

One Relation between Myself and Oxford¹

A.N. Prior

1. One relation between myself and Oxford is that I live there. Another is that I have brown eyes and Oxford is on the Thames. This is a “relation” between us in the sense that it is a fact, albeit a complex one, which concerns these two objects – myself, Oxford. Or in the sense that it is expressed by a sentence which is about me & about Oxford; or by a sentence which has at one point a designation of Oxford & at another point a designation of myself.
2. Consider now the following inscription: Homo sum. This inscription stands in a number of relations to me. For example, I have in effect requested that it be printed. Another relation between this inscription & myself is that it is made of printer’s ink & I am made of flesh & blood. Another is that it consists of a capital H followed by a lower-case O followed by a lower-case M followed by a lower-case O followed by a space followed by a lower-case S followed by a lower-case U followed by a lower-case M, and I am a man. And for an inscription to stand in {2} that relation to an individual, i.e. the relation which consists in the inscription having those components in that order & the individual being a man is part of what is meant by being true of in Latin, or being a Latin sentential function satisfied by. This would be so, at all events, if satisfaction & truth in Latin could be given the kind of definitions that Tarski provides for satisfaction & truth in more “formalized” languages.

[3. I shall now invent a language called Lubbish. It is composed entirely of inscriptions of the following four forms: -- JOX, POX, TWINKS, SLINKS. A “sentential function” of Lubbish is any inscription in which a part that has one of the first two forms is followed by a part that has one of the second two forms. Thus every sentential function of Lubbish will have one of the four forms: JOX TWINKS, JOX SLINKS, POX TWINKS and POX SLINKS. And any object \underline{x} is true in Lubbish of any object \underline{y} if & only if (i) \underline{x} is a sentential function of Lubbish, and (ii) either the first part of \underline{x} is of the form JOX and \underline{y} is the sun or the first part of \underline{x} is of the form POX and \underline{y} is the Thames]²{3}

3. I shall now give the name “being satisfied in Lubbish” to a very simple relation. Any object \underline{x} is satisfied in Lubbish by any object \underline{y} if & only either (i) \underline{x} is an inscription of the form JOX and \underline{y} is a banana, or (ii) \underline{x} is an inscription of the form POX and \underline{y} is an aeroplane. You can say, if you like, that Lubbish is a language consisting of nothing but the two verbs JOX and POX, which respectively mean what we mean in English by “is a banana” and ‘is an aeroplane’. But to say things like this is like saying after we have introduced the phrase “—is satisfied in Lubbish by —” as a way of writing “—is red and — is round”, that Lubbish is a language consisting of all {4} red things, each of which is used in Lubbish as a verb meaning what we mean in English by “is round”. [Or it is like saying, after we have introduced the phrase “—is satisfied in Lubbish by

¹ Edited by Adriane Rini and Max Cresswell. The original is kept in the Prior collection at Bodleian Library, Oxford, Box 6. The page numbers in the original are put in curly braces.

² The text in [] has been crossed out.

—“ as a way of saying “—shaves—”, that Lubbish is a language consisting of all beings that shave themselves or others, in which each] ³ In fact, given any two properties F and G, we can invent a language L consisting of all objects possessing the property F, which signify in the language L the possession of the property G. And given any two sets of propositions F1, Fm and G1, Gn, we can invent a language L consisting ⁴ {transcriber’s note: the 1 in F1, the m in Fm, the 1 in G1, and the n in Gn should be subscripted.}

Palestam

Islamic Phil



³ The text in [] has been crossed out.

⁴ [Transcriber’s note:] the 1 in F1, the m in Fm, the 1 in G1, and the n in Gn should be subscripted.