Philosophical Discoveries

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I.—PHILOSOPHICAL DISCOVERIES[1]

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I

THERE are two groups of philosophers in the world at present who often get across one another. I will call them respectively ' analysts ' and ' metaphysicians ', though this is strictly speaking inaccurate—for the analysts are in fact often studying the same old problems of metaphysics in their own way and with sharper tools, and the metaphysicians of an older style have no exclusive or proprietary right to the inheritance of Plato and Aristotle who started the business. Now metaphysicians often complain of analysts that, instead of doing *ontology*, studying *being qua being* (or for that matter *qua* anything else), they study only *words*. My purpose in this paper is to diagnose one (though only one) of the uneasinesses which lie at the back of this common complaint (a complaint which analysts of all kinds, and not only those of the ' ordinary-language ' variety, have to answer). The source of the uneasiness seems to be this : there are some things in philosophy of which we want to say that we *know* that they are so—or even that we can *discover* or *come to know* that they are so—as contrasted with merely deciding arbitrarily that they are to be so ; and yet we do not seem to know that these things are so by any observation of empirical fact. I refer to such things as that an object cannot both have and not have the same quality. These

[1] Sections 2-5 and 7 of this paper appeared in the *Journal of Philosophy*, liv (1957), 741, in a symposium with Professors Paul Henle and S. Körner entitled ' The Nature of Analysis '. The whole paper could not be printed there for reasons of space, and I am grateful to the editors of the *Journal* for permission to include in this revised version of the complete paper the extract already printed.

things used to be described as metaphysical truths ; now it is more customary, at any rate among analysts, to express them metalinguistically, for example by saying that propositions of the form ' p and not p ' are analytically false.   An analyst who says this is bound to go on to say what he means by such expressions as ' analytically false ' ;   and the account which he gives will usually be of the following general sort : to say that a proposition is analytically false is to say that it is false in virtue of the meaning or use which we give to the words used to express it, and of nothing else.   But this way of speaking is not likely to mollify the metaphysician ; indeed, he might be pardoned if he said that it made matters worse.   For if philosophical statements are statements about how words are *actually* used by a certain set of people, then their truth will be contingent—whereas what philosophers seem to be after are necessary truths : but if they are expressions of a certain philosopher's *decision* to use words in a certain way, then it seems inappropriate to speak of our *knowing* that they are true.   The first of these alternatives would seem to make the findings of philosophy contingent upon linguistic practices which might be other than they are ; the second would seem to turn philosophy into the making of fiats or conventions about how a particular writer or group of writers is going to use terms—and this does not sound as if it would provide answers to the kind of questions that people used to be interested in, like ' Can an object both have and not have the same quality, and if not why not ? '   This is why to speak about ' decisions ' (Henle, *op. cit.* pp. 753 ff.) or about ' rules ' which are ' neither true nor false ' (Körner, *op. cit.* pp. 760 ff.) will hardly assuage the metaphysician's legitimate anxiety, although both of these terms are likely to figure in any successful elucidation of the problem.

It is worth pointing out that this dilemma which faces the analyst derives, historically, from what used to be a principal tenet of the analytical movement in its early days—the view that all meaningful statements are either analytic (in the sense of analytically true or false) or else empirical.   From this view it seems to follow that the statements of the philosopher must be either empirical or analytic ; otherwise we can only call them meaningless, or else not really statements at all but some other kind of talk.   Many analysts failed to see the difficulty of their position because of a confusion which it is easy to make.   It is easy to suppose that the proposition that such and such another proposition is analytically true, or false (the proposition of the analyst) is itself analytic, and therefore fits readily into one of

the approved categories of meaningful discourse. But, though it may *perhaps* be true, it is not *obviously* true that to say ' Propositions of the form " *p* and not *p* " are analytically false ' is to make an analytically true statement ; for is not this a statement about how the words ' and not ' are used ? And is it analytically true that they are used in this way ? There are conflicting temptations to call the statement analytic, and empirical, and neither. The early analysts therefore ought to have felt more misgivings than most of them did feel about the status of their own activities ; and this might have made them more sympathetic towards the metaphysicians, whose activities are of just the same dubious character (neither clearly empirical nor clearly analytic).

This is not to say that the matter has not been widely discussed since that time ; and indeed there are certain well-known simple remedies for the perplexity. But I am not convinced that the disease is yet fully understood ; and until it is, metaphysicians and analysts will remain at cross purposes. It is a pity that the early analysts, in general, tended to follow the lead, not of Wittgenstein, but of Carnap. Wittgenstein was moved by doubts on this point among others to describe his own propositions as ' nonsensical ' (*Tractatus*, 6.54) ; but Carnap wrote, ' [Wittgenstein] seems to me to be inconsistent in what he does. He tells us that one cannot state philosophical propositions and that whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent ; · and then instead of keeping silent, he writes a whole philosophical book ' (*Philosophy and Logical Syntax*, p. 37), thus indicating that he did not take Wittgenstein's misgivings as seriously as he should have. At any rate, the time has surely come when metaphysicians ought to co-operate in attacking this problem, which touches them both so nearly.

Once it is realised that the propositions of the analyst are not obviously analytic, a great many other possibilities suggest themselves. Are they, for example, empirical, as Professor Braithwaite has recently affirmed ?[1] Or are some of them analytic and some empirical. Or are they sometimes ambiguous, so that the writer has no clear idea which of these two things (if either) they are ? Or are they, not statements at all, but resolves, stipulations or rules ? Or, lastly, are they (to use an old label which has little if any explanatory force) synthetic *a priori* ? These possibilities all require to be investigated.

This paper is intended to serve only as a prolegomenon to such an investigation. It takes the form of an analogy. If we could

[1] *An empiricist's view of the nature of religious belief*, p. 11.

find a type of situation in which the same sort of difficulty arises, but in a much clearer and simpler form, we might shed some light on the main problem. In choosing a much simpler model, we run the risk of over-simplification ; but this is a risk which has to be taken if we are to make any progress at all. If we are careful to notice the differences, as well as the similarities, between the model and that of which it is a model, we shall be in less danger of misleading ourselves.

The suggestion which I am going tentatively to put forward might be described as a demythologised version of Plato's doctrine of *anamnesis*. Plato says that finding out the definition of a concept is like remembering or recalling. If this is correct, some of the difficulties of describing the process are accounted for. To remember (whether a fact, or how to do something) is not (or at any rate not obviously) to make an empirical discovery ; yet it is not to make a decision either. So there may be here a way of escaping from the analyst's dilemma.

II

Suppose that we are sitting at dinner and discussing how a certain dance is danced. Let us suppose that the dance in question is one requiring the participation of a number of people —say one of the Scottish reels. And let us suppose that we have a dispute about what happens at a particular point in the dance ; and that, in order to settle it, we decide to dance the dance after dinner and find out. We have to imagine that there is among us a sufficiency of people who know, or say they know, how to dance the dance—in the sense of ' know ' in which one may know how to do something without being able to *say* how it is done.

When the dance reaches the disputed point everybody may dance as he thinks the dance should go ; or they may all agree to dance according to the way that one party to the dispute says it should go. Whichever of these two courses they adopt, there are several things which may, in theory, happen. The first is, chaos—people bumping into one another so that it becomes impossible, as we should say, for the dance to proceed. The second is that there is no chaos, but a dance is danced which, though unchaotic, is not the dance which they were trying to dance—not, for example, the dance called ' the eightsome reel '. The third possibility is that the dance proceeds correctly. The difficulty is to say how we tell these three eventualities from one another, and whether the difference is empirical. It may be thought that, whether empirical or not, the difference is obvious ; but I do not find it so.

It might be denied that there is any empirical difference between the first eventuality (chaos) and the second (wrong dance). For, it might be said, we could have a dance which consisted in people bumping into one another. In Michael Tippett's opera *The Midsummer Marriage* the character called the He-Ancient is asked reproachfully by a modern why his dancers never dance a new dance : in reply, he says ' I will show you a new dance ' and immediately trips one of the dancers up, so that he falls on the ground and bruises himself. The implication of this manoeuvre is the Platonic one that innovations always lead to chaos—that there is only one right way of dancing (the one that we have learnt from our elders and betters) and that all deviations from this are just wrong. But whether or not we accept this implication, the example perhaps shows that we *could* call *any* series of movements a dance. If, however, we started to call it a dance, we should have to stop calling it chaos. The terms ' dance ' and ' chaos ' mutually exclude one another ; but although we cannot call any series of movements *both* chaos *and* dance, we can call any series of movements *either* chaos *or* dance ; so the problem of distinguishing dance from chaos remains.

The first and the second eventualities (chaos and wrong dance) are alike in this, that, whether or not we can say that *any* series of movements is *a* dance, we cannot say that *any* series of movements is *the* dance (*viz.* the eightsome reel) about the correct way of dancing which we were arguing. It might therefore be claimed that, although it may be difficult to say what counts as *a* dance, and thus distinguish between the first and second eventualities, we can at least distinguish easily between either of them and the third (right dance). And so we can, *in theory* ; for obviously both the wrong dance, and chaos or no dance at all, are distinct from the right dance. That is to say, the terms of my classification of things that might happen make it analytic to say that these three things that might happen are different things. But all distinctions are not empirical distinctions (for example evaluative distinctions are not) ; and the question is rather, How, empirically (if it is done empirically) do we tell, of these three logically distinct happenings, which has happened ? And how, in particular, do we tell whether the third thing has happened (whether the dance has been danced correctly) ?

III

Let us first consider one thing that might be said. It might be said : ' The dance has been danced correctly if what has been danced is the dance *called* the eightsome reel.' On this suggestion,

all we have to know is how the expression ' eightsome reel ' is used ; then we shall be able to recognise whether what has been danced *is* an eightsome reel.   This seems to me to be true ; but it will be obvious why I cannot rest content with this answer to the problem.   For I am using the dance analogy in an attempt to elucidate the nature of the discovery called ' discovering the use of words ' ;   and therefore I obviously cannot, in solving the problems raised within the analogy, appeal to our knowledge of the use of the expression ' eightsome reel '.   For this would not be in the least illuminating ; the trouble is that we do not know whether knowing how the expression ' eightsome reel ' is used is knowing something empirical.   We shall therefore have to go a longer way round.

It may help if we ask, What does one have to assume if one is to be sure that they have danced the right dance ?   Let us first introduce some restrictions into our analogy in order to make the dance-situation more like the language-situation which it is intended to illustrate.   Let us suppose that the dance is a traditional one which those of the company who can dance it have all learnt in their early years ; let us suppose that they cannot remember the circumstances in which they learnt the dance ; nothing of their early dancing-lessons remains in their memory except : how to dance the dance.   And let us further suppose that there are no books that we can consult to see if they have correctly danced the dance—or, if there are books, that they are not authoritative.

What, then, in such a situation, do we have to rely on in order to be sure that we have really established correctly what is the right way to dance the eightsome reel ?   Suppose that someone is detailed to put down precisely what happens in the dance that the dancers actually dance—what movements they màke when. We then look at his description of the dance and, under certain conditions, say, ' Well then, *that* is how the eightsome reel is danced '.   But what are these conditions ?

We have to rely first of all upon the accuracy of the observer. We have to be sure that he has correctly put down what actually happened in the dance.   And to put down correctly what one actually sees happening is, it must be admitted, empirical observation and description.   But what else do we have to rely on?   There are, it seems to me, at least two other requirements. As Henle correctly observes (I do not know why he thinks I would disagree) we cannot ' discover the rules of a ballroom dance simply by doing it ' (*op. cit.* p. 753).   The first requirement is that the dance which is being danced is indeed the eightsome

reel ; the second is that it is being danced right. These are not the same ; for one may dance the eightsome reel but dance it wrong. Though the distinction between dancing a dance and dancing it right is not essential to my argument, it is in many contexts a crucial one (and with games, even more crucial than with dances ; it must, *e.g.* be possible to play poker but, while playing it, cheat). Even Körner, who on page 759 of his paper objects to the distinction, uses it himself on page 762, where he says, ' If it [*sc.* a performance of a dance] is relevant but uncharacteristic, it is incorrect '. For both these requirements, we have to rely on the *memory* of the dancers ; and, as I have said, to remember something is not (or at any rate not obviously) to make an empirical discovery.

IV

The sort of situation which I have been describing is different from the situation in which an anthropologist observes and describes the dances of a primitive tribe. This, it might be said, *is* an empirical enquiry. The anthropologist observes the behaviour of the members of the tribe, and *he* selects for study certain parts of this behaviour, namely those parts which, by reason of certain similarities, *he* classifies as dances. And within the class of dances, *he* selects certain particular patterns of behaviour and names them by names of particular dances—names which *he* (it may be arbitrarily or for purely mnemonic reasons) chooses. Here we have nothing which is not included in the characteristic activities of the empirical scientist ; we have the observation of similarities in the pattern of events, and the choosing of words to mark these similarities.

In the situation which I have been discussing, however, there are elements which there could not be in a purely anthropological enquiry. If a party of anthropologists sat down to dinner before starting their study of a particular dance, they could not fall into the sort of argument that I have imagined. Nor could they fall into it *after* starting the study of the dance. This sort of argument can arise only between people who, first of all, know how to dance the dance in question or to recognise a performance of it, but secondly are unable to say how it is danced. In the case of the anthropologists the first condition is not fulfilled. This difference between the two cases brings certain consequences with it. The anthropologists could not, as the people in my example do, know *what* dance it is that they are disputing about. In my example, the disputants know that what they are disputing

about is how *the eightsome reel* is danced.   They are able to say
this, because they have learnt to dance a certain dance, and can
still dance it, and know that if they dance it it will be distinctively
different from a great many other dances which, perhaps, they
can also dance.   The anthropologists, on the other hand, have not
learnt to dance the dance which they are going to see danced after
dinner ;   and therefore, even if they have decided to *call* the
dance that they are to see danced ' dance no. 23 ', this name is
for them as yet unattached to any disposition of theirs to recog-
nise the dance when it is danced.   The anthropologists will not
be able to say, when a particular point in the dance is reached,
' Yes, *that's* how it goes '.   They will just put down what happens
and add it to their records.   But the people in my example, when
they say ' eightsome reel ', are not using an arbitrary symbol for
whatever they are going to observe ;   the name ' eightsome reel '
has for them already a determinate meaning, though they cannot
as yet say what this meaning is.   It is in this same way that a
logician knows, before he sets out to investigate the logical
properties of the concept of negation, *what* concept he is going to
investigate.

The second consequence is that, when my dancers have put
down in words the way a dance is danced, the words that they
put down will have a peculiar character.   It will not be a correct
description of their remarks to say that they have just put down
how a particular set of dancers danced on a particular occasion ;
for what has been put down is not :   how a particular set of
dancers *did* dance on a particular occasion, but :   how *the* eight-
some reel *is* danced.   It is implied that if *any* dancers dance like
this they are dancing an eightsome reel correctly.   Thus what
has been put down has the character of universality—one of the
two positive marks of the *a priori* noted by Kant (we have already
seen that what has been put down has the negative characteristic
which Kant mentioned, that of not being empirical).   What
about the other positive mark ?   Is what we have put down (if
we are the dancers) *necessarily* true ?   Is it necessarily true that
the eightsome reel is danced in the way that we have put down ?

What we have put down is ' The eightsome reel is danced in
the following manner, *viz.* . . .' followed by a complete descrip-
tion of the steps and successive positions of the dancers.   We
may feel inclined to say that this statement is necessarily true.
For, when we have danced the dance, and recognised it as an
eightsome reel correctly danced, we may feel inclined to say that,
if it had been danced differently, we *could* not have called it,
correctly, an eightsome reel (or at any rate not a   correct

performance of one) ; and that, on the other hand, danced as it was, we could not have denied that it was an eightsome reel. The statement which we have put down seems as necessary as the statement ' A square is a rectangle with equal sides '. I do not wish my meaning to be mistaken at this point. I am not maintaining that there is any temptation to say that the statement ' The dance which we have just danced is an eightsome reel ' is a necessary statement ; for there is no more reason to call this necessary than there is in the case of any other singular statement of fact. The statement which I am saying is necessary is ' The eightsome reel is danced as follows, *viz.* . . .' followed by a complete description.

We may, then, feel inclined to say that this statement, since it has all the qualifications, is an *a priori* statement. But there is also a temptation to say that it is synthetic. For consider again for a moment the situation as it was before we began to dance. Then we already knew how to dance the eightsome reel, and so for us the term ' eightsome reel ' had already a determinate meaning ; and it would be plausible to say that, since we knew the meaning of ' eightsome reel ' already before we started dancing, anything that we subsequently discovered could not be something attributable to the meaning of the term ' eightsome reel ' ; and therefore that it could not be something analytic ; and therefore that it must be something synthetic. Have we not, after all, *discovered* something about how the eightsome reel is danced ?

There is thus a very strong temptation to say that the statement ' The eightsome reel is danced in the following way, *viz.* . . .' followed by a complete description, is, when made by people in the situation which I have described, a synthetic *a priori* statement. Perhaps this temptation ought to be resisted, for it bears a very strong resemblance to the reasons which made Kant say that ' Seven plus five equals twelve ' is a synthetic *a priori* statement. Yet the existence of the temptation should be noted. Certainly to call this statement ' synthetic *a priori* ' would be odd ; for similar grounds could be given for considering all statements about how words are used as synthetic *a priori* statements. If, which I have seen no reason to believe, there is a class of synthetic *a priori* statements, it can hardly be as large as this. Probably what has to be done with the term ' synthetic *a priori* ' is to recognise that it has been used to cover a good many different kinds of statement, and that the reasons for applying it to them differ in the different cases. It is, in fact, an ambiguous label which does not even accurately distinguish

a class of statements, let alone explain their character. What would explain this would be to understand the natures of the situations (as I said, not all of the same kind) in which we feel inclined to use the term ; and this is what I am now trying, in one particular case, to do.

V

The peculiar characteristics of the situation which I have been discussing, like the analogous characteristics of the language-situation which I am trying to illuminate, all arise from the fact (on which Professor Ryle has laid so much stress) that we can know something (*e.g.* how to dance the eightsome reel or use a word) without being able yet to say what we know. Professor Henle has objected to the extension of Ryle's distinction to the language-situation. ' This distinction is no longer clear ', he says, ' when one comes to language, and it is by no means apparent that one can always know how to use a word without being able to say how it is used ' (*op. cit.* p. 750). But, although I do not claim that the distinction is entirely clear in any field, in language it is perhaps clearer than elsewhere. To say how a term is used we have, normally, to *mention* the term inside quotation marks, and to *use*, in speaking of the quoted sentence or statement in which it occurs, some such logician's term as ' means the same as ' or ' is analytic '. In saying how a term is used, we do not have to use it ; and therefore we may know fully how to use it in all contexts without being able to say how it is used. For example, a child may have learnt the use of ' father ', and use it correctly, but not be able to say how it is used because he has not learnt the use of ' mean ' or any equivalent expression. Henle seems to confuse being able to ' decide on logical grounds ' that a statement is true with being able to say ' the statement is logically true '. A person who did not know the use of the expression ' logically true ' could do the former but not the latter.

Besides noticing that the dance-situation has the characteristics which I have described, we should also be alive to certain dangers. There is first the danger of thinking that it could not have been the case that the eightsome reel was danced in some quite different way. It is, of course, a contingent fact, arising out of historical causes with which I at any rate am unacquainted, that the dance called ' the eightsome reel ' has the form it has and not some other form. If it had some different form, what my dancers would have learnt in their childhood would have been different, and what they would have learnt to call ' the eightsome

reel ' would have been different too ; yet the statement ' the eightsome reel is danced in the following manner, etc.' would have had just the same characteristics as I have mentioned (though the ' etc.' would stand for some different description of steps and movements).

Next, there is the danger of thinking that if *anthropologists* were observing the dance, and had been told that the dance which they were to observe was called ' the eightsome reel ', *they*, in reporting their observations, would be making the same kind of statement—namely a non-empirical, universally necessary statement which at the same time we are tempted to call synthetic. They would not be making this sort of statement at all, but an ordinary empirical statement to the effect that the Scots have a dance which they dance in a certain manner and call ' the eightsome reel '.

VI

There is also a third thing which we must notice. If a completely explicit definition were once given of the term ' eightsome reel ', it would have to consist of a specification of what constitutes a correct performance of this dance. To give such a definition is to give what is often called a ' rule ' for the performance of the dance. Now if we already have such a definition, then statements like ' The eightsome reel is danced in the following way, *viz.* . . .', followed by a specification of the steps, will be seen to be analytic, provided only that we understand ' is danced ' in the sense of ' is correctly danced '. It might therefore be said that, once the definition is given, there remains no problem—no proposition whose status defies classification. Similarly, if we were to *invent* a dance and give it explicit rules of performance, there would be no problem. But in this latter case there would be no *discovery* either. It is because, in my problem-case, we do not *start off* by having a definition, yet do start off by having a determinate meaning for the term ' eightsome reel ', that the puzzle arises. It is in the *passage to* the definition that the mystery creeps in—in the passage (to use Aristotle's terms) from the ἡμῖν γνώριμον to the ἁπλῶς γνώριμον.[1] What we have to start with is not a definition, but the mere ability to recognise instances of correct performances of the dance ; what we have at the end is the codification in a definition of what we know. So what we have at the end is different from what we have at the beginning, and it sounds sensible to speak of our *discovering* the

[1] *Eth. Nic.* 1095 b 2 ; *An. Post.* 71 b 33.

definition—just as those who first defined the circle as the locus
of a point equidistant, etc., thought that they had discovered
something about the circle, namely what later came to be called
its essence.   We see here how definitions came to be treated as
synthetic statements ; and, since the real or essential definition
(the prototype of all synthetic *a priori* statements) is one of the
most characteristic constituents of metaphysical thinking, this
explains a great deal about the origins of metaphysics.

Briefly, there are two statements whose status is unproblem-
atical, both expressed in the same words.   There is first the
anthropologist's statement that the eightsome reel (meaning ' a
certain dance to which the Scots give that name ') is (as a matter
of observed fact) danced in a certain manner.   This is a plain
empirical statement.   Secondly, there is the statement such as
might be found in a book of dancing instructions—the statement
that the eightsome reel is danced (meaning ' is correctly danced ')
in a certain manner.   This statement is analytic, since by ' eight-
some reel ' the writer *means* ' the dance which is (correctly)
danced in the manner described '.   Should we then say that the
appearance of there being a third, mysterious, metaphysical,
synthetic *a priori* statement about the dance, somehow inter-
mediate between these two, is the result merely of a confusion
between them, a confusion arising easily from the fact that they
are expressed in the same words ?   This, it seems to me, would
be a mistake.   For how do we *get* to the second, analytic state-
ment ?   Only *via* the definition or rule ; but if the definition is
not a mere empirical description, then there is, on this view,
nothing left for it to be but a stipulative definition, the result of
a decision.   So there will be again no such thing as discovering
how the eightsome reel is danced.   There will only be something
which might be described as ' inventing the eightsome reel '.   It
is preferable, therefore, to say that there is a third kind of
statement, intermediate between the first and the second, which
forms, as it were, the transition to the second—we settle down
in the comfortable analyticity of the second only after we have
discovered that this definition of the term ' eightsome reel ', and
no other, is the one that accords with our pre-existing but un-
formulated idea of how the dance should be danced.   And this
discovery seems to be neither a mere decision, nor a mere piece
of observation.   But, since I am still very perplexed by this
problem, I do not rule out the possibility that, were I to become
clearer about it, I should see that there is no third alternative.

Before I conclude this section of my paper, and go on to
describe more complicated kinds of dances which resemble

talking even more closely, I have two remarks to make. The first is that, unless *some* people knew how to dance dances, anthropologists could not observe empirically how dances are danced ; and that therefore there could not be empirical statements about dances unless there were at least the possibility of the kind of non-empirical statement that I have been characterising. The situation is like that with regard to moral judgments ; unless *some* people make genuine evaluative moral judgments, there is no possibility of other people making what have been called ' inverted commas ' moral judgments, *i.e.* explicit or implicit descriptions of the moral judgments that the first set of people make.[1] So, if philosophical analysis resembles the description of dances in the respects to which I have drawn attention, empirical statements about the use of words cannot be made unless there is at least the possibility of these other, non-empirical statements about the use of words. This perhaps explains the odd fact that analytical enquiries seem often to start by collecting empirical data about word-uses, but to end with apparently *a priori* conclusions.[2]

The second remark is that I have nothing to say in this paper which sheds any direct light on the question (often confused with the one which I am discussing)—the question of the distinction between logic and philology. The features which I am trying to pick out are features as well of philological as of logical discoveries, and this makes them more, not less, perplexing.

VII

I will now draw attention to some differences between the comparatively simple dance-situation which I have been discussing so far and the language-situation which is the subject of this paper. Talking is an infinitely more complex activity than dancing. It is as if there were innumerable different kinds of steps in dancing, and a dancer could choose at any moment (as is to a limited extent the case in ballroom dancing) to make any one of these steps. Talking is in this respect more like ballroom dancing than like reels—there is a variety of different things one can do, and if one's partner knows how to dance, she reacts appropriately ; but to do *some* things results in treading on one's partner's toes, or bumping into other couples and such further

[1] See my *Language of Morals*, pp. 124 f.
[2] See the remarks of Professor Ayer on Mr. Wollheim's valuable paper La Philosophie Analytique et les Attitudes Politiques ' in *La Philosophic Analytique*, ed. *Béra* (Cahiers de Royaumont; Editions de Minuit, forthcoming), and compare also Aristotle, *An. Post.* 100 a.7 and *Eth. Nic.* 1143 b 4.

obstacles as there may be, however well she knows how to dance.
Nevertheless there are a great many things which one can do ;
and not all of them are laid down as permissible in rules which
have been accepted before we do them.   There can be innova-
tions in dancing and in speech—and some of the innovations are
understood even though they are innovations.

Both dancing and talking can become forms of creative art.
There are kinds of dancing and of talking in which the performer
is bound by no rules except those which he cares to make up as
he goes along.   Some poetry is like this ; and so is ' creative
tap-dancing ' (the title of a book which once came into my hands).
The most creative artists, however, are constrained to talk or
dance *solo*.   It is not about these highest flights of talking and
dancing that I wish to speak, but about those more humdrum
activities which require the co-operation of more than one person,
and in which, therefore, the other people involved have to know
a good deal about what sort of thing to expect one to do, and
what they are expected to do in answer.   It is in this sense that
I am speaking of ' knowing how to dance ' and ' knowing how to
talk '.

What makes co-operation possible in both these activities is
that the speaker or dancer should not do things which make the
other people say ' We don't know what to make of this '.   That
is to say, he must not do things which cannot be easily related to
the unformulated rules of speaking or dancing which everybody
knows who has learnt to perform these activities.   The fact that
these rules are unformulated means that to learn to formulate
them is to make some sort of discovery—a discovery which, as I
have said, cannot be described without qualification as an
empirical one.   If a person in speaking or dancing does something
of which we say ' We don't know what to make of this ', there are
only two ways of re-establishing that *rapport* between us which
makes these co-operative activities possible : either he must
explain to us what we *are* to make of what he has done ; or else
he must stop doing it and do something more orthodox.   He
must either teach us his new way of dancing or talking, or go on
dancing or talking in our old way.   I should like to emphasise
that I am not against what Körner calls ' replacement-analysis ' ;
the last chapter of my *Language of Morals* is evidence of this.
But we need to be very sure that we understand the functioning
of the term that is being replaced before we claim that a new
gadget will do the old job better.

It might be said, dancing is not like talking, because dancing
is a gratuitous activity, and talking a purposeful one ; therefore

there are things which can go wrong in talking that cannot go wrong in dancing—things which prevent the purposes of talking being realised. This I do not wish to deny ; though the existence of this difference does not mean that there are not also the similarities to which I have been drawing attention. And the difference is in any case not absolute. Some talking is gratuitous ; and some dancing is purposeful. When dancing in a crowded ballroom, we have at least the purpose of avoiding obstacles, human and inanimate. If we imagine these obstacles multiplied, so that our dance-floor becomes more like its analogue, that elusive entity which we call ' the world ', dancing becomes very like talking. And all dance-floors have at least a floor and boundaries of some kind ; so no kind of dancing is *completely* gratuitous ; all dancers have the purpose of not impinging painfully against whatever it is limits their dance-floor (unless there are penitential dances which consist in bruising oneself against the walls—but this too, would be a purpose). And there are some markedly purposeful activities which, though not called dances, are like dances in the features to which I have drawn attention—for example, the pulling up of anchors (old style).

This analogy points to a way of thinking about our use of language which is a valuable corrective to the more orthodox representational view, in which ' facts ', ' qualities ', and other dubious entities flit like untrustworthy diplomats between language and the world. We do not need these intermediaries ; there are just people in given situations trying to understand one another. Logic, in one of the many senses of that word, is learning to formulate the rules that enable us to make something of what people say. Its method is to identify and describe the various sorts of things that people say (the various dances and their steps) such as predication, conjunction, disjunction, negation, counting, adding, promising, commanding, commending —need I ever stop ? In doing this it has to rely on our knowledge, as yet unformulated, of how to do these things—things of which we may not even know the names, and which indeed may not *have* names till the logician invents them ; but which are, nevertheless, distinct and waiting to be given names. Since this knowledge is knowledge of something that we have learnt, it has, as I have said, many of the characteristics of memory— though it would be incorrect, strictly speaking, to say that we *remember* how to use a certain word ; Plato's term ' recall (ἀναμιμνήσκεσθαι)', is, perhaps more apt. As in the case of memory however, we know, without being, in many cases, able to give further evidence, that we have got it right. And often the only test we can

perform is: trying it out again. In most cases there comes a point at which we are satisfied that we have got the thing right (in the case of speaking, that we have formulated correctly what we know). Of course, the fact that we are satisfied does not show that we are not wrong ; but if once satisfied, we remain satisfied until we discover, or are shown, some cause for dissatisfaction.

VIII

Meno, in the Platonic dialogue named after him, is asked by Socrates what goodness is (a question much more closely akin than is commonly allowed to the question, How and for what purposes is the word ' good ' used ?). Being a young man of a sophistical turn of mind, Meno says ' But Socrates, how are you going to look for something, when you don't in the least know what it is ? . . . Or even if you do hit upon it, how are you going to know that this is *it*, without having previous knowledge of what *it* is ? ' [1] In more modern terms, if we do not already know the use of the word ' good ' (or, in slightly less fashionable language, its analysis), how, when some account of its use (some analysis) is suggested, shall we know whether it is the correct account ? Yet (as Socrates goes on to point out) if we knew already, we should not have asked the question in the first place. So philosophy either cannot begin, or cannot reach a conclusion.

It will be noticed that my dancers could be put in the same paradoxical position. If they know already how the dance is danced, what can they be arguing about ? But if they do not know already, how will they know, when they have danced the dance, whether they have danced it correctly ? The solution to the paradox lies in distinguishing between knowing how to dance a dance and being able to say how it is danced. Before the enquiry begins, they are able to do the former, but not the latter ; after the enquiry is over they can do the latter, and they know that they are right because all along they could do the former. And it is the same with the analysis of concepts. We know how to use a certain expression, but are unable to say how it is used ($\lambda o \gamma \grave{o} \nu \ \delta \acute{\iota} \delta o \nu a \iota$, give an analysis or definition, formulate in words the use of the expression). Then we try to do the latter ; and we know we have succeeded when we have found an analysis which is in accordance with our hitherto unformulated knowledge of how to use the word. And finding out whether it *is* in accordance involves talking (dialectic), just as finding out whether the account of the dance is right involves dancing.

[1] *Meno*, 80 d.

Dialectic, like dancing, is typically a co-operative activity. It consists in trying out the proposed account of the use of a word by using the word in accordance with it, and seeing what happens. It is an experiment with words, though not, as we have seen, an altogether empirical experiment. In the same way, we might dance the dance according to someone's account of how it is danced, and see if we can say afterwards whether what we have danced is the dance that we were arguing about (*e.g.* the eightsome reel) or at least *a* dance, or whether it is no dance at all. There is no space here to give many examples of dialectic ; but I will give the most famous one of all.[1] It is a destructive use of the technique, resulting in the *rejection* of a suggested analysis. An account of the use of the word ' right ' is being tried out which says that ' right ' means the same as ' consisting in speaking the truth and giving back anything that one has received from anyone '. The analysis is tried out by ' dancing ' a certain statement, *viz.* ' It is always right to give a madman back his weapons which he entrusted to us when sane '. But the dance has clearly gone wrong ; for this statement is certainly not (as the proposed definition would make it) analytic, since to deny it, as most people would, is not to contradict oneself. So the analysis has to be rejected.

Plato was right in implying that in recognising that such a proposition is not analytic we are relying on our memories. It is an example of the perceptive genius of that great logician, that in spite of being altogether at sea concerning the *source* of our philosophical knowledge ; and in spite of the fact that his use of the material mode of speech misled him as to the *status* of the analyses he was looking for—that in spite of all this he spotted the very close logical analogies between philosophical discoveries and remembering. He was wrong in supposing that we are remembering something that we learnt in a former life—just as more recent mythologists have been wrong in thinking that we are discerning the structure of some entities called ' facts '. What we are actually remembering is what we learnt on our mothers' knees, and cannot remember learning.

Provisionally, then, we might agree with the metaphysicians that philosophy has to contain statements which are neither empirical statements about the way words are actually used, nor yet expressions of decisions about how they are to be used ; but we should refuse to infer from this that these statements are about some non-empirical order of being. The philosopher elucidates (not by mere observation) the nature of something which exists

[1] Adapted from *Republic*, 331 c.

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before the elucidation begins (for example, there is such an operation as negation before the philosopher investigates it ; the philosopher no more invents negation than Aristotle made man rational). He neither creates the objects of his enquiry, nor receives them as mere data of experience ; yet for all that, to say that there is such an operation as negation is no more mysterious than to say that there is such a dance as the eightsome reel. But even that is quite mysterious enough.

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