

## CHAPTER IX

## THE SAME NAME ARGUMENT

IT may now be well to consider a matter which is sometimes alleged to constitute a difficulty fatal to any view whose logic is at all Nominalistic in character. In simple terms, this alleged difficulty may be presented in the following way. It has been urged above that (say) "colour" has no single referent proper and peculiar to it. There is, we have noticed, nothing common to diverse hues that might be their common nature.

It would not occur to us to call a colour "a sound" because we know that colours are not properly so-called. This brings us to the alleged difficulty. On a Nominalist account of the significance of abstract nouns and adjectives, no reason can be given, it is alleged, for a proper, as opposed to an improper use of any such noun or adjective. Thus, the Nominalist cannot answer the question, Why is "colour" properly used with reference to red, orange, yellow, etc., and not properly used with reference to middle C and A sharp?

The Nominalist cannot answer this, or any analogous question, it is said, because he denies to "colour" or to any other *abstract* noun or adjective, any proper and unique referent. That being the case, the reason why we know that the word "colour" is properly used only with reference to some hue or other cannot be found in the common nature or form which (for the Realist) is common to or present in, all hues. And with that reason for the alleged knowledge in question ruled out, nothing remains in which that reason could be found. For only the diverse hues remain; once the reality of their common nature, colour, is found to be non-existent.

Since diverse hues are diverse, plainly they cannot, out of their diversity, yield a reason or "ground" as to why diverse

hues are properly called by the same name, viz., "hues", or form, or "colours".

This conclusion would seem to assume that anyone for whom "colour" is the proper name of a common nature or form called "colour", or "colouredness", will find no difficulty in answering our mooted question. The reason why we call hues by the same name is that they have *colour* in common. They are the same in their common nature. For that reason, it is urged, they are called by the same name.

Now, without questioning the validity of that assumption, let me notice that this answer does more than assume that "colour" is the proper name of a common nature. Those who give the answer in question take it that they are aware of this common nature in diverse colours. For, if they are not aware of it, then they are not aware of what they say is their reason for properly calling diverse colours by the same name. The process by which they come to be aware of this identity in difference may be as intellectual, or as merely sensuous as we like. But were the Realist not aware of the common nature on which he bases his case, he would be as badly off as he says the Nominalist is.

So much is, presumably, even obvious. Yet, even in this connection, a question arises. Is the awareness of this common nature the same as the identification of it? In other words, when we are aware of prose are we identifying it as prose, or are we merely aware of it? M. Jourdan, we know, was not aware of it as prose, even though he had been talking it all his life. Another man, whose daily occupation as a museum attendant brought him daily experiences of azurite, might be surprised to learn that it was called by that name.

However, any such examples have no real bearing on the question at issue. We are not asking about the inception of habits of speech. Nor are we inquiring at all into how such habits are formed. A museum attendant might perceive examples of azurite every day of his life, and he might form the habit of calling it "dark blue". Yet no amount of information as to how this habit was formed

would be the same as an answer to our question: Is the awareness of an object the same as the identification of that object?

Presumably a good deal of epistemology would be at stake as to whether or not that question were answered in one way or in another. For example, it might be held that to be aware of *x* is, by that very fact, to identify *x* as *x* (although whether or not such a view is overly simple is not very doubtful). Again it might be held that all awareness is of the nature of judgment, and that to identify or recognize an object is a process mediated by memory and comparison at least, not a simple mental act. For our purpose, it is not necessary to attempt at all to decide on how the mind identifies an object as being that object, and no other one. But it is necessary that we should notice the importance of the question for both the Realist and the Nominalist alike.

For, however it might be that the Realist would come by his knowledge of the common nature or form which he adduces as the true reason for propriety in verbal usage, still it is requisite that he should know that common nature or form. This is to say that he must identify it as *this* common nature or form rather than *that* one—as (say) colour, rather than sound. And this is not to say that he must know what it is called; if only because to know that an alleged common nature is called “colour”, need not be to know in fact any such common nature at all.

Our point is, simply, that any alleged common nature or form which is adduced as the reason for any propriety in verbal usage must be somehow identified as being that common nature, rather than this one. It would seem to be plain that anyone who insists that a nature or form common to diverse hues is the reason why they are all called by the same name, is assuming that he identifies that alleged common nature in any range of diverse hues, or any other apposite example.

With this point in mind, we may go on to ask whether or not the tentative conclusion that “colour” is a term verbal,

leaves us without any explanation of why it is that diverse hues are called by the same name. No, it does not. To come directly to the point: the reason why a red is called “a colour”, and why a blue is called “a colour”, is that red and blue respectively are identified as *being* what are called “colours”. The fact that we are in the habit of calling reds and blues by the name “colour” is a fact about English usage; and that is not in question in this connection. For that habit is a cause which contributes to the production of an effect. This effect is the use of the word “colour” with reference to a coloured patch. And that contributing cause is no reason why the same name is properly applied to diverse colours. For that which is among the causes of an appellation need not be a reason for its propriety.

Even so, we may be told, the statement that a red and a blue are properly called “colours” for the reason that they are identified as a red and a blue, gives us no reason why a red and a blue are properly called “colours”. Those two hues, you say, have no common nature. Yet you say that both of them are properly called hues, or colours, because each one is identified as being the hue that it is. All this is simply a way of forgetting that only the same being may be called by the same name. Actually, you identify a determinate blue, and you call it by its own name. And in this there is no reason why red and blue are properly called “colours”.

This objection at least implicitly takes for granted the point of which, nevertheless, it would seem to make an issue. For it raises no question as to the propriety of calling a certain common nature “colour”. Yet the reason for propriety in usage in the case of an alleged common nature is strictly analogous to the reason in the case of a perceived hue. As colour would be properly called “colour” for the reason that the common nature colour is identified (by the Realist) as being what is ordinarily so-called, so a red is properly called “red” because it is identified as being a red in fact. This brings us back to our main point. A red and a blue are properly called by

the same name for the reason that both of them are identified as being the colours they are. Just as the reason for calling a red by the name "red" is that it *is* red, so the reason for calling a red and a blue by the name "colour" is that each one of them *is* a colour.

Presumably, the same sort of objection will be made again. A red and a blue are indeed commonly called by the same name; viz., "colour". Yet you conclude that a red and a blue are called by the same name not because they are the same, but for some other reason. Surely, things that are properly called by the same name must be the same.

The specious force of this objection arises from a confusion. The same thing must be called by the same name, if we are to avoid equivocation and consequent ambiguities. This is to say that for good practical reasons all cases of the same thing ought to be called by the same name. From this it is assumed to follow that all cases of the same name may be properly used only with reference to the same thing.

Yet this converse does not follow. The specious force of the objection in question derives from a simple confusion; viz., that in which the unlimited conversion of any such universal proposition as, "all cases of the same thing should be called by the same name", could be thought valid.

We have noticed what is the reason for the proper use of "colour" in the view of those who assert that term to be the name of a common nature. This reason is that very common nature itself, identified or noticed as being common to diverse hues. It is said that they are properly called by the same name because they are identified as being identical in respect of their being common nature or form.

Now, for reasons that need not be repeated, the reality of any such common nature is more than doubtful. The claim that, without some such *assumption*, at least, no reason for the proper use of any abstract noun such as "colour" can be given, rests on a confusion.

That the same thing ought to be called by the same name, whenever we refer to it, does not even begin to imply that the same name may be properly used with reference to only

one object or thing. In point of fact, "colour" is used with reference to different referents. And the alleged reason why the same name may properly be used with only one reference is arrived at by the unlimited conversion of a universal proposition.

The reason for (as distinguished from the cause of) the use of the single name "colour" with reference to diverse hues is that those objects are recognized as being the colours (the hues, the reds, yellows, blues, etc.) which they are. This is to say that we identify colours as colours, and that their *being* colours is the sole and exhaustive *reason* why we call them "colours".

Even so, we shall be told, this does not begin to explain why it is easy to make statements of comparison about different hues or colours, whereas it is hardly possible to compare hues or colours and in fact (say) sounds. On the Realist hypothesis an explanation of this lies ready at hand. To be sure, we must reply, that is so; but for reasons that need not be repeated, this explanation is not tenable.

Nor need it be entertained *faute de mieux*. For the reason why colours are not (directly, at any rate) comparable with sounds, is that colours and sounds are in different intrinsic orders. We have seen above something of what it means to compare colours as more or less like one another. We cannot say that hues and sounds are like each other,<sup>(1)</sup> for the reason that they are not in the same order. Hues are in the intrinsic order that is the order of hues, for the reason that a red is nearer an orange than a blue, that a purple is nearer a blue than a yellow, and so on. The statement that this particular order is intrinsic to hues (as distinguished from the intrinsic order of pitches), means that a red *is* nearer an orange than a blue, that a shade of orange *is* nearer a yellow than a violet, and so on, for every single hue. To say that a red might not be nearer an orange than a blue is to say that a red might not be the red that it is. Likewise to say that a green (say) might not be nearer a

<sup>(1)</sup> I.e., *qua* hue and *qua* pitch. They may be the same in feeling, or as felt. A dull colour may feel heavy, as a low note may feel heavy.

blue than a crimson lake, would be to utter a self-contradiction. And just so with pitches.

Since these orders are intrinsic, the reason why hues are in their order and pitches are in another order is that it is of the nature of any hue to be nearer to this hue than to that one on the analogous order of hues, and that it is of the nature of any pitch to be nearer this pitch than that one; but it is not of the nature of any hue to be nearer middle C than an A sharp, or of any pitch to be nearer a red than a blue. This is the reason why hues and sounds are not comparable. We cannot say of a colour that it is more like this sound than that one because no colour is in the order of sounds.

The reason why red, orange, yellow, green blue and purple are called by the same name, "colour", is that they resemble each other (more or less) in the primary analogical sense made out above. There could be no reason (as distinguished from cause) why middle C and red should be called "hues", because middle C is in the order of pitches, not in the order of hues.

But the hues mentioned above are resembling (more or less) as they are nearer to or further from one another in their intrinsic order. Any one of these hues is nearer some other hue, and further from still another hue, for the reason that red is to orange as orange is to yellow; that orange is to yellow as yellow is to green; that yellow is to green as green is to blue; that green is to blue as blue is to purple, and that blue is to purple as purple is to red.

Thus, diverse hues constitute an order, the nature of which is exhausted by the diverse hues themselves. The reason why (say) a yellow is to a green as a green is to a blue is that a yellow is yellow; that a green is green, and that a blue is blue. To say that some yellows might not be to green as green is to blue, would be to say that some yellows might not be yellow. Thus all the diverse hues resemble each other (more or less) in that they constitute an analogous order of hues. The reason why diverse hues are properly called by the same name is that they resemble each other, in this analogous sense of the term resemblance.

Thus, we may notice that the reason why different hues are called by the same name is radically different from the reason why two cases of orpiment are called by the same name. Diverse hues are identified as being hues, not pitches or temperatures. That is to say that diverse hues are identified as constituents of the same intrinsic order. It is because these hues resemble each other more or less as they are nearer to or further from each other in this intrinsic order that they are properly called by the same name. But two cases of orpiment (of the same saturation and intensity) are called by the same name because they are strictly the same.

Whenever we confuse the two primary senses of "resemblance", a time-honoured demand at once arises. Bank of England notes (of the same issue and denomination) are called by the same name. Azurite and indigo are called by the same name, "colour". Therefore, azurite and indigo must be the same. They must have something "in common"; for, like the Bank of England notes, they are called by the same name.

Once any confusion whatsoever between the sense in which banknotes of a single issue and denomination are resembling, and that in which azurite resembles indigo has been enforced by what may be called "the same name argument", the demand for a common nature or form that would be common to the diverse constituents of an order has become a major problem. Yet, "the same name argument" is founded on nothing better than the illicit conversion of an *A* proposition. Without any question, the same thing ought to be called by the same name; but this could not imply that the same name may be properly used only with reference to one referent.

Unless it can be shown that diverse beings in an intrinsic order do have "something in common", the man who insists that those diverse beings are called by the same name because they have this "something in common" has nothing upon which to base his claim. Nevertheless, the sound of his contention will have a familiar ring. That is half the

battle, where manœuvres in being plausible are concerned. The plausibility of the claim is indeed venerable. Those of us who like tradition more than we would do, if we disliked the look of the future less, will be little inclined to face up to the inanity of it. Yet our position here is ineluctable.

A choice that is verbal is offered us, without doubt; but a man eats his words, and nothing more, when he swallows an alternative of that kind. If this alternative were more than verbal it would offer us a nature, a form, or a being of some sort which would be common to diverse beings that are called by the same name. This offer certainly can be suggested, but it cannot be made. It cannot be a real offer until what it claims to be able to give us is at least shown to be actual or determinate.

For to be, is to be determinate. In this context, the phrase "to be determinate" means "to be distinct from anything else". There may be some question as to whether this first step in ontology is a postulate, or not. It is hard to see how anyone could sustain the contradictory of it. The sentence, "some beings are not distinct from anything else", contradicts the principle in question. And a being that were not distinct from anything else would be in no wise distinct from nothing.

It is not difficult to urge that diverse hues are called by the same name because they have a common nature, colour. Yet this alleged common nature can be no determinate hue, such as indigo, nor may it be any range of hues. In order that any common nature or form might be common to diverse hues, this alleged common nature would have to be distinct from them all. This is to say that the common nature in question would be distinct from all determinate hues. It would be hue indeterminate, and the indeterminate is nothing.

The demand for a nature or form that would be common to diverse beings cannot be fulfilled, even partially. This should occasion no regret. The demand in question arises out of a confusion that is enforced by a fallacy. The

new coins of the same mintage are the same, and they are called by the same name. Diverse hues are diverse; but because they are called by the same name, it is urged that they must have something in common—that they must, somehow, be resembling as the coins resemble each other. In such ways as this, two radically different senses of "resemblance" become confused in our minds.

The reason why two cases of cobalt blue (of the same saturation and intensity) are called by the same name is that they resemble each other, in the sense that they are the same in character. Shades of blues are called by the same name; and they are not the same, in the sense in which two cases of cobalt are resembling. But shades of blue are called by the same name because they resemble each other. They are resembling in that any blue, such as azurite, is nearer any other blue, such as a light blue, than yellow. Blue and yellow are called "colours", not "sounds", because either one of them is nearer the other than middle C. For neither of these hues is an even remote neighbour of any pitch.

Diverse hues are called by the same name. They are not the same, but diverse. This is so, despite the verbal fact that diverse hues are called by the same name. The reason why diverse hues are properly called by the same name "colours", is that they are resembling in being analogous. This is not to say that they are the same in character, as are the respective hues of two three-cent stamps. Any single hue is to some other hue as that hue is to any other hue. Violet is to red as red is to orange. The order of hues is an intrinsic order, in that it is exhaustively constituted by the diverse hues of that order themselves. The position of (say) a red in the intrinsic order of hues is determined by, in that it consists of, the perceived character of that single red hue. The position of that red hue in the intrinsic order of hues is in no wise distinct from that red hue. The reason why a red hue is next to a red-orange is nothing at all distinct from either of those two hues. This is the case, *mutatis mutandis*, where any hue whatever is in question.

Crimson-lake could be no more be to azurite as azurite is to indigo than it could be different from the hue that it is.

Any hue whatever is nearer hue y than hue z in the order of hues, in that there are more hues between y and z, than there are between y and x. The degrees by which any hue differs from any other hue consist of the hues which lie between them in the analogous (and intrinsic order) of hues. Diverse hues are called by the same name because they resemble each other. They are called "colours" because they are resembling in that any hue (and no pitch, for example) is to some other hue as that hue is to still another hue. It is in this sense that hues are resembling, but not the same.

We have seen above that, in some quarters, it is an established practice to urge that things called by the same name must have something in common, if only because they are called by the same name. Those who stand on this line of argument recognize that a way over a river and a card game are called by the same name, "bridge". They do not affirm that the way and the game have something or anything in common. Nevertheless, they do urge that felt beauties, for example, must have a common nature or form because they are called by the same name, "beauty". For surely things that are properly called by the same name must be in some respect or other the same.

In view of the many exceptions to which this line of argument is open and even acknowledged, it ought to be suspect on the face of it. There is no impropriety in referring to a certain heavenly body as a star, and in referring also to a very earthy creature as a star. But the argument that because things are called by the same name, they must, therefore, be in some or other respect the same, is more than suspect; it is fallacious.

To be sure, every single case of the same thing should be called by the same name, if we are to avoid equivocation. Now it is assumed to follow from this that every use of the same name must be made with reference to the same thing. Thus, as convertend, we have the proposition,

all cases of the same thing should be called by the same name. This is alleged to yield the converse, all uses of the same name must be made with reference to the same thing. Plainly this is the illicit conversion of a universal proposition. All that follows from the convertend in question is that some uses of the same name must be made with reference to the same thing; namely, those uses of a name that render it a technical term.

Thus we may notice that the arguments to the conclusion that things called by the same name must therefore be the same derives from an elementary confusion. The fact that a way over a river and a card game are properly called by the same name does not even tend to prove that they have anything in common. And the alleged logic of the matter is illicit.