

## CHAPTER ONE

### TRANSITION FROM EPISTEMOLOGY (FIRST PHILOSOPHY) TO NATURALIZED EPISTEMOLOGY

Quine's idea of naturalized epistemology is fundamental and philosophically revolutionary. It is supposed to be fundamental because the centrality of Quine's philosophy of language actually hinges on the proper understanding of his concept of **naturalized epistemology**. Again, it may be thought as philosophically revolutionary because it eventually occupied an important position in philosophy by way of encountering the classical epistemology. According to Quine, epistemology (First philosophy) is faulty on many accounts. First, it acknowledges a priori and a posteriori distinction which according to Quine is not tenable. Secondly, it is supposed to be a normative science as it deals with *is-ought* dichotomy. As a result, it goes beyond human knowledge. Precisely speaking epistemology or theory of knowledge, being the first philosophy, does not work on the face of humans need. Philosophy in proper must address or act on human knowledge and this is completely foreign in traditional or classical epistemology or first philosophy. That is why Quine talks in favour of naturalized epistemology instead of epistemology (First Philosophy).

What then is naturalized epistemology according to Quine? Naturalized epistemology, according to Quine, is an incorporation of both science and common sense. Quine says, "Epistemology is concerned with the foundations of science. Conceived thus broadly, epistemology includes the study of the foundations of mathematics as one of its departments."<sup>11</sup> Quine intuits a similarity between the study of mathematics and the study of epistemology. Just like the study of

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<sup>11</sup> Quine, W. V. O., *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays*, op. cit., p. 69.

mathematics, Quine divides the foundation of epistemology into a theory of concepts, or meaning and a theory of doctrine or truth. He then says just as mathematics is to be reduced to logic, natural knowledge in some sense or other is to be based on sense experience. This was completely foreign in the first philosophy. According to Quine, it was the anxiety for traditional or classical epistemologists, namely Hume and others, that they did not incorporate the necessity of science in sensory evidence. According to Quine, there are two cardinal tenets of empiricism remained unassailable of which one is that “whatever evidence there *is* for the science *is* sensory evidence. The other, to which I shall recur, is that all inculcation of meanings of words must rest ultimately on sensory evidence.”<sup>12</sup>

According to Quine, it is within science that reality is to be identified and described. By the term ‘science’, Quine, of course, does not mean the technical science; rather he means the theoretical or natural science. He uses the word ‘science’ in a comprehensive manner as he unequivocally includes psychology, economics, sociology and history under this name. Moreover, his understanding of science is consistent with common sense; with everyday knowledge. There may have different nature of common sense, such as, reflective (thoughtful) and unreflective (not thoughtful). Naturalized epistemology incorporates only reflective or thoughtful common sense and when Quine claims that there remains continuity between science and common sense, he thereby means reflective common sense. In fact, unreflective common sense, Quine claims, has not been enthralled by science. As Quine deals with human knowledge, he accordingly inclines to say that knowledge of any sort should adhere with the term ‘science’. Knowledge of any sort must be accorded with the so-called desired science. In this sense, it can be said that science is the paradigm of knowledge, i.e., our most successful attempt at knowledge. Accordingly, it can

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 75.

be said that philosophy being a part of our knowledge aims at to be successful and this can be happened if it would fulfill the so-called scientific standards.

As by the term ‘science’, Quine means the so-called theoretical science, application of science should not be uncritical. Rather, we can say that they rely on ordinary use where emphasize has been laid on clarity and vivacity. Quine is extremely critical about the general term ‘knowledge’ that we notice in epistemology or in the first philosophy. He conceives the general term ‘knowledge’ as elusive and indistinct. Even though knowledge is evidential, but it is not clear just how strong the evidence must be for something. Evidence on the basis of which something has been designated as knowledge fails to provide a clear picture to count it as knowledge in the real sense of the term because in most general cases we are not sure about the evidences we have in support of claiming something as knowledge. In this regard, Quine says that the word ‘knowledge’ is “useful and unobjectionable in the vernacular where we acquiesce in vagueness, but unsuited to technical use because of lacking a precise boundary.”<sup>13</sup> True human knowledge must be accorded with the so-called theoretical science and the supporting data or evidence must be backed up by science. Even Quine while seeking the legitimacy of knowledge emphasizes more on the contexts of word rather than precision.

Thus, the genesis of Quine’s **naturalized epistemology** actually hinges on the endurance of science and common sense. According to Quine, the seamlessness of knowledge, so to speak, is the by-product of both science and common sense and it would be determined not on the basis of formal rules and principles but on the basis of the standards of clarity and vivacity. He further goes on to say that there is no fundamental difference of kind within knowledge. We do not find the clear-cut gulf between a priori knowledge and a posteriori knowledge. There is a strong

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<sup>13</sup> Quine, W. V. O., “Relativism and Absolutism”, *Monist* 67 (1984), p. 295.

perception or idea that philosophy seeks to understand our theory from *within*. On the basis of this philosophical perception or presupposition, philosophy draws a priori theory. This in fact makes difference a priori theory from a posterior theory. However, while outlining naturalized epistemology, Quine directly denies the distinct possibility of a priori theory arising out of within. Within the sphere of naturalized epistemology there is no provision of making distinction between **a priori** and **a posteriori theory of knowledge**. According to Quine, the distinction between a priori and a posteriori can only be comprehended in philosophy if we adhere to the distinction between analytic and synthetic proposition. But as all we know that Quine in his “Two Dogmas of Empiricism” denies the possibility of analytic and synthetic distinction in the strict sense of the term. Some commentators have expressed Quine position about the distinction between analytic and synthetic distinction. Some hold that Quine has denied such distinction and some others have held that Quine does not deny such distinction rather he inclines to say that such distinction does not pay any serious philosophical contribution. However, we think Quine denies the possibility of a priori knowledge within the sphere of his naturalized epistemology. We think Quine’s rejection of a priori knowledge within the sphere of naturalized epistemology bears a serious philosophical implication. However, it is clear to us that debate between Quine and Carnap actually links with the distinction between analytic and synthetic propositions. His denial of the distinction between analytic and synthetic is also related with his attitudes towards meaning. As we know that an analytic statement is determined just by looking at the linguistic analysis or of the meaning of the subject and the predicate terms of the proposition under consideration. Kant offers us two distinctive features of analytic judgment. He says that in an analytic judgment the predicate term is overtly or covertly contained in the subject term and secondly, the denial of an analytic judgment leads to a contradiction. We think that these two

distinctive marks of analytic judgment is determined just by looking at the linguistic meaning of the subject and predicate terms.

For example, how do we come to know that the statement, such as, “All red roses are red” is analytic? Here we can determine it as analytic just by looking at the very linguistic meaning of the term ‘red-rose’. If a rose is red, it must be red. We have this linguistic meaning just by looking at the use of language. Our point at this juncture is that the analyticity of a statement is determined just by looking at the linguistic meaning of the statement under consideration. Interestingly, Quine equally denies the possibility of analytic judgment on the background of a priori intuition just by looking at the analysis of the meaning of the judgment. According to Quine, in the process of analysis of the meaning of the statement, we can take the help of translation manual, but the very fact is that the mechanism of translation manual is indeterminate in the true sense of the term. Thus, we can say that in Quine’s philosophy of language, his attitude towards meaning plays an important role. Even some commentators would say that Quine’s attitude towards meaning is supposed to be the centrality of his philosophical outlook.

We have already hinted that within the sphere of Quine’s naturalized epistemology, there we do not find any significant distinction between a priori and a posteriori. This does not make sense to say, after Quine, that in the process of having knowledge we cannot accept any distinction whatsoever. There are, of course different sort of knowledge, that can be acquired differently. For example, my knowledge of the mobile phone is somehow different from my knowledge about P. F. Strawson. Quine, of course, does not rule out such differences. One may also talk of observational knowledge arising out of observational sentences and such kind of knowledge is somehow different from non-observational knowledge. Quine, however, thinks that all kinds of knowledge fall under the same very general account. The very distinctive mark of such general

account of knowledge is that it rules out nothing or in other word, nothing can be ruled out from the general account of knowledge. Even, it does not rule out a priori knowledge. Even though Quine opines that there are differences among different sorts of knowledge or between a priori and a posteriori knowledge, but what he denies is that there is a single clear cut distinction between a priori and a posteriori knowledge. Thus, it seems to us that Quine's understanding of knowledge within his naturalized epistemology is exceptionally intangible in the sense that even though Quine conceives that there are differences among various kinds of knowledge, none of the differences actually matters to him at the level of *abstraction* at which he is working. As a physicalist Quine, of course, finds various differences among various kinds of knowledge, but such superficial differences cannot bear any conceptual significance in abstraction. Quine says, "I am physical object sitting in a physical world. Some of the forces of the physical world impinge on my surface. Light rays strike my retinas; molecules bombard my eardrums and fingertips. I strike back, emanating concentric airwaves. These waves take the form of a torrent of discourse about tables, people, molecules, light rays, retinas, prime numbers, infinite classes, joy and sorrow, good and evil."<sup>14</sup> The remarks within the quotation clearly reflect what is philosophically most significant about human situation generally. It seems that Quine does not have any intention to begin with absolute certainty in philosophy like Descartes and others; rather he finds comfortable to start with our theory of the world from general perspective. He does not find any relevance to place philosophy at the beginning on a priori foothold; nor does he think that philosophy as such demands cognitive accomplishments.

Thus, it appears that Quine's naturalized epistemology goes against many earlier philosophical theories. The question naturally arises: Why does Quine prefer to develop such theory? What

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<sup>14</sup> Quine, W. V. O., *The Ways of Paradox and Other Essays*, (New York: Random House, 1966; revised and expanded edn, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 228.

philosophical advantage he notices in his naturalized epistemology? Why does he prefer physicalistic approach in philosophy? In this regard, it can be said that Quine actually tries to develop the theoretical or cognitive aspects of our lives. In this regard, he inclines to say that human knowledge is personified in language. He conceives language as the concentric airwaves through which human knowledge in the desired sense is manifested. He further claims that language is just like waves through which the so-called cognitive activity of humans is made possible. Quine elsewhere claims that our knowledge in general is *seamless*, unbroken, i.e., all in one. Such unified human knowledge is the by-product of science and common sense. According to Quine, naturalized epistemology is a process of philosophical revelation of the continuity of science with common sense. They are in the same line of business, the only distinction between science and common sense is that unlike common sense science is more self-conscious and more successful. Science gives clarity and vivacity of knowledge. Quine says, "...the scientist can enhance objectivity and diminish the interference of language, by his very choice of language. And we [i.e., we philosophers], concerned to distill the essence of scientific discourse, can profitably purify the language of science beyond what might reasonably be urged upon the practicing scientist."<sup>15</sup> What Quine says here is that there remains a part of philosophy which is concerned to 'purify the language of science' in order to have maximum clarity and objectivity. However, Quine feels that not all linguistic vocabularies those have been used in philosophy do meet his (Quine's) standard. He rejects such vocabularies as insufficiently clear.

It is important to point out here that Quine, by his own account, is an empiricist and his very idea of naturalized epistemology even talks in favour of it. This does not, however, make sense to say that being an empiricist; Quine takes the notion of experience as absolutely fundamental. All

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 235.

philosophers who emphasize on common sense or rely on experience are in some sense or other regarded as empiricists. We think Quine is not a blind empiricist; rather he would be treated as refined empiricist. His understanding of common sense is continuous with science. Even though, Quine elsewhere in his book *Theories and Things* admits that experience like meaning, thought and belief is a worthy object of philosophical and scientific clarification and analysis, but this does not make sense to say that it is all about of philosophical analysis and clarification. Even experience like others may at times be *ill-suited* for use as instrument of philosophical clarification and analysis. Even for better philosophical and scientific clarification, Quine has given more emphasized on sentences which are observable and fairly accessible. Humans' thought or belief, though loosely, is made possible by way of linking observables to observables along with conjecturing causal connections. Quine has strong reservation on the many linguistic terms philosophers have taken for granted in developing their philosophical theories. According to Quine, many such terms by their own standards are not sufficient. They even suffer from lack of clarity and vivacity. Quine does not claim that terms such as, 'means' or 'understands' are senseless; nor even he suggests that such terms should be ousted from the domain of language; rather he sets the standard of the terms and in turn deserves that such terms do meet the standards of clarity and vivacity.

### **1.1 Stimulations and Science are the basic contents of Naturalized Epistemology**

The very objective of naturalized epistemology is to show the relationship between language and reality. Of course, it is true to say that the main function of any linguistic analysis is to show the relationship between language and reality. When Quine raises the question: how does language come to be about the world, it is indeed at par with the question: what is the relationship between language and reality? Different linguistic philosophers have given different interpretations about

the relationship between language and reality. For, example, early Wittgenstein in his *Tractatus* has introduced his celebrated picture theory where he has conceived every picture as a model of reality. Wittgenstein in this regard has introduced the logical interpretation of language. Many other semanticists have adopted referential method for showing the relationship between language and reality. Their point of view is that language invariably refers; there is no question of doubt and the referential aspect of language in some sense or other does foothold on reality. The conceptualism of Strawson, Putnam, Davidson, the speech acts theory of Austin, Searle, etc., are the different approaches through which the relationship between language and reality has been portrayed. Our point of contention at this juncture is that among many different functions of language, the main function is to make a relationship between language and reality.

Quine, of course, takes a scientific approach to show in what sense language comes to be about the world. According to Quine, language comes to be about the world in virtue of its relations to sensory stimulation. Quine in his “The Scope and Language of Science” has emphasized more on physical forces which impinge on the sensory surfaces. For Quine, physical forces impinging on appropriate parts of the body which give rise to stimulations of the sensory nerves and in turn produced noises about the world in virtue of their relations to such stimulations. Accordingly, Quine’s theory may be termed as ‘stimulus response theory’ which is the byproduct of both stimulations and science. In this regard, Quine goes on to say that the real source of human knowledge is energy encroaching on our sensory surfaces and also stimulating our sensory nerves. As a result, sensory stimulation according to Quine holds the centrality of human cognition or human knowledge. This is mainly for the reason that sensory stimulations in some sense or other are correlated just the way the world around me at a particular moment. In this sense, the world affects me only through such stimulations. But how do we reveal it? What

actually helps us to have a sense of such correlation? According to Quine, stimulation or sensory stimulation can be grasped within natural science itself. This is how our information about the world can be materialized. Thus, in a sense our information about the world is passing through our sensory receptors. Such inquiry, Quine claims, is purely an empirical inquiry that has been materialized through science and common sense.

Quine's outlook as stated above is complicated and in some cases preposterous. It seems that in some cases his position is sound and in some other cases his position lacks clarity. Some would say that Quine's claim that our utterances are about the world in virtue of their relation to stimulations of our sensory surfaces may appear untenable. Quine, in fact, was fully aware of this point. According to Quine, our putative knowledge forms a highly interconnected system. Some observable sentences are directly correlated with sensory stimulations while some others are not directly correlated with stimulations. Those sentences which are not directly correlated with stimulations, of course, be indirectly connected with observation sentences which are directly connected with stimulations and thus maintain a link in human cognition or human knowledge. Such sentences are called *non-observation* sentence. Thus, when we increasingly deal with the abstract aspects of knowledge, it would be very difficult to dig out exactly what sentences are in stake. Even though there is knowledge, such as, mathematical and logical, which are very much abstract and conceivable in nature, but such kind of acceptable knowledge is no longer associated with sensory stimulations. There is a strong perception in philosophy which goes in favour of mathematical and logical knowledge because of their authenticity and acceptability. According to them, mathematical and logical knowledge is far more acceptable than sensory knowledge or knowledge arising out of stimulations. Even though Quine has a sense of mathematical and logical knowledge like other, but unlike the others, Quine does not anticipate

any subtle distinction between mathematical and logical knowledge with sensory knowledge. According to Quine, all acceptable and incorrigible knowledge becomes the part of human knowledge and such kind of human knowledge must be accredited by science and common sense and hence becomes the part of naturalized epistemology. Quine contends that even the knowledge of mathematic and logic is indirectly associated with sensory stimulations and hence is counted as part of our knowledge. Thus, the form of human knowledge Quine desires to have is philosophically known as *holism* in the sense that by way of conceiving human knowledge within the sphere of naturalized epistemology, Quine approaches towards the **unification of human knowledge**. This does not, however, make sense to say that Quine's perception of human knowledge is obscure; rather it is a matter of ordinary fact because it is the by-product of both science and common sense.

Thus, for Quine one can have putative knowledge when sentences which are a potential part of our knowledge are somehow connected with sensory stimulation. This indeed is the very definition of putative knowledge. Quine immediately conceives a difficulty perhaps arising out of the 'prediction of stimulation'<sup>16</sup>. However, he tells us that one can easily overwhelm the apparent difficulty if predictions of observation sentences are directly interconnected with sensory stimulation. In fact, Quine's cognitive language plays a crucial role in prediction. According to Quine, a sentence can be termed as cognitive if it is supposed to be the necessary constituent in a significant body of sentences in some sense or other as a whole issue in prediction of observation sentences. Having said this, Quine, of course, homogenizes the prediction of observation sentences to be something like a definition of science. In this regard, Quine recalls later Wittgenstein's metaphor 'language-game'. Quine, in fact, uses predictions of

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<sup>16</sup> Quine, W. V. O., *Pursuit of Truth* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990; revised edn, 1992), p. 2.

observation sentences as the *frontiers of science*. Here Quine contrasts the language game of science with other language games, such as, fiction and poetry. Wittgenstein says, “A sentence’s claim to scientific status rests on what it contributes to a theory whose checkpoints are in prediction.”<sup>17</sup> In this regard, Quine does not offer us any notable distinction in kind between common sense knowledge and scientific knowledge. According to Quine, science is nothing but is ‘refined common sense’.<sup>18</sup> Quine says, “Science is not a substitute for common sense but an extension of it. The quest for knowledge is properly an effort simply to broaden and deepen the knowledge which the man in the street already enjoys, in moderation, in relation to the commonplace things around him.”<sup>19</sup> As science is a continuation of common sense, the scientist himself is indistinguishable from the common man in the sense of evidence. The only difference between a scientist and a common man is that unlike a common man, a scientist is more vigilant in his approach. However, this does not make sense to say that over vigilant requires some revision of evidential standards in the part of common sense, but what it requires is to pay more patient and systematic collection of evidences. Quine then claims that characterization of science is warranted by the fundamental fact that it is only through the waves of energy on our sensory surfaces along with consequent stimulations of our sensory nerves that we can discover anything about the world. Thus, Quine’s naturalized epistemology being the central idea of empiricism is an amalgamation of both science and common sense and it has been materialized both by low-level empirical trials and by inference from independently well confirmed theories. It is by reference to this idea that one can come across to the understanding of the world by sensory experience.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>18</sup> Quine, W. V. O., *The Ways of Paradox and Other Essays*, op. cit., p. 253.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 229.

We think that Quine's general view of knowledge within the sphere of naturalized epistemology is a sort of biological phenomenon. It has been clearly reflected by the very opening sentence that takes place in his book *From Stimulus to Science*. Here Quine says, "We and other animals notice what goes on around us. This helps us by suggesting what we might expect and even prevent, and thus fosters survival."<sup>20</sup> Knowledge of both men and animals actually starts from stimulus, i.e., stimulus is the starting point of knowledge. However, in the course of development, human knowledge differs from knowledge of other species because unlike other species, humans do have a vast and bewildering growth of conceptual and linguistic organs. According to Quine, there underlies a necessary prediction both in the case of men and also in the case of animals. However, unlike animals, the prediction of men is dependable. This is all about of natural science. Human learning process of knowledge is biologically better than animals. Everyone begins with ordinary elementary knowledge which locus is stimulus; but the very fact is that for our own survival ordinary elementary knowledge must be taken seriously. Ordinary language cannot be terminated in any point of human life. We must engage with ordinary knowledge. Even though our survival actually hinges on so many other extraneous factors besides ordinary human knowledge, but ordinary knowledge is supposed to be the defining and essential characteristic of our survival because without ordinary knowledge we do not come to know in a proper and desire manner what is happening around us. Thus, for Quine, ordinary knowledge in the true sense of the term is indispensable and fundamental.

Even though there we notice various forms of knowledge, putative or non-putative; scientific or non-scientific, but not all kinds of knowledge has survival value. Quine's naturalized

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<sup>20</sup> Quine, W. V. O., *From Stimulus to Science* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 1.

epistemology emphasizes more the survival value of humans. Quine admits that in the most general level, we notice a triangular fusion among knowledge, survival value and the prediction of stimulus. However, humans' biological propensity is to enhance the survival value. In the early period, survival value is pre-requisite. However, once we have in place a conception of the world as enduring through time, questions about the remote past and future will arise, and in turn their answers will count as putative knowledge. Thus, it can be said that ordinary knowledge has been recognized as putative knowledge through the ages of baptismal ceremony. Quine though seems in favour of survival value, but he does not think that survival value alone is the main goal of science. It is only the general propensity of human that they do prefer survival value simply for their biological necessity. The goal of science is, of course, secure humans' survival value because it indirectly helps to the growth of knowledge. Thus, it seems that ordinary general knowledge both for man and animals starts from stimulus and then the process continuous in the form of refinement. In this process humans take the help from science which animals cannot do. As a result, humans' ordinary knowledge turns into putative knowledge unlike animals. Thus, it can be said simplistically that the centrality of general knowledge is stimulus and hence stimulus has been treated as a paradigm of Quine's naturalism. In this sense, it can be said that Quine's naturalized epistemology is the by-product of both stimulus and science.

## **1.2 Can Quine be regarded as Realist being a proponent of Naturalized Epistemologist?**

Thus, while developing his theory of naturalized epistemology, Quine puts emphasize on a system of beliefs associated with sensory experience what Quine terms as *knowledge*. It is a form of rudimentary knowledge which tells us what is happening around us. Critiques would say how do we know that it is through sensory experience that we come about anything of the world? Quine's answer is very simple. He tells us that it is the very common way that we know anything

else; it is the part of the system of beliefs which efficaciously foresees sensory experience. In this regard, Quine insists on in saying that it is a general perception or so to speak a general standard that our overall scientific theory based on historicity and baptismal ceremony demands of the world only that it be so structured as to assure the sequences of stimulations that our theory gives us to expect. We do not have any alternative path barring this; we do not have at our hand some extra-theoretical reality with which we may compare; we do not have sufficiently robust kind of reality or world. Thus, within the sphere of sensory stimulation, Quine does not incorporate something as *real*. One reason perhaps is that if we think after Quine that our knowledge is no more than a means of prediction stimulation then there is no point of purporting the existence of reality at all. Quine elsewhere inclines to say that our talk of external things is just a conceptual apparatus that helps us to reveal and control the initiating of our sensory receptors in the light of previous initiating of our sensory receptors. This sensory initiating is a matter of continuous and non-stopping process. More specifically, it can be said that our sensory initiation is directed towards objects which he counts as real. However, he does not take real objects as *fully real* independent of us. Thus, we can say that Quine may be regarded as a realist with certain reservation. He perhaps would be treated as a realist about ordinary objects informed by the scientists. That is why Quine has attributed his view of realism as '**robust realism**'<sup>21</sup>.

Let us delve into the issue in what sense Quine is supposed to be a realist. This position can be made clear with regard to non-realist position. Instrumentalism or fictionalism is called non-realist. It states that scientific theories are nothing but simply instruments for making predictions and the elements we are talking about in scientific theories, such as, electrons, neutrons, etc., are not real entities at all. Thus, it seems that if the entities of a particular theory of which we are

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<sup>21</sup> Quine, W. V. O., *Theories and Things*, op. cit., p. 21.

being talked of are real, then this theory would be treated as a realist theory. On the contrary, if the entities or elements of a theory are not real, then it would be treated as a non-realist theory. In the case of instrumentalism, the elements, such as, electrons, neutrons, etc., are not real, but we accept them as a sort of useful fiction because such fictions help us to make successful predictions. However, they are not real because they do not exist. They are conjectured on account of their instrumental value or use value. We have the same sort of interpretation, of course, on a relative basis, where it has been assumed that entities of common sense knowledge, such as, tables, mountains, etc. have instrumental value like electron, neutrons. There is a section of philosophers who find some sort of similarity between Quine's theory and instrumentalism. However, this does not make sense to say that Quine is an instrumentalist. Instrumentalism deals with two different kinds of things of which one is real and the other is a useful fiction in the sense that it helps us to accomplish knowledge about the real entities. For example, fictional entities as mentioned above though unreal are postulated by the scientific theories in order to attain knowledge of physical objects. Knowledge of physical objects is real. Thus, fictional objects are useful or instrumental in the sense that they help us to attain knowledge about real objects. There we notice another theory where entities of science and ordinary physical objects are held to be fictional. However, they have been hypothesized in order to facilitate real entities manifested through experience. We think each of these accounts is anti-realist as neither of these positions holds that entities of one class do measure up to the standard of reality set up by entities of other class.

### **1.3 Is Quine an Instrumentalist?**

We do not think so, because according to the instrumentalist, there are elements which are *given*. Quine, being a naturalized epistemologist, does not accept anything as given. Even though Quine

has presumed that the occurrence of stimulations is independent of theory, but we do not know them independent of theory, i.e., they are not self-regulating. Entities which are given are self-regulating. Quine, thus, denies any sort of self-regulating entity. As a naturalized epistemologist Quine invariably denies any philosophical position based on a priori criterion. He does not agree with the philosophical position that there is reality independent of our experience. According to Quine, we cannot have any self-regulating knowledge, i.e., knowledge of objects independent of our ordinary conceptual scheme. Quine's naturalized epistemology invariably stands against any extra-theoretical given; it stands against any sort of a priori intuition. In this regard, he contends that there is "no first philosophy prior to natural science"<sup>22</sup>. Our ordinary conceptual scheme gives rise only to ordinary knowledge. Ordinary knowledge, Quine reveals, is nothing but a process of internal development and in this process we do not have or we do not require any given object rather this internal process goes on with the help of familiar objects of everyday life. Thus, Quine's position is very clear. He simplistically denies any sort of a priori intuition, any sort of objects which are given, any sort of reality independent of our experience. He equally denies a priori concept of conceptual scheme and it goes against Strawson. According to Strawson, we all of human beings have a unified conceptual scheme on the background of which our knowledge of the world is made possible. Strawson in this regard, takes help from Kant. Quine denies both Strawson and Kant. He denies Strawson by saying that the conceptual scheme we have is ordinary and therefore there is no point of adhering the view that there is a unified conceptual scheme. Secondly, he equally denies Kant's position of a priori intuition. According to Quine, the fruitful knowledge always comes from within and such kind of knowledge is committed to the theory. Any sort of knowledge that deviates from theory would no longer be treated as knowledge.

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<sup>22</sup> Quine, W. V. O., "Five Milestones of Empiricism", in *Ibid.*, p. 67.

#### **1.4 Quine's Naturalized Epistemology is a Theory Building process**

As we have already stated that Quine's naturalized epistemology is the byproduct of both science and common sense (stimulus). Thus, with the collaboration of science and common sense, Quine develops a theory. In this sense, it can be said that Quine's naturalized epistemology is a theory building process. Quine elsewhere in his book *Word and Object* remarks that "everything to which we concede existence is a posit from the standpoint of a description of the theory-building process, and simultaneously real from the standpoint of the theory that is being built."<sup>23</sup>

Whatever has been anticipated from the very standpoint of a theory has equally been posited as real. As a result, it can be said that we do accept objects as we do accept the theory. It is indeed the natural standpoint of Quine that whatever has been qualified by the theory would in turn be regarded as real in the desire sense. Quine, however, does not rely on ordinary usage in his theory building process, because in ordinary usage there is a general propensity of contrasting between theories with fact. However, Quine sets out from ordinary usage on this point. Instead of that, Quine has been committed to a theory which is working from within. According to Quine, in the process of naturalized epistemology, we can never do better than occupy the standpoint of some theory. In this regard, Quine differentiates two stances, such as, 'the standpoint of a description of the theory-building processes' (epistemological) and 'the standpoint of the theory that is being built' (metaphysical).

In first philosophy the gulf between epistemology and metaphysics is vivid and distinct by their own peculiar inquiries. Quine, being a naturalized epistemologist, denies any sort of philosophical jargon that appears and remains as philosophical dogma. Truly speaking, in Quine's naturalized epistemology, being a theory building process, there is no dichotomy

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<sup>23</sup> Quine, W. V. O., *Word and Object*, op. cit., p. 22.

between epistemology and metaphysics. Even the epistemological standpoint, Quine tells us, presupposes the ontological standpoint. Instead of emphasizing on the distinction between philosophical theories in the form of division of labor, Quine rather puts emphasize more on how we come by our theory of the world is itself part of that theory. In fact, Quine reveals reciprocity between epistemology and ontology and even expresses no reservation in claiming that epistemology contains ontology. Compartmentalizing philosophy into different names is the objective of philosophy. The very objective of philosophy is to study how knowledge as part of our own creation is being created. In this sense, Quine's theory building process is directed towards the theory that is being built. Thus, Quine's naturalized epistemology or in short, Quine's naturalism is revolutionary in the sense that by way of approaching this theory Quine denies that there is a distinctively philosophical standpoint from which we can reflect on knowledge. Precisely speaking, it can be said, after Quine, that our study of human knowledge takes place within the theory and it studies and presupposes everything within the theory. This in fact leads us to say after Quine that our knowledge is nothing but a 'conceptual apparatus' and it does not conflict with realism.

While making a distinction between **old and new epistemology**, Quine goes on to say that old epistemology, what Quine has termed it as 'first philosophy' in some sense or other aspired to contain natural science out of sense-data; while new epistemology what Quine has termed it as '**naturalized epistemology**' is contained in natural science as a chapter of psychology. Thus, the basic elements of old epistemology are sense-data and the basic elements of new epistemology are stimulus and it has become a part of psychology. The distinctive feature of Quine's new epistemology, i.e., naturalized epistemology is that here everything is our own construction or projection from stimulations. The former may be thought of as 'epistemology in natural science'

and the later may be thought of as ‘natural science in epistemology’. The former is contained by sense-data, whereas the latter is contained by **psychology or stimulations**. In this regard, Quine makes a clear cut distinction between **cognitive and non-cognitive**. Quine, being a cognitivist, engages in finding out the distinction between what is good for human beings by way of the prediction of sensory experiences and what is good for them in other ways. He then claims that anything that has been determined by the way of the prediction of sensory experiences counts as science and it would be good for humans.

### **1.5 The Constituent of Theory**

Quine very often speaks of ‘our theory or our system of the world’. In fact, his naturalized epistemology actually hinges **on his theory building process**. Side by side, he also talks of ‘our science’ or ‘our knowledge’. Let us explain what is the constituent of Quine’s idea of theory? Or more specifically, what is the embodiment of theory? We have already mentioned that Quine’s naturalized epistemology being a new form of epistemology is a theory building process and it has been developed with the collaboration of both science and common sense (stimulus). According to Quine, our theory is embodied in language, i.e., it is constituted by a set of sentences (language). By ‘our theory’ Quine means a scientific theory associated with a complex of ideas and one can have a sense of such ideas with the help of words (language) that express them. Thus, our theories are embodied in language and one can look for our theories through sentences or language as such in order to have a sense of the ideas expressed by means of words or sentences, i.e., language as such. Quine’s naturalized epistemology deals with a kind of human knowledge contrary to a matter of ideas or contrary to propositional knowledge abstracted out of the meaning of the sentences. Quine expresses his reservation of such knowledge because he thinks that to talk of ideas or propositions is too vague as well far-off

from the evidence arising out of stimulations. Knowledge of proposition or knowledge of ideas, Quine contends, does not match with the genuine scientific account of knowledge. Knowledge expressing through words or sentences and also our uses of them are by contrast open to public view and very much consistent and coherent with scientific study.

Quine's naturalized **epistemology as a theory building process equally** deals with a kind of knowledge which is very much contrary to the philosophers' idea that knowledge is basically and fundamentally a matter of states of brain. Even though, Quine has a high regard about scientific motivation in general, but he still favours the position that knowledge should be treated as a matter of language. His understanding of language is somehow different from ideal or logical language. It is now a matter of history that linguistic philosophers regarding the very nature of language have broadly been divided into two different classes, such as, ideal or logical language philosophers and ordinary language philosophers. When we are talking about the nature of language after Quine, we do, of course, talk of ordinary language. Again within ordinary language, there are a good numbers of linguistic philosophers, such as, later Wittgenstein, Austin, Ryle, Strawson and others and we do not think that Quine's position about the implication of language has a similarity with other ordinary language philosophers just stated. Indeed, it is true to say that Quine has a considerable philosophical debate with Strawson about the philosophical implication of language. Even though both Quine and Strawson are thought as conceptualists, but like Strawson, Quine does not admit a *unified conceptual scheme* for all humans. Quine, unlike Strawson, is a relativist.

According to Quine, our knowledge is public in nature. However, it is by no means merely 'public in principle' as states of the brain. This position of Quine certainly goes against Noam Chomsky who states that language is the mirror of human mind. Language, according to

Chomsky, is the mirror of human mind because every normal human at the time of his or her birth has biologically and innately possessed a left hemisphere as an organ of language from where human language has been spontaneously generated. In this regard, Chomsky brings the concept of 'generative grammar'. Now, as language is generated from brain, the knowledge that we have is supposed to be the states of the brain. Knowledge is within, it is shared and it lies on the strong foothold of a sophisticated scientific theory. Knowledge associated with naturalized epistemology is linguistic with the perception that 'all knowledge must be thought of as linguistic'. Quine's position that *knowledge is linguistic* is at par with the others linguistic philosophers, most importantly, along with the earlier predecessor Carnap who gave enormous stress on language. However, the only notable difference between Quine and Carnap about language is that Carnap talks in favour of ideal or constructed language; whereas Quine talks in favour of ordinary language mostly associated with stimulations.

Whatever the nature of language may be, it is indeed true to say that Quine is in favour of the view that our theory of the world is embodied in language. Even though the slogan 'our theory of the world is embodied in language' is particularly Quinean, but many linguistic philosophers like Quine have already voiced in favour of it. However, this does not make sense to say that Quine has followed the same what has done by his predecessors. Quine in this regard has emphasized on three aspects. First, in ordinary usage a 'theory' is very often analogized with 'fact'. Quine, however, denies it. Instead of this, Quine goes on to say that all our knowledge in some sense or other is theoretical in nature. The difference of knowledge, if there be any, could be measured not in terms of comparison but in terms of degree. Secondly, by the term 'our theory', Quine actually means 'aggregate of theories'. This so happens because knowledge of different types overlap and interlock in terms of degrees. In this sense knowledge of different types are

incorporated with each other. Knowledge of different categories functions just like a regulative ideal; it is not an established fact, but it is something towards which one should endeavor. Quine says, “Knowledge develops in a multiplicity of theories, each with its limited utility. ... These theories overlap very considerably, in their so-called logical laws and in much else, but that they add up to an integrated and consistent whole is only a worthy ideal and happily not a prerequisite of scientific progress. ... let the reconciliations proceed; each step advances our understanding of the world.”<sup>24</sup> Thirdly and more importantly, by using the term ‘our theory’, Quine emphasizes more on the word ‘our’. By the word ‘our’, Quine actually intends to say that our conception of the world is not based on any sort of imagination or fantasy. ‘Our theory’ is something like the best inclusive knowledge presently available in all disciplines. Again by the term ‘best’, Quine actually means the knowledge arising out of *sensory experience* or stimulus having outmost clarity and simplicity. Moreover, our theory of the world, Quine claims, is comprehensive and complex in nature because it unifies everything. To that extent, it is an idealization, but it remains in contact with actual human practice. Even though our theory as an idealization is supposed to be the ultimate truth about the world, but the ingenuity of this theory is that here everyone enables to take part in a holistic manner. Alternatively, it can be said that our theory contains rudimentary knowledge that everyone can share of it. We think Quine’s phrase ‘our theory’ is just like the metaphor ‘language-game’ as used by later Wittgenstein. According to later Wittgenstein, the metaphor ‘language-game’ is a class concept and under this there are many sub-games. Now, each and every game belongs to ‘language game’ on the basis of shareable characteristics. Wittgenstein in this regard breaks the corridor of classical essentialism. According to the traditional essentialism, we have the idea of a class concept just on the basis of the essential quality every species belonging to this class must possess. That means the defining

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 251.

characteristic of all species or token of a class must remain the same on the basis of which one can have the class concept. The later Wittgenstein breaks the essentialist position. Wittgenstein in his *Philosophical Investigations* shows that we have the idea of a class not on the basis of common characteristic all species belonging to this class do possess, but on the basis of ‘similarities, dissimilarities, something common, something uncommon, overlapping crisscross relations’.

We think Quine’s position in the case of ‘our theory’ or in the process of theory building process is similar to Wittgenstein. According to Quine, within our theory, there are different sub-theories, just as within our *knowledge* there are different types of knowledge measured in terms of degrees. However, every sub-theory belongs to ‘our theory’ and there underlies overlapping and crisscrossing relationship among all sub-theories. That is why, Quine elsewhere in his writing vehemently claims that our theory is the best theory by its standard because it gives rise, of course continuously, the low-level common sense knowledge what Quine terms it as ‘rudimentary knowledge’ with the most advanced scientific knowledge. Thus, Quine’s naturalized epistemology is a theory building process through which one can acquire best knowledge by best possible means without anticipating any philosophical dogmas. As a theory building process, Quine’s naturalized epistemology actually goes against many well established philosophical perceptions. First, it goes against Kantian analytic-synthetic distinction and again it goes against Carnap’s reductionism. Quine terms the views of both Kant and Carnap as ‘two dogmas’. However, the most distinctive insight of Quine’s naturalized epistemology actually hinges on his subtle philosophical position that ‘our knowledge is embodied in language and an acquisition of the one goes hand-in-hand with an acquisition of the other’. His naturalized epistemology thus engages in exploring how elementary **cognitive** or **theoretical language**

**could be acquired.** Quine in this regard denies the mentalist interpretation as expounded by Chomsky, Katz, Fodor and many others. Unlike the mentalist interpretation, Quine goes on to say that through primitive vocal responses to stimulation, a child gradually can develop sophisticated language. Such acquisition process of language is natural in the sense that one can acquire such development with the help of his stimulations; nothing else. The point of contention at this juncture is that whether such stimulation is something innately possessed or not. According to Chomsky, acquisition of language is something innate. Quine does not think so. According to Quine, acquisition of language is natural and it is purely the outcome of stimulus responses and nothing else. The task of a philosopher is to search what exactly underlies in cognitive language, to see the evidence relation, the relation borne by theory to the observations that support it. For Quine, relations to observation sentences and thus to stimulations constitute the evidence for theory. Thus, to acquire the mastery over language, the learner must come to use it in accordance with those some relations. Once the learner acquires the mastery or authenticity over language, the so-called evidential relation is virtually ordained in the process of learning.

### **1.6 New Interpretation of Metaphysics within the purview of Naturalized Epistemology**

Apparently, it can be said that there is no place for metaphysics in Quine's naturalized epistemology. Quine's naturalized epistemology as we have already learnt actually deals with 'our theory' associated with our stimulations and science and hence be regarded as natural and more importantly it deals with rudimentary low level common sense knowledge with the background of theoretical science, the so-called traditional metaphysics thus cannot be accommodated within naturalized epistemology. This does not make sense to say that Quine completely overlooks metaphysics? His notable article: "**What There Is**" actually brings the relevant of ontology. Quine actually uses the term 'ontology' frequently, but his later writings

are directed towards the impossibility of a certain form of metaphysics. Again, one should keep in mind that metaphysics perhaps is not a completely different sort of philosophical wing; the relevance of metaphysics finds everywhere. Even great German philosopher Immanuel Kant did not accept metaphysics in general, but at the same time he accepted a particular sort of metaphysics. Therefore, it would be very unforgiving to consider Kant as anti-metaphysician. We notice the same in Quine's case. Quine's naturalized epistemology as a theory building process certainly does not accommodate the general position of metaphysics, but Quine too in some cases with reservation has accepted a particular kind of metaphysics what we term it as a 'new form of metaphysics'. The method of Quine's metaphysics is primarily the clarification and simplification of our theory of the world. Our theory of the world actually gives us the accepted guideline and thereby tells us what it is that we are really committed to believing and what the world is really like just at the moment we claim that we know about it. By way of perceiving what there is in the world just when we claim that we know it, Quine thereby does not claim that there is a metaphysical source of knowledge based on a priori insight distinct from what the natural sciences rely upon. Metaphysics, if there be at all, must be consistent with sciences. We do not require a kind of metaphysic which would offer us the real truth on matters contrary to partial truth produced by natural sciences. Even though philosophy engages in searching or so to speak contributing knowledge, but like metaphysical knowledge there we do not require any second-order knowledge or activity distinction from the genuine cognitive work of the sciences. Philosophy as a naturalized epistemology must confine with clarification, simplifying and reorganizing first-order scientific activities.

According to Quine, naturalized epistemology **being a theory building process** does of course incorporate evidence or the sentences in which evidence is exemplified. In this regard, Quine

takes the help from first-order logic. Quine claims that in some sense or other our theory implies evidence. But how does the implication can be defended and justified in naturalized epistemology? In this regard Quine goes on to say that it is first-order logic along with the concept of identity which we should look for an understanding of implication relations. Quine admits that the methods of logic are to be directly applicable to **our theory of the world**. The application of the methods of logic does of course require significant reorganization because the language of logic always demands adequate clarity in ordinary language and it is indeed true to say that ordinary language in its own structure may not always be fitted in applied logic. The use of logic, Quine opines, always demands ‘preparatory operators’ and this sort of preparatory work at large is the reformulation required for Quine’s metaphysical enterprise. Thus, in a sense, it can be said that with the introduction of first-order logic, Quine has succeeded at making our theory safe. Logic works within the logical syntax of language and the logical syntax of language requires reorganization of the ordinary syntax of language and such reorganization in turn justifies the implication relation between theory and evidence. Thus, Quine’s natural epistemology acknowledges a sort of metaphysics which would act within the logical syntax of language and such metaphysical entry does not vitiate the very objective of our theory. While justifying the positive impact of logic on theory building process, Quine says that “the motivation of the Procrustean treatment of ordinary language at the hands of the logicians has been ... that of achieving theoretical insights comparable to those which **Arabic** notation and algebra made possible.”<sup>25</sup>

It seems clear to us that Quine’s new interpretation of metaphysics is the outcome of the syntax of logic, because the syntax of logic, precisely speaking, sets out a clear and definite criterion for

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<sup>25</sup> Quine, W. V. O., “Mr. Strawson on Logical Truth”, in W. V. Quine, *The Ways of Paradox and Other Essays*, op. cit., p. 149.

the metaphysical (ontological ) assurances of a theory formulated in that syntax. This, in turn, helps us immensely in clarifying the idea of ontology. Thus, Quine's metaphysical work consists in considering how **our theory can** best be formulated in the canonical notation of logic. Quine in this regard contends that incorporating our theory into the background of first order logic puts a premium on ontological or metaphysical decisions. This so happens because first-order logic deals with generalizations over objects, it emphasizes more on exactly what objects there are, what expressions are to be taken as referring to objects. Quine's very intention of introducing referential language in his naturalized epistemology remains unfulfilled if he does not include the syntax of logic in our theory. Quine claims that his reformulation of our system of the world as itself an integral part of our coming to know the world better. Quine thus sets up a standard which gives us the insight on the basis of which we come to know that a particular sort of entity is comparatively better than another. Such standard is not external to our system; rather it is a standard to which our knowledge already conforms must be the correct one. Thus, Quine's very objective of naturalized epistemology is to build up the appropriate standards in philosophy by means of which the best system of knowledge as a whole can be determined.

Even though Quine in **his theory-building process** voices in favour of appropriate standards, but he is no longer voices in favour of a particulate stringent and inviolable standard. As a conceptual relativist, Quine cannot stick to a definite standard. In fact, Quine does not think that the 'simplest, clearest overall pattern of canonical notation' is the only meaningful language; nor does he think that it is the language that we ought to speak. As an open mind philosopher, Quine gladly accepts that his supposed canonical notation, i.e., the syntax of logic might not be learnable as a first language, even elsewhere Quine talks in favour of 'a bifurcation in canonical notation' with different standards corresponding to different purposes. However, he tells us that

any standard whatsoever with the background of canonical notation, or the syntax of logic would be treated as philosophically profitable because it would emphasize on a kind of language slightly different from ordinary language where referential opacity can no longer persist or exist.

Thus, the main objective of Quine's naturalized epistemology is to set up the whole status of philosophy. According to Quine, the status of philosophy, at large, would be directed towards its contribution to our overall system of theory of the world. In this regard, Quine, as we have already observed, emphasizes more on understanding and prediction as the major aim of science. Knowledge, according to Quine, may be originated in a concern with prediction. Therefore, the point or status or objective of philosophy must be naturalized in the sense that it would bring its direct role in prediction of sensory experience. Philosophical understanding, Quine claims, must incorporate in some sense or other sensory experience what Quine termed it as 'prediction'. Quine's naturalized epistemology thus attempts to design a kind of philosophy where knowledge can be accomplished with the collaboration of science and stimulus and the language through which knowledge can be attained would be a referential in nature and this referential form of language can be obtained with the help of the syntax of logic what Quine termed it as 'canonical notation'. Thus, it seems to us Quine's naturalized epistemology is nothing but an enterprise of *a theory building process* through which different standards are being developed on account of different situations to have acceptable rudimentary common sense knowledge. Thus, the very distinctive aspect of Quine's naturalized epistemology is to develop a theory from within. He reconceives epistemology within epistemology. The method he adopts the constant revision of epistemology within epistemology. In this process he finds epistemology as *naturalized epistemology*.

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