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Dualism and Categories

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Meeting of the Aristotelian Society at 21 Bedford Square, London, W.C.1,
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III—DUALISM AND CATEGORIES

By L. R. REINHARDT

I

In the *Philosophical Review* for July 1965, Jonathan Bennett writes: "Descartes was a dualist and Spinoza a monist. If this marks a contrast between them, there ought to be a question to which Descartes's answer was 'two' and Spinoza's 'one'." This is a refreshing approach to the question of substantial dualism, monism and pluralism. Bennett goes on to reject the questions (a) How many substances are there?, (b) How many basic kinds of substances are there?, and (c) Of how many substances does an embodied person consist? For Bennett's reasons for rejecting these questions, I refer the reader to his article. I am interested in the question Bennett says is the right one, namely (d), Given that *A* and *B* are basic, logically independent attributes, what is the smallest number of substances needed to instantiate both *A* and *B*? To this, according to Bennett, Descartes's answer is 'two' and Spinoza's is 'one'.

Interpreting dualism or monism in some such way is fashionable at the present time. John Watling¹ writes: "But his (Descartes's) doctrine of substance was in reality a doctrine of categories; when he spoke of 'a substance' he did not mean 'a thing' but 'a kind of thing'." Watling goes on to argue that Descartes's doctrine is a theory about properties (or predicates) presupposing other properties; he says that what is meant by a substance is the subject of predicates which satisfy two conditions: (1) the predicates do not presuppose or entail any other predicates; and (2) the predicates cannot both be true of the same thing or kind of thing.

Watling notes that no predicates will satisfy these conditions if they are interpreted with rigour. For any predicate entails the disjunctive predicate formed out of itself and any other predicate

¹ In *A Critical History of Western Philosophy*, ed., D. J. O'Connor, MacMillan, 1964.

you please. A doctrine of genuine properties is needed. But my purposes do not require me to go into that problem any further than to note it. We should be clear as to why both conditions are essential. If only the first condition were met, it would not follow that two such predicates could not be true, as a matter of fact, of the same object. And if only the second condition were met, we should get, to borrow an example of Watling's, both average plumbers and ordinary plumbers as substances. For the predicate 'having $2\frac{3}{4}$ children' can be true or false of average plumbers but not of ordinary plumbers, and the predicate 'lives at 14 Gower Street' can be true of an ordinary plumber but not of the average plumber. But it is plausible to argue that predicates such as 'having $2\frac{3}{4}$ children' are dependent on predicates like 'having 2 children' and not *vice versa*. So whatever it is that can have $2\frac{3}{4}$ children is not a substance. Naturally, it does not follow that what can have 2 children is either, for this predicate in turn presupposes other predicates.

There is an obvious similarity between Bennett's treatment of this issue and Watling's, though Bennett avoids the phrase 'kind of thing' in his final question. Bennett rightly argues that Spinoza could perfectly well say that there was an infinity of kinds of things, inasmuch as there is an infinity of *attributes*. Spinoza can be interpreted as saying that there are only two kinds of thing we can know about. That he calls particular things 'modes' is not really important in this connexion. Bennett agrees however, that Descartes can be understood as answering 'two' to the question how many basic kinds of thing there are. But the agreement between Descartes and Spinoza is too important to allow it to be obscured by the phrase 'kind of thing'. After all, they both subscribe to the view that everything we know reduces in some way to consciousness or extension and their modes.

Bennett's formulation has the advantage of avoiding the problem of disjunctive predicates. In his way of putting it, we only need 'basic, logically *independent* attributes'. A lot of work is being done here by the word 'basic'. But Bennett does not have to justify it, because it is clear enough that, for Descartes, extension and consciousness are basic in the sense that everything can be reduced to one or the other. The reduction may be doubtful and philosophers may want to argue about it, especially concerning

the truths of mathematics. But it is appropriate to understand 'reduction' here as exemplified by the relationship between propositions about average plumbers, and propositions about ordinary plumbers. It is not Bennett's concern, nor is it mine, to justify or criticize reductionist views, but what is aimed at in such theories is widely understood.

Now Descartes would no doubt agree that extension and consciousness were two such basic attributes and further that they are the *only* two. Since Descartes confused logical and mathematical truths with truths about concepts, he believed that these truths were about conscious beings. Again, we need only note this. I think it more interesting to worry about why Descartes thought there were *at least* two substances rather than to worry about why he thought there were *at most* two. There are various ways to worry about this and I am going to consider one of them in detail. My primary purpose is to show that approaching dualism as a theory about categories or kinds of things, and in terms of what can be predicated or not of the same kind of thing, is inadequate for rendering the force of dualism as a philosophical view. If this is true, it follows that overcoming dualism, if one wishes to, is not to be accomplished by arguing against its rendering in those terms.

A weakness that is immediately discernible in Watling's treatment of Descartes (though it is important to remember the limits of the place he is writing, a book designed to popularize philosophy) is the claim that substances which satisfy the two conditions are not thereby established as causally independent of each other. Watling rightly says that even if some predicate can be true of something without some other predicate also being true of it, it does not follow that, in fact, the properties involved do occur independently. There may be causal laws which link the properties and, in that sense, it may be impossible for the properties to occur independently. But Descartes does say, "We mean by substance nothing other than a thing *existing* in such a manner that it has need of no other thing in order to *exist*". To recast this too quickly into a doctrine about what can be *conceived* of without conceiving of anything else may strike us as missing something central to the rationalist tradition and its concept of a cause. On the other hand, it might be said that Descartes worked very hard

to find a link between the mental and the physical. So, it is not obviously unreasonable to attribute to him the strictly logical doctrine. But this is a piece of evidence that cuts both ways. For, the animal spirits must be susceptible to both mental and physical predicates, which, because of the second requirement of the logical doctrine, must be impossible.

My aims will best be served by allowing myself to fall into arguing in terms of categories and types or kinds of things. What I believe to be a spurious clarity can best be exhibited by indulging in it. To avoid building a straw man I shall draw extensively on a recent article by Professor Fred Sommers entitled "Predicability".²

II

Are there any compelling reasons for regarding mental predicates and physical predicates as true of different subjects? In general, what requires us to say that some pair of predicates must be true of, or false of, different *kinds* of things? Or, to raise the problem only slightly differently, when the same grammatical predicate is applied to what are, by antecedent conviction, different kinds of things, what requires us to say that the predicate is equivocal or ambiguous? The issue is related to philosophical disputes over, *e.g.*, whether 'The square root of 4 is purple' is a false proposition or merely a string of words which fails to express any proposition at all, whether such utterances are false or nonsense. Colours and numbers present the best examples of cases where it seems right to say that something is not the *sort* or *kind* of thing which can take, truly or falsely, some predicate.

The issue relates to dualism concerning a human being in the following way: There are things we say about others and ourselves, using proper names and the pronoun 'I' which seem to be restateable without loss by substituting for the proper name or for 'I' an identifying reference to a particular body. That I have blue eyes or brown hair or that I am lying on the floor, for example.

² "Predicability", in *Philosophy in America*; ed., Max Black, Allen & Unwin; London, 1965. Throughout Section II of this paper, I am summarizing Sommers and quotations are from his article.

But there are other things we say which seem to be odd when such substitution is indulged in. For example, 'I am extracting the root of 3,064' and 'I have a toothache'. I say only 'odd' here because to say nonsensical, without more ado, would beg the question Hobbes put to Descartes, 'Why cannot it be something corporeal which thinks?' An answer given to Hobbes's question *via* the category approach is that if 'extracting a root' or 'having a toothache' can be true or false of corporeal me, we shall have to allow that they can be true or false of a corporeal table. We shall have to agree, it seems, that either the table thinks or it doesn't. And many philosophers find this undesirable. Can this reaction be vindicated?

A digression is required here. I do not want to discuss in detail problems about the Law of Excluded Middle; but since I am discussing Sommers's views, I must mention his wider concerns which are related to that law. Sommers develops a general test for the equivocity of predicates and, concomitantly, for the 'coherence of ontologies'. I shall be describing this test presently. One of Sommers's motives is to justify what is no doubt widespread agreement that, *e.g.*, the word 'hard' does not mean the same thing in the phrase 'hard chair' and 'hard question'. The test he prescribes derives from a general theory of predicability. In this theory, Sommers distinguishes between the pairs: Denial/Affirmation and Negation/Assertion. Given this distinction, the Law of Excluded Middle is relevant only to assertion and negation, which apply only to entire propositions. Denial and affirmation apply only to the predicate of a proposition. Hence it is possible, according to Sommers, for both the denial and the affirmation of a proposition to be false. To illustrate, 'The number 2 is red' and 'The number 2 is not red' will *both* be false. This distinction also enables Sommers to maintain that both 'The King of France is bald' and 'The King of France is not bald' are false. His distinction is like that between external and internal negation, which does apply to general propositions such as 'Everyone is bald', and 'Someone is bald'. One defence for a view like Sommers's is that it allows us, when we say such things as 'The number one is neither red nor not red', to claim that we are speaking *truly*, even if the truth we state is a logical or a grammatical truth. I do not myself think much hinges on this. Paul

Benacereff has argued,³ rightly I believe, that whether you say of 'The number 2 is red' that it is false or nonsense doesn't much matter. For if you do insist that it is false, you must answer the question 'How do you know it is false?' And, in answering that question, it is quite likely you will bring forth pretty nearly the same considerations which would be adduced by the philosopher who said it was nonsense. In either case the general views lying behind the claim are what is important; the claim cannot go much beyond the support for it. My digression ends here. It has been necessary in order to do justice to Sommers's overall concern.

Given the plausibility of substituting descriptions of bodies for some uses of 'I' and of proper names, the problem develops as follows: If we assert of Smith both that he is lying in the next room and thinking of Vienna, must we construe the reference of the name 'Smith' as ambiguous or equivocal? It seems we must either do that or adopt a different alternative as follows: We may construe the predicate 'lying in the next room' as an equivocal predicate, having a different sense when applied to, say, Smith's dictionary and when applied to Smith himself. But this latter alternative seems to be undesirable. For, to take a different predicate, namely 'weighs 200 pounds', both Smith and his dictionary may each weigh 200 pounds and they could be weighed on the same scale. It seems ludicrous to say that 'weighs 200 pounds' is equivocal over Smith and his dictionary.

When might we have to say that a reference was equivocal? There is a kind of linguistic joke which is called a *zeugma*, in which equivocity of the subject term is the source of the humour, such as it is. Sommers gives these two examples: 'This period is smudged and lasts an hour' and 'The cape is stormy in winter and loose about her shoulders'. In the first case, we must locate some kind of equivocity or ambiguity in the expression 'The period' and in the second case we must do likewise with 'The cape'. Such sentences as these would be obvious jokes or tricks, as would be variations on them such as 'The smudged period lasted an hour' and 'The stormy cape was loose about her shoulders'. But, *e.g.*, a sentence such as 'The fat Smith was thinking of Vienna' seems to be perfectly all right. We may want to say here that the difference between persons and other things has simply been brought out by

³ In the *Philosophical Review*, 1965.

such contrasts. We just *do say* of the referents of proper names both that mental and physical predicates are true of them. But Sommers argues that it is not enough simply to notice that we do, in fact, *say* certain things and not others. These facts alone, he argues, cannot settle matters of categories and types or matters of equivocity. In arguing against straightforward ordinary language claims, Sommers presents some of his most persuasive points. I shall mention a number of them, add an example of my own, and draw some conclusions which are only implicit in Sommers's argument.

Sommers introduces a distinction between an 'individual' and an 'entity', sometimes using the phrase 'genuine individual'. This suggests a contrast or opposition between *genuine* individuals and *mere* entities. First, consider the phrase 'red earache'. Aches are just as bad candidates for colour predicates as numbers. Yet, for certain purposes, we might talk of a man having a red earache whenever his ear ached while it was red. This, according to Sommers, would only set up red earaches as entities, not as individuals. The introduction into our language of a phrase such as 'red earache' would be simply a matter of convenience, a manner of speaking. The introduction of this way of speaking would not establish that aches could really be red or not red. Sommers also considers sentences such as 'Iceland is a bankrupt island'. This example comes closest to the case of human proper names. The predicate 'being an island' is applicable, truly or falsely, only to bodies of land, while the predicate 'being bankrupt' can be true only of persons or corporations. (Incidentally, it can be shown by Sommers's own test that 'bankrupt' is equivocal over persons and corporations.) Yet we do say that Iceland is both bankrupt and an island. Hence we are led to construe the name 'Iceland' as equivocal or ambiguous. 'Iceland' does not name a genuine individual, and in so far as we think of such names as names of unitary things, it is merely a convention, again a manner of speaking.

Consider the following example, which is my own, but which supports Sommers's line of argument: Suppose there were a culture in which it was a matter of life and death to know the favourite number of the monarch or chief. All monarchs and chiefs must select a number and promulgate the name of it to the

community when they assume office. This number might plausibly come to be called 'the purple number'. Hence, in a particular community of this culture, it might be said that the square root of 4 was purple. It might even be that public accounts were kept in a way influenced by this practice. The exchequer might only be willing to refer to the number 2 by using circumlocutions such as '5 minus 3' or 'the square root of 4', *etc.* And perhaps, any of these expressions, if written down, had to be in purple, and the numeral '2' in a yet deeper purple; or maybe they could never write down that numeral at all. Perhaps the vocable '2' could only be uttered in the course of certain rituals, and perhaps only by certain people. The accountants might become a political force, trying always to persuade the new monarch or chief to adopt the same number so that their books wouldn't get messed up through retroactive alterations.

Now in spite of such a story, we will still be inclined to insist that numbers *can't* be coloured, that they are not the sort of thing that can take colour predicates. But we cannot seriously challenge the intelligibility or meaningfulness of the way the people in this culture carry on. It may be silly, even pernicious, but it makes sense. Hence, we shall be led to agree that it is only a manner of speaking, a mere convention. Not only that, but the way of speaking can come to look like almost a prejudice or a bad habit. Examples like these are persuasive and I believe they actually carry some weight against arguments which go no further than pointing out, by repeating them, *sentences* which we do, in fact, utter from time to time in our daily lives.

The way I interpret Sommers, he is suggesting that Descartes was rather like an anthropologist or coloniser who might try to correct the numerical discourse of this tribe. Descartes was, in effect, arguing that our use of proper names as referring to genuine individuals which can take categorically different predicates is just a convention, perhaps a deeply rooted convention or *practice*, but still, seen properly, ultimately a manner of speaking. There may be reasons of interest to historians, psychologists and anthropologists as to why this practice has arisen. But, metaphysically and logically, it is an erroneous form of discourse.

Sommers does not, I think, believe in spiritual beings distinct from bodies. He seems to want us to be more candid in our

rejections of Cartesianism, in our rejections of non-corporeal thinking things. He claims that we have only two alternatives. We must 'adopt a spiritless language', which he says is Ryle's solution, or we must accept spirits into our ontology and straightforwardly deny their actual existence. According to Sommers there is a 'coherent ontology' with spirits in it and one without them. By an ontology, he means, we might say, a stable of possible beings. Either we must clean up this stable or we must agree that in denying the existence of spirits, we are doing nothing significantly different from denying the actual existence of unicorns, which, pretty clearly, would be included in anybody's ontology in Sommers's sense of that term.

Sommers doesn't depend mainly on the persuasiveness of the examples I have cited, nor on his distinction between individuals and entities. His main arguments involve a test for things being of different types, a test for equivocity of predicates, and, internal to this, a test for coherent ontologies. I shall now summarize this part of his article.

Sommers initial concern is to show that the entire rejection of type differences, as found in philosophers such as Quine, arises out of failing to go beyond a perfectly good test for answering the question whether two things are of different types. This test is as follows: 'Two things are of different types if and only if there are two predicates P and Q such that it makes sense to predicate P of the first thing but not of the second and it makes sense to predicate Q of the second thing but not of the first.' For example, take lectures and headaches. It makes sense to say of a lecture that it was delivered by a speaker but not of a headache (one may feel doubtful about this), while it makes sense to say of a headache that it was cured, but not of a lecture (again, the examples admit of disagreement). Now, some predicates obviously apply to both lectures and headaches, *e.g.*, 'lasted an hour' or 'was of interest to psychologists'. This fact, Sommers submits, has been taken to show that there are really not any differences deserving the name type differences. And this, to Sommers unfortunate, conclusion is reached for the following reasons: In effect the converse of the test cited is accepted as also true, this converse reading 'If there is a predicate P , which applies to both of two things univocally, then the two things are of the same type.' But, to take Quines'

position, it can be argued that 'exists' is a predicate which applies univocally to everything it applies to. And, if this extension to vacuity goes too far, we can at least see that temporal predicates and such predicates as 'is of interest to psychologists' will apply univocally to many things which satisfy the original, unconverted test. So either there will be no type differences or not very many. (It never occurs to Sommers to defend his view against Quine by agreeing that 'exists' applies univocally to everything it applies to and then adopting Frege's view that existence is a property of concepts; a concept, as I shall discuss later, is a pretty obvious candidate for being an entity of a different type than the things which fall under it.)

Sommers thinks the difficulty lies in accepting the theory that a type difference, arrived at by the weak test, will, as he puts it, *enforce ambiguity* in *any* predicate applied to the two things. Some way has to be found of allowing type differences which still allows some predicates to apply univocally to different types of things. Sommers starts on relatively uncontroversial ground. One of the most persuasive points in this part of his article is the example of 'hard chair' and 'hard question'. He argues that if the word 'hard' is univocal here, it ought to make sense to ask if the question is harder than the chair or *vice versa*. It must be admitted that we are reluctant to agree with Quine in this case.

Sommers goes on to his test for 'enforcing ambiguity' in predicates. This test is to be applied after it has already been established by the original test that two things are of different types. The test is as follows: "If *a*, *b* and *c* are any three things and *P* and *Q* are predicates such that it makes sense to predicate *P* of *a* and *b* but not of *c* and it makes sense to predicate *Q* of *b* and *c* but not of *a*, then *P* must be equivocal over *a* and *b*, or *Q* must be equivocal over *b* and *c*. Conversely, if *P* and *Q* are univocal predicates, then there can be no three things, *a*, *b* and *c* such that *P* applies to *a* and to *b* but not to *c*, while *Q* applies to *b* and to *c* but not to *a*." The ontological element in this test is explicit, and Sommers wants it to be a test for what he calls 'coherent ontologies'. He is making a recommendation for the carrying on of a certain kind of philosophical argument.

What about our hard chair and our hard question? What we wanted was something which vindicates our intuition that 'hard'

is equivocal in these two cases. We have seen that questions and chairs pass the test for being of different types. Using the new test for 'enforcing ambiguity', we take a third thing, let us say a pause. And we need another predicate, let us say 'thoughtful'. 'Hard' makes sense of chairs and questions, but not of pauses; and 'thoughtful' makes sense of questions and pauses, but not of chairs. Therefore, either 'thoughtful' is equivocal over questions and pauses or 'hard' is equivocal over chairs and questions; or, the least likely alternative in this case, there can be no possible world in which chairs, questions and pauses coexist. Given these alternatives, we will very likely agree that 'hard' is equivocal, though the test allows us to say that both predicates are equivocal if we want to do that. Sommers's own example concerns the predicates 'thoughtful' and 'five feet high' applied to fences, men and statements. Here the test will enforce ambiguity in 'thoughtful'. In this case, we see that we can still retain the belief that men and fences are different kinds of things and the belief that a predicate like 'five feet high' applies to things in different categories or things of different types.

Sommers regards his test as sufficient to dispose of the ontology of P. F. Strawson,⁴ which includes *disembodied* spirits. Sommers notes that Strawson's views, like Ryle's, are calculated to eliminate the ghost in the machine, but that Strawson does allow ghosts outside of machines, to which it is essential that they should once *have been* persons. But Strawson's *M*-predicates no longer significantly apply to them. We cannot significantly ask of the immortal spirit of Socrates what colour it is, or how much it weighs. So, in Strawson's ontology, there are three things, bodies, persons and spirits such that the predicate 'weighs a hundred pounds' applies to two of them but not to the other and such that the predicate 'thinks' applies to two of them but not to the other. The test proves that at least one of these predicates must be equivocal. But, argues Sommers, if the notion of immortal spirits is to make sense, at least some *P*-predicates must apply univocally to them and to persons. Hence, Strawson's ontology is incoherent. Sommers suggests that the way out might be to allow spirits full personal status, that is, allow that all *M*-predicates applicable to

⁴ *Individuals*, Chapter 3; Methuen & Co; London, 1959.

a living man apply to them as well. But then, he asks, rhetorically, how much does the immortal spirit of Socrates weigh?

Sommers argues that not only is Descartes's ontology coherent, but it is the ontology we must adopt once we choose to 'speak of immortal spirits in the usual sense'. (He does not, apparently, think that there is any difficulty about this 'usual sense'.) He says that Descartes's doctrine is 'inevitable' even if we wish to deny the existence of such spirits. Sommers notes that Strawson has correctly pointed out the 'fundamental move' made by Descartes: "The Cartesian error is a special case of the general . . . of thinking of designations, or apparent designations, of persons as not denoting precisely the same thing or entity for all kinds of predicates ascribed to the entity designated. That is, if we are to avoid the general form of this error, we must not think of 'I' or 'Smith' as suffering from type ambiguity".⁵

"But", says Sommers, "for anyone who chooses to speak of disembodied spirits this is no error. For now it is no longer possible to consider 'Smith' univocal in statements predicating weight and consciousness of him. Neither Descartes nor Strawson is prepared to find ambiguity in either 'thinks' or 'weighs' as these are said of spirits and men and men and stones respectively. If we are to save this piece of ontology, we have no choice left but to find the ambiguity in 'Smith'. What Strawson calls an 'error' is precisely what results from talk about thinking spirits, heavy stones, and fat conscious persons. Strawson's avoidance of this 'error' is precisely what is responsible for the incoherence of his own doctrine. For as we have seen it applied, the rule here requires that we *lay all the ghosts in the language* or else let them inside the machine as well. Letting them inside Smith's machine causes 'Smith' to suffer from type ambiguity. Keeping them out and asserting Strawson's doctrine that persons are 'primitive' individuals, requires that we *give up talk of spirits altogether*. It means keeping them out of the language." (Italics mine.)

Sommers says that this 'radical solution' is that of Ryle, and that only Ryle's solution is consistent with the primitiveness of persons. Sommers comments on Strawson's suggestion that another alternative might be to 'locate ambiguity' in some *M*-predicates, such as 'is in the drawing room'. Sommers claims

⁵ *Ibid.*

that this won't do. We shall have to argue that *M*-predicates are systematically ambiguous. But if *all M*-predicates are ambiguous, there is little point in distinguishing between *M* and *P* predicates in the first place.

III

I shall now return completely to my own person; not that I haven't been intrusive in the course of sketching Sommers's views. The upshot of the criticism which follows is that dualism cannot be illuminated satisfactorily by the preceding method of argument. But I will not resist the temptation of making some more general criticisms of the kind of philosophising this method represents.

First, is it true that Descartes is 'locating the ambiguity' in the particular? This seems plausible enough for a proper name. But what about the fact that we do say of a computer that it is 'doing an algebra problem' or 'playing chess', even 'playing chess well'? If Descartes consented to express himself in Sommers's terms, he would have to say that 'playing chess' was equivocal over computers and persons. If not, Descartes would have to put ghosts into every machine of which we do, in fact, say that they do things. Even 'presses trousers' will have to be ambiguous. And, adopting Sommers's terms, how would Descartes express his view that animals are simply complicated mechanisms? We do say that a dog is 'in pain'. But 'in pain' will have to be equivocal over dogs and persons. This suggests that Strawson's suggestion about treating *some* predicates as equivocal over persons and material bodies cannot be treated so lightly. Assuming that you have to discuss the problem in terms of univocity and ambiguity, there is no way to avoid regarding action predicates as equivocal over human beings and machines and mechanisms, except by arguing that in *both* cases some kind of reduction to physical predicates is possible or by putting ghosts into all the machines. It seems to me a better way of understanding Descartes is to see that he is, in effect, saying that in the case of machines, including animals, predicates like 'in pain' or 'extracting a root' *are* thus reducible, while with human beings they are not. But is that a theory which amounts to saying that the predicates are *equivocal*? If so 'plumber' will be equivocal in 'average plumber' and 'good plumber'. The weakness of

approaching this issue on a word by word, or phrase by phrase basis begins to emerge here.

The case of computers allows a criticism of Sommers in terms of his own test. Consider the three things, a computer, an automobile and a man. And take the predicates 'made by General Motors' and 'extracting a root'. Now, if it is helpful anywhere—I don't say it is—to talk of sorts of things and kinds of things, it is surely plausible to claim that an automobile is not the sort of thing that either does or does not extract roots and that a man is not the sort of thing that either is or is not made by General Motors. Hence, 'extracting a root' must be equivocal over the computer and the man. Both the computer and the automobile would be 'made by General Motors' in the same sense. (A man could be 'made by General Motors' in the sense that the corporation might have promoted him rapidly to a position of great power and prestige.)

The only other alternative I can see for Sommers is to argue that a man *could* be 'made by General Motors'. But this argument would simply raise all the problems of dualism in all the familiar ways. If this is going to happen even with the test available to us, it is hard to appreciate the utility of the test.

The question of what is going to count as manufacturing a human being raises epistemological problems. Sommers, at the end of his article, is critical of the epistemological criticisms of metaphysics which he associates with Kant, and applauds the revival of philosophical logic as the tool of critics of metaphysics. He says: "For it may turn out that once we solve the right problems in philosophical logic we shall discover that Kant belongs to his century and not to ours." I don't see how philosophy can avoid making use of both kinds of criticism and see no good reason whatsoever why on earth it should try to. Nor is the line between them as obvious as Sommers is assuming.

Descartes's metaphysics is *not* simply a matter of 'locating the ambiguity' in the particular terms. To call this his fundamental move is a travesty. This may be *one* way to elucidate his views about the duality of the living human being; but it isn't enough, because it gives no clear method of elucidating his closely related views about animals or what would certainly *be* his view, that machines do not really calculate. In these cases, it cannot be a

matter of locating the ambiguity in the particular unless we allow the bizarre consequence that machines, like human beings, have souls.

I deliberately mentioned the predicate 'playing chess well' in connexion with computers. For I want to make a fairly minor criticism of Sommers's remarks about comparatives. Recall he said that if 'hard' were univocal over chairs and questions, we should meaningfully be able to ask whether a question was harder than a chair or *vice versa*. At most, this is a necessary condition of univocity, and that is not beyond argument.⁶

There are comparatives, other than temporal predicates, which run right across what Sommers would call type differences. We might say a computer plays chess better than Jones does, or that a man's composure was more resilient than a rubber ball, or that a man's heart was harder than a stone, or that a man's manners were rougher than a corn cob. These verbal possibilities suggest a more serious criticism of Sommers. I said that he applauded the revival of philosophical logic. But I do not think he is taking seriously enough the philosopher most responsible for it, namely Frege. Nor is he attending carefully enough to Ryle, whom he also praises. Frege said that a word had meaning only in the context of a proposition. Ryle says, over and over again, that the meaning of a word is a matter of the contribution it makes to the propositions into which it enters. If one believes that there is truth in these *dicta*, then they ought to be taken seriously. Quine did take them seriously, and carried the idea even further, perhaps too far. His famous statement of the progress of the theory of meaning is apt here. Quine⁷ claims that with Plato, the unit of meaning was the word, with Frege it was the proposition; but, according to Quine, it is the whole of the language of science. Once we appreciate this more general view of Quine's, his saying that 'hard' is not ambiguous over chairs and questions does not inspire reluctance, though the whole view itself may. But it is that whole view which has to be attacked. The little corner of it

⁶ *Studies in Empirical Philosophy*, by John Anderson; Angus & Robertson, 1962.

⁷ In *From a Logical Point of View*, Harvard University Press, 1961.

on which Sommers pitches his tent affords opportunities only for reconnaissance.

The apparatus of equivocity, univocity and ambiguity, with their companion terms of criticism, 'metaphor' and 'literal' is not enough. Something a bit less neat is required. Possibly some progress can be made with a notion of a central core of use for a word, with the related image of radiation out from the core. But this will be more like the family resemblance views of Wittgenstein. And to make it fruitful philosophically, it seems to me necessary to consider as well the view of Wittgenstein that what has to be accepted as 'the given' is 'forms of life'. We can see Wittgenstein's latest view as somewhere between Frege and Ryle on the one hand and Quine on the other. If we have to have a *dictum*, perhaps it should be 'A word has meaning only in the form of life in which it is imbedded.'

Sommers is perpetrating what I shall call, for fashionability's sake, 'ontological alienation'. He is doing no more than appealing to the ways we talk when he says that something is not the sort or kind of thing which takes some predicate or other. And yet he manages to make these ways of talking, modes of discourse, and their related forms of life appear to be in need of some standard by which they can be justified. Sommers is erecting categories and types into a structure, a foundation, to which we can appeal when we feel the need to *justify* or find rationales for the ways we talk. Our activities have to be measured up against the way things metaphysically are.

To talk of something not being the sort or kind of thing that can be *F* or *G* is a way of talking about the ways we talk; it is a mode of representing what we understand about what we do say and do not say. Sommers is reading this mode of representation into a metaphysical reality, or, I suppose, a logical reality, which philosophy is supposed to inspect. But in the course of the inspection, all we will ever examine will be human activities and the language that is internal to them. Sommers uses the words 'kind' and 'sort' in his article when he is invoking his test. Yet, in the ordinary use of these words, there is such a variety of possibilities that saying some *A* is not the kind of thing some *B* is, can be right from one point of view and wrong from another. A tractor and a harrow are the same kind of thing, farm implements, but a tractor is not the kind of thing that has blades in it. A

refrigerator and a cooker are both the same kind of thing, kitchen equipment, but a refrigerator is not the kind of thing you bake a cake in.

Now, it might be replied to these examples that, in neither case are we compelled to use an expression like 'kind of thing' or 'kind of object' or 'kind of entity'. We can always say 'different kind of farm implement' or 'different kind of kitchen equipment'. The reply might continue with the observation that the philosophically interesting cases are those where we find that in the expression 'kind of . . .', we are compelled to insert such words as 'thing', 'object' and 'entity'. It would be further claimed that these are the cases which lead us to theories of categories and types. There is genuine force in this claim. It *is* in these cases where we *do* find something of more philosophical interest than in cases of farm implements and kitchen equipment.

But I think that this greater interest is due to the formality of concepts like 'object', 'thing' and 'entity'. For my purposes the cash value of 'formality' is sufficiently specified by noting that questions such as 'How many objects (things, entities) are there in this room?' or 'How many things do you own?' do not give any clear directions for an answer. They contrast sharply with questions such as 'How many books are there in this room?' Questions like the latter only raise borderline case problems, and while the phenomenon of borderline cases is of philosophical interest in itself, not very many particular cases of it are, and they usually come in as examples of some more general difficulty. Words like 'object' and 'thing' do not carry with them any principle of individuation; they are about as 'topic neutral' as a word can get. An important feature of this formality is that in determining what kind of object or thing something is, you must examine the mode of reference appropriate to it. But references are internal to forms of discourse. 'Reference' is itself a formal concept. Since references and identifications are internal to discourse of some kind, the philosophical interest in kinds of object is virtually the *same* interest as the philosophical interest in modes of reference in different kinds of discourse. To quote an apt claim of David Shwayder's: "We probe the metaphysics of the referent by picking at the logic of the reference."⁸ Another way to put

⁸ In *Modes of Referring and the Problem of Universals*, University of California Press, 1961.

the point is to say that the pair 'reference-object' must be defined in a circle, though not a vicious one.⁹ So I would agree that there is a legitimately greater interest in those cases where the phrase 'kind of . . .' must be filled out by words like 'object'. But this actually supports my position that to talk of categories of things is a way of talking about our ways of talking. Consequently theories about types and kinds of things must look to our language for their justification and not *vice versa*.

I am not, however, attacking the notion of a category or a type as it is used in connexion with the difference, *e.g.*, between concept and object in Frege, or substance and quality in Aristotle, or any use of the notion in connexion with the issue of particular and universal. Distinctions such as these are often got across by philosophers by saying such peculiar things as 'Humanity is not a man', which we might also express in the form 'Being a man is not itself manly', and then depending on our hearer to *take* this in the right way. The crucial distinction though, is the one Frege was getting at with his distinction between concept and object, with his related metaphors of the unsaturated and the saturated. For this distinction is required in order to appreciate the difference between a proposition and a mere list. Now, no test like Sommers's is needed for this distinction. Even if Sommers's test works for this difference, applying it would just be an empty exercise. Anyone who didn't see the relevant distinction already would hardly be convinced by the test.

Now, the extension of category differences beyond these obvious cases would be worth while if, in any given case, the difference argued for could be exhibited as, contrary to appearances, a case of this genuinely categorical kind. But this will always require argument and some kind of philosophical theory. Only if cases like 'Saturday is in bed' can, by argument, be exhibited as special cases of the concept-object kind of distinction is calling them category-mistakes worthwhile. The way to do it with 'Saturday is in bed' is not clear to me for it raises the problem of Time. So long as this is not done, though, the peculiarity of

⁹ For a thorough discussion of this point, see D. W. Hamlyn "Categories, Formal Concepts and Metaphysics", in *Philosophy* 1959.

such locutions will only look like a symptom of something else. After all, *some* sense can always be given to such locutions; it is only a matter of being sufficiently imaginative, or, in some cases, sufficiently perverse. Even the well-known example ‘Colourless green ideas sleep furiously’, can be taken to be a way of saying that uninteresting, immature theories are definitely not in circulation, thus making it a synthetic and false proposition.

Before a theory like Sommers’s can be of any use, antecedent judgments have to be made about the sense or nonsense of locutions which conform, at least superficially, to the rules of English grammar. But it remains to be established that any *a priori* limits can be erected for determining what utterances will be incapable of being given *some* sense. Why should we expect that such a theory is even possible? Why, for that matter, is it even desirable? Is philosophy to *legislate* for poetry?

IV

I come now to a more general criticism of the general approach of which Sommers presents an example. I said earlier that his tools are the concepts of univocity, equivocity and ambiguity. These are usually wielded along with the notion of a metaphor and of literal truth. Now, here, I think, one of Austin’s bits of advice is invaluable. Usually, interest in the contrast between the literal and the metaphorical focuses on the metaphorical. Austin said we should attend to the other halves of our favourite dichotomies. Stanley Cavell¹⁰ has followed this advice in the present case with some fruitful results. Cavell notes that the contrast between literal and non-literal truth is clearest with what are called ‘idioms’. For example, ‘He fell flat on his face’, ‘He has got a fly in his ointment’, or ‘He has got a bee in his bonnet’. If someone said, concerning any of these that he meant it literally, we should see immediately what was up. (Cavell, writing for an American audience, didn’t notice that it mightn’t be clear with ‘He has got a bee in his bonnet’. Does this mean that the idiom has *two* literal senses?) But with what are usually acknowledged to be metaphors, the case is not so clear. Take, for instance, ‘Juliet is the sun’ and suppose that someone said

¹⁰ “Aesthetic Problems of Modern Philosophy”, in *Philosophy in America*, ed., Max Black; Allen & Unwin, London 1965.

that he meant *that* literally, that he meant it was literally true that Juliet was the sun. Or consider an example suggested to me by Peter Winch, namely St. Francis's 'See the flowers of the field, how they praise God'. One just doesn't know what to do with that if he has to answer yes or no the question whether it is meant literally or metaphorically. One view of metaphor is that it involves an analogy between the original use and the extended use. But that won't very obviously do here. For, to take the paradigm analogy case, 'foot of a man' extended to 'foot of a mountain', the basis of the analogy, the relative position of a man's foot to his head, could have been easily discerned *before* the word 'foot' was extended to descriptions of landscapes. But the words of St. Francis were probably intended to have an effect which presupposes that something about the ordinary case had been unnoticed; or intended to evoke a different or new understanding of the original case. Our understanding of the activities normally called 'praising God' may be altered by words such as those of St. Francis. And surely much of what poets strive for is what we may call backlash on our ordinary ways of perceiving, and understanding.

V

I want now to say something about the suggestion implicit in Sommers's article that our ways of speaking are often *mere* manners of speaking. This suggestion arises mainly out of his distinction between individuals and entities. I have said that his contrast suggests a distinction between *genuine* individuals and *mere* entities. Now these phrases strike me as simply a couple of clubs with which we are being beaten (in fact, beaten back about 30 years in the progress of philosophy). To talk of red earaches, *now*, would, I agree, strike us as a mere manner of speaking. But I don't see why it wouldn't be just as genuine an individual as any other disease if it became a well-established piece of medical language. An argument that diseases and disorders themselves are not proper or genuine individuals might be interesting. It would, I think, involve the kind of categorical distinctions which I said earlier were clear and usually obvious.

If we would give up talk of red earaches more readily than we would give up talk of human beings as individuals who bear both mental and physical predicates, that is a fact about our practices,

about our conventions. A convention need not be anything arbitrary or even something *we* can alter. Pascal certainly did not mean the word that way when he said that convention was man's nature. Even if we allow Sommers's arguments to lead us to the conclusion that our way of talking about human beings is a more deeply rooted human practice or form of life than our way of talking about bankrupt islands or purple numbers, I feel a strong urge simply to reply, 'So what?' That is the way we talk; that is the way we are. It is not *just* that we utter certain sentences but that we say certain things; and it is not *just* that we say certain things, but that the uttering and the saying are imbedded in a form of life.

VI

I have argued that the representation of Descartes's position and therefore of philosophical dualism in general, as a matter of category differences is inaccurate and not very informative. I have also argued against the general fruitfulness of talk about categories, kinds and types, except in cases such as the difference between concept and object. Beyond this, a theory of categories requires a *theory* of sense and nonsense, and a way of distinguishing different senses within sense. I would endorse Sommers's general theory of predicability, with its distinction between internal and external negation. But the application of that theory to many philosophical problems cannot be carried out independently of a test for equivocity and ambiguity. And in setting up his test Sommers does no more than appeal to talk of kinds and sorts of things.¹¹ I have argued that his appeal is only an appeal to the ways we talk and, concomitantly, that categories set up on this basis must look to our language for their justification and not *vice versa*. This being so, no such theory can be strong enough to undermine our attribution of both mental and physical predicates to human beings. On this level, Strawson is right, 'persons' are primitive entities, genuine individuals. (I should not myself use

¹¹ This point is not affected by the fact that Sommers's test follows from his general theory of predicability. For the theory is *formal*. The use of the theorems which constitute the test requires prior agreement that some predicate *does not apply* to some object. It is at this point that the appeal to sorts and kinds comes in.

the word 'person' in this connexion.) And Sommers's attempt to criticize Strawson, to show his ontology as incoherent, fails. For Strawson's ontology involves no more difficulty than does Descartes's, at least when taken in the manner Sommers represents them. Both philosophers will have to 'locate ambiguity' in *some* predicates.

But this is only so if the right way of dealing with the problems is in terms of equivocity and ambiguity in the first place. And I have tried to raise doubts about that. The view, no doubt shared by many who wouldn't willingly wear the tag 'dualist', that machines do not really think, is not illuminated by saying that 'thinking' is equivocal over persons and machines. One does not, if one believes machines don't think, regard the problem as resolved by saying that machines think in a different sense, or that metaphorically, they think, or that, in a manner of speaking, they think. What one believes is that they do not think *at all*. And an account is needed of why, even though one does believe this, it is still perfectly intelligible to *say* of machines that they press trousers, solve problems, *etc.* An account is needed of why we are convinced that it would be silly to quit talking this way.