# GE and AE Passages

**"Grammar and Existence"**

Existential Quantification

Categorizing Contexts

Objections to Metalinguistic Strategy

| Geach: "There is something Tim and Tom are: tall" | Frege: There is something predicates stand for (not name) | Objection 1: Trading Nonlinguistic for Linguistic Universals | Objection 2: Categorizing contexts don't mention linguistic expressions |
|---|---|---|---|
| IV, VI, VII | VII, VIII, X | XI | XII, XIII |
| Resolution: | Resolution: | Resolution: | Resolution: |
| "Simple grammatical mistake": No common noun | Nonrelational theory of 'means' | In AE: Distributive Singular Terms | In AE: Dot quotes |

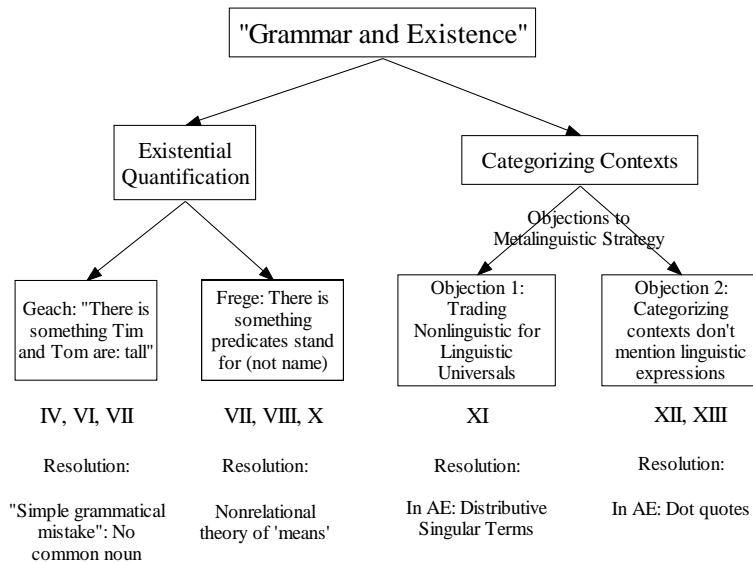## "Grammar and Existence" [1958]

<u>The Question</u>:

**III.** Since the use of category words involves a prima facie commitment to abstract singular terms such as 'Triangularity'..the question naturally arises, "**Does the use of these singular terms [viz. 'Triangularity'] involve a commitment to Platonism?**" [130]
"[T]he widespread view that the introduction of predicate variables carries with it the use of such category words as 'quality', 'attribute', or 'property' is simply a mistake. [131]

**V.** "There is no *general* correspondence between *existentially quantified formulae* and *existence statements.*" [135]
[Geach] is misled by his own formulation into supposing that

($26^2$) *There is something* (i.e. tall) which both Jack and Jill are
although it does not commit us to the 'abstract or universal entity' *tallness,* does commit us to the 'property' *tall.* Thus he tells us that while the predicate 'red' is not to be construed as a *name,* it does 'stand for' something, and he proposes 'property' as a 'general term for what predicates stand for'. [137]
**"Now it is important to realize that Geach gives *two* accounts of the term 'property'; one of which, though cautious, is based on a simple grammatical mistake, while the other is derived from Frege's account, and is more difficult to expose. The cautious account is contained in the passage quoted above, in which he stipulates that 'property' is to be equivalent to 'something that an object is or is not'. The Fregean account is the one in which properties are introduced as *what predicates stand for.* [138]
"[T]he hypothesis with which we are working is that only those 'something-' statements which

are of the form 'Something is an N', where 'N' is a common noun, **have the force** of existence statements-thus of the statement 'There are Ns'." [138]

The key point to notice is that unlike existence statements proper, the statement

(26) *There is something* which Jack and Jill both *are*

begins not with 'There is *a* …', not with 'There is *a something* …', but simply with 'There is something …'. If it began with 'There is a something …', thus using 'something' as a common noun, one might well look for a common noun, such as 'property', to pinpoint just what *sort* of 'something' 'there is' which Jack and Jill both are. We could then have

(26$^3$) There is a property which Jack and Jill both *are*.

But all this, as by now should be obvious, is logical nonsense**. 'Something' is *not* a common noun, and it is incorrect, therefore, to introduce 'property' as equivalent to 'something which an object is or is not'. The term 'property' has, as a common noun, the form '— is a property' whereas,** *unless* **'***something***'** *is to be construed as a common noun,* **the supposed equivalent has the form '— is something which an object is or is not', thus**
**(28) Tall is something which an object is or is not**
**and** *not* **'— is** *a* **something which an object is or is not'. Only if the expression 'something which an object is or is not' were a common noun expression (which it is not) would it be correct to introduce the common noun 'property' as its stipulated equivalent. In short,** *this* **way of introducing the term 'property' is simply a mistake**. [139]

**VI.**      Suppose we had begun with an example which involved the common noun 'man', instead of the adjective 'tall', say
(29) Tom is a man.
The corresponding generalization, as we have represented it, would be,
(30) Tom is a *something*
where the fact that the 'something' comes after the indefinite article makes it clear that 'something' is, so to speak, quantifying over a common noun variable. [140]

Now the question-word 'what?' plays a number of roles in English which might well be split up among a number of interrogatives. In particular, we might introduce the interrogative 'quale?' to indicate that the answer is to be in terms of an adjective, and the interrogative 'quid?' to indicate that the answer is to be in terms of a common noun. Then we would have the question-echoing counterparts

(31$^1$) *Tall is quale* Tom is: *Tom is who* is tall,

(29$^2$) *A man* is *quid* Tom is: *Tom is who* is a man.

To the first of each of these pairs there would correspond a general statement which would bear the mark of its origin, thus,
(34) *There is something* which is *quale* Tom is (i.e. tall).
(35) *There is something* which is *quid* Tom is (i.e. a man)
or, more concisely,

($34^1$) *There is somequale* which Tom is (i.e. tall).

($35^1$) *There is somequid* which Tom is (i.e. a man).


**VII.**   ($38^1$) *Man* is a concept
and
($39^1$) *Triangular* is a concept.
These sentences, however, are puzzling, to say the least, for it is difficult to repress the feeling that since 'concept' is a common noun, the context '— is a concept' requires a singular term rather than an adjective or a common noun to complete it. [142]
For, one is tempted to expostulate with Geach, surely adjectives and common nouns *stand for something—though,* of course, they are not *names*. Surely we can say
(44) 'Triangular' stands for something
or
($44^1$) There is something which 'triangular' stands for
**And can we not therefore legitimately introduce the common noun 'concept' as having the force of 'something which a predicate stands for'? The answer is, as before, No; not, however, because it is incorrect to say that there is something which 'triangular' stands for (or *bedeutet),* but because the expression 'something which a predicate stands for' like the expression 'something which an object is or is not' does not play the sort of role which would make it proper to introduce a common noun as its stipulated equivalent.**


**VIII.**   Even if we could take it as established that to quantify over adjective- common noun- and statement-variables is not to assert the existence of qualities, kinds, or propositions, we would sooner or later have to face the fact that **ordinary language does involve the use of the singular terms and the common nouns which raise the spectre of Platonism**—and, indeed, that we do make the existence statements which the Platonist hails as the substance of his position. For we do make such statements as 'There is a quality (thus triangularity) which …', 'There is a class (thus, dog-kind—or the class of white things) which …', and 'There is a proposition (thus, *that* Caesar crossed the Rubicon) which …'. These statements, genuinely existential in character, make forthright ontological commitments. Or are these commitments, perhaps, less forthright than they seem? Can they, perhaps, be 'reduced' to statements which make no reference, explicit or implicit, to ontological categories? [147-8]


**IX.**   Indeed, it is apparently open to a simple and devastating objection. How can 'Triangularity is a quality' (11) have something like the force of '"Triangular" (in English) is an adjective' ($11^2$) in view of the fact that (11) *makes no reference to the English language*? [156] Again, how can the truth of (11) be ascertained by reflecting on the use of the word 'triangular' if, were a German to say

(78) Dreieckigkeit ist eine qualität, aber es gibt keine Englische Sprache,
his colleagues would recognize that his statement was only contingently false? [157]

**[T]o know how to use singular terms ending in '-ity' is to know that they are formed from adjectives; while to know how to use the common noun 'quality' is (roughly) to know that its well formed singular sentences are of the form '— is a quality' where the blank is appropriately filled by an abstract noun.** (That the parallel points about '-keit' and 'qualität' in German are genuine parallels is clear.) Thus a more penetrating examination (80) shows it to be self-contradictory in spite of the fact that *one* of its German counterparts is not. [158]

**Thus, while my ability to use 'triangular' understandingly involves an ability to use sentences of the form '— is triangular' in reporting and describing matters of physical, extralinguistic fact, my ability to use 'triangularity' understandingly involves no new dimension of the reporting and describing of extralinguistic fact—no scrutiny of abstract entities—but constitutes, rather, my grasp of the adjectival role of 'triangular'.** [158]

**The non-self-sufficiency, then, of universals and individuals is not a matter of gappiness, but rather a reflection of the fact that adjectives, common nouns, and singular terms alike are what they are because of their different contribution to the statement-making role performed by the** *sentence.* [159]

"*Ontological* categories are the material mode of speech for *syntactical* categories." [159]

Summary of strategy of GE:

**X.**      I began by arguing that 'existential quantification over predicate or sentential variables' does not assert the existence of abstract entities. I then suggested that if the only contexts involving abstract singular terms of the forms 'f-ness', 'K-kind', and 'that-p' which could not be reformulated in terms of expressions of the forms 'x is f', 'x is a K', and 'p' were categorizing statements such as 'f-ness is a quality', 'K-kind is a class', 'that p is a proposition', then **we might well hope to relieve Platonistic anxieties by the use of syntactical therapy.** I then examined a context which has been thought to correlate words with extralinguistic abstract entities, namely the context ''—' (in L) means …', and found that it does not do so. Encouraged by this, I proceeded to examine the distinction between the material and the formal modes of speech to see if the idea that such categorizing statements as 'Triangularity is a quality' have the force of syntactical statements such as '"triangular" is an adjective' can run the gauntlet of familiar objections, with what I believe to be hopeful results.  [161]


[Material from the rest of GE is better discussed in AE below.]

**"Abstract Entities**" (1963)

1. (163-4) "I have argued in a number of papers…that abstract entities..are linguistic entities. They are linguistic expressions. They are *expressions*, however, in a rarified sense…Redness, as a first approximation, is the word ●red● construed as a linguistic kind or sort which is capable of realization or embodiment in different linguistic materials, e.g., 'red, 'rot', and 'rouge'… Expressions in this rarified sense I have called…linguistic *types*." (164) "abstract entities are linguistic types" (164) "the interpretation of qualities, relations, propositions, etc. as linguistic types." (165): "the thesis that universals (in the sense of qualities, relations, classes, and the like) are linguistic kinds…"

2. WS confronts the problem that linguistic types seem themselves to be a kind of (but only *one* kind of) universal. His solution (166) "requires us to hold that not all *ones* over and against *manys* are universals (i.e. qualities, relations, sorts, kinds, or classes), and consequently to conclude that **the problem of "the one and the many" is in fact broader than the problem of universals** (in the specified sense)." His example of a one-in-many that is *not* a universal in his sense is what is referred to by "the pawn". His analysis will be that that expression is a distributive singular term. In effect, he shows us how such terms are *used*, and want that *pragmatic* account to do the work that was supposed to be done by *semantic* talk of what they *refer* to (namely, the thought would be, universals). (166) "**to refer to such a *one* we need a singular term other than the singular terms by which we refer to individual pawns, and yet which does not refer to a universal of which they are instances**." (166) "Pawn" is a common noun.

3. Strategy (167): "If, therefore, we can understand the relation of *the lion* (one) to *lions* (many) without construing *the lion* as a universal of which lions are instances; and if the looked-for singular term pertaining to pawns can be construed by analogy with "the lion"—indeed, as "the pawn"—then we would be in a position to understand how *the pawn* could be a one as against a many, without being a universal of which pawns are instances. This in turn would enable **a distinction between a generic sense of "abstract entity" in which the lion and the pawn as well as triangularity (construed as the ·triangular· ) and that two plus two equals four (construed as the ·two plus two equals four· ) would be abstract entities as being ones over and against manys and a narrower sense of abstract entity in which qualities, relations, sorts, classes, propositions and the like are abstract entities, but of these only a proper subset, universals but not propositions, for example, would be *ones* as over and against *instances* or *members*.** This subset would include the kind *lion* and the class of pawns, which must not be confused with *the lion* and *the pawn* as construed above. But all this will be given a more careful formulation in what follows. Such is the agenda. It is readily carried out."

4. [T]he fundamental theme is the equivalence schema

    The $K$ is $f \equiv$ All $K$s are $f$†

    where this represents an identity of sense, the dagger indicating that the righthand side is a "non-accidental" truth about $K$s (i.e., [roughly] that *being f* is either one of the criteria for *being a K* or is implied by the latter on inductive grounds. [167]

5. (168) "Now if we reflect on the two statement forms

    1. The $K$ is a one

    2. $K$s are a many

    we note that they are in the material mode, the former having (in first approximation) the sense of

    "The $K$" (in English, our language) is a singular term,

    the latter (and it will be noticed that the plural verb is an unperspicuous consequence of surface grammar) having the sense of

    "$K$s" (in English, our language) is a plural term."

6. (168) "I propose to call expressions of which "the lion" is a paradigm example **"distributive singulars."**

7. (169) "To construe "triangularity" as having, albeit less perspicuously, the **sense** of "the •triangular•"…"

8. Thus, "•triangular•" would be the common name of items which play the role played in our language by \*triangular\*s, where the asterisk quotes form the common name of the design tokens of which one is found between them. [169]

9. (169) "In the use which we have in mind, **neither "the pawn" nor "the lion" is the name of the role or kind to which the common noun pertains**."

**10.** (170) "**Both the idea that qualities, relations, kinds, and classes are *not reducible to manys* and the idea that they *are reducible to their instances or members* are guilty of something analogous to the naturalistic fallacy.**"

11. (170-1) "the corresponding equivalences pertaining to **pieces in a rule-governed system**…" "the criteria have been split into a descriptive and a prescriptive component.  It is the latter which is essential to the character of the equivalence as defining a "piece"…The division of the criteria into descriptive and prescriptive components is, potentially, the drawing of a distinction between a "piece" in a narrower sense (the criteria of which are specified by the prescriptive component) and what might be called a recognized "embodiment" or "materialization" of the piece."

12. Texas chess (172).

13. (173) "the conception of our language as one way of playing a game with more generic descriptive criteria of which there are other mutually different varieties is already implicit in the conceptual framework we actually use."

**14.** (173) "I have been proposing (as a first approximation) a "rational reconstruction" of ***triangularity* as *the •triangular•***

15. (176) ""within the limited horizon**, the abstract suffix "-ity" can be regarded as a form of quotation**, thus triangularity and "triangular" would be parallel constructs.

16. [W]e can always take an adjective and form a singular term from it by the use of an appropriate suffix, the result is often stilted and artificial, and competes with a standard expression involving such a suffix, but of which the stem is no longer an adjective in actual use. [177]

17. (176)-(179) are on various forms of quotation, leading up to his "contrived linguistic role or office common nouns", such as •triangular•. (179): "If we bear in mind our earlier discussion of the criteria for application of common nouns, we can say that **dot quotation corresponds to ordinary quotation where the latter practice has been modified in such a way that the descriptive component of the criteria for the application of the common noun formed by quoting has been reduced to that which is implied by the prescriptive component, and the latter has been given its most generic formulation**."
[Ftnt 13 here says WS will not argue, but does believe, that these roles can be specified in terms of language-language, language-entry, and language-exit moves.]

18. (179) Let us, therefore, continue to use expressions formed by means of dot quotes to refer to linguistic types, which latter, though identifiable (by virtue of the name-forming practice) as the types realized in our language by the designs within the quotes, do not have *being of these designs* among their criteria. Thus, a •triangular• need not be a *triangular* (written *or* spoken). It can be a *dreieckig*. The most useful way to put this at the present stage of the argument is by the proportion

$$\frac{\text{expression formed by dot quotes}}{\text{expression formed by ordinary quotes}} = \frac{\text{"pawn" as applying to the appropriate pieces in any game which can be regarded as a different embodiment of chess}}{\text{"pawn" as applying to the familiarly shaped pieces used in ordinary chess}}$$

19. On nominalization and dot-quotes: "[W]whereas ordinary quotation forms an expression which, depending on context, functions as a common noun or as the corresponding singular term, we shall give our dot quotes the job of forming an expression which must be preceded by "the" to form the corresponding singular term. [179]

7

20. (179): "Triangularity = the •triangular•    That it is raining = the •it is raining•"

21. (180) on *immediate* vs. *ultimate* criteria of application of dot-quoted expressions.

22. Section IV (there is no Section III) is an aside, explaining in terms of dot-quotes how (a) Triangularity is a universal and (b) Triangularity is an individual, can both be true.  Ftnt 17 (183) has the interesting remark that: "Although it is philosophically illuminating to reconstruct such material mode of speech categories as 'individual', 'quality', 'relation', etc. as classifications of linguistic types, ordinary discourse does not provide for a reduction of statements involving them which would parallel the straightforward reduction of their formal mode of speech counterparts."  Here the last notion of "formal mode of speech **counterparts**" is the best WS can do to describe the relation he is interested in.

23. The possibility that the word "kind" might have these two senses throws light on Russell's erstwhile distinction between classes as ones and classes as manys. Or, with an eye to Frege, we can say that in contexts such as (g) kinds are *distributive objects,* whereas in (f)-like contexts they are concepts or functions.  [186]

24. Section VI lets us "see more clearly why it is incorrect to say that all abstract individuals are linguistic, where "abstract individual" is given the sense of "distributive individual."  The reason is that (187):
"— is a *linguistic* abstract (distributive) individual
becomes
        •—•s are *metalinguistic* distributive singular terms,
and appropriate examples of these forms would be
        The •*triangular*• is a linguistic abstract (distributive) individual
        •the •triangular••s are metalinguistic DSTs.
Thus, since it is not true that
        •the lion•s are *metalinguistic* DSTs
it is not true that
        The lion is a linguistic distributive individual."
Section V sets up this discussion, by considering the "formal mode counterparts" of various material mode claims, and then regimenting them using common nouns and DSTs formed by dot-quotes.

25.  Section VII explains that on this account **there are abstract entities that are not objects, but functions** (188-9):
"1.    *The lion* is a (distributive) individual and not a kind (i.e., The •the lion• is a DST and not a common noun.
2.     Lionkind is a kind and not a (distributive) individual (i.e., The •lion• is a common noun and not a DST).

8

3.      *Lionkind* is a (distributive) individual and not a kind (i.e., The •the •lion•• is a DST and not a common noun).

4.      Triangularity is a quality and not a (distributive) individual (i.e., The •triangular• is a predicate and not a DST).

5.      *Triangularity* is a (distributive) individual and not a quality (i.e., The •the •triangular•• is a DST and not a predicate).

In (1), (3), and (5), we have examples of items which are objects and not functions; in (2) and (4), examples of items which are functions and not objects."

This raises the question (189): "What, then…is the formal mode counterpart of "abstract entity"?" The answer offered is the disappointingly evasive (190): "**This points toward an interpretation of "entity" rather than "abstract entity" as the material mode for "linguistic expression," and to a distinction between "non-abstract" and "abstract" entities which reflects a basic dichotomy between kinds of linguistic expression**. Just how this latter might be characterized (or, indeed, whether a simple dichotomy will do) falls outside the scope of this paper." He goes on to suggest that wider and narrower senses are available, with the narrower sense corresponding to *metalinguistic* expressions such as "the ●triangular●", rather than "the ●lion●".

26. Although he has been careful about the issue in the previous section, WS begins section VIII with a Fregean howler (192):  "Frege's concepts are a subset of senses—predicative senses."

27.  Section IX (192) begins: "We must now make good a still more basic oversimplification in our rational reconstruction of such abstract singular terms as "triangularity" as the **names of** linguistic types which are typically embodied in our language by the designs of which they contain an illustration (i.e., as having the **force**, in terms of our quoting convention, of, for example, "the •triangular•"). For, while these abstract singular terms *are* names of linguistic types, and, indeed, of types to which the designs they illustrate are **intimately related**, it is at least an oversimplification to say that the types in question are realized in these designs."

28. The closing section, IX, is concerned with how one might generalize what WS calls "**the illustrating sign design principle**" ((195), (196)) employed by dot quotes for languages that are ˢperspicuousˢ (with respect to Bradley's problem), such as Jumblese.  This is, as he notes (199), a matter of metalanguages for Jumblese, and (worse) Jumblese metalanguages.  An interesting project would be to do better what WS does here: say how to form dot-quoted expressions and their corresponding (by adding 'the') DSTs, for and in Jumblese.  Thus (199): "The question, "What Jumblese expression, if any, stands for triangularity?" as interpreted in the preceding paragraph must not be confused with the question What Jumblese expression, if any would be the translation of "triangularity"? **The latter, of course, would presuppose an account of Jumblese metalanguages, a difficult but by no means impossible task which will not be attempted here.**"

29. More (201): "From this point of view, the classical problem of universals rests in large part on the fact that, in such languages as English and German expressions referring to universals are constructed on an illustrating principle which highlights **a design which actually plays a subordinate role**, and consequently tempts us to cut up such sentences as
Triangular (*a*)
into two parts, one of which has to do with the universal rather than the particular, the other with the particular rather than the universal, and tempts us, therefore, to construe the statement as asserting a dyadic relation ("exemplification") to obtain between the particular and the universal."

30. Conclusion, reverts to the discussion at the end of NS, on the relation between *exemplification* and *truth*, and the connection of the latter to a kind of *doing*. (202-3):
"Thus the "relation" of exemplification which for Platonists binds the realm of becoming to the realm of being, and which for more moderate realists binds the "real" order to the "logical" or "conceptual" order, is an offshoot of the "relation" of truth, which analysis shows to be no relation at all, but a sign of something to be **done**."
What is to be done, we are told in NS, and the point is reiterated here, is making *inferences* (203). He further refers to the *normative* character of claims about necessary relations among universals ("Triangularity implies trilaterality,") and it is again clear that he means what *inferences* it is (would be) *correct* to draw.