Royaumont Colloquium, 1958 – Analytic Philosophy

General discussion*

Mr. Perelman

Before beginning with this general discussion, I would like to tell our English friends that we have been following this session devoted to analytic philosophy with great interest. It allowed some to come into contact and some to become more familiar with it, and they are now better able to distinguish the analytic philosophers from each other. In any case, we have seen that the method used by analytic philosophers offers new perspectives in philosophy, that are often very interesting even for those who prefer a different type of philosophy. The various lectures helped us to see how this method can be applied to all areas of philosophy – from the most general metaphysics to the history of philosophy, spanning epistemology, theory of values and its application to ethics and political philosophy. I personally believe that the reader of the forthcoming volume would be very interested in seeing these lectures complemented by a short bibliography of the main works, books and articles that have been conceived in the spirit of analytic philosophy.

I believe that the general discussion should have only one goal, which is to give us a better understanding of the ideas and method of analytic philosophy. Through papers presented by truly brilliant figures we sensed a definite common attitude among these different philosophers without being able to say exactly on what points they agree and, sometimes, on what points they do not, when dealing with general questions relating to the method and conception of philosophy.

R.P. Van Breda

How much time do you plan to allot to the discussion of different issues?

Mr. Perelman

Let's say about one hour for each aspect.

* "Discussion générale", in Cahiers de Royaumont, 1962, *La philosophie analytique*, Éditions de Minuit, Paris: 330-380.

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I

Mr. Perelman

The first issue that I am taking up is as follows: What do you mean by analytic philosophy? What is the goal that you set yourself while practicing this method? How do you practice it? To what extent is it an analysis of language? To what extent do you go beyond the analysis of language in using this method? What does it presuppose *outside of* language? Are there experiences or certain extra-linguistic knowledge that are assumed as given as you practice this method? And, finally, what are the criteria of success for your method?

This is the first issue, and now I would like to ask Prof. Austin, for example, to tell us how he would respond to this.

Mr. Austin

It seems to me that there are a number of issues that are a bit entangled. Let's first take the label: "analytic method". I would begin by saying – and I believe that there are a certain number of my colleagues who would at least share my view – that to my mind the expression isn't particularly precise, and that I don't even think it is a label that can aptly describe what we are doing or the manner in which we are going about doing it. All you can say, if you like, is that no one yet has come up with a more satisfactory term or at least a term we agreed on, and, for my part, I do not see anything wrong with being labelled thus – this label is just as worthy as any other. But I believe it should be stated clearly that none of us is going to say that it is a method I could modestly claim for everyone who is inspired by it and, as a consequence, that there is anything specific about it. I, for my part, would add that the method I would modestly claim for myself and would like to see more widely applied could be described as a certain way of dealing with problems as they present themselves, with help of a certain number of tricks or techniques, so that this would ultimately be an art, and that one can learn bit by bit, step by step, to apply it not just to traditional problems of philosophy but to a field that has remained as of yet unexplored, to be found on the fringes of philosophy and encompassing all problems that have been excluded, ignored or neglected, but whose solution could perhaps enable us to go back to the traditional problems of philosophy with a more assured footing, problems that are – here I agree with you – difficult, worthy of respect and certainly deserving every bit of the attention we give to them.

Having said that, what are the methods so characteristic that are ascribed to us, and why do we say that they have a certain relationship to language? – Is it that I'm deviating from my subject or am I right in the middle of it? Well,

I believe that one can indeed say that we employ language for our investigations – that we put it to work in the majority of cases. At least that's what I do. To a very great extent this is also what many of my colleagues do. To put it differently, as I think I have explained, we begin by drawing up a list of everything that relates, in language, to the subject we are investigating: all the words we use, all the expressions in which these words appear. It is essential that this choice be sufficiently representative, and to insure that our inventory is complete enough we use methods that I have already described, so I shall not come back to these. We also make sure that we are to deal with a problem of sufficiently limited scope. So this, for me, is what is essential: a complete, meticulous inventory of everything relating to the topic we are investigating, and the choice of a restricted topic at least to begin with.

Then I could perhaps try and answer the question you raised, that has come up a number of times, notably in Father Van Breda's interventions. To what extent do we apply criteria that are not strictly linguistic? In which sense are we dealing with phenomena that are not strictly speaking linguistic, when we go beyond the point we have reached so far?

What we ordinarily do or perhaps, I could say, even specifically do, is to ask ourselves in what circumstances we use each of the expressions that we have noted. We have before us a complete, but chaotic list of all kinds of expressions. To what case does each one of them apply? In other words, we use the multitude of expressions provided by the richness of our language to direct our attention to the multiplicity and richness of our experiences. We use language to observe through it the living facts that constitute our experience, which we would often tend simply to ignore without it.

One quickly discovers, as soon as one directs one's attention to these things – or at least one quickly succeeds in formulating the hypothesis – that nothing happens without reason. If there are two expressions in language, one will discover something in the situation that prompts us to use one or the other, something that explains our choice. It could be that the choice seems arbitrary, but very often we note a clear preference for one particular expression, over the other. And we base our case on the hypothesis that if this preference exists there must be something in the overall context that would explain, if one were to discover it, why, in this particular case, we give preference to one, while we give preference to a second one in another case.

When we try to explain the choice that determined the use of this or that expression as opposed to another one, we very quickly notice, however, that there are many more facts or groups of facts of various types and kinds in the overall context in which a speech act occurs, than we would have initially believed. If our list is sufficiently long from the outset, the diversity of expressions that

could be used draws our attention to the extraordinary complexity of situations in which we are called upon to speak. That is to say, language sheds light on the complexity of life.

I believe that it becomes evident from all of this, that our study does not end at *words*, whatever one understands by this: I suppose that one thinks here about what phoneticians, semanticists, grammarians do. But I would never wish to imply that this is what we are doing. We use words to learn about the things we talk about when we use words. Or, if one finds this definition too naïve: we use words in order better to understand the totality of the situation in which we find ourselves using them.

I hope that I have responded to the question: "Do we go farther than words?" As far as I am concerned, I have nothing more to add.

Let us now move to, and perhaps we can come to an end here, this other question that has come up repeatedly: "What is the criterion for a good analysis?" I can only speak for myself without pretending to express the view of my colleagues but, if you like, when we tackle a problem and try to get to the bottom of it, this is roughly how we proceed. In any case, the important thing for me is, at the outset to reach an agreement on the question: "What should we say when…?" To my mind, experience amply proves that agreement can be reached on "what should we say when?", on this or that thing, even if I would concede to you that it is often a long and difficult process. No matter how long this takes, you will manage, and it is on the basis of this agreement, on this given, on this achievement, that we can begin to reclaim our little corner of the garden. I should add that this is all too often what is missing in philosophy: a preliminary "datum" on which an agreement can be reached at first.

I do not say that one can expect to proceed in every case from a given data that is seen by everyone as secured. We are all in agreement at least in thinking that this is desirable. And I would go so far as to say that some of the experimental sciences have found their point of departure and a good direction to proceed in precisely this manner, that is, by coming to an agreement on the way to determine certain data. In the case of physics, by use of the experimental method. In our case, by the impartial search for a "What should we say when?", which gives us a point of departure because, as I have already pointed out, an agreement on "What should we say when?" already constitutes agreeing on a particular way one describes and grasps facts. The only thing I would be tempted to add, if I did not fear anticipating what could emerge in the second part of our discussion, I would thus only tell as a warning: that we dot not pretend to discover in this way the entire truth there is concerning any thing. We simply discover facts that those who have been using our language for centuries have found worth noting, have

retained in passing as worthy of note, and preserved within the evolution of our language.

I know that one will say that this is not much, with respect to the eternity and the totality of history. All the same, if a language perpetuated itself in the speech and the writings of civilized men, if it had been serviceable in all circumstances of their lives across ages, it is likely that the distinctions it draws, just like the connections it establishes in its multiples turns of phrases, are not entirely devoid of any value. At least one will discover in it familiar things concerning all aspects of life, envisaged from every angle, and with the most conflicting goals, that are worth being noted, and which seem to me to be, at the end of the day, infinitely richer in variety and common sense – but here I might be mistaken – than the sort of reverie in which I used to abandon myself between lunchtime and five o'clock, when I was spending my energy trying to solve riddles of the universe, just as our fine teachers had encouraged us to do.

Mr. Perelman

Thank you very much, Mr. Austin. I have the impression that Professor Ryle wishes to tell us something, to complement your exposé.

Mr. Ryle

First of all, I would like to echo the words of Mr. Austin. If one absolutely has to use the expression "analytic method", there isn't anything necessarily wrong with that. But this does not mean that there is a particular formula or a set of tricks of which one could say: "Anyone who deals with what could be vaguely called philosophical issues in a different way does not have the right method that would allow us to find a solution to a problem <…>[1]

By "analytic method", I understand any method that allows us to find a solution to a typical philosophical problem. And I understand "philosophical" in the ordinary sense. And I also do not have the intention of going through all the meanings that the word "philosophy" has taken in the course of history.

To illustrate what I mean by a philosophical problem, I shall take a really banal example, where I think you will all recognize the type of things that may puzzle us and the type of problems that cannot be resolved by recourse to one or the other exact science.

Let us take the case of two persons: I'll call the first William, the other John. They both have good eyes. Both are looking at headlines of the same journal. They are equally well positioned to see what they are reading. The lighting is the same for both. Now, it turns out that one of the words in one of

[1] [Editors' note: the text is corrupted, ending abruptly in the middle of the word "problem"].

the headlines, let us say PARIS, is poorly printed and it turns out to be spelled P.A.R.R.I.S. John knows the proper spelling, while William doesn't. In these circumstances how can you say that John sees something (a misprint), that William does not see, while saying that what is visible for John is also visible for William? In this type of situation, there could be a very minor defect in the paper, let us say a comma that does not show up well in print, of which we could say: this is visible for John but not William, because John has better eyesight than William or because one is closer to the journal than the other. But this is not the case. I have stated that, by hypothesis, everything which is visible for John is also visible for William. Still, John sees a mistake in print; William does not see it. And the only difference between the two is that John knows the spelling, while William does not.

You will tell me that we are dealing here with a rather minor problem. One could say that it concerns the notion of things that are visible and the notion of things that are perceived. One can easily imagine this type of example coming up in an examination, on the topics of sensation and perception. But it is not the label that interests me. As I see it, this is a problem that could be intriguing to many; I know many who have been attracted to it – and I was myself caught by it. And by "analytic method" I mean any method that is capable of solving a problem of this type, capable of clearly explaining to us why we face this apparent contradiction that allows us to say that everything that is visible for John is also visible for William, while, on the other hand, we also say that John sees something, a misprint, that William does not see. I do not want to say that this problem is important but taking an important problem as an example would have taken up too much time, and this one allows me to characterize the analytic method in one word: that is, to say once again, *any operative method* that allows one to solve this type of problems, problems that are – I hasten to add – usually much more interesting than the one I have just provided.

One thing, in any case, is perfectly clear. Even though we are dealing here with questions that involve among other things a problem of vision, our problem does not figure among those that we could present to an ophthalmologist, saying: "Doctor, you know so much about eyesight and vision, how is it that everything that is visible to John is also visible to William and that still John sees something that William does not see, even though the only difference between the two is that one knows how to spell while the other does not?" Such a problem is of no interest either to the eye specialist or to the optician.

If we want to use a technical term, the omnivalent term of "philosophy", to designate this type of problem in order to distinguish it from others – and I am not saying that one wouldn't have good reasons to do so in certain cases – then,

I would say that we have here a poor example of a philosophical problem that cannot be reduced either to a scientific problem, to a historical problem or to a theological problem.

Mr. AYER

I do not disagree either with Mr. Ryle or with Mr. Austin. Yet it still seems to me that they have given us a description of the method of analytic philosophy which is a bit too broad. And at the same time they have not succeeded in explaining or, to be honest, they have not even tried to explain why we think that these methods are the only methods – we do not say this because one ought to show prudence, but we still act as if it were the case – that allow for progress in philosophical reflection. I would like to say a few words about these two points.

It seems to me that Russell, with whom the entire movement began, worked at a meta-linguistic level, and that he did this first of all for ontological reasons. He wanted to get rid of expressions that have no meaning. This is where his reflection begins. According to him, one must first eliminate all expressions that do not denote real things. He also wanted to get rid of expressions denoting things whose existence struck him as epistemologically dubious. And the method he applied was one of translation: translating phrases in which these expressions occurred in phrases with expressions denoting things whose existence is not open to doubt; for an empiricist, this means reducing, at least in an ideal sense, all types of propositions to propositions about sense data.

As to the criterion, it is also empirical. No one can postulate rules according to which one can judge whether a translation is good or not. The verification will take place by examining counter-examples. If one does not find counter-examples to the proposition that one has reached, it will be judged satisfactory. But, obviously, no proof is ever absolute. One can never be dogmatic, at best, one can state that this or the other translation is certainly not valid. This is a solution – as Mr. Austin has said – which is purely provisional.

Since Russell we have given up the ideal of translation, the practical application of which seemed difficult or arbitrary to some; and in most cases the empiricist theses that inspired Russell were also given up. Still, great resemblances remain between today's analysts and those of the past: if we have renounced translating we still try to describe how expressions that one wants to eliminate or simply explain actually function. And we still choose, even now, these expressions at least in part for ontological reasons. We do not rely on a theory of meaning that simply consists in saying that the words have, let us say, an eidetic meaning. We do not believe that there exist, properly speaking,

meanings. This is simply because we do not think of this as an explanation. Mr. Quine and myself are very close on this point. Explaining the sense of a word through its meaning is not explaining anything.

One is no longer looking for a translation assuming a preliminary agreement on identity of meaning, but for a description that tends to make puzzling expressions less puzzling.

A word now on the issue of the analysis of language. I find myself entirely in agreement with Mr. Austin, in saying that this is very misleading. But we have found nothing better. Let us take for example the work of Ryle, if he doesn't mind me doing so. One could say that in his *The Concept of Mind*, Ryle studies the way in which we use words such as: belief, intelligence, will, knowledge, action, etc. But one could also say that he studies the material phenomena of knowing, believing, acting, etc. His way of proceeding, as it appears to me – and he is here to contradict me if I am wrong – is to ask what happens typically or by necessity when someone believes something, when someone wants something, when someone acts of his own free will, etc. Obviously, we can ask ourselves the same questions in a different way by asking what these words are supposed to mean. But one is not on the same side of the net, if I can say so. One plays either the phenomenological game or the linguistic one. Whatever side one chooses, one always finds oneself at fault. Because if we say "phenomenology", we seem to cling to Husserl. If we say "linguistic", we are open to another type of misunderstanding, which would lead us to believe that we are striving to do a word by word scientific analysis of language, as linguists do, and this is not what we do.

R.P. Van Breda

Could you elaborate on this point of difference?

Mr. Ayer

That is to say, that the purely linguistic, scientific and empirical attitude leads you to state, for instance, that in Scotland the words "assiet", "giggot" are used that are not used in southern England; the regional variations of the pronunciation of the words are studied through phonetics, etc. – these are all empirical notions that have nothing to do with what people like Ryle or I do and certainly even less with what Austin does.

But we can still note in Ryle's work, and even more in Austin's work, that in studying grammar, in the most literal sense of the word, one finds twists and turns that supply clues or threads that lead to phenomenological discoveries. We find them in Ryle, for example in connection with his study of *knowledge*; we would probably find even more in Austin, for whom this investigation is not

only useful but also one of the most important. It is, however, simply a matter of degree.

Finally, if I may add another word, one of the reasons that we insist even more on saying that philosophy is an activity that bears on language is that we are convinced that philosophy is not capable of competing directly with science, that it is a second-order activity, so to speak, meaning by this that it does not bear directly on facts, but on the way one talks about facts. And this is why, although we are, as you have been able to see, deeply divided on other issues, we find ourselves in complete agreement here. There is no reason to consider that what the French call "la réflexion philosophique" is thinking that bears directly on facts, and not on the way one describes facts. In other words, for us there is no point in trying to see philosophy as a kind of supra-scientific discipline. That's all I have to say for now.

Mr. PERELMAN

Mr. Urmson would, no doubt, like to add something regarding these links between current analytic philosophy and Russell.

Mr. URMSON

I don't wish to say anything other than to express my almost perfect agreement with Mr. Austin in what he has said. If I had to discuss these things in particular with him, I would perhaps like to begin discussing certain points. But certainly today, and at the general level on which we are forced to remain, I accept what he has said to us.

Mr. PERELMAN

Even regarding Russell?

Mr. URMSON

I believe that Professor Ayer has defined Russell's position very well, remaining at the level of generalities in which we placed ourselves, which makes it impossible for us to go into details. I am entirely in agreement with the idea that Ayer approaches philosophy from the same angle, or at least more or less, as Russell did. When I say that the analysts distanced themselves from Russell, I immediately make an exception for Ayer, who is much closer to Russell than most of us. I think that it is always ontological reasons that prompt him to do what he does. You will tell me that this is also the case for many among us. Still there are nuances, degrees: Professor Austin, for example, who is certainly an extreme case in the opposite sense. It is to these extreme positions that I was thinking of when I compared today's school of Oxford and Russell's position

of fifty years ago. Extreme positions once again, such as that of Professor Austin, mine certainly, and that of several others. But many more feel much closer in heart and spirit to Russell.

Mr. Perelman

Mr. Hare wishes to add something.

Mr. Hare

Two points of detail. First of all, the word "ontology" has come up again and again in our conversations over the last eight days, and each time with a multiplicity of meanings, leading to a lot of confusion. I have no intention of entering now into a classification of all the meanings of this word. I suggest that we simply put it aside from the discussion, as long as we have not been able to clarify its meaning. I am certain, for instance, that Professor Gewirth and Professor Quine would use the word in a completely different meaning than the one shared among continental philosophers. Perhaps Professor Quine will enlighten us on this point, when he gets a chance to speak. But it seems to me that he uses it as if analysts could devote themselves to ontological studies without leaving the essential domain of analysis. I believe that this would not be true, if we were to understand the word as certain philosophers on the continent understand it.

Secondly, I would like to take this opportunity to come back to a question that has been asked to me by Professor Quine, precisely regarding therapeutic positivism. With that which one can call *esprit de l'escalier*, I thought of a better response than the one I gave him on the spot. I said yesterday that I see myself as a therapeutic positivist but I wasn't in agreement with the methods used by the most illustrious representatives of this doctrine. Upon further reflection, I would prefer to say that I am not what one could call a positivist therapist because by this term people generally mean that philosophy is only about looking for a cure to ills of this type. I would prefer to say that if our attention is often attracted to a philosophical problem because of the difficulties that arise through ordinary language, the philosopher should not content himself to resolving these difficulties but should try, as Aristotle has shown, to write a general treatise to show how one could solve them, or to give a medical analogy, to write a treatise of pathology and general medicine, which would also tell us how these arise. For me, this is the essence of philosophy. And I believe that this position is in formal disagreement with what we generally view as therapeutic positivism.

This does not stop me from being in agreement with therapeutic positivism on one essential point, upon which I have distanced myself from a good number

of my Oxford colleagues, in the sense that I believe that we should, first and foremost, restrict ourselves only to philosophical problems that leave us truly puzzled. I also believe that we should not cast our nets too far, at least at the beginning, and that it would be good to only take up topics in our research that we reasonably believe will help us to solve the difficulties that we have encountered.

Mr. PERELMAN

Professor Quine has been mentioned so often that I shall ask him to open this discussion that will start now. I ask you to raise your questions, objections and requests for elaboration here, on the comments regarding method that have been presented to you.

Mr. QUINE

I have been asked whether I agree with Ryle and Austin. I certainly agree with them to a very large extent, and in particular regarding everything that one could refer to as method. In what I do or try to do, I am perhaps not so close to them and their group or what has been called the Oxford School, even if we have common views on some points. In any case, I believe that a common trait unites us: that our activities are focused on language. I believe that one of the main reasons that we prefer to focus on language is that if we deal directly with the problems of the foundations of reality, we are in danger of introducing a set of presuppositions that touch underlying conceptual schemes relating to the most deeply rooted habits of thinking and feeling, so that none of the participants can oppose their own point of view to that of the others without seemingly being guilty of a petition of principle. You can go on discussing faculties and entities forever, that no one conceives in the same way. Everyone will maintain his own point of view, proceeding from an opposing conceptual scheme. Now, a philosophical retreat to language is an approach that helps us escaping such vicious circles. Let us see how.

The central and primordial function of language is to deal with common objects, of common size, of familiar use, of the kind one finds at the market. It is here that interlocutors can come to a perfect reciprocal understanding, even though they might disagree on ontological matters. Now, *words* themselves are one of those kinds of common objects, of common size, and therefore people can agree with each other rather well when they talk about words, in spite of all ontological disagreement. Now, here's the trick: transposing the ontological discussion to a discussion of language in such a way as to insist no longer on this or that presumed irreducible ontological *facts*, but more on the methodological assets or goals that favor this or that discursive ontological

theory. The trick is to avoid a direct discussion of the fundamental features of reality, so as to turn, rather, to the discussion of the pragmatic virtues of theories about reality.

The usefulness of such an approach that prompts us to retreat from the conceptual to the semantic level, and focus on the way we speak about things instead of focusing on things spoken of, remains, even if one thinks, as I continue to think, that the fundamental problems regarding conceptual schemes are of the same kind as the fundamental problems of physical science or of mathematical logic.

Mr. Perelman

Thank you. Mr. Jean Wahl, if you could please come forward to the podium…

Mr. Jean Wahl

I would like to be very brief. I was not always able to follow thoughts being reduced to a "swift movement of lips" from a behaviorist point of view. But I did notice two expressions, "retreat" and "avoid", in what Mr. Quine said. There is thus first of all a certain approach, a preliminary approach, by means of which you avoid certain things. For certain reasons… I would really like for these reasons to be explained. It is about this retreat and this avoidance that I request clarifications.

R.P. Van Breda

First of all, I would like to express my satisfaction at having heard my friend Ayer accentuating the negative attitude of analytic philosophy towards all undertakings of continental philosophy. It is obviously the absolute right of English philosophers to have no interest in what is happening elsewhere. But the discussion is clarified a lot by stating this openly. Quite often they meant to be understood as saying "You certainly do something different. Carry on if this interests you. That's very good". For my part, I believe that there's an implicit value judgment here, which exists by the way on both sides, and that it is worth formulating it openly. When we meet we are often too polite and show very little honesty. It is the truth, pure and simple, I believe, that there are many continentals who do not have any real interest in your philosophy. I would dare say that it is the same thing for you regarding the continentals.

There remains a very important issue, raised by the three or four speakers who have spoken this morning. By these four speakers I mean Mr. Austin, Mr. Ryle, Mr. Ayer and Mr. Quine. All four have raised an issue, which strikes me as very important: When is a problem philosophical? Mr. Austin is not inter-

ested in this question. Mr. Ryle, by contrast, has clearly addressed it. He went to pains to define the method, which should help us recognize when a problem is authentically philosophical. Mr. Ayer, for his part, said "one must distinguish oneself from the sciences and we are not interested in the first-degree type of reflection on the facts", which at least constitutes a draft version of a definition of what constitutes the problem of philosophy. Mr. Quine, for his part, advocated semantic schemas, which would be of quasi-universal application.

I can only state that a discussion on what would constitute for these four speakers the content of a philosophical reflection seems impossible to avoid. One cannot elude it by referring to historical disagreements on this issue. These historical dissensions have never stopped a number of people from believing themselves to be philosophers and us from referring to them as such. This problem is also one for each of us, and as the problem should be solved before one can determine the "subject-matters" of philosophy (to take up the expression used by Mr. Quine), I'm afraid it has to be solved beforehand, and in a definite fashion. I add that what I heard here, this morning, as describing what the analysts deem philosophical, is neither very clear nor satisfactory to me. I do not presume that your school does not recognize some characteristics of philosophy as such, but I admit that I myself am unable to clearly distinguish them.

Mr. Perelman

Before giving the floor to professors Austin, Ryle, Ayer and Quine to respond, I would like to ask a last question myself which relates, I believe, to what Professor Austin said. We look for turns of phrase that we can find in English, because this group of expressions has seemed sufficiently important to a cultural group that uses this language, and this is enough for us, he tells us, to attach importance to it. The question I would like to ask is the following. I have the impression that there are reasonable beings outside England and apart from English speakers, who also have very different expressions in their own language, and if we wish to go beyond a conception that is not just the one that has been found to be important in English, we would have to do the same work in all of the cultures that have been able to find that certain distinctions are important and reveal something about the structure of reality.

Right now, I open the discussion to the floor for those who would like to respond. I suggest that Professor Ryle answer the questions that have been directed to him and to which he wishes to respond. I don't think he will want to respond to all of them. I would then give the floor to Professor Austin, to Professor Ayer and to Professor Quine.

Mr. Alquie

Can we ask that the responses be quite short so that we have enough time to address other issues?

Mr. Perelman

Yes, but their responses will be shorter than we would like.

Mr. Ryle

I do not think that any of the questions was addressed specifically to me. The question raised by Father Van Breda was directed to us four. He was anxious to hear us explaining what philosophy is. I do not really see what satisfaction he could derive from a response that would be very brief. But he seemed to find something terribly negative in simply saying that nowadays a philosopher, in the sense we now understand philosophy, is no longer an astronomer, for instance, or a chemist or an ophthalmologist, though a chemist, an astronomer or an ophthalmologist could be a philosopher at the same time. This reply does not satisfy him. It is not enough for him either that one could cite several problems that I would say are typically philosophical as opposed to scientific problems.

He is thus asking us to provide some general formula, which would make the audience shudder, at least, I hope, as it makes its author shudder. What would he say of this one? Professor Quine has mentioned – apparently without making anyone shudder – *conceptual schemes*. This is not the exact expression he used. He has spoken of *underlying conceptual schemes*. Well, I suppose that we could say that one task of the philosopher would be to examine the structures and the interconnections of the conceptual schemes, more particularly in the case in which we sense a certain difficulty in connecting a given part of our conceptual schemes with another one. Or something to that effect. Of course, we would have simply shifted the problem, because you would be entitled to ask me what these splendid conceptual schemes consist of, what my understanding of this grandiose expression is. I would much more prefer to offer you a varied selection of all the problems which have always been considered and stand a great chance of being considered for a long time as typically philosophical. But I am really afraid that Father Van Breda will only say that I am hiding behind the examples, since what he wants is a formula.

R.P. Van Breda

Let me ask you simply, Mr. Ryle, whether you would be willing to accept, on this list, as one of the central problems of philosophy, the problem that one must decide on thought, on philosophical reflection…

THE PRESIDENT

With your permission, we would like to keep your reply for the second part of our discussion, so that we do not already begin with this second part. Are there any further questions you would like to respond to?

Mr. RYLE

I think that's all I had to say for right now.

Mr. AUSTIN

I will not deal with questions Professor Ryle has already answered, that either have to do with the boundaries between what we do, no matter how we name it, and philosophy, or call for a definition of philosophy. I said everything that I had to say on this earlier and I will not repeat myself. Moreover, I did not realize that we were to address this question at this stage in our debate. For the same reasons, since I already said everything I had to say and since I do not think this question relates to the topic at hand, I will not try to give a response regarding the boundaries that separate linguistics and analytic philosophy, whatever one might understand by this. I would simply say, if you like as a sort of warning, that I, for one, do not think that the boundary is so strictly defined as Professor Ayer led us to believe.

Therefore, to take up questions that seem to me to be more directed to me, let me begin with the first one. It has to do, once again, with the method of analytic philosophy. We are being asked why we do what we are trying to do when we act the way we do. When one asks me this question, I feel a bit as if in the situation of one of my colleagues, a father, who every time he was about to punish his children was held back by the fact that he could not remember the reasons one has for punishing children. The same holds for me. When someone asks me why I do what I am doing, I remain silent. Everything that I can say, in the most insistent way, is that the word "method" displeases me. I much prefer the word "technique", and even more the plural "techniques". On this point, I feel that it is important to make a distinction when we examine our relations, as friendly they may be, with someone like Professor Quine. Everything he has said about the way one has to consider language and the importance of this inquiry for philosophy, strikes me as extremely appealing. I love what he does. I appreciate what he has achieved. But I am perfectly aware of the fact that he uses techniques that are completely different from mine.

Mr. Goldmann's question relates again to method. He asked me what this agreement that we are seeking consists of, and, first of all, an agreement between whom? This question seems to me entirely legitimate. One could also ask a physicist: with whom would a physicist seek an agreement? I would say,

first of all, an agreement among all those who would like to go through the trouble of seeking one. And if we come to an agreement, then all the better. And if we don't, all we have to do is look elsewhere, try something else, aim for a different experiment on the basis of which we could hope to come one day to an agreement. The best we can do is to choose a certain number of sharp-witted colleagues of a quarrelsome nature.

But I might also add something to what I just said earlier about the importance of finding a *datum*, on the basis of which consent could be reached. There is a third party we could call up – one that would help us to reassure ourselves that the agreement we have obtained is not in vain, that it will stand the test of critique and facts. This would consist of inviting a group of outsiders to our group, but ones who would know how the thing works, to repeat the experiment, to resume the investigation of the same expressions, to see if they would reach the same results as we did. Here, I wouldn't know a better way to proceed than to say again what I said regarding Mr. Apostel's demonstration the other day. Nothing can be more encouraging for me than to see how someone else tries the same things and proves that he is able to reach similar results, just as well or even better than I could do. This is what we have always recognized as the characteristic approach of scientific thought, even when applied to a limited field.

Both Professor Ayer and Professor Urmson spoke about Russell, what separates us from him and what brings us closer to him. To this I would add that there are still great differences between us. My general line of thought aligns itself very closely to that of Mr. Urmson: take what comes and take it easy. But when Ayer comes along and tells us with a certain virulence that, if we do not take the road of language, we must be shown a different road that allows us to get to the facts without the detour of language; when he adds that this attempt has already been made a number of times and that history shows that it has been in vain, dangerous and sometimes quackery, well, then I should say that I agree wholeheartedly. In Socrates' time one would customarily say: "Why does he waste his time with words when he should be dealing with the nature of things?" And already Socrates responded in a way that seemed right; I still agree with what he says.

This was not the only reproach that was directed at him. You will remember that Aristophanes found it frivolous that Socrates would waste his time measuring leaps of fleas. If others after him had passed their time measuring these leaps like Socrates, they would have invented physics several centuries earlier. And I would say, in the same vein, that if people since Socrates had followed his example and opted for the path of language, sticking to it instead of beating around the bushes in all directions in search of the hidden paths of

things, philosophy as we know it, which does not seem so bad to me, would have been invented many centuries ago, as it partly was in Athens. Indeed, we are rediscovering it.

One word in response to what Mr. Hare said. Well, he certainly knows very well that I do not agree with him when he says that we should confine ourselves to the central part of philosophy, when choosing the words we are going to examine. I know he is not in agreement either when I say we should try to find our topics in less septic, less bitterly contested regions. I for my part see three good reasons: first, we warm up without getting too hot; secondly, the great problems that have resisted all frontal assaults could be breached if we attack them at an angle; thirdly, and this seems to me by far the most important, isn't there any risk in claiming to know in advance what the most important problems are? And this even if we suppose, what still remains to be seen, that we could claim to know the best method to take them on? I believe that, by taking a step back, we would have a greater chance of perceiving the outline of the peaks and of finding the best path, as we go along. Here, the example of physics is once again instructive. By tinkering right and left with instruments, as Faraday did, we have more chances of hitting upon something really important than by saying one day: "Let's tackle some great problem: let us ask ourselves, for example, what is our universe made of?"

Mr. Meteroc has asked two questions. He wonders first how we apply the concept of the totality of language and if it includes this crepuscular thing that is called "artistic language". He also asks how we can find a principle of classification for parsing such a diverse and also cumbersome collection of expressions, since it brings together something like fifteen thousand concepts that are so many varieties of one and the same kind, for each one of the attempts that we make. I believe that one can respond with just one word to two questions as Professor Ryle did: *ambulando.* As with physics or in the natural sciences. You will find the principle of classification of your beetles only by arranging all the beetles that you find, by counting the number of species and different varieties and looking at them well enough to identify them. There is no other way to proceed. In any case I am sure that one cannot say anything in advance. The same goes for the notion of the totality of language and the crepuscular fringes where daylight plays with shadows: we would only know how to tackle them by going there to look and see. Far be it from me to want to exclude them from the field of our research. Their hour will come. I do not feel capable of tackling them right now, that's all. I understand that this response may not be completely satisfactory.

Finally, coming to our president. Mr. Perelman asks: "Why English rather than other languages? And if you must consider all languages, would your inquiry ever come to an end?" If I am not mistaken, these questions cancel each

other. I want to say that, up to a certain point, if we do what we are engaged in first in English, it is because we think that this is already a lot; to venture out into other languages would lead us much further. But I am completely in agreement with Mr. Apostel in thinking that other languages should be subjected to the same inquiry, simultaneously, if possible, or else consecutively. The great principle to keep in mind is that every language that has survived up to our time and all expressions that have survived within each language bear witness, just as they deserved to survive, if we accept the law of evolution that only respects the fittest. In my view, they all deserve our attention or at the very least, as in my case, my respect.

Mr. Ayer

Two words, since Mr. Austin has already responded to most of the questions that interested me. Mr. Goldmann asked me if what he calls "second-degree facts" – an expression which doesn't seem very felicitous to me, but I do not wish to appear as a dictator in matters of terminology; I would rather simply say "semantic facts" – and if our focusing more specifically on these facts wouldn't lead us to reintroduce a sort of metaphysics, in the guise of a "meta-fact", which he, for his part, finds shocking.

Mr. Goldmann

I did not speak of metaphysics, I spoke of *meta-facts*.

Mr. Ayer

These *meta-facts* are an expression used by you to describe semantic facts – second-degree facts if you like. I don't see how we could avoid focusing on these facts whatever name we use to call them.

As for Mr. Béra, I have not understood what he is chastising us for. He says that we assume that speech can be reproduced in written words. I think so, perhaps wrongly…

Mr. Bera

Do you believe in an *exact* equivalence between the two? Do you believe that one can see written signs as the exact equivalent of words in action?

Mr. Ayer

Let us come to an understanding. Perhaps in a given language, the language that one finds in certain newspapers does not correspond exactly to the everyday spoken language. Only it doesn't follow that one cannot reproduce it faithfully by means of written signs…

Mr. Bera
What is your take on this?

Mr. Ayer
…But I, for my part, do not see, even if we make this objection, that there are detrimental consequences for the proof.

Mr. Bera
You can see very well that we are not talking about the same thing.

Mr. Quine
I do not understand why, but it seems to me that I have not succeeded in getting my thoughts across. For this reason, I am going to try to restate this in French. It was, though, a precise, limited idea.

When philosophers discuss fundamental points of their system, there is always the danger of a vicious circle. One trick for avoiding or reducing this danger consists in transforming their ontological sentences into two sentences that deal with words and that compare their suitability with respect to the two conflicting conceptual theories. Every phrase can be transformed into a usual one that deals with words. Usually, this transformation does not pose any difficulty. But when the discussion concerns foundations, this translation into usual language has the effect of diminishing, even of completely reducing, the problematic vicious circle. Starting from this, there are philosophers such as Carnap who have thought that the fundamental problems of conceptual systems are essentially practical problems of language. But this does not necessarily follow.

Mr. Williams
I would be very tempted to enlarge a bit on this last point. I will limit myself to a brief response to Mr. Béra, to whom the translation of my talk on the *Cogito* is much indebted. He recalled that we had several difficulties with this translation and he takes issue with us for treating language as if it were a monologue. I would have thought exactly the opposite. But this is not the question, because what I say or think is perhaps not enough. In any case, we are certainly constantly aware of the fact that language is an instrument of communication, manifestations of which appear in a complex array of questions and responses where a number of interlocutors intervene. And this, as I have very briefly underlined in my talk, is intimately linked to the fundamental problems of philosophy, since all the difficulties that Descartes stumbled upon in elaborating the *Cogito* stem precisely from the fact that he, by contrast, had committed the

crucial error of treating language as a monologue. Here I believe to be in full agreement with what Mr. Strawson said elsewhere and also, broadly speaking, with Mr. Merleau-Ponty, when they see in the Cartesian effort an attempt to isolate oneself from the world and not to wonder what the relations between the self and the world, the self and others could be. This attitude leads to a dead end, where the only way out is to consider language as a tool of communication.

II

Mr. Perelman

We can now proceed to the second part of our discussion. I will first ask professors Ryle and Austin to be so kind as to respond to a question that was asked by Father Van Breda.

Mr. Ryle

As far as I can remember, the question was specifically the following: What is the relationship between the analytic method and philosophy? Or something like that. Am I mistaken?

Mr. Perelman

That was my question, not Father Van Breda's.

Mr. Ryle

Whatever the case may be, I would prefer, for my part, to ask, for example: What is the relationship between the method or methods used by mathematicians and mathematics? I would understand it better in that case. If you discuss questions of a certain kind, there is more than one way to find an answer that will lead you nowhere. If the problems that you are discussing are of a philosophical nature the only way to obtain a satisfactory response, if you are able to, is to use the appropriate method and not another one. Let us consider again my rather simple and rather tedious example of John and William. If you were vexed by the same problem and tried to solve it by means of the instruments of an optician, you would certainly be doing something silly. You have to examine the apparent contradiction between the fact that what is visible for John is also visible for William and the fact that John, however, sees a misprint whereas William does not. If you wonder where the contradiction lies, where it shows up, then and only then are you embarking upon a philosophical inquiry, something distinct, if you like, from a scientific investigation that could be undertaken by an optician.

Mr. PERELMAN

I will now turn over to Mr. Austin.

Mr. AUSTIN

I will only say a few words. I said, and I can only repeat it here once more, that for me philosophy has always been the name that one gives to a holdall in which we provisionally put all the problems lying about, for which no one has yet found respectable use, a unanimously accepted method for dealing with them. All we claim to have done is to have found a technique for clearing a small corner of the bushes. In English we often say: "Be your age". We could add: "Be your size". One must be of one's age and size. We are modest-sized, we begin modestly. If we were giants such as Descartes or Husserl, I would then say: let us begin from the beginning.

Mr. ALQUIE

I would like to express a wish rather than ask a question. One of the main goals of this colloquium is for us "continentals" to become acquainted with analytic philosophy. I believe that one of the things which separate us from our English colleagues is the habit that we have of constantly referring to the history of ideas. For us, philosophy is, first and foremost, what Descartes, Spinoza, Kant, etc. have said. Now, it is very striking that in the discussions we have heard the references to these authors are extremely rare. Yesterday I had the opportunity to ask Mr. Hare how his conception relates to Kant's and it seems that what he said to this matter shed considerable light on the question for us Frenchmen. I would like to express the wish that in the responses to the questions that will be asked, our English colleagues try to explain the relationship of their philosophy to that of English philosophers with whom we are more familiar: Berkeley and Hume. In many of the formulations that have been presented to us, we thought that we recognized echoes of opinions we know or believe to know to be those of these authors. Thus, when Mr. Ayer just said moments ago that one of the sources of analytic philosophy was the aspiration to eliminate expressions that do not possess any effective thought content, we are reminded of Berkeley and his critique of the notion of matter. Because this critique consists entirely in showing that behind the word "matter" we are, strictly speaking, thinking nothing. And Hume also shows that when we talk of "cause" we have in mind something completely different from what we believe we have in mind. But among these authors there is a fundamental difference between, on the one hand, the analysis of language alone and, on the other, the much more important opposition between language and intuition. Because the last word, for them, belongs to intuition and

it is ultimately in the name of mental experience that they criticize language. The fundamental question of philosophy is: "What do we really have in mind when we say that…" This is why, in Mr. Ayer's talk, there is a point that has remained obscure for me: Mr. Ayer declares that the analytic method is, in a certain sense, phenomenological and in another sense linguistic. Now, at least for us Frenchmen, there's a contradiction here. It seems to us that we have to choose between a method that takes language as a guide and analyses it, and a method, which, on the contrary, criticizes language in the name of intuition. It is for this reason that a clarification of the relationship between the analytic method and that employed by Berkeley and Hume would be valuable to us.

Mr. Poirier

May I share here some reflections, some impressions that have been suggested by the lectures in this colloquium, that have brought us into more direct contact with a school, of which some ideas were, of course, not entirely unknown to us? One could group them as follows: total agreement on the very point of analysis of language; several reservations regarding some of its methods and norms; a lot of doubts regarding the philosophical scope.

I. We should not be inclined to oppose a project that has ultimately nothing revolutionary about it, in spite of the title of a rather well-known collection of Oxford papers,[2] that impresses us essentially by virtue of the art with which it is realized. Its initial aim is actually in agreement with those of a number of classics[3], and its conclusions actually seem to continue those of other recent schools: how can one be surprised to see neo-empiricists considering them as epigones or phenomenologists not formulating any objections about principles? Aren't we all more or less analysts without knowing it, just as Mr. Jourdain was a writer of prose?

Who will dispute, for instance, that a study of philosophical problems should begin with an analysis of fundamental notions and the elimination of ambiguities? Wasn't it Descartes who wanted the problem of essence to be addressed before that of existence and all thoughts be defined? We all know that the most familiar words, truth, falsity, demonstration, value, mind, mass have different, often irreconcilable, meanings, and that one should not uncritically apply to them common formulas. The famous principles of logic are the very example of equivocal sentences. The philosopher, the logician must therefore, before anything else, analyze language and make it unequivocal. This is the reason why there is an analytic and linguistic task in logic that precedes the

[2] *The Revolution in Philosophy* [ed. by Alfred J. Ayer, London, Macmillan, 1956].

[3] It could legitimately claim to be that of Aristotle.

actual synthetic or constructive task. Moreover, moving from alpha to omega, one can say that the definition of the word *matter* is the definitive task of physics, the definition of the word *universe* that of cosmology, that each science ultimately defines its subject-matter and that its goal is to establish a natural language just as Duhem said that its goal was to establish a natural classification.

The analysts, however, essentially adhere to ordinary language. That is in fact a natural point of departure, but only with the purpose of correcting it and passing from actual usage to a normative, ideal use of words. Isn't this the perennial method of Socrates and Aristotle: going from everyday to rational or scientific language, from a bad to a better language?

As for knowing if one should speak of analyzing language or thought, of defining words or ideas, the names or the things or the concepts, this is hardly important.[4] We all know that thought only materializes, only becomes something real and concrete within a discourse, that discovering a true thought beneath a misleading language means substituting clear phrases that are well understood and universally accepted as expressing the authentic meaning to misleading expressions which were not felt satisfactory. But this in turn presupposes that there is something deeper that determines and justifies this substitution, something we call thought, meaning, idea, in the same way as there is something that determines our perceptions, our experiences, our physical measures and that we call physical reality, no matter how difficult it is to define it. One can always, for logical purposes, speak of all of this in terms of behaviors, dimensions, discourse, that which will once be referred to as behaviorism or as experimentalism, or as nominalism, or phenomenalism or even idealism. It is a fact that I don't know who my neighbor is, or not even who I am, and I can only relate to visible body the audible words of my neighbor, and that his being, his mind, his personal character reveal themselves only as a law governing his physical actions. This law must itself exist in a certain way and it is altogether much simpler and undoubtedly truer to say: I speak with X, or I love X, than to say: the words of my body correspond to the words of body X, the emotions and the feelings of my body correspond to the presence and the gestures of body X. The same holds true for language. So, let us leave aside these squabbles over words, and speak freely in terms of thought, in accordance with the classical usage, or in terms of language, following the present style, since they are equivalent.

Let us no longer ask if the philosophical problems have a linguistic or mental foundation, if the problem of God, for instance, is born from an inner belief

[4] After all, a collection of papers by the most well-known analysts is entitled *Essays on Conceptual Analysis* [ed. by Anthony Flew, London, Macmillan, 1956].

or anxiety (well-founded or not) or from the fact that one finds the word God in dictionaries or books. All of this has little importance.

And perhaps it is also useless to wonder if the analysis of language stems from logic, linguistics, psychology or sociology. But here the problem becomes more complex, because this brings us to questions of methodology regarding which there is less spontaneous and much less universal agreement.

II. It is indeed difficult to escape the feeling that some of our Oxford friends take language, and ordinary language in particular, to be something absolute, within which the different meanings of an utterance and the rules of its usage, once they have been properly analyzed, are perfectly determined, thus *ipso facto* determining our judgment regarding its value and its truth. It's a bit like in Freudianism, where becoming aware of conflicts and complexes has, in and of itself, a healing virtue. It is also a kind of anti-psychologism, extending that of the majority of logicians: one would say there are natural, objective, that is, necessary implications of language in itself, while in the eyes of the majority of people these implications are those that have been attributed to it by various persons, based on the psychological meaning that they give to words and expressions. There is here something misleading and quite paradoxical for which one finds an equivalent in phenomenology. If we don't relate language to ideas, essences existing in themselves (or in relation to a divine thought), and if we don't relate it either to individual minds that speak it, it is difficult to see where it stands and what implications it determines. Here, all that one can say is that I cannot see what you are talking about and to what you are referring. But I fear that I am over-stretching here the thoughts of these authors and distorting a bit their theses, so as to be better able to assert their originality.

As a matter of fact, the meaning of a discourse is something very indeterminate and something that varies with a time, a milieu, the circumstances, the interlocutor, his culture and intellectual orientation, in a word, with the entire logical, psychological and social context. One does not isolate a phrase from the tone in which it is spoken, nor from the attention and from the resonances that it elicits in the listener as in the speaker (these are not always the same, and this is the source of quite a few misunderstandings!). And this is why an analysis of ordinary language, even for the words of everyday usage, is often risky. We saw this very well in the attempt to analyze diverse French semi-synonyms, an analysis that is both subtle and incisive and yet it has been convincing only to a certain number of us. And if this is the case in ordinary language, what to say about the writings of philosophers? Will one purport to apply ordinary semantics to them? The objection was made with great pertinence.

Now, according to which rules do we analyze language, following which methods and which norms?

We evoke the etymological criterion only for the record, since it is clearly unusable in general.

Are we appealing to a purely positive and linguistic criterion of universal assent? Yet we know how fragile it is, how relative meanings are, and how illusory an exegesis based on "common sense" would be.

Do we proceed in a purely empirical and individual way according to what we know of the author and the context of "discourse"?

In fact, in a philosophical discussion we manage to reach an agreement on the words and the expressions only by referring implicitly to experiences and theoretical evidence, which presuppose the shared principles, a common interpretation of facts and ideas that have a normative status. Analysis can only take place within the framework of a doctrine: Thomists only have a common understanding within Thomist philosophy, Marxists only within the Marxist dialectics, which they consider to be ideally required. But we seem to be on a rather different level from the one within which the "analysts of language" proceed.

The notion of norm also enters into play almost inevitably, from two points of view: there are well-made languages and there are incorrect ones, and there are good and bad ways of speaking a given language. There is a sense *de jure* and a sense *de facto* of a given phrase and of a given discourse, but the sense *de jure*, the theoretical sense, is not fixed *ne varietur* and depends on the fact that at least an elite has adopted and preserved it. It is thus quite difficult to remain on a level of pure description and not to bring value judgments to bear in the analysis of language.

I would also say that I was surprised to see that two notions were never invoked, those of historical evolution of language and virtual meanings.

If we want to draw philosophical consequences from the analysis of language, we must envisage its history and its effective or ideal progress. Without this we could just as well philosophize by analyzing prehistoric language (supposing it is known) or that of the pygmies or the Andamans. Language is not simply an established fact which poses static problems: how, through which instinct, which preadaptation, which divinations have we been able to understand and to speak a given language? how can we translate one language into another, that is to say, what does a given discourse in a given language mean? It is also something that is renewed, it re-invents itself, transcends itself, deepens, along with the thought that it represents, and understanding how this is possible and how it emerges is the dynamic problem of language.

When I speak of virtual meanings, I mean to say this: a word, a sentence do not simply have a current meaning, they do not translate something prepackaged, they are the indicators of a meaning that will be constructed later on,

they correspond to needs and promises of meaning, just as many propositions contain the promises of a truth that can only become actual to the extent that the meaning of the terms that appears in them becomes more precise. These are certainly not clear ideas, far from it, but this does not prevent them from being well-founded. In any case, intending to analyze language only in frozen actual meanings would be tantamount to the psychological atomism of the last century, that is, to the most illusory of empiricisms.

The conclusion to all this is that language is the expression of a thought which is half-real, half-virtual, in the minds, in a culture, in a society, in an experience, in a history, in a process of progress, and can only be understood as such. The analysis of language can thus only bear fruits, if it is not purely linguistic (in the sense of an autonomous science as opposed to psychological and epistemological considerations). What is more meaningful in language is its law of development and its implicit promise. Perhaps Oxford should be inspired here by Newman.

III. One the last problem remains: that of results. No matter how interesting the description and elucidation of terms and sentences is and no matter how appealing the work of glossarists can be, where does all this lead us and in what way does it constitute or proclaim itself as philosophy? I have just alluded to the "Freudian" hypothesis according to which becoming conscious of the meaning of language would *ipso facto* cure philosophical illnesses, but we would still like to have some example of such cures and I would like to know how the analysts think here to put their method to work.

First of all, as far as language itself is concerned, do they claim to rectify its use and structure, given that they are the opposite of artificial languages, of formal symbolism? Would they accept an eventual codification?

One would happily grant in general that, apart from deductive formalisms, artificial languages can only represent schemes that are much too flimsy and too conventional to be adapted to any concrete reality. Uprooted from a tradition of thought that is not without biases or dangers but which reminds us, with respect to each word, each expression, of the diversity of their meanings and of the problems and arguments associated with them, we would not be able to fix arbitrarily, through some simple conventions, the meanings of concepts that history has surrounded with resonances and caveats. Replacing old terms by new symbols is not enough, and in losing a tyrant one also loses an advocate, an advisor and a guide, because language is the daughter of history and of all thought. It is thus reasonable to proceed from the experience of everyday language, rather than to construct formalisms off the bat and somehow identify them in retrospect with a reality as best as one can. Do we, in order to create a resembling statue, geometrically arrange cubes or prefabricated polyhedrons?

Moreover, we would not be able to codify ordinary language in a rigorous way.

First, because it is directed to real people, in given circumstances, in a general human context. Even if we intend to "speak our language well", we speak to be understood, that is, in relation to the interlocutor and the moment.

Second, because everything depends on what we want to say. Is it a matter of proving something in a rigorous, logical way? Then we need rigid and mechanical concepts into which a formalized language fits. If, by contrast, it is a matter of persuading, inferring intuitively, becoming aware of a reality, describing an experience, deploying our *esprit de finesse*, then we need a living language, with its richness, its dynamism, its overlapping meanings, I would even say, its provisional indeterminacies.

We would thus not be able to dream of reducing discourse to a systematic assemblage of terms with a defined meaning independent from the context, because each and every discourse is a living organism. And one could no longer ideally endow language with contradictory qualities: being easy to learn and fixing the exact nuances of meaning by means of the grammar, being both rigid and fluent, fixing thought and renewing it, being logical and poetic.

We add that it is actually enough, at least in French, to know one's language well, to seek the true expression and possibly take some precautions or use some tricks to eliminate ambiguities that are linguistic in nature. But no grammar, no vocabulary, would ever give us the "true" usage of words such as God, mind, I, body, soul, nor any other important word.

Let us consider now philosophical problems or, to be frank, metaphysical problems. What attitude does the school of logical analysis suggest adopting for this subject?

Here it seems to us that we can get a glimpse of some nuances in the Oxford school, in particular in Mr. Strawson's descriptive metaphysics, which we hope to gain a better understanding of later. On the whole, though, one has the impression that the conclusions do not differ essentially when one goes from logical positivists to Oxford analysts. Whereas the former think that everything that goes against the axiomatization and the formalization of artificial languages and is not defined in terms of physical experience is nothing but pseudo-problems and *flatus vocis*, the latter seem to say that the analysis of the empirical meanings of metaphysical concepts and problems shows us an interesting diversity, towards which it is advisable to feel a kind of sympathy and a benevolence tinged with aestheticism. The practical difference is not very big. What goes beyond language does not seem to touch, for instance, Mr. Austin very much. And as far as religious problems are concerned, in general there seems to be even greater reticence.

Of course, one is free to have no interest in metaphysics, especially given that compared to the aggressiveness of the Vienna Circle and its epigones, the analysts seem really accommodating and almost condescending toward possible philosophical or ontological longings. But one would like to know if all the differences in the conclusions can be reduced to their being a-metaphysical rather than anti-metaphysical, and to their considering philosophers (in the strict sense) to be dreamers rather than delirious persons. Isn't metaphysics also for the analysts an illness of language, just as religion was in the eyes of Max Müller? Should we conclude that the notions and the traditional problems have so much sense that it is almost as if they did not have any?

If not – and to the extent that one still recognizes the legitimacy of such philosophical problems – the only method is, certainly, to prove movement by walking, and we wish that one day our Oxford colleagues will come back and bring us some examples of dealing, by means of the analytic method, with these problems that are still kept alive as legitimate, and that they will at least allow us to become cognizant of solutions that can be brought to bear on them, in this new framework.

The remarkable application of the "analytic" method by Mr. Hare to a moral problem nicely shows all the difficulties of linguistic analysis itself, without speaking of its conclusive value in the concrete cases. Here I have also felt embarrassed as when Socrates showed me, by the analysis of the words happiness, virtue, etc. that the bad person is always unhappy and the sage always happy. To be sure, if a student came to us, declaring with despair that "nothing has importance" we, too, would all respond by saying: "My poor friend, what is that supposed to mean?" I should say, however, that one could probably not get rid of moral nihilism by purely grammatical means. It is not like the case of contradictory formulas: all the judgments are wrong, nothing has logical meaning, etc. In fact, one has to consider the real sense of the formula (assuming that there is a defined and different grammatical sense): nothing has in itself, speaking absolutely, any importance; nothing merits being judged important, life signifies nothing more than a rain shower. In these conditions, we would not readily accept that "nothing has importance" implicitly entails "for me" or "for such or such". I add that if by applying the methods of the analysis of language one would succeed in making people accept that the idea of importance "in itself" does not make sense, for this very reason one would justify, I'm afraid, the affirmation (formula or idea) that "nothing is important".

Mr. E. Weil

I don't know if I should intervene in this debate because the question raised has always seemed to me void of any meaning. If one wishes to discuss method,

then one should first have a method to decide the method for such a discussion. This seems to me to be a typical case of infinite regress. I believe that philosophy is done by philosophizing and that the methods have to be regarded, if one wants to speak about them at all costs, as sediments of this living activity.

So here, if you like, a first negative point. Now, concerning the linguistic approach, it seems to me to constitute less a real method, properly speaking, than the choice of a point of attack. Of course, one must always choose one's point of attack. But – and this is not a critique, it is a question – I wonder whether this linguistic point of attack is the best possible point of attack, if, speaking of language, one does not want actually to speak of communication, and whether there are not modes of communication that are at least just as important as language.

What one could say, of course, by advocating the linguistic attack, is that it is the easiest point of attack. I would reply to this that it is in any case not clear that the easiest attack is necessarily the most fruitful.

Mr. GALIMBERTI

I have often thought, in the course of our discussions over these last days, that the vaults of Royaumont, if they hadn't had to be rebuilt when they were in danger of becoming ruins, might have had something to teach us. They may still be haunted by the spirits of those who came here centuries ago seeking shelter. We have attended discussions that resemble in a striking way those that took place in the age of scholasticism. To take an adjective that gets to the very heart of a question that is, as you know, quite nuanced, I think that in spite of all the efforts, the spirit of Oxford is still after all the spirit of the nominalists and that to this spirit of nominalism the continent is still opposing a realist spirit. I ask myself whether we aren't guilty of the same error as those people. When Father Van Breda, for example, and I am only naming him because he was the fiercest adversary, says that this cannot interest him much because the problem lies beyond, is it really his own cause that he is defending? I mean is it the cause of his clothes and of the religion in the name of which he is speaking? Because in the end this religion is always the one that has expressed his most secret message in the fourth Gospel where it is written: "In principio erat Verbum". Does he fear that he will get lost talking about the *Logos*?

But, on the other hand, there's also the strange fate of nominalism which was supposed to act as the advocate of words and which finds itself in the position of an adversary of words. They fear them. They, too, want things. Here on both sides, we want just things, we are afraid of words. Finally, it is our fate that we must always justify our words by means of things. In so doing we forget that actually, if we want to speak of a philosophical truth, we have to figure out

how to do that: "In principio erat Verbum", since ultimately we are ourselves the Word, the *Logos*. The principle of all our incomprehension, now as then, remains the same. We have a sort of veil before our eyes, which shrouds the real meaning, or better, the linguistic meaning, of language. This is why I think – no matter what Father Van Breda says of this – that the efforts of the Oxford group should be followed with great interest. Perhaps the only thing that remains to be desired is that it finds the way to elaborate a language that has also value for us or that, conversely, we are capable of constructing such a language.

Mr. Perelman

If you allow me, we will now give the floor to Professor Ryle who has to catch his flight. But this will not stop us from following the discussion so that we can address all aspects without letting any participant feel robbed of his right to present objections.

Mr. Ryle

Prof. Alquié has rightly reminded us that what is called philosophy on the continent is most often reduced in practice to the history of ideas. What he claims as true about the continent is, to my knowledge, also true of the entire world – I mean the parts of this world with which I am acquainted. I do not claim to know how history of philosophy is taught in France. I have seen how it is taught elsewhere, in different places, in particular in Toronto. The teaching of the history of philosophy consists in exhuming the bodies of all known philosophers and doing an autopsy on them. The result would pretty much resemble a collection of obituaries, in the best case.

Mr. Alquié has asked us what we think and what I, in particular, think of the history of philosophy, and what connection we have established between what we have done and the thought, in particular, of Hume or Berkeley. I do not have the intention of embarking at such a late hour on a lecture on Hume or Berkeley. I will limit myself to a brief remark, on the subject of Hume.

For many excellent historical reasons, Hume was completely unaware in his time of the boundaries that for us divide what we call psychology and the discipline that deals with what I would personally call philosophical problems or if you prefer conceptual problems. From the very title of his work, he seems concerned with the problem of the advancing of empirical knowledge on human nature. And this definition would encompass a whole range of things, psychology, sociology, anthropology, political economy, etc. I am not saying that he did not contribute to the advancement of these disciplines. But I would compare his contribution to these disciplines, a contribution many aspects of which seem ephemeral to us today, to the contribution he made to

a different field and for which he is rightly famous. So now the perspective changes.

When he tells us, for instance, that essentially the relationship of cause and effect is not of a logical nature, what kind of affirmation is he putting forward? Certainly not the kind that for him would merit the recognition of future generations of psychologists, sociologists, chemists, physicists or biologists. It is also equally clear that, by affirming that causality is not a logical relation – once again I am not citing his exact words, I'm summarizing –, it didn't occur to him to intersperse his text with quotation marks. If we had told him that he was doing a linguistic analysis he would have been the first to be surprised. Nevertheless, he made an important contribution, which remains valuable to us. There is a difference between saying "The butter is going to melt *because* it is in the sun" and stating "Tomorrow is Sunday *because* today is Saturday". There are assertions that we can include among the logical inferences or purely formal ones: there is an essential, crucial difference between making assertions of this type and asserting a causal relation between, for example, the heat of the sun and the fusion of butter.

In this domain, although he has certainly did not make use either of our methods or of our language, Hume's contribution is crucial, even if it does not increase in any of its dimensions the sum of our empirical knowledge of human nature. To say that Hume, for this reason, should be counted among the philosophers of language would still be absurd, since he uses neither quotation marks nor expressions borrowed from semantics.

Professor Weil has told us that for him the linguistic approach expresses the choice of a point of attack, which is only one point of attack among others and not necessarily the best. I love this strategic metaphor. If we had time to dwell on this, I would like to ask him to describe for us a point of attack that would not, from our point of view, be a linguistic one. Personally, I have always taken great care to avoid the use of such words, language and linguistic, which is responsible for a great part of the confusion in our debate.

Professor Wahl has put his finger on an interesting point: in certain respects, it seems quite true that certain philosophers on the continent are quite close to Anglo-Saxon philosophers, while in other respects they seem very distant. The symptoms of these differences are recognizable. One could suggest several diagnoses. I would perhaps venture to frame one. We, too, for our part, first felt a need in the still recent history of the movement to elaborate, if not a system, at least a group of responses to very general, overly general questions that concern philosophers, though ready to go back to details and find out how the system would apply to this or that domain. My readings and the meetings in which I have recently participated have left me with the impression that this

conception is still widespread among classical philosophers, many of whom think that it is their task to elaborate as soon as possible something that can be considered to be their system; and if their efforts do not go beyond volume I, they would be allowed to leave aside anything they could say concretely about the application of their system in detail. Our own conception would tackle the problem the other way around. We tend to believe that if you are not capable of attacking head on problems about details, it is futile to pretend you possess a skeleton key that would give you access to the Problems written with a capital letter. If you would like another example: when someone comes along and tells us that he knows how to extract food from soil and then we discover with time that he confuses all grains and that he does not know how to dig his own patch of the garden, we suspect that he is being lazy and is trying to make a name for himself the easy way. Whatever the case may be, and I do not want to be too brutal, this tendency exists and manifests itself also on our side of the Channel. We think we are cured from it, even if sometimes the patient becomes used to his treatment… There are these addictions that make the symptoms resurface, as you well know.

Before taking leave from you, I would like to tell you how much pleasure I have derived from this meeting. The simple fact of being together, trying to see, apart from what people publish, always belatedly, what they think and the way they think what they think, to observe the faces, to grasp the inflections of voice, is of inestimable value. The discussions that have taken place here, which have been organized with a great care that we all appreciate, has given us a valuable and daunting revelation of the points of contact that bring us closer as well as of the differences that separate us. I will not speak at length of the charm of the location, the cordial atmosphere that reigned throughout. I will simply say that for those of us who have had the opportunity to participate in these discussions, Royaumont will remain an enduring memory. I would like to thank Professor Jean Wahl in particular for his welcome he has extended to us here on behalf of all his colleagues.

Mr. GEWIRTH

I am neither a continental nor an Englishman. I have come here as a neutral observer, or if you prefer, as one who is geographically neutral. I have come to listen and take note of the issues. And the impression that stands out for me from this experience is one of confusion.

On the one hand, it seems in fact that the English have apparently said such accurate, such reasonable things that it would be difficult not to be in agreement with them. They have defended their case very well. They have given us solid reasons to believe that they are innocent of a number of things that they

have been accused of, most notably, an excessive obsession with language. Yet, at the same time, I cannot but think, surrounded by all the *Gemütlichkeit* (to place myself on another neutral ground) that has continued to reign throughout all these debates, that the underlying differences between the different speakers tended to become confused, and that one lost a lot of clarity in that respect.

I will draw inspiration from one of the last remarks of Professor Ryle, to find my own point of departure for a new attempt of this type, to point at least to a possible direction of convergence or at the very least of a better mutual understanding of the divergent points of view.

As the discussion has progressed, and again and again on various occasions throughout these days, we have sensed that one or the other representative of philosophy on the continent was refraining from saying or would actually say: "But you are addressing the same problems as us!" This is true, I believe, at least for the similarity of topics. But, to take up once again the oversold expressions, method or technique, the differences are flaring up in the manner in which both of you address the same subjects. And in these differences of method or technique, I would, for my part, see more than differences of style, real divergences of approach.

As striking as they are, these differences remain in my view very often expressed in a negative way. One cannot deny that the English display, towards what is happening in philosophy in the rest of the world, a kind of contempt. And this disdain surprises us, to the extent that some of us ask on what criteria they rely, so as to reject wholesale all other ways of conceiving philosophy. It goes without saying, I believe, that the English feel only suspicion towards the undertakings of a Heidegger. We see this mistrust gradually spreading to other philosophers. On what is it based? What justifies it?

It seems – and I can speak more freely now that the specialist Mr. Urmson has left – that one could write the history of the analytic movement, at least a great part of it, by addressing the criteria that, one after the other, the analytic philosophers have put forward for almost one hundred years by now to reject, condemn or disparage other styles than theirs of conceiving philosophy. One of the most famous examples of this type of criterion can be found in the theory of verification as applied to meaning. As soon as this theory was on the market, and I seem to remember that it did not hold very long, it gave logical positivist philosophers an easy weapon to stigmatize all those who didn't think like them. How would a Hegel, how would a Heidegger, how would, should I know who else?… could ever verify one single assertion that he makes?

However, the difficulty that we face today, along with the contemporary English representatives of this school, is considerably different in my view. Here, we no longer have persons with a clear and simple formula that they use

to justify their refutation, their condemnation or their mistrust of any philosophical method other than theirs. Thus, in his talk, Professor Ryle wanted to identify the differences that oppose him to Husserl, saying that the latter appealed to essences or to intuitions. But these claims were less clear than they seemed at first glance, in part because he did not elaborate on the reasons of this disagreement, in part because Ryle himself, here and elsewhere, seems to be referring to essences or to an intuition. In part, finally, because, and this third point is crucial for me, he did not clarify what the other alternative would be.

I think that in order to understand what is happening right now one should stick to what Mr. Austin has said. Working in the concrete, piecemeal so to speak, English philosophers have not yet reached the point where they could say – and perhaps, at least this is what I strongly suspect, they are by nature and by vocation little inclined to ever actually reach this point – why, for what reasons summed up in a simple and general expression, they think what they think and condemn or simply avoid every other conception of philosophy.

Moreover, whatever the case may be, the findings that they offer us as fruits of their investigations are often so new and so convincing, so apt at provoking reflection and stimulating further investigations, that we can only welcome their efforts – for which I am, for my part, extremely grateful.

Mr. Perelman

Before giving the word to Mr. Austin I myself would like to ask him, as well as Mr. Ayer, a question, pertaining to the links that they conceive between science, philosophy and the analysis they deal with.

If I have understood correctly, one of the essential criteria for differentiating them is that there is agreement in science, and that there is no such an agreement in philosophy, and that inasmuch as it would be possible, they would like to transform certain domains of philosophy into domains of science, dealing with the problems by means of methods on which an agreement is possible.

I wonder whether, in this matter, they do not feel clearly obliged to limit their conclusions, and to limit them so that they stop being interesting to other philosophers. In the sense that, when one examines linguistic structures, one can be completely in agreement, but from the moment when these linguistic structures must serve as a way of arguing in favor of the existence of certain categories or of certain structures transcending language – and this is certainly Professor Ryle's point of view, since he has told us again and again: "I am not dealing with English or French, or any other languages, but through analysis of language I try to understand and to reveal facts that are not purely linguistic" –, in this case there is already an adventure – called by Whitehead *Adventures of Ideas* – precisely where disagreement becomes possible. I also wonder in this

connection whether Professor Austin and those who are closer to him than to Professor Ryle wish or not to embark on this adventure.

Mr. Devaux
This risk…

Mr. Austin
I shall first echo a comment by Mr. Jean Wahl who is surprised to see us be so close and so distant at the same time. In a certain sense I share his surprise, but on the other hand I wonder why we should be so surprised by the distance that separates us. It so happens that we all are standing on different grounds, and in spite of being so near, our respective grounds have managed to stay different for a very long time, with remarkable ease. I think it is hardly likely that we will succeed in finding a complete rapprochement that soon. Perhaps, with the help of time, we will succeed in gradually coming closer.

I will now turn to Mr. Gewirth, the linesman who has given us his impartial judgment on the game of the two sides. He began by saying that we stigmatize philosophers who do not think the way we do, especially those that come from Europe. I do not think that one can say that we, or at least most of us, are spending most of our time stigmatizing anyone. But I suppose that one can accuse us of the sin of not greeting people on the street. I agree with you that this lack of politeness is worse in a sense than a direct provocation. One can appeal to mitigating circumstances: we are simply too busy. We pride ourselves on having found an entertaining occupation, which we find profitable.LeL Add to this that provoking people under their noses, which would be better after all, I agree with you, than not responding to someone greeting you on the street, puts you at risk of being drawn into a nasty quarrel. Quarrels don't lead anywhere, they make you lose precious time at what could be a decisive moment. Think of the time lost in the 19th century, in futile debates between Darwinians and their opponents!

I will add to my response that is directed to Professor Gewirth, who knows very well what I am talking about, that we ourselves already have our fair share of such quarrels. We have already spent a lot of time quarreling with each other. If we are a movement – or if one can believe that we are a distinct trend in contemporary philosophy – it is indeed because we have come to believe, mistakenly of course, that our most immediate colleagues are the only ones with which it is worth showing ourselves in disagreement.

I would thus say, if one is to chide us for our unusual impertinence, and our way of stigmatizing people without appearing to be doing precisely that: "A thousand apologies, but we're pressed for time and life is so short!"

In response to Professor Alquié, who asks us what we make of history, my response would be in very general terms, both on my own behalf and on behalf of all my colleagues, that we have too much respect for the history of philosophy to wish for it to be neglected. We devote a lot of time to it, sometimes too much time. And I share Professor Ryle's view when he says that there is a danger of devoting too much time to historical studies in philosophy. But let us not give names.

Mr. Alquié wanted to know what we think of Hume and Berkeley. This choice was not made by chance, but I am not sure whether he wanted to know our opinion of these two authors generally speaking, or if his question does not have more to do with the present relationships of analytic philosophy to each of the two. I will attempt to respond briefly to both points.

Of Berkeley and Hume, in a general sense, I would say, for my part, that the former offers us a lot more material for reflection than the latter, at least as regards epistemology, for which Berkeley's work is a valuable lode, not yet completely exhausted today. However, I profess the greatest admiration for Hume's moral philosophy. If, on the other hand, we put the two authors into historical perspective, we cannot deny that Hume undertook an enormous operation of cleansing for his time, that is, a hygienic operation that was then indispensable, as it is still today, for each of us, at one or the other moment in one's life. But I do not believe that one gains a great deal from a meticulous study of his philosophical writings. As a writer he was not capable of writing a prose solid enough to withstand such treatment, whereas Berkeley was, at least to a greater extent and to a degree that was certainly remarkable for his time.

Now, to what extent can one link analytical philosophy with either Hume or Berkeley? I think that both did something, in their time, that was quite similar to certain things that we are doing today. But we can say that the results that they obtained in the areas in which they were engaged are completely obsolete today for the simple reason that they did not have at their disposal either the techniques or the time necessary to complete the studies that they had undertaken, always on very vast problems without going into enough detail nor deeply enough.

To come now to the remarks presented by Professor Galimberti – I hope I will distort neither his name nor his thought – they tend to suggest that there could exist certain proclivities, certain nominalist tendencies in a good part of what is practiced in the schools that are described as analytic. Here I wonder whether I dare speak on behalf of my colleagues, and Professor Ryle in particular, but if someone came up to me and said straight into my face: "Don't you have a little proclivity towards nominalism?" without wanting to attribute to me – not that I think that Galimberti had the intention of so doing – an at-

tachment to a particular doctrine, my God, I believe I could only do one thing, which is, admit my weakness; there is nothing so terrible about that.

Mr. Shalom asked me what we should do with the propositions uttered by classical philosophers. What would one say about them? I do not see how one can respond to such a general question and I suppose that Mr. Shalom expects that I respond to this in equally general terms. There are people that are called philosophers, in the classical sense of the term. They have all put forward a certain number of propositions, belonging to very different types. There are good ones, there are bad ones, of all types and species. What more would you do if, for one or the other reason, you happened to develop a special interest for what a "classical" philosopher had to say, in addition to taking the propositions that seem to you to be the most remarkable and examining each one for its merits? I would simply add this: the fact that any given remark made at a given time in history by this or another philosopher would strike us today as completely erroneous does not prove anything against this other fact, that the same remark, located in its context, could offer us an extremely rich subject for reflections; nor would it also stop us from saying that it was made by a genius, even though, in our eyes, he was wrong. One needs a genius to clash head-on with common sense.

I would respond to Mr. Goldmann who surprised me a bit – just as he took Mr. Ayer by surprise, who will, I hope, have something to say about this – by appearing to be saying, if I understood him correctly, that what we did went against a scientific investigation – let's say psychological, behavioristic if you like – of what happens in the situations in which speech acts take place, examined from their various aspects. Must it be reaffirmed here in the strongest possible terms that I have nothing against this type of studies? I am convinced on the contrary that psychology, along with a number of other scientific disciplines of this type, can discover a great number of things that would be completely missed by linguistic analysis. This is also true of situations in which we find ourselves when we say something. I am thus in favor of this type of research and I can only refer you to an article of mine where I expressed my credo on this, an article that also has a very apt title: "A Plea for Excuses"; since roughly speaking my credo boils down to making excuses for not doing what is certainly not something I intended to do.

I now proceed to the question raised by our president. He asked me, not without reason, if I am not thinking that at the end of our studies, once we will have fulfilled the task we set ourselves by means of the techniques we defined and that one could call, if you like, linguistic philosophy, there would remain, of our own confession, a great number of unsolved problems, as for instance, that of the categories in which one would have to sort out the phenomena

which for us constitute our universe, or even the categories that offer us an exact, correct description of the universe in general; and if the residue of our action wouldn't precisely be discovering these categories that would escape the control of linguistic techniques. Well, I would say, as far as I'm concerned, that I believe that Mr. Perelman is perfectly entitled to say and to think this. I am convinced that if one could press this orange to the last drop there would still remain a good deal to be done. There would still remain, in our holdall, quite a few things left which we wouldn't have touched.

But do take note of this: the question is whether we admit that another philosophical method – I am thinking here perhaps of a very particular one, which is rather fashionable at the moment on the continent – could be the right one? That it could tackle problems that we see as unsolvable and slay them in one go? My answer is no, twice no. First, I do not believe that the time has come – I did not say that it will never come – to address the type of problems you have alluded to. And then I believe *even less* that any of the philosophical methods presently held in favor has the slightest chance of succeeding in coming up against them.

You see, I have so often said that philosophy is the name we give to all the residual problems that still elude the proven methods of science, that I am unable to give this up. When the time comes, if it ever does, to address the problems, which professor Perelman thinks, rightly or in any case with a lot of plausibility, will arise one nice day, then, I wonder again if it will be philosophy that will still be in a position to tell us how we can go about solving them. I rather believe that even in that case we will have to invent our own methods, and when they are perfected, we will discover that they are scientific.

And this brings me to the last question, raised by Mr. Weil, who tells us that our way of conceiving philosophy seems to him the easiest, but that he does not believe it proved for that reason that it is the most fruitful. I do not believe to be mistaken in saying that here Mr. Weil leaves it to be understood that in his view it is not, indeed, the most fruitful one.

Let me say to you first of all that this is certainly the type of question that could have been directed, say, to Descartes, with respect to his geometry, or to Galileo with respect to his physics. I do not say that it was wrong to ask them; they were told: "All of this is nice, really easy. But isn't there a way to proceed much faster and to reach more important results?" And the verdict of history is no, there is no other way.

Furthermore, in what sense are you claiming this is easier? I personally do not find that this is as easy as you claim it is. You need a long time to get familiar with it, a long time to learn to handle these techniques with enough awareness, modesty and, I would add, joy. You need a lot of care. You also need

a sense of team work, which is something that is not given to all philosophers. The only sense in which one could say that these methods are easier is that if one applies them with enough care, one becomes aware that they will provide reasonable assurance against risks of error. I did not say assurance against strokes of genius. But that is a different story.

I would put forth a last argument in favor of this method that you claim is easy, and which seems to be a decisive advantage to me. In general, when someone proposes a new method in philosophy, the first thing that people must do after developing their thesis is try to convince their peers, as it turns out their colleagues in their department. But, you know very well what happens in philosophy: if you manage to convince someone, this person will have all the less faith in you. The big advantage of our method, then, is that it does not force us to convince anyone of its excellence. It is enough for us to say: "Why don't you try…"

Mr. Ayer

I would only add a few supplementary words, to provide nuances on certain points that Mr. Austin has said and to elaborate my own proposal. I am not entirely in agreement with him, most notably in his response to Mr. Alquié's question regarding Hume. I agree with him in thinking that our moral philosophy follows from Hume, but I attach more importance than he seems to do to the theory of knowledge. In any case, I believe that it is clear that Russell's work is very close to Hume's, which explains why those like myself, who continue to follow very closely Russell's work are able to relate more directly and more willingly to Hume's work than those like Austin who have abandoned most of the positions endorsed by Russell.

The second question has to do with language. For Mr. Alquié the issue is knowing if we are speaking about language or if we think that we reach facts through language. If you don't mind, let us take an example: What is understanding? You can frame this question the following way: What do we mean when we say that someone understands something? A first interpretation, both naïve and hasty, of the functioning of language, would be to say that here "understanding" means a mental act, and that every time that someone understands something, just as I hope Mr. Alquié understands me right now, there is something happening in his brain and this something is something exceptional, peculiar. At this moment what we are trying to do is look at the typical cases. Typical cases for which one would say correctly that someone is in the process of understanding something. At this point one realizes that specifically mental processes are not necessary. It is in describing these typical cases where the phrase "understanding something" applies, that one could

succeed in grasping what the word "understanding" means – or if you prefer, what understanding is. This is what I meant by saying that one can express it in two ways. And I think that it will be easier for us to come to an agreement in this regard.

Now, Mr. Goldmann certainly misunderstood me, I probably did not express myself very well or the translation from English to French has betrayed my thoughts. I'll take another example: let us say that we are searching for a thief. Money has disappeared. Several banknotes had been marked and one finds some of the marked bills in a suspect's pocket. And one says: this is evidence, though not conclusive evidence, that he is the pickpocket. So where are the facts of the first order? They are, I would say, the fact that the bills are in his possession, that these bills had disappeared, and that they were marked. Now, one could also say of the fact that the suspect is in possession of the marked bills that it is proof that he had stolen them. This is for us of the type of the second-order facts. Not the fact that he has the bills on him, but the fact that this first fact constitutes evidence for the theft. So, for me philosophy consists in asking oneself, principally or exclusively, what one wants to say in saying that this or that fact constitutes the proof of this or that other one – or to raise questions of the same order, concerning second-order facts. If Mr. Goldmann doesn't like the expression one could easily replace it with another one.

Mr. GOLDMANN

The entire problem is knowing, precisely, whether this science is a science like any other or whether, in your opinion, it has a privileged status.

Mr. AYER

Of course, it has a privileged status. It is a science like others, but it differs, in essential points, which have to be noted, from sciences like physics or chemistry. But if you want by all means to call it scientific, perhaps it is less misleading than to deny it this character.

Finally, with regard to Mr. Perelman's question I believe that Mr. Austin has already said what I could have said. Obviously, we have here methods at our disposal, which, in our view, lend themselves to solving important problems. In particular, the problems that have been raised in the course of the history of philosophy. It seems to me that the classical issues of epistemology, the problem of realism or of idealism, the problem of free will, and so on, can be dealt with – at least we hope so – by our methods, and potentially can be solved by these methods. Those who claim that they have at their disposal other methods, easier or more difficult ones – it is irrelevant, only the efficacy will count – only have to try and use them. To provide a convincing proof of

their superiority, they have to bring problems, real problems that are amenable to solution by means of their methods and not by ours. It is true that one could then debate what constitutes real problems. Professor Quine is next.

Mr. QUINE

I will respond briefly to the remarks that have been addressed especially to me, since my last intervention. Most notably to Mr. Goldmann with respect to the example which he has suggested to decide what seems in his view to be a major difficulty. He asks us to consider the case of the publisher and if, according to us, we have to define the concept of publishing on the basis of what the publisher can say about it, on the basis of language, or more generally, on the basis of the publisher's real situation with regard to the books that he sells. My answer is that we have to take both into account as *descriptions*. Because I remain skeptical regarding the value of the distinctions that one could establish between essential and accidental characteristics – just as I remain skeptical regarding the value of definitions. Perhaps this is related to my profession: when one works too long with logic, one ends up contracting a kind of allergy with regard to oversold clichés, like that of the sense of a definition.

But I would also like to say that I am pleased that I came from so far away to attend this meeting, which has helped us get to know each other better. I am especially grateful to those who have provided multiple signs of friendship towards me.

Mr. AUSTIN

May I add a word? My colleagues have already expressed their joy and gratitude for being brought together. I would like to add the name of Mr. Béra to those whom we have to thank. I have the feeling that he has contributed in large measure to the success of this undertaking and that he had to show a lot of patience over the course of these days, the burden of which he had shouldered.

Mr. PERELMAN

I would like to join these acknowledgements, on behalf of my Belgian colleagues, to thank all of the managing committee and, in particular Mr. Béra for all the care he has shown in organizing this conference. I hope that it will be followed by many more, equally successful ones.

Translated from French by Camilla R. Nielsen