

Philosophical Tribulations

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18. Imagine a tribe which could masturbate only in a group. And so it never occurred to them that anyone might do it alone and they had no word for this either. And now, imagine this tribe in the dark. If no one says anything or touches anyone, do they know they're masturbating? Suddenly someone turns on the light. At what moment would it be correct to say, 'Hey! We're a bunch of wankers!' ?

19. Imagine everything just as it is, only *DIFFERENT*, instead of the same. What would it mean to want to say that, at a quite particular point in a chess game--just before you lose your queen, let us say--, we came to recognize that we lacked a special facial gesture for expressing precisely *THIS* kind of difference?

20. I want to say: AAAAAAARRRRRRRGGGGGHHHH !

21. Philosophical puzzles take the form: a one-legged Indian in a butt-kicking contest on thin ice.

22. Let us say that the builders have turned on the lights and discovered the tribe in section 18. One of the builders says to his apprentice 'slab', but he mistakenly makes the gesture which the apprentice has been taught to associate with 'Go to the bank in the High Street and withdraw 45 pounds sterling and send it by registered post to your Aunt Inge in Sweden right away'. Let us assume that this is a state-sponsored apprenticeship.

What would it look like if one of the tribesmen had said 'slab' instead? What sort of abuse would this amount to, in a real case?

23. At this point, I make a gesture and smack the apprentice up the backside of the head: "Don't you SEE!?" It's all right there in front of you. Nothing is *hidden*.

24. Suppose I intend to shoot someone. I tell him, "Stand over there." Then I raise the gun and take aim. Now he says, "I say there. Hang on. What are you up to?" I want to say, "You stupid git! What part of 'stand over there' don't you understand? Now get over there and shut up!" The hardness of the logical must.

I once said that Russell was such a randy bugger, he could have screwed a rhinoceros right under the table. The Theory of Logical Types is neither here nor there. Find it queer that 'stand over there' can be *just as exact* as 'neither here nor there.'

If I notice a characteristic crunching feeling under my shoes, is it necessarily Christ's Pieces I'm standing on?

25. I am pretty certain I have never been to the moon. Anyway, *Moore* says *he's* never been, and I am tempted to believe it.

But how do I know Moore isn't on the *DARK* side of the moon?

26. A philosopher stares out the window wondering why he can't get his left foot into a right glove. (Augustine once tried this.)

27. A sigh is wrenched from me: **Whoa, Nelly!**

[One can imagine the reader chortling at this.]

28. My aim is: to show the philosopher how to turn the Klein-bottle inside-out!

29. But that would merely be, so to say, grammatical friction.

30. Of course, if he asked for a manometer, I might make some mysterious marks in my diary -- vaguely, *HERE*, let us say --, and show it to him, glinting, as it were, out of the corners of my eyes, 'I know all right that he's pulling the wool over my eyes'. And here, as always, the picture forces itself upon us of a one-legged Indian hopping on ice. 'Yes,' I want to say, 'it is an absurd picture. But it is the one we are *familiar* with, the one we use every day.' --And now I am completely in the dark, groping about like a queer tribesman. What sort of abuse is this?

31. I do *not* want you to answer that!

32. Suppose I write some coded hieroglyphs in my diary and then, two days later, cross them out. Does that mean that I reject what I wrote? Not necessarily. It might be a *confirmation* of what I wrote. One can imagine a use for this exercise: I wish to impress someone with my powers of prophecy. I show him the symbols--then later, the crossed-out symbols. Now I explain to him: 'The symbols are mystic Runes--they mean "two days from now, you will cross out these symbols". And so it has come to pass, exactly as predicted.' Thus, these mysterious symbols are not just twaddle after all--they really do have a kind of power. And now--I want to *use* this power to win friends and influence people.

Of course, it isn't a question of there being a causal connection between the prophecy and its fulfillment. But neither is it merely coincidental. For, after all, the prophecy does not say that 'something or other' may happen, but that something quite particular will happen. *How* it is to happen is another matter. That, I should like to say, is in the hands of God.



Suppose someone said, 'I see this as a duckwabbit, but I don't believe it.' Should we believe him?

34. 'Surely you cannot deny that everyone has his own duckwabbit which he never shows his mother!' --What gave you the impression I was trying to conceal something from my mother? All I said was, I may --or may not-- be a behaviorist in disguise. And nothing is so mysterious as the obvious looked at too closely. '*LOOK HERE!* This is *my* duckwabbit, dammit!' --and here, I want to say, 'Come off it, man! Can't you see I'm busy.' And isn't that explanation enough?

35. 'Listen, there really is something quite daffy about all this. You can't get away with it.' What made you think I was trying to get away with something? 'I see this picture before me, all right. But now I want to know what *use* to put it to.' Don't I employ pictures like this all the time to baffle undergrads and queer old dons? What more justification do I need?

36. 'Why did the chicken cross the road?' What would show why a chicken would want to cross a road? In what particular circumstances would we say that a chicken had crossed a road *without* wanting to? Inadvertantly, under compulsion, or to get away from Colonel Sanders, for example. I make a sort of clucking noise with my tongue, then I make a gesture--slap myself on the forehead, let us say--, and suddenly it is clear to me: *now* I know how to cross the road!

37. I stifle a belch. And here, I can only imagine something comical, like a one-legged philosopher hopping up and down on thin ice, trying to ram his foot into a glove. "Give it a rest!" I want to shout at him.

38. The wind cries Mary, but it can't call Bob. Why?

39. Come down off the peaks of obscure-rant-ism with your rucksack of little grammatical fictions and just whack balls around on the croquet pitch of mundanity. Sometimes a simile makes me puke.

40. Suppose I say "I must be losing my marbles," but I mean "wild pigs rampant in the gully." How do I do that? Say one thing and mean another. Well, how do I lose money on the stock market? This is just something I do, part of my form of life. Say, could you loan me a fiver?

41. If I say 'raise your arm,' you know perfectly well what to do and you raise your arm. Now suppose I say, 'Want to raise your arm. Only--don't really raise it, just *want* to.' Are you quite sure you know what to do in this case? Suppose I say, 'Want to raise your arm tomorrow.' Now suppose I said that last week, and say it again next week; is this the *same* want as before, or a different one? 'Of course all those queer wants go on in me, and now I want to say--' Oh, to *hell* with what *you* always want to say. **Get on with it!**

42. Why can't we describe the aroma of shit? 'It smells like *shit*, you dumbshit!' I feel like I'm doing brain surgery with a pipe wrench.

43. My philosophy can only be understood as bad poetry.

44. Philosophy is the disease for which it is supposed to be the cure, but isn't. We have met the enemy and they are us. (The Jewishness of this remark.)

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