LANGUAGE AND THE HAVING OF CONCEPTS

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§1 One method of handling the question of what it is to have a concept makes essential use of results common to a certain group of theories of meaning. This method[1] can be given the following stepwise representation. (1) Establish that there is a class of expressions each of which means, in at least one sense of 'means', something which can be called, according to preference in regard to vocabulary, either a universal, a property, or a concept. (2) Explain the fact that people understand statements containing expressions which mean universals, properties, or concepts by postulating a capacity for standing in a special relation of having which holds from minds to those entities meant by the class of expressions in question. (3) Identify the actualization of this capacity with what is ordinarily spoken of as the having of a concept. The 'has' in 'John has the concept *red*' is thus interpreted as referring to a relation of having of the kind which holds between minds and universals, properties, or concepts. And 'the concept *red*' in the context of this statement is interpreted as referring to the universal, property, or concept which is the meaning of the expression 'red'. If no obstacles are encountered in taking these steps, then there is an analysis of having a concept in terms of having a meaning.

We will devote the present section to the task of showing that such a meaning theory of conceptualization is unsatisfactory. We shall thereby be removing at least one important barrier in the way of a sympathetic hearing for the detailed discussion of the radically different approach to the question of what it is to have a concept in the subsequent sections of this paper.

In taking step (1) above two starting points are at least logically possible. We can begin (a) with a consideration of expressions in use or (b) with a consideration of expressions themselves apart from their use. Whether we take step (1) by beginning with (a) or by beginning with (b), we cannot subsequently take step (3) without incurring circularity. Our argument for this shall hinge on the claim that what is meant by saying that a certain expression means a universal, a property, or a concept is that it is of such a kind that a person who understands it is said to have the corresponding concept.

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First, consider beginning with (a). It makes sense to say of an expression in use that on certain occasions it is understood and that on others it is misunderstood or else simply not understood. Now a person who understands an expression knows what it means. But, it will be asked, doesn't the fact that people can know what expressions mean justify our holding that, with the exception of expressions which mean particulars and of some other expressions like 'but', 'maybe', and 'some', expressions mean nonparticulars which we call universals, properties, or concepts? It will be shown that, although there is a use of 'mean' which allows us to answer this question affirmatively, such a use of 'mean' depends on the notion of concept-having.

Consider the question 'What is it that John knows when he knows what 'is a factor of' means?' which might be suggested by the claim that John knows what 'is a factor of' means which might be a claim made in order to assure us that John has understood 'Two is a factor of four'. The answer 'John knows that 'is a factor of' means the universal, property, or concept *is a factor of*' is not such that it can be understood by a questioner who is familiar with 'means' only as it occurs in such contexts as 'He means for you to wait', ''red' means the same as 'rouge'', 'I know what he means by 'average velocity'; he means that, if a car goes 15 miles in 15 minutes, then its average velocity is a mile a minute', and ''John is a man' means that John is a rational animal'. Thus, while the questioner might understand the answer 'When John knows what 'is a factor of' means, he knows that *a* is a factor of *b* if *a* divides *b* without remainder', he does not understand the answer actually given. How is talk about expressions meaning nonparticular entities to be made significant for him?

Could the significance of 'John knows that 'is a factor of' means *is a factor of*' be explained by saying that it is synonymous with 'John knows what 'is a factor of' means'? Imagine trying to explain to a child what it is for swallows to do high dives from midair by saying 'That's just what swallows do'. This could have a point if you meant by it to delay the explanation until you could point to a swallow taking a dive, but there is no comparable excuse which could give a point to the alleged explanation of an expression's meaning a property by the statement that that is what the expression means. Thus, your saying that 'John knows that 'is a factor of' means *is a factor of*' is for you synonymous with 'John knows what 'is a factor of' means' is just a way of saying that you intend to answer the question 'What does John know when he knows what 'is a factor of' means?' by the statement 'John knows that 'is a factor of' means *is a factor of*'. But saying how you answer a question doesn't of itself explain your answer or even guarantee its significance.

The needed explanation can, however, be found in another direction. Certain expressions are such that, if they are understood, we can say of those who understand them that they have the corresponding concepts (cf. § 2). In regard to understanding these expressions, knowing what they mean and having the corresponding concepts go together. Thus two ways of speaking are appropriate in speaking of understanding certain expressions;

something is had, the concept, and something is known, the meaning of the expression.

Ordinarily the question 'What does John know when he knows the meaning of a certain expression?' is, as was suggested above, not answered by the statement that John knows that a certain expression means a corresponding universal, property, or concept. But a fusion of the two ways of speaking just mentioned results in a further use of 'means' in accord with which such an answer would be possible. This fusion takes place if what is meant by an expression becomes identified with what is had in concept-having. By an identification of this kind a further use of 'means' emerges according to which an expression means a nonparticular entity, if in understanding that expression one exercises a corresponding concept and thus has that concept. As what is meant, this nonparticular entity is called a universal, a property, or a concept; as what is had in having a concept, it is uniformly called a concept. This further use of 'means' can be represented in the definition: 'is a factor of' means the universal, property, or concept *is a factor of* if and only if 'is a factor of' is an expression such that in order to understand it one must have the concept *is a factor of*.

The questioner could be given this definition to fall back on in interpreting the answer to his question about what John knows in knowing what 'is a factor of' means. Moreover, we now see that the fact that people know what certain expressions mean does not, without qualification, justify our holding that some of those expressions mean nonparticular entities. It is only where 'means' is used in the sense given by the above definition, a sense which is logically secondary in regard to the notion of conceptualization, that there would be justification for this. It is irrelevant here whether the fusion of talk about having a concept with talk about knowing what an expression means is not in fact a confusion. Thus the genuineness of the further use of 'means' is not in question.

But it is clear that taking step (1) by beginning with (a) leads to circularity when step (3) is taken. For, by (3), having a concept is analyzed in terms of having the universal, property, or concept which a corresponding expression means. And what is meant by saying that such an entity is what an expression means is that one has the corresponding concept when one knows what it means.

Now consider beginning with (b). Pure semantics has been described as that discipline which abstracts from the use of expressions and considers them only in regard to what they mean. Yet once the semantical analysis of a language is complete, being informed of its results should be a sufficient basis for understanding expressions of the language analyzed when they are in use.[2] Now let us suppose that a language has been analyzed in terms of a set of rules which includes the following rule for its descriptive predicate constant 'R': 'R' means the property *red*. Reasons will be found for the choice of a rule of this kind in terms of the way it helps to solve or avoid the problem of the nature of synonomy, of the paradox of analysis, and of intersubstitutibility in contexts of various kinds. Whatever its other merits, however, it must be such that once it and the other

rules of the language are given 'R' can be understood. Whereas earlier we began with the understanding of expressions in use and followed a path which led to nonparticulars as meanings, we now begin with rules relating expressions to nonparticulars as their meanings hoping thereby to establish a basis for understanding those expressions when they are used. Once a justification of mentioning properties in rules of meaning is given in this way in terms of the fact that by doing so we accomplish what we set out to accomplish, step (1) above has been taken.

But there is a difficulty if we wish to go farther and take step (3). In teaching you how 'R' is to be understood I come to the rule ''R' means the property *red*'. What is to be understood by 'means the property *red*'? Unless you understand this the rule will not help you to understand 'R'. I reply that 'means the property *red*' is equivalent to 'means what 'red' means', since it is true that the property *red* is the meaning of 'red'. Thus we can reformulate our rule as follows: ''R' means the same as 'red''.[3] Now you ask whether, in this case, the sameness of meaning of two expressions entails that they are to be understood in the same way. On an affirmative reply, you are prepared to say that you understand 'R'. But the identity 'The property *red* is the meaning of 'red'' is not one of the rules for the language in question. Its justification does not rest on the same ground as does that for the rule for 'R'. It is justified only if 'meaning' is the participial form of 'means' where the latter has the sense given in the previous definition. Thus, in attempting to take step (3), we shall be stopped by the same circularity encountered earlier.

More generally, if a semantical analysis comprises rules of meaning relating expressions to properties and if that analysis is to be a basis for understanding the language analyzed, then one must first understand what it is for an expression to mean a property. But to explain what it is for an expression (e.g., 'R') of a language under study to mean a property requires the introduction of an expression in use (e.g., 'red') which means the same property. However, in saying that an expression in use means a property we are saying that understanding such an expression involves having a corresponding concept. Hence, if we establish on semantical grounds that descriptive predicate constants mean properties, we are still not free to take step (3) without incurring circularity. *Mutatis mutandis*, the argument here holds equally in regard to semantical analyses in which the relation of designation, reference, or signification takes over the relevant functions of the relation of meaning or in which universals, concepts, or intensions take over the relevant functions of properties.

If it is objected that these considerations are irrelevant in regard to semantics, since one need not require that an adequate semantical analysis be a sufficient basis for understanding the language analyzed, then in our turn we must say that the use in semantics of rules of meaning stated in terms of properties is irrelevant to the question of what it is to have a concept. For if a "language" is not understood, if its rules are an insufficient guide to its use, there is no occasion for speaking, in any full sense, of having concepts corresponding to its expressions.

In what follows a partial answer will be given to the question of what it is to have a concept. Its acceptance will in no way depend on a prior acceptance of the criticism just offered of the meaning theory of conceptualization. It will be found (cf. §§5-7) that in most, but not all, instances part, but not all, of what is meant by saying that a language user has a concept is that he has an ability to use a corresponding expression.

§2 Throughout most of this discussion the phrases 'the concept *red*', 'the concept *man*', . . . will be employed instead of the phrases 'the concept of red', 'the concept of man', ...[4] By this choice the numbered statements below (4.1, 4.2, 5.1, . . .) are made simpler than they otherwise could be. But this simplification is such that by the considerations of this section we see how corresponding statements could be made in regard to the idiom 'the concept of . . .'.

In our discussion it will be convenient to appeal to ways in which phrases of the form 'the concept . . .' are customarily used, even though an instance of 'the concept . . .' with italicized complement is of the nature of a technical phrase while phrases of the form 'the concept of . . .' are more customary. By means of the relationship, to be introduced shortly, between these two types of phrases referring to concepts, such an appeal is always to be understood as translatable into an appeal to ways in which phrases of the form 'the concept of . . .' are customarily used.

Moreover by the above choice we avoid the following apparent problem. The blank in 'the concept of . . .' can be filled only by a substantive. Hence one might say that 'the concept of disjunction', e.g., is meaningful only if disjunction is a thing, since the word 'of' indicates that what follows it is a substantive and, thus, an expression which refers to something, not to nothing. Suppose we were to employ 'the concept of . . .'. Then we would face the problem of there being those who would deny that an analysis of 'having the concept of disjunction' could sensibly be undertaken. They would reason that this expression has no meaning, since 'disjunction', for them, has no referent. But one is certainly under the spell of word-magic if he maintains that every substantive occurring in any meaningful context functions referentially. The heuristic replacement of 'the concept of . . .' by 'the concept . . .' is, thereby, intended in part to reflect a denial of the claim that, since 'the concept of . . .' can be completed only by a substantive, the completed expression is meaningful only if there is a thing to which the completing substantive refers, i.e., only if there is an impalpable something which the concept is of.

There is a certain parallel between 'the expression 'red'' and 'the concept *red*'. Just as 'the expression' serves as a reminder of the significance of the quotation marks around ' 'red' ', so too 'the concept' will serve to indicate the significance of the italics of '*red*'. Thus, just as we can sometimes replace 'used the expression 'red'' by 'used 'red'', so too we can sometimes replace 'has the concept *red*' by 'has *red*'. In addition, a quoted expression following 'the expression' may belong to any part of speech. And an expression which when italicized follows 'the concept', unlike an expression which follows 'the concept of', may, at least from

the point of view of structural correctness, belong to any part of speech. But 'red' *in italics*, like 'red' *in quotations*, functions substantively.

How is the expression which when italicized follows 'the concept' related to the substantive filling the corresponding 'the concept of . . .'? To give an answer we appeal to the notion of understanding an expression. We shall say that the concept of red is the same as the concept *red* if and only if

(a) having the concept of red is a necessary condition for understanding 'red' or any synonym of 'red',
(b) having any other concept which is not entailed by the concept of red is not a necessary condition for understanding 'red' or any synonym,
(c) having the concept of red is not a necessary condition for understanding a complete expression which is a constituent of 'red' or any synonym, and
(d) there is no expression nonsynonymous with 'red' such that having the concept of red, but having no other concept, is a necessary condition for understanding it.

Realization of condition (b) would be compatible with the claim that something other than a concept might be necessary for understanding 'red'. But concepts other than the concept of red would be needed in order to understand 'red and green' and 'a red sunset'. Hence, the concept of red is not the same as either the concept *red and green* or the concept *a red sunset*. The relation of entailment among concepts which is mentioned in (b) is to be understood in such a way that, if, e.g., 'John is a man' entails 'John is an animal', then the concept of man will be said to entail the concept of animal. A generalized form of (c) would not be satisfied by the concept of teacher and the expression 'the teacher of Alexander'. Thus, even if it is assumed that the only concept needed to understand 'the teacher of Alexander' is the concept of teacher, we could not say that the concept of teacher is the same as the concept *the teacher of Alexander*. Moreover, suppose it were held that the concept of man is a concept needed and the only concept needed in order to understand 'Aristotle'. Without a condition corresponding to (d), the concept of man would be the same as the concept *Aristotle*.

Likewise, suppose that having the concept of negation (of being, or of the self) is a necessary condition for understanding most uses of the adverb 'not' or any synonym (of the verb 'to be' or any synonym, or of the pronoun 'I' or any synonym), and that conditions corresponding to (b) - (d) are also satisfied. Here we shall say that the concept of negation (of being, or of the self) is the same as the concept *not* (*to be*, or *I*).

A complication must be mentioned. It might be maintained that the only concept needed in understanding 'redness' or the substantive 'red' is the concept of red. It then follows, if conditions corresponding to (b) - (d) are also satisfied, that the concept *red* (where '*red*' is the predicate 'red' in italics) is the same as the concept *redness* or *red* (where '*red*' is the

substantive 'red' in italics). We avoid this conclusion by noting that 'the concept of red' has two senses, corresponding to the fact that understanding the predicate 'red' and understanding 'redness' or the substantive 'red' call for different conceptual powers. Attempts to rid language of abstract nouns only give support to this point. Suppose 'Redness is garish' is rendered as 'If anything is red, then it is garish'. Then the difference between the conceptual powers involved in understanding 'red' the predicate and 'redness' would be reflected in the fact that understanding the hypothetical statement above involves the concepts of implication, of universal quantification, and of the variable, *in addition to* the concept of red needed in understanding the predicate 'red'. Similarly, instead of saying that the concept *negation* (*being*, or *self*) is the same as the concept *not* (*to be*, or *I*), we recognize that 'the concept of negation' ('the concept of being', or 'the concept of the self') has several senses; it is used in one sense when we say that the concept of negation (of being, or of the self) is needed to understand the adverb 'not' (the verb 'to be', or the pronoun 'I'), and in another when we say that it is needed to understand 'Peter can recognize a negation' ('Peter is an extraordinary being', or 'Peter believes that the self is incorruptible').

Are there not considerations which put a restriction on the number of kinds of expressions which when italicized can complement 'the concept . . .'? This question can be translated into one about the more usual form 'the concept of . . .'. Are there not considerations which put a restriction on the number of kinds of expressions about which we can say that a concept of something or other is needed for understanding each of them and not needed for the understanding of any one of their constituents, and for each of which there is no nonsynonymous expression such that the same concept and no other is needed for understanding the latter expression? It will not do to answer this second question by saying that a concept-of is needed in understanding just those expressions which refer to concepts. For, in order to find out which expressions refer to concepts, one must begin by asking: In regard to which expressions does it make sense to say that understanding them is a conceptual matter?

We can say that understanding 'man', 'greater than', or 'prime number divisible by two', as used predicatively, involves the concept of man, of being greater than, or of being a prime number divisible by two. Yet we would hesitate to say that understanding 'Aristotle' or 'the teacher of Alexander' could involve having the concept of Aristotle or of the teacher of Alexander. But it would be to invert the right order of reasons to say that we hesitate because we know that 'Aristotle' and 'the teacher of Alexander' do not refer to the concepts of Aristotle and of the teacher of Alexander. Moreover, it would be appropriate to say that someone does or does not know who Aristotle or the teacher of Alexander was. But we would not try to communicate the same fact by saying that he has or lacks the concept of Aristotle or of the teacher of Alexander. In addition, the pattern followed in choosing the titles *The Concept of Nature* and *The Concept of Mind* would not extend to the choice of a title for a study of Aristotle.

In general, then, 'the concept of . . .' as completed either by a proper name or an individual description lacks a use. This is not to imply that no concept is needed in order to understand 'Aristotle' and 'the teacher of Alexander'.[5] Conditions corresponding to (d) and (c), respectively, account for such possibilities, if one should insist upon them. However, one can speak of the concepts of the self, of universal quantification, and of implication as involved in understanding 'I', 'any', and 'if-then'. And a psychologist of the future who would undertake a study of the formation of such concepts would not be dismissed with the remark that he has wrongly taken 'the concept of the self', etc. for meaningful phrases. The only restrictions which will here be placed on complements for 'the concept of . . .' will be the following: The blank in 'the concept of . . .' cannot be filled by proper names, individual descriptions, and, we add, interjections (construed grammatically as well as more broadly to include any expression used with purely emotive significance).

Now, since 'the concept of . . .' as completed by 'Aristotle' 'the teacher of Alexander' or 'ugh!' has no use and, thus, is not spoken of as involved in the understanding of 'Aristotle', 'the teacher of Alexander', or 'ugh!', it follows from the above conditions of sameness that the concept *Aristotle, the teacher of Alexander,* or *ugh*! is not the same as any concept-of. But since being the same as some concept-of is our only guide for the use of phrases of the form 'the concept . . .', we must say that italicized proper names, individual descriptions, and interjections cannot be used to complete 'the concept . . .'. Nevertheless, we can use meaningfully 'the concept *I*', 'the concept *this*', 'the concept *and*', and 'the concept *of*', even though 'I', 'this', 'and', and 'of' are nonpredicative.

Finally, we consider the use of the definite article in 'the concept . . .'. In contexts in which we speak of the possession of concepts we shall generally use 'the concept . . .' despite what might seem to be two decisive objections. First, it will be said that if concepts are proprietary in the sense that, if between two people there is but a single concept, then one of the two will not have that concept, we cannot say that both John and Peter have, e.g., the concept *red*, but only that each has a concept *red*. In fact (cf. §§4-5) we shall be led to view concepts as abilities and thus to the position that each person must have his own concepts. But 'the'-phrases are not always used where there is a supposition of uniqueness (e.g., 'Have you seen the new Plymouth?'; 'He has the ability to put people at ease'). Moreover, retaining the definite article in speaking of both John's and Peter's concept *red* allows us to make an important distinction. A sighted person has the concept *red*; a congenitally blind one has a concept *red* or a certain concept *red*, if he knows something of the use of 'red'. Second, there are always slight qualitative differences between the concepts of any two normal persons; thus, it will be said, both of them cannot have, e.g., the concept *red*. Slight differences in language usage as well as in nonlinguistic responses enable us to detect these conceptual differences. But, when someone's concept is broadly similar to a generally received one, we would not hesitate to say, despite slight differences,

that he has *the* concept in question. Once again retaining the definite article preserves an important distinction. Hence, we are justified in using 'the concept . . .' instead of 'a concept . . .' without assuming either that two persons can have a numerically identical concept or that they have concepts alike in every feature. It should be added that in cases where the expression which when placed in italics completes 'the concept . . .' is ambiguous, the use of the definite article is justified only where it is clear which sense of that expression is in question.

§3 We shall now list some uses of phrases of the form 'has the concept . . .' with which we shall not be concerned.

Consider the expressions 'having the concept *to add*' and 'having the concept *to fly*'. The first would be applied to a person only if it were supposed that he could add. The second, however, is, for the most part, applied where there is no ability to fly. Despite this difference there is a similarity. In familiar uses of the above expressions (or, more strictly, in familiar uses of counterparts of these expressions in the concept-of idiom) the persons to whom they are applied have a certain command of language. This is clear in the case of saying that most children have the concept *to add* before they leave the second grade, as well as in the case of saying that men had acquired the concept *to fly* long before Da Vinci investigated the mechanism of flight.

There is, however, some precedent for the attribution of concept-having to individuals having no command of language. One might affirm or deny on the basis of empirical evidence that a deaf-mute who can communicate neither in writing nor by sign language has the concept *to tie a bowline knot*. One can speak of the infant's acquisition of the "behavioral"[6] concept *permanent object*. Once again there is the difference between concept-having which is an ability to perform an activity (e.g., to tie a bowline knot) described by the italicized expression completing 'the concept . . .' and concept-having (e.g., having the behavioral concept *permanent object*) which is not such an ability.

When a phrase of the form 'has the concept . . .' is synonymous with one of the form 'is able . . .' where in the two phrases the blanks have been filled by the same expression, italicized and unitalicized, respectively, the concept in question will be called "autodynamic". The language user's concept *to add* and the deaf-mute's concept *to tie a bowline knot* are autodynamic. Now if an autodynamic concept is such that the expression which, when italicized, completes 'the concept . . .' describes a nonlinguistic (a linguistic) activity, then we shall speak of it as a nonlinguistic (a linguistic) autodynamic concept. Having made these distinctions we lay down the restriction that identity conditions corresponding to (a)-(d) of §2 are to be satisfied only when the concept-of in question is a language user's concept which is not a nonlinguistic autodynamic concept. Where the concept-of is not of this nature a failure of these conditions to be satisfied is not a sign of lack of identity. Thus, we are left here with no means of deciding for certain concepts questions of identity in regard to the two ways of speaking of concepts. More important, however, is the

fact that in the following sections we shall discuss the meaning of phrases of the form 'has the concept . . .' only for cases in which the concept had is (a) a language user's concept and (b) not a nonlinguistic autodynamic concept.

The restriction of discussion to 'has the concept . . .' only as applied to language users is a significant one, for, as we shall point out here, the meaning of that expression is generally different when applied to individuals lacking a command of language. (Thus it is not as if we were to say that we intend to analyze 'is a physical thing' only as applied to red things, thereby implying acceptance of the false supposition that 'is a physical thing' when applied to red things does not mean the same thing as it does when it is applied to things of other colors.) The concept *triangle* has been attributed to rats when they have learned to jump toward a triangular form which is presented to them along with forms of other shapes.[7] But a high school student of geometry who has been trained to pass this test and yet who cannot use the term 'triangle', or some synonym, correctly and who thus finds all of what his instructor tells him about triangles either perversely wrong or else a mere game with words, would not be said to have the concept *triangle*. The fact that the jumping-criterion is satisfied in both cases, combined with the fact that in the one case the concept is said to be possessed but in the other not, indicates that we are concerned with two different meanings of 'having the concept *triangle*'. Now suppose that a psychologist would say that a child has the concept *permanent object* if, instead of losing interest in an object once it is hidden from his view, he goes in search of it or anticipates its reappearance. But such a test is not a sufficient basis for judging that a language user has the concept *permanent object*. For that we would expect the language user to be able to understand a statement such as the statement that a certain object was small and it is now large, that a certain object was here but it is now there, or that a certain plaything has been hidden until its user behaves. At least in certain cases, then, a phrase of the form 'has the concept . . .' as applied to language users differs in meaning from the same phrase as applied to individuals lacking a command of language.

It might be claimed that there are some concepts the having of which is the same, both where there is a command of language and where there is not. It might, e.g., be claimed that the test used to decide whether a victim of "nominal" aphasia has the concept *to play chess* is also sufficient in regard to determining whether a language user has the concept *to play chess*.[8] Furthermore, an affirmative answer might be felt appropriate to the question of whether the test used in the case of the deaf-mute is also sufficient to determine whether a language user has the concept *to tie a bowline knot*. But, since these tests are tests for abilities to act in the nonlinguistic ways described by the italicized verbs, it must be granted that both of these concepts, as spoken of in respect to language users as well as in respect to others, are nonlinguistic autodynamic ones. We suggest that it is only in regard to such concepts that a phrase of the form 'has the concept . . .' can have the same meaning both in regard to language

users and those who are not. Thus in singling out applications of 'has the concept . . .' where we are concerned (a) with a language user's concept and (b) with a concept which is not a nonlinguistic autodynamic one, we have chosen applications of that expression in which its meaning differs from that which it has when it is applied to individuals lacking a command of language.

§4 We now suggest, as a first possibility, that a phrase of the form 'has the concept . . .' means the same as an expression about the having of a certain linguistic ability.

We are led to this suggestion in the following way. In most cases the evidence used in determining whether someone has a certain concept is linguistic. Manifestations which are a sufficient basis on which to judge that there is an ability to use an expression are generally a sufficient basis on which to judge that a corresponding concept has been acquired. Conversely, sufficient evidence for the lack of such an ability is generally sufficient evidence for the lack of the corresponding concept. Now this linguistic criterion of conceptualization does not seem to be an empirical rule of thumb. For, if it were, there would be, as seems unlikely so far, other means than linguistic ones for determining in every case the presence or absence of any given concept. Thus we might go on to claim that the linguistic criterion is a criterion governing the use of phrases of the form 'has the concept . . .'. As so interpreted this criterion tells us that we cannot, on pain of contravening usage, ascribe the having of a concept where we have just denied the having of a corresponding linguistic ability, and conversely. That there are flaws along this line of reasoning will become evident in §5, but, for the moment, it seems to provide the following definition with a high degree of plausibility:

4.1 John, a language user, has the concept *red* $=_{df}$ John can use the expression 'red' correctly.

Assuming that John could have the concept *red* without knowing English, 4.1 should be modified[9] to read as follows:

4.2 John, a language user, has the concept *red* $=_{df}$ John can use correctly some expression in some language which is used in the same way that 'red' is used in English.

The phrase 'a language user' is to be understood as a sign for both of the restrictions ((a) and (b)) listed in §3. That is, the definiendum of 4.1 or 4.2 is an abbreviated form of 'John, a language user, has the nonlinguistic autodynamic concept *red*'.

4.2 is not intended to reveal something about having the concept *red* in its relation to 'red' which is not equally true of the concept *green* in its relation to 'green' and of concept *prime number* in its relation to 'prime number'. Thus 4.2 is intended to exemplify or instance the principle employed in giving a definition of the having of any concept by a language user. Our interest in 4.2 is implicitly an interest in the generalized definition 6.1 of which 4.2 is an instance. We use 'the concept *red*' in

statements explaining the meaning of conceptualization in view of the expository value of a concrete instance.

We place the following restriction on any application of the general principle used in constructing 4.2. The expression quoted to the right of '$=_{df}$' and, hence, the expression italicized to the left of '$=_{df}$' cannot be a proper name, an individual description, or a purely emotive expression (cf. §2 *ad fin.*). However, this restriction can be dropped in respect to 5.1 and related forms where there is an entailment in only one direction.

The notions of sameness of use and of linguistic ability which are employed in 4.2 call for comment. We shall take them up in that order.

(i) "How can you claim to have analyzed conceptualization when you have been forced to appeal to the notion of sameness of use or synonomy which is notoriously obscure?" Indeed we wish to avoid explaining *obscurum per obscurius*. But the objection confuses two senses of clarity. In one sense an expression is clear, or has become so, if its meaning has been rendered explicit by analysis. 'Sameness of use' is, let us suppose, unclear in this sense. Nevertheless, clarity in this sense is not, outside of a formal system, a prerequisite for constituents of an analysans. For, if *A* has been analyzed in terms of *B* and *C*, then to ask whether *B* and *C* have themselves been analyzed is to pose a question which applies to them and not, retroactively, to *A*. The practice of avoiding explaining *obscurum per obscurius* is such as to indicate that the relevant sense of clarity is not opposed to the characteristic of being unanalyzed.

In a second sense, the sense relevant to the practice of avoiding explaining *obscurum per obscurius*, an expression is clear to the degree that it lacks vagueness. Is 'sameness of use' vaguer than phrases of the form 'has the concept . . .'? Our answer is, no. Independently of 4.2, we note that every instance where there is no way of deciding whether two expressions have the same use is associated with an instance where there is no way of deciding a matter of conceptualization. Suppose, e.g., that because of the vagueness of 'sameness of use', and not because of lack of evidence, I am unable to decide whether 'mind' and 'Geist' have the same use. Then I would also be unable to decide whether or not the truth of 'Jakob hat der Begriff *Geist*' entails and is entailed by the truth of 'James has the concept *mind*'. Thus an appeal to sameness of use or synonomy in defining a phrase of the form 'has the concept . . .' introduces no new region of vagueness which is not already a part of the use of that phrase.

(ii) This is no place for a full-dress treatment of the 'can' of 'John can use 'red' correctly' (S). So we shall merely emphasize the fact that there is a feature of the 'can' of S which is not shared by the 'can' of 'Water can dissolve salt' and of 'My stomach can digest beef with ease'. Where the former 'can' is used it is recognized that there is personal control over the employment of the ascribed ability.

The 'can' of personal control presents a special problem to the theorist who wishes to be able to reformulate 'can'-statements as subjective conditionals. It is nonsense to speak of sulfur, e.g., as intentionally failing or cribbing on a test devised by a chemist in order to show one of its

properties. Thus, if one of sulfur's properties is stated in terms of a subjunctive conditional whose antecedent describes certain test conditions, then, although there may be other objections, one would not object to such a statement on the grounds that sulfur might intentionally not cooperate with the tester. But if one were to reformulate S as some completed form of the schema 'If John were tested as regards the correct use of 'red', he would use 'red' correctly' (T), it would be objected that John might intentionally not cooperate with the tester. (Because there is no mention of a specific set of tests, T is called a schema.)

In view of this problem and also because of the possibility of unintentional slips even when S is true, T might be emended to read as follows: 'If John were to intend to cooperate with his examiners, then, if he were tested as regards the correct use of 'red', it is highly probable that he would use 'red' correctly' (T'). Using a schema like T', it would seem that the only difficulties in regard to subjunctive conditional reformulations of 'can'-statements involving a personal-control ability which has been acquired are those shared by such reformulations of 'can'-statements which do not mention a personal-control ability of any kind.[10]

§5 There are two familiar criticisms of the thesis that concepts are merely language habits which make it necessary to abandon 4.2. According to the first, a concept can be exercised in inward thought without a corresponding exercise of a linguistic ability (the nonverbal thought difficulty). According to the second, a linguistic ability can be exercised in parroting an expression or in having an expression run through one's mind over and over again without a corresponding exercise of a concept (the language-without-thought difficulty). Now there is no general reason in the case of statements of exercise, as there seems to be in the case of statements including quotations, to place restrictions on the intersubstitutibility of definitional equivalents. Yet, even though it would be warranted by 4.2, the inference from 'John exercises the concept *red*' to 'John exercises an ability to use 'red' or some synonym correctly' could, in view of the first criticism, lead from a true premise to a false conclusion. Likewise, the converse inference, also warranted by 4.2, could, in view of the second criticism, lead from a true premise to a false conclusion. In this section we shall discuss (in (i) and (ii)) the alleged criticisms separately in order ultimately to ask (in (iii) and (iv)) what relations can be maintained, despite these criticisms, between the expression to the left of and that to the right of '$=_{df}$' in 4.2. It will be shown that, contrary to expectations, the nonverbal thought difficulty is compatible with an entailment from concepts to language habits and that the breakdown of 4.2 can, as regards this difficulty, be located in the failure of the converse entailment from language habits to concepts.

(i) Supporters of a formulation such as 4.2 will maintain that on any occasion on which concepts are exercised in inward thought, i.e., whenever there is inward conceptual thought,[11] there is a linguistic performance of some kind. For brevity, anyone who maintains this will be said to maintain the "linguistic thesis". One would not expect the advocate of the linguistic

thesis to accept battle on the field of untutored introspection. Suppose that after thinking inwardly on a certain occasion I am unable to say that I have heard inwardly or have imagined myself saying or writing a word or group of words. A supporter of the linguistic thesis would not regard this as a refutation. Rather, I would be told that, for the most part, the inward linguistic accompaniments of thought are not to be found unless looked for. For the future, I am instructed to cultivate an attitude of watchfulness for inward words. And if, subsequently, thoughts pass for which I cannot claim linguistic accompaniments, I am to assume momentary breakdowns in that attitude.

As integral to this approach there is the conviction that the linguistic thesis is true *a priori*. It is this conviction which supports the belief that, even though one could not report having heard or imagined words on a particular occasion of thinking, there were, nevertheless, words. But if we examine examples of talk about thought and inward talk, it appears that this conviction is ill-founded. Suppose that I say, 'I was just thinking to myself that we'd better prepare for the worst'. And then suppose that in reply to a question about a linguistic accompaniment I say, 'I thought this without saying or imagining a word to myself'. It might be doubted that I did not mutter something to myself, but it would be granted that my second statement does not contradict the first. Thus, if the first statement does report conceptual thought, conceptual thinking does not entail linguistic activity. If there is doubt as to whether the example involves an instance of conceptual thinking, a different example, allowing us to draw the same conclusion, could be found which does. By examining particular cases, apart from the general assumption that all of them must fit the linguistic thesis, we find reason to reject that thesis as true *a priori*. But as we have so far only shown the possibility of instances counter to that thesis we have not shown that it is in fact false.

Once the linguistic thesis as *a priori* has been abandoned, the grounds for the summary rejection of the truth of all statements such as 'I have thought this without saying or imagining a word to myself' disappear. This is not to say that now we are to regard all such statements as true. But our warrant for treating some of them, at least, as true is no weaker than the warrant we have for accepting some reports of, e.g., toothaches and dreams. Thus, when considered apart from the conviction that the linguistic thesis is an entailment, certain instances relevant to that thesis appear as actual counter instances. Evidence accumulates for the factual falsity of that thesis.

A related product of giving up the *a priori* stand concerns the cultivation of an attitude of watchfulness for words. If one is convinced that with thought there must be words despite the fact that sometimes one does not hear or imagine them, then, if these words are not to be unobservables and, hence, suspect from the start, the thinker must sometimes be treated in the manner of a man who stands before a barn with his eyes shut. The thinker has only to keep his inner ear open to hear the verbal accompaniment, just as the man before the barn has only to keep his eyes open to

see its red color. With this postulation of an inner ear which, like an outer eye, opens and shuts on events which go on independently of it, an intelligible difference seems to be established between 'I thought it without listening for the words' and 'I thought it while listening for the words'. The directive to cultivate an attitude of watchfulness for words then seems an intelligible one. But there is no longer a temptation to accept such a postulate when it is recognized that it is needed only to support a faulty thesis about the relation of language to thought. If one does not accept this postulate of an inner ear, which accompanies the linguistic thesis, then one can only treat the directive to cultivate an attitude of watchfulness for inward words as an empty one.

Having established that conceptual thought, and, hence, an exercise of concepts *can* occur without the use of language, the nonverbal thought difficulty must be recognized as a genuine one in regard to 4.2. We have gone a step farther than was needed by pointing out that, since some denials of linguistic accompaniments of conceptual thought are to be accepted at face value, conceptual thought *does*, on occasion, occur without language.

(ii) It might be thought that by suitable repairs, made in view of the language-without-thought difficulty, either (a) 4.2 can be saved or (b) at least an entailment from linguistic ability to concept-having can be justified. Suppose, e.g., that the clause 'John can use correctly some expression in some language' (cf. 4.2) is replaced by 'John can use correctly *and thoughtfully* some expression in some language'. We would no longer be forced to say that, because of the intersubstitutibility property of definitional equivalents, John must be exercising the concept *red* when he parrots 'Beets are red'. But there are difficulties associated with this 'thoughtfully'-proviso. If 'thoughtfully' means the same as 'with an exercise of the concepts in question', the modification is circular. And even if an analysis of 'thoughtfully' could be found[12] which does not mention concepts, it will be shown (cf. (iv) *infra*) that 4.2 modified by the 'thoughtfully'-proviso must be rejected. Moreover, an entailment from an ability to use a term to the possession of a concept can, in certain circumstances, be justified without that proviso. These matters will be dealt with in the light of the following discussion of the question of whether an entailment from concept-having to language ability is compatible with nonverbal thought.

NOTES

1. Cp. Russell, *Problems of Philosophy*, London, 1912, p. 52.
2. Cf. Carnap, *Meaning and Necessity*, Chicago, 1947, p. 168.
3. Note the important difference between Carnap, *Introduction to Semantics*, Cambridge, Mass., 1942, p. 24, 2, 1-5, and Carnap, *Meaning and Necessity*, p. 4, 1-2.

4. Cp. Frege's terminology in, e.g., "On Concept and Object," *Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege*, trans. Geach and Black, Oxford, 1952, pp. 42-55.

5. Cf. Maritain, *Formal Logic*, trans. Choquette, New York, 1946, p. 40. "The 'singular' concept is in fact a *universal* (e.g., man) that the mind has led back and pressed down . . . upon a singular thing."

6. Cf. R. Thomson, *The Psychology of Thinking*, Baltimore, 1959, p. 94.

7. Cf. C. E. Osgood, *Method and Theory in Experimental Psychology*, New York, 1953, p. 667.

8. Cf. G. Humphery, *Thinking*, London, 1951, pp. 248-9.

9. Cp. Geach, *Mental Acts, Their Content and Their Objects*, London, 1957, p. 16.

10. Two arguments have recently been advanced regarding native as distinct from acquired abilities, variants of which might be thought to controvert this claim. (Cf. R. Taylor, "'I can'," *Philosophical Review*, LXIX, 1960, pp. 78-89.) (a) It might be objected that because of the mention of intention, 'If John were to intend to cooperate with his examiners, then, if he were tested as regards the correct use of 'red', he would use 'red' correctly' (T'') and hence T' are, if true, entailments. They cannot, then, be identified with S which is not *a priori*. This objection rests on the claim that what is meant by John's intending to cooperate is merely the circumstance that he does use 'red' correctly when tested. This claim is false. A person does not contradict himself in saying 'John could intend to cooperate but fail to use 'red' correctly when tested, even though T'' is true'. I.e., the truth of T'' is logically compatible with the possibility of unintentional slips. If, then, the antecedent of T'' is not such that T'' must be regarded as an entailment, we have here no reason to say that its probabilistic counterpart T' is an entailment. (b) It might be objected that, because the exercise of an ability ascribed by a 'can' of personal control is a matter of contingency, T'', by mentioning conditions which when satisfied determine the exercise of an ability, is an unacceptable reformulation of S. By something's being a matter of contingency we shall mean that "existing conditions are sufficient neither for its occurrence nor nonoccurrence" (*Ibid.*, p. 80). But how do we know that the exercise of such an ability is a matter of contingency? One might argue that using 'red' correctly is a contingent occurrence because it is true of John, as of many language users, that he can use 'red' both correctly and incorrectly. But by a similar argument we would have to say that a grain of salt's dissolving in a beaker of water is contingent since water can both dissolve and crystallize salt. Nonpersonal agencies have capacities for contrary results. On abandoning this argument one might then say that the simultaneous truth of 'John can use 'red' correctly *on this occasion*' and 'John can use 'red' incorrectly *on this occasion*'

is incompatible with there being sufficient conditions on this occasion either for correct or incorrect use. Indeed the assumption of the simultaneous truth of these statements is just the assumption that the matter of use is contingent. But John cannot show us that this assumption is correct by using 'red' correctly and then immediately (but nevertheless on a different occasion) misusing it in a pun. This would give evidence only for the joint truth of S and 'John can use 'red' incorrectly'. Without more convincing arguments for contingency, there is no reason to reject T''. Similarly, if contingency were understood, in some way, in terms of probabilities, the same arguments would fail against T'.

11. In speaking of conceptual thought a contrast is implied with nonconceptual thought. The quick thinking which enabled you to avoid an automobile accident, the thinking-of-what-you-were-doing which enabled you to hit the nail rather than your finger, and the day-dream thinking of basking at the beach are non-conceptual. Thinking an argument through, recalling that something happened, and calculating with paper and pencil the number of rolls of wallpaper needed could be listed as instances of conceptual thought. Since in what follows there will be occasion only for speaking of conceptual thought the qualifier 'conceptual' will, in most instances, be dropped and is to be implicitly understood.

12. Cf. Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*, London, 1949, pp. 45-7, 139-40, 295-6.

To be continued

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