

# I. Parts of Speech (Text 105)<sup>1</sup>

A.N. Prior

1. In undertaking to investigate the logic of attitudes, what I mean by an 'attitude' can be most accurately conveyed by saying that it is what is expressed by the R in sentences of the form xRp, where x is the name of some individual and p is a sentence. Examples of sentences of this form are 'Seneca asserts that all men are mortal', [Paul denies that all men are mortal,] 'Othello believes that Desdemona loves Casio', 'Charles wonders whether this is red', 'John fears that the power supply has failed'. Here the phrases which express what I call 'attitudes' are ' - asserts that - ', ' - believes that - ', ' - wonders whether - ', ' - fears that - '.

[Expressions falling into this category have been oddly neglected by the majority of 'logical grammarians'.]

2 Expressions falling into this category would seem to be of particular importance to philosophical psychologists, but they have been oddly neglected by the majority of 'logical  
[passage ends abruptly here]

{unnumbered new page}

$$a + b\underline{x} + c\underline{x}^2 + d\underline{x}^3 \quad \&c.$$

$$[ \quad \frac{a + b\underline{x}}{x - 1} \quad \text{then} \quad \frac{a + b}{x - 1}$$

If  $a + bx$  div. by  $x - 1$ ]

If  $x - 1$  divides  $a + bx$  then  $x - 1$  divides  $a + b$   
& If  $x - 1$  divides  $a + b\underline{x} + c\underline{x}^2$  then  $x - 1$  divides  $a +$  [transcriber's note: First, ditto marks are used in this line; second, the page is folded over here and the rest of the line is hidden.]

23     in 5 base means 13  
         not div. by 4.

31     in 5 base means 16  
         & div. by 4.

13

22

31

40

44

53 {3}

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<sup>1</sup> This text has been edited by Adriane Rini, Max Cresswell and Martin Prior. The original is kept in the Prior collection at Bodleian Library, Box 6, Oxford.

descriptions of the -- supposed situation; but what is intended is surely clear, namely [that for some  $n$ , whatever to] that, for any given system of time-units, there is some  $\underline{n}$  such that for all  $\underline{m}$ , to be going to happen  $\underline{m}$  time-units hence is the same thing as to have happened  $\underline{n} - \underline{m}$  time-units ago (so that to be going to happen  $n$  time-units hence is the same thing as to be happening now). On this view we are all “having the past over again” -- & not just having it over again, but having it over again, and again, and again, and again – all the time, & “what it would be like” to be having the past over again is exactly what it is like as things are. To know that one was having the past over again, in such a world, would be simply to have lived through a complete cycle & at some point to remember having done before what one is doing now (this remembering being of course itself an item repeated in all the cycles).

But to this version of ‘having the past over again’, whether anyone is put into the position of knowing he is doing so or not, it may be objected that it is impossible to distinguish the given supposition from {4} the supposition that time is indeed linear, & that we never return to the actual past, only as time goes on events exactly repeat themselves, & do so endlessly. In fact, my own description of the supposed state of affairs, [accords far better with this way of looking] when it is properly scrutinised, suggests this way of looking at the matter rather than the other. I have spoken, for example, of “having the past over again, & again, & again, & again”. What does this mean but that something is to be repeated through an endless future – how else can one understand it? And certainly if anyone is actually to be aware of the repetitions, this must be the form which his awareness will take. And there is unquestionably something, namely this series of cycles of experiences, which goes on endlessly

{[4]}

between Relativity & Idealistic Philosophy,” in the Schilpp volume Albert Einstein: Philosopher Scientist (1949). The full context is worth giving. Real change, Gödel says, presupposes an “objective lapse of time”, & this in turn implies that “reality consists of an infinity of layers of ‘now’ which come into existence successively.” But the special theory of relativity requires us to admit that “each observer has his own set of ‘nows’, & none of these various systems of layers can claim the prerogative of representing the objective lapse of time.” In a footnote Gödel dismisses the possibility that the lapse of time may be “relative”, i.e. may take place differently for each observer, & nevertheless be “objective”, each observer’s own time-lapse being perfectly real. “A relative lapse of time, however”, Gödel says, “would certainly be something entirely different from the lapse of time in the ordinary sense, which means a change in the existing. The concept of existence cannot be relativized without destroying its meaning completely.” What this mean, I take it, is that if I ask the question “When I was taking my Easter holidays in 1941, had that stellar explosion I am now observing taken place or not?”, it<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> [Transcribers’ note:] Page ends abruptly here. On the final page in this file there are just a few notes, as follows, and there is a question whether the notes are in fact in Prior’s hand.

? PARTS of SPEECH

pp 1-31 Ch I Parts of Speech

pp 40-100 Ch II Platonism & Quantification

[File ends here.]