Names, Verbs and Quantification Again

NICHOLAS DENYER

We can readily distinguish between names and verbs. Philosophers customarily take this linguistic distinction between two kinds of expression to correlate with a grand metaphysical distinction between particulars, individuals or objects on the one side and forms, universals, or concepts on the other. Richard Gaskin maintains that all such grand metaphysical distinctions are misconceived, and that both names and verbs may be taken to designate objects. His most recent argument for this conclusion infers it from two premises. One is that we can hardly deny that transitive verbs designate objects while conceding that intransitive verbs do. And the other is that 'it will have to be conceded that *intransitive* verbs … *do* designate objects, if names do, and that "*monadic*" universals are genuine existents, if particulars are'.[1]

However, no such thing has to be conceded. On the contrary, there is good reason to refuse such concessions. The reason was implicit in the article to which Gaskin's most recent argument is a reply.[2] I there pointed out the enormous logical differences between quantifying name-variables only, quantifying verb-variables only, and quantifying both name- and verb-variables. My purpose was to rebut an earlier argument of Gaskin's, which held that both names and verbs may be taken to designate objects, because these expressions 'all admit of significant quantification in respect of their referents'.[3] My response was that this argument from quantification backfires: the enormous logical differences between these three sorts of quantification mean that the behaviour of names and verbs under quantification, so far from proving them to be metaphysically interchangeable, vindicates the customary belief that the distinction between them cuts deep. Now those who take the trouble to familiarize themselves with these logical differences (as they can by read-

[1] Richard Gaskin, 'Predication and Ontology: Reply to Denyer', *Philosophy* **73** (1998) 625–29. The quotation is from p. 627; the italics are Gaskin's.

[2] Nicholas Denyer, 'Names, Verbs and Quantification', *Philosophy* **73** (1998) 619–24.

[3] Richard Gaskin, 'The Unity of the Declarative Sentence', *Philosophy* **73** (1998) 21–45. The quotation is from p. 33.

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ing my earlier article and the works there cited) will appreciate that these very differences are found also between quantifying name-variables only, quantifying *intransitive* verb-variables only, and quantifying both name- and *intransitive* verb-variables. So why should Gaskin think it has to be conceded that, however things may be with verbs generally, at least intransitive verbs are metaphysically little different from names?

When rebutting Gaskin's argument from quantification, I conceded that it contains this modicum of truth: if we allow only monadic predication, then it makes no serious logical difference whether we quantify name-variables, or verb-variables, or both. From *this* concession, which I do readily grant, Gaskin makes a fallacious inference. He supposes that, because no big difference between names and intransitive verbs shows up in the quantified logic of monadic predication, the enormous differences between names and verbs that show up in the quantified logic of predication generally are differences between names and transitive verbs alone. At any rate, I can think of no other reason why he should report me as claiming that there is a logically and metaphysically significant 'difference between *transitive* verbs and names in the logic of polyadic predication' and as 'appealling to a difference between names and specifically *transitive* verbs' (op. cit. in n.1, p. 626; both sets of italics are Gaskin's), for all the world as if I were agreeing that names and intransitive verbs are logically and metaphysically interchangeable.

Whether Gaskin committed this fallacy matters little here. For however he came by the idea that the enormous logical difference between names and verbs is solely a difference between names and transitive verbs, that idea is simply false.

Trinity College, Cambridge

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