

CHAPTER THREE

LANGUAGE AS THOUGHT AND AS COMMUNICATION

My aim in this paper is to throw light from several directions on the intimate connections which exist between conceptual thinking and the linguistic behavior which is said to ‘express’ it. The position which I shall ultimately delineate and defend, though behavioristic in its methodological orientation is not, initial appearances to the contrary, behavioristic in its substantive contentions. It can, nevertheless, be characterized as an attempt to give a naturalistic interpretation of the intentionality of conceptual acts.

The early sections (I-IV) stress the essentially rule-governed character of linguistic behavior. I argue that a proper understanding of the nature and status of linguistic rules is a *sine qua non* of a correct interpretation of the sense in which linguistic behavior can be said to *be* (and not merely to *express*) conceptual activity. The second, and larger part of the paper (Sections Vff.) is devoted to exploring the sense (or senses) in which language can be said to ‘express’ thought. A distinction is drawn between three different contexts in which the verb occurs. It is argued that they involve radically different meanings which, if confused, blur the distinction between language as conceptual act and language as means of communication, and preclude the possibility of an adequate philosophy of language.

I

There are many interesting questions about the exact meaning or meanings of the term ‘rule’ in non-philosophical contexts. What, for example, is the difference between a ‘rule’ and a ‘principle’? Are principles simple ‘first’ rules in that they are not special applications of more

general rules? Or is the primary difference that rules can be arbitrary? Or are principles rules for choosing rules? Is the principle of induction, for example, a higher order rule for choosing law-like statements, themselves construed as extra-logical rules of inference? Though these questions are intrinsically interesting and relevant to the general topic of this paper, I shall not discuss them. For however the domain of norms and standards is to be stratified and botanized, the term ‘rule’ has acquired over the years a technical and generic sense in which it applies to general statements concerning that which ought or ought not to be done or to be the case, or to be permissible or not permissible—distinctions which can be put in many different ways.

For our purposes, then, a rule is roughly a general ‘ought’ statement. Such statements have been traditionally divided into hypothetical and categorical ‘oughts,’ or, as it has often misleadingly been put, ‘imperatives.’ The distinction between hypothetical and categorical oughts is an important one, though I believe that they are far more intimately related than is ordinarily taken to be the case.¹

Hypothetical oughts have the form “if one wants X, one ought to do Y.” They transpose a relation of implication between a state of affairs X and a doing of Y into an implication appropriate to practical reasoning. In spite of their crucial importance to a theory of normative discourse, I shall have nothing to say about them, save by implication.

As far as anything I have so far said is concerned, a categorical ought is simply one that is not, in the familiar Kantian sense, a hypothetical ought. I shall continue my division informally by calling attention to the most familiar variety of general categorical oughts, those, namely, of the form

If one is in C, one ought to do A.

Notice that although this proposition is conditional in form, it is not, in the Kantian sense, a hypothetical ought; and it is *as* contrasted with the latter that, even though it is conditional, it is called categorical. By application and the use of modus ponens one can derive conclusions of the form

S ought to do A

which not only are *not* hypothetical oughts, but are categorical (non-iffy) statements. Notice, by contrast, that from “If one wants X, one ought to do A,” together with “S wants X” it is *not* correct to infer “S ought to do A.”

The important feature, for our purposes, of general categorical oughts of the above form is that for actual existence to conform to these oughts is a matter of the agents to which they apply *doing* A when they are actually in the specified circumstance C; and this, in turn, a matter of their setting about doing A when they *believe* that the circumstances are C.

It follows that the ‘subjects’ to which these rules apply must have the concepts of *doing* A and *being in* C. They must have, to use a current turn of phrase, the appropriate ‘recognitional capacities.’ Furthermore, for the rule itself to play a role in bringing about the conformity of ‘is’ to ‘ought,’ the agents in question must conceive of actions A *as* what ought to be done in circumstances C. This requires that they have the concept of what it is for an action to be called for by a certain kind of circumstance.

II

Importantly different from rules of the above form—which may be called, in a straightforward sense, *rules of action*—are rules that specify not what someone ought to do, but how something *ought to be*. Of these an important sub class has the form

Xs ought to be in state ϕ , whenever such and such is the case

The purpose of such a rule is achieved to the extent that it comes to be the case that Xs are in state ϕ when such and such is indeed the case. This time, however, the conformity of actual existence to the ought does not, in, general, require that the Xs which are, in a sense, the *subjects* of the rule, i.e. that to which it applies, have the concept of what it is to be in state ϕ or of what it is for such and such to be the case. This is obvious when the Xs in question are inanimate objects, as in the example.

Clock chimes ought to strike on the quarter hour.

Now ought-to-be's (or *rules of criticism* as I shall also call them), though categorical in form, point beyond themselves in two ways. In the first place they imply (in some sense of this protean term) a *reason*, a *because* clause. The exploration of this theme would seem to take us back to the excluded topic of hypothetical imperatives. In the second place, though ought-to-be's are carefully to be distinguished from ought-to-do's they have an essential connection with them. The connection is, roughly, that ought-to-be's imply ought-to-do's. Thus the ought-to-be about clock chimes implies, roughly,

(Other things being equal and where possible) one ought to bring it about that clock chimes strike on the quarter hour.

This rule belongs in our previous category, and is a rule of action. As such it requires that the item to which *it* applies (persons rather than chimes) have the appropriate concepts or recognitional capacities.

The distinction between ought-to-do's (rules of action) and ought-to-be's (rules of criticism) stands out clearly when the examples are suitably chosen. A possibility of confusion arises, however, when the ought-to-be's concern persons rather than inanimate objects. Consider, for example,

One ought to feel sympathy for bereaved people

This example is interesting for two reasons: (1) It is a rule conformity to which requires that the subjects to which it applies have the concept of what it is to be bereaved. In this respect it is like a rule of action. (2) In the absence of a clear theory of action one might think of *feeling sympathy* as an action. Thus a casual and uninformed look might lead to the subsumption of the example under the form

One ought to do A, if C.

It is clear on reflection, however, that feeling sympathy is an action only in that broad sense in which anything expressed by a verb in the active voice is an action.

Nor should it be assumed that all ought-to-be's which apply to persons and concern their being in a certain state whenever a certain circumstance obtains are such that the conformity to them of actual fact requires that the persons in question have the concept of this circumstance. The point is of decisive importance for our problem. To set the stage, consider ought-to-be's pertaining to the training of animals.

These rats ought-to-be in state ϕ , whenever C.

The conformity of the rats in question to this rule does not require that they have a concept of C, though it does require that they be able to respond differentially to cues emanating from C. Since

the term ‘recognitional capacity’ is one of those accordion words which can be used now in one sense now in another, it is a menace to sound philosophy.

On the other hand, the subjects of the ought-to-do’s corresponding to these ought-to-be’s, i.e. the trainers, must have the concept both of the desirable state ϕ and of the circumstances in which the animals are to be in it.

If we now return to the sympathy example, we notice another interesting feature. If we compare the ought-to-be with the corresponding ought-to-do,

(Other things being equal and where possible) one ought to bring it about that people feel sympathy for the bereaved,

we see that the ‘subjects’ of the ought-to-be (i.e., those who ought to feel sympathy) coincide with the ‘subjects’ of the corresponding ought-to-do (i.e. those who ought to bring it about that people feel sympathy for the bereaved). It is the same items (people) who are the *agent*-subjects of the ought-to-do and the *subject-matter* subjects of the ought-to-be.

III

It is obvious, from the above considerations, that if *all* rules of language, were ought-to-do’s we would be precluded from explaining what it is to have concepts in terms of rules of language. Now many rules of language *are* ought-to-do’s thus,

(Other things being equal) one ought to say such and such, if in C

and as such they can be efficacious in linguistic activity only to the extent that people have the relevant concepts. It is therefore of the utmost importance to note that many of the rules of language which are of special interest to the epistemologist are ought-to-be’s rather than ought-

to-do's. For only by taking this fact into account is it possible to carry out a program according to which (a) linguistic activity is, in a primary sense, conceptual activity; (b) linguistic activity is through and through rule-governed.

Much attention has been devoted of late to linguistic *actions*² where the term 'action' is taken in the strict sense of what an agent does, a piece of conduct, a performance—the *practical* sense of action, as contrasted with the general metaphysical sense in which action is contrasted with passion. The topic of linguistic actions, whether performatory, locutionary, illocutionary, perlocutionary³, or perhaps, elocutionary is an important one. Indeed, it is important not only for a theory of communication, but for epistemology, for there are, indeed, linguistic *actions* which are of essential interest to the epistemologist: thus asking questions and seeking to answer them. On the other hand it can scarcely be over-emphasized that to approach language in terms of the paradigm of *action* is to make a commitment which, if the concept of action is taken seriously, and the concept of rule is taken seriously, leads to (a) the Cartesian idea of linguistic episodes as *essentially* the sort of thing brought about by an agent whose conceptualizing is not linguistic; (b) an inability to understand the rule-governed character of this conceptualizing itself, as contrasted with its overt expression. For if thought is analogous to linguistic activity to the extent implied by Plato's metaphor 'dialogue in the soul,' the idea that overt speech is action and its rules *rules of action* will generate the idea that all inner speech is *action* and *its* rules *rules of action*, which leads to paradox and absurdity without end.

I propose, instead that the epistemologist, while recognizing that language is an instrument of communication, should focus attention on language as the bearer of conceptual activity. This is not to say that the two aspects can be separated as with a knife. Indeed, by pointing out that ought-to-be's imply ought-to-do's we have already recognized that language

users exist at the level of agents. Roughly, to be a being capable of conceptual activity, is to be a being which acts, which recognizes norms and standards and engages in practical reasoning. It is, as Kant pointed out, one and the same reason which is in some of its activities ‘theoretical,’ and in some of its activities ‘practical.’ Of course, if one gives to ‘practical’ the specific meaning *ethical* then a fairly sharp separation of these activities can be maintained. But if one means by ‘practical’ *pertaining to norms*, then so-called theoretical reason is as larded with the practical as is practical reasoning itself.

IV

Even if it be granted that many of the linguistic oughts which are of special interest to an epistemologist are ought-to-be’s, the fact that ought-to-be’s and ought-to-do’s are conceptually inseparable might be thought to preclude a linguistic approach to conceptual abilities. Clearly *primary* epistemic ought-to-do’s (and by calling them ‘primary’ I mean simply that they are not the unfolding of ought-to-be’s, whether as primary they are categorical or hypothetical), pertaining to the systematic use of linguistic abilities and propensities to arrive at correct linguistic representations of the way things are, presuppose the possession of concepts by the agents to which they apply. And since all ought-to-be’s unfold into ought-to-do’s which, in their turn, presuppose concepts, the outlook for linguistic theory of concepts would seem to be dark indeed. Yet the fundamental clues for a resolution of the problem have already been given.

To fix our ideas, let us consider an example which, though simplified to its bare bones contains the essence of the matter:

(Ceteris paribus) one ought to respond to red objects in sunlight by uttering or being disposed to utter ‘this is red’.

This *ought-to-be rule* must not be confused with (fictitious) *ought-to-do rule*,

(*Ceteris paribus*) one ought to say ‘this is red’ in the presence of red objects in sunlight

The latter presupposes that those to whom it applies have the concepts of ‘red’, ‘objects’, ‘sunlight’, and, even more important, of what it is to say ‘this is red.’ In other words, they must already have the conceptual framework of what it is to do something in a circumstance.

The distinction between *saying* and *uttering*, or being disposed to utter, is diagnostic of the difference between the ‘ought-to-do’ and the ‘ought-to-be.’ It might be objected that to use language meaningfully is to say rather than merely utter. But to merely utter is to parrot, and we need a concept which mediates between merely uttering and saying.

Notice that the ought-to-do which corresponds to the above ought-to-be, namely

One ought to bring it about (*ceteris paribus*) that people respond to red objects in sunlight by uttering or being disposed to utter ‘this is red’.

presupposes that *its* agent subjects have a conceptual framework which includes the concepts of a red object, or sunlight, of uttering ‘this is red,’ of what it is to do or bring about something, and of what it is for an action to be called for by a circumstance.

On the other hand, this ought-to-do does *not* presuppose that the subjects in which the disposition to utter ‘this is red’ in the presence of red objects in sunlight *is to be brought about* have any of these concepts.

But what of the objection that the *subject-matter* subjects of the ought-to-be coincide with the agent subjects of the ought-to-do and hence that they too must have the concepts in question? The answer should be obvious; the members of a linguistic community are *first* language learners and only potentially ‘people,’ but *subsequently* language teachers, possessed

of the rich conceptual framework this implies. They start out by being the *subject-matter* subjects of the ought-to-be's and graduate to the status of agent subjects of the ought-to-do's. Linguistic ought-to-be's are translated into *uniformities* by training. As Wittgenstein has stressed, it is the linguistic community as a self-perpetuating whole which is the minimum unit in terms of which conceptual activity can be understood.

Furthermore there are radically different kinds of linguistic ought-to-be's: not only word-object ought-to-be's (or, as I have called them elsewhere, language entry transitions)⁴, but also the ought-to-be's formulated by formation and transformation rules.

The oughts governing utterances, as perceptual responses to the environment are not ought-to-do's—though, as the pragmatists have emphasized, perception as an element in enquiry occurs in a context of actions, epistemic and otherwise. Similarly the oughts governing inference are not ought-to-do's. Inferring is not a *doing* in the conduct sense—which, however, by no means implies that it is not a *process*. Again, as the pragmatists have stressed, inference as an element in enquiry occurs in the context of action, epistemic and otherwise.

A language is a many-leveled structure. There are not only the ought-to-be's which connect linguistic responses to extra-linguistic objects, but also the equally essential ought-to-be's which connect linguistic responses to *linguistic* objects. There could be no training of language users unless this were the case. Finally, there would be no language training unless there were the uniformities pertaining to the use of practical language, the language of action, intention, of 'shall' and 'ought', which, as embodying epistemic norms and standards, is but one small (but essential) part of the conceptual structure of human agency.

One isn't a full-fledged member of the linguistic community until one not only *conforms* to linguistic ought-to-be's (and may-be's) by exhibiting the required uniformities, but grasps

these ought-to-be's and may-be's themselves (i.e., knows the rules of the language.) One must, therefore, have the concept of oneself as an agent, as not only the *subject-matter* subject of ought-to-be's but the *agent*-subject of ought-to-do's. Thus, even though conceptual activity rests on a foundation of *conforming* to ought-to-be's of *uniformities* in linguistic behavior, these uniformities exist in an ambience of action, epistemic or otherwise. To be a language user is to conceive of oneself as an agent subject to rules. My point has been that one can grant this without holding that all meaningful linguistic episodes are *actions* in the conduct sense, and all linguistic rules, rules for doing.

A living language is a system of elements which play many different types of roles, and no one of these types of role make sense apart from the others. Thus, while the mere concept of a kind of vocalizing being a response by a human organism in specified circumstances to a certain kind of object does make sense in isolation, this concept is not as such the concept of the vocalizing as a *linguistic response*. For to classify an item as linguistic involves relating it to just such a system as I have been sketching. 'Word' goes not only with 'object' but with 'person', 'ought to-be's', 'ought-to-do's' and much, much more.

Within the framework sketched above, I propose to explore the idea that insofar as it has conceptual meaning, language is essentially a means whereby one thinker can express his thoughts to others. Now the term 'thought' has a wide range of application, including such items as assumptions, the solving of problems, wishes, intentions, and perceptions. It is also ambiguous, sometimes referring to *what* is thought, sometimes to the *thinking* of it. To limit the range of my paper, I shall concentrate on thought as belief, and since the latter term shares the ambiguity indicated above, I note that for the time being at least, I shall be concerned with believings rather than things believed.

The following characterization of the state of believing something will serve to get the discussion under way

Jones believes that-*p* = Jones has a settled disposition to think that-*p*.

It would be foolhardy—indeed downright mistaken—to claim that this formula captures ‘the’ meaning of believes, and even more so to put it by saying that ‘a belief is a settled disposition to think that something is the case.’ For, as with most, if not all, of the words in which philosophers are interested, we are confronted with a cluster of senses which resemble each other in the family way.

To say that the senses of cognate expressions bear a family resemblance to one another must not be taken to imply that they present themselves as a family, nor even that they constitute a family. Aristotle seems to have thought that philosophically interesting concepts present themselves to us as families in which, with a little effort, we can discern the fathers, mothers, aunts, uncles, and cousins of various degrees. In some cases something like this may be true. But the matter is rarely so simple, and there is more than a little truth to the idea that the families are ‘created’ by reconstruction (hopefully rational) or regimentation rather than found.⁵

If the above account of belief gets us started, it does so by confronting us with the equally problematic concepts of *disposition* and *thinking that-*p**. Before stepping into these quicksands, let us ostensibly make matters worse by turning our attention from *believing* itself to the more complicated concept of the *expression* of belief. For sound philosophical strategy calls for the examination of concepts as they function in larger contexts, rather than subjecting them to scrutiny in splendid isolation. By taking elusive concepts together, one may limit the degrees of freedom which enable them separately to elude our grasp. If beliefs are to be construed as dispositions, this strategy would have us seek to relate the sense in which beliefs are ‘expressed’

to the sense in which the dispositions of things and persons are manifested by what they do. This suggests the schema

x expresses Jones' belief that-p = x is a manifestation of Jones' settled disposition to think that-p.

If the right hand side of this attempted explication were clearcut and unambiguous, substantial progress would have been made. But it isn't; and our only hope is that a spark of clarity may result from rubbing unclarities together.

A first unclarity concerns what it is for a disposition to be 'manifested' by a doing, and how the class of doings by which a given disposition is manifested is to be delimited. If the 'disposition' is of the familiar kind to which we refer by such expressions as 'an angry disposition' or, perhaps, by such a term as 'humility', then it would seem that, depending on circumstances, any of a wide range of episodes could be its manifestation. Indeed, there is a sense in which, depending on circumstances, any of a wide range of episodes could count as a 'manifestation' of Jones' belief that-p. But, to characterize belief that-p as a settled disposition *to think that-p*, is, if sound, to narrow things down in an interesting way. For to do so, is to introduce a conceptual tie between the designation of the disposition and the kind of episodes which can be said, at least in a primary sense, to 'manifest' it.

For if we ask what episodes manifest a disposition to V, when 'V' represents a verb which stands for a doing (e.g. 'laugh') the answer must be, in the first instance, episodes of V-ing (e.g. laughing). We have consequently committed ourselves to the idea that it is episodes of *thinking that-p* which are, in a primary sense at least, manifestations of Jones' disposition *to think that-p*; and consequently that it is episodes of thinking that-p which are, in a primary sense, manifestations of Jones' belief that-p. This gives us the schema

x is a primary manifestation of Jones' belief that-p \rightarrow x is a thinking that-p.

But now our troubles really begin. For there is a *prima facie* tension between 'being a thinking that-p' and being a 'manifestation' of anything. The latter term carries with it the implication of 'making something manifest,' i.e., apparent, (roughly) perceptible, observable. But, we are tempted to expostulate, what need be less 'manifest' than an episode of thinking that-p.

It might be thought that all we need do is replace 'manifestation' by a term which lacks this implication. And there are, indeed, such terms at hand—thus 'realization', 'actualization'. The statements

episodes of thinking that-p are *realizations* of the settled disposition to think that-p

episodes of thinking that-p are *actualizations* of the settled disposition to think that-p

trip easily off the metaphysically trained tongue. But they are ruled out by our strategy. For the concept with which we are concerned is that of the *expression* of a belief, and 'expression' clearly has the same implication of 'overtness' or 'perceptibility' as does the 'manifestation', to which our initial intuitions have led us.

The boulder may have slipped, but perhaps it has not rolled to the bottom. Our task may ultimately prove to be like that of Sisyphus, but perhaps we are not yet forced to make a new beginning. To continue is to look for a way of making coherent the idea that episodes of thinking that-p are the primary *expressions* (with all that this implies) of the belief that p.

To do so within the allotted space however, I must abandon the leisurely dialectic which consults intuition at each stage of the argument, and instead must draw upon the familiarity of standard philosophical moves. In terms of this new strategy, the obvious move is to espouse a

form of logical behaviorism according to which, in first approximation, ‘thinking that-p’ is, in its most episodic sense, to be equated with ‘candidly and spontaneously uttering ‘p’⁶ where the person, call him Jones, who utters ‘p’ is doing so *as one who knows the language to which ‘p’ belongs*. I need not remind you of all the troubles which beset this move. Some of them will be taken into account as the argument moves along. But since, in any case, my strategy remains in a broad sense dialectical, the fact that the above equation suffers from serious inadequacies need not prevent it from playing an essential role in the argument.

The phrase ‘candidly and spontaneously’ is intended to sum up an open-ended set of conditions without which the suggestion can’t get off the ground. Jones’ thinking that-p obviously cannot be a quoting of ‘p’ or uttering it on the stage in the course of acting. The qualifying phrase also clearly rules out the case where Jones is lying, i.e. using words to deceive. Somewhat less obviously it is intended to imply that Jones is not choosing his words to express his convictions. He is neither lying nor speaking truthfully. In a sense, as we shall see, he is not *using* the words at all.

According to the behavioristic position we are now considering, thinking that-p is, in its *primary episodic* sense, thinking-out-loud that-p. As thinking-out-loud, an utterance of ‘p’ is not directed to an audience. It is not, as such, a social act. Explicit performatives (e.g. ‘I promise’) are clearly out of place in utterances which are, in the desired sense, to be thinkings-out-loud. Nor is it appropriate to characterize thinkings-out-loud in terms of the categories of illocutionary performance—at least those which require an audience (e.g. ‘statement,’ ‘avowal,’ ‘argument’)⁷—even though exactly similar utterances would, *in a context of ‘communication,’* be appropriately so characterized.

VI

It is important to realize that the ways in which we classify linguistic expressions are not only bound up with the jobs they do, but with the purposes for which the classification is made. Since these purposes tend, for obvious reasons, to concern the role of language as a means of communication, i.e., as that by which we give information, warn, make statements, predict, describe, etc., we should not be surprised, our behaviorist will tell us, if expressions which, as candidly uttered in *non-communicative* contexts, are thinking-out-loud, are classified in a way which is conceptually tied to communication, and, hence, to functions of quite a different order of complexity. One needs only think of the difference between the purely logical characterization of 'it is not raining' as the 'negation' of 'it is raining', and characterizing it as the 'denial' of the latter, or note the social implications of classifying a word as a *referring* expression.

Thus the ways in which common sense, and not only common sense, classifies linguistic expressions, and the verbs which it uses to describe what people do with them, are heavily weighted in the direction of linguistic *performances* in a context of *communication*. That it is legitimate to view language in this way is not to be doubted. Indeed, it is philosophically important to be clear about the categories in terms of which the variety of ways in which language functions in inter-personal exchange are to be understood. But there is a danger that exclusive concern with this perspective will obscure those connections between thought and language where the latter is not functioning as a means of communication.

The point is not that there are failures of communication, e.g. the supposed hearer may be an inanimate object mistaken for a man or a foreigner. It is not even that there are soliloquies, if by this is meant cases of 'talking to oneself.' It is the more radical point that thinking-out-loud is

a form of meaningful speech which doesn't consist in talking *to* anyone at all, even oneself, and hence is not, in any ordinary sense, *talking*.

VII

But before I develop this point let me return to the formula we were considering before this digression on the orientation toward contexts of communication of the categories in terms of which common sense, linguistics, and many philosophies of language approach linguistic behavior. The formula was

x is a primary expression of Jones' belief that-p = x is a primary manifestation of his settled disposition to think that-p (i.e. is a thinking that-p).

The implications of the term 'manifestation' (and, for that matter, of 'expression') led us in the direction of a logical behaviorism according to which the relevant sense of 'thinking that-p' is 'thinking-out-loud that-p'. Thus reinterpreted, the formula becomes

x is a primary expression of Jones' belief that-p = x is a primary manifestation of Jones' settled disposition to think-out-loud that-p (i.e., is a thinking out-loud that-p).

It will be remembered that the point of this behavioristic move was to assimilate the sense in which an episode is a primary *expression* (implying overtness) of a belief to the sense in which an episode of, for example, a piece of litmus paper turning red is a *manifestation* (implying overtness) of its disposition to turn red.

It should be noted in passing that in the case of the litmus paper we seem required to expand the characterization of the disposition into

disposition to turn red, *if put in acid*.

This generates the suspicion that if we are to continue with our strategy, we must similarly expand our analysis of ‘Jones believes that-p’ into

Jones has a settled disposition to think-out-loud that p, if ...

If what? There many pitfalls here, though we can, perhaps, cover them up temporarily with something like ‘if the question whether-p arises.’ To do so, however, would immediately confront us with a more serious difficulty. For it simply isn’t the case that if a person believes that-p, he utters ‘p’ let alone thinks-out-loud that-p, whenever the question whether-p arises.

Confronted by this fact, we are strongly tempted to abandon our strategy and say that if a person believes that-p, then (other things being equal) whenever the question whether-p arises, he tends to *think* (*not* think-out-loud) that-p; to which we might add that if the circumstances are appropriate he may *express* his thought by uttering (saying?) ‘p’.

VIII

On the other hand, if, however, we are to continue with our original strategy, we must resolutely put aside the temptation to draw the kind of distinction between *thought* and its *expression* which this formulation implies, and continue with the intriguing idea that an uttering of ‘p’ which is a primary expression of a belief that-p is not merely an *expression* of a thinking that-p, but is itself a *thinking*, i.e., a thinking-out-loud that-p.

Yet the preceding remarks do remind us that we must take into account the fact that there is a sense of ‘express’ in which we can be said to express our thoughts by *using* language for this

purpose. Thus, we express our thought that-p by *saying* 'p.' Can we sophisticate our logical behaviorism to do justice to this fact?

Let us take a closer look at the words 'thought' and 'express'. First the latter: it will be noticed that the reference to observability implied by the term 'manifestation' in the context 'manifestation of the disposition to think that-p' was absorbed by the behaviorist into the phrase which describes the disposition. Thus, 'manifestation of the disposition to think that-p', became, in effect 'actualization of the disposition to think-out-loud that-p'.

Thus the behaviorist's formula becomes, in effect,

x is a primary expression of Jones' belief that-p = x is a manifestation of Jones' settled disposition to think that-p = x is an actualization of Jones' settled disposition to think-out-loud that-p (i.e., x is a thinking-out-loud that p).

It is only too clear that by pushing this analysis of the context 'expression of belief' in this direction the behaviorist has lost contact with the idea that people express their beliefs by using language. The point can be put simply—indeed bluntly—by saying that the concept of the *actualization of a disposition* is not, as such, the concept of an *action*, whereas *expressing their beliefs* is something people *do*.

The statement

Jones, by saying 'p', expressed his belief that-p
requires an interpretation of *saying p* as an action which is undertaken by Jones *in order to express (to someone) his belief that-p*. If we suspect that Jones is lying, we could equally describe him as saying 'p', but we would then go on to say something like

Jones, by saying 'p', *pretended* to believe that-p.

In neither case could Jones' saying 'p' be construed as a case of *thinking* (even 'out loud') that-p. Thus were Jones speaking truthfully, the thinking immediately involved, if any, would be of the sort described by such formulas as

Jones thought that saying '...' would express his belief that-p

Jones intended to express his belief that-p by saying '...'

or, in the case of lying

Jones intended to pretend to believe that-p by saying '...'

Thus, granted the validity of the concept of thinking-out-loud, the thinking-out-loud which, were it to occur, would be immediately involved in the situation formulated by

Jones, by uttering '...', expressed his belief that-p

would be *not*

Jones thought-out-loud that-p

but rather

Jones thought-out-loud that saying '...' would express his belief that-p

or, where Jones is lying,

Jones thought-out-loud that he would pretend to believe that-p by saying '...'

Needless to say, the latter thinking-out-loud would be self-frustrating in the presence of the audience he intends to deceive.

IX

If we leave behaviorism aside for a moment, we can add a new dimension to the discussion by noting that the term ‘express’ in contexts pertaining to thought has two radically different senses. The difference can be brought out by relating these senses to two different contexts, namely,

(1) *Jones* expressed his thought (belief) that-p by saying ...

(2) *Jones’ utterance* of ‘p’ expressed his thought that-p

I shall call the former the ‘action’ sense of express, and the latter, for want of a better term, the ‘causal’ sense. Both, as we shall see, are to be distinguished from a third sense illustrated by the context

Jones’ utterance of ‘p’ expressed *the* thought that-p

where the phrase ‘*the* thought that-p’ stands for an abstract entity, a thought in Frege’s sense (i.e., in one sense of this term, a ‘proposition’). I shall call this the logical (or semantical) sense of ‘express’.

Although my ultimate aim is to show how a logical behaviorist might draw these distinctions, my initial move will be to discuss them in more traditional terms. I shall, therefore, construct a regimented (I dare not say idealized) model according to which, in the course of learning to speak a language, a child acquires the capacity to be in mental states which are

counterparts, in a sense to be analyzed, of the utterances which come to belong to his repertory of linguistic behavior. The idea can be blocked out in two steps:

- (a) A mental episode which is a thinking that-p is correlated, in a certain linguistic community, with a piece of linguistic behavior which stands for (expresses in the logical or semantical sense) the thought (proposition) that-p
- (b) In the initial stages of the child's mastery of the language, whenever it has a thought that-p, this thought is manifested in a purely involuntary way by the corresponding verbal behavior.

As our model for understanding the sense in which the uttering of 'p' is the involuntary manifestation of a thinking that-p, let us take the instinctive connection between a pain and a piece of unlearned pain behavior. The fact that a connection between states A and B of a child is, in some sense, *learned* rather than *instinctive*, *acquired* rather than *part of its initial equipment*, by no means entails that either A or B is under the child's voluntary control. Not all learning to *do* something in a broad sense of 'do' consists in the addition of new behaviors to the stock of things that are under one's voluntary control.

The key feature of our model is that the acquired connection between the mental act and the verbal behavior is not to be construed on the action model of 'using the behavior to express one's thought.' Thus, verbal behavior is not in our child's voluntary control in that, although, *once the language is learned*, a necessary and sufficient condition of the child saying 'p' is that it thinks that-p, the saying is the involuntary manifestation of the thinking.

Notice that the model allows the child a rich vocabulary, including the language of intention and resolve as well as the language in which matters-of-fact are stated. It also allows

that the child learns to verbalize about verbal behavior and even about the mental acts of which its verbal behavior is the involuntary manifestation.

X

We are now in a position to weaken our model and still make our point. We need not suppose that the child remains a chatterbox. We can suppose it to acquire the ability to keep its thoughts to itself in the sense that it can effectively tell itself to keep quiet, without ceasing to think. We can grant that to this limited extent its verbal behavior becomes under its voluntary control. When it is thinking without speaking, we shall say that it is in a keeping-its-thoughts-to-itself frame of mind. When not in this frame of mind, it thinks out loud.⁸ Thus, ‘Thinking out loud’ remains the primary form in which thinking occurs. The child’s keeping its thoughts to itself can be compared to the opening of a general switch which breaks (or, to mix metaphors) short circuits the initial acquired connection between thoughts and verbal behavior.

At this stage, the child has no conception of locutionary acts (e.g. predicting, telling) as verbal behavior which can be engaged in whether or not one is thinking the corresponding thoughts. It has no concept of *saying ‘p’ without thinking that-p*.

On the other hand, it is perfectly capable of having concepts of actions involving thinking out loud. Thus, wondering out loud about the weather; “I shall wonder out loud about the likelihood of rain.” It is important to see that this by no means entails that there is such a thing as an action of *thinking out loud that-p*. Even in our more sophisticated framework there is no such thing as an action of thinking that-p, though there is the action of *deliberating* (i.e., deliberating out loud) what to do. By granting, as we must, that it can conceive of actions consisting of

thinkings out loud, we admit a further sense in which its verbal behavior (*as* thinkings out loud) would be under its voluntary control.

The child's verbal behavior would express its thoughts, but, to put it paradoxically, the child could not express them.

Notice, also, that although its linguistic behavior would be meaningful, and we could say of each of its utterances what, specifically it meant, e.g.

Jones' utterance meant 'it is raining'

It would, on our assumptions, be incorrect to say, for example

Jones, by uttering '...' meant (to convey) ...

For the latter supposes that Jones has the concept of an action of uttering '...' as a piece of linguistic behavior which could exist independently of its being the "spontaneous verbal expression" of the corresponding mental act. There being no such action as bringing about a specific mental act, there could be no such thing as bringing about a thinking out loud for the purpose of conveying a thought.

In other words, just as our regimenting fiction enables us to draw a distinction between a sense in which a mode of verbal behavior can *express* thoughts without being *used to express* them, so it enables us to distinguish between the context

utterance of E (in L) means - - -

and the sense of 'means', closely related to 'intends', which involves the context

Jones, by uttering E, means (to convey) ...

The familiar saw that words have meaning only because people mean things by them is harmless if it tells us that words have no meaning in abstraction from their involvement in the verbal behavior of language users. It is downright mistaken if it tells us that for an expression to have a certain sense or reference is for it to be *used* by people *to convey* the corresponding thought. Rather, we should say, it is because the expression has a certain meaning that it can be effectively used to convey the corresponding thought.

XI

Let us now return to the initial accounts we gave of belief and its expression. The first thing to note is that if we were to reformulate them in terms of our model we would get something like the following schema

Jones believes that-p = Jones has a settled disposition to think that-p, if the question occurs to him whether-p, and, indeed, to think out loud that-p, unless he is in a keeping-his-thoughts-to-himself frame of mind.⁹

We also get the following formulae with respect to ‘expression of belief’:

x is a primary actualization of Jones’ belief that-p → x is a thinking that-p (and, indeed, a thinking out loud that-p unless he is in a keeping-his-thoughts-to himself frame of mind.)

x is a primary expression of Jones’ belief that-p → x is a thinking out loud that-p.

Thus, where Jones is in a thinking out loud frame of mind, the verbal behavior is both an *actualization of* and, in the ‘causal’ sense, an *expression of* his belief, both a *thinking* and an *expression of thought*.

XII

But what will our logical behaviorist say to all this? Clearly he will be unhappy about our uncritical acceptance of mental acts as covert inner episodes. What moves might he make? He may well accept our initial formula

Jones believes that-p = Jones has a settled disposition to think that-p.

But he will emphasize the ‘settled’, which we have not yet done, and will call attention to the fact that it presumably contrasts with something. It is not obvious what the contrasting adjective should be, but it, too, should apply to dispositions. Let us, he suggests, try ‘proximate,’ drawing on the contrast between ‘settled’ and ‘near the surface’. Another appropriate contrast would be provided by ‘short term’.

Objects, as is well known, can have causal properties which are not so to speak, immediately available. Thus iron attracts flings, *if* it has been treated in a certain way. A *proximate* disposition can roughly be characterized as one which is immediately available.

Our logical behaviorist, consequently, suggests that

Jones believes that-p = Jones has the *settled* disposition to have *short term, proximate* dispositions to think-out-loud that-p, if the question whether-p arises, and he is in a thinking-out-loud frame of mind.

In other words, our logical behaviorist construes the contrast between fleeting thought episodes and settled beliefs as falling *within* the broad category of dispositions, and hence construes the ‘covertness’ of thoughts as simply a special case of the covertness of dispositions. Flammability, he reminds us, is not a covert flame.

Many features of our previous discussion can be fitted into this framework, once its distinctive character is understood. Thus, the behaviorist substitutes for the previous account of the child's candid and spontaneous verbal behavior as the expression (in the 'causal' sense) of classically conceived episodes of thought, an account according to which a

thinking-out-loud that-p

is simply an 'actualization' of a

short term proximate, disposition to think-out-loud that-p.

In the non-behavioristic model we stipulated that the child be unable to verbalize without thinking the appropriate thought, in other words, that only if it has the mental act of thinking that-p does it utter 'p'. In the behavioristic reconstruction framework, the corresponding stipulation would be that all utterances of 'p' be thinking-out-loud that-p.

Both stipulations could be formulated in the same words, thus 'the child utters 'p' only in the course of thinking out loud that-p'. But the two concepts of thinking out loud are radically different. In the non-behavioristic model, the phrase 'thinking-out-loud' referred to thoughts together with their verbal expression. In the behavioristic reconstruction it is to be taken as an unanalyzed expression which means roughly the same as 'candid, spontaneous verbal behavior,' but serves, by its hyphenated mode of composition, to emphasize that the basic meaningfulness of candid, spontaneous verbal behavior is *not* to be construed in terms of its being the reverberation at the tip of the tongue of covert episodes which are thoughts properly speaking, in accordance with the schema

x is candid, spontaneous verbal behavior = is an expression¹⁰ of thought

XIII

It is important not to confuse logical behaviorism with what might be called logical physicalism. I mean by the latter the view which denies that, to quote Chisholm, “when we analyze the kind of meaning that is involved in natural language we need some concepts we do not need in physics or behavioristics.”¹¹ Chisholm thinks that to deny the need for such an irreducible concept is tantamount to trying to “analyze the semantics ... of natural language in a physicalistic vocabulary of a behavioristic psychology with no undefined semantical term and no reference to thoughts.”¹²

In the essay which led to the correspondence from which I am quoting, I had argued that the concept of meaning which belongs in the context

E(in L) means - - -

is not to be analyzed in terms of a reference to ‘thoughts’. Thus I rejected any analysis along *either* of the following lines

E(in L) means - - - = *candid and spontaneous* utterances of F causally express thoughts pertaining to - - -

E(in L) means - - - = *speakers of L* use E to express their thoughts pertaining to - -

where ‘thought’ is to be taken as referring to classically conceived inner episodes or mental acts.

On the other hand, though I denied that ‘means’ in the sense appropriate to the context ‘E(in L) means - - -’ is to be analyzed (defined) in terms of a reference to thoughts, I also argued that it cannot be analyzed in physicalistic terms. From Chisholm’s point of view this was a blatant attempt to have my cake and eat it. As he saw it, to *admit* that “to analyze the kind of

meaning that is involved in natural language” we need a distinctively semantical term (‘means’) which *cannot* be analyzed in physicalistic terms, but *deny* that the explication of this distinctively semantical term requires a reference to *thoughts* has all the appearance of paradox.

The correspondence went on at some length, and although some progress was made, the issue was never really joined. As I now diagnose the situation some ten years later, the cause of this failure was my inability to clarify adequately two, points:

- (a) The exact nature of statements of the form ‘E(in L) means - - -’
- (b) The exact relation of the concept of *meaning* to that of *thought*.

The space which remains is too short to do anything more than indicate the moves I should have made.

My basic move should have been to clarify along the lines of the present paper the distinction between the contexts

person expresses

and

utterance expresses.

My second move should have been to give a more adequate clarification of the concept of meaning as it occurs in the context ‘expression (in L) means - - -’ (as contrasted with the context ‘person, by uttering E, means - - -’). At the time of the correspondence I was unable to do much more than offer the rather cryptic suggestion that statements of this form are (a) *sui generis*, (b) *convey* (rather than *describe*) how the subject expression is used, by exhibiting an expression in the hearer’s active vocabulary which has the same job—the idea being that by rehearsing his use

of the latter, he will be able to grasp the use of the former. As I have since argued,¹³ to say what an expression means is to *classify* it by the use of a sortal predicate the application of which implies that the expression in question does the job in its language which is done in the speaker's language by an expression from which the predicate is formed. Thus, roughly

'und' (in German) means *and*

has the form

'und's (in German) are •and•s

where '•and•' is a sortal predicate of the kind in question.

But above all I should have made it clear that in my view the fundamental concept pertaining to thinking is thinking-out-loud as conceived by our logical behaviorists.¹⁴ This is not to say that I agree with him in rejecting the classical conception of thoughts as inner episodes in a non-dispositional sense. Rather I accept mental acts in something like the classical sense, but argue that the concept of such acts is, in a sense I have attempted to clarify, a derivative concept.

Finally, I should have emphasized my total commitment to the thesis that the concept of thought essentially involves that of intentionality in the following sense. To say of a piece of verbal behavior that it is a thinking-out-loud, is to commit oneself to say of it that it *means something*, while to say of it specifically that it is a thinking-out-loud that-p, is to commit oneself to say of it that it is a piece of verbal behavior which means p.

Thus, at the primary level, instead of analyzing the intentionality or aboutness of verbal behavior in terms of its expressing or being used to express classically conceived thoughts or beliefs, we should recognize that this verbal behavior is *already thinking in its own right*, and its

intentionality or aboutness is simply the appropriateness of classifying it in terms which relate to the linguistic behavior of the group to which one belongs.

¹ For an exploration of this and related issues, see my *Science and Metaphysics* (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968), Chapter VI (especially sections XIV-XVII).

² I have in mind particularly John Austin and his students. The best statement of this approach is to be found in Austin's *How to do Things with Words*, London, Oxford University Press, 1963.

³ For an explanation and defense of these distinctions see Austin's *How to do Things with Words*.

⁴ "Some Reflections on Language Games [Reprinted as Essay 2 of this volume]," *Philosophy of Science*, Vol. 21, No. 3, 1954 (Reprinted as Chapter 11 in *Science, Perception and Reality*). It is important to note that a full discussion would refer to may-be's (or permitteds) as well as ought-to-be's—otherwise the concept of 'free' as opposed to 'tied' (stimulus bound) linguistic activity, essential to any account of the functioning of a conceptual system, would be left out of the picture.

⁵ Equally dangerous are such metaphorical contrasts as those between 'paradigm' and 'borderline,' 'shadow' and 'penumbra.' All suggest a sequential strategy according to which, once we find the thread, we know how to begin and what kinds of difficulty to expect.

⁶ Similarly, 'wondering whether-p' would be equated with 'uttering 'p?'' , 'wishing that-p' with 'uttering 'would (that) p'' and 'deciding to do A' with uttering 'I shall do A'.

⁷ We can grant that a thinking-out-loud that-p might be a constituent of a reasoning-out-loud or a deliberating-out-loud on a certain topic.

⁸ The concept of 'thinking out loud' appropriate to this model should not be equated with thinking-out-loud as construed by the behavioristic position we have been considering. The latter does not recognize 'mental episodes' in the sense required by the present model.

⁹ The 'if the question occurs to him whether-p' condition can be taken to cover all cases in which, where the alternatives 'p' and 'not p' are relevant to his course of thought, he thinks that-p, even if the question whether-p is not actually raised.

¹⁰ 'Expression' in the causal sense, i.e., a manifestation at the 'surface' of a covert process which is its cause.

¹¹ *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, Vol. II, p. 523.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Most recently in *Science and Metaphysics*, Chapter II.

¹⁴ The priority in question, to use Aristotle's distinction, is in the order of knowing as contrasted with the order of being. As an analogy, notice that concepts pertaining to things as perceived by the senses are prior in the order of knowing to concepts of micro-physical particles, whereas, (for the Scientific Realist) micro-physical particles are prior in the order of being to objects as perceived by the senses.