanation is forthcoming of the glaring but disregarded fact that one of the oldest of the intellectual disciplines is the least productive of secure results, however minor, it cannot be said that philosophical work is carried on in the open light. The fact that philosophy does not in its vast collection of propositions posses a single assertion which is uncontroversial shows philosophy to be an unnatural subject and its propositions not subject to natural and familiar classifications.

If we look with care at the *arguments* adduced in support

of philosophical views, if so to speak we draw near to the arguments, we can see that they are *a priori in character*, or, at any rate, that they are *like a priori* arguments that demonstrate propositions. A classical scholar remarked that Parmenides had an argument but no evidence for his view about the nature of Being.[4] We might say that an argument, which uses no experiential evidence, is the only kind of consideration which could be relevant to a *philosophical* proposition, and that empirical evidence is not logically relevant either to the support or refutation of a nonempirical proposition. An *a priori* argument may be described, in general terms, as the kind of argument which establishes, or attempts to establish, a logically necessary connection between concepts, i.e., a connection which holds under all theoretical conditions.[5] In Kantian language, a thinker who constructs an *a priori* argument does not leave the domain of concepts to obtain his result.

There is and has been for a great many years a difference of opinion regarding the nature of *a priori* reasoning. Some philosophers have maintained that it can only be dissection analysis, which consists of stating explicitly in the predicate of the resulting proposition the components which are implicit in its subject-term. The view about the nature of logically necessary propositions which is linked with this idea about *a priori* argumentation is that they are analytic: "being logically necessary" is equated with "being analytic". Other philosophers maintain that not all *a priori* arguments are merely explicative and that some of them establish a necessary relation between one concept and another concept of which it is not a component. The existence of propositions which are both logically necessary and are such that their predicates (or consequents) cannot be extracted from their subjects (or antecedents) by a process of concept-dissection

[4] Benjamin Farrington, *Greek Science.*

[5] An *a priori* consideration may, of course, show concepts to be independent of each other, e.g., the concepts *cow* and *having two stomachs.*

is thought in some quarters to make philosophy possible as an *a priori* science of reality. Philosophers who are sensitive to the actual practice of philosophy realize that it is confined to "reflecting"[6] on concepts, in other words, that it is confined to *a priori* procedures. For the most part these philosophers rest their hope of philosophy's being informative of reality on the claim that some propositions are logically necessary and also add to our knowledge of what is referred to by the subject. A recent complaint among philosophers has been that clarity is not enough, which is to say that dissection analysis, whose function is to "clear up"[7] concepts, conveys no information about the universe. It has to be pointed out, however, that some able philosophers have held that analytic propositions are both laws of thought and also laws of things. Regardless of this division of opinion it will be clear that an investigation which confines itself to the mere scrutiny of concepts will result in entailment-claims, either analytic or synthetic.

The word "analysis" has a narrow use in philosophy, in which it applies to a procedure that issues only in analytic statements, and a wider use in which it applies to any procedure that issues in entailment-statements, whether tautological or not. In philosophy where it has not resulted in uncontested entailment-claims, i.e., where analysis fails to help us decide whether an entailment-claim is correct or not, it is particularly important to get a clear view of it. It has been claimed that analysis is not a procedure of defining a word but is instead a kind of examination of extra-linguistic objects, concepts or propositions, which are the meanings of expressions. Thus G. E. Moore has written: "To define a concept is to give an analysis of it; but to define a word is neither the same thing as to give an analysis of that word, nor the same thing as to give an analysis of any

[6] C. D. Broad's term.
[7] C. D. Broad's term.

concept".[8] The impression created by these words, and others to a similar effect, is that philosophical analysis is not in any way an examination of language and that language is external to conducting an analysis: angels could practice analysis without the help of language. Wittgenstein's reported suggestion that we ask for the use of an expression, not for its meaning, gives rise to a different idea of analysis. This is that analysis is a special kind of investigation of the use terms have in a language. The nature of philosophical analysis is bound up with the kind of claims it results in, i.e., apparent entailment-claims, and whether it is the investigation of verbal usage or of extra-linguistic entities can best be determined by getting clear about the nature of entailment-statements, or of logically necessary propositions.

Without entering into refinements, entailment-statements may be said to divide into two kinds: those which may be called "identity-entailments", i.e., those whose consequents are identical either with their antecedents or with a component of their antecedents, and those whose consequents are not related to their antecedents in this way. The former are held by many philosophers to have no factual content, that is, to have no use to convey information about things or occurrences, etc. Wittgenstein has epitomized this feature of tautologies by remarking in the *Tractatus* (4.461) that "I know nothing about the weather when I know that it is either raining or not raining", or what comes to the same thing, when I know that if it is not raining, then it is not raining. Some philosophers might oppose this by saying that this tautology is about the weather and tells us what the weather *must be*. We may allow this, but we shall then have to say that a proposition which tells us what the weather must, logically, be fails to tell us what the weather *is*. The proposition remains true no matter what the weather is like

[8] *The Philosophy of G. E. Moore* (P. A. Schilpp, ed.), Library of Living Philosophers, Vol. IV, p. 665. See also p. 661.

and so tells us nothing about what the weather actually is. In Wittgenstein's word (4.462) "tautologies are not pictures of reality"; and this is because their truth-values are not determined by what the world happens to be like. A lady won control over her wayward dog by saying to it, "Tucker, come here or don't come here!" Her dog could not fail to do what she told it to do, which gave her subjective gratification. But Tucker could not fail to do as he was told because what he was told was not a command: he was not ordered by her words to do anything. Similarly, a tautological statement, or an identity-entailment, has no use to convey information about things or occurrences, because being true under all conditions it says nothing about which condition obtains.

As is known, philosophers are in disagreement over whether the class of necessary propositions is identical with the class of identity-entailments; and those who agree among themselves that there are non-identity entailments, i.e., synthetic *a priori* propositions, are by no means in agreement over which necessary propositions are synthetic. Despite this puzzling multiplicity of conflicting opinions (which no one really expects to be resolved so long as philosophy is an active enterprise), most philosophers, and probably all, have the idea that the possibility of there being an *a priori* investigation of reality depends on there being propositions which are both synthetic and logically necessary. But philosophers who rest their hope on the existence of such propositions rest it on a feeble reed, one that is too fragile to provide a solid perch for the owl of Minerva. The reason for this is that the consideration which shows that tautologies have no use to give factual information about things shows the same thing about synthetic *a priori* propositions. In general, a proposition which is characterized by logical necessity is *prevented* from being about the existence and behavior of things by the fact that it is necessary.

A proposition which is true by necessity is one whose

truth-value is invariant under all theoretical conditions, and this is because its truth-value is not conditioned by what there is. Wittgenstein has said: "A tautology has no truth-conditions, since it is unconditionally true."[9] These words, suitably modified, apply to every *a priori* truth: it is unconditionally true, and thus is not related to conditions, actual or theoretical, which *make* or *would make* it true. What prevents a tautology from having factual content is just the fact that it is logically necessary or is true *independently* of conditions, and this also prevents a synthetic *a priori* proposition from having factual content. A proposition which is true independently of what the world is like, is true no matter what it is like, and thus has no use to convey information about what there is or about what there is not. According to a Kantian claim, the words "Every change has a cause", unlike the words "Every effected change has a cause", express a non-identity entailment, namely, *being a change* entails *having a cause*. But if the words do in fact express an entailment, then they say nothing more about conditions under which changes occur than do the words "Every caused change has a cause". Philosophers who, like Broad and A.C. Ewing, hold the so-called entailment view of causation would seem to be holding a view which is not about how events are related to each other or about a condition under which changes occur.

Many philosophers who give up the notion that *a priori* truths can be about things (or, it would be better to say, give up this notion with part of their mind) go over to the position that they are verbal, about the actual use of terminology. One version of this view is that they "simply record our determination to use words in a certain fashion"; another version is that they are true by definition or by virtue of the meanings certain words have; and still another version is that "they are purely about the use of the expressions they

[9] *Tractatus*, 4.461.

connect". On this view, the analytic proposition that an effect must have a cause is about the use of the words "effect" and "cause" which it connects or that it is made true by the use these words have; and the putative synthetic *a priori* proposition that a change must have a cause is about the use of the terms "is a change" and "has a cause". On the conventionalist idea of logical necessity, it will be clear that a synthetic *a priori* proposition no more than one that is analytic is about things. It needs to be remarked, however, that so-called linguistic philosophers have been charged with thinking that facts about things can be inferred from the study of verbal usage, and that the truth-values of philosophical theories can be determined by the study of the language in which the theories happen to be formulated.[10]

Conventionalism is not free from objections, which are well known. One of them is the following. A proposition that is about the use of terminology is empirical: usage could be different from what it actually is, which is to say that a true verbal proposition could in principle be false, and of course conversely. Thus, if the *proposition* expressed by the sentence "An effect must have a cause" were about the use of the words "effect" and "cause" and how they function with respect to each other in the English language, it would be empirical. But if it is empirical, i.e., has one of two possible truth-values, which remain its *possible* truth-values independently of the truth-value it actually has, it cannot be *a priori,* i.e., be such that its actual truth-value is its only theoretically possible truth-value. A proposition cannot be both logically necessary and also verbal. Just as a proposition is prevented from being about things by being *a priori,* so it is prevented from being about words by being *a priori.* A logically necessary proposition is neither about things nor about words.

A third view as to what necessary propositions are about

[10] See C. D. Broad, "Philosophy and 'Common-Sense'", *G. E. Moore. Essays in Retrospect* (Ambrose and Lazerowitz, eds.).

has to be noted, even if only briefly here. This is that their subject-matter is a special part of all that there is, the domain of abstract objects. A nonempirical proposition issues from a scrutiny of concepts and their connections, and a correct analysis results in an *a priori* proposition which is a truth about concepts. A sentence which expresses a proposition that is true by *a priori* necessity expresses an entailment that holds between abstract entities. Without going into Platonic metaphysics, we can best see *what* we know when know that a proposition is *a priori* true by considering *sentences* which express them, and comparing them (a) with sentences which express propositions about things (or about ordinary, non abstract objects) and (b) with related sentences which express propositions about verbal usage.

Consider the following sentences.

> "All gamps are large hand umbrellas"
> "All gamps, without the theoretical possibility of an exception, are large hand umbrellas"
> "Being a gamp entails being a large hand umbrella."

A person who did not know the word "gamp", if he were informed that the word was in the dictionary and that the sentence expressed a true proposition, might think it expressed an empirical generalization, like that expressed by the sentence "All Watusi are very tall". But this information would not be enough to tell him the meaning of the word "gamp". The information that the second sentence expresses a true proposition would, however, be enough to tell him what the word means, and this is also the case with regard to the third sentence. Knowing that the last two sentences express a true proposition is the same as knowing that the first sentence states a logically necessary proposition. Hence what a person learns who is informed of the fact that "All gamps are large hand umbrellas" states an *a priori* proposition, is a verbal fact to the effect that a term has a certain

meaning. What we know when we know that a sentence expresses a logically necessary truth, and know this in virtue of understanding the terms occurring in the sentence, are verbal facts about the use of terminology. But the sentence does not *express* what it is that we know in knowing that it expresses a necessary proposition: the proposition is not verbal, although knowing it to be true requires nothing more than knowing facts of usage. A person can hardly be blamed if he feels like the peasant in the fable who is told by the satyr that he blows an his fingers to warm them and on his soup to cool it. It would seem to require a semantic satyr to say, on the one hand, that to know that a proposition is logically necessary all that is required is knowledge of rules for the use of words, and on the other hand, that the proposition is nevertheless not verbal!

What makes it difficult to explain the nature of *a priori* necessity and creates the impression that we are blowing both verbally hot and verbally cold, is the form of speech in which a sentence must be cast in order to express a necessary proposition. In a metaphor, this mode of speech gives a sentence for an *a priori* necessity the two faces of Janus, each of which belies the other. Its verbal face and its nonverbal, ontological face can be made visible by comparing the sentence

"A gamp is a large hand umbrella"

with the sentences

"The word 'gamp' means large hand umbrella"

"A gamp is an awkward thing to carry."

The first sentence is related to the second in a way that is easier to see than to describe. The second sentence, we might say, *states* what it is that we know in knowing that the first sentence makes a true *a priori* claim; but the first does not *state* what the second states. The first sentence conveys, without expressing, what the second openly expresses. To put the matter in oracular language, the sentence "The word 'gamp' means large hand umbrella" *reveals*

what the nonverbal sentence *conceals*: the explicit verbal content of the one is the concealed verbal content of the other. To put the difference in terms of the familiar distinction between use and mention, the second sentence mentions a term which occurs without mention in the first. In this respect, the second sentence has a feature in common with the third sentence, "A gamp is an awkward thing to carry", which mentions no word that occurs in it. But the two sentences differ in an important respect, and this is a difference which may be said to be truly invisible: the third sentence *uses* the word "gamp" to refer to something, actual or imagined, whereas the word occurs in the first sentence without being used to refer to anything. Both are in the ontological form of speech, the form of speech that is used to make statements about the existence and nature of things. Nevertheless, unlike the third sentence, the first does not *use* words to refer to things. In a figure, the resemblance between the two sentences is only skin deep; beneath its linguistic surface the sentence for the necessary proposition has its content in common with the verbal sentence. The sentence, "A gamp is a large hand umbrella", presents a verbal fact in the ontological mode of speech.

In sum, a sentence which expresses a necessary proposition is in the form of speech in which language is used to describe things and occurrences, but is nevertheless a sentence that does not use words to make a declaration about things. It is this feature, its ontological form, which, despite the verbal content of the sentence, is capable of creating the delusive idea that language is being used to express a theory about the world. The analysis of *concepts* turns out, accordingly, to be the explication of verbal usage conducted in the ontological idiom; and, again, it is the form of speech which is responsible for the idea that philosophical analysis is a method of learning basic facts about things "by the mere operation of thought",[11] by mental penetration into the

[11] Hume's expression.

meanings of expressions. Thus, the proof that the diagonal of a square is incommensurable with its side, far from looking like the explication of the rules governing the use of terminology in a regularized, exact language, has the appearance of being a kind of unfolding of contents hidden in meanings which when brought to the surface reveal a mystifying fact about ideal objects. Undoubtedly it was the wish to dispel this appearance and to make us aware of the linguistic substructure which supports the appearance that made Wittgenstein characterize a logically necessary proposition as a "rule of grammar".

It will be remembered that Wittgenstein said that philosophical propositions are not empirical, which makes it natural to infer that he thought them to be *a priori*. Some philosophers, for one reason or another, have attempted to cast doubt on the validity of the distinction between empirical and *a priori* propositions. This cannot be gone into here, but we can permit ourselves one jaundiced remark: this is that behind the nominal rejection of the distinction, philosophers continue to use the distinction, which they mark by a different terminology. An air of a verbal game being played surrounds the rejection. The unavoidable impression made on an observer who finds himself puzzled by the game is that some philosophers are made unhappy by conventional nomenclature and wish to change it. In ordinary life most of us seem to be made less unhappy by the invented term "senior citizens" than by the ordinary expression "old people". Wittgenstein said that a philosopher rejects an expression with the thought that he is refuting a theory, and this appears to apply to philosophers who 'refute' the validity of the empirical-*a priori* distinction.

To return to the point that philosophical propositions are not empirical. Seeing that they are not makes it natural to proceed to the idea that they are *a priori*. This idea fits in with the analytical procedure by which they are arrived at. But as has already been noted, what is a natural inference

outside of philosophy may, nevertheless, not be a correct inference *in* philosophy. By way of parenthetical observation, it should be noticed that if the views of philosophy are *a priori*, then they are certainly not cosmic propositions, propositions about what the universe is or is not like. The sentences which express them convey only information about the actual use of terminology in a language; they are "rules of grammar", in Wittgenstein's way of speaking, formulated in the nonverbal mode of speech. It is hardly necessary to say that philosophers would deny that their questions were merely verbal or that they were centrally concerned to explicate usage. And in a way their disavowal is correct: philosophy makes use of analytical lexicography but does not reduce to it. A philosophical sentence like "Chance is nothing but concealed and secret cause"[12] is linked with the explication of the actual use of the words "chance" and "cause", but does not serve to convey information or misinformation about actual usage. Construed as expressing a necessary proposition it would be equivalent to the entailment-sentence "Being a chance occurrence entails having an unknown cause". Part of the verbal claim obliquely presented by the sentence is that "uncaused chance occurrence" has no application to occurrences, actual or theoretical, in other words, that the phrase has no descriptive content. Some so-called ordinary-language philosophers, and also Wittgenstein at times, would say that instead if expressing a necessary proposition a philosopher who asserts the sentence is in a disguised way misrepresenting actual usage. An alternative construction which can now be placed on the philosophical sentence is that it neither expresses an *a priori* truth nor misrepresents usage, but rather is a disguised way of announcing an artificially retailored use of the word "cause", a stretched use of "cause" in which it applies to all occurrences, chance as well as non-chance.

[12] Hume attributes this view to other philosophers. *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Book I, Part III, Section IV.

Philosophers are not made happy by the thought that their views have only verbal content. The idea of an *a priori* science of the universe has great appeal, and undoubtedly receives its support from the unrelinquished wish for cosmic clairvoyance. Sober reflection, which seems to have no chastening effect on unconscious wishes, shows that if a claim is about things it is not *a priori* and if it is *a priori* it is not about things. Locke said that mathematics is both demonstrative and instructive. It is not to be denied either that mathematics is demonstrative or that it is instructive; but if we resist Platonic metaphysics, the reality which emerges is that in respect of being demonstrative mathematics in an indirect way is about the use of expressions it connects. This, for example, learning by means of a calculation that what the sentence "13 = 187-174" says is true comes to knowing a connection between the use of the term "13" and the expression "187-174". To put it very roughly, mathematics explicates, and thus is instructive of, the interrelations of the rules governing the fuctioning of its symbols, which is not to imply that it has no application to certain kinds of problems about things.

One consideration that goes against the view that philosophical sentences which fail to express *a priori* truths misrepresent the actual use of terminology is the resistance to correction by those who pronounce them. A person who states that $34 \times 7 = 228$ will see his mistake when it is pointed out to him. But a philosopher who asserts that a chance occurrence has a secret cause has an unaccountable myopia to his mistake, despite his knowing what everyone else knows about the actual use of "chance" and "cause". Even if he acknowledges the mistake, there is no guarantee that later he will not return to it. It is not necessary to be a scholar of the history of philosophy to learn that a refuted philosophical theory is a phoenix which springs into life from its own ashes over and over again.

The metaphilosophical view which construes a philosoph-

ical sentence as embodying an academically retailored piece of terminology presents an explanation of what makes it possible for a philosopher to remain fixated to his mistake, or if he gives it up, makes it possible for him to return to it. Put simply and without elaboration, the re-editing of terminology, unlike the misrepresentation of verbal usage, is not open to correction. One involves a mistake, the other does not. A philosophical "view" is a grammatical creation, which like a daydream can be enjoyed alongside the world of sober fact with which we have to live. To hark back to Wittgenstein's important observation that a philosopher rejects a form of words while fancying himself to be upsetting a proposition about things: we might instead say that the philosopher is covertly changing language under the illusion that he is revealing to us the content of the cosmos.

We are now in a position to understand Hume's baffling statement that a color is not a substance, baffling because in conjunction with showing to his own satisfaction that we have no idea of substance, he states that a color is not a substance. The sentence "We have no idea of substance" is such that if it expressed a true proposition it would be the case that the word "substance" stands for no idea, or that it is a word without a meaning; and obviously, anyone who thought that it expressed a true proposition would treat "substance" as he treats a nonsense word. If it expressed a true proposition, the sentence "A color is not a substance" would not express a proposition about what a color is not; it would be literally senseless. There is a strong temptation to say that Hume just failed to see that his sentence was, on his own showing, nonsensical; but another explanation is now available which also has to be considered. This is that he was, to use Wittgenstein's expression, playing a language game with the word "substance", now doing one thing with it, now another, for the dramatic effects the game produces.

To put the matter over briefly and without argument, Hume's claim that "we have no idea of substance, distinct

from that of a collection of particular qualities" has *grammatical import.* It comes to the claim that substantive words are words that stand for *qualities,* which is to say that nouns are really adjectives.[13] If we do not look on Hume's statement as a concealed misdescription of the grammar in actual use, we arrive at the idea that it presents an ontologically expressed grammatical rearrangement of parts of speech, the classification of nouns with adjectives. His philosophical view that there is no substance distinct from a cluster of qualities puts forward a grammatically reconstituted language in which words that ordinarily count as substantives now are to count as adjectives. This revamped grammar is projected onto the everyday noun-adjective structure of language, and gives rise for some people to the magical illusion that a discovery has been made about the nature of things. To others it gives rise to the illusion that the real structure of our language, its depth grammar, is being revealed. The statement that a color, or a shape, is not a substance can now be seen to be a statement which falls back on ordinary, unrevised grammar, and as being to the effect that the name of a color, or a shape is not to count as a noun.

[13] Interestingly enough, Hume makes a similar remark about the problem of personal identity: "... all the nice and subtile questions concerning personal identity can never possibly be decided, and are to be regarded rather as grammatical than as philosophical difficulties." (*Treatise,* Book I, Part IV, Section VI.)

RESUMEN

Un nuevo campo de investigación ha surgido bajo el nombre de metafilosofía. Esta investigación se hace sentir hasta en el pensamiento de aquellos filósofos que afanosamente la evitan. La metafilosofía es la investigación de las expresiones filosóficas que tiene como finalidad una comprensión satisfactoria de las características de esas expresiones que permiten los desacuerdos entre los filósofos.

Wittgenstein dijo que los problemas filosóficos no tienen solución sino sólo disoluciones. Lo anterior implica que la comprensión clara de una cuestión filosófica le quitaría su aspecto problemático. Mi aforismo privado es que la metafilosofía es el grano de arena en la ostra filosófica. El hecho de que los filósofos han tenido poco o ningún interés por investigar la permanencia de sus desacuerdos revela que no tienen el deseo de entender la naturaleza de su actividad filosófica. Por ese deseo de omnipotencia intelectual pagan con su ceguera respecto al carácter peculiar de sus expresiones. Wittgenstein llamó la atención respecto de la naturaleza de las proposiciones filosóficas diciendo que éstas no son el tipo de proposiciones para cuya aceptación o rechazo sea importante la experiencia.

Lazerowitz analiza la afirmación de Hume de que la sustancia no nos es revelada por ningún sentido, conclusión a la que llega en su investigación sobre si la sustancia es una cosa en la cual inhieren atributos experimentales. Esto nos recuerda la afirmación de Ayer de que lo único que nos revelan los sentidos son *sense-data*; ésta parece ser una generalización empírica que partiese del examen de casos concretos. Pero esto no es así, ya que no puede haber un contraejemplo teorético en el que algo fuese revelado por nuestros sentidos y no fuese *sense-data*. A las palabras: "es revelado por nuestros sentidos, pero no es un *sense-datum*", no se les ha dado uso descriptivo. Lo mismo ocurre con la afirmación de Hume cuando dice que los colores y las figuras no son sustancias, ésta tampoco es una generalización empírica sino que es la afirmación de una implicación, ya que la oración "ningún color es una sustancia" sería reformulable por: "ser un color implica no ser una sustancia". La conclusión a la que llega Hume es que a partir de los solos datos sensoriales no tenemos "ninguna idea de sustancia distinta de la de una colección de cualidades particulares". La investigación de Hume no fue una investigación sobre una colección de cualidades particulares, sino fue una investigación sobre algo además de esa colección, lo cual no encontró. La implicación de su afirmación es que el

nombre "sustancia" en el idioma inglés no tiene sentido literal; y de esto se sigue que "ser un color implica no ser una sustancia" no tiene sentido de la misma manera en que tampoco lo tiene "ser un color implica no ser un crul". Sin embargo, la primera afirmación es un sinsentido distinto al segundo, pues el enunciado de Hume nos enfrenta con un "enigma" que, no obstante, entendemos.

Ahora bien, si las proposiciones de la filosofía no son empíricas, es natural pensar que son *a priori*, ya sea lógicamente necesarias o lógicamente imposibles. Pero esto que es natural pensar acerca de las proposiciones fuera del campo filosófico, puede no ser verdad respecto de las proposiciones en la filosofía. Se considera comúnmente como equivalente el decir: "ser lógicamente necesarias" y "ser analíticas". Otros filósofos consideran que no todos los argumentos *a priori* son meramente explicativos; estos filósofos basan su esperanza de que la filosofía nos informe acerca de la realidad en el supuesto de que hay proposiciones lógicamente necesarias y a la vez no analíticas.

Independientemente de esta división de opiniones, es claro que de una investigación que consiste en un escrutinio de conceptos resultarán afirmaciones de implicaciones, ya sean éstas analíticas o sintéticas. La palabra "análisis" tiene un uso restringido en filosofía cuando sólo se refiere al procedimiento que tiene como resultado enunciados analíticos; y tiene un uso más amplio, cuando se aplica al procedimiento que tiene como resultado un enunciado de implicación sea éste tautológico o no. Cuando en filosofía el resultado de un análisis no se da en términos de implicación, esto es, cuando el análisis falla para ayudarnos a decidir si una afirmación de implicación es correcta o no, es, particularmente importante, llegar a una visión clara del asunto. Se ha afirmado que el análisis no es un procedimiento para definir una palabra, sino que es un tipo de examen de objetos estralingüísticos: los conceptos o proposiciones que son los significados de las expresiones de un lenguaje. Wittgenstein, en cambio, considera que el análisis es una investigación sobre el uso que tienen los términos en el lenguaje. La cuestión de si el análisis es una investigación sobre el uso verbal o sobre entidades extralingüísticas puede ser mejor determinada si se clarifica la naturaleza de los enunciados de implicación, o de las proposiciones lógicamente necesarias.

Los enunciados de implicación se pueden dividir en dos tipos: aquellos que se pueden llamar "enunciados de identidad", y aquellos cuyos consecuentes no están relacionados con sus antecedentes de esa manera. Los primeros no transmiten ninguna información sobre las cosas o sucesos por ser verdaderos bajo cualquier condi-

ción. Muchos de los filósofos que rechazan la idea de que las proposiciones *a priori* pueden ser sobre las cosas, sustentan la posición de que son verbales (sobre el uso actual de la terminología de un lenguaje). Una versión de este punto de vista es que las proposiciones *a priori* registran nuestra determinación sobre la manera como se han de usar las palabras; otra versión dice que son verdaderas por definición o por virtud del significado que tienen ciertas palabras; por último, hay otra versión que dice que son proposiciones sobre el uso de los términos y entonces son empíricas, ya que como el uso puede ser diverso, pueden ser en principio falsas. Una tercera postura sostiene la proposición que así como el ser *a priori* impide que sea sobre las cosas, así el ser *a priori* impide que sea sobre las palabras. Sostiene que una proposición *a priori* es una verdad acerca de conceptos, esto es, expresa una implicación que encierra entidades abstractas. Para entender lo que conocemos cuando conocemos que una proposición es verdadera *a priori* consideramos las oraciones que las expresan y comparamos éstas con (a) las oraciones que expresan proposiciones acerca de las cosas y (b) con oraciones que expresan proposiciones acerca del uso verbal, por ejemplo:

"Un parasol es un paraguas grande."
"La palabra 'parasol' significa paraguas grande."
"Un parasol es algo estorboso para cargar."

La segunda oración establece lo que conocemos al conocer que la primera oración expresa una afirmación verdadera *a priori*, pero la primera no establece lo que la segunda establece. La primera oración transmite, sin expresar, lo que la segunda abiertamente expresa, esto es, la segunda revela lo que la oración no verbal encubre. Para poner la diferencia en términos de la distinción entre uso y mención, la segunda menciona un término que ocurre, sin ser mencionado, en la primera. En cambio, la tercera oración no menciona ningún término, sino que usa la palabra "parasol" para referirla a algo, sea actual o imaginado, en tanto que en la primera este término ocurre sin referirse a nada. Tanto la primera como la tercera están en la forma de discurso ontológico (la forma de discurso que se usa para hacer enunciados acerca de la existencia y naturaleza de las cosas). La oración que expresa la proposición *a priori*, la primera a diferencia de la tercera no usa las palabras para referirse a las cosas, su superficie lingüística la hace parecida a la tercera, pero tiene un contenido similar a la segunda, esto es, a la oración verbal. Es el carácter ontológico de la forma de la oración que expresa la proposición *a priori* la que crea la ilusión de que el lenguaje se usa en este caso para expresar una idea acerca de los

hechos básicos de las cosas. Las oraciones que expresan proposiciones *a priori* transmiten sólo información acerca del uso actual de la terminología de un lenguaje, son "reglas de la gramática" (siguiendo la manera de hablar de Wittgenstein) pero son formuladas en el modo no verbal del discurso.

Volviendo a la afirmación de Hume: "no tenemos ninguna idea de la sustancia distinta de la de una colección de cualidades", ésta tiene sólo importancia gramatical. Afirma que los sustantivos representan a las cualidades, que es lo mismo que decir que los sustantivos son realmente adjetivos. Y el enunciado que dice que el color o la figura no son sustancias, es visto ahora como un enunciado que afirma que el nombre de color o figura no es un sustantivo.

Siguiendo a Wittgenstein, quien hizo la importante observación de que el filósofo al rechazar una forma de hablar se ilusiona al creer que echa abajo una proposición acerca de las cosas, nosotros podemos decir que el filósofo cambia disimuladamente el lenguaje bajo la ilusión de que nos revela el contenido del cosmos.