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### Chapter III

## PROPOSITIONS

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I have tried to begin describing what sense-perception *is*; or, in other words, what it is that happens in our minds, when (as we should say) we get knowledge of the existence of a material object by means of our senses. Events undoubtedly do happen in our minds which we should describe in this way, *i.e.*, as the getting knowledge of the existence of a material object by means of our senses. When, for instance, I hold up this envelope and you all look at it: we should say that we all *saw it*, the same object, the same envelope; that, by seeing it, we got knowledge of its existence; and that this object, the envelope which we all see, and know to exist, is a material object. I tried, then, to begin describing what sort of an event this was which happened in the mind of each of us; *without* assuming either that we did, in fact, all know of the existence of the same object, when it happened, *or* that, if we did, the object was a material one. I have only tried to describe what sort of a thing this event, which we *call* knowledge of the existence of a material object by means of the senses, certainly *is*, without deciding whether it really deserves to be called what we do call it—namely, knowledge of the existence of a material object.

And I pointed out, first of all, that every such event *partly* consists in a peculiar way of having before our minds certain kinds of things which I called *sense-data*—for instance, a visible patch of colour, a visible area, which is or seems to be occupied by the patch of colour, and a visible size and shape which are the size and shape of the visible patch and of its area: these were all *sense-data*.<sup>1</sup> And the peculiar way in which we had these sense-data before our minds I called 'direct apprehension'. Every act of sense-perception consists then, partly at least, in the direct apprehension of certain sense-data. And this part of what happens in sense-perception is, I think, far the easiest to notice, when you try to discover what happens by observing your own mind. About the existence of this kind of thing, which I called the direct apprehension of sense-data there seems to be no

<sup>1</sup>See footnote 2, p. 30.

doubt at all, nor about what sort of a thing it is. You can very easily observe *it*: but the difficulty is to discover that anything else happens *at all*, and, if so, what the exact nature of this something else is.

But now, with regard to this part of what happens—this direct apprehension of sense-data—I said that an overwhelming, majority of philosophers had held certain views. They have held, namely (1) that no part of the sense-data which I ever directly apprehend *is* or exists at all, except at the moment when I am directly apprehending it; (2) that no part of the sense-data which I ever directly apprehend, is ever directly apprehended by any one else; and (3) that no part of the sense-data which I ever directly apprehend is in the *same space* with any part of those which are directly apprehended by any one else. And by saying that they are not in the *same space*, I meant, as always, that they are *neither* in the same place *nor* at any distance in any direction from one another; or, if we are talking of the sense-given spaces themselves, we must say, to be accurate, that no part of *my* sense-given space *is the same part of space* as any part of the sense-given space of any one else, nor at any distance in any direction from any such part. These three views, taken together, I spoke, of as *the* accepted view with regard to sense-data, though of course they are not accepted quite by everybody. They are, I said, often expressed by saying that all sense-data exist only *in the mind* of the person apprehending them; or by saying that sense-data are not *external* objects: and I think there is no great harm in expressing them in this way, although when such expressions are used, something else may be meant as well, which is, I think, more doubtful than are these three views. We may say, then, that it is and has long been the accepted view that all sense-data exist only in the mind of the person who directly apprehends them, or are *not* external objects—meaning by these expressions merely the three views, which I have tried to formulate more exactly above. And I wished to call your attention to this accepted view, and to make you grasp it as clearly as possible for two reasons. Firstly, because it seems to me that many of the strangest views of philosophers, those which depart most widely from Common Sense, are founded, in the first instance, upon this view. Had not this view been thought of, no philosopher would ever have thought of denying the existence of matter or of inventing all sorts of other things to take its place. And secondly, I wish to call your attention to it because I think that so far as philosophical views are founded upon this view, they are not badly founded. In other words, I think there really are very strong

arguments in favour of this view, arguments of a sort that I tried to give you. And though these arguments do not seem to me absolutely conclusive, yet they are so strong that I think none of us can really be sure that this accepted view with regard to sense-data is not a correct one: though if any of you can find, either for or against it, any more conclusive arguments than I can find, I should be only too glad to hear them. The question whether this accepted view about sense-data is true or not, may, I think, fairly be called one of the main problems of philosophy.

But now, in speaking of this accepted view, I ought perhaps to have explained that some philosophers, whom I meant to reckon as holding it, would not perhaps assert it quite in the unqualified form which I have given it. And I wish now to mention these possible qualifications, both for the sake of accuracy and because these qualifications can only serve, I think, to bring out more clearly the general nature of the view and the immenseness of the range of facts to which it is supposed to apply. The first qualification is this. There are some philosophers who hold that sense-data exist in my mind, not only when I directly apprehend them, but also very often when I *do not* directly apprehend them: and so too, of course, in the minds of all of us. And these philosophers might, I think, perhaps hold (I do not know whether they would) that the very same sense-datum which I directly apprehend at one moment, may go on existing *in my mind* even when I cease to apprehend it, and that this may happen very often indeed. This, then, if it were held, would be to hold that there were exceptions to the first of my three rules, and even possibly *many* exceptions to it: it would involve holding that some sense-data, which I directly apprehend, may go on existing when I do not directly apprehend them. But the philosophers I am thinking of would certainly hold that this, if it happens at all, can only happen *in my mind*: no sense-datum, which I ever apprehend, can exist, *after* I cease to apprehend it, *except in my mind*. And they would hold, too, that of these sense-data, which exist in my mind, when I do not directly apprehend them, *both* the other two rules are just as true as of those sense-data which I do directly apprehend: *both* that nobody else can directly apprehend them, *and* that they cannot be in the same space with the sense-data in anybody else's mind. So that I think you can see that this qualification, though, strictly speaking, it does admit *many* exceptions to my first rule, is yet not very important for our present purpose. And the second qualification is this: Some philosophers would, I think, admit that

in a few abnormal cases, there may be two or more different minds—two or more different *persons*—in or attached to *the same living human body*, and that in such cases these different persons *may* be able to apprehend directly *the same* sense-data; and they would perhaps say also, that this, which may happen abnormally to human minds in living human bodies, may happen constantly in the case of *other spirits* in the Universe. And this, of course, if it were held, would involve exceptions, and perhaps many exceptions, to both my second and third rule. But this qualification also is, I think, plainly unimportant for our present purpose. For these philosophers *would*, I think, admit that in the case of *our* minds, the minds of each of *us*, normal human minds, attached, each of them, to a different living human body, *no* exceptions to these two rules ever occur. 0.1.101

With these qualifications, I think it is fair to say that my three rules with regard to sense-data are accepted by the vast majority of philosophers; and these qualifications only, I think, serve to make it plainer what an enormous range of facts the three rules are supposed to apply to. They are supposed to apply to all the sense-data directly apprehended by all the human minds, attached like ours, each of them, to a different living human body, with the possible exception that sense-data, directly apprehended at one moment by *one* mind, may exist in *that* mind even when not directly apprehended by it.

But now, *if* this accepted view is true, it follows, I said, that if we do ever perceive a material object or any part of one, and if we do all of us now perceive the same material object—if, for instance, we do all see this same envelope—this event cannot *merely* consist in the fact that we directly apprehend certain sense-data: it must consist, in part, of something else too. For, according to the accepted view, no part of the sense-data which any one of us directly apprehends can be either a part of a material object nor a part of the space occupied by a material object, nor can any part of the sense-data directly apprehended by any one of us be the same as any part of those directly apprehended by any other of us. If, therefore, I do ever perceive a material object, then, on the accepted view, something else must happen besides the fact that I directly apprehend certain sense-data. And I tried, at the end of my last lecture, to give a brief account of what this something else might be. But I said I should try to explain more fully at the beginning of this lecture, *what* this something else might be; and this is what I shall now try to do. Only I am afraid that this explanation will take me much longer than

I thought it would. Instead of occupying only the beginning of this lecture, it will occupy the *whole* of this lecture; and I shall not be able to finish what I have to say about it even in this lecture: I shall have to leave over a part of the subject until next time. The fact is I want to make as clear as possible exactly what sort of a thing the knowing of material objects by means of the senses can be, if it does *not* merely consist in the direct apprehension of sense-data. And I think the way of doing this, which will in the end prove shortest and clearest, is to try and give an account of *all* the different ways we have of knowing things: trying to distinguish different sorts of things which might be said to be ways of knowing from one another, and giving them separate names. And I think I can best do this by first calling your attention to an entirely new class of facts—a class of facts which I have not yet mentioned at all.

The fact is that absolutely all the contents of the Universe, absolutely everything that *is* at all, may be divided into two classes—namely into *propositions*, on the one hand, and into things which are not propositions on the other hand. There certainly are in the Universe such things as propositions: the sort of thing that I mean by a proposition is certainly one of the things that *is*: and no less certainly there are in the Universe some things which are *not* propositions: and also quite certainly absolutely everything in the Universe either is a proposition or is *not*, if we confine the word 'proposition' to some one, quite definite, sense: for nothing whatever can both have a quite definite property and also *not* have that very same property. This classification, therefore, of all the things in the Universe into those which are and those which are not propositions, is certainly correct and exhaustive. But it may seem, at first sight, as if it were a very unequal classification: as if the number of things in the Universe, which are *not* propositions, was very much greater than that of those which are. Even this, as we shall presently see, may be doubted. And, whether this be so or not, the classification is, I think, by no means unequal, if, instead of considering all that *is* in the Universe, we consider all those things in the Universe which we *know*. For, however it may be with the Universe itself, it is, I think, certain that a very large and important part of *our knowledge* of the Universe consists in the knowledge with regard to propositions that they are true.

Now the new class of facts which I want to call your attention to, are certain facts about propositions and about our knowledge of them.

And, first of all, I want to make it as plain as I can exactly what I mean by a proposition. The sort of thing, which I mean by a proposition is, as I said, something which certainly is. There certainly are things in the Universe, which have the properties which I shall mean to ascribe to a thing when I call it a proposition. And when I call a thing a proposition I shall mean to ascribe to it absolutely no properties, except certain definite ones which some things certainly have. There may be doubt and dispute as to whether these things have or have *not* certain *other* properties besides those which I ascribe to them; and also as to whether what I mean by a proposition is quite the same as what is usually meant. But as to the fact that some things *are* propositions, in the sense in which I intend to use the word, I think there is no doubt.

First of all, then, I do *not* mean by a proposition any of those collections of *words*, which are one of the things that are commonly called propositions. What I mean by a proposition is rather the sort of thing which these collections of words *express*. No collection of words can possibly be a proposition, in the sense in which I intend to use the term. Whenever I speak of a proposition, I shall always be speaking, not of a mere sentence—a mere collection of words, but of what these words mean.

I do not then mean by a proposition any collection of words. And what I do mean can, I think, be best explained as follows. I will utter now certain words which form a sentence: these words, for instance: Twice two are four. Now, when I say these words, you not only hear *them*—the words—you *also* understand what they mean. That is to say, something happens in your minds—some act of consciousness—*over and above* the hearing of the words, some act of consciousness which may be called the understanding of their meaning. But now I will utter another set of words which also form a sentence: I utter the words: Twice four are eight. Here again you not only hear the words, but also perform some other act of consciousness which may be called the understanding of *their* meaning. Here then we have an instance of two acts of consciousness, each of which may be called an apprehension of the meaning of certain words. The one of them was an apprehension of the meaning of the words: Twice two are four; the other an apprehension of the meaning of the words: Twice four are eight. Both of these two acts of consciousness are alike in respect of the fact that each of them is an act of apprehension, and that each of them is the apprehension of the meaning of a certain set of words which form a sentence. Each of

them is an apprehending of the meaning of a sentence: and each of them is an *apprehending* in exactly the same sense: they are obviously exactly alike in *this* respect. But no less obviously they differ in respect of the fact that *what* is apprehended in the one case, is different from what is apprehended in the other case. In the one case *what* is apprehended is the meaning of the words: Twice two are four; in the other case *what* is apprehended is the meaning of the words: Twice four are eight. And the meaning of the first set of words is obviously different from that of the second. In this case, then, we have two acts of apprehension, which are exactly alike in respect of the fact that they are acts of apprehension, and acts of apprehension, too, of exactly the same kind; but which differ in respect of the fact that *what* is apprehended in the one, is different from *what* is apprehended in the other. Now by a proposition, I mean the sort of thing which *is apprehended* in these two cases. The two acts of consciousness differ in respect of the fact that *what* is apprehended in the one, is different from *what* is apprehended in the other. And *what* is apprehended in each case is what I mean by a proposition. We might say, then, that the two acts of apprehension differ in respect of the fact that one is an apprehension of one proposition, and the other the apprehension of a different proposition. And we might say also that *the* proposition apprehended in the one is the proposition *that* twice two are four—not the *words*, twice two are four, but the *meaning* of these words; and that *the* proposition apprehended in the other is the different proposition that twice four are eight—again *not* the words, twice four are eight, but the meaning of these words.

This, then, is the sort of thing that I mean by a proposition. And whether you agree or not that it is a proper use of the word, I hope it is plain that there certainly *are* things which are propositions in this sense. As a matter of fact this is, I think, one of the senses in which the word is commonly used. Often, no doubt, we may mean by a proposition a sentence—a collection of words; but quite often also, I think, we mean by a proposition *not* the words but their meaning. This, then, is how I am going to use the word 'proposition'. And I hope it is plain that there certainly are such things as propositions in this sense. It is quite plain, I think, that when we understand the meaning of a sentence, something else does happen in our minds *besides* the mere hearing of the words of which the sentence is composed. You can easily satisfy yourselves of this by contrasting what happens when you hear a sentence, which you *do*

understand, from what happens when you hear a sentence which you do *not* understand: for instance, when you hear words spoken in a foreign language, which you do not understand at all. Certainly in the first case, there occurs, beside the mere hearing of the words, another act of consciousness—an apprehension of their meaning, which is absent in the second case. And it is no less plain that the apprehension of the meaning of one sentence with one meaning, differs in some respect from the apprehension of another sentence with a different meaning. For instance the apprehension of the meaning of the sentence: Twice two are four, certainly differs in some respect from the apprehension of the meaning of the sentence: Twice four are eight. They certainly differ in some respect, which may be expressed by saying that one is the apprehension of one meaning, and the other the apprehension of a different meaning. There certainly *are* such things as the two different meanings apprehended. And each of these two meanings is what I call a proposition. In calling them so, I do not mean to assert anything whatever as to the manner in which they are related to the apprehension of them. All that I mean to assert is simply that each of them is something which can and must be distinguished from the act of apprehension in which it is apprehended. Each act of apprehension is alike in respect of the fact that it is an act of apprehension, and an act of apprehension of the same kind. But they differ in that whereas one is the apprehension of one proposition, the other is the apprehension of a different proposition. Each proposition, therefore, can and must be distinguished both from the other proposition, and also from the act which is the apprehending of it.

But now, if we use the word 'proposition' in this sense, it is plain, I think, that we can say several other things about propositions and about the apprehension of them.

In the first place, it is, I think, plain that we apprehend a proposition in exactly the same sense in three different cases. When we hear certain words spoken and understand their meaning, we may do three different things: we may *believe* the proposition which they express, we may *disbelieve* it, or we may simply *understand* what the words mean, without *either* believing or disbelieving it. In all these three cases, we do I think obviously apprehend the proposition in question in exactly the same sense: namely, we understand the meaning of the words. The difference between the three cases merely consists in the fact, that when we believe or disbelieve, we *also* do something else *beside* merely apprehending the proposition: beside



merely apprehending it, we also have towards it one attitude which is called belief, or another different attitude which is called disbelief. To believe a proposition, to disbelieve one, or simply to understand it, in the sense in which we do these things when we hear words spoken that express the proposition, consist then, all three of them, at least in part, in apprehending this proposition in exactly the same sense. In all three cases we do apprehend a proposition in exactly the same sense, though where we believe or disbelieve we *also* do something else besides. This sense in which we apprehend a proposition, in all these three cases equally, is obviously one sense of the word apprehension; and it is a sense to which I wish to direct your attention, as I shall presently have more to say about it.

One point then with regard to propositions and our apprehension of them, is that there is a definite sort of apprehension of them, which occurs equally, whenever we either believe, disbelieve, or merely understand a proposition on actually hearing spoken words which express it.

And a second point is this. It is, I think, also plain that we often apprehend propositions in exactly the same sense, when instead of *hearing* words which express them, we *see* written or printed words which express them—provided, of course, that we are able to read and understand the language to which the words belong. This understanding of the meaning of written or printed sentences, which occurs when we actually read them, is, I think, obviously an apprehension of propositions in exactly the same sense as is the understanding of sentences, which we hear spoken. But just as we apprehend propositions in exactly the same sense in both these two cases—whether we hear spoken sentences which express them, or *see* these sentences written or printed—so also, obviously, we very often apprehend propositions in exactly the same sense, when we *neither* hear nor see any words which express them. We constantly think of and believe or disbelieve, or merely consider, propositions, at moments when we are neither hearing nor seeing any words which express them; and in doing so, we are *very often* apprehending them in exactly the same sense in which we apprehend them when we do understand the meaning of written or spoken sentences. No doubt when we do thus apprehend propositions, without either hearing or seeing any words which express them, we often have before our minds the *images* of words, which would express them. But it is, I think, obviously possible that we should apprehend propositions, in exactly the same sense, without even having before our minds *any*

*images* of words which would express them. We may thus apprehend a proposition, which we desire to express, before we are able to think of any sentence which would express it. We apprehend the proposition, and desire to express it, but none of the words we can think of will express exactly *the* proposition we are apprehending and desiring to convey.

Our second point, then, with regard to propositions and our apprehension of them is this: namely, that in exactly the same sense in which we apprehend them, when we hear certain words spoken of which we understand the meaning, we also often apprehend them, when we neither see nor hear any words which express them, and probably often without even having before our minds any *images* of words which would express them.

And a third point is this. Namely, that the propositions which we apprehend in this sense, and in all these different cases, are obviously quite a different sort of thing from many of the things which we apprehend. When, for instance, I directly apprehend a sense-datum—a patch of colour, for instance—the patch of colour is obviously not the same sort of thing as these propositions of which we have been talking: *it*, the patch of colour, is not itself a proposition. The most obvious way of expressing the difference between a proposition, and what is not a proposition, is by saying that a proposition is the sort of thing which is commonly expressed by a *whole* sentence. I say the *sort* of thing; because, as we have seen, we may apprehend many propositions which are not *actually* expressed at all. And I say *commonly* expressed by a whole sentence, because I am not sure that some whole sentences, for instance an imperative, such as ‘Go away’, express a proposition at all; and because also propositions are sometimes expressed by single words. For instance, when a man calls ‘Fire’, he is expressing a proposition: he is expressing the proposition which *might* be expressed by the whole sentence: There is a fire taking place. But, if we say that a proposition is the sort of thing that is commonly expressed by a whole sentence, we indicate, I think, pretty clearly the sort of thing that a proposition is. Things which are not propositions, if expressed at all, are usually expressed by single words or collections of words, which do not make complete sentences. Thus, supposing I utter the whole sentence: This patch of colour, which I now see, exists. One part of this sentence, namely, the words ‘This patch of colour which I now see’, may perhaps be said to ‘express’ or mention this patch of colour, which I do now directly apprehend, and which is *not* a

proposition; and obviously that particular set of words, which mention this colour, do not by themselves form a complete sentence: the words 'This patch of colour, which I now see' *are* not a complete sentence by themselves. And similarly, whenever we utter a complete sentence, while the whole sentence does, as a rule, express a proposition, some of the words or sets of words of which it is composed express something which is *not* a proposition. For instance, consider again the sentence: Twice two are four. This whole sentence, as we saw, does express a proposition. But, if we take some one of the words of which it is composed, for instance the word 'two', this word by itself does not make a complete sentence and does not express a proposition. But it *does* express *something*. What we mean by the word 'two' is certainly something. This something, therefore, *is*—is something, and yet is not a proposition. In fact, whenever we do apprehend a proposition we always also apprehend things which are *not* propositions; namely, things which would be expressed by *some* of the words, of which the whole sentence, which would express the proposition, is composed.

A third point, then, with regard to propositions and our apprehension of them, is that propositions are by no means the only kind of things which we apprehend; but that whenever we do apprehend a proposition, we always *also* apprehend something else, which is *not* a proposition.

And a fourth point with regard to propositions is this. Namely, that propositions, in the sense in which I have been using the term, are obviously a sort of thing which can properly be said to be *true* or *false*. Some propositions are true propositions and other propositions are false propositions. And I mention this point, because some philosophers seem inclined to say that nothing can be properly said to be true or false, *except* an act of belief: that, therefore, *propositions*, not being acts of belief, cannot properly be said to be so. And I do not here wish to deny that an act of belief may be properly said to be true or false; though I think it may be doubted. We do undoubtedly speak of true and false beliefs; so that *beliefs*, at all events, may be properly said to be true or false. But the fact is, I think, that, as with so many other words, we use the word 'belief' in two different senses: sometimes, no doubt, we mean by a belief an *act* of belief, but very often, I think, we mean by it simply the proposition which is believed. For instance, we often say of two different people that they entertain *the same belief*. And here, I think, we certainly do not mean to say that any act of belief performed by the one is the *same*

*act* as an act of belief performed by the other. The two acts of belief are certainly different—numerically different: the one act is the act of one person, and the other is the act of a different person; and we certainly do not mean to assert that these two acts are identical—that they are not *two* acts, but one and the same act. What we do, I think, mean, when we say that both persons have the same belief, is that *what* is believed in both of the two different acts is the same: we mean by a belief, in fact, *not* the act of belief, but *what* is believed; and what is believed is just nothing else than what I mean by a proposition. But let us grant that acts of belief may be properly said to be true and false. Even if this be so, it seems to me we must allow that propositions, in the sense I have given to the term, can be properly said to be true and false *also*, though in a different sense. For what I mean by a proposition is simply *that* in respect of which an act of belief, which is a *true* act, differs from another, which is a false one; or that in respect of which two qualitatively different acts of belief, which are both false or both true, differ from one another. And obviously the quality in virtue of which one act of belief is true, and another false, cannot be the quality which they both have in common: it cannot be the fact that they are both of them acts of belief: we cannot say that the one is true, simply because it is an act of belief, and the other false, for the same reason—namely, simply because it is an act of belief. What makes the one true and the other false must be that in respect of which they differ; and that in respect of which they differ—whatever it may be—is just that which I mean by the proposition which is apprehended in each of them. Even, therefore, if we admit that nothing but an act of belief can be properly said to be true or false, in *one* sense of these words, we must, I think, admit that there is another corresponding sense in which propositions are true and false. Every true act of belief partly consists in the apprehension of a proposition; and every false act of belief also partly consists in the apprehension of a proposition. And any proposition apprehended in a true act of belief must be different from any proposition apprehended in a false act of belief. Consequently all the propositions apprehended in true acts of belief must have some common property which is not possessed by any of those which are apprehended in false acts of belief. And there is no reason why we should not call *this* property '*truth*'; and similarly the property possessed in common by all propositions apprehended in false acts of belief '*falsity*'.

Propositions are, then, a sort of thing which may be properly said to be true or false. And this gives us one way of distinguishing what

is a proposition from what is not a proposition; since nothing that is *not* a proposition can be true or false in exactly the same sense in which a proposition is true or false. There are, indeed, we may say, two other senses of the words 'true' and 'false', which are closely allied to those in which propositions are true or false. There is, to begin with, *if* acts of belief can be properly said to be true or false at all, the sense in which an act of belief is true or false. An act of belief is true, if and only if the proposition believed in it is true; and it is false, if and only if the proposition believed in it is false. Or, putting the matter the other way, we may say: A proposition is true, if and only if any act of belief, which was a belief in it, would be a true act of belief; and a proposition is false, if and only if any act of belief, which was a belief in it, would be false. I do not pretend to say here which of these two ways of putting the matter is the better way. Whether, that is to say, the sense in which acts of belief are true and false, should be defined by reference to that in which propositions are true and false; or whether the sense in which propositions are true and false should be defined by reference to that in which acts of belief are true and false. I do not pretend to say which of these two senses is the more fundamental; and it does not seem to me to matter much which is. What is quite certain is that they are two different senses, but *also* that each *can* be defined by reference to the other. One sense, then, of the words true and false, *beside* that in which propositions are true and false, is the sense in which acts of belief are true and false. And there is obviously, also, another sense of the words, which, though different from these two, is equally closely related to both of them. Namely, the sense in which any set of words—any sentence, for instance—which *expresses* a true proposition is true; and any set of words which *expresses* a false proposition is false. Or here again, putting the matter the other way, we may say: Any proposition which is such that any verbal statement which expressed it *would* be a true statement, is true; and any proposition which is such that a verbal statement which expressed it *would* be a false statement, is false. We may, therefore, say that another sense of the words true and false is that in which anything that *expresses* a true proposition is true; and anything which *expresses* a false proposition is false. And obviously in this sense not only words, but also other things, gestures, for instance, may be true or false. If, for instance, somebody asks you: 'Where are my scissors?' and you point to a particular place by way of answer, your gesture—the gesture of pointing—expresses a proposition. By pointing you

obviously express the same proposition as if you had used the words 'Your scissors are there', or had named the particular place where they were. And just as any words you might have used would have been true or false, according as the proposition they expressed was true or false, so your gesture might be said to be true or false, according as the scissors really are in the place you point to or not. There are, therefore, these three senses of the words true and false : The sense in which propositions are true or false ; the sense in which acts of belief are true or false, according as the propositions believed in them are true or false ; and the sense in which anything that *expresses* a proposition is true or false, according as the proposition expressed is true or false. And obviously these three senses are not *the same*, though each can be defined by reference to the others. That is to say, neither an act of belief nor the *expression* of a proposition, can be true or false in exactly the same sense in which a proposition is true or false. And the same, I think, is true universally : nothing but a proposition can be true or false in exactly the same sense in which propositions are so. And why I particularly wanted to call your attention to this, is for the following reason. Some people seem to think that, if you have before your mind an image of an object, which is *like* the object—a copy of it—in certain respects, you may be said, merely because you have this image before your mind, to have a *true* idea of the object—an idea which is *true*, in so far as the image really is like the object. And they seem to think that when this happens, you have a *true* idea of the object, in exactly the same sense as if you believed a true proposition about the object. And this is, I think, at first sight a very natural view to take. It is natural, for instance, to think that if, after looking at this envelope, I have before my mind (as I have) an image, which is like, in certain respects, to the patch of colour which I just now saw, I have, *merely* because I directly apprehend this image, a true *idea* of the patch of colour which I just now saw. It is natural, I say, to think that merely to apprehend this image *is* to have a true idea (true, in certain particulars) of the patch of colour which I saw ; and that, in apprehending this image, I have a true idea of the patch of colour, in exactly the same sense as if I had a true belief about the patch of colour. But it is, I think, easy to see that this view, however natural, is wholly mistaken. The fact is that if *all* that happened to me were *merely* that I directly apprehended an image, which was in fact like some other object, I could not be properly said to have *any* idea of this other object *at all*—*any* idea, either true or false. Merely to

apprehend something, which is *in fact* like something else, is obviously not the same thing as having an idea *of* the something else. In order to have an idea *of* the something else, I must *not only* apprehend an image, which is *in fact* like the something else: I must also either know or think that the image *is* like the something else. In other words, I must apprehend some *proposition about* the relation of the image to the object: only so can I be properly said to have an *idea* of the object at all. If I do apprehend some proposition about the relation of the image to the object, then, indeed, I may be said to have an *idea* of the object: and if I think that the image is like the object in respects in which it is *not* like it, then I shall have a *false* idea of the object, whereas if I think that it is like it in respects in which it is *in fact* like it, then I shall have, so far, a *true* idea of the object. But if I apprehend *no proposition at all* about the relation of the image to the object, then obviously, however like the image may *in fact* be to the object, I cannot be said to have any idea of the object at all. I might, for instance, all my life through, be directly apprehending images and sense-data, which were *in fact* singularly accurate copies of other things. But suppose I never for a moment even suspected that there were these other things, *of* which my images and sense-data were copies? Suppose it never occurred to me for a moment that there were any other things at all beside my sense-data and images? Obviously I could not be said to have any idea at all about these other things—any idea at all, either true or false; and this in spite of the fact that my sense-data and images were, *in fact*, copies of these other things. We must, therefore, say that merely to apprehend an image (or anything else), which is, in fact, like some other object, but without even thinking that the two are like, is *not* to have a true idea of the object in the same sense as when we apprehend a true proposition about the object. No mere image or sense-datum can possibly *be* either a true idea or a false idea *of* anything else, however like or unlike it may be to the something else. Or, if you choose to say that it is, *in a sense*, a true idea of an object, if it be like it, and an untrue one, if it be unlike it, you must at least admit that it is a *true* idea in quite a different sense from that in which a proposition about the object, if true, *is* a true idea of it. Nothing, in short, can be true or false in the same sense in which propositions are true or false. So that, if we never apprehended any propositions we should not be capable of ever making any mistakes—a mistake, an *error*, would be impossible. Error always consists in believing some proposition which is false. So that if a man merely

apprehended something, which was *in fact* unlike something else, but without believing either that it was like or unlike, or anything else at all about it, he could not possibly be said to make any mistake at all: he would never hold any mistaken or false opinions, because he would never hold any *opinions* at all.

Now I have insisted on these four points with regard to propositions, chiefly in order to make as plain as possible *what* sort of a thing a proposition is: what sort of a thing I mean to talk about, when I talk of a proposition. But now I come to the two points about propositions to which I wish specially to direct your attention.

The first of them is this. You may remember that I called your attention to a particular way of apprehending propositions: *the* way in which you apprehend one, when you hear a sentence uttered and understand its meaning: *the* way, for instance, in which you apprehend the proposition that Twice two are four, when you hear me say 'Twice two are four', and understand what these words mean. Now I want a special name for *this* way of apprehending propositions, because, as we shall presently see, there is another quite different sort of thing which might also be said to be a way of apprehending propositions. I want, therefore, a special name for *this* way of apprehending them—the way I have hitherto been talking of, and which I have just tried to define—so that you may always, by means of the name, recognise that it is *this* way that I am talking of, and not any other way. And I propose, for this purpose, to call *this* way of apprehending them, the *direct apprehension* of them. But now at once a question arises. I have already given the name *direct apprehension* to something else. I have given the name *direct apprehension* to the relation which you have to a patch of colour, when you actually see it, to a sound when you actually hear it, to a toothache, when you actually feel it, etc.: I have said that the actual seeing of a colour *is* the direct apprehension of that colour; that the actual hearing of a sound *is* the direct apprehension of that sound, etc. The question, therefore, now arises: Is this relation to a proposition, which I now propose to call direct apprehension of a proposition, the same as the relation which I formerly called *direct apprehension*—namely, the relation which you have to a colour, when you actually see it? Or in other words: Is the relation, which you have to a proposition, when you hear words which express it uttered, and understand the meaning of these words, the same relation as that which you have to a colour, when you actually see it? I confess I cannot tell whether this is so or not. There are, I think, reasons for supposing that what I



call the direct apprehension of a proposition is something different from the direct apprehension of a sense-datum: different I mean, not only in respect of the fact that, whereas the one is the direct apprehension of a proposition, the other is the direct apprehension of a sense-datum, and that a proposition and a sense-datum are different sorts of things; but different *also*, in the sense, that the relation which you have to a proposition, when you directly apprehend it, is different from that which you have to a sense-datum, when you directly apprehend *it*. There are, I think, reasons for supposing that what I call direct apprehension of a proposition really is, in this sense, a very different sort of thing from what I call direct apprehension of a sense-datum: but I cannot tell what the difference is, if there is one; and the reasons for supposing that there is one do not seem to me to be perfectly conclusive. I must, therefore, leave undecided the question whether I am using the name *direct apprehension* in two different senses. But even if I am, I hope this need not lead to any confusion. I shall always mean by the name *either* the kind of relation which you have to a colour, when you actually see it *or* the kind of relation which you have to a proposition when you *understand it*—for instance, when you hear words which express it, and understand what they express. And if these two relations are, in fact, different, then that will only mean that there are in fact two different kinds of direct apprehension. And it is, I think, much less important to decide whether there are two different kinds—whether that which I call direct apprehension of a proposition is in fact a different kind of thing from that which I call direct apprehension of a sense-datum, than to distinguish *both* of them quite clearly, from other kinds of things, which are certainly different from either, but which might also be called ways of apprehending.

My first point about propositions is, then, that I want you to understand as clearly as possible what that way of apprehending them is, which I am going to call *direct apprehension* of them.

And my second point is this. Every proposition is, as we constantly say, a proposition *about* something or other. Some propositions may be *about* several different things; but all of them are *about* at least one thing. For instance, the proposition: Twice two are four, might be said to be *about* both the number two *and* the number four: when you believe it or apprehend it, you are apprehending something *about* the number two and also something about the number four. But the point I wish to call your attention to is this. Namely, that in the case of an immense number of the propositions which we

apprehend, even at the moment when we *do* directly apprehend the whole proposition, we do *not* directly apprehend by any means all of the things which the proposition is *about*. Propositions, in fact, have this strange property: that even at the moment when we do directly apprehend the whole proposition, we need not directly apprehend *that which* the proposition is about. And in the case of immense numbers of the propositions which we directly apprehend, perhaps even the majority of them, you can, I think, easily see that this does actually happen. In *some* cases, when we directly apprehend a proposition, we do also directly apprehend the thing *about* which the proposition is. For instance, at the moment, when I am actually looking at this patch of colour, and directly apprehending it, I may also directly apprehend a proposition about it—for instance, the proposition that it *is* or exists, or that it is whitish. But obviously I can also directly apprehend propositions about it, at moments when I am *not* directly apprehending *it*. *Now*, for instance, when I am no longer directly apprehending it, I can still directly apprehend propositions *about* it—for instance, the proposition that it *was*, that I did see it just now, and so on. And it is, I think, obvious that we are constantly thus directly apprehending propositions *about* things, when we are *not* directly apprehending these things themselves. We are constantly talking and thinking *about* things, which we are *not* directly apprehending at the moment when we talk or think about them: indeed by far the greater part of our conversation and our reading is obviously *about* things which we are *not* directly apprehending when we converse or read about them: it is comparatively rarely that our conversation is confined exclusively to things which we are directly apprehending at the moment. And yet, whenever we talk or read about such things, we *are* directly apprehending propositions *about* them, though we are *not* directly apprehending the things themselves. Obviously, therefore, we do constantly directly apprehend propositions *about* things, when we are not directly apprehending these things themselves. And I want a name for this kind of relation which we have to a thing, when we do directly apprehend a proposition *about* it, but *do not* directly apprehend *it* itself. I propose to call it *indirect apprehension*. That is to say, I propose, to say that I am *now indirectly* apprehending the patch of colour which I saw just now when I looked at this envelope: meaning by that the two things that I am directly apprehending a proposition about it, but am *not* directly apprehending the thing itself. You may object to this name, on the ground that I am not now

really apprehending the patch of colour at all: on the ground that to say that I have to it any relation at all, which can be called *apprehension*, is misleading. And I have a good deal of sympathy with this objection, because the very point I want to insist on is what an *immense* difference there is between this relation I have to it *now*, when I *do not* directly apprehend it, but merely directly apprehend a proposition about it, and the relation I had to it just now when I did directly apprehend it. You may say the difference is so great that they ought not to have any common name: that they ought not *both* to be called forms of apprehension. But then, great as is the difference between these two different ways of being related to a thing, there is just as great a difference between what happens when I *do* directly apprehend a proposition *about* a thing, and what happens when I do not *even* do as much as this—when I do not even think of the thing in any sense at all. So long as I am directly apprehending a proposition about a thing, I *am* in a sense *conscious* of that thing—I am *thinking of it or about it*, even though I am not directly apprehending it, and there is quite as great a difference between *this way* of being related to it, the apprehending of a proposition about it, and what happens when I am *not* thinking of it in any sense at all—when it is utterly out of my mind, as between *this way* of being related to it and that which I have called direct apprehension. Some name is, therefore, required for *this way* of being conscious of a thing—this way which occurs when you do directly apprehend some proposition about it, though you do not directly apprehend *it*; and I cannot think of any better name than *indirect apprehension*. You might say that I ought to use the whole long phrase: That relation which you have to a thing, when you do directly apprehend a proposition about it, and *do not* directly apprehend it. But this phrase is inconvenient, because it is so long. You might say that the short phrase 'thinking of it' would do: that this is just what we mean by thinking of a thing. But there are two objections to this. In the first place, it may be the case that this relation is the only one we have to a thing, even when we should not say that we were *merely* thinking of it, when we should say that we were doing something more than merely *thinking* of it. And in the second place, though we do often use the name 'thinking of' for this relation, we also use it for that of direct apprehension. For instance, we often say, I think, that we are thinking of a proposition, when we are directly apprehending the proposition: and so too, when I am said to be thinking of the number 2, I am, I think, very often directly apprehending

the number 2. The name 'thinking of' will not, therefore, do, as an unambiguous name to distinguish the kind of relation which I want to call 'indirect apprehension' from that which I call 'direct apprehension'. And I cannot think of any better name for the purpose than 'indirect apprehension'. And, in fact, it does not much matter what name I use, provided you understand what I mean by it. I mean, then, by 'indirect apprehension' the kind of relation which you have to a thing, when you *do* directly apprehend some proposition *about* it, but *do not* directly apprehend the thing itself. And the point I want to insist on is that this is quite a different kind of relation from that which you have to a thing when you do directly apprehend it. The only connection between the two is this, that whenever you indirectly apprehend any *one* thing, you must be *directly* apprehending *something else*—either some proposition about it, or perhaps sometimes something other than a proposition.

But now by the help of what I have said about propositions, and about what occurs, when we directly apprehend them, I think I can classify and distinguish all the different sorts of relations to things, which would commonly be said to be ways of knowing them. And this is what I wish now to do.