

MAPPING, MEANING, AND METAPHYSICS

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The positivistic attack on the meaningfulness of philosophical or metaphysical propositions led to a preoccupation with so-called clarified or perspicuous language schemata. Yet, this aspect of the "linguistic turn"¹ in philosophy provided a ground, somewhat paradoxically, for the rejection of the philosophical nihilism that was part of the positivistic legacy. Instead of dismissing metaphysical issues and claims as empty verbiage or mere nonsense, some philosophers in the linguistic tradition attempted to employ clarified languages, or ideal languages as they were sometimes called, to both restate and resolve the classical problems as questions and insights about the structure and interpretation of such schemata. Unquestionably one underlying motive for the interest in ideal languages as a key to the restatement and resolution of philosophical problems was the ancient connection between thought and language. In getting at features of clarified languages some linguistic philosophers, explicitly or implicitly, thought they were getting at features of mental processes. Ideal languages thus became a means for studying the connection between thought and the ordinary world of experience, as well as for examining the logical structure of thought processes. Other philosophers simply took such perspicuous language schemata to afford unproblematic ways of putting the traditional issues and proposed solutions to them. Still others spoke in terms of an articulation of our conceptual scheme or of an elaboration of a conceptual framework that would be adequate for the inclusion of science, mathematics, and so forth. It is not surprising that with such varied offshoots of the earlier concern with the meaning of metaphysical pronouncements we have not been supplied with a clear and unproblematic articulation of the role of such ideal schemata in the philosophical enterprise. Nor is it

surprising that it sometimes appears as if all a philosopher means by a perspicuous or clarified language is one which enables us to produce formalized transcriptions of statements of a natural language, excluding or including metaphysical assertions depending upon one's philosophical inclination. Supposedly, expressing matters in the symbolism of the predicate calculus, or set theory, or of a modal calculus is synonymous with clarification and analysis for some philosophers. In this paper I propose to offer a partial remedy by specifying a presupposition for the significant employment of formal schemata in the clarification and solution of the classical metaphysical or ontological problems and to consider the proper role of the background natural language (involving a conceptual scheme or background theory, as some would put it). The principle involved will be discussed by way of considering a misguided use of clarified schemata that is both common and crucial to some leading contemporary versions of nominalism, a recent and popular conception of ontological reduction, and a current and fashionable view about "theories" of truth. I will suggest that the views considered in this paper are philosophically trivial, question begging, and amount to a nihilistic denial of the very problems they propose to resolve. While they *appear* to use clarified schemata to consider and answer traditional philosophical problems, the philosophers we shall consider actually reject the issues they propose to resolve. However, unlike the early positivists, they do so in a circuitous, rather than a direct, manner. What I shall suggest is that they do so in that they run counter to the principle in question and that the proposed principle is a condition for the cogent use of clarified schemata in the explication and resolution of philosophical issues. However, I shall not offer any arguments for the principle at issue. It is too basic for one to defend. What I hope to do is show how several philosophers, by denying the principle, illustrate the triviality of using clarified schemata without it.

All philosophers recognize the difference between the quite ordinary claim that one who asserts that there is a white piece of paper on a desk is mistaken since what he took to be paper is plastic or because what appeared to be white is actually pink and the quite extraordinary claim that such a person is mistaken because there are neither physical objects, nor colors, nor relations or because physical objects are not really colored. Recognizing this, we recognize also that we may unproblematically say, in an appropriate context and sense, that there are objects, properties of objects, and relations in which objects stand. In the same way we clearly recognize that some claims about objects having certain properties or standing in certain

relations are true and others are false. When a philosopher raises questions about whether there really are common properties, in *addition* to objects, and about what *makes* or *corresponds to* a true sentence, so that it is true if there is such a correspondent and false if not, he is raising a question that is not to be answered in the way in which one answers questions as to whether an object is paper or plastic, white or pink. It should also be clear that what we take to be an appropriate response will depend on how we construe the question². That there is some need to construe or “reconstruct” the question can be taken to be the point of the positivistic revolution, at least for those who believe that while there is merit in the positivistically inspired concern with the meaning of metaphysical assertions there is a trace of madness in the wholesale rejection of such assertions based on that concern. Construing or reconstructing an issue obligates one who attempts to do so to restate the question without using the term or phrase that appears to be problematic or, at least, to provide a context of explication to remove the problem about its meaning or use. In so doing, he must not transform the question into one that is irrelevant to the historical issue. Thus, one who transforms the problem of universals into a question as to whether or not all or most natural languages have so-called “general” terms obviously loses the thread of the historical problem. A more promising beginning is to suggest that the philosophical problem about properties and universals can be gotten at by raising questions about the reference and ascription of some predicates. Do some predicates refer *as* proper names or so-called “singular” terms do and, if so, to what do they refer? If they do not refer *as* proper names do, do they refer at all, and, if so, what is the difference in the mode of reference? Some may profess to find such questions as puzzling and inarticulate as the original problem. Whether to respond to such critics or simply to achieve further clarification, we can suggest getting at these questions, and related ones, by considering a simple model situation. We will talk about three objects and only note their colors, shapes, and some spatial relations. Consider the domain comprised of



We have, then, two white squares and a black circle in our miniature “universe” or domain. We may also consider a series of statements that are unproblematically true in the sense that it was

unproblematic, in my earlier example, that a pink piece of plastic, rather than a white sheet of paper, was on my desk.

- (II) The square to the left of the circle is white.
 The circle is black.
 The circle is between the squares.
 etc.

It is both clear and unproblematic that we can speak of the word 'black' standing for one color or color property and the word 'white' standing for another. We may also say, unproblematically, that the sentences of (II) may be used to ascribe properties to the objects of the domain (I). At this point a philosopher seeking to establish the existence of universal properties may argue that the use of a predicate to ascribe one and the same property to two of the objects presupposes that we have recognized universals. But this is not an argument; it is merely a prologue to one. What such a philosopher wants to hold is that the only *account* that would fit the unproblematic facts expressed by the list of (II) is one which would acknowledge universal properties. But what is it to give an "account" in such circumstances and what is it to acknowledge universal properties? One may attempt to deal with such questions by introducing a schematic language. Let us now imagine ourselves to construct a sign system using a set of signs-- 'a', 'b', 'c'-- to refer to the objects of (I); signs that we later intend to take on the role of monadic predicates-- 'W₁', 'S₁', 'B₁', 'C₁'; and signs that will become relational predicates-- 'L₂', 'R₂', 'B₃'. We can also specify formation rules in the standard way so that patterns like 'W₁ (a)', 'L₂ (a, b)', 'B₃ (a, b, c)', etc. become sentential patterns. We may now consider ourselves to have, in an extended sense, three "domains": the miniature world of objects (I); the set of true English sentences (II); and the artificial linguistic schema (III), which is as yet uninterpreted.

It is clear that we can coordinate the signs 'a', 'b', and 'c' to the left hand square, the circle, and the right hand square, respectively. In a way, I just did so. In so connecting the signs of (III) to the objects of (I) I made use of written sentences of English or, as some might say, I made use of a "framework". Of course I need not have made use of written sentences of any natural language. If I was not concerned with communication, I might have said things to myself or employed gestures or perhaps, if one is not committed to the thesis that thought is linguistic, had appropriate thoughts that did not employ language. But let us forget such possibilities and the issues

they involve and consider the coordination to have been made using the same language to which the sentences of (II) belong. The problems I am concerned with have to do with the use of such a background language or "framework" and its proper role in the explication and resolution of ontological issues. I am not concerned with whether such statements of the background language establish or merely record the coordination in question. A coordination has been made and it is revealed by the statements of the background language or framework. We can consider such a background language or framework to be a further domain (IV), which includes the sentences of (II) and further sentences to the effect that the sentences of (II) are true.

Having coordinated the signs 'a', 'b', 'c', to their reference in the domain (I) we may say that we have acknowledged such objects by the coordination. We may reflect this by a series of statements in our background language, (IV), making use of the standard quoting convention for referring to signs and sign patterns.

- (1) 'a' refers to the left hand square.
- (2) 'b' refers to the circle.
- (3) 'c' refers to the right hand square.

The recognition of the objects a, b, and c, reflected in (1), (2), and (3), may be unproblematically called *ontological*. I say "unproblematically" and "ontological" for two reasons. First, we must recognize such objects to exist, as we recognized a pink piece of plastic on the desk, to have a coordination and, second, the recognition of such objects is an obvious condition for our use of the sentence patterns of (III) to make statements about such objects. An ontological commitment with respect to a domain like (III) and a coordination is simply reflected by the pairing of something of (III) with something of (I). This ought not to be controversial since it does not enable us to prejudge the issues surrounding the controversy between nominalists and those who reject nominalism. One may hold that common properties or universals need not be recognized in an ontology since we need not map predicates like 'W₁', 'L₂', etc. onto colors, spatial relations, etc. as we mapped the signs 'a', 'b', and 'c' onto objects in order to have sentence patterns like 'W₁ (a) reflect sentences of the background language such as 'The square to the left of the circle is white'.

Nominalism of course may take several forms. In one form, which I associate with Nelson Goodman,³ the predicates are coordinated to the particulars a, b, and c in the same sense that the signs 'a', 'b', and

'c' are coordinated to them, except that a predicate may be coordinated to more than one particular-- just as in natural languages proper names are often given to more than one individual. Thus, in addition to (1), (2), and (3), reflecting the coordination of names to objects, we would have

- (4) 'W₁' refers to a and 'W₁' refers to c.
- (5) 'S₁' refers to a and 'S₁' refers to c.
- (6) 'B₁' refers to b.
- (7) 'C₁' refers to b.

In all of (1) through (7) the expression 'refers to' is used univocally. An anti-nominalist or "platonist" might advocate the use of

- (4_p) 'W₁' refers to the color white.
- (5_p) 'S₁' refers to the shape square.
- (6_p) 'B₁' refers to the color black.
- (7_p) 'C₁' refers to the shape circle.

Such a one could then hold that the objects of (I) *exemplify* properties such as white, square, *etc.*. That exemplification of a property by an object constitutes a fact which is then the ground of truth for a sentence like 'W₁ (a)'. Such a platonist also uses 'refers to' univocally in (1), and, say, (4_p). Goodman, not recognizing properties, has nothing for the objects of (I) to exemplify. Thus, he sometimes expresses his view by stating that objects exemplify predicates--terms or linguistic items. That is, the objects of (I) exemplify items of the domain (III) and not further items of (I). As Goodman sometimes puts it, exemplification is the converse of the denotation relation. Hence, if one spoke of 'W₁' *being true of a*, this would be elliptical for the first conjunct of (4). One could also then say that 'a' is true of a or that a exemplifies 'a' as well as 'W₁'. Moreover, since 'W₁' and 'S₁' have the same denotation one can hold that 'W₁ = S₁' is true, if one allows for identity statements of that kind. One thus incorporates a so-called extensionalist view with respect to predicates. In effect predicates are class terms given in extension, and, consequently, 'W₁ (x)', or 'x ∈ W₁', is elliptical for 'x = a or x = c'. There are a number of traditional problems associated with such a view. A typical one is that the ordinary statement of (II), such as "This is white", used when one ascribes a color to a, correlates with "'W₁' refers to a" or with 'a = a or a = c'. But, whereas the natural language statement is neither one whose truth follows from statements reflecting coordinations of signs with things

(semantical rules, if you will) as set forth in (1) – (7) nor a statement which is of the form of a tautological identity, it is coordinated, on the view in question, with such a rule or tautology. Such a standard dispute I do not wish to pursue here. Rather, I am concerned with an attempt to avoid the problem by holding that ‘ W_1 ’ is true of a since a is white, and not true in virtue of a semantical rule or tautological identity.

Such a defense of the nominalist view involves the two-fold claim that (4) holds *because* both a and c are white and that (4), nevertheless, makes use of the same denoting relation as (1). The nominalist justifies his claims by appealing to the biconditional :

(α) ‘ W_1 ’ is true of a \equiv a is white.

He further holds that that is all one need do to eliminate the problem of universals. The predicate ‘ W_1 ’ holds of an object not because it refers to a property which the object *has* or *exemplifies*, but because the object *is white*. This claim focuses our attention on the right hand side of the bi-conditional (α) and the use of the term ‘white’ in that sentence. The term ‘white’ is, of course, a term of the background or natural language, and that is the crucial point in considering the cogency of the nominalist’s response. Suppose that instead of (α) one invoked

(α') ‘ W_1 ’ is true of a $\equiv W_1$ (a).

An appeal to (α') would immediately lead to a question about the use of ‘ W_1 ’ on the right hand side. Since (α') is merely a restatement of

(α'') ‘ W_1 ’ refers to a $\equiv W_1$ (a)

it is obviously problematic to hold that (4) reflects or establishes a correspondence between a sign and a thing as (1) does. We do not simply coordinate a sign from the domain (III) to something from the domain (I); we coordinate a sign, ‘ W_1 ’, to an object, a, on the basis of the object’s having a property or being of a kind. But, it is precisely such a condition that gives rise to the philosophical puzzle. To appeal to the condition that a is W_1 obviously amounts to a circular avoidance of the issue, not to a solution of the puzzle. It would obviously be problematic to use

(1’) ‘a’ refers to a

as an expression of the coordination rule for 'a', without a prior coordination of 'a' to some object. The nominalist of Goodman's stripe seeks to avoid the similar problem about 'W₁' in (α') and (α'') by employing (α) and the use of 'white' as a term of the natural or background language. While it is obviously question begging and inadequate to explain or coordinate 'W₁' by *using* that sign, as in (α') and (α''), the nominalist apparently thinks it is cogent to employ the background term 'white' as in (α). Such a use of the background term becomes the key to the nominalist's gambit. Before considering such a problematic use of a background language, we may note the similar use of formalized or perspicuous schemata by two other prominent nominalists.

Quine's version of nominalism sometimes depends on holding that there are two denoting relations so that instead of (4)–(7) we would have

(4') 'W₁' is true of a and 'W₁' is true of c.
etc.

where 'is true of' is not elliptical for 'refers to' but expresses another basic relation between words and objects⁴. This leads to obvious questions as to the basis for statements like (4'). Sometimes there is no answer from Quine, but at places it appears as if the response would be

'W₁' is true of a \equiv 'W₁ (a)' is true \equiv a is white.

Thus, as in Goodman's case, he reverts to a term of the natural language and the unproblematic assertion that the object in question "is white".

Some things W. Sellars has written would lead, and in fact have led, his readers to believe that the nominalistic position can be established by eliminating predicates and relation terms from a schema like (III)⁵. Thus, instead of having predicates like 'W₁', etc. in (III), we would adopt the convention that the signs for the objects a, b, and c be considered to encompass different type fonts. Instead of having a formation rule putting a predicate next to a subject term, as in 'W₁ (a)', to form a sentence we would have, for example, the following signs

a, A, a, A

to express, respectively, 'W₁ (a)', S₁ (a)', 'C₁ (a)', and 'B₁ (a)'. In a

like vein we would replace ' $R_2(a, b)$ ' by, say, 'ab', and ' $L_2(a, b)$ ' by something like ' $\frac{a}{b}$ '. In this manner we do not make use of either monadic or relational predicates and, hence, we perspicuously show that we do not take predicates to denote entities but only take "singular" terms to do so. Were the possibility of so using type fonts and spatial relations among sign tokens taken as an argument for Sellars' nominalism it would be a poor argument indeed. Esoteric penmanship would simply replace philosophical reasoning. Obviously what would now stand for a property would be a letter's being in a type font of a certain kind, rather than a predicate letter, and, hence, something is now relevant for the perspicuous schematic language to contain correlates of natural language sentences that previously was not relevant, *i.e.* the type font of the singular term or proper name. However, I think that what Sellars intends is to merely show, in a perspicuous manner, the rejection of properties as entities, while assuming that there are other grounds on which to base the rejection. These grounds are to be found in Sellars' arguments that the proper formulation of coordinating statements like (4) through (7) for a schema that included predicates, and hence one which would not be as perspicuous a schema as one employing only names in a variety of type fonts, would be in terms of something like

- (4_s) ' W_1 ' is a 'white'
- (5_s) ' S_1 ' is a 'square'
- (6_s) ' C_1 ' is a 'circle'
- (7_s) ' B_1 ' is a 'black'

where the dots around the English predicates indicate that the predicates ' W_1 ', *etc.* play the role in (III) that their English counterparts play in (II) and (IV). What this amounts to is a complicated way of stating that ' W_1 ' means the same as 'white' does in English. By contrast, in (1) through (3) we retain the referential connection between the terms 'a', 'b', and 'c' and the objects they denote. Sellars, like Goodman and Quine, thus also makes use of the English term 'white', but in a more complicated way⁷. The complication supposedly provides the defense of the view.

Goodman, Quine, and Sellars make a common move when they use the terms of the natural or background language to avoid a coordination of the predicates of (III) to properties of the objects of (I). Contrast what they do with the philosopher who makes use of (4_p) through (7_p). According to the latter, we are as much committed, by such a coordination, to the properties as we are to the objects a, b, c. He then goes on, having recognized properties, to consider when

one will be taking properties to be universals, or classes, or quality instances, *etc.* In so doing, he explains the meaning of the term 'universal' as it occurs in philosophical discourse, in a philosopher's talk about the domains (I), (II), and (III) and about the coordinations among them. Such discourse takes place in (IV). A philosopher who maintains that our natural language reference to properties is properly analyzed in terms of particularized quality instances, rather than in terms of universals, will hold that while 'W₁' may be coordinated to the color of a, we must introduce a further term, say 'W₂', to refer to the color of c. He will probably also hold that we must recognize a rather special relation that will hold between the quality instances W₁ and W₂, and, hence, introduce a further term into (III) to refer to such a relation. A philosopher advocating the recognition of universal characteristics will hold, among other things, that 'W₁' stands for one and the same entity with respect to both a and c. Such arguments as may them ensue between proponents of these and other alternatives are not my concern here. We may note, however, that in spelling out the various alternatives one recaptures, rather than ignores, much of the traditional dialectic, and, in so doing, one expounds and explicates more of the contextual meaning of philosophical usage of terms like 'universal'. One uses the model domain (I) and the schematic language (III) to elucidate the traditional vocabulary. We also make use of the list (II) and the background language (IV). The latter is crucial in our coordinating the philosophical term 'universal', a problematic term of the background language, to the unproblematic background term 'property', in order to propound and explicate the alternative metaphysical views. Such coordinations of metaphysical terms to ordinary ones is quite different from the coordination of the terms of (III) to the entities of (I). But such comments invite an objection. Does the platonist not make use of the background term 'white' in (4_p) and did I not express myself by saying we could take 'W₁' to stand for the property indicated by 'white' in English? Is this not to do exactly what Sellars does, except for my speaking of "standing for a property" where Sellars might use "plays the same role as"? Or, to put it another way, is the only difference that the platonist *uses* the term 'white' without quotation marks in (4_p), whereas the term occurs within the special dot quotes in (4_g)? Is not Sellars' line or argument cogent and my way of speaking verbose and redundant? The appearance is deceptive, for I have not made use of the background natural language in the way in which the trio of nominalists do. Their line of argument negates the point of employing schematic languages. With respect to the problem of

universals, the question is whether to take colors, shapes, *etc.* as being of that ontological kind. We are asking whether the correlate of a term of the background language, say 'white' as it occurs in sentences of (II), can be used in sentences of (III) so that the latter can be taken to express the same facts as the former without the term 'W₁' being correlated to a common property. (In my previous sentence the terms 'property' and 'fact' are used in an unproblematic sense). One thing our three nominalists do is refuse to ask the question we raise, since they get the sentence of (III), 'W₁ (a)', to express what a sentence of (II) does by ruling that 'W₁' correlates to the term 'white'. That they do this by talk of "true of" or the use of the dotted quotes, rather than by talk of *meaning* or *correlating*, is beside the point. Another thing they do, perhaps unconsciously, is refuse to acknowledge that terms like 'fact' and 'property' are used in an unproblematic sense on some occasions when we speak of *the property* white and *the fact that* an object is white. Once one recognizes that there is an unproblematic sense in which we may speak of properties and facts it becomes difficult to avoid the issue in the way in which the trio of nominalists do. Recognizing that there are properties in an unproblematic sense, we must take the relevant ontological question to involve a request about the nature or status of properties. By doing what they do, they bypass the problem of universals by a sort of semantical detour. Once such a problem is raised, rather than avoided, we can obviously not be content with the claim that 'W₁ (a)' holds because a is white or with the assertion that 'W₁' corresponds to or means the same as 'white' as solutions to the problem of universals. In short, using a schematic formal language to explicate and resolve ontological issues involves our coordinating the primitive terms of the schema to "things" of the domain (I). To express or state what is coordinated to what by use of a background schema or language or framework is one thing; to coordinate a term of the schema to a term of the background language is quite another thing. One simple aspect of the situation may blind the nominalist to this obvious difference. Suppose the nominalist is asked why he does not hold that we need not recognize the object a since we could coordinate the sign 'a' of the schema to the background language phrase 'the left hand square' or 'this', in an appropriate context, rather than to the relevant object of (I). Thus, we could avoid recognizing a particular object like a as an entity. This, of course, suggests a *reductio ad absurdum* of the nominalist's position. He could reply that while the sign 'a' of the schema (III) refers to the same thing as an appropriate phrase of the background language, it does not mean the same thing as such a phrase. In the case of singular

terms it is inappropriate to hold that different terms or phrases *mean the same* thing when they *refer to the same* thing. In the case of predicates or so-called "general" terms, however, the notions of *meaning* and *reference* are readily run together, as one speaks of 'W₁' meaning the same thing as 'white' or referring to the same color as the English term. Since the natural language expressions 'means the same' and 'refers to the same' are somewhat interchangeable for predicates in such contexts, one can easily be led to think that the question of what a term like 'W₁' is coordinated with can be replaced by a question as to what natural language term it represents. Once the replacement is made the ontological question is lost. Moreover, replacement on such grounds reveals that, on the one hand, the nominalist depends too much on an apparent difference in natural languages between "singular" and "general" terms and, on the other hand, he begs the question by emphasizing one of the apparently interchangeable natural language expressions at the expense of the other.

One may object that I am merely stipulating a problem and the condition for its solution by fiat. Hence, the so-called ontological issue is an artificial one. There comes a point in all such disputes where argument must cease. As I see it, what is offered by the approach taken here is a way of construing the classical ontological issues (or, at least, some of them) so that they are not buried by esoteric linguistic devices. When it is held that the problem is to be formulated in terms of acknowledging the coordination of the primitive signs of (III) to things, not words, I am clearly making a more restricted use of the background natural language than the nominalists we have considered. That one must make such a restricted use of the background language is the principle I mentioned above. The acceptance or rejection of such a principle leads to two sets of rules for explicating and resolving metaphysical questions. In effect, one who deals with the ontological questions according to the principle in question accepts more stringent conditions for their solution; thus it is no surprise that he ends up with more entities. We may also note that a historical question arises. Which use of perspicuous language schemata fits best with the elucidation of the historical tradition and provides us with insights about it?

What I have said is more in the way of specifying what a particular philosophical issue is, rather than offering an argument purporting to establish how we *must* construe such issues. But, as in all such cases, we can judge the respective viewpoints by their fruits. A paradigm case is provided by Quine's use of a background schema or language.

Quine's approach to four further philosophical issues involves a remarkably similar use of a background language to that employed by all three nominalists to rid their ontologies of universal properties. Quine has used the approach to eliminate names, talk of truth values, the appeal to classes in validity theory for lower functional logic, and reference to mental entities. The approach is so similar in all four cases that one is tempted to speak of "Quine's way out" as a general rule for avoiding issues. In the case of names Quine's move is astoundingly simple. Suppose that the linguistic apparatus of (III) has been enlarged to include a system of quantificational logic and identity along with a standard approach to definite descriptions along Russellian lines. Assume we also have signs in the same syntactical category as 'a', 'b', and 'c' which are not coordinated with objects, *i.e.*, names that do not name. Let 'Pegasus' be such a sign. According to Quine we can define a predicate 'Pegasizes' so that

$$(D_1) \text{ Pegasizes } (x) = \text{df. } x = \text{Pegasus.}$$

Given (D_1) , we can now eliminate 'Pegasus' from (III) and use, instead, 'the x such that x Pegasizes' or, in Russell's symbolism, ' $(\exists x)$ Pegasizes (x) '. The procedure is taken to be legitimate since (D_1) really belongs to the background schema which is used in introducing terms into (III). This supposedly answers the obvious question about the cogency of eliminating a term used to define another term by replacing the former with the latter⁸.

The same technique is used in the case of propositional logic where we have a so-called "internal" criterion for a tautology, being a theorem in a system, and an "external" criterion, having the value *true* in all lines of a truth table. The external criterion, as Quine views it, commits us to truth values as entities. To avoid such a commitment we can eliminate the reference to truth values by, first, noting that the external and the internal criteria yield the same results and, second, dispensing with the external criterion by specifying that a tautology is to be characterized only in terms of the internal criterion. One is tempted to make the obvious protest that the internal criterion is what it is, namely a criterion for a form being tautologous, only because it correlates with the external criterion. Once again the background language is thought to provide a reply. Since the crucial statements of the coordination of the two criteria are made in a background language, one does not need to refer to truth values in a schema employing the system of propositional logic and specifying a proposition to be a tautology in terms of that system. The use of such a schema, not employing terms standing for

truth values, does not involve the user in ontological commitments associated with such terms.

Essentially the same move is made to eliminate reference to classes and hence the recognition of classes as entities in the case of the predicate calculus. We have an external criterion in terms of standard validity theory making reference to classes and an internal criterion specifying a propositional form to be a logical truth in terms of being a theorem of a certain system. We eliminate reference to what is talked about in the terms of the external criterion by employing only the internal criterion.

Quine's most dramatic and philosophically interesting use of the technique in question occurs in his offhand dismissal of mental entities. Consider a language system that employs mentalistic terms and another that employs only physicalistic terminology. Many have felt that they can eliminate a commitment to mental entities by avoiding the use of mentalistic terminology. One way of avoiding such use, according to some philosophers, is by means of discovered correlations between mental states and physical ones. Quine gives the attempted reduction a new twist. Suppose we have not discovered such correlations as yet for some mental states. Let M_1 be such a kind of mental state. All we need do, according to Quine, is introduce the term 'P₁-state' so that we stipulate that a P₁-state is a physical state that holds of a subject if and only if there is a corresponding M_1 state holding. Having done this we now eliminate the expression for the mental state, M_1 , from the language and use the expression 'P₁-state' to characterize subjects in *that* state. We thus eliminate in the use of such a linguistic schema an ontological commitment to the mental states, since we have eliminated the mentalistic terms from the vocabulary of the schema⁹. Again, the coordination is stated in a background schema containing reference to both M_1 and the "corresponding" physical state. But here, as in all the above cases, since we employ the schema with the terms for the "entities" we seek to eliminate how have we succeeded in removing them from our ontology? One response, which I do not take to be explicitly Quine's, is to point out that the ontological questions are resolved in terms of the commitments of a formal schema, such as (III), and not in terms of our background natural language. This response presupposes the use of the background language I have been criticizing and also reveals its triviality. Of course, that was the point of bringing Quine's four "reductions" into the discussion. Quine, himself, has an explicit response that is just as inadequate.

Our dependence upon a background theory becomes especially evident when we reduce our universe U to another V by appeal to a proxy function. For it is only in a theory with an inclusive universe, embracing U and V , that we can make sense of the proxy function. The function maps U into V and hence needs all the old objects of U as well as their new proxies in V .

.....
 If the new objects happen to be among the old, so that V is a subclass of U , then the old theory with universe U can itself sometimes qualify as the background theory in which to describe its own ontological reduction. But we cannot do better than that; we cannot declare our new ontological economies without having recourse to the uneconomical old ontology.

This sounds, perhaps, like a predicament : as if no ontological economy is justifiable unless it is a false economy and the repudiated objects really exist after all. But actually this is wrong; there is no more cause for worry here than there is in *reduction ad absurdum*, where we assume a falsehood that we are out to disprove. If what we want to show is that the universe U is excessive and that only a part exists, or need exist, then we are quite within our rights to assume all of U for the space of the argument. We show thereby that if all of U were needed then not all of U would be needed; and so our ontological reduction is sealed by *reductio ad absurdum*¹⁰.

One thing Quine presupposes in the above passages is that a coordination by means of what he calls a *proxy function* constitutes a reduction.

Thus, if we take "square of" to be a proxy function and consider a universe U of the natural numbers and a subclass of U consisting of the squares of the members of U , we can consider U to be "reduced" to this subclass, V . In short, 2 and 3 will have been reduced to 4 and 9, respectively, and, hence, we can do without 2 and 3, as they are not members of V . 9, as a member of U , will have been reduced to 81, as a member of V , but will nevertheless persist as a member of V , since it is the square of 3, but no longer, so to speak, will it be 9. Of course, it is the role 9 plays as the ninth member of one progression and as the third of another that is crucial. So, of course, there is no puzzle in one sense. What is puzzling is talk of "reduction" in such cases. Such talk is based on the essential presupposition that a coordination or mapping by means of a proxy function constitutes a reduction of some things to other things. For such a presupposition there neither is nor can be an argument. One merely stipulates a use

of the term 'reduction'. Be that as it may, such a stipulation about *reduction* does not help in the cases of the elimination of the name 'Pegasus' and the mental state M_1 . In those cases we are concerned with the circularity of introducing or specifying the meaning of an expression, 'Pegasizes' in the one case and ' P_1 -state' in the other, in terms of another expression and then eliminating or reducing the latter. Quine may overlook the difference between the two types of cases since, in some vague sense, a background language operates in both. That is, when we reduce 9 to 81 the statements of the coordination, on which the reduction is based, must be made in a background language employing the terms '81' and '9'. This, as Quine views matters, does not interfere with the reduction of the one to the other. Therefore, he might think that when we eliminate 'Pegasus' in favor of 'Pegasizes', the statement (D_1) occurs in the background language and hence does not preclude our eliminating one term in favor of the other, even though we use both in the background language. But this makes no literal sense. It is one thing, specious as it is, to reduce 9 to 81, where the expressions '9' and '81' are taken as terms of arithmetical systems in some ordinary mathematical context. It is quite another thing to speak of such a reduction where the expression '81' is defined, for example, as 'the square of 9'. Quine apparently sees no difference.

Quine's approach to ontological reduction illuminates Sellars' attempt to avoid a commitment to universal properties by a specious use of the background natural language. There is, as I see it, no difference between what Sellars does with ' W_1 ' and 'white' and what Quine does with 'Pegasizes' and 'Pegasus'. This suggests that the *reductio* that is involved concerns the viewpoint of Sellars and Quine, and not the denial of ontological reduction on the basis of a mapping. To put it another way, connecting a line of philosophical argument with Quine's "way out" constitutes, as I see it, a *reductio ad absurdum* of such a line of thought.

Davidson has recently made use of the same approach as Sellars, Goodman, and Quine in his consideration of the concept of "truth". He has held that a clear and sufficient theory of truth is offered if we have, in a schema, a predicate 'T' which satisfies Tarski's Convention T. Of the problem of truth and its solution, he writes :

Tarski taught us to appreciate the problem, and he gave an ingenious solution. The solution depends on first characterizing a relation called *satisfaction* and then defining truth by means of it. The entities that are satisfied are sentences both open and closed; the satisfiers are functions that map the variables of the

object language onto the entities over which they range--almost everything, if the language is English...

The semantic concept of truth as developed by Tarski deserves to be called a correspondence theory because of the part played by the concept of satisfaction; for clearly what has been done is that the property of being true has been explained, and nontrivially, in terms of a relation between language and something else. The relation, satisfaction, is not, it must be allowed, exactly what intuition expected of correspondence; and the functions or sequences that satisfy may not seem much like facts.... If we thought of proper names instead, satisfiers could be more nearly the ordinary objects of our talk--namely, ordered n-tuples of such. Thus 'Dolores loves Dagmar' would be satisfied by Dolores and Dagmar (in that order) provided Dolores loved Dagmar¹¹.

In appealing to the expression "provided Dolores loved Dagmar" Davidson avoids the question about facts, as grounds of truth, just as Sellars, Goodman and Quine avoid the question about universals. Suppose we include a truth predicate in (III) and satisfy the Tarski-type condition so that, for example,

$$T 'W_1(a)' \equiv W_1(a)$$

holds. What this means is that the sentence ' $W_1(a)$ ' is true if and only if a is white. But the question that philosophers have traditionally pondered involves the connection of sentences like ' $W_1(a)$ ' with something of (I). What Davidson provides from the domain (I) is the object a , since a is white. That is, one gets the English rendition of ' $W_1(a)$ ' and the object as the ground of truth, or explanation. Thus, we get an individual from (I) and a statement from (IV), only it is put in the roundabout way of saying that a is a *satisfier*, provided a is white.

We might ask in what sense we have a theory of truth when we have a condition for a truth predicate in a schema? We are told that one question replaces another, and this is supposedly justified since the one question is clear and the other is not. One can almost hear the reply being made in a Viennese coffee house of the 1930's.

The central merit of Convention T is that it substitutes for an important but murky problem a task whose aim is clear. After the substitution one appreciates better what was wanted in the first place, and gains insight into the aetiology of confusion.

The original question is not confused, only vague. It is : what is it for a sentence (or utterance or statement) to be true ? Confusion threatens when this question is reformulated as, what makes a sentence true ? The real trouble comes when this in turn is taken to suggest that truth must be explained in terms of a relation between a sentence as a whole and some entity, perhaps a fact, or state of affairs. Convention T shows how to ask the original question without inviting these subsequent formulations^{1 2}.

Here we clearly have the replacement of a philosophical question by one that is of interest to those interested in certain formal or logical properties of linguistic schemata. It is clear that Tarski was interested in a purely technical question :

Even a superficial analysis ... shows that in general composite sentences are in no way compounds of simple *sentences*. Sentential functions do in fact arise in this way from elementary functions, *i.e.* from inclusions; sentences on the contrary are certain special cases of sentential functions. In view of this fact, no method can be given which would enable us to define the required concept directly by recursive means. The possibility suggests itself, however, of introducing a more general concept which is applicable to any sentential function, can be recursively defined, and, when applied to sentences, leads us directly to the concept of truth. These requirements are met by the notion of the *satisfaction of a given sentential function by given objects*, and in the present case by given classes of individuals^{1 3}.

The incompleteness of Tarski's Convention T as a criterion for a *theory of truth* and his concern with a formal question is apparent from his statement about languages with a finite number of sentences.

If the language investigated only contained a finite number of sentences fixed from the beginning, and if we could enumerate all these sentences, then the problem of the construction of a correct definition of truth would present no difficulties. For this purpose it would suffice to complete the following scheme : $x \in \text{Tr}$ if and only if either $x = x_1$ and p_1 , or $x = x_2$ and p_2 , ... or $x = x_n$ and p_n , the symbols ' x_1 ', ' x_2 ', ..., ' x_n ' being replaced by structural descriptive names of all the

sentences of the language investigated and ' p_1 ', ' p_2 ', ..., ' p_n ' by the corresponding translation of these sentences into the metalanguage¹⁴.

In short, we give a "correct definition of truth" or a "theory of truth" by *listing the true sentences*, in such a finite case. The inadequacy of such a "theory" for concerns philosophers have traditionally had appears obvious. It is interesting to recall that Sellars replaces a question about the coordination of predicates with the domain (I) by a question about the coordination of *predicates of* (IV) with *predicates of* (III). Davidson duplicates Sellars' move: in a two-fold way. He replaces an ontological or philosophical question with one that is not, and he must literally, but covertly, make a move similar to Sellars' move about predicates. The latter feature comes out when we note that *a satisfies* ' $W_1(a)$ ' because *a* is white. That ends the matter, just as a list of true sentences would end the matter for Tarski, in the case of a language with a finite number of sentences. By making the response *because a is white*, Davidson makes questionable use of the background schema or language to avoid a philosophical issue in much the same way Sellars does. Properties and facts are avoided by the same kind of move. There is another interesting feature of Davidson's appeal to Convention T. In avoiding *relational* facts like the fact that Dolores loves Dagmar, Davidson speaks of ordered "n-tuples" of ordinary objects such as *the pair* Dolores and Dagmar *in that order*. He thus appeals to a further kind of entity, an ordered pair. Some philosophers might question the ontological parsimony gained by speaking of an ordered pair which satisfies 'Dolores loved Dagmar', while disdaining to talk of such metaphysical and vague entities as facts. But we can understand how one could come to make such a move. Logicians and mathematicians deal with ordered n-tuples in a systematic manner. In this sense, much is known about such "things". Thus, the philosophical problems about truth and facts disappear, in part, in favor of the textbook treatment of non-philosophical aspects of logic and mathematics. It is worth noting how the relational case and the ordering involved suggests a plausibility that is totally absent from the monadic case of ' W_1 '. In the latter case one has to say, in the traditional terminology, that *a* is the ground of truth of ' $W_1(a)$ '. This is what directly leads to the *justification* of such a claim in terms of *a*'s being white, which returns us to the special use of the background language to avoid the issue. A similar problem arises for those who seek to suggest that the fact that an object, say *a*, stands in a relation to another object, *b*, is best represented by a

juxtaposition of the signs for a and b, and not by a sentence employing a rational predicate. In the monadic case, they must make a different move; hence Sellars' use of type font. A nonlinguistic version of the problem arises when some speak of a fact as a *configuration* of objects without a relation being involved. To accommodate facts like *that a is white*, they must construe the object a as some sort of esoteric compound to avoid introducing properties as constituents of facts. For Davidson, no such complications arise. Like Quine, Goodman, and Sellars he is content to note that a is white.

Where several distinguished philosophers employ a common pattern which one believes to be misguided, one feels compelled to seek a reason. No doubt the old positivistic disdain for the traditional metaphysical issues and the wish to exorcise them is partly responsible, but other possibilities seem relevant. Some philosophers have held that the approach I have advocated mistakenly presupposes that we need not make use of a background language. Such an approach supposedly assumes that the coordination of (I) with (III) takes place in a linguistic vacuum. Properly conceived, such coordination cannot be divorced from the context of our natural language. Recognizing this, we might just as well use the background schema as Sellars does, to avoid properties, facts, *etc.* Interestingly enough the positivistic nihilism involved in the use of perspicuous language schemata along the lines that I have been rejecting joins with an old, traditional argument of pragmatic-idealistic-holistic flavor that has long been directed against the empiricist-atomist tradition. One can almost hear the old phrase "vicious abstraction" echoing in the charge that the context supplied by the background language is overlooked in the approach taken here. It is no accident that the pattern I have been presenting stems from the views of Russell and the early Wittgenstein. Nor is it an accident that the holistic-pragmatic pattern permeates the work of Quine and Sellars. Be the historical connections as they may, the point at issue is not that we need make use of a background framework or language or that we cannot abstract the philosophical questions from it. The issue is whether we can make distinctions with respect to the different ways of using such a background schema. We need not deny that our talk about (I) and (III) takes place in a natural language to deny that it is legitimate to use

'W₁' means the same as 'white' in English

and

'W₁' is true of a (or 'W₁ (a)' is satisfied by a) because a is white

to avoid the recognition of universals and facts.

Facts and properties pose a number of well known problems for philosophers of the Quine and Davidson variety: problems that center around so-called *identity criteria* and questions of extensionality. Such concerns could also lead to an attempt to avoid the "problematic entities" at virtually any cost. This can help us understand why they do what they do. Sellars, I suspect, has a further motive. More cognizant of and sympathetic to the historical tradition, Sellars fears that with properties come facts, and with facts we face the issues surrounding the notions of *negation* and *possibility*. Thus, he seeks to block the threat of an expanding ontology at the outset. Perhaps the same motive is what led Wittgenstein to abandon the themes of the *Tractatus* and seek to turn philosophy away from the classical problems of ontology^{1 5}.

Whatever their motives, it is clear, I trust, that the philosophers we have considered avoid ontological issues and commitments by a broader use of the background language than I wish to allow. I am not, in this paper, denying that one can avoid the issues they do as they do. I am merely noting that they do so by playing the philosophical game by different rules or principles.

NOTES

¹The phrase is due to Gustav Bergmann.

²For some related comments see H. Hochberg, "Metaphysical Explanation", in *Metaphilosophy*, vol. 1, No. 2, April, 1970, pp. 139-165.

³Goodman's views are presented in his book *Languages of Art*, however, my presentation depends upon arguments he presented in talks and responses at the University of Minnesota in the spring of 1973.

⁴Sometimes, however, Quine seems to express a view more like Goodman's. For a detailed consideration of Quine's view and its problematic consequences see H. Hochberg, "Nominalism, Platonism, and Being True of", *Nous*, 1968.

⁵Wilfrid Sellars, "Naming and Saying", in *Science, Perception and Reality* (London and New York), Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963. For a commentary along such lines see Robert Ackermann

“Perspicuous Languages”, in *The Ontological Turn* (Iowa City, University of Iowa Press), ed. by M. Gram and E. D. Klemke, 1974.

⁶The need for a neutral name form to be used in relational patterns is a feature of Sellars’ view that I am not sure he fully appreciates. It not only involves a radical distinction between relational and non-relational predication, but can be taken to embody a recognition of the difference between the object as such and the object as exemplifying a property : the neutral form of the name as opposed to the name’s occurring in a font *standing for a property* (as I would put it).

⁷My presentation of Sellars’ view relies on his presentation of his viewpoint, as I understood it, in a series of lectures, responses to questions, and arguments he gave at the University of Minnesota in the fall of 1973.

⁸For a detailed consideration of some other aspects of Quine’s views see H. Hochberg, “On Pegasizing”, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 17, 1957, pp. 551-554, and “Professor Quine, Pegasus, and Dr. Cartwright”, *Philosophy of Science*, 24, 1957, pp. 191-203.

⁹Quine’s materialism has been criticized in detail in H. Hochberg, “Of Mind and Myth”, reprinted in *Essays in Ontology*, ed. by E. Allaire *et al* (The Hague : Martinus Nijhoff), 1963.

¹⁰W. V. Quine, *Ontological Relativity*, (New York and London : Columbia University Press), 1969, pp. 57-58.

¹¹D. Davidson, “True to the Facts”, *The Journal of Philosophy*, vol. LXVI, No. 21, 1969, pp. 757-758.

¹²D. Davidson, “In Defense of Convention T”, p. 80

¹³A. Tarski, “The Concept of Truth in Formalized Languages”, *Logic, Semantics, Metamathematics*, (Oxford : Clarendon Press), 1956, p. 189.

¹⁴Tarski, *op. cit.*, p. 188.

¹⁵Strongly influenced by the later Wittgenstein, E. B. Allaire has adopted the line of Sellars and Davidson with respect to the issue of facts. Where Sellars seeks to prevent the ontological issues from arising in the case of predicates and properties, Allaire in his article “Truth”, to appear in *Metaphilosophy*, seeks to draw the line in the case of sentences and facts. In effect his line of argument is a duplicate of Sellars’, involving the same specious use of a background natural language. The issue seems to reduce to the point at which a philosopher seeks to avoid raising the question of reference between language and what language is about. The nominalists we have

considered seek to avoid the question about predicates, while recognizing it for so-called singular terms. One may look at the later Wittgenstein as refusing to raise the question at all and hence obliterating ontological questions completely.