

Ms. 381

(4)

On the nature of signs

A sign is an object which stands for another to some mind. I propose to describe the characters of a sign. In the first place like any other thing it must have qualities which belong to it whether it be regarded as a sign or not. Thus a printed word is black, has a certain number of letters and those letters have certain shapes. Such ~~material~~ ~~qualities~~ characters of a sign I call its material quality. In the next place a sign must have some real connection with the thing it signifies so that when the object is present or is so as the sign signifies it to be the sign shall so signify it and otherwise not. What I mean will best be understood by illustration. A weathercock is a sign of the direction of the wind. It

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would not be so unless the wind made it turn round. There is to be such a physical connection of between every sign and its object. Take a painted portrait. It is the sign of the person for whom it is intended. It is a sign of that person in virtue of its likeness to that person: but this is not enough - it cannot be said of any two things that are alike one is a sign of the other but the portrait is a sign of that person because it was painted after that person and represents him. The connection here is an indirect one. The appearance of the person made a certain impression ~~on~~ upon the painters mind and that acted to cause the painter to make such a picture as he did do so that the appearance of the portrait is really an effect of the appearance of the person for whom it was intended. The one caused the other through the medium of the painters mind. Take any statement which is made concerning

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a matter of fact. It is caused or determined by the fact. The fact has been observed & the perception of the fact which was caused by it in its turn causes the statement to be made. Perhaps however the fact was not directly perceived. The statement may be a prediction. In that case it cannot be said that that which follows after has caused that which precedes it, the prediction, but if the event has been predicted it has been through some knowledge of its cause and this same cause which precedes the event also precedes some cognition of the mind which ~~gave~~ gave rise to the prediction so that there is a real causal connection between the sign and the thing signified although it does not consist in one being the effect of the other but in both being the effects of the same cause. I shall term this character of signs their pure demonstrative application. In the 3rd place it is necessary for a sign to

be a sign that it should be regarded as a sign
 for it is only a sign to that mind which so considers
 and if it is not a sign to any mind it is not a
 sign at all. It must be known to the mind first
 in its material qualities but also in its pure de-
 monstrative application. That mind must
 conceive it to be connected with its object so that
 it is possible to reason from the sign to the thing.
 Let us now see what the appeal of a sign to the
 mind amounts to. It produces a certain idea
 in the mind which is the idea that it is a sign of
 the thing it signifies and an idea is itself a sign,
 for an idea is an object and it represents an object.
 The idea itself has its material quality which is the
 feeling which there is in thinking. Thus the red
 and blue are different in the mere sensation.
 This difference in no way resembles the distinction
 which there is between ^{those} ~~the~~ things ~~themselves~~ in the
 outward world which are called red and

those things which are called blue. Those things differ only in the rapidity with which their particles vibrate. In order that the senses discriminate between the two cases it is necessary that there should be some difference in the sensation but it is entirely indifferent so far as the difference of sensation is concerned whether it be a shorter or a longer vibration which produce that peculiar sensation which red things do. Whatever looks red might look blue or vice versa and the representation would be equally true to the facts.

Thus our mere sensations are only the material quality of our ideas considered as signs. Our ideas have also a causal connection with the things that they represent without which there would be no real knowledge. It is not so clear at first sight that our ideas resemble their signs in necessarily appealing to some mind. That appeal could amount to nothing except the production of certain other ideas

in which the first one should be virtually reproduced and according to the ordinary conception of the mind when the idea is once reached consciousness the correlation is complete nevertheless I regard this as an error of a very important character.

Since the object of every thought has a representation we necessarily in our thoughts attach to things those characters which belong to representations although since we do not usually recognise them as such those characters appear in a disguised form. What Kant calls categories of the understanding are those characters which we attribute to things on account of the objects of our thought being in reality representations and for the proof of this it is sufficient to refer to the critic of the 'Pure Reason' because however Kant may have failed, as I think he has in the attempt to enumerate those categories and to give an account of the precise manner of their derivation yet he has sufficiently shown that many of them are nothing but transformations of the general forms of logic and there can be no serious doubt that they are all of one nature in regard to the deduction of the objective validity of these universal conceptions. Without

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finding any fault with the general process of the
Kantian deduction I think that we may go farther
than he for according to him they do not apply
to the things *in themselves* but if the theory of reality
which has been developed in the previous chapter
be admitted then the things as they really exist
are of the nature of objects of thought so that they
must in themselves be subject to all the conditions
of representations. To a logician who accepts any-
thing like the Kantian doctrine logic has a
higher function than that of merely giving
maxims for reasoning. Its value in this respect
has sometimes been overestimated for reasoning
well is an art which depends far more upon
practical disciplines than upon any theoretical
knowledge but if all our universal conceptions
which are so continually in use such as relation,
cause, negation etc etc are derived from the
various characters of representations then the

study of representations must be of the highest utility in making these conceptions distinct to our minds and giving us the full mastery over them. The mediaeval logicians divided conceptions into two classes. The 1st were direct conceptions of objects which they call '1st intentions'. The second were conceptions of the general object of this or that representation and were termed 'second intentions'. Adopting this convenient term we may call all those universal conceptions which are applicable to objects in consequence of the latter being essential objects of representations and which can only be defined by means of the characters of the representations instead of by means of the impudical qualities of the objects. All these terms are of the highest moment in the study of logic.

A representation is something which has such a relation to the mind and to an object as to bring the two latter into a certain relation.

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with one another. Generalising this conception and refusing to limit our conception to the human mind alone we conceive of something which is in such a relation to a second or a third as to bring that second & third into relation with one another. Since every object is a representation every object belongs also to this more general class just as we have besides the perfect representation a type of which is the syllogism which explicitly designates both the object which it signifies and also the modification of consciousness which it produces. The judgment which expresses only the object and not the effect of the representation upon thought and thirdly the term which explicitly designates neither of these so we have besides what may be termed the conjunctive which is in such a relation to a second without being conceived as having that relation bound up with another and in the third place the simple generally.

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to another it can represent an object considered as having a correlate. For example it requires a proposition to state that every man has a father or mother but the term 'son' denotes a man considered as having relation to his father or mother and this term is not complete unless the correlate be added and in the same way it requires a syllogism to infer from two relations which a certain object has to a second and third. ~~That~~ that this second and third have a certain relation with one another but a proposition may state that if an object has a certain relation to a second and third then that second and third will have a certain relation with one another and a term may name an object as if it had such a relation to the second that this second and third were in relation with one another. For example "giver of — to —" This names a person as if he were in certain relation to a thing and to another person such as to bring that thing into

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a certain relation with that person and this term is like the relative incomplete unless its two correlates be added to it. A term like this I call an adjective term. It would appear at first sight that terms with three correlates were as different from those with two correlates as those with two correlates are from those with one. But that this is not the case a little reflection will show. Take as an example of a term with three correlates 'the seller of A to B for C'. We may substitute for this term the doer of a certain action D for the reward C and this is a term with only two correlates and the correlate D shall itself be a term with two correlates namely the surrender of A to B ~~for C~~ and thus the term with three correlates is precisely equivalent to a term with two correlates one of these correlates itself being a term with two correlates. It is obvious that the term with two correlates cannot be analyzed in this way into a