Logical Translation

There is a cluster of problems which have formed the traditional subject-matter of philosophers, in particular of logicians and epistemologists—problems which may be said to form the heart of their inquiries. I refer to such time-honoured questions as those which derive from the classification of judgements or propositions into various types—negative and affirmative, categorical and hypothetical, general and singular; judgements about the past or the present or the future; judgements about material objects or persons, about the data of perception or of memory or of the imagination. Every student of philosophy is all too familiar with the type of question I mean: e.g. are hypothetical judgements properly described as being true or false, and, if so, how is this determined? Is there a particular kind of ‘fact’ which establishes the truth or falsity of modal judgements in the way in which certain kinds of categorical judgements are said to be verifiable or falsifiable by ordinary ‘facts’ or ‘events’? What do judgements about the past or future describe? Do there exist past and future facts for them to describe and, if so, in what sense of ‘exist’? Do negative judgements describe ‘negative facts’, and if not, what function do they perform? Can sentences about material objects be translated into sentences about the actual or possible sensible experience of observers, or are material objects not, in this sense, ‘reducible’ to sense data? Are general propositions about ‘classes’ containing an infinite number of members, and are there such classes and in what sense of ‘are’? Or, alternatively, are empirical general propositions perhaps not ‘really’ propositions at all but ‘rules’ or ‘prescriptions’ (and is this particularly true of causal judgements?), or are such statements descriptions, not indeed of infinites of some sort, but of actual or recommended habits or dispositions to behave in certain ways or to perform various operations of a theoretical or practical kind? Or perhaps not so much statements about, as concrete examples of, these tendencies at work, not descriptions or rules but exercises of verbal habits in accordance with certain rules? Every student of philosophy will recognise that much writing, both modern and ancient, has been devoted to giving answers to these questions, and an immense
amount of ingenuity has been used in the elaborate defence of this or
that theory against logical or epistemological objections. The purpose
of this paper is to indicate that some forms, at any rate, of this discussion,
illuminating as they may be in various unintended ways, rest upon at
least one fundamental fallacy which has vitiated the topic from its
earliest beginnings in Greek philosophy, and still obsesses the thought
of many distinguished contemporary philosophers.

The most persistent symptom of the fallacy I have in mind is the
desire to translate many prima facie different types of proposition into
a single type. This process is so ingrained a practice on the part of
philosophers, and in particular logicians, that we hardly stop to ask
what the motive for this operation is. Thus the traditional Aristotelian
doctrine of the syllogism strongly suggests that the first mood of the first
figure, *Barbara*, is the ideal pattern of scientific knowledge, and that a
science is defective unless it is, at any rate in principle, capable of being
set out in this form. Similarly, propositions embodying ‘clear and dis-
tinct ideas’ occupy a uniquely privileged position in the Cartesian theory
of knowledge; as ideas of this type are to the rationalists, so empirical
statements expressing ‘simple ideas’ or ‘impressions’ of direct experience
are to the British empiricists, and ‘basic’ or ‘atomic’ propositions to
Russell and his followers, ‘atomic’ and ‘protocol’ propositions to the
early Viennese school, and so forth. All these schools of thought,
differing and indeed sharply opposed as they may be on many other
crucial issues of principle, have at least one thing in common: they
clearly favour one type of proposition or statement before all others;
it seems to them untouched by the problems and difficulties which
afflict other modes of expression which are represented as being defective
or likely to lead to paradoxes from which the model propositions are
commendably free. Indeed, the possession of such logical defects and
difficulties is identified with failure to approximate to the ideal model
of the ‘good’ proposition. The stock example of the logic books, ‘The
cat is on the mat’, is an example of just such a ‘good’ proposition. This
is a proposition which seems to offer no difficulties, and to need no
theory to ‘explain’ it, provided that it is true and easily verified – e.g.
if there occurs before the eyes of the speaker a cat which is in fact sitting
on a mat. The relation between the symbols and what they symbolise
CONCEPTS AND CATEGORIES

is then assumed to be one of simple correspondence: the sentence is like a cap so constructed as to fit its particular object; the object is present and the cap fits it precisely; 'difficulties' arise only when the object is not of the type required, or not present, or indeed not existent at all. So long as the cat is on the mat the sentence ‘The cat is on the mat’ is obviously true and offers no difficulties. But if the cat leaves the mat, the sentence suddenly begins to bristle with difficulties: it is still perfectly intelligible, but what does it now describe? It is false, but how are false propositions related to a world which, *ex hypothesi*, verifies only propositions which are true? If the cat had not moved, the sentence would still have been true; what kind of ‘facts’ does this kind of hypothetical sentence describe? And if it entails ‘The cat is no longer on the mat’, is the relation of this true negative proposition to the world analogous to that of the corresponding, no longer true, affirmative one? Is not being on the mat a ‘feature’ of ‘reality’? Are there negative facts? Are there hypothetical facts? Are there false facts? If not, is the relation of these ‘difficult’ sentences to their subject-matter of a kind radically different from that apparently simple and direct correspondence which seemed to govern the relation of the selected ‘straightforward’ sentences to theirs? Or were we altogether too simple and naïve in the first place when we took these straightforward sentences to consist of symbols in direct correspondence to external reality? The reader will recognise here a world of long familiar problems and the classic solutions of them—simple correspondence, complex correspondence (early Russell), coherence, intuition, the various solutions of pragmatism, operationalism, strong and weak verifiability etc. Underlying this type of approach to the subject there is the common assumption that there are certain propositions (or sentences) of the simple, straightforward, ‘good’ kind, which offer no problems, with the implied corollary that if all propositions were only of this type, no difficulties would arise, and the elaborate and never quite satisfactory theories advanced to remove them would not be required. There is a kind of latent dualism which permeates this method of treating the descriptive use of words, whereby propositions are almost instinctively divided into straightforward and problem-raising, tractable and troublesome, good examples of their kind and eccentric or degenerate species requiring special remedial treatment, good and had, sheep and goats. The selected ideal model of what a ‘good’ proposition should be will naturally differ according to the philosophical outlook of the logician and his school: Cartesians, after a formal bow to theology and ethics, inclined to place those of mathematics and
mathematical physics foremost; Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Mill, Russell, and modern empiricists pursue the ideal of empirical propositions, purified of everything which could make them erroneous, as being alone immediate, incorrigible, and simple, and for this reason 'fundamental'. My purpose is, however, not to contrast the competing candidates for this privileged status, but to draw attention to the phenomenon of competition itself. For it seems to me that its goal is illusory, that this entire way of looking at the subject rests upon a gigantic fallacy, perhaps almost as old as logic itself, and that acceptance of it has lured philosophers into seeking two familiar roads out of the difficulty, each of which leads into its own dead end. The reason for this is that the 'difficulty' is unreal, and the methods of dealing with it consequently neither solve nor fail to solve any genuine question.

The situation is this: we begin by taking some harmless statement, say 'It is 3 p.m., and the book is on the table', as a fair example of an informative proposition. This, if true, does not at first appear to give rise to any philosophical difficulties: there is something reassuring about being able to observe the hands of a clock and the presence of the book on the table, and to report this in language appropriate for this purpose; the symbols for it fit their subject-matter like caps specially designed to do so, or like arrows which satisfactorily hit the target at which they are aimed, or whatever metaphor conveys the same notion. This is evidently one of the most fundamental conceptions — or metaphors — of how language functions: on the one hand I have the symbols, on the other the world. The former are fashioned to describe or express or convey or symbolise the latter. The relationship is, as it were, ostensive. If I am asked what the symbols mean I can point, or think I can point, at something which I have used the symbols to mean. Difficulties begin as soon as the possibility of such direct pointing breaks down. If I infer from the above propositions that 'If the book is on the table, it is not on the chair' and am asked what this means, I find that I cannot point in the same simple and expressive fashion. The apodosis — '[the book] is not on the chair' — raises a difficulty since obviously absence is not to be pointed to in the way that a specific position in my vicinity can be. Moreover, the hypothetical proposition is not equivalent to the negation of the conjunction 'The book is on the table and the book is on the chair.' The 'meanings' of conditional sentences cannot be pointed to as,
CONCEPTS AND CATEGORIES

perhaps, the 'meanings' of some categorical ones can, and this is part of what we mean by calling them conditional. And if I further go on to meditate upon the fact that books, as a rule, are not as large as tables, I am again unable to point to something in my environment as the 'referent' of my symbols. By this time some minutes have passed, and if I am now asked whether it is true that the book was on the table at 3 p.m., I cannot in any literal sense of the word point to this 'fact' either, since it is past, gone, not before me. This suggests strongly that there is some fatal gulf which divides the original sentence, which 'fitted' its portion of the real world so neatly, from these more troublesome sentences, which, meaningful though they obviously are, are like so many collections of displaced symbols in search of their proper places in the real world – homeless names vainly seeking for their unfindable owners.

The problem of how symbols mean has now emerged in its crudest and most uncompromising form, and to solve it two expedients have been adopted. Each of these has for many years formed the nucleus of much interesting speculation; nevertheless each of them turns out upon examination to be equally desperate and futile. The first takes the form of what we may call, for want of a better label, the deflationary method. It assumes that the only genuine, fully formed proposition is that of the favoured kind (and this will differ for the different philosophical schools) and that all other types of proposition derive their logical force solely from some type of traceable relationship to it. In the case we have selected, the favoured model is affirmative, singular, categorical, and empirical. Since it is conjunctive in form and conjunctive 'facts' are not easy to find in nature, it seems best to make it 'simpler' still, and split the complex into two 'simple' propositions: 'The book is on the table'; 'It is now 3 p.m.' But this, as it stands, will not quite do. If the criterion of meaning on the part of a symbolic expression is the existence before its user of something at which he can point, books and tables and even times of day make this process no easier for they cannot be simply pointed at. The entire panoply of phenomenalist armament is here brought into play. I am told that I cannot point at tables, but only at tabular appearances or data, nor at books as reposing upon them, but only to bookish data as standing in certain visual, tactile etc. relations in my visual, tactile etc. fields to the tabular data. '3 p.m.' is even less capable of being pointed to, and an elaborate translation of its meaning is offered again in visual, tactile, etc., terms as being that to which my symbols ultimately refer. The ideal proposition gradually emerges as
LOGICAL TRANSLATION

requiring a minimum of certain definite properties. Thus, at the very least, it must be:

1 Affirmative, for how am I to point at what is not there?
2 Categorical, for how am I to point at the something that only might be; or, in the case of unfulfilled hypotheticals, that cannot in principle be?
3 Singular (or a finite collection of singulairs), since it must be something or other, particular and specifiable, for what would it be like to point to something in general, belonging to no particular time and place, discoverable in no one’s specific sensible field?
4 Logically simple, for how can I point at something which is disjunctive, i.e. a this-or-that, but neither specifically this nor that? Nor can it be conjunctive, for how can I point to something which is both-this-and-that?
5 Not only particular but about the present: it must refer to something in my sense field, here and now; for how can I point to something not here, or in the past, or in the future? If the ‘object’ of the sentence is elsewhere or already over, or not yet arrived, it is not ‘actual’, the arrow has no target, the cap has nothing upon which to fit (or not to fit).
6 It must refer to something ‘immediately given’, for unless it does this, the ‘object’ is again not here, not now etc., and the fatal difficulties recur in another form.
7 It must be true (although this is a desideratum of an altogether different order, and one which the theory, so far from insisting upon it, does its best to circumvent), for if it is false what does it point to? If a proposition is false, it describes nothing, it only misdescribes, but misdescription is only another kind of failure on the part of the arrow to hit its target; and if meaning is a sort of target-hitting, then what is false is also meaningless.

This is not, of course, intended to be an exhaustive catalogue of the minimum of properties required by the ‘good’ propositions — those which give no trouble, the model statements whose relation to their subject-matter is so clear and so simple that if no other statements were in use, no logical or epistemological problem would arise. It seems but a short step from this to that ‘immediate’ contact with reality in which thought and being are one, the realm of the Hegelian Absolute, where there are no problems and no mental pursuit of unattainable goals, because there are no minds, and nothing to pursue.
CONCEPTS AND CATEGORIES

Leaving aside for the moment what would constitute representative examples of such 'good' sentences or propositions (we shall return to this later since clearly this is the heart of the matter), it seems clear that if we set about the subject in this way we are committed to looking upon sentences or propositions which do not conform to the ideal either as being wholly meaningless, or else as precariously saved by being shown to have some kind of logical relationship to the ideal propositions, which may yet confer some kind of status upon them, although necessarily a somewhat inferior one. For we may still rescue such imperfect propositions by looking upon them as possessing meaning in proportion as they contain 'sound' elements; i.e. can be analysed as complexes, some elements in which are meaningful in the approved sense, i.e. through being affirmative, categorical, simple, singular, true, about what is here and now before the speaker etc. – so many grains of pure gold embedded in a baser medium. This medium can then be removed from them, and upon examination will turn out to mean nothing at all, but perhaps, at best, to perform some other logical or psychological function. This is the sort of view which lurks at the back of such theories as those of Logical Constructions, whether in the older Humean version, or in the later, more elaborate form developed by Russell and his disciples. If we practise this kind of analysis, we start by asking about any given sentence whether it is genuinely descriptive; and if this claim has been made on its behalf, we require that the sentence shall be so analysed into its constituents that the truly descriptive elements in it shall be revealed in the form of 'basic' or 'atomic' propositions which have the properties required of the 'good' propositions, i.e. direct correspondence with experience in the sense adumbrated above. The proposition analysed is then revealed as a complex of irreducible simple statements, with logical constants acting as links and determining formal properties. Everything not so analysable is relegated to a non-descriptive realm and labelled as emotive, or expressive, or a psychological residue etc. – a kind of linguistic slag heap, from which the precious ore has been extracted – useful enough in some respects, and more than this, perhaps biologically or psychologically indispensable, but liable to land us in metaphysical or theological confusions if we mistake it for an informative or fact-affirming use of words. Descriptive language emerges as a 'construction' logically built out of the 'basic' bricks, consisting of the 'good' propositions only; whatever is left over is to be relegated as being non-propositional. What, on this view, is to become of all such soi-disant
propositions as hypothetical or general propositions, statements about
the past and future, about material objects, about other persons etc.? There are no two ways about it: in so far as they give genuine information they are not hypothetical, not about the past etc., and if it is desired to retain them unimpaired, they will have to be expelled from the class of genuine propositions altogether. This predicament is by no means confined to empiricists or positivists. So faithful a disciple of Aristotle and Descartes as Cook Wilson, when he asked himself what singular hypothetical propositions were about, convinced himself that reality consisted of what is and was and will be, and not of what might be or might have been; consequently, hypothetical propositions could not be real propositions at all (for what did they describe?), but something to do with connections between questions; for questions, being neither true nor false, do not assert or describe, and so are free from the requirements exacted of all claimants to true propositional status. It is true that the connections turned out to hold not so much between the questions as between the answers to them; and 'answers' are in fact the old familiar propositions scarcely disguised at all; and so the problem had not been solved after all. But the very oddity of this effort to show that hypothetical propositions were not properly propositions at all is symptomatic of the effects of the doctrine which made this odd procedure seem worth attempting. Again, when F. P. Ramsey suggested that causal propositions were perhaps not propositions at all, he did so because causal statements were obviously general, and if interpreted extensionally (and what is it to ask for the meaning of a symbol if not for its extension?) could not be pinned to anything that could be pointed to; because general statements did not seem to point to — be knock-down verifiable by — anything which was sensed or introspected, or described as so many items in somebody's experience. Indeed the very ideal of an entirely extensional logic — the rigidly extensional interpretation of meaning — the almost superstitious horror of intensional analyses as a relapse into the darkness of metaphysics, is symptomatic of this attitude. Language was viewed as a kind of system of verbal credit, where descriptive sentences functioned like cheques which, to be used at all, did not indeed need to be immediately converted into bullion, but retained their value only so long as they were in principle so convertible. The gold cover of such sentences consisted in the facts of direct experience, 'objects' of 'knowledge by acquaintance', and the degree of meaning which any such expression possessed depended directly upon the amount of such cover in terms of the basic or 'good' propositions —
CONCEPTS AND CATEGORIES

themselves directly convertible into the bullion of ‘facts’ – which it turned out to have. In so far as it was not so covered, it was liable to be exposed as in the strict sense not descriptive; and if to have meaning was to describe, meaningless. This naturally led to intolerable paradoxes too familiar to be rehearsed here. It was difficult, for instance, to maintain that general propositions, or propositions of science, were non-descriptive (but, as some declared, merely matrices for the generation of meaningful sentences), since they were obviously refutable, i.e. falsifiable by negative singular propositions, and if they could be false, they were propositions after all. All the notorious difficulties which beset rigorous versions of phenomenalism (or the early, uncompromising kinds of logical positivism) emerged in their acutest form in the course of the attempt to force propositions of various types into the Procrustean bed of the chosen model – the ‘atomic’, not further analysable, incorrigible proposition. Paradoxes began to accumulate; propositions about the past were required by the more uncompromising among the early positivists to become (‘in some sense’) propositions about the future – or else to be eliminated. Propositions about the present underwent the same drastic treatment, and this, incidentally, was soon seen to provide two senses of ‘about the future’ – the normal sense in which propositions about the future were distinguished from those about the present and the past, and an abnormal sense in which all propositions were ‘in some sense’ or ‘for methodological purposes’ propositions about the future; in this sense ‘the future’ could no longer be contrasted with the past or present, or indeed with anything else, and so in the end turned out to be devoid of meaning. Similarly, propositions about other selves turned out to be a sub-class of propositions about the observer’s own data, and the words ‘my own data’ or ‘the observer’s data’ were robbed of meaning with the same fatal inevitability; for now all data were ‘in some sense’ the observer’s own, and a solipsism followed which, there being no stable non-solipsism with which to contrast it, also turned out to describe nothing. It gradually became clear that what was being demanded was the relegation to the limbo of ‘non-propositional’ language of everything which was not categorical, affirmative, singular, about the speaker himself, about his immediate experience, here and now etc., but since these attributes could not ex hypothesi be contrasted with anything beyond (for the statement of it was logically prohibited), the deflationary programme of ‘reducing’ all propositions to a selected type of proposition, certified as genuine (as well as the milder versions which accorded significance to ‘imperfect’ propositions, but only in so
far as the blood royal of the genuine propositions flowed through some portion of their complex structures), turned out to be one of the worst mares' nests of modern philosophy. It was evident that the deflationary method led into an impasse and had to be abandoned.

The other or inflationary route was the precise inverse of the first. It began again with the assumption that the only genuine propositions were categorical, true, singular, etc.; but since there obviously did exist expressions clearly not of this kind, e.g. statements normally called hypothetical, or general, or about the past or future of other persons, or false, or unverifiable, or not clearly classifiable as either empirical or a priori, to which it was un plausible to deny all descriptive power, it was decided to cut the knot by boldly accepting the fact that they were, after all, what they seemed to be, i.e. perfectly valid and intelligible, propositions as descriptive as any others, unjustly suspected of being defective only because they were assumed to be about the same kind of entities as those dealt with by the 'good' non-trouble-giving propositions with which they were so unfavourably contrasted. Once it was grasped that they were concerned with entities different in kind from the favoured propositions, they might be rescued, and even accorded equal status with the latter. This doctrine maintained that hypothetical propositions, for example, were not at best partly categorical, partly not propositions at all, but that they were perfectly good propositions in their own right, but concerned with a special class of entities – 'hypothetical facts', or 'real possibilities', or 'essences', or the like. General propositions, similarly, presided over a perfectly genuine kingdom of their own, populated by entities called 'universals'. Propositions about the past and future dealt with past facts and future facts respectively, unfulfilled hypotheticals dealt with 'unactualised possibilities', and the categorical, singular etc. propositions originally set up as ideal models no longer represented a superior species, but were assigned their place as equals among their peers, governing as they did, not indeed all facts, but only some among them, i.e. those which were actual, present, particular etc.

Worlds upon worlds of new entities suddenly became unfolded. Regions inhabited by mathematical or logical entities were revealed to the view – unchanging Platonic forms, connected in queer ways with the 'real world', or else detached from it and secure in their own serene and beautiful universes. Realms of 'subsistent' entities, inhabited by immortal essences, came into being to correspond to the many forms of the imagination, scientific, mathematical and poetical, capable
moreover of accommodating games, Utopias, mythological and heraldic creatures, and every other form of logically coherent fiction. These theories, which grew more and more fantastic, provided for everything which had been or could be thought of, true and false, reasonable and nonsensical; the world of ordinary life was somewhat vaguely treated as a species of the curious genus 'entity', and distinguished by the pseudo-attributes 'actuality' or 'existence', which ignored the lethal force of Kant's refutation of the ontological argument. It was a process of uncontrolled inflation, and it operated on a very simple principle: that all genuine propositions were au fond categorical, singular, true, etc.; but instead of trying, as the deflationists had done, to extricate only what was genuinely categorical, non-hypothetical, non-general etc. out of the unsifted mass of what, prima facie, looked like propositions, it boldly proceeded as if all these statements were already categorical and singular and all that was required of genuine propositions, and set about discovering entities to correspond with them. Thus if, let us say, hypothetical propositions were in the last analysis categorical, what were they categorical about? Plainly about hypothetical entities. If general propositions were au fond singular, what kind of things did they describe? Individual things — 'ingredients of facts' called 'universals'. General propositions were in truth singular propositions, and their subjects were universals much as those of more routine singular propositions were the events or 'facts' of 'direct experience'. Propositions about the past were about 'timeless' entities qualified by the attribute 'pastness' exactly as propositions about the present were about similar entities qualified by 'presentness'. False propositions were true about 'possibilities' while true propositions were true about 'actualities'. It was very simple; all propositions as such were categorical about something or other, and the task of metaphysics and the theory of knowledge was to establish the 'status' of what in any given case this something was. These timeless 'entities' or 'essences' with their many curious attributes were now the targets which the propositional arrows struck, the shapes in the real world which the linguistic caps precisely fitted. Their relations to one another — the 'structure of reality' — was the province of a new metaphysical discipline called variously phenomenology, logic etc.; and a special intellectual faculty was postulated (or discovered) whose business it was to fix the unalterable 'ontological status' of mathematical, historical, psychological, scientific, fictional etc. entities to each other. The question always took the same form: what kind of categoricals were hypothetical propositions, what species
LOGICAL TRANSLATION

of singular propositions were general ones; what did negative propositions affirm, what did false propositions state truly?

The vice of the inflationary method was the precise opposite of the deflationary one; if the latter prohibited the saying of much that could intelligibly be said, the former encouraged speculation and description of much that did not exist and could not be related to the real world because there was nothing to relate. The first method used Occam's razor to eliminate too many necessary entities; the second set no limit to their multiplication. The inflationary method was not a straitjacket like its rival, but it led to consequences which were more ludicrous because it manufactured entities which grew increasingly fantastic. The proliferation of bogus 'objects' proved too much even for their creators: the free play of the imagination cannot indefinitely be represented as discovery. Formal methods can be made use of to expose the absurdity of this method. According to the theory of 'subsistents' a true statement corresponds to 'existent' entities, while a false one, to have any meaning at all, must correspond to non-existent, 'subsistent' entities (or propositions). What relation, if any, occurs, on this view, between existent and subsistent entities? Any proposition describing such a relation must itself, to be meaningful, necessarily correspond to something or other, not a 'subsistent' or collection of 'subsistents' in the ordinary sense, but to something or other – a 'super-subsistent' at some 'higher level'. But this is tantamount to converting relational propositions into subject-predicate propositions about entities; all of these entities will require relations to other entities if they are to be described at all, but no sooner are such relations provided than they turn into particulars requiring their own relations, etc., and this is a vicious infinite regress of the most obvious kind. On a representative theory of language things in the real world are like so many islands connected with or kept apart from each other by gap-like entities which correspond to relations. The Midas touch of any Meinongian theory fills these gaps with subsistent entities, and thus makes impossible the description of any particular object; for objects can be described only in terms of their relations to other objects, or of the relations of their own internal parts to one another, while here relational propositions, as in the similar system of Leibniz, are treated as if they did not exist; where all relations function like terms, there are no relations. The situation is that of Bradley's nightmare; all relations are converted into terms, and new relations are perpetually needed to relate the new terms; but no sooner are they created than they turn into terms themselves, calling for relations to relate them.
CONCEPTS AND CATEGORIES

these, as soon as invoked, harden into terms themselves. But terms
cannot be related by terms; this fallacy, common to Bradley and Russell
in his middle period, which turns logic into an extravagant ontology,
can go no further.

III

Oddly enough, the fallacy which underlay the inflationary method was
identical with that which vitiated the reverse process of deflation. For
in each case what was demanded was forcible assimilation of all pro-
positions to a given type; in one case non-categorical, non-singular,
non-veridical etc. propositions were considered pro tanto as not
propositions at all, in the other they were all, in principle, looked upon
as categoricals, but concerned with peculiar entities the description of
which involved intolerable paradoxes. In both cases what was not
categorical, or singular, or veridical etc. was regarded as peculiar,
problematic, needing special explanation. In one case this was done by
condemning all but one type of proposition as vicious, although partially
redeemable in inverse proportion to the distance from the ideal type.
In the other case all propositions were pronounced equally virtuous, and
the curse was taken off the suspected types by transferring it to the
object itself. Provided the entities to which propositions corresponded
were sufficiently variegated, the propositions could be pressed into the
same logical uniform, i.e. all propositions were eo ipso categorical,
singular, affirmative, true etc. The deflationary method gave the
impression that only 'good' propositions stood, as it were, face to face
with the real world; all others were forms of squinting at it from the
side, or of purblindness, or indeed, in extreme cases, of total blindness.
The inflationary theory represented all propositions as being equal
vis-à-vis their objects, but endowed many of these objects with exceed-
ingly queer logical and metaphysical properties to whose existence lack
of imagination, or excessive respect for commonsense notions, had too
long rendered philosophers blind or inattentive. (The analogue in the
case of the more fanciful theories of perception will readily come to the
mind of the students of this branch of philosophy.) What is common to
both methods and equally fatal to either is, of course, the correspondence
model. For it leads to the view that one class of propositions, and one
only, is properly so called; and by the simple expedient of eliminating
all its rivals a priori, leaves the victorious class without attributes.
Properties with which there is nothing to compare cannot be described;
consequently all genuine propositions cannot, in principle, and literally,
be of the same logical type, for there is then no way of indicating what it is.

This fatal dichotomy ('either categorical or not a proposition') is not confined either to a particular province of philosophy or to a particular school of thinkers. In ethics, for example, it sometimes takes the form of claiming to detect specific ethical characteristics, whether \textit{a priori} or empirically, as being 'inherent' in objects or persons, characteristics as many and as various as may be wanted to meet all the apparently irreducible distinctions between the various ethical predicates which occur in sentences expressing moral judgements. Alternatively, if the deflationary method is adopted, it may take the form of a ruthless axe, with which all ethical statements which cannot be translated into the favoured type of proposition (or whatever in them remains obstinately unreduced after they have been subjected to this treatment) are lopped off and consigned to Hume's bonfire as devoid of the right kind of significance, or anyhow insusceptible to philosophical analysis; and the same treatment is meted out to aesthetic, political, or historical judgements, and other recalcitrant material. Nor is this method confined to empiricists: Plato and Aquinas, Descartes, Leibniz and their modern disciples merely represent the obverse of this outlook: which considers sense perception or other sources of empirical evidence to be so many inferior, confused 'modes' of cognition, lower forms of mental activity, condemned in proportion as they are thought to fall short of the ideal model of the kind of \textit{a priori} knowledge, and the type of combination of words, which the particular rationalist philosopher happens to favour as the paradigm of clarity or infallibility. In this respect there is relatively little to choose between the fundamental attitudes that govern these apparently deeply opposed schools of thought: each condemns the ideals and practices of the other for failing to satisfy criteria which are drawn from the same sort of misleading mythology. Their criticisms of one another's theories are often valid enough; it is only when their positive grounds for this are revealed that we receive a sudden shock. For the case sometimes resembles nothing so much as that of a man who with great cogency demonstrates the lunacy of another man who claims to be Napoleon, and then adds as a clinching argument that he is Napoleon himself.

\textbf{IV}

So much for the merits of the inflationary and deflationary methods, with their apotheosis of the favoured mode of expression: it might not
CONCEPTS AND CATEGORIES

be without interest to consider the nature of one of the most persistently recommended types of such model propositions – the ‘basic’ propositions of the analytical school of modern empiricism. What are the unique properties of these propositions in virtue of which they represent, we are told, the lowest level, the ground floor of the many-storied buildings called logical constructions? They must be the ultimate, not further reducible, ‘foundations of knowledge’, upon which all else must rest; hence they must be simple, indubitable, and somehow reflect the nature of reality more directly and infallibly than any others; for otherwise they will lose their privileged status, and cease to be the bullion in terms of which all other expressions claiming to be intelligible can be certified as philosophical legal tender. What, then, do they require in the way of characteristics if they are to be, as it were, face to face with reality? One property they must have, and that is of being capable of being known in a way which precludes their ever being false; they must be absolutely safe. Their occurrence in ordinary speech may be infrequent, and they may look or sound unwieldy or barbarous when articulated; they may turn out to be thoroughly jejune and uninteresting, and they may be of little use in normal communication; but they will have one enviable attribute which no other type of expression will be in a position to boast – they will in some sense be ultimate, reducible to nothing else; they, and they alone, will be wholly ‘testable’ by any rational being who chooses to entertain them, and they will serve as the foundation of all other knowledge – which surely should be a reward enough for any amount of dullness and platitudinousness. It might be as well to inspect one of these humble but indispensable entities: let us return to our earlier example and assert ‘The book is on the table.’ This will not do; we have obviously said too much; the sentence is not ‘safe’ and ‘basic’ in the sense required. It is certainly not incorrigible, for we may be labouring under an illusion of one or more of the senses. What we see before us may not be a book nor its pedestal a table. In accordance with time-honoured practice, to use the scrupulous methods taught to us by the sense datum philosophers a quarter of a century ago, we start the process of ‘reduction’ which is to lead us to the discovery of what can be whittled down no further. We must not say that there is a book on the table, we must say ‘There are bookish data surrounded by tabular ones’ – all the rest is inductive and uncertain. But this will not do either, for what do we mean by ‘bookish’, and what do we mean by ‘tabular’, and where are these data occurring, and when, and for how long, and to whom are we saying these words, and how do we know that they are conveying
the information we mean them to convey? To fulfil the programme everything that is uncertain (i.e. might turn out to be false) must be remorselessly pruned away, however poverty-stricken the remainder may turn out to be; for truth and, above all, infallibility are what is required rather than richness of content. Consequently we continue the whittling process. We are at some point obliged to say that by 'bookish' and 'tabular' we mean something sufficiently resembling a standard model or models in terms of which these terms are, or could be, defined. Do the data before us sufficiently conform to this standard to be properly described as tabular or bookish? How can we tell? Must we assume that our memory is infallible? But does not this bring about what of all things we most wished to avoid, the necessity of referring to the existence of entities in the past, past experiences on our part, which are not 'here', not 'before us', as those data must be which basic sentences are invented to describe? So we must continue to cut away; our memory may be fallible and the alleged past data not have occurred; if we are to give 'bookish' and 'tabular' their proper meanings we must no longer have recourse to occurrences as the standard models for these words, but only to the belief, whether true or false, that such data did once actually occur. By 'bookish' and 'tabular' we mean no longer what resembles standard book-like or table-like appearances, but only what we believe may so resemble. But alas, even this heroic act of self-denial will not suffice. For even in order to believe that this or that occurred in our past, if only for the purpose of providing a minimum point of reference for symbols, such words as 'before' and 'after' must refer to something not now present. Once we abandon the mythological region of the 'point-instant', of the 'immediate' present, we become theoretically liable to the risk of error, for what we are referring to is in some sense not before us, and may turn out to be different from what we think it to be. In this academic sense there is no empirical statement we cannot doubt: we are not sure that there are other selves capable of understanding our words; we do not know that the words themselves are performing the task of classifying our immediate data, since classification includes assimilation to other members of a given class, but this has been ruled out, since we cannot be certain, in the sense required, whether they – the other members of the class – in fact possess the model characteristics attributed to them, since ex hypothesi they must be absent and not available for inspection. By this time it should be becoming plain that we are marching with rapid strides towards a logical absurdity. We are trying to say at one and the same time that we are attributing certain
CONCEPTS AND CATEGORIES

characteristics to our data by means of the infallible propositions which report direct acquaintance, and yet also that we can only name these characteristics by contrast or comparison to other characteristics which, being absent, cannot be infallibly known, and so cannot guarantee us against error when invoked for the purpose of comparison or contrast. Yet to say that something is true or false is at the very least to compare it with the past or the future, with entities not here and not now, that is, to relate it to a field wider than the object under review. We can escape this only by saying that we are not asserting, only naming, only christening. But it is doubtful whether even this can be done without calling in what is absent and therefore theoretically dubitable; and in any case to name is not to describe and therefore not to say anything true or false; the act of christening is not the uttering of a proposition, however basic, however trivial, however non-informative. Our basic propositions are gradually becoming names for the phenomena of what used to be called 'pure sensation'. Whether such phenomena occur or not is relatively immaterial; the point is that in a world which consists of nothing else, description, language, true and false propositions, are terms which cannot be given any interpretation.

What is this but, under another name, the quest for the absolute immediacy desiderated by Bradley, the pure manifold of Kant, the pure 'given' – not yet 'distorted' or 'mutilated' by categories and concepts of 'discursive thought' – Bergson's unbroken continuum of pure duration, which appears in more sophisticated forms as the search for logical particulars or for the referends of logical proper names – for the ultimate constituents of the world which alone are real but cannot, owing to the generalising character of words, ever be described?

It should by now be clear that the search for basic propositions in this sense leads nowhere, since it proceeds from a fatal misconception; but what is of greater interest is not whether such propositions can in fact be formulated, but why so many thinkers have felt so desperate a need for their existence and have expended so much ingenuity upon a task so inevitably doomed to frustration. In other words, why did philosophers look for answers (at times heavily disguised as metaphysical investigations of various kinds) to so odd a series of questions as: 'When we utter a hypothetical proposition, what kind of categorical proposition are we uttering?' 'When we make a general statement, to what class
LOGICAL TRANSLATION

of singular statements does it belong? 'When we speak of the past or the future, which portion of the present are we referring to?' 'When we speak about objects far away, what are the objects in our vicinity with which they are identical?' 'When we ask questions about the lives of other persons, which incidents in our own autobiography are we referring to?' 'When we speak of the external world, which of our “inner” sensations are we describing?' Yet this is what the demand for a purely extensional logic comes to; and such ingenious notions as, for example, the concept of material implication to some extent derived from this attitude; it acted as perhaps the strongest single motive for the employment of this weapon in the attempted transformation of hypotheticals into conjunctions or disjunctions of categoricals. And although it can be shown easily enough that the promise to ‘reduce’ all contingent hypothetical propositions by this means cannot be fulfilled, it is worth inquiring why such desperate efforts were expended upon seeing how much could be translated by this unpromising method. One obvious reason was of course the need, particularly acutely felt after the excesses of idealist metaphysics, to discover a criterion for the exclusion of what was literally nonsense. The coherence theory of truth seemed to destroy, or at any rate to blur, the differences between the intelligible and the meaningless use of words, and any test of significance possessing initial plausibility appeared welcome to those who were struggling to build a dyke against the torrent of sometimes inspired, but largely unintelligible, writing. Moreover, there was the desire to arrest what I have called inflation. Too many metaphysicians behaved as if differences in types of expression were pointers to differences of ‘types of fact’, and this led to a view that there were as many metaphysically irreducible kinds of entity in the world as there were different modes of expression in use; and the systematic demonstration that this was not so, that nouns did not necessarily ‘correspond’ to things, nor adjectives to characteristics, is one of the major glories of modern empiricism and modern logic. Sentences previously thought to be logically independent were shown to be translatable into one another, and this did, no doubt, have the effect of an automatic check upon the indiscriminate multiplication of entities, showing much metaphysical discussion to be baseless and due to verbal confusions. And although the search for infallible criteria of significance proved a wild goose chase, because significance is not determinable by a specific set of rules, yet this approach did mark a great philosophical advance which it will take more than such maxims as ‘Every sentence has its own logical grammar’. 

73
CONCEPTS AND CATEGORIES

to discredit. But the method is obviously being pushed to fantastic lengths when we are invited to judge all statements in terms of their logical relation to the selected model, and as a result either to reject a number of meaningful sentences on the ground that they are not 'basic' or 'atomic', nor molecules constructible out of such atoms (not suitable bricks for the Logischer Aufbau der Welt), or, alternatively, to manufacture entities which would enable all propositions to be represented as categorical, singular, atomic, basic etc., or combinations of these; and this when the so-called 'basic' or 'atomic' propositions themselves turn out on examination to approach the limits of meaninglessness – not to be recognisable forms of descriptive human utterance. And yet it is clearly not some unaccountable love of the odd and the fanciful which has driven so many distinguished thinkers towards this eccentric remedy; it must correspond to some permanent tendency on the part of philosophers, some very deeply rooted metaphors which govern the thought of logicians and epistemologists. Perhaps, therefore, attention to the psychology of philosophical thinking of this kind may throw some light upon this curious state of affairs.

VI

As a tentative hypothesis about some possible causes of this attitude, I should like to mention three fundamental fallacies which by their interplay may have contributed to bring about this result.

1 The correspondence theory of language

There is nothing prima facie very unnatural or surprising about the assumption that words are names, and that it is not truth, so much as meaning, that is a form of correspondence between symbols and things. After all, we learn language to some degree by being shown things, or made to touch or hold them, and then told what words to use; and many words are in fact names, class names, but still names, labels attached to classes of objects absence of which makes the use of these names inappropriate. Berkeley, who showed such genius in refuting the fallacy of *unum nomen, unum nominatum*, and discredited, one hopes for

1 Perhaps the first explicit account of it occurs in Plato's *Theaetetus*, in which Socrates describes it as an opulent dream. The resemblance between the Platonic simile and the doctrine of, e.g., Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London, 1922) is most striking.
ever, the notion that because there were general terms, therefore universals were among the real inhabitants of the universe, himself fell into the converse fallacy of supposing that although general terms did not stand for entities which are general (because there could be none such) they could, if they were to be meaningful, be translated into other terms which did stand for entities. This led in time to the doctrine that a language could be discovered or invented which was free from, and proof against, logically misleading expressions; such a language would be 'logically perfect', and it would consist exclusively of words which did directly correspond to things and their properties, and otherwise only of logical words – constants, transformation rules and the like, whose very form would clearly show that they made no claim to describe or refer to anything whatever. From this it naturally seemed to follow that it was possible, provided one took enough trouble, to arrive at combinations of words which were closer to – stood in a more face-to-face relation with – reality than those in ordinary use; this was the purpose of the whittling operation mentioned above. Even if some meaning could be given to the 'fundamental' or 'basic' sentences which represent the ideal goal of this process, the fallacy did not stop there but directly involved its perpetrators in the entire Procrustean programme. For it held out the alternatives of either eliminating all but basic propositions and combinations of them from the logically perfect language, leaving the untranslated and untranslatable portions of hypothetical, general etc. propositions to fend for themselves as best they could, as psychological attitudes, dispositions or states, emotional residues etc.; or of stretching the basic propositions to cover (as we are told Procrustes did with the legs of his shorter guests) whatever one required to say, which led to the production of fanciful worlds populated by Meinong's queer entities. The theory is fallacious because all words are not names, and meaning is not a species of correspondence with a triadic or any other unique, formally analysable, structure (with unconvincing ad hoc adjustments to explain away, say, the obvious difficulties created by false propositions); yet neither is it an utterly absurd theory of meaning; many words or sentences can, in a sense, be said to 'correspond'; this metaphor, if it throws darkness on some, clarifies other ways in which words are used. But when what has significance solely because and in so far as it characterises a particular part of a whole is predicated about the whole, a logical fallacy is generated; and the result turns out to be meaningless. This is precisely what occurs when the effort is made – however unavowed – to represent
CONCEPTS AND CATEGORIES

every species of proposition as combinations of one single species. This is logical translation at its most misguided.

2. The Ionian fallacy

A related tendency is the extension of what may be called the Ionian fallacy of asking what everything is made of. The Ionian philosophers themselves may be wholly guiltless of this, since what they were probably asking were questions of physics, from which metaphysical ones were perhaps not clearly distinguished in their day. But the form which this inquiry has taken in later times, from Aristotle to Russell, is a search for the ultimate constituents of the world in some non-empirical sense. Does it really make sense to ask whether the universe consists of events, or point-instants, or sense data, or occurrences? These terms are considered an improvement on such entities as substances, or forms, or unknowable substrata, or Hegelian ideas, since prima facie they wear a more empirical look. But this is a mere deception. For what kind of answers are these questions designed to elicit? If everything consists of 'occurrents' or 'occurrences', what would it be like for something not to be an occurrent or occurrence? How could we know, by what species of empirical or metaphysical inspection, if it were not? And if we could not know this, what significance can we attach to the positive assertion that everything is so composed? What evidence can we have for it or its contradictory? In making it, what are we denying, what alternative are we ruling out, and how can we know when we are and when we are not justified in doing this? A sentence of the form 'Everything consists of . . . ' or 'Everything is . . . ' or 'Nothing is . . . ', unless it is empirical, i.e. states what might be, and only de facto is not, otherwise, states nothing, since a proposition which cannot be significantly denied or doubted can offer us no information. And although this is a truism which need not be further laboured, yet notable philosophers have been trapped into thinking that they can significantly ask what everything is made of, very much as if the question were answerable in the way in which empirical questions are answered, save only that the answers are given in terms of such ultimate constituents as occurents or sense data or atomic facts, as if such entities existed and had characteristics and histories of their own; such thinkers are naturally committed to the view that the propositions which describe such 'ultimate constituents' are basic in the sense required. And since the world consists of these basic ingredients, language cannot do better than mirror them — reproduce the 'structure of reality'. Atomic propositions are the
LOGICAL TRANSLATION

names of such ultimate constituents, molecular ones of combinations of them. This is indeed a metaphysic with a vengeance, without any of the virtues of the more interesting metaphysical systems, which have at times embodied illuminating historical or psychological or poetical insights in the guise of logical or metaphysical discoveries. This strange ontology combines all the vices of the correspondence theory of meaning with everything that positivists have justly urged against synthetic a priori judgements; for what are these judgements which purport to analyse the universe into its ultimate constituents, so ultimate that there can be nothing to contrast them with, but synthetic, a priori, and meaningless into the bargain?

3 The search for security

Finally, there is what Dewey once called the quest for certainty. Plainly one of the most powerful of philosophical stimuli is the search for security – the infallible knowledge of incorrigible propositions. As we have said above, no matter how dry, dull, uninformative such propositions may turn out to be, or how difficult to formulate, all our efforts and austerities will be most richly rewarded if we really secure unasailable certainty at last, reach islands, which may be small and arid and isolated, so long as they constitute dry land in an uncertain and uncharted sea. All the doctrines which look upon belief and opinion as capable of being distilled until they yield up their granules of certain knowledge (which, we are informed, they 'presuppose'), all the doctrines which hold out the goal of clear and distinct ideas whose certainty nothing could cloud, or speak of simple substances, or of simple ideas, not compounded of parts and therefore indestructible and undistortable, or of such ultimate prime matter as impressions, or bundles of sensations, or 'basic' or 'atomic' facts, or 'protocol sentences'; what are all these but an attempt to convey the view that at some time we must reach the last stage of our journey, beyond which it is logically impossible to go, for surely even the weariest river of analysis must somewhere wind safe to the sea of 'the ultimate stuff' of which everything is made? It is as if we were told that logical security could be had, but only at the price of extreme modesty; if we ask for too much, as ambitious metaphysicians have done, our treasures will melt into thin air, but if we ask for little – lowering the scale of our demands as the chances of their being wholly satisfied look more and more remote – we may go away not altogether empty-handed after all. A little is better than nothing; our foothold will be very precarious, but if we take sufficient care we
CONCEPTS AND CATEGORIES

need never slip; by contracting our claims to an absolute minimum we may be able to obtain a logical guarantee for the little that is left; the results may be humble but at least they will be safe; and that is surely worth any sacrifice. Or, to use another image, the ever-narrowing circle of light may reveal little of interest or importance, but that is more comforting than to be left in total darkness. Yet the truth is that even humility and self-denial cannot help; a claim may be modest, but it is still a claim; and the guarantee we seek, however qualified, is still a guarantee and consequently a logical impossibility. Whatever the psychological causes of this pursuit of security, it leads to fatal consequences, for it leads to the belief that there must be a group of propositions, tested and found indestructible, which forms the minimum gold reserve without which intellectual currency cannot be exchanged. It is one thing to maintain that sometimes we believe, and at other times know; sometimes we doubt legitimately, and sometimes we only think that we doubt, because it is thought philosophically proper or logically possible to do so, when in fact we are as certain (in the sense of ‘certain’ in which that word is normally used) as it is possible to be in the context in which we should normally say this. It is one thing to say this, which is true, and another to look for, and affect to find, incorrigible propositions, and worse still to maintain that they are indispensable to all descriptive language. For there is no reason to suppose that any empirical proposition is literally incorrigible in the sense that it cannot in principle be false. This kind of guarantee (which Kant made the most interesting of all attempts to obtain) is not to be had; not because nature is hostile and unwilling to yield up her secrets, but because upon examination the notion of such a guarantee turns out to be meaningless. This must surely follow from what has been shown about the delusiveness of the very notion of basic propositions. To say anything significantly about the world we must bring in something other than immediate experience (whatever ‘immediate’ may mean), namely the past and the future, and absent objects, and other persons, and unrealised possibilities, and general and hypothetical judgements, and so forth. And if these, because we cannot certify them as certain, are cut away, in the end literally nothing will be left. We cannot speak without incurring some risk, at least in theory; the only way of being absolutely safe is to say absolutely nothing; this is the goal towards which the search for ‘fundamental’ propositions asymptotically tends. Why are we so bent upon retaining these incorrigible propositions? Because we have been told that if these cannot be discovered everything will for ever remain uncertain, and that this is not
merely discomfiting but in some way philosophically 'unsatisfactory'.
But this is only another case of the fallacy of uttering 'Everything is . . .';
for the word 'uncertain' can only be given interpretation by being
contrasted with 'certain', of which we must consequently have had,
or be able to imagine, at least one characteristic example, if we are to
attach any significance to the word. The fallacy is to suppose that the
proposition 'The word “certain” has at least one application' entails the
proposition 'What is certain is incorrigible.' And those who are betrayed
into supposing that certainty entails incorrigibility will naturally look
upon propositions guaranteed as being incorrigible with especial favour,
as foundations upon which all else rests. We have returned once again
to the privileged class of basic propositions, and to the desire either to
translate all other propositions into them or combinations of them,
or else to represent them as being poor relations dependent upon the
privileged class - and so partly propositional and reputable, partly non-
propositional and denizens of some inferior realm; or at the worst
altogether non-propositional, to be relegated to some waste-paper basket
vaguely defined in pejorative psychological terms.

These three fallacies, interconnected as they obviously are, at any rate
psychologically, while they may not be sufficient by themselves to
afford a complete explanation of how those fatal twins, the processes of
inflation and deflation, pursue their disastrous careers, nevertheless do
serve to throw some light upon the major fallacy involved; namely the
belief or assumption that all propositions must in principle be either
translatable into, or at any rate in some way connected with, the
approved type of sentences (which alone fully reflect 'the structure of
reality'), or else suffer from defects which must either be explained away
or palliated by special logical 'treatment', or, if they prove too recalcitrant,
removed with their owners beyond the logical pale.

What moral are we to draw from this? Not, certainly, that no trans-
lation at all is possible between types of proposition - if only because
successful reductions of this type are a salutary psychological check upon
the tendency to inflation and multiplication of entities, and indeed
indispensable as a method for precluding certain types of nonsense; nor
yet that metaphors should not be used by philosophers in explaining
the relations of propositions among themselves as well as their function
in speaking about the world. Words mean, not by pinning down bits of
reality, but by having a recognised use, i.e. when their users know how
and in what situations to use them in order to communicate whatever
CONCEPTS AND CATEGORIES

they may wish to communicate; and for this there are no exhaustive formal rules. But because there is no single criterion of meaning and no single method or set of rules for testing it, it does not follow that there are in principle no criteria at all, no methods and no rules which may apply in differing types of context and situation. But neither, on the other hand, does the fact that many metaphors have proved fatal, or at least misleading, tend to show that all metaphors can or should be eliminated as such, and speech rendered absolutely literal. For the ideal of ‘literalness’ in this extreme sense is merely another instance of the fallacy of ‘basic’ sentences, with their false claim to fit ‘the facts’ precisely and completely, against which my argument has been directed.

The development of language is to a large extent the development of metaphors, and to attempt to discriminate between the metaphorical and non-metaphorical use of words, where metaphors are either embedded in normal speech, or a source of genuine illumination, would be absurdly pedantic, and, if pushed to extremes, unrealisable. To translate, reduce, deflate, is philosophically laudable so long as there is a real gain in clarity, simplicity, and the destruction of myths. But where it is obvious that types of proposition or sentence cannot be ‘reduced’ or ‘translated’ into one another without torturing the language until what was conveyed idiomatically before can no longer be conveyed so fully or clearly or, at times, at all in the artificial language constructed to conform to some imaginary criterion of a ‘logical perfection’, such attempts should be exposed as stemming from a false theory of meaning, accompanied by its equally counterfeit metaphysical counterpart – a view of the universe as possessing an ‘ultimate structure’, as being constructed out of this or that collection or combination of bits and pieces of ‘ultimate stuff’ which the ‘language’ is constructed to reproduce.

Unless this is realised, logical translation continues to be misused, particularly when attempts are made to force propositions, on pain of degradation or even elimination, to conform to some uniform model, and so to rob them of their most important uses and differences. Of all philosophical obsessions this is almost the most persistent, and has thrown too much dust in the eyes of philosophers in the form of insoluble, because illusory, philosophical problems.