

# QUINE ON NATURALISED EPISTEMOLOGY

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*Dedicated to*  
*my*  
*Beloved Parents*



## DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis entitled **QUINE ON NATURALISED EPISTEMOLOGY** has been prepared by me under the guidance of Dr. Kantilal Das, Professor of Philosophy, Department of Philosophy, University of North Bengal. No part of this thesis has formed the basis for the award of any degree or fellowship previously.

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## ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

The main contention of this thesis is to outline the philosophical implications of Quine's Naturalized Epistemology. According to Quine, epistemology must be naturalized. The position that epistemology must be naturalized goes against the First Philosophy or Traditional Epistemology. According to Quine, traditional epistemology is full of dogmas; it functions under the womb of dogmas. Quine while developing his naturalized epistemology rejects a number of traditional or concurrent views, such as, traditional metaphysics, the analytic-synthetic distinction, reductionism, modal logic, essentialism and skepticism. For Quine, each of these doctrines in many diverse ways requires the existence of meanings, propositions, attributes, relations, or numbers. He denies all these views because he does not intend to do philosophy within the womb of dogmas. Instead he introduces an enhanced common sense, naturalism in contrast to mentalism, physicalism in opposition to phenomenalism, holism in opposition to reductionism and atomism, pragmatism, under-determination of theory, indeterminacy of translation, radical translation, inscrutability of reference, and ontological relativity.

Quine further contends that science is a continuation of common sense and his philosophy of naturalized epistemology in the real sense of the term is a continuation or extension of both common sense and science. In this regard, he goes on to say that there are no meanings, propositions, relations, or numbers that would seem to be inconsistent with what either common sense or science would say. Thus, in a sense Quine's position in the realm of analytic tradition seems unusual as he differs on many issues that would honor in analytic tradition. He is more inclined to offer us a piecemeal inquiry. His philosophical position is revolutionary because it appears both as positive and negative. He contradicts with so many classical and traditional epistemologists, such as, Kant, Carnap and all those who designed philosophy on the basis of

presupposition or dogmas. Side by side, he offers us a new concept of philosophy known as naturalized epistemology which impacts a lot in the subsequent philosophical developments. We thus read Quine as a revolutionary critique because each of his philosophical theory appears as a critical exposition of the earlier well established philosophical theory. Quine confessed Carnap as a towering figure in philosophy for his reductionism and they had mutual admiration and affection but still they had profound conceptual philosophical differences. The epistemological outlook of Quine reflects both the attractions of Carnap's methodology and a powerful negative reaction to some of its fundamental tenets. It was reflected in his essay "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" first published in 1951. Here Quine inclines to say that their divergences about ontology ultimately stem from their differences about the analytic-synthetic 'cleavage'. In this regard, Gibson in his excellent work *The Philosophy of W. V. Quine* remarks that their debate is absolutely central to their conceptions of empiricism. They are in agreement that empiricism is the philosophy that best explicates the nature of science, and they concur that science provides the best theory of the world. However, they divide on the perception whether empiricism requires the analytic-synthetic distinction. Thus, the locus of their philosophical debate actually hinges on their very perception of the philosophy that best explains *the nature of reality*. In Quine's phrase, *as to what there is*. The root of this dispute is deep as it goes to the heart of what they think philosophy is all about. Having said this, within the philosophical debate neither of them abandoned his fundamental philosophical position.

We think that both Carnap and Quine believe that all knowledge derives from sense experience. This is the classical statement of empiricism one can trace to Locke and Hume. This position is acceptable to both Quine and Carnap. However, the difference begins when Carnap asserts that sense experience requires a philosophical reconstruction that would be extremely needed towards

explaining the organized and coherence theories one finds in science. Here the term *reconstruction* should be apprehended in terms of *justification*. For Carnap, justification in terms of reconstruction is prerequisite because science cannot be derived merely from observation. Science has a non-observational component that gives it much of its scope and conceptual force that would require justification or reconstruction. That is why Carnap invokes in favour of reconstruction or justification as he thinks that it would be the main function of empirical philosophy what Quine calls 'the reductive thesis'. As it is reductive, it is logical in character and as it is logical in character, it is analytic in nature. Thus, to develop a reconstruction of the coherent body of the theory called 'science', the philosopher must, Carnap opines, presuppose the distinction between the analytic and the synthetic. For Carnap, the framework of a scientific theory derives from analyticity; it is not a function of sense experience but of a priori decision. Thus, for the classical epistemologists, the analytic-synthetic distinction is essential to their defense of empiricism. Quine vehemently rejects Carnap's interpretation of the task of empiricism as unlike Carnap, he thinks that no reconstruction in the form of justification of science by philosophy is either needed or possible. For Quine, to assume that such an *Aufbau* or philosophical reconstruction is required to assume that philosophy has a privilege position from which it can infallibly judge science.

This position of Quine, we do reckon, brings empiricism as a normative philosophy. According to Quine, Carnap by way of illuminating reconstructionism within empiricism actually injected normative stance within epistemology by way of assuming that the existence of first philosophy is self-validating. Quine believes that this is a kind of fantasy advocated and entertained only by the traditional philosophers. Instead of this, he proposes *epistemology naturalized* which denies the normative account of traditional epistemology. It recognizes that science goes its own way in

developing theory and pays no attention to any such normative reconstruction. This is the message of Quine's *Naturalized Epistemology*.

Quine's naturalized epistemology is based on the remark, "Don't theorize, just look at human practice". This reminds me Wittgenstein who once remarked "Don't think, look!" Quine contends that no justification beyond scientific practice is possible. His advocacy of psychology by which he means behaviourism, is an alternative formulation of the same point that eventually entails the repudiation of philosophical reconstruction. Quine settles for behaviourist psychology and the stimulation of sensory receptors as the foundation of naturalized epistemology which offers us a new conception of empiricism that banks on the very nature of scientific activity. We thus evaluate his theory as the philosophy purified of dogmas appeared in the forms of analytic-synthetic cleavage and reductionism. He calls for empiricism without the Dogmas.

In a nutshell, we can say that Quine's naturalized epistemology has a far reaching philosophical implication on the basis of which we can not only revisit the earlier philosophical theories appear under the name **First Philosophy**, it also helps us to enter into a new philosophical regime that we are talking at present. His philosophical reflection not only appears as a revolt of the classical traditions, it equally opens up a new path leads to the contemporary philosophy of language, such as, post modernism, post structuralism etc.

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## PREFACE

The main contention of this **Doctoral Thesis** is to explicate and examine the philosophical implication of Quine's Naturalized Epistemology. Quine's naturalized epistemology appears as a revolt against the so-called **First Philosophy** or Traditional Epistemology. By way of criticizing First Philosophy, Quine thus offers us a radical interpretation of philosophy in the name of Naturalized Epistemology. According to Quine, epistemology must be naturalized. Naturalized epistemology is the offshoot of both natural sciences, such as, sociology, economics, psychology, history etc. and common sense. He holds that science is continuous with common sense, with everyday knowledge. He explains the doctrine as the recognition that it is within science itself and not in some prior philosophy, which reality is to be identified and described. His main contention was to develop philosophical theory without presupposing any philosophical dogmas. For Quine, while considering human knowledge, philosophers have no vantage point, no method, no stance, which is different in kind from that of the knowledge which is their subject. He conceives that philosophers are *just like sailors* who engage to rebuild their boat on the open sea. Thus, for Quine, philosophers do not require any vantage point outside the open sea, i.e., outside naturalized epistemology. There is no such cosmic exile. In this Doctoral research work an attempt has been made to show the far reaching philosophical implications of Quine's naturalized epistemology.

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## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

W.V. O. Quine (1908-2000) has occupied a central position in the domain of analytic philosophy or philosophy of language. He is certainly the best well known analytic thinker of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, his philosophical writings in most general cases have been undervalued. Even though Quine perhaps would not be appraised as an original thinker like Kant, Descartes, Wittgenstein and Heidegger, but he, of course, would certainly be recognized as authentic critical thinker. His critical approach towards the well-established philosophical doctrines actually portrayed his insightful ingenuity. As a leading campaigner of critical philosophy in modern period, Quine enables to occupy the centrality in linguistic philosophy. The other distinctive aspect of his philosophical writing is that he offers us a unified, systematic and comprehensive treatment of his philosophical thought. According to Quine, philosophy is all about of clarification and precision without any philosophical dogma. Accordingly, he has attempted to do the same in technical work, such as, in logic and set-theory. As a systematic thinker, Quine develops his philosophical theories as a *coherent whole*. More succinctly, it can be said that as an incalculably methodical thinker Quine has attempted to fix his philosophical doctrines to form a *coherent whole*.<sup>1</sup> Even though Quine's writing is wide-ranging in nature, but as a systematic thinker Quine has linked his various philosophical aspects into a single and unified whole with utmost consistency. Unlike practical philosophy or value theory, Quine has deeply engaged within the realm of theoretical philosophy. His writing on analytic philosophy directly or indirectly touches upon every topic of analytic concept since the time of Frege. He has no interest in ethics, or the nature of just society, or the nature of aesthetics, rather he has given emphasize more on human knowledge having theoretical implication.

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<sup>1</sup> See Gibson, Roger F., *The Philosophy of W. V. Quine: An Expository Essay* (Tampa FL: University of South Florida Press, 1982), p. xvii.

Quine started his philosophical career with logic and it is learnt that early encyclopedias classified him as a logician. However, within a short period, he came to be known as a general philosopher. Even though he started his philosophical career with logic and language, but in due course his philosophical reflection spread over other branches of philosophy, such as, ontology, epistemology and metaphysics. Together with Nelson Goodman, Quine has explored the possibility of being a nominalist. However, unlike Goodman, he settled for a platonic realism and independently worked towards indeterminacy of reference. The other main theme of Quine's philosophy is his critical outlook towards analyticity and modality. Quine resolved his criticisms of the modalities by arguing that quantification into modal contexts leads to a collapse of modal distinctions.

While developing his philosophical writings, Quine had profusely been influenced by Carnap. It has been reflected in a tribute that he gave soon after the demise of Carnap in 1970. Quine acknowledged Carnap as the greatest predecessor and teacher. He considered himself as the ardent disciple. He developed his philosophical career almost half a decade under the tutorship of Carnap. However, in the subsequent years Quine developed various philosophical theories some of which went against Carnap in various ways. He disagreed with Carnap but he candidly confessed that his line of thought was profusely determined by problems that he felt was underlined in Carnap's philosophical thought. His indebtedness to Carnap has been more pronounced with the dedication of his first philosophical monograph *Word and Object*. In fact, Quine's initial interest on philosophy actually grew by his reading Poe's "Eureka" and William James's *Pragmatism*. However, as a student of undergraduate, Quine revealed that philosophy like mathematics and classics is an area of *concentration*. In this regard, Quine was influenced by Bertrand Russell. Quine observes that Russell's philosophy of language in general and his

philosophy of logical atomism in particular is an assortment of both mathematics and philosophy. As a follow up, he wrote a thesis on ‘mathematical philosophy’. His admiration of Russell also led him to read *Our Knowledge of the External World, Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy* and in turn has remarked that these books “whetted my appetite for cosmic understanding.”<sup>2</sup> This reflects that Quine has started his philosophical career with little background in philosophy. At the earlier stages, Quine was not as much systematic in compare to his later stages. Even though the later Quine appears to us as a critique, but at his earlier stage he was so much critical about others’ philosophical writings. However, his first serious philosophical disagreement began with Carnap. Before his encounter with Carnap, Quine read Russell’s philosophy seriously. Even though there we witness some philosophically overlapping distinct ideas between Russell and Quine in the real sense of the term, but Quine has been influenced by Russell’s ‘scientific method in philosophy’ that has been forecasted by Russell in his *Our Knowledge of the External World*. It takes natural sciences as model of knowledge. It emphasizes more on the analysis of knowledge with the background of logic as an essential tool and method of philosophy. In this regard, Russell says, “...the study of logic becomes the central study in philosophy: it gives the method of research in philosophy, just as mathematics gives the method of research in physics.”<sup>3</sup> The main contention of Russell in advocating of scientific method in philosophy is to make philosophy as a progressive discipline. Russell goes on to say that philosophy of our time is becoming scientific by way of the simultaneous acquisition of new facts and logical methods.

With the influence of Carnap and Russell, Quine in his earlier stage develops logic as the general conception of philosophy. According to Quine, logic as such sets the standard of philosophy and

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<sup>2</sup> Hylton, P., *Quine* (New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 33.

<sup>3</sup> Russell, B., *Our Knowledge of the External World* (London: George Allen and Unwin, Second edn, 1926), p. 243.

in turn gives us a paradigm of philosophy. Quine gives importance on clarity and precision and his work on logic certainly at length helps him to work on the desired direction. Quine argues against **mentalism** and **intensionality** because logic does not match with these. Instead of developing his own philosophical theory, most of Quine's philosophical effort was directed towards clarifying and simplifying the works of others. That is why we understand Quine as the critique of philosophy. While attributing Quine's philosophy Joseph S. Ullian, a notable commentator remarks, "He weaned the infant [field of mathematical logic] from its ontological and notational excesses, bathed it in clarity, and clothed it in elegance."<sup>4</sup> Quine's logical development was centered round with Russell's *Principia Mathematica*, because Quine has deeply engaged in modifying the theory of that book in one way or another. His main objective is to generalize the theory of *Principia Mathematica* and by way of doing this; he has attempted to revise and clarify the basis of the system, resolving confusions and in turn, imposing extensionality. Quine then developed two-systems of set-theory, each of which in some sense or other is an offshoot of the type theory of *Principia*. Thus, he developed logic and set-theory which is in some sense or other would be the ramification of *Principia Mathematica*. The distinctive aspect of Quine's set-theory is that it is purely intuitive in nature and it gives importance on the *syntactic exploration*.

We think Quine's philosophy of language addresses a transformation or shift from Epistemology (First philosophy) to Naturalized Epistemology. The default Quine reveals in classical epistemology is that it is somehow or other deviates from human knowledge and it deals with a priori knowledge. Classical epistemology, being the First philosophy, distinguishes between a priori knowledge and a posteriori knowledge with the introduction of the distinction between

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<sup>4</sup> Ullian, J. S., "Quine and the Field of Mathematical Logic", in L. E. Hahn and P. A. Schilpp (eds.), *The Philosophy of W. V. Quine* (Peru IL: Open Court, 1986; Second expanded edn, 1998), p. 569.

analytic and synthetic propositions. Classical epistemology also makes a distinction between first-order philosophy and second-order philosophy. Even classical epistemology accommodates the discourse of ethics which according to Quine is a second order activity. Quine reveals that any attempt of making distinction between a priori and a posteriori; first-order and second-order philosophy, actually goes beyond the limit of human knowledge. According to Quine, human knowledge would be naturalized and we do not find any relevance of naturalism in Quine's sense in the discourse of ethics, epistemology and logical reduction. Epistemology, being the First Philosophy even would be regarded as normative science because it deals with *is-ought* dichotomy. Quine in his celebrated article "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" criticizes both Kant and Carnap. According to Quine, Kantian distinction between a priori and a posteriori associated with the distinction between analytic and synthetic actually hinges on a dogma and Carnap's distinction between first and second-order of philosophy again hinges on another dogma. Philosophy associated with human knowledge, Quine opines, must be free from any sort of dogmas.

What then is epistemology according to Quine? How does Quine reconceive epistemology as naturalized epistemology? In this regard, Quine in his essay entitled "Epistemology Naturalized" says, "Epistemology, or something like it, studies a natural phenomenon, viz., a physical human subject."<sup>5</sup> Epistemology, Quine says, is concerned with the foundations of science. He elsewhere makes a parallelism between epistemology of natural knowledge and the foundations of mathematics. Quine says, "Just as mathematics is to be reduced to logic, or logic and set theory, so natural knowledge is to be based somehow on sense experience."<sup>6</sup> David Hume was a

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<sup>5</sup> Quine, W. V. O., "Epistemology Naturalized", in W. V. Quine, *Ontological Relativity and other Essays* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), p. 82.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p.71.

classical epistemologist. Hume contemplated the epistemology of natural knowledge both as conceptual and doctrinal. Conceptual aspect deals with meaning and doctrinal aspect deals with truth. The old epistemology or the first philosophy, of course, aspires to contain a natural science and it has been developed out of sense-data. However, epistemology in its new setting is contained in natural science as a chapter of psychology. According to Quine, one effect of seeing epistemology in a psychological setting is that “it resolves a stubborn old enigma of epistemological priority.”<sup>7</sup>

As Quine’s naturalized epistemology is predominantly associated with human knowledge of first-order or a posteriori knowledge, he thereby inclines to say that within the sphere of human knowledge, there is no relevance of the distinction between a priori and a posteriori knowledge and first-order and second-order knowledge. In this regard, Quine says, “The quest of a simplest, clearest overall pattern of canonical notation is not to be distinguished from a quest of ultimate categories, a limning of the most general traits of reality.”<sup>8</sup> The default of First Philosophy, Quine reveals, is that it functions with the dictation of philosophical dogmas and it finds unnecessary distinction between first and second-order and also between a priori and a posteriori knowledge. First philosophy, Quine opines, thus fails to address the desires of humans as it goes beyond the limits of human knowledge based on naturalized epistemology.

What then Quine exactly means by naturalized epistemology? What is the distinctive philosophical mark of naturalized epistemology? In what sense does epistemology be conceived as naturalized epistemology? These are the very important questions those need to be taken care of when we deal with Quine’s philosophy of language. Naturalism, Quine opines, is supposed to

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 84.

<sup>8</sup> Quine, W. V. O., *Word and Object* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1960), p. 161.

be “the recognition that it is within science itself, and not in some prior philosophy, that reality is to be identified and described.”<sup>9</sup> Within the sphere of naturalism, there is no vantage point, no method, no stance, and no dogmas. Quine seeks to find the philosophical requirement of naturalism in words (language). In his first philosophical monograph, namely, *Word and Object*, Quine gives us a sense of naturalism. Human knowledge, according to Quine, is all about the relationship between word and object. Every word, Locke says, is the sensible mark of idea. In this sense every word in some sense or other is linked with reality. Thus, the relationship between word (language) and object (reality) is the centrality of Quine because it is the desired knowledge through which the relationship between language and reality can be comprehended. Thus, in one sense we can say that Quine’s first monograph as appeared as the name of *Word and Object* actually help us to foresee in what sense and how much human knowledge can be acquired within the straight jacket of naturalism which is supposed to be the by-product of science and common sense. In this sense, it can be said that Quine’s philosophy of naturalism is a continuous process of rebuilding of the philosophy of the predecessors who have emphasized more on the gulf between first-order and second-order or the gulf between a priori and a posteriori knowledge. In this regard, Quine in some sense or other encounters Kant and Carnap. This has been reflected in his book *Word and Object*. Quine, in fact, has dedicated this book to Carnap and the book begins with the epigraph taken from Otto Neurath: “We are like sailors who must rebuild their boat on the open sea, without ever being able to put into dock and reconstruct it from the best components.”<sup>10</sup>

Quine’s objective of naturalized epistemology is to rebuild philosophy on the face of human knowledge where there is no room for any sort of philosophical prejudices. According to Quine,

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<sup>9</sup> Quine, W. V. O., *Theories and Things* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 21.

<sup>10</sup> See Neurath, O., “Protokollsätze”, *Erkenntniss* 3 (1932-33); trans. in P. Hylton, *Quine*, op. cit., p. 7.

within the realm of naturalized epistemology, a philosophy must work with the background of conceptual scheme and there is no need to go outside beyond the conceptual scheme. Human knowledge, Quine says, is the by-product of science and common sense and within this framework there is no room for cosmic-exile. A philosopher, can, at best, scrutinize and improve the system from within; beginnings in the middle of things.

But how do we come to know where we are and when we are ‘in the middle of things?’ We are in the middle of things, Quine opines, actually means ‘we are in the middle of our system of knowledge’. As a result, every philosopher should work or so to speak contribute to that system. It can be attained through the scientific culture of human cognition or through the scientific culture of theoretical activity. Thus, there is nothing wrong to suggest that Quine’s naturalism is based on science and common sense through which reality can be identified and described. According to Quine, common sense without science is philosophically fruitless. Naturalized epistemology is the by-product of both science and common sense. Quine’s naturalized epistemology thus is a transition from epistemology (first philosophy) to naturalized epistemology. Therefore, in the **First Chapter** of this thesis we propose to analyse Quine’s naturalized epistemology and it would be entitled as **Transition from Epistemology (First Philosophy) to Naturalized Epistemology**.

It seems to us that while reconceiving epistemology as naturalized epistemology, Quine gives emphasis on two concepts, such as shared responses to stimulation and observation sentence. Thus, there is nothing wrong to claim that the transition from first philosophy (classical epistemology) to naturalized epistemology is made possible through language and translation manuals. Therefore, it is pertinent at the very outset to explicate the nature of language after Quine. What then is the nature of language according to Quine? Is Quine a believer of ordinary

or artificial language? The debate between ordinary and ideal language is prominent in philosophy. In fact, linguistic philosophers have been divided into two groups regarding the very nature of language. Some of them adhere to the view that ordinary language should be treated as the method of linguistic philosophy and in this regard there appears the pragmatic aspects of language and others hold that as ordinary language is ambiguous, it should be revised in such a way so that the non-referential terms can be eradicated from the body of language. Thus, there develops ideal or artificial language. The semantists are the architect of ideal language. We should not read Quine as a proponent of ideal or ordinary language. Rather we think that Quine has developed a different kind of language known as *cognitive language*. Therefore, in the **Second Chapter** of this thesis we propose to analyze and examine the nature and philosophical implication of cognitive language after Quine and it would be entitled as **Cognitive Language**.

As a conceptual relativist Quine emphasizes more on the nature of cognitive language which in turn is associated with his famous thesis indeterminacy of translation. In fact, Quine's thesis of indeterminacy of translation has become the most discussed of all his philosophical conclusions. Quine's indeterminacy of translation is based on two important philosophical assumptions. First, the translation manuals that correlate two languages are under-determined by the evidence very similar to the hypothesis that we notice in science. Secondly, the translation manuals are not like hypothesis in the science because scientific hypotheses are true or false whereas the question of truth and falsity in the case of translation manuals simply does not arise. As a conceptual relativist Quine adheres to the view that there remains indeterminacy in any sort of translation in terms of degree. Two translation of the same text may not be equal. According to Quine, in the process of translation we actually lose some originality of the text. Quine's famous thesis of indeterminacy of translation describes that 'there exist more than one fully adequate translation

manual for each radically foreign language'. It further states that translation from one natural language into another resembles translation of number theory into set theory in that various equally good alternative but non-equivalent schemes of translation are always possible. Quine speaks of alternative manuals of translation compatible with the totality of possible observation of verbal behaviour. The indeterminacy thesis asserts the possibility of constructing two or more manuals of translation that are perfect fits. Anyway this does not hamper our communication. In the **Third Chapter** of this thesis we propose to analyze and examine with critical outlook Quine's concept of translation manuals and it would be entitled as **Quine on Indeterminacy of Translation as Radical Translation.**

Quine's theory of indeterminacy of translation what he terms it as *radical translation* has implicit philosophical implications. It actually goes against so many well-established philosophical theories and doctrines on the basis of which subsequent philosophical theories were developed over the years. While developing the concept of naturalized epistemology, Quine actually denies the philosophical foundation of First Philosophy (i.e., classical or traditional epistemology). According to Quine, the foundation of traditional epistemology is full of dogmas and it does not bear any sense in the real sense of the term. As a result of that he calls for naturalized epistemology which is completely guided by sense-experience and natural sciences. Naturalized epistemology is completely free from any sort of philosophical dogmas whatsoever. In this regard, Quine adopts translational manuals which for him indeterminate in nature. Now, this position of Quine goes against classical epistemologists who claimed epistemological knowledge on the basis of strict philosophical presuppositions or stringent rules and principles which are inviolable. In his famous article "Two Dogmas of Empiricism", Quine raises some serious philosophical reservations about Kant who was the chief architect of analytic and

synthetic distinction, or in short analyticity and also about Carnap who developed reductionism on the basis of artificial language and logical and mathematical rules. Thus, for Quine, Kant was responsible for making epistemology as dogma oriented philosophy and Carnap was equally responsible for dogma oriented philosophical, mathematical and logical theories having strong epistemological implications. Therefore, in the **Fourth Chapter** of my thesis, we propose to analyze and examine the debate between Quine and Kant and Quine and Carnap in subsequent sections and it would be entitled as **Anti-Naturalism and Anti-Reductionism: A debate between Quine and Kant and Quine and Carnap.**

Besides Kant and Carnap, Quine's debate with Noam Chomsky is again philosophically revolutionary. Noam Chomsky, many would claim, brings the Second Linguistic Revolution in philosophy. The first linguistic revolution was confined to Semanticists' and Pragmatists' interpretation of language where language has been used externally. For them the primary function of language is external. Chomsky claims the other way round. For Chomsky, the primary function of language is internal and in this regard he introduces I-language or internal language. He revived Descartes innate idea in this regard. He says that language is innate because it is spontaneously generated from the left hemisphere of the brain. He terms it **Transformation Generative Grammar** (in short TGG). Thus, for Chomsky, the primary function of language is internal and the secondary function of language is external. Accordingly, it can be said that acquisition of language is internal, mental, innate and it is no longer would be the outcome of behaviourism. This position actually goes against Quine. This is where the debate between Quine and Chomsky actually hinges on. According to Quine, one can develop language through behavioural approach. Chomsky denies it. Therefore, in the **Fifth Chapter** of this thesis,

we propose to discuss and examine the philosophical debate between Quine and Chomsky and it would be entitled as **Acquisition of Language: A debate between Quine and Chomsky**.

The **Sixth Chapter** of this thesis is entitled as **Concluding Remarks** where a critical account will be given in my own rationale.

The thesis will end with a **Selected Bibliography** followed by a brief **Index**.

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## 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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## CHAPTER TWO

### COGNITIVE LANGUAGE

#### 2.1 The Nature of Cognitive Language

We think that Quine is neither a believer of ordinary language nor a believer of artificial language; rather he is a firm believer of *cognitive language*. What then is cognitive language? In what sense cognitive language differs from other forms of language? Why does he prefer cognitive language in order to develop naturalized epistemology? Cognitive language, according to Quine, is predominantly associated with **sensory stimulation** or **neural intake**. Quine has used the term cognitive language and neural intake interchangeably. According to Quine, our information about the world is acquired from sensory stimulations. Sensory stimulation of Quine may perhaps be similar to the concept of ‘illocutionary force’ as used by J. L. Austin. The interpersonal communication between the speaker and the hearer is all about the information about the world. Therefore, conveying information about the world must be related to stimulations. In a nutshell, we can say that cognitive language is a language of stimulations. The genesis or intrinsic aspect of cognitive language is stimulation or stimuli response of the users of language. Cognitive language is related to stimulations of our sensory surfaces. As a result of that, it has been attributed as cognitive. Here the response of every individual is associated with his or her own sensation. Language is a medium of communication. The communication is binary in the sense that it is made possible between the speaker and the hearer. While making this interpersonal communication possible both the speaker and the hearer must response in making communication possible. Thus, the response of the communicators is an integral part of making communication possible or successful. Communication of language between the speaker

and the hearer apparently seems to be a very simple and trivial one, but in reality it is complicated and complex. Quine while outlining the nature of cognitive language offers us a communicative mechanism.

According to Quine, the distinctive nature of cognitive language is that **it is public in nature**. He elsewhere conceives cognitive language as a *social art*. At the very outset of his book *Word and Object*, Quine goes on to say that cognitive language **as a social art is public**. Sensory stimulation is the outcome of the function of brain. It is the byproduct of brain cells fire where chemicals are released into the bloodstream, the blood pressure rises or falls, and so on. Neither these are the function of language, nor even candidates for being part of language. Cognitive language, Quine claims, consists of public responses to stimulation which in turn at times may affect others. We respond to each other's responses to stimulation for our own survival. This has been attributed as the *survival value of language*. It can even function through primitive systems of signals as we see in the case of sparrow. For example, one sparrow sees a hawk, gives a cry, and the whole flock flies. Quine reveals the same in language as well. According to Quine, language is based on the idea and in language knowledge is embodied in a medium which is *open, public, and scientifically traceable*. Language is public and sharable but the stimulations language draws in the mind of the users of language are not shared.

The other distinctive aspect of Quine's cognitive language is that it can be learned. Cognitive language is learned but from this it does not make sense to say that cognitive language is learned because of the fact that it is public in nature. Human language is learned from other speakers of the same language. This is so happens because "language is a social art which we all acquire on the evidence solely of other people's overt behaviour under publicly recognizable

circumstances.”<sup>26</sup> Thus, we are in a position to understand the very nature of cognitive language as developed by Quine. The distinctive aspect of Quine’s account of cognitive language is that it is shared, public, learned responses to current stimulations. Quine’s idea of cognitive language is different from the sophisticated discussions of language where the concept of reference, truth-conditions, intention, and the communication of ideas count the most. The cognitive language of Quine is distinctively detached from this. By contrast, the idea of shared response to current stimulation is itself in need of explanation in more fundamental terms. Unlike the revisionists’, Quine here gives emphasis on the *naturalistic* explanation of language where the human knower is conceived as a physical object in a physical world subject to physical forces and justifiable in terms of those forces. Thus, it seems to us that the idea of shared, public, learned responses to current stimulation is fundamental for a Quinean account of cognitive language. Quine claims that there are certain bits of language which play the role of shared responses to current stimulations. The supposed bits of language are sharable. As they are sharable, they are observational in nature. Thus, the cognitive language Quine presumes is constituted by ‘observational sentences’. Accordingly, Quine goes on to say that the act of assenting to an observation sentence is a learned shared response to current stimulation. According to Quine, observation sentences are directly linked to stimulation. As a result of that such sentences are fundamental on two important accounts. First, they are fundamental to account cognitive language. Here attempt has been made to know how our noises can be meaningful and the capacity to make meaningful noises can be acquired. Secondly, they are equally fundamental to account how our knowledge as a whole is answerable to evidence. These two issues are explicitly entwined with each other. Observation sentences, Quine holds, are the point or locus at which language is directly linked to sensory stimulations. Sensory stimulations are the only

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<sup>26</sup> Quine, W. V. O., *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays*, op. cit., p. 26.

source of our information about the world. Sentences thus can be *cognitively meaningful* in virtue of their links to observation sentences. Thus, following Quine, we can say that observation sentences are fundamental because it is only through observation sentences one can make a link to his or her stimulation. Observation sentences simply respond to stimulation, of course, with certain qualification or reservation.

## 2.2 Call for a Global Stimulus

Stimulation or stimulus response holds the centrality of cognitive language. That is why Quine seeks a global stimulus which is undergoing at a given moment. It is ‘the class of all sensory receptors that were triggered at that moment; or, better, the temporally ordered class of receptors triggered during that specious present’<sup>27</sup>. Such episodes, Quine contends, is cognized simply as a brief stage of the perceiving subject’s body. They are said to be global because they include everything and leave nothing.<sup>28</sup> Quinean global stimulus response theory is modeled on Carnap’s elementary experiences. It is quite relevant to Quine’s physical mimicry of phenomenalist epistemology. For Quine and also for Carnap in the *Aufbau*, it is the whole sensory content of a given moment which is taken as basic. At that stage the distinction between the relevant and irrelevant aspects is otiose. One should pay attention not on the distinction between Quine and Carnap. Instead of that, one should pay attention on the similarity between them. As far as our observation is concerned, Quine’s position of the whole sensory content of a given moment is *straightforwardly physical*. Quine elsewhere claims that we are physical objects. We are subject to physical forces which give rise to stimulations of our sensory nerves. As a result of that there

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<sup>27</sup> Quine, W. V. O., *From Stimulus to Science*, op. cit., p. 17.

<sup>28</sup> See Quine, W. V. O., *The Roots of Reference* (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1974), p. 16.

is no point of saying that ‘sensory content’ is something for which the subject is aware. In this regard, Quine’s position has a distinctive affinity with Carnap’s view in the *Aufbau*.

According to Quine, any idea of a response to stimulation leads one to presume that there underlies a systematic correspondence of stimulations with behaviour. The idea of a correlation requires that we are talking about repeatable type of stimulation and of behaviour. Precisely speaking, we do require similarity relations among episode of stimulations and among episodes of behaviour. Thus in real sense, correlation is a matter of stimulus and it is relevantly similar to a given one being regularly followed by behaviour relevantly similar to a given episode. We think that the notion *relevantly similar* requires further clarification. By the phrase or term *relevantly similar*, Quine actually means *receptual similarity*. Receptual similarity is a matter of physical resemblance between two or more episodes of stimulation. Quine in this regard says, “Episodes are receptually similar to the degree that the total set of sensory receptors that are triggered on the one occasion approximates that triggered on the other occasion.”<sup>29</sup> Even though Quine is less definite as far as behavioural similarity is concerned, but he suggests ‘a definition might be sought with regard to the total set of fibres of striped muscles that are contracted or released on one occasion and on another’<sup>30</sup>. Many would say that the straightforward similarity relations Quine has foreseen between stimulation and behaviour is very difficult to mark off. Suppose the person  $x$  while driving a car sees a red traffic light and as a result of that he has stopped the car. Now imagine the exact situation, except the light is green, where the person  $x$  does not stop his car. As far as a global stimulus is concerned, it may be presumed that the two situations have a high degree of receptual similarity. In both the situations, all the non-visual sensory nerves are stimulated in the same order. However, the behaviour of  $x$  is considerably

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

different in the two cases. What we can say here is that two occasions which are perceptually quite similar must result in different behavioural episodes because the *subject does not perceive them as relevantly similar*. Stimuli thus are understood as global including all irrelevances. Indeed, it is precisely the irrelevances which cause the problem here. According to Quine, two or more episodes are perceptually similar or dissimilar subject to the firing of nerves which make no immediate difference to the subject's behaviour. We need perceptual similarity because it will screen out irrelevances. Accordingly, we can say that two or more episodes should be treated as *perceptually similar* only if they are *relevantly similar* in the ways that affect the animal's behaviour in the same way. Alternatively, we can say that two or more episodes of stimulation as followed by similar episodes of behaviour should count as perceptually similar. However, many would say that such attempt to avoid the problem of irrelevances again falls into a problem of vacuity. It then amounts to a definition of perceptual similarity simply in terms of behavioural similarity. Accordingly, it can be said that if two episodes are behaviorally similar then two preceding episodes of neural intake would be perceptually similar by definition. Quine says, "Perceptual similarity ... should be somehow intermediate between perceptual and behavioural similarity."<sup>31</sup> Perceptual similarity is reflected in the behavioural output and hence is somehow distinctive to the current output.

The question that needs to be taken care of: how is the idea of perceptual similarity to be comprehended? In this regard, Quine gives the example of an animal. When a trained animal is confronted with a circular stripe he pressed a lever and is refrained when confronted with four spots. According to Quine, confronting the animal with a circular pattern of seven spots, we find that it presses the lever. Accordingly, we may conclude by saying that the pattern of seven is

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

perceptually more similar to the circular stripe than to the four spots. The whole process is mentalistic because here the animal acts on the basis what is perceived. It perceives that the seven spots as more similar to the circle than to the four. Quine, however, does not find any substantive ground on the superficial perception; rather he thinks that it relies on an intuitive notion of an animal perceiving. Here we do characterize perceptual similarity for the animal by saying that it consists precisely in the animal's being disposed to act. Quine does not think that a discussion of language at the behavioural level is fruitful. Instead of behavioural approach, he gives importance to the **neurophysiological level**. The so-called perceptual similarity that we observe in the case of animal is behavioural in nature. Quine perhaps does not apply the same in human. The perceptual similarity in human is neurophysiological rather than behavioural. Many would perhaps confuse of designating Quine as a proponent of behaviourism. We think Quine is not a proponent of behaviourism; rather he gives importance on neurophysiological aspect of human while developing cognitive language in the real sense of the term. However, we have a behavioural criterion for perceptual similarity where animals do exhibit some response to sensory episodes which are sufficiently and perceptually similar. In fact, the very idea of perceptual similarity helps Quine to give an account of the idea that some parts of a global stimulus will matter more than others in explaining the behaviour of the other. Quine in this regard introduces the concept *salient*. By the concept 'salient', Quine means the **triggering of nerve endings**. According to Quine, the triggerings caused by the light would be *salient* in each. In this regard Quine was inspired by Carnap's *Aufbau*. Quine uses the idea of salience to distinguish various modalities. The visual stimuli, according to Quine, are those stimuli whose salient triggerings are those of retinal receptors and so on.

While developing cognitive language, Quine gives more emphasis on perceptual similarity. He thinks that perceptual similarity has general and fundamental importance. In this regard Quine says, "Perceptual similarity is the basis of all expectation, all learning, all habit formation."<sup>32</sup> Perceptual similarity plays an important part of learning even in the primitive case of learning system. Even in the case of animal we notice the same. A dog once burned by a fire will not approach another fire. The same happens in other animals as well. It is a general perception that having been hurt in one occasion one avoids the same situation in the future. We can avoid the situation but we cannot avoid the event. We must survive within the event. We cannot avoid the event of earthquake. It is natural. But we can avoid the situation which goes against us. An event creates a situation and from situation consequence generally follows. Perceptual similarity thus helps us immensely to know about of learning. According to Quine, one may not learn about a particular situation at a particular moment, but of course, one may learn about *all situations of a certain kind*. It is perceptual similarity which actually gives us the relevant 'kind'. What is the nature and standard of perceptual similarity? Is perceptual similarity external or internal? Perceptual similarity, Quine opines, is innate. This position apparently comes to us as surprise. We think Quine has altogether a different interpretation of the concept of innate. Generally, in normal situation what is innate is unchanged. But Quine thinks the other way round. According to Quine, there undergoes a constant change within the standard of innate. However, within this changing paradigm there remains a prior similarity standard. As a result of that we can say after Quine that perceptual similarity cannot itself have been learned. Some of it is innate, but not all of it. This does not make sense to say that Quine accepts the view that we have innate knowledge. For Quine, perceptual similarity in the true sense of the term cannot be conceived as

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<sup>32</sup> Quine, W. V. O., *From Stimulus to Science*, op. cit., p. 19.

a matter of the facts of the world but rather of reactions of them. We do not find objective similarity in two perceptual similarities.

Of course Quine in his *From Stimulus to Science*<sup>33</sup> admits that some standards of perceptual similarity must be innate. He equally proclaims that such standards change radically and rapidly in consequence of experience and learning. Perceptual similarity, Quine notes, plays a significant role in primitive induction where it is visible that experience of an event of one kind follows an event of another kind. This eventually leads to a repetition of the pattern. Expectations set up by primitive induction enable humans and non-humans to survive. Even changes in similarity standards enable animals to do this in a far better way. We note the same in human knowledge as well. Thus for Quine, revision of similarity standards essentially begins with primitive induction. Primitive induction is not our only way of knowing, but it is an essential beginning of our knowing process. It is the root of knowing process.

Quine then assimilates perceptual similarity as **global stimuli**. It is a global episode through which animal's sensory nerves being stimulated. Quine elsewhere conceives perceptual similarities as dispositions. Quine says perceptual similarities are second order dispositions because it helps one to change one's similarity standards. What then is a disposition? A disposition, Quine says, a physical state of organism and thus the notion is a physicalistic one. It involves the micro-structure of the animal's brain and nerves system and therefore contains a vast majority of behavioural dispositions. It is difficult to explore. It is pending almost unimaginable advances in neurophysiology and hence be treated as the behaviourist criterion for possession of the disposition. However such complexity does not create any problem before our learning process. In fact, we have a sufficient condition for having certain standards of

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

perceptual similarity. As perceptual similarity plays the crucial role in primitive induction, any test in this regard is subject to an *open-ended ceteris paribus* clause. As a result of that the standards of perceptual similarity are fairly stable.<sup>34</sup> Thus, the demand for global stimuli is justified because sentences are directly and firmly associated with our stimulations. Quine says, “The sentence should command the subject’s assent or dissent outright, on the occasion of a stimulation in the appropriate range ...”<sup>35</sup> According to Quine, individual’s occasions of assent or dissent are directly conditioned to the individual’s sensory stimulation. In this regard, Quine speaks of *modulus of stimulation* which assists us to unify various stimulus patterns which all lead to the assent to a given sentence. A competent speaker of the language will assent to a given observation sentence on the basis of perceptual similarity associated with stimulation patterns.

### **2.3 Lead to Shared Responses**

The previous section deals with global stimulus based on *modulus of stimulation*. It was generally associated with the idea of a single animal’s responding to sensory stimulation. The language on which the process of stimulation works is shared and public. Thus, the nature of cognitive language Quine envisages is shared and public. Accordingly, we can say that Quinean approach of cognitive language is closely associated with natural language. In this regard, Quine goes on to say that owing to apprehend any part of language as a matter of response to current stimulation one has to find a way of extending the previous discussion to make sense of the idea of *shared responses*. The idea of our sharing response to stimulation, what Quine tributes it as *neural intake*, is that of responding to certain stimulation in a certain way. One should respond to the same stimulations in the same way because here one is guided by perceptual similarity based

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<sup>34</sup> See Quine, W. V. O., *The Roots of Reference*, op. cit., p. 22.

<sup>35</sup> Quine, W. V. O., *Pursuit of Truth*, op. cit., p. 3.

on the principle of *ceteris paribus*. But the question arises: how does the idea of same stimulations or same neural intake remain similar between two individuals? As each of us has own sensory nerves, own stimulations, how does it confirms that both of his or her sensory stimulation remain the same? In this regard, Quine says that as we have homologous nerve endings, we have exactly the same pattern of sensory nerve endings. As a result of that we could speak of the same nerve ending from overlapping persons meaning that one is occupying exactly the same like the other. In fact Quine does not appreciate this difficulty; rather he simply assumes that the notion of ‘the same stimulation’<sup>36</sup> persists across persons. As a conceptual relativist, Quine though talks in favour of homology, but he does not talk in favour of full homology. In this regard, Quine comments, “If we construe stimulation pattern my way, we cannot equate them without supposing homology of receptors; and this is absurd ... full homology is implausible.”<sup>37</sup> Thus, it seems to us that even though Quine does not anticipate this problem seriously, he at the same time does not give us a clear solution to the problem as well.

In this regard one may make a fruitful contrast between Quine and Davidson. Unlike Quine, Davidson does not think that observation sentences are inherently linked or associated with stimulation. Accordingly, instead of looking into nerve endings, Davidson puts emphasis to the objective circumstances. Thus, Davidson’s position may be treated as an alternative theory of meaning and evidence. Davidson remarks, “...the events and objects that determine the meaning of observation sentences and yield a theory of evidence are the very events and objects that the sentences are naturally and correctly interpreted as being about.”<sup>38</sup> Let us make a contrast

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<sup>36</sup> See Hylton, P., *Quine*, op. cit., p. 123.

<sup>37</sup> Quine, W. V. O., “Propositional Objects”, in W. V. Quine, *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays*, op. cit., p. 157.

<sup>38</sup> Davidson, D., “Meaning, Truth and Evidence”, in R. Barrett and R. Gibson (eds.), *Perspectives on Quine* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), p. 72.

between Quine and Davidson. Suppose a child in the presence of a horse utters 'Horse'. On Quine's account, here the child has acquired disposition to make an utterance within a certain range when it receives a perceptually similar stimulation pattern within a certain range. Contrary to that, on Davidson's account, the disposition which matters for the child's understanding is one that is galvanized by the actual horse itself. Thus, the real difference between Quine and Davidson lies between the use of *a proximal stimulus* and *a distal stimulus*. Quine talks in favour of proximal stimulus whereas Davidson talks in favour of distal stimulus. It seems that Davidson's distal stimulus is the most obvious way of explaining the public nature of cognitive language where social artifact consists of *shared responses*. Contrary to this, Quine's proximal stimulus gives an instantaneous connection with the child's nerves system. It looks like a natural choice because it is associated with causal account and also is connected with brain psychology where the real or actual explanation of these matters can be found. Thus, in one sense Davidson gives us the public nature of language whereas Quine gives us the desire for causal explanation; one is objective and the other is subjective. Davidson thinks that one should not think of cognitive language as a matter of shared responses to stimulation; rather it is a matter of facts, objects, events or situations in the objective world. The language, Davidson envisages, is cognitive but only at the price of changing the subject. For Davidson, learning of language is public and objective giving emphasis on publicity and objectivity. Quine, on the other hand, enquires how cognitive language is possible and how one acquires a language of this kind. We think Quine differs from Davidson and rejects Davidsonian position on account of the fact that unlike the latter the former puts importance on the naturalized epistemology. While eliminating the so-called cognitive language, Davidson puts emphasis on linguistics. This is unlikely in Quine's case. Quine gives importance on naturalized epistemology as the outcome of the

*pronouncements of natural science*<sup>39</sup> and *common sense*. According to Quine, the problem with Davidson is that even though he talks in favour of objectivity, but it is no longer clear in what sense and how far cognitive language comes to be about the objective world.

Quine thus sticks to the idea that the stimulus to be proximal, not distal. Accordingly, cognitive language is to be understood as a matter of *shared responses* to stimulation patterns, not to objects. The individual is responding to stimulation patterns. Unshared stimulations do not help us to cognize the sharing of responses. We can make it clear with the help of cross-person comparisons of stimulations where perceptual similarity counts the most. Let us make this point clear with an example. Suppose, in a given perceptual situation the person *x* undergoes one stimulation pattern, A, and in the same situation the person *y* undergoes a stimulation pattern, A+. In another perceptual situation the person *x* undergoes B and the person *y* undergoes B+. Now, the point is that if A and B are perceptually similar to *x*, A+ and B+ would equally be perceptually similar to the person *y*. Quine conceives the standard of perceptual similarity in this way. Quine says, “In general, if external events ... produce neural intakes in both of us, and yours are perceptually similar for you, mine are apt to be perceptually similar for me.”<sup>40</sup> On the basis of sharing standards of perceptual similarity, one can also make sense of the idea of shared responses to stimulation. As a certain or specific stimulus manifests a certain response, one may naturally generalize that any similar stimulus would have induced to manifest a similar response on the basis of the principle *ceteris paribus*. This is how the idea of **shared responses** is materialized. If we do share our responses then a perceptual situation which actually causes me to have a stimulation pattern will also cause you to have a stimulation pattern to the same

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<sup>39</sup> Quine, W. V. O., *Pursuit of Truth*, op. cit., p. 41.

<sup>40</sup> Quine, W. V. O., “I, You, and It”, in A. Orenstein and P. Kotatko (eds.), *Knowledge, Language and Logic* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 2000), p. 2.

response. In this way, two or more distinct individuals do share their responses to stimulations. Sharing of responses is a natural selection; there underlies pre-established harmony of standards of perceptual similarity, independent of inter-subjective likeness of receptors or sensations.

But how does Quine develop the stimulus meaning of a sentence? It seems to us that sentences are nothing but a part of a public shared language and hence inter-subjective in nature. As a result of that it can be said after Quine that the same perceptual situations which would give rise, in one speaker, to sensory stimulations would also give rise in any other speaker of the same language. This indeed requires the standards of similarity. As a social or inter-subjective criterion it emphasizes on the fact that the members of the linguistic community must share a response to stimulation for that response to count as an observation sentence. According to Quine, observation sentences are all more or less trivial by the standards of the linguistic community. By dint of perceptual situation, any two members of the community would give equal response or verdict on a given observation sentence. There thus never occurs any serious dispute. So, assent to an observation sentence must be a response to something readily detectable by the senses. However, a sentence over the course of history may acquire or loss the status of an observation sentence. For example, the sentence, 'That is Mozart!' might perhaps become an observation sentence, with advances in musical education. However, there are seemingly limits to this process based on the limits to what can be readily detected by the senses. In this process Quine develops the *stimulus meaning of a sentence*. According to Quine, the stimulus meaning of a sentence for a given speaker is a set of stimulation patterns. Basically, it consists of two such sets, one positive and the other negative. As far as the positive stimulus meaning of a sentence of a speaker is concerned, it consists of all those stimulation patterns which would lead the speaker to change her verdict on the sentence to assent. In such a case the speaker would either dissent

from the sentence or give no verdict. However, after receiving the stimulations, the speaker would assent to it. As a result of that the given stimulation pattern is being treated a part of the positive stimulus meaning of the sentence for the speaker. The negative stimulus meaning can be defined in the same way but unlike the positive, here we note ‘interchanging assent and dissent on the part of the speaker’. We need both the assent and the dissent because in such a case the stimulation patterns belong to neither. Our point of contention at this juncture is that for a given speaker to understand an observation sentence all that is required is that he or she has the appropriate stimulus meaning for it. This is how one can develop the individualistic criterion for being an observation sentence.

In compare to individualistic criterion, the social criterion is more complicated. Here the problem of cross-person comparison of stimulations counts the most. Suppose a given stimulation pattern is in my positive stimulus meaning of a sentence. Then there is a type or range of perceptual situations that would standardly give rise to that pattern in me. Now, if the sentence is supposed to be an observational sentence it would standardly give rise to a stimulation pattern to you as well which would be treated as the positive stimulus meaning of the same sentence. It is important to observe here that stimulus meaning should not be treated as *meaning* as we understand by the term *meaning* in philosophy of language. Using a sentence with an exact stimulus meaning in the real sense of the term cannot be sufficient to use it correctly. Many cognitivists fail to conceive it. However, Quine conceives it very well. According to Quine, the very idea of stimulus meaning has no interesting application at all in the case of eternal sentences. In the case of an eternal sentence stimulus meaning may be empty. More succinctly, it can be said that an eternal sentence lacks stimulus meaning. An eternal sentence is a kind of sentence where the belief of the user of the sentence may not be changed within a considerable

period. For example, if I am adequately convinced that milk is good for young children then no stimulation pattern within the relevant time will lead to a change of verdict. As a result of that its positive and negative stimulus meaning would be void or null for me. Does it then lead us to say that the sentence is meaningless? The answer, according to Quine, is negative. Quine does not think that an eternal sentence is meaningless. There are many other sentences as well where the stimulus meanings are **vacuous** or **nearly vacuous**. The only point that needs to be taken care of is that stimulus meaning will not in general be close to what is required for an understanding. What indeed would be the stimulus meaning of the speaker when he or she utters the sentence “There is a philosopher”? The sentence under consideration does not tell anything about what it is to be a philosopher. Nor it will enable you to understand the sentence under consideration. In fact, its meaning is far from its stimulus meaning. Stimulus meaning is **inevitably visible** in the case of observation sentence because in the case of observation sentence what is required for correct use is stimulus response to the appropriate stimulation pattern. Thus, the meaning of observation sentence is its stimulus meaning.

## **2.4 Learning or Acquisition of Cognitive Language**

There is no question of denying the fact that stimulus response of observation sentence is a part of learning process. It is true not only to humans; it would equally be true to animals as well. According to Quine, stimulus and response is a familiar behaviourist model of animal learning. In this process of learning, the animal at the very outset receives a sensory stimulus, makes a response, and receive a reward. Thus, in the process of learning, then occurs a series of episodes, such as, there is a similar stimulus, a similar response, and again a reward. These episodes as a whole inculcate the disposition to make a similar response when receiving a similar stimulus. This is the general model of learning. However, Quinean model of learning is somehow different

from it. Like the general model, Quine does not think the whole episode of learning as different events, such as, stimulus, response and reward. Rather Quine conceives the whole episode of learning as *a single event*. Every single event, according to Quine, is presumably pleasant to the animal in normal case and after a number of such episodes the animals eventually endeavours to recreate a further such episode. The animal acquires the disposition to add the response so as to increase the similarity of the pleasant episode. In this regard Quine says, “Learning, thus viewed, is a matter of learning to wrap the trend of episodes, by intervention of one’s own muscles, in such a way as to simulate a pleasant earlier episode. To learn is to learn to have fun.”<sup>41</sup> Although many would say that pleasure is an essential aspect of learning, but Quine in his model of learning does not tell anything about it. Quine says, “Behaviourally the shoe is on the other foot: an episode counts as pleasant if, through whatever unidentified mechanism of nerves and hormones, it implants a drive to reproduce it.”<sup>42</sup> As a result of that Quine does not appeal to the idea of pleasure for a fundamental explanation of why the animal acts as it does. Of course, one should not presume it wholly unexplanatory. Nobody can deny that a dog acts in a certain way because it enjoys eating a biscuit. The same happens in the case of other animals as well. Now, if the dog’s state of enjoyment were taken as explanatory then explanation would stop there. Explanation in terms of low-level generalization about behaviour actually suggests that this generalization is to be explained in turn by embedding it in a richer theory of the dog’s ‘nerves and hormones’. In order to learn, an animal must require not only the appropriate similarity standard for input that would require for the episodes of stimulation of its sensory nerves, but also for output, for whatever nerves and muscles are involved in that. Quine’s model of learning incorporates both. For Quine, it is total episodes which are virtually related by relations of

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<sup>41</sup> Quine, W. V. O., *Roots of Reference*, op. cit., p. 28.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

perceptual similarity. We have already stated that one should address on the coincidence of standard of perceptual similarity for sensory stimulations where the process of learning actually hinges in part on the response of others. Accordingly, when we have a case of a one animal learning from another animal, the combination of perceptual situations plus responses must be grouped in the same way by the standards of perceptual similarity of the one and by those of the other.

We notice a more complication when we deal with human infants learning language. Unlike animals, human infants learning language has been materialized partly by passive observation and partly by performance. At times a child sees something red and hears the sound 'Red'; on other it sees the red thing and makes that sound. These episodes are perceptually similar even though the stimulation of the nerves involved in producing the sound will be different. Thus, there is no reason to think about that people should not have standards of perceptual similarity. Possession of language certainly helps how one can imagine an evolutionary explanation of possessing standards. Quine of course offers us a simplified model of how learning of language or acquisition of language goes. In this regard, he assumes a 'babbling model' and then explains how things work out in that scenario. In his simplified bubbling model we are to assume that the infants emits a noise by way of imitation of what it has heard its elder utter or as a part of random babbling which in turn stimulates the auditory nerves of one or more of its elders. At the same time, the elder's sensory nerve, more or less, are also stimulated in a way that would dispose her to utter a noise which she takes to be similar to that of the infant. The elder (or she) behaves towards the child in a way that disposes him to re-create a similar situation. Here the adult must act not so much when her own sensory nerves are appropriately stimulated but rather when the child's are. This clearly suggests that the process of learning actually hinges on the

adult's *empathetically projecting herself into the child's perceptual situation*. We are all skilled at doing this sort of thing; we have an 'uncanny knack'<sup>43</sup> for emphasizing another's perceptual situation. Learning is based on *our being able to do this* and also our having standards of perceptual similarity which line up in the right ways, both for input and for output. One must bank on these dwell points. Nobody can deny the complexity of learning even in the simplest kind of learning. One cannot even deny the role of *empathy* in the process of learning. The learner must have standards of perceptual similarity.

Each perception, Quine claims, would be the outcome of fleeting neural event. For example, each perception that 'it is raining' is a fleeting neural event. Two perceptions by Tom that it is raining are apt to differ neurally because there are varied indications of rain. Difference of time occurrence may also be noted. Thus, it may be said that Tom's perceptions of its raining constitutes a class of events that is too complex based on heterogeneous neurally. Having said this, still we may say, after Quine, that there is some neural trait that unites these neural events as a class. Within these eventful varieties still we have the perception of stimulus generalization or subjective similarity that Tom eventually learned to make the observation sentence "It is raining" and it is equally true and do for all of them. Here Tom must have standards of perceptual similarity which amalgamate various class of neural events arising out of his brain. The same is also happening in Tom's teacher because his perceiving rain must be perceptually similar for his teacher. As a result it may be claimed that her standards of perceptual similarity unite certain of Tom's neural events even though the events in Tom's head and the events in her's (Tom's teacher) head are completely unknown to each other. Quine in this regard tells us to address on the *symptom*. He comments: "And what a remarkable sort of symptom! We detect it by

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<sup>43</sup> Barrett, R. and Gibson, R., (eds.), *Perspectives on Quine*, op. cit., p. 4.

empathetic observation of the subject's facial expressions and what is happening in front of him, perhaps, and we specify it by a content clause consisting of a vicarious observation sentence."<sup>44</sup>

The observation sentence "It is raining" counts as similar to both Tom as well as to Tom's teacher. While learning the sentence "It is raining", the neural states of Tom in various occasions during the vicinity of rain must count as similar for him. Likewise, the neural states of Tom's teacher during the vicinity of rain count as similar. It is a matter of the learner and teacher that each having appropriate standards of perceptual similarity. These standards are higher-order disposition where states of the nerves systems of the brain are involved. Does it then lead us to assume that Quine here takes the behavioural approach of learning of language? Many would consider Quine as a behaviourist. However, we do not think so. We think that Quine here takes *physicalistic account* even though in specifies states of the brains as dispositions. Quine takes his simplified model of learning as exemplary. Its' implication is revolutionary in the sense that it not only effective in the first stage language learning, it is equally effective even in less favourable cases. Here Quine also emphasizes on ostensive learning along with observability. Quine says, "Ostensive learning is fundamental, and requires observability. The child and the parent must both see red when the child learns 'red', and one of them must also see that the other sees red at the time."<sup>45</sup>

## 2.5 Call for Observation Sentences

It seems that Quine banks on observation sentences in order to explain the process of learning of language. An observation sentence, according to Quine, 'is one on which all speakers of the language give the same verdict when given the same concurrent stimulation'. Again, later he

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<sup>44</sup> Quine, W. V. O., *Pursuit of Truth*, op. cit., p. 62.

<sup>45</sup> Quine, W. V. O., *Roots of Reference*, op. cit., pp. 37-38.

claims that ‘observation sentences are precisely the ones we can correlate with observable circumstances of the occasion of utterance or assent and they afford the only entry to a language’. According to Quine, observation sentences are the repository of evidence for scientific hypothesis. In this regard, he puts emphasis on *learned shared responses* to current stimulation. Observation sentences or acts of asserting to them are such responses. Quine’s proposal of learning of observation sentences actually leads us to assume that what is to be learned is basically a response to current stimulation. The situation is, of course, more complicated than that of current stimulation. Observation sentences are not simply responses to current stimulation because observation sentences in some sense or other are structurally oriented whereas responses to stimulation are unstructured. More succinctly, it can be said that observation sentences are physical whereas stimulations are no longer physical. Secondly and more importantly, observation sentence, according to Quine, are corrigible, whereas a mere response to current stimulation cannot be corrigible. The question of correct or incorrect; truth or falsity in the case of a response to stimulation simply does not arise.

Are observation sentences incorrigible? If they are so, then in what sense are they incorrigible? In what sense Quine understands or conceives the concept of incorrigibility? The concept of ‘incorrigibility’ is philosophically a desirable concept and many philosophers have used this term. The ‘cogito-ergo-sum’ of Descartes is an incorrigible statement. It is incorrigible in the sense that it is absolutely true. Thus, it may be said that a statement is incorrigible if it is absolutely true. Quine, of course, cannot interpret the term ‘incorrigibility’ along with the line of Descartes; Quine would be regarded as conceptual relativist. As far as incorrigibility of observational sentences is concerned, Quine sincerely gives an affirmative answer to it in his *Word and Object*. But he equally imposes a qualification. He says that “the philosophical doctrine of infallibility of

observation sentences is sustained under our version. ... (This immunity to error is, however, like observability itself, for us a matter of degree.)”<sup>46</sup> Quine’s version of observation sentences actually departs from a philosophical tradition in the sense that it allows about ordinary things instead of requiring them to report sense data. Even in his *Roots of Reference*, Quine is more explicit in allowing for corrigibility. He remarks: “Our definition of observation sentence speaks only of concurrence of present witnesses, and sets no bar to subsequent retractions.”<sup>47</sup> He then sets out the criterion of observability. As far as the criterion of observability is concerned, observation sentences are no longer associated with determining the truth value of the sentence; rather it looks for immediate and unreflective assent to the sentence.

According to Quine, one cannot rule out the deceptive situation of observation sentence. When ‘Rabbit’ uttered as a one-word sentence, there are surely situations in which it looks for all the world as if rabbits are present, yet it would perhaps be the case that there are no rabbits around. The situation that occurs in this putative observation sentence is called deceptive where any normal speaker of the language is likely to give the wrong decision on the sentence due to the lack of knowledge. One can imagine a wholly convincing deceptive situation for ‘Rabbit’. In a situation of this type observers will assent to ‘Rabbit’ because in such a case each observer is experiencing stimulation. However, they are wrong because there are no rabbits around. Thus, in a deceptive situation one looks at rabbit around but in real sense there is no rabbit at all. Now, the point is that in the case of deceptive situation whether the sentence would be treated as observational sentence. Suppose  $x$  knows in somehow that a particular situation is deceptive and  $y$  does not know it. As a result of that both  $x$  and  $y$  will give different verdict regarding this situation even though both of them have perceptually similar stimulus response. The same can

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<sup>46</sup> Quine, W. V. O., *Word and Object*, op. cit., p. 44.

<sup>47</sup> Quine, W. V. O., *Roots of Reference*, op. cit., p. 41.

happen in other cases as well. It thus seems that we have the same global stimulus even though our responses to different queried sentences would be different. The sort of cognitive language Quine thus presumes proceeds in terms of dispositions. As a result of that most of the Quine's discussions of cognitive language address it very well of how it functions and of how it might be learnt if observation sentences were simply responses to stimulation.

We need to explicate the question how often deceptive situations occur in case of observational sentences? For example, 'There is a horse' is a highly observational sentence. In contrast, 'It's flimsy' has a lower degree of observability. Thus, the idea of observability can be measured in terms of degree. The degree of observability of a sentence is closely associated with the way it can be learnt. Corrigibility often reflects that acquiring a disposition to assent to sentence under appropriate stimulatory conditions does not amount to full mastery of the sentence. However, for highly observational sentence it will come nearer to it. This is reflected when we make a comparison between an infant and an adult learners of language. An infant who acquires such a disposition will not be able to use the sentence in the same way an adult can do it. The reason is that like an adult the infant does not have the mastery and authenticity over the language he uses. As a result of that, the infant under consideration will not be able to respond appropriately in situations which the adult can tell are deceptive. As the situation so presumed is highly observational, such situations would extremely rare. Even though the infant has to go a long way towards learning the correct use of the sentence, but still we can say that in the case of highly observational sentence the infant's use will in fact very close to that of the adult. According to Quine, even in case of color, for example 'Red', 'sameness of stimulus meaning comes unusually close to what one intuitively expects of synonymy'.<sup>48</sup> Quine in this regard talks

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<sup>48</sup> Quine, W. V. O., *Word and Object*, op. cit., P. 41.

of ‘intrusive information’. According to Quine, although intrusive information at times plays significant role in different situations but we must heavily rely on generally shared collateral information as well. The notion of observationality, Quine opines, is relative to the modulus of stimulation. As the notion of stimulus meaning was relative to the modulus, observationality, according to Quine, increases with the modulus. Even though the notion of observationality to some extent is vague, but we ignore degree of constancy or reliability of stimulus meaning from speaker to speaker. Quine says that “the stimulus meaning of a standing sentence can show fair constancy from speaker to speaker...”<sup>49</sup> Thus, viewing the graded notion of observationality, we may still speak of sentences simply as observation sentences when they are high in observationality. For Quine, it is for ‘observation sentences that the notion of stimulus meaning constitutes a reasonable notion of meaning.’<sup>50</sup> In the case of observation sentence we are pretty sure that there is a firm agreement on the part of the well-placed observers. The notion of agreement on the part of observers leads us to assume that the concept of observationality is social. For Quine, language as a socially inculcated set of dispositions is substantially *uniform over the community*, but it is uniform in different ways for different sentences. This position of Quine has a similarity with later Wittgenstein. The concept of *family-resemblance* or *form of life* of later Wittgenstein has the same philosophical implication of Quine even though like the former the latter does not talk about ordinary language. Language, for Wittgenstein, is form of an activity; language is rule-following and following a rule is a practice in society, in community and within the form of life. Thus, in a sense language is *social* for both Quine and Wittgenstein. However, Quine’s understanding of language is cognitive in nature and such language is certainly foreign in later Wittgenstein.

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 44.

Even though we are talking of corrigibility, but it shows that acquiring a disposition to assent to a sentence under appropriate stimulatory conditions does not amount to full mastery of the sentence. What we can say here is the idea of partially learning. It is the process of partially learning through which an infant might go a long way towards learning the correct use of some sentences. Thus for Quine, acquiring the mastery of language is a practice through observability; whereas for Chomsky, acquiring the mastery or competence over language is an innate process that has been developed through Transformational Generative Grammar (TGG). According to Quine, we start with partial or defective learning and once we have learnt more we are in a position to refine our earlier usages and making it correct until it amounts to complete adult mastery of the sentence. Thus, the process of acquiring the mastery of language is a process of constant and continuous revision of language through stimulus response, perceptual similarity based on observational sentences. Utterances of highly observational sentences are very close to being response to current stimulation. It is closely connected with the very concept of corrigibility and truth-values. Observation sentences, Quine thinks, are thus integrated with the rest of the theory because we tend to revise our theories in terms of responses. At times, we will revise our observation sentences in response to theory and at other times we will withdraw an observation sentence for avoiding unacceptable theoretical adjustments. Quine in this regard says, “The tail thus comes, in an extremity, to wag the dog”.<sup>51</sup> For Quine, if theories are responsive to observation sentences, then we cannot rule out the possibility under which incorrigibility is settled in favour of the theory. Accordingly, there is no point in saying that the incorrigibility of observation sentences is adventitious. Rather one has to assume that it is a byproduct of their being integrated with theory.

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

As far as objectivity is concerned one has to say that some features of observation sentences lie behind our talking about them to have truth-values and to be objective claims about the world. However, the question remains unresolved that how a mere response to stimulation could be an objective claim? However, once we introduce the idea that the response is corrigible; the matter would be altogether different. Objective claims are those where we may have turned out to be mistaken about it with regard to public opinion and it may need to be revised at some point. In this regard, Quine quips why we take our language to be about a world independent of it and of us? Part of his answer is that learning is inter-subjective. So, the real, Quine says, 'is the stuff that mother vouches for and calls by name'<sup>52</sup>. Accordingly, it can be said that the real is also the stuff about which mother and others in general may correct you and about which you may be mistaken. This clearly suggests that the integration with theory which explains the incorrigibility of observation sentences is intrinsically connected with their having truth-values. It is only in virtue of these characteristics that they count as even the *first steps of cognitive language*.

Thus, we are in a position to assess how an infant does gradually catch on the full adult use of observation sentences. Here an infant starts with the sentence as *merely as a response to the current stimulation*. He then acquires the disposition to change his verdict on it in the light of new evidence. This is **physicalistic** in nature. This will involve his treating it not as an unconstructed whole but rather as a make-up of significant parts. These two steps occur when the infant comes to assent to the observation sentence on account of both current stimulation and on the basis of integrated broad theory. It would be treated as a modest or low level process. It is stage where an adult says to an infant 'It looks like a rabbit but it is not really one' where the illusion is made clear. In this way the infant perhaps may come to know the idiom 'looks like...

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<sup>52</sup>Quine, W. V. O., "The Scope of Language and Science", in W. V. Quine, *The Ways of Paradox and Other Essays*, op. cit., p. 232.

but is not really'. This is how an infant gradually overcomes his limitations of language. This process of learning is no longer behavioural in nature. Many would say that Quine's cognitive language is behavioural in nature. Quine himself denies it. Quine is a physicalist and thus he has introduced a physicalistic account of cognitive language. We think, after Quine, that no sentences completely fulfill the criteria for being observation sentences. Of course, we think that some sentences are highly observational and some others are not. We can measure it in terms of degree. But we can say that as far as the criterion of observability is concerned, no sentence would be absolutely observational. Highly observational sentences come closer and will be more or less learnable as responses to stimulation. However, they are integrated into wide-theory and they have truth-values and are objective and corrigible as well. We can say that Quine's account of learning of observation sentences is an ongoing account of the learning of responses to current stimulation. The gap between learning of responses to current stimulation and highly observation sentences actually leaves a gap in his account of the learning of cognitive language. However, the gap can be narrowed down if we following the process of learning of language by an infant along with Quinean line. We think the very idea of observation sentence actually holds the centrality of doing this.

## **2.6 Are Observation Sentences Theory-laden?**

So far we have seen that there is a gap between the observation sentence in the mouth of the infant and in the mouth of an adult. An infant is a first learner of language whereas an adult is fully competent speaker of the language. To the infant utterance of an observation sentence is a mere response to stimulation. In almost all situations the adult will give the same responses to his stimulations. Thus, as far the response level is concerned there we do not find any significant distinction between an infant and an adult. This is made possible because response is based on

perceptual similarity which is common to all observers. As sentences are observational in nature there underlies perceptual similarity to all observers. The only difference between an infant and an adult actually hinges on the range of knowledge they have regarding the object. For the adult the sentence is integrated with the rest of his knowledge. Accordingly, it may be claimed that uttering or asserting a sentence by an adult is not merely a response to stimulation. Besides, stimulation the adult has required a much more complicated disposition unlike an infant. On the basis of this an adult can easily avoid deceptive situation that cannot be avoided by an infant. The infant over the course of time has to acquire the mastery of the sentence to make or uplift him at par with an adult. He must begin to attain the wider theory into which the observation sentence is integrated. As the mastery over language is a matter of disposition, the infant like the adult must attain complicated disposition. Thus, as far as complex disposition is concerned an observation sentence in the mouth of the beginner differs from that of the mouth of an adult. Quine conceives it very well as he says that an observation sentence has two aspects what he termed it as ‘Janus-faced’<sup>53</sup>.

What then is the role of observation sentence? Are observation sentences theory-laden? Many would say that observation sentences are theory-laden. The role of observation sentences is the ultimate evidence for theory. Some philosophers of science would say that there is no notion of observation which can serve as an independent notion of evidence for theory. Quine particularly in his later writings claims that observation sentences are theory-laden. According to Quine, there is a point of saying that observations sentences are theory-laden. Let us make this point clear after Quine. Suppose the sentence ‘There is water’ – is an observation sentence. ‘Water’ is a word which certainly occurs elsewhere in our theory of the world. In the science there is a

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<sup>53</sup> See Quine, W. V. O., “In Praise of Observation sentences”, *Journal of Philosophy* 90, no. 3 (March 1993), pp. 109ff. Also see Quine, W. V. O., *Pursuit of Truth*, op. cit., p. 8.

theory which reads 'water' as H<sub>2</sub>O. Naturally, one might think the word 'water' in its modest way with a theoretical term. The point that needs to be taken care of is that the observation sentence uses the term might be taken to show that the sentence has theoretical commitments in the sense that it already presupposes and draws upon our theory. As a result of that one may say that the sentence under consideration is not neutral – 'theory-free' – evidence for theory. Even though Quine adheres to the view that observational sentences are theory-laden, he does not think that all observation sentences without exception are theory-laden. It may even perhaps be the case that in one sense this is correct and in another sense this is not correct. There are different types of observation sentences. Innocent observation sentences are theory-laden. Quine says, "Retrospectively those once innocent observation sentences are theory-laden indeed. An observation sentence containing no more theoretical a word than "water" will join forces with theoretical sentences containing terms as technical as "H<sub>2</sub>O". Seen holophrastically, as conditioned to stimulatory situations, the sentence is theory-free; seen analytically, word by word, it is theory-laden."<sup>54</sup> Following Quine, we can say that observation sentences may be theory-free when seen one way and theory-laden when seen another. When we talk of observation sentences we naturally focus on the various uses of the sentence but not on the sentence itself. We have seen that an assent to the observation sentence by the infant is a mere response to stimulation. As a result of that the observation sentence is not theory-laden in the case of an infant. However, in the case of an adult the observation sentence is theory-laden. The infant has only a partial mastery of the use of the sentence. He may make the same noise just like an adult but like an adult he will not be predisposed to accept or reject it under precisely the same circumstances. The sentence as used by a competent speaker is not theory-free. Even though he may initially accept an observation sentence but gradually he may change his mind in

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<sup>54</sup> Quine, W. V. O., *Pursuit of Truth*, op. cit., p. 7.

the light of new evidence. As a result of that he may draw a theory beyond the single observation sentence with which he has started on. Quine in his later writing accept this point. While illuminating the nature of observation sentence Quine goes on to say that “it is the infection of observation by theory; the anti-epistemologists have a point here.”<sup>55</sup> Thus, for Quine, observation sentences are corrigible. They are not mere responses to stimulation, they are **theory-laden**.

So far we have elaborately distinguished between observation sentences seen analytically and observation sentences seen holophrastically. Those observation sentences seen analytically are called genuine observation sentences with their full use and those observation sentences seen holophrastically are called the infant’s proto-observation sentences. This distinction has to do with corrigibility and with neutrality between theories. This is also associated with other issues, such as, with grammar and also with reference. An observation sentence that has been used by an adult and also attributed as ‘seen analytically’ is made of significant parts in the sense that they can occur in other sentences. The so-called significant parts are systematically arranged where grammar gets its foothold. Observation sentences in their adult usage are made up of nouns, verbs, articles, adjectives, prepositions. On the contrary, observation sentences seen holophrastically and as used by the neophyte function without grammar. Here the speech to which the learner is exposed affects him by stimulating his auditory nerves. Here the infant starts with the learning of language with standards of perceptual similarity which group noises into phonemes. Like grammar, reference is another issue to which the distinction between Quine’s two aspects of observation sentences is relevant. Elsewhere in his book *Word and Object*, Quine

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<sup>55</sup> Quine, W. V. O., “I, You, and It”, in A. Orenstein and P. Kotatko (eds.), *Knowledge, Language and Logic*, op. cit., p. 5.

speaks of observation sentences as being ‘about ordinary things as opposed to sense-data’<sup>56</sup>. This reflects that observation sentences or most of them do refer to objects. There lies the relevance of reference while reading observation sentences. This does, however, make sense to say after Quine that any observation sentence is referential. Quine enquires how the child who has already acquired some observation sentences comes to acquire the capacity to refer to objects.<sup>57</sup> Quine equally raised the same point in his *Pursuit of Truth*. Here Quine says that it is an advantage of beginning with observation sentences that ‘the nature and utility of reification could be deferred’<sup>58</sup>. However, it should be kept in mind that just acquiring observation sentences is not *ipso-facto* acquiring the capacity to refer. Accordingly, it can be said that initially observation sentences are not referential. It is not about anything so long it fails to refer an object. Thus, proto-observation sentences that an infant or a child can acquire initially are non-referential. However, the adult’s outlook or vision about the same sentence is referential. Thus, we can say that referential sentences are theory-laden and non-referential sentences are not theory-laden. An observation sentence which is not theory-laden is ungrammatical where stimulation plays the central role. But an observation sentence which is referential and theory-laden is grammatical in nature.

Simplistically, we can say after Quine that observation sentences as initially acquired are not referential. Such sentences are non-referential because they are indirectly linked to current neural intake. They are not linked with objects. Here Quine deviates from Davidson and others. One may raise a quip at this juncture. The child’s utterance of ‘Fido’ is linked to the neural intake according to Quine, but the child in this case, in some sense or other, acquires the disposition to

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<sup>56</sup> Quine, W. V. O., *Word and Object*, op. cit., p. 44.

<sup>57</sup> See Hylton, P., *Quine*, op. cit., p. 144.

<sup>58</sup> Quine, W. V. O., *Pursuit of Truth*, op. cit., p. 23.

utter or to assent to 'Fido' when it is in the presence of the dog. At least we can say against Quine that there is no deceptive situation in such a case. If it does then why do we deny referentiality in the case of observational sentence as undertaken by an infant? Quine would say that here the child's utterance is not a sentence that can be assessed as correct or incorrect, true or false. In the case of a referring expression we have an altogether a different interpretation. A referring expression is assessed as succeeding in referring, or failing to refer to an object. The utterance of the child in the present case is not a sentence but a name where the point of justification is almost void. In this regard, Quine makes a distinction between 'full reification' and what he calls 'perceptual reification'. Experiments show that unlike the former the later is innate. This does not imply that the infant is innately capable of full reification which, according to Quine, involves the ability to make sense of identity over time. We have no reason to think that pre-linguistic infants can make sense of such things. Quine here agrees with Campbell on the point that reification of bodies is innate in man and other higher animals subject to a qualifying adjective 'perceptual reification'. Quine says, "I reserve "*full* reification" and "*full* reference" for the sophisticated stage where the identity of a body from one time to another can be queried and affirmed... ." <sup>59</sup> Quine ascribes perceptual reification to the infant, but not full reification. He equally accepts that perceptual reification naturally comes to us. Quine further contends that many of our early observation sentences are terms referring to what Quine calls *bodies*. A body, according to Quine, "typically contrasts with its visual surroundings in color and in movement or parallax. It is fairly chunky and compact. ... If we make contact, it resists pressure" <sup>60</sup>. The fact that children learn observation sentences, such as, 'Mama', 'Dadda', or 'Fido' actually specifies innate standard of perceptual similarity which are ready-made for bodies with their vagaries. The

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<sup>59</sup> Leonardi, P. and Santambrogio, M., (eds.), *On Quine: New Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 350.

<sup>60</sup> Quine, W. V. O., *From Stimulus to Science*, op. cit., p. 24.

similarity basis of 'Mama' was rather a long story and it is apparently a sort of similarity that we are innately predisposed. The child's standards of perceptual similarity actually allow him readily to catch on to words for bodies. We are, Quine says, in a memorable turn of phrase, 'body-minded animals' and he continues by saying that "by natural selection; for body-mindedness has evident survival value in town and jungle."<sup>61</sup> Infants thus equipped standards of perceptual similarity adopted for bodies. These are complex dispositions where there we do not have any specific methodology. What is true to say is that children are basically quick learners. They also quickly learn general terms for bodies besides observation sentence 'Mama'. This learning demands a second order similarity, what may be termed as 'a similarity of similarities'. In virtue of these dispositions which gradually lead the infant to second order similarity is a sort of engagement in perceptual reification. However, perceptual reification falls short of full reification. In this sense perceptual reification may be comprehended as a mere reaction to stimulations.

Thus, it seems to us that perceptual reification is inferior to full reification as unlike the perceptual reification, full reification requires certain abilities, which go beyond anything that we have reason to attribute to the infant. According to Quine, full reification actually involves being able to re-identify an object across time. A competent speaker of language always cannot answer this question whether the same object over again and again is being identified by him, but he can at least make sense of it. For Quine, this is a special ability which would require "our whole schematism of space and time and the unobserved trajectories of bodies within it."<sup>62</sup> Thus, in a sense the requirements for full reification are also the requirements for reference. When we talk of proto-observation sentence, we are actually talking merely about the infant's ability to respond

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<sup>61</sup> Quine, W. V. O., *Roots of Reference*, op. cit., p. 54.

<sup>62</sup> Quine, W. V. O., *From Stimulus to Science*, op. cit., p. 36.

to neural intake. Of course, it may perhaps be the case that this sort of ability be sufficient for proto-observation sentences, but surely not for reference. Quine, of course, does not think that the relation between a referring expression and the object to which it refers is fundamental, rather he thinks of such relation as derivative. Instead of inquiring mere reference, Quine put emphasis on explanation of how the reference is made possible; what it is for a term to refer; how it comes about that we are capable of using terms in that way. For Quine, reference always presupposes infant's ability to respond to stimulation; it also presupposes further abilities. In inquires further what those abilities are and how they might be acquired. All these issues are concerned to Quine. That is why Quine, like Davidson, does not build the notion of reference into the fundamental account of language.

So far we have discussed two aspects of observation sentences where an infant taking his first step into language and a competent speaker who has a whole range of sophisticated stimulations. The former has mastered only some response to stimulations, proto-observation sentences. By contrast, for the latter observation sentences are concerned to theory as a whole in various ways, such as, corrigibility, reference, evidence, etc. The relevance of all these arise out of these connections. These two aspects are hierarchical in nature. We start with the one and gradually move towards acquiring the latter. Thus, in a sense the dual aspect is essential to the function of observation sentence as the starting point of language and conceptualization. However, the learning proto-observation sentence does not presuppose any prior conceptual or theoretical resources because it is the begging where one can start. As far as corrigibility of observation sentence is concerned, one has to emphasis on how we come to be able to correct our own and other's utterances in the light of latter evidence. Quine in this regard introduces the concept 'categoricals' and then tells us how observational categoricals might be acquired; how other

sentences might be accepted or rejected on the basis of observation categories at a very general and schematic level. In this regard, the issue of reference plays an important role.

## **2.7 Beyond Observation Sentence**

To justify observation sentences as theory-laden, we have to go beyond the range of observation sentence. According to Quine, we are physical objects and we are also subject to physical forces which gives rise to the stimulation of our sensory nerves. Through sensory nerves or input we emit sounds or marks or gestures (output). Our output is about the world that has been portrait through cognitive language. This is the basis of cognitive language. Cognitive language thus makes a relation of sensory input to linguistic output what Quine reads as ‘the relation of theory to evidence’. We have seen that the beginnings of cognitive language start from responses to stimulation of observation sentence. Thus, in a sense cognitive language is answerable to sensory stimulations. Even though we start with observation sentences as a beginning of developing cognitive language, but we cannot stick to it because of the complex nature of cognitive language. Cognitive language is complicated because here one has to explore how does knowledge relate to observation sentences and thus to sensory stimulations. How do we acquire our theory of the world? The so-called observation sentences that we talk with regard to Quine’s cognitive language are not typical of language as such. They can only be learned *as responses to stimulations*. The dispositions which must be acquired in order to learn a particular observation sentence are relatively straightforward and more importantly, the number of sentences that a child can learn as observation sentences will be quite small. According to Quine, sentences in general differ from observation sentences both in complexity and also in number. Unlike a sentence, an observation sentence is primarily associated with relatively straightforward and specifiable dispositions. One thing should be kept in mind that Quine is not interested about

linguistic, rather his intention is to give an epistemological interpretation of cognitive language. In the previous sequel we have seen that Quine has developed naturalized epistemology and in this regard he has criticized First Philosophy or the so-called traditional or classical epistemology governed by philosophical dogmas. Thus, we can say that the concern of Quine's cognitive language is not the mechanism of language learning along with the line of linguist; rather his main concern is epistemological. As far as epistemological intuition is concerned it is a matter of how our sentences come to make claims about the world and how we acquire cognitive language. His interest is not, of course, to know about child's sense of grammaticality rather to know about how the child might be in a position to learn relevant observation sentences; how to form judgments as to the correctness of other sentences. Thus, in a sense Quine is interested to know about the ability to use the construction to make utterances that the rest of us accept as true or at least as plausible. Quine, however, inclines to say that assigning the correct truth-value of linguistic expression does not make sense to say that one has come to know about its use. To know how we do use a sentence is not associated with the correct truth value of the sentence under consideration. However, many would say that to know about the correct use of sentence actually leads us to know about the truth-value of the sentence under consideration. The use of a sentence is relative whereas the truth value of a sentence is not relative; a sentence is true once for all, or false once for all. However, the truth value of a sentence of the new kind is affected by the truth-values of other sentences. Thus, the idea of distributing truth-values continues to play a vital role. Quine in this regard talks in favour of learning of *eternal predication*. For Quine, a predication may be saddled with one truth-value for all eternity. Simplistically, it can be said after Quine that in learning language, 'we are learning how to distribute truth-values. ... In

learning the eternal predicational construction, we are learning how to judge whether a given pair of terms produces a true predication, true for good, or a false one, false for good'.<sup>63</sup>

As we have said Quine's ultimate objective continues to be on knowledge. He is more interested with the way in which knowledge is acquired. Even though process of learning is a higher level of abstraction, but it should not be detached from epistemology of theory of knowledge. We have already noted that sentences in general are correctly asserted or denied on the basis of other sentences asserted or denied and also on the basis of stimulation. The point concerned the complexity of the dispositions helps one to learn sentences beyond the observational. Beyond the level of observation sentence there may be little of general nature that can be said about what counts as evidence for and against a sentence. Holism limits how much there is to be said about the evidence relation. Holism equally limits how much there are to be said about the learning relation. Thus, Quine's strategy is to find out the process of language-dependent learning based more on holism. In this direction observation sentences would be regarded as the first part of language to be acquired. At this stage Quine is concerned to show how sentences of that kind might be learnt by an infant who has not yet mastered any part of language. At that stage, we presuppose that the infant has mastered some parts of the language and on the basis of that he can move to the second stage of learning. Although Quine is a conceptual relativist, but his account of learning of language by an infant attributes some prior language mastery to the learner albeit in a modest way. As a result of that it may perhaps be the case that the infant may or may not pass through a stage of uttering observation sentences whenever stimulatory circumstances warrant the utterance. The disposition to utter is inhibited and largely replaced by a disposition to assent to or dissent from observation sentences. Along this way, the infant thus

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<sup>63</sup> Quine, W. V. O., *Roots of Reference*, op. cit., p. 65.

comes to master assent or dissent. This profusely facilitates his learning. From physicalistic point of view, the children hears one adult assenting to or dissenting from, the queried sentences of another and eventually he spontaneously ventures his own utterances of assent and dissent in response to observation sentences meet with acceptance or rejection. Here infant's learning of the observation sentence actually relies on the mastery of other parts of language-assent and dissent. It relies on the ability to respond in the appropriate sort of way to adult sign of assent or dissent in response to observation sentences. Thus, for Quine, learning of observation sentence is language-dependent in a limited way.

This position of Quine is contrary to the position of Chomsky. Unlike Quine, Chomsky puts emphasis on the innate mechanism of developing the learning of language. According to Chomsky, language is innate. Every normal child at the time of birth innately preoccupied a linguistic organ placed in the left hemisphere of the brain from where language is spontaneously generated. As language is spontaneously generated from the brain, Chomsky calls it **Transformation Generative Grammar**. Thus, for Chomsky learning of language at the initial stage is mental, not physical as Quine has claimed. According to Quine, learning of language at the very initial stage is a stimulation of responses. For Chomsky, it is innate and it is developed from the brain where there is no role of stimulation or stimulus responses. Thus, we find a significant difference between Quine and Chomsky as far as learning of language by an infant at the initial stage is concerned. Quine is in favour of language dependent learning of language, i.e., learning that 'depends on other locutions previously learned'<sup>64</sup>. Here learner's standard of similarity plays an important role. There are many analogous constituents, such as, *disjunction*, *negation*, *conjunction* etc. from which one may take the help. What is initially learnt as being

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

what he calls a *verdict function* rather than a truth-function. A sentence may be true or false, but there are three possible conceptual verdicts on an observation sentence, such as, assent, dissent, and abstain. Quine also mentions another kind of learning what he calls *analogous synthesis*. For example, if an infant observe that from the word ‘Foot’, an adult can construct the sentence ‘This is my foot’, likewise just on the basis of analogy the infant may utter the sentence ‘This is my hand’ from the word ‘Hand’ on an appropriate occasion without having any previous experience.

If a child says ‘My hand hurts’, his sentence is not an observation sentence. Here the stimulatory conditions which prompt its assent are not shared even though there are some observable marks, such as, cuts, scrapes and bruises which may bring sympathy. If the child says ‘Mama’s hand hurts’ from the sentence ‘My hand hurts’, it is not closed to an observation sentence at all because here the child’s mother may not currently be visible. Thus, on the basis of analogous synthesis, there may enlarge the stock of sentences of an elementary sort. Over the course of learning process the child finds new ability to form predictions leads it to sentences which are importantly different from observation sentences. According to Quine, the new sentence is appropriately asserted “when the respective regions that are rendered salient by these two terms are combined in a certain pattern: the one surrounded by, or embedded in, the other.”<sup>65</sup> This ongoing process gradually helps one to generalize and end up by associating ‘in’ with the manner of embedment. This is how one may take a step beyond observation sentence, a step towards something that is quite new in principle. Beyond the observation sentence, one has to depend more on the **range of indirect evidence**. However, the so-called indirect evidence is a different matter from the learning of observation sentence. It is holistic. It depends on the child’s

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

is having mastered a portion of the theory of the world which extends well beyond the observation sentence.

The next stage is a general mastery of the 'in' construction where the child may form compounds on the basis of his grasp of the components without any prior experience of the whole sentence. At this stage, the distance from direct observation is likely to be greater. Here the child depends on vague and indirect evidence at large. As far as holism is concerned the child's learning of the sentences involves a mastery of what counts as evidence for and against. Owing to have the full mastery (competency over language, according to Chomsky) the child then proceeds to compound sentences and modify the expressions contained in these original sentences. He can construct new sentences as well. Full ability or mastery to do this will come only as gradually. As far as holism is concerned we can say that a given may be linked not merely to current stimulation but to other sentences as well. Thus, in a sense holism as such prompts one to move beyond the observation sentences. Now, to say that a sentence is linked to certain other sentence is to say that a competent user of that sentence will be more or less likely to assent to those other sentences. It is clearly a behavioural matter as it has to do with behavioural dispositions. It is ultimately a matter of the physical state of the organism. Language learning is a gradual process; it is in general progresses in this way that what is learnt is a holistic language where evidence gradually bears on a given sentence indirectly via other sentences. Alternatively, we can say after Quine that what is to be learnt is a holistic language. Here the learner gets mastery if he proceeds by leaps where its truth and falsity is not evident. The 'leap' that is involved here is of a particularly interesting kind as it is based on the idea that 'the sound of a word can have somewhat the same effect as the sight of its object'<sup>66</sup>. Here we have a prototype of the confusion

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 67.

of use and mention, of a word with the thing it designates. Quine in this regard says, “Language is rooted in what a good scientific language eschews. ... Language is conceived in sin and science is its redemption.”<sup>67</sup> What we can assert at this juncture is that beyond the observation sentences, language mastery, like the evidence relation, is holistic.

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 68.

## CHAPTER THREE

### QUINE ON INDETERMINACY OF TRANSLATION AS RADICAL TRANSLATION

Quine's concept of indeterminacy of translation has played a central role in his every philosophical decision. In fact, his concept of naturalized epistemology cannot be comprehended without his very idea of **Indeterminacy of Translation**. As a conceptual relativist Quine always advocates a systematic method of translating the language of a group of people. In the previous sequel we have observed that a child gradually accomplishes the mastery over language just by noticing the adult who uses language in different ways. According to Quine, there undergoes a constant revision of language without knowing the truth values of language. **Translation is a natural phenomenon** of the users of language. In this process there remains flexibility. As all we know that Quine is against any sort of philosophical dogmas and in this regard he vehemently criticizes both Kant and Carnap for their dogma based philosophical theories. According to Quine, translation is indeterminate because we always lose the originality when one text is translated into another. Accordingly, there we do not find exact translation if we compare two translation of a single text. Thus, one concerns the translation of complete sentences. Here Quine conjectures that two translation manuals, each fully acceptable, may give translations of a given sentence which are not in any sense equivalent. Having said this, Quine claims that any sort of translation is radical in the sense that during translation our linguist has no prior contact with the language; nor with anyone who has any knowledge of it. However, two linguists, independently engaged in radical translation, might come up with different and incompatible translation manuals, each of which was fully successful. This is where the genesis of the theory of indeterminacy of translation actually hinges on.

### 3.1 Two Philosophical Assumptions of Indeterminacy of Translation

We think that Quine's thesis of indeterminacy of translation actually hinges on **two philosophical assumptions**. First, the translation manuals that correlate two languages are **under-determined by evidence** very similar to the hypothesis that we notice in science. Secondly, translation manuals are not like hypothesis in the sciences because scientific hypothesis are true or false whereas the question of truth and falsity in the case of translation manuals simply does not arise. The first assumption is relatively uncontroversial as besides Quine there are some other philosophers, such as, Chomsky and Rorty, who accept the same. However, they disagree with Quine regarding the second hypothesis as they do not find any significant difference between translation manuals and scientific hypothesis. Let us try to understand from Quine's perspective why does he anticipate the difference between translation manuals and scientific hypothesis. We think the problem of meaning plays the main role at this juncture. If meaning is defined in terms of verification, falsification or confirmation then surely there is no way of tracing the meaning of any individual sentence down to such notions. This follows from the first assumption, the under-determination of our theory of nature. We know that the meaning of a sentence, according to the verificationist, is determined on the basis of evidential/observational data and truth-value. This is unlikely in the case of Quine. As Quine talks of cognitive language based on stimulation, there is no point of saying of evidence and truth-value. Moreover, no particular meaning can be assigned to a sentence taken in isolation. If it does, then surely it will go against Quine's holism. It is the translation of the whole language that matters, but not the translation of the individual sentences. According to Quine, there is no point in saying that to require a translation manual to correlate sentences that have the same meaning therefore make no sense.

Secondly, as a firm believer of physicalism, Quine thinks it so that meaning and other intensional entities are of no help in explaining what goes on in the world. Accordingly, we have no reason to assume that there are such entities. As a result of that we cannot say after Quine that among the many empirically satisfactory translation manuals there is one that is the right one that matches sentences that express the same meaning. According to Quine, all translation manuals are equally right and each of them can be said to preserve meaning in the legitimate way. Thirdly, an argument which was long overshadowed by Quine's stress on verificationism and physicalism, makes use of an assumption which seems to go much more to the heart of his view on the public nature of language. What linguistic expressions mean has been established by people reacting to the same sort of evidence that we make use of when we try to understand one another. There is no other meaning anywhere that our translation manuals are supposed to capture. According to Quine, even if there are such meanings as Frege and many other philosophers of language or linguistic philosophy have assumed, they would play no role in language learning and communication in the real sense of the term. Therefore, it may be assumed after Quine that the situation in translation manuals is therefore unlike that in natural science.

### **3.2 The Death of Meaning**

We think Quine's philosophical position in some sense or other lies in his attack of standard philosophical views about meaning. The meaning question within the paradigm of linguistic philosophy is highly debatable and linguistic philosophers over the course of history involve into a tug of war regarding the criterion, standard and the functional aspect of meaning. If Quine is right then almost everything that other linguistic philosophers have said and say about meaning is wrong. In fact, many would say that the traditional or classical concept of meaning **is death** if we Quine's position is anticipated. As far as the concept of meaning is concerned Quine objects

two clusters of views. The first is associated with the analytic-synthetic distinction and it goes against Kant. The second is associated with postulation of intensional objects, propositions or meanings in order to account for translation and it goes against Carnap and other semantics. The second group of views is not to be thought of as committed to the existence of **certain queer things**. Its minimum claim is that the sentence of a language has a definite meaning apart from any proposed scheme of translation from the language. It may be said that the theory of meaning is adequate to account for translation and ambiguity, objects of psychological states, such as emotion, feeling, etc., must permit an analytic-synthetic distinction. According to Quine, linguistic philosophers have been almost totally wrong about meaning. He denies that appeal to meaning will do any of the things these philosophers have wanted to do for them. We think Quine's position is nearly tantamount to disbelieving in meaning. When he criticizes or denies the analytic-synthetic distinction, he does not want to say that there is no sharp distinction; rather he intends to say that **nothing is analytically true**. According to Quine, the analytic-synthetic distinction does not resemble the red-orange distinction; it resembles rather the **witch-non-witch distinction**, which actually fails to distinguish anything as there are no witches. As the ascription of analyticity, like the ascription of witchcraft, commits one to an incorrect explanatory claim, there is no point of asserting such distinction. However, some anti-Quinean would like to say that the analytic-synthetic distinction can be drawn without appeal to a controversial explanatory claim, but Quine does not agree with them. According to Quine, if the distinction holds good then it should equally work in ordinary talk about meaning, synonymy, definition, etc. Quine equally denies that the distinction can be taught ostensibly or just by knowing the meaning of the terms of the sentence under consideration. Thus, for Quine that there is no point of introducing

an analytic-synthetic distinction in the way classical and traditional philosophers including Kant had thought of.

Quine is in favour of the propositional sense of meaning as advocated by the whole host of semanticists and the verificational sense of meaning as propounded by the logical positivists or the reductionist sense of meaning as propounded by Carnap, and others. For Quine, an adequate account of belief and desire, etc., must treat psychological states as attitudes towards sentences rather than as attitudes towards propositions. He further contends that an adequate account of translation does not require reference to preservation of meaning if meaning is taken to be fixed by the language independently of some general scheme of translation. Acquiring meaning without translation is false. Determinate, fixed meaning is not possible. Adequate accounts of translation, psychological attitudes, ambiguities, etc., all are integral part of meaning but unfortunately attempt has been made to avoid the logistic support of these entities.

Does it then lead us to assume that Quine was against the postulation of intensional objects? We do not think so. He does not intend to say that intensional objects, propositions or meanings are a queer kind of entity. In fact Quine was a believer of abstract entities as used in set theory. What he denies is the mode of explanation regarding those objects. His attitude toward intensional objects is similar to his attitude toward phlogiston or the ether. In fact Quine does not attempt to show that these views are a priori false or necessarily false. Quine does not argue that a defender of analyticity or of intensional objects can be led into inconsistency. Rather he intends to say that there is a substantial lack of defending their claims in favour of meaning. For Quine, just like we can reject the theories of witchcraft, phlogiston, the ether, likewise we can reject the theory of meaning as propounded by the classical thinkers. Even Quine at times inclines to say there is no way to make sense of analytic-synthetic distinction. He claims that this distinction from the strict

sense of the term is meaningless. In support of Quine, Gilbert Harman says ‘that nothing is analytic, all that truth or falsity is synthetic’. Quine wants to say that one cannot make sense of the analytic-synthetic distinction simply on the ground that they turn out to be analytic truths. Quine’s message is that the analytic-synthetic distinction, intensional objects of psychological states, meanings and propositions is no better off than witches, the ether, phlogiston, or God and God is dead. The meaning as sought by the linguistic philosophers, particularly semantics, is dead. While determining meaning, they hold bad empirical theories.

### **3.3 Full Blooded Theory of Analytic Truth: Quine’s Reservation**

According to this theory, analytic truth is known solely by virtue of meaning or that are knowable solely by virtue of meaning. Just by using the term; ‘by virtue’, a full blooded theory of analytic truth commits its defender to an explanatory claim about meaning. According to Kant, an analytic proposition has two distinctive features. First, the predicate term of an analytic statement is overtly or covertly contained by the subject term and secondly, the denial of an analytic statement always leads to a contradiction. Thus, following Kant we can say that *meaning* is always part of the reason why a sentence expresses a truth. Since the sentence could be made to express a falsehood by assigning different meaning to the words that make up the sentence. The sentence ‘All bachelors are unmarried’ expresses a truth by virtue of their meaning plus the way the world is. The sentence is analytic and it is known as truth just by looking at the meaning of the subject and predicate term of the sentence under consideration. Likewise the sentence ‘Copper conducts electricity’ expresses a truth because it means what it does and **because of the way the world is**. If the meaning were suitably different or if the laws of nature in the world were suitably different, the sentence under consideration would not express a truth. According to the full blooded theory of analytic truth, there are other sentences that express truth

solely by virtue of their meaning and independently of the way the world is. The sentence 'Copper is a metal' or the sentence 'Red roses are red' would be said to express truths solely by virtue of their meanings. They express truths would be said to have nothing to do with the way the world is, apart from the fact that these sentences have the meaning they have. But how do we understand or cognize the truth of a sentence that would be independent of the way the world is and depend entirely on the meaning of the sentence? Moreover, if analyticity is taken as knowability by virtue of knowledge of meaning, then why should it not be counted as knowing something about the world to know that copper is a metal? Proponent of this view would like to say that if someone sincerely denies these sentences he must fail to understand what he is saying. Quine does not agree with this. According to Quine, the problem for a defender of analyticity is to show how in certain cases each compulsion or obviousness is a sign of truth or knowability by virtue of meaning. One may say that it would be a matter of convention that a given word means what it does. Our convention might have been different and we can change them now if we desire to do so. Such a change in our convention would affect the truth and falsity of sentences like 'Copper conducts electricity'. A conventionalist further argues that meaning depends on conventions for the use of an expression and the relevant conventions specify which sentences are to be counted true and which false. Here we have adopted certain rules or conventions that assign truth or falsity to sentences like 'Copper is a metal' and 'Wood is not a metal'. The so-called conventions act as a ready reference on the basis of which one can determine the meaning of the word 'copper', 'metal', 'wood', and the logical words like 'if', 'not', 'every' etc. As a result of that certain principles are true by virtue of meaning, i.e., by virtue of convention.

Quine does not endorse the conventionalist account of meaning. According to Quine, the conventionalist would face a major difficulty if it is supposed to account for the logical truth and

falsity. An infinite number of sentences of logic require conventional assignments of truth and falsity. Conventionalist, however, seemingly holds that we make certain general conventions that together assign truth or falsity to the infinite set. But the problem with conventionalism is that of dealing with logical words. It has been objected by saying that conventionalism in logic thus either proves circular or heads to an infinite regress. Moreover, even if we think that conventional assignments of truth and falsity determine meaning, from this it does not follow that a sentence assigned truth is true by virtue of convention or false by virtue of convention. Even some relevant notion of convention cannot be distinguished from the notion of postulation. Accordingly, it can be said that since 'truth by convention' is 'truth according to one's conventions, postulates,' truth by conventions does not guarantee truth and therefore cannot accept for truth. For similar ground conventionalism must fail to account for knowledge of truth by virtue of knowledge of meaning because knowledge of meaning is not sufficient for knowledge that it is true.

One may say that the ultimate defense of full blooded theory of analytic truth actually hinges on the entitlement that some truths are either necessarily true or knowable a priori, where the notion of necessary truth and a priori knowledge are given special meaning. It has been claimed and proved that all necessary or a priori truth must be analytic truth; i.e., true by virtue of meaning or knowable by virtue of knowledge of meaning. A sentence expresses a necessary truth if, given the meaning of the sentence, it must be true no matter what. Likewise a sentence expresses an a priori truth if knowledge of its meaning can suffice for knowledge of its truth. Accordingly, we can say that the meaning of such a sentence guarantees its truth. Simplistically, it can be said that knowledge of meaning is enough for knowledge of truth and either the a priori or the necessary or both can be identified with the analytic. For example, the sentence 'Copper is a metal' and

‘Copper is copper’ are said to express necessary truth and also said to be knowable a priori. Hence they are analytic as well. This classical position of the concept of analyticity, necessity and a prioricity are not very clear to Quine. A prior knowledge may be either relative or absolute. One has to have an absolutely a priori knowledge. Likewise, certain truths may be necessary being the laws of nature or being discovered by science. However, such natural necessity cannot guarantee analyticity because truths arising out of laws of nature are synthetic and only necessary truths are analytic. Laws of nature do not hold solely by virtue of the meaning of words used to express those laws. Moreover, laws of nature are not absolutely necessary as they need not have been true. There are conceivable worlds in which they do not hold. Therefore, Quine thinks that the notions of absolutely a priori knowledge and of truths absolutely necessary are obscure. Quine concludes by saying that no truths are a priori or necessary and therefore that no truth is analytic in the full blooded sense. For Quine, it is not clear how meaning can account for truth or knowledge of meaning account for knowledge for truth. Quine’s argument is equally effective against the effective theory that has been engaged in identifying the analytic truths as those that are either explicitly or implicitly truths of logic. For example, ‘A male sibling is male’ represents an explicit logical truth where the equivalence is equivalence by virtue of meaning. According to the weaker theory, sentences expressing logical truths are count as analytic truths. There is nothing wrong in logical truth. In fact logical truths are undisputable, but the claim that two sentences are equivalent by virtue of meaning requires further discussion. Quine puts more emphasis on the explanatory use of meaning. For Quine, a notion of analytic truth or meaning equivalence that had **no explanatory use** would eventually fail to resemble sufficiently anything philosophers have in the past meant by those expressions. One cannot uphold the weak theory of analytic truth by simply appeal to ordinary or philosophical talk about meaning, synonymy,

definition and analyticity. As an alternative one must *explicitly justify the explanatory claim involved in 'equivalent by virtue of meaning'*. For Quine, the ascription of analyticity commits one to an explanatory claim that something can be true or knowable by virtue of meaning or at least that two sentences can be equivalent by virtue of meaning. So far it seems to us that there is no way in which meaning might provide such explanation.

There is a section of philosophers who run with the conviction that language is often used to express a speaker's psychological attitudes that may perhaps be incompatible with Quine's rejection of the notion of meaning equivalence. According to this view, two or more sentences would be equivalent by virtue of meaning if they express the same **psychological attitude**, i.e., if they express the same belief. If the same belief can be expressed by several different sentences, then surely a belief cannot be construed simply as the acceptance of a sentence. Accordingly, it has been claimed that psychological states represent attitudes towards propositions. Quine objects to this philosophical position. He thinks that the postulation of propositional attitudes underlying one's sentential attitudes purports to offer an explanatory without really doing so. Quine, of course, agrees that there are such things as accepting a sentence as true, or desiring a sentence to be true, thinking a sentence as true along with the line of psychological states. However, this does not make sense to assume that propositional attitudes can acquire these sentential attitudes. In fact, Quine denies that a person accepts a sentence because he accepts a proposition or meaning expressed by that sentence. For Quine, belief takes the upper hand in order to determine the meaning of sentence. Therefore, it can be said after Quine that identifying the underlying belief has a paramount importance as the acceptance of a proposition or meaning. According to Quine, different sentential attitudes are often identified in ordinary speech depends on shifting context and hence it does not presuppose postulation of something behind the

sentence. Philosophers often seek the reason for postulating propositions of meanings in translation. For them translation consists in finding a sentence in one language that 'has' the same meaning or express the same proposition as a given sentence in the other. Quine argues that this is not a correct account of translation because it makes no sense to speak of the translation of a single sentence of one language into a sentence of another language apart from other translations one would make. Translation, Quine opines, must proceed against the background of a general scheme of translation from the one language to the other. Quine does not accept any predetermined general scheme of the notion of translation. In fact Quine thinks that translation is indeterminate but still radical. Without reference to a general scheme of translation, the notion of the translation of an isolated sentence of number theory is indeterminate. Quine claims that this sort of indeterminacy holds the radical translation in general. One cannot speak of translation apart from a scheme of translation. Radical translation is always indeterminate. In this regard Quine finds the intimate connection between **translation** and **psychology**. Translation, Quine opines, always involve certain psychological states, e.g., desires and beliefs. Indeterminacy is inexorable unless there are fairly strong restraints. As Quine gives emphasis on psychological attitudes and denies any strong propositional restraints, any sort of translation must survive within indeterminacy. Thus, we can say that indeterminacy is *sui-gensis* in Quine's translation manual. The possibility of translation from one language to another does not support the postulation of intensional objects, meanings, or propositions. Translation does not require antecedently existing meaning relations between sentences of different language apart from some proposed scheme of translation from the one language to the other. Quine believes that the basic psychological reality consists in attitude one has to sentences in one language along with connections among these attitudes and between these attitudes and their causes and effects, such

as, observation and speech. The postulations such as meanings, propositions, intensional objects are wrong because these are incompatible with the indeterminacy of radical translation.

We think Quine admits **an account of verbal disagreement** in his translation manuals. Quine anticipates verbal disagreement within ‘identity schemes’. As a conceptual relativist Quine inclines to say that identity schemes ascribes to others roughly the same beliefs he has and roughly the same methods of belief formation. Sometimes it may perhaps be the case that a relatively obvious modification of the identity translation will translate beliefs, etc., that appear to diverge from one’s own beliefs, etc., into beliefs, etc., similar to one’s own. In this way, one will accept the modified translation scheme and take the apparent disagreement belief to be **merely verbal**. If we stand by this philosophical position of Quine then certainly the analytic – synthetic distinction made by the classical thinkers including Kant would be in danger. As we know that the analytic proposition is determined on the fixity of meaning and the trouble incurs when we come to know that in any change from one view to another tends to involve a change in meaning. Any change in view represents some change in meaning. The question of meaning transitivity in the case of translation simply does not arise whereas the proponents of the analytic-synthetic distinction need transitivity. There has been no change in meaning in analytic-synthetic distinction and as a result of that it can be said any move from A to B has not changed the analytic statements of meaning postulates of the theory in question. But how do we come to know that two statements have the similarity of meaning? If meaning is psychological in nature associated with beliefs and stimulation then there is no point of saying ‘similarity of meaning’. Thus, the mistake, according to Quine, lies in confusing similarity of meaning. There are other problems as well associated with the analytic-synthetic distinction but the mistake about similarity of meaning plays a vital role.

### 3.4 Translation and Meaning

So far we have seen how surface irritations generate through language one's knowledge of the world. It is further noted after Quine that the classical notion of meaning primarily associated with the concept of truth about the world is **death** because through stimulations there emerges something recognizable as talks of things. Therefore, it can be said that the so-called meaning enquiring through translation would be a different adventure altogether that stands against the classical interpretation of meaning based on propositional meaning. Thus, the first step of translation or so to speak radical translation is to pay attention after Quine "how much of language can be made sense of in terms of its stimulus conditions, and what scope this leaves for empirically unconditioned variation in one's conceptual scheme"<sup>68</sup>. As a conceptual relativist, Quine says that manuals for translating of one language into another can be set up in divergent ways, all compatible with the totality of speech dispositions, yet incompatible with one another. Translations are diverse in nature. One sentence may be translated in diverse ways. Two translation manuals may give translations of a given sentence which are not in any sense equivalent. Even at times it may be the case that translation can be applied on the part of sentence under consideration. It may perhaps be the case that two fully acceptable translations may give different translations of sub-sentential parts of language. However, this does not create the difference between the sentences rather the difference if there be any may be overcome so that for the whole sentences the two translations give roughly equivalent readings. Here special attention has been laid on the translations of referring expressions what Quine terms as 'indeterminacy of reference' and at times he reads it as 'inscrutability of reference'. Quine calls it indeterminate because he explicitly takes this idea, not the indeterminacy of reference, to be

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<sup>68</sup> Quine, W. V. O., *Word and Object*, op. cit., p. 26.

‘the serious and controversial thesis on indeterminacy of translation’<sup>69</sup>. Many contemporary thinkers, of course, following Quine termed it as ‘holophrastic indeterminacy’. Many would say that even though these two doctrines are of great importance, but it was not made clear in his book *Word and Object*. Even though Quine initially begins with indeterminacy of reference but in his later writings he was more concern about holophrastic indeterminacy. Quine initially developed the concept of radical translation and its indeterminacy in his book *Word and Object*. Quine’s concept of radical translation as a way of making claims about *meaning tangible* goes back almost Quine’s earlier work. Anyway, Quine’s general idea of radical translation is to give an approach to language which is evidently empirical. It engages to know about how language could be learnt and how much can be made of the idea of meaning. In this regard Quine was consistently denying anything about non-empirical. As Quine’s understanding of language is evidently empirical, it would equally be observable. This distinctive aspect of Quine’s indeterminacy is that it stands or appears against synonymy and propositional meanings. This position of Quine actually goes against Kant and Carnap. Quine’s famous article ‘Two Dogmas of Empiricism’ tells the story what we are saying at this point of time.

The question that needs to be taken care of **what the indeterminacy of translation amounts to?** What exactly is indeterminacy of translation? To find a suitable answer to this question we have to explain, in brief, the concept of translation manual and also to know about under what condition or situation translation manual would be successful. One might say that a manual is successful if it translates any sentence of the one language by an equivalent and synonymous sentence of the other. Thus, in a sense the very starting point of translation manual rules out indeterminacy. However, Quine rules out any sort of understanding of translation based on

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<sup>69</sup> Quine, W. V. O., *Pursuit of Truth*, op. cit., p. 50.

synonymy because Quine is skeptical about the notion of synonymy based on propositional meanings and truth. For Quine, our ordinary practice of translation does not presuppose it. In fact, Quine conceives the success of a translation manual from practical terms. It is indeed a matter of manual's efficacy that would facilitate the 'fluent dialogue and successful negotiation'<sup>70</sup> with the speakers of the translated language. Further Quine says, "The practical purpose of such a manual would be inculcation in us of fluency and effectiveness in the native language. ... I picture the whole enterprise as directed to the holistic objective of communication."<sup>71</sup> Quine's main position is that the two linguists might produce incompatible translation manuals each of which is fully successful in this sense. Even though translation to Quine is indeterminate but this does not make sense to say after Quine that it is paradoxical or impossible. Indeterminacy is sui-generis for any sort of translation and it does not seem to be problematic. Hintikka expresses serious reservation over the indeterminacy of translation manual. Quine in a response to Hintikka says, "I am in favour also of translation, even radical translation. I am concerned only to show what goes into it."<sup>72</sup> In fact Quine does not recognize any serious problem of indeterminacy of translation. However, Quine anticipates an attack on translation if one assumes that the only way to understand translation is as preserving synonymy. As we know instead of giving emphasis on the notion of synonymy Quine actually offers us a different type of translation where indeterminacy does not appear as threaten to translation. If the so-called translation is primarily concerned with synonymy then there is a one and uniform way of translation because in such a case one has to give emphasis just on the very meaning of propositional language and nothing else. Thus, there we do not have any alternative ways of

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<sup>70</sup> Quine, W. V. O., *From Stimulus to Science*, op cit., p. 80.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 82.

<sup>72</sup> Davidson, D. and Hintikka, J., (eds.), *Words and Objections: Essays on the Work of W. V. Quine* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1969), p. 312.

translation because there is no scope of shuffling or reshuffling propositional meaning. Quine's translation manual is based on stimulation response where meaning is determined on the basis of beliefs and it may be possible of making successful translation in more ways than one.

Does it then lead us to assume that Quine rules out the possibility that two translation manuals would be different and incompatible? In *Word and Object*, Quine goes on to say that a single sentence may be translated into two different sentences which are not equivalent in any plausible sense of equivalence. This point had been raised by Harman. Quine in his reply to Harman says that it is just one translator who can reject the translation of other translator. For Quine, it may perhaps be the case that 'the English sentence prescribed as translation of a given Jungle sentence by two rival manuals might not be interchangeable in English contexts.' Even one may notice different and incompatible operational test in two translation manuals each of which makes for smooth communication. We may apply them alternatively just by translating one sentence by one manual and next the other sentence by other manual. In this process we can regularly translate **discourse** in the target language into something incoherent in our language. However, if the alternative use of manuals destroys our fluent interaction with the speaker of the target language then in such a case two manuals count as **different** and **incompatible**.

### **3.5 Is Indeterminacy Epistemological or Ontological?**

There is no question of doubt that Quine's thesis of the indeterminacy of translation is probably the most well-known and most widely discussed thesis in contemporary philosophy of language. Despite the widespread discussion of the thesis of indeterminacy of translation, it still remains obscure and unclear particularly on the issue whether the thesis of indeterminacy of translation is an **ontological matter** or **epistemological matter**. The main reason for this unclarity is that the

thesis characteristically takes two different forms, such as, **an epistemological form** (where it is primarily concerned with the relation between translation manuals and the possible evidence or data which we use to choose between such manuals) and **an ontological form** (in which it concerns the relation between translation manuals and the ‘totality of facts’ or ‘the whole truth about nature’). Thus, from ontological perspective it can be said that there is no fact of matter about correct translation. Philosophers are often confused and as a result of that he (Quine) has been misinterpreted. So, we must be careful regarding the question what is indeterminacy? Indeterminacy is the claim that ‘there is nothing to discover’, ‘nothing for the lexicographer or linguist to be right or wrong about’, as Quine says in his “Meaning in Linguistics”. Facilitating ‘fluent dialogue and successful negotiation’ is not merely how we find out that we have a good translation manual, rather it is all that correctness that can amount to for such manuals. If two manuals each of which fulfill this criterion completely, then each is supposed to be correct. This is all about of translation manual.

Let us begin with the **epistemological** or **methodological** point of view. It is said that indeterminacy thesis treats the issue from an epistemological or methodological point of view. It states that the problem is the **relationship** between our data and methods for selecting translation manuals on the one hand and the translation manual we eventually select on the other. The thesis makes the claim that our data and the methods do not determine ***a unique choice of translation***. As a result of that there will always be incompatible translation manuals correspondingly well supported by *the totality of our evidence*. We know that epistemological inquiry of any sort is evidential in nature where sense data count the most. Philosophers often find the epistemological or methodological reading of indeterminacy thesis in Quine’s writing. One of such a passage is just like the following where Quine says that “the linguist’s finished jungle-to-English manual

has as its net yield an infinite *semantic correlation* of sentences ... Most of the semantic correlation is supported only by analytical hypotheses, in their extension beyond the zone where independent evidence for translation is possible. That those unverifiable translations proceed without mishap must not be taken as pragmatic evidence of good lexicography, for mishap is impossible.”<sup>73</sup> Thus, it is assumed that many discussions of the indeterminacy thesis are epistemological or methodological one. As a result of that we notice a philosophical debate about what are the correct ‘constraints’ on the methodology of translation; whether the ‘principle of charity’ is a good methodological principle etc. Having said this we think that this epistemological debate does not address itself to the whole problem raised by Quine’s work. Quine repeatedly states that his point is not an epistemological or methodological one. According to Quine, if it is supposed to be an epistemological or so to speak methodological in the real sense of the term then certainly there would appear or reveal a philosophical stage in which one may know something about correct translation. But there is no correct translation that we can either know or fail to know according to Quine. In fact there is no *fact of matter* on the basis of which one may assume which translation is correct or incorrect. Quine says, “The point is not that we cannot be sure whether the analytical hypothesis is right, but that there is not even ... an objective matter to be right or wrong about.”<sup>74</sup>

Many commentators would like to say that if Quine denies any epistemological or methodological relevance in indeterminacy then his theory of indeterminacy would simply be treated as a special case of the more general idea of *under-determination* of theory by evidence. Noam Chomsky particularly raised this objection against Quine. Quine, however, does not think that indeterminacy should occasion any concern whatsoever. He does not think that it is merely a

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<sup>73</sup> Quine, W. V. O., *Word and Object*, op. cit., p. 71.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

special case of the *under-determination of theory of evidence* as raised by Chomsky. Quine holds a more general thesis of the under-determination of theory. For Quine, not only translation theory but all of science is epistemologically underdetermined by our evidence. There will always be incompatible total scientific theories equally well supported by the totality of evidence. But the point is that indeterminacy thesis is supposed to distinguish translation theory from the rest of science. Further the indeterminacy conjecture is not that two manuals of translation may each be compatible with the available evidence; rather each may be compatible with all of the facts about the world. While replying to Chomsky, Quine goes on to say that the indeterminacy of translation is not just inherited as a special case of the under-determination of our theory of nature. It is parallel but additional. By indeterminacy Quine mean "... where indeterminacy of translation applies, there is no real question of right choice; there is no fact of the matter even to *within* the acknowledged under-determination of a theory of nature."<sup>75</sup>

We can say after Quine that in cases of indeterminacy there is 'no fact of the matter' as to determine which translation is correct. The intended notion of fact of the matter is not **transcendental**. It is ontological. It deals with a question of reality and to be taken naturalistically within our system of the world. This clearly reflects that Quine intends to be making something more than an epistemological claim in his thesis of the indeterminacy of translation. He inclines to say that not only translation is indeterminate by all our evidence; it is not even determined by all the facts there are, nor even be determined by all the truths about nature. Many would say that this position of Quine is very strong and it would be trivially false if we do not carry out some kind of limitation on what can be part of the 'totality of truths of nature'. In Quine's case the necessary limitation springs from his **physicalism**. Quine believes

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<sup>75</sup> See Quine, W. V. O., "Reply to Chomsky", in D. Davidson and J. Hintikka (eds.), *Words and Objections: Essays on the Work of W. V. Quine*, op. cit., p. 303.

that physics is our most basic and fundamental theory of the world; it should be treated our 'ultimate parameter'. Accordingly, the totality of truths about the entities dealt with the physics represents the totality of truths that there are. Since Quine believes that the totality of truths of nature is identical with the totality of truths of physics, the ontological version of the indeterminacy thesis amounts to the claim that translation is not determined by the set of truths of physics. Of course, Quine elsewhere in *Word and Object* speaks of the objective data and in a likelihood manner he goes on to say that "our only data are native utterances and their outwardly observable circumstances."<sup>76</sup> Many would presume that translation actually hinges on synonymy, but Quine gives us a different account of translation. For Quine, indeterminacy does not create a barrier or so to speak creep up the practice of translation. Quine does not rule out the possibility of successful translation. However, Quine does not think that translation process is a single tract process rather he admits the possibility of translation in more ways than one.

So, the vital question at this point of time is to examine in what sense are the two translation manuals 'different and incompatible?' As a firm believer of manifold of translations of single sentence, Quine rules out the possibility of producing as translations of a single sentence into two sentences which are equivalent. Quine in this regard says that the possibility of equivalence of meaning of two translations of a single sentence is nil. He in fact dislikes even the minimum appeal to the notion of equivalence. It may perhaps be possible that one translator would reject the other translation of a given sentence. However, later on Quine modifies his earlier stance on translation. He improves upon himself by saying 'that the English sentence prescribed as translation of a given Jungle sentence by two rival manuals might not be interchangeable in English contexts.' Now he inclines to say that we have two translation manuals, each of which

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<sup>76</sup> Quine, W. V. O., *Pursuit of Truth*, op. cit., p. 38.

makes for smooth communication. However, Quine equally admits the possibility of ‘different and incompatible’ within the process of communication. According to Quine, in different translations we employ them alternatively, translating one sentence by one manual, then the next sentence by the other manual, the next by the first, and so on. In this process, we regularly translate discourse in the target language into something incoherent in our language. However, if the alternative use of the manuals terminates our fluent interaction with the speaker of the target language, then ‘the two manuals count as different and incompatible’<sup>77</sup>. The genesis of Quine’s indeterminacy is that ‘there is nothing to discover’. There is nothing for the lexicographer or for the linguist to be right or wrong about as Quine says in his ‘Meaning and Linguistics’. For Quine, ‘fluent dialogue and successful negotiation’ is not merely how we find out that we have a good translation manual; rather it is all that correctness can amount to for such manuals. In fact, if it would be the case that two manuals each fulfill this criterion completely then *each is completely correct*. This is the fundamental aspect one must adhere when engaging himself in translation manual.

### **3.6 A Contemporary debate between Indeterminacy and Under-determinacy**

We note a contemporary debate regarding Quine’s dual concepts, such as, indeterminacy and under-determination. According to Quine, indeterminacy of translation is ‘an indeterminacy additional to the under-determination of nature’.<sup>78</sup> Here Quine takes the realistic view of nature. He then goes on to say that natural science is under-determined by all possible observation. A theory from physicalist or natural point of view may be treated as determinate or under-determine, but translation always remains indeterminate. In this sense, Quine claims that the

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>78</sup> Quine, W. V. O., “Indeterminacy of Translation Again”, *Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 84 (1987), p. 10.

indeterminacy of translation is additional to under-determination of theory. Indeterminacy is *sui-generis* of translation. Accordingly, it can be said that translation remains indeterminate even in a situation in which we do not face under-determination in the real sense of the term. Even though, under-determination may be associated with the very idea of indeterminacy, but indeterminacy and under-determination have their independent locus. Indeterminacy is an ‘enduring trait of language’<sup>79</sup> to the nature of linguistic meaning. Contrary to that, under-determination of theory is supposed to be a thesis about the relation between our theories and the evidence. In this regard, Gibson makes an interesting observation. For him, the doctrine of under-determination of theory claims that theories about the world transcend all possible observations of the world. In this process some competing theories can be developed on the same observational basis. They appear to be logically incompatible but empirically equivalent. This is equally reflected in Quine’s remarks. Quine says, “This is a point on which I expect wide agreement if only because the observational criteria of theoretical terms are commonly so flexible and fragmentary”<sup>80</sup> Under-determination happens to be the case because owing to capture a finite formulation, infinite lot of observation conditionals need to be counted. As a result of that we cannot produce a finite formulation on the basis of infinite conjunction of observational conditions. Thus, for Quine, “there is some freedom of choice of stuffing, and such is the under-determination.”<sup>81</sup> Thus, it appears that under-determination is a practical claim that can be faced by anyone while building theories. It is an epistemological claim which is primarily concerned about the question how theories are linked to observation. Here the links between theoretical and observational talk are

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<sup>79</sup> Gaudet, E., *Quine on Meaning: The Indeterminacy of Translation* (London and New York: Continuum, 2006), p. 68.

<sup>80</sup> Gibson, R., *Enlightened Empiricism: An Examination of W. V. Quine’s Theory of Knowledge* (Tampa: University Presses of Florida, 1988), p. 12. Or See Quine, W. V. O., “On the Reasons for Indeterminacy of Translation”, *Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 67 (1970).

<sup>81</sup> Quine, W. V. O., “On Empirically Equivalent Systems of the World”, *Erkenntnis* 9 (1975), p. 324.

flexible and fragmentary. It underdetermines the theoretical talk. According to Hylton, “Quine insists that indeterminacy of translation is not simply a straightforward instance of under-determination; to suppose that it is is to construe it as an epistemological matter, which is not how Quine intends it. In this argument, under-determination is a crucial premise in an argument for indeterminacy, but the latter is not simply an instance of the former.”<sup>82</sup>

What then about indeterminacy of translation? According to Quine, indeterminacy of translation is altogether a different thesis. It is a thesis about the **nature of language** and also about **the nature of meaning**. Since we do not have any identity criteria of meanings as such and as we cannot terrify meanings as such, the theory associated with the nature of language and meaning would remain indeterminate. It is no longer associated with epistemological inquiry like the theory of under-determination. It has nothing to do with the evidential link between observation and theories. Indeterminacy of translation is linked with **criterion of meanings** whereas under-determination is linked with the relation between **evidence and theory**.

Why does Quine assert that indeterminacy of translation is a claim about the nature of language beyond and above under-determination of theory? Quine thinks it so because he conceives it as an ontological claim instead of epistemological claim. According to Quine, the problem of meaning is no longer epistemological practice; rather it is matter of ontological practice. Being an ontological claim, indeterminacy of translation envisages *what there is* or *what there is not*. It talks about the *furniture of the world*. One should not confuse here between indeterminacy of translation and translation manuals. Translation manuals, according to Quine, do not have any ontology. Translation manuals do not make any suppositions about the furniture of the world. Translations are not based on the identification of meanings or entities. Having said this, under-

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<sup>82</sup> Hylton, P., *Quine*, op. cit., p. 217.

determination and indeterminacy are close concepts because each of these concepts accepts lacking of precision in some sense or other. Under-determination affirms epistemological lack whereas indeterminacy of translation affirms lack of entities on the basis of which theories could be right or wrong. According to Quine, under-determination of theories actually hinges on “the observational criteria of theoretical terms” which are “commonly so flexible and fragmentary”. But in case of indeterminacy of translation, the lack or the absence of determination is a lack of entities about which manuals could be right or wrong.

**Is there any epistemic relevance in indeterminacy?** Interestingly, some commentators have interpreted indeterminacy with regard to epistemology. For them indeterminacy is a matter of epistemological inquiry. Even though there is a possibility of a unique correct translation, the evidence available to the linguistic and the procedures one may employ do not suffice to determine it. If Quine stands with this philosophical position, then indeterminacy would simply be regarded *as a special case of the more general idea of under-determination of theory by evidence*. Even many would say that Quine perhaps confuses by mixing his concept of *indeterminacy with under-determination*. Perhaps he fails to articulate any deep difference between the two notions. Even many of Quine’s critics are puzzled by his distinction between under-determination and indeterminacy. Bechtel asks, “Why, then, should the availability of alternative translation manuals count against our taking a realistic attitude toward one translational manual? As we do with physical theories, why can we not adopt one of these theories despite the under-determination?”<sup>83</sup> Our evidence of the world does not uniquely determine a single theory of the world. In this regard **Chomsky** says, “...serious hypotheses concerning a native speaker’s knowledge of English ... will “go beyond the evidence”. If they

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<sup>83</sup> Bechtel, P. W., “Indeterminacy and Intentionality: Quine’s Purported Elimination of Propositions”, *Journal of Philosophy*, LXXV (November 1978), p. 654.

did not, they would be without interest. Since they go beyond mere summary of data, it will be the case there are competing assumptions consistent with the data. But why should all of this occasion any surprise or concern?”<sup>84</sup> Chomsky claims that there remains an asymmetry between under-determination of theory and indeterminacy of translation. He senses asymmetry because he reads indeterminacy of translation as an epistemological claim. According to Chomsky, indeterminacy of translation is nothing but a mere case of under-determination. As a result of that indeterminacy appears as an uninteresting theory to Chomsky. Unlike Quine, Chomsky intends to say that *the notion of fact of the matter* is an epistemological notion and such fact is no way related to physics or to translation. For Chomsky, both manuals and theories are under-determined and as a result of that they lack *a fact of the matter*.

Quine does not agree with Chomsky. He does not think that indeterminacy should concern any occasion. Nor he does think that it is merely a special case of the *under-determination* of the theory of evidence. For Quine, indeterminacy conjecture is not that two manuals of translation may each be compatible with the available evidence; rather each may be compatible with all of the facts about the world. The notable aspect of Quine is that within the partial endorsement of *under-determination*, he does not deviate from his realist position. According to Quine, the point about indeterminacy of translation is that it withstands all this truth, the whole about nature. Quine talks in favour of ‘**the totality of nature**’ whether known or unknown, observable and unobservable, past and future. Thus, Quine intends to say that where indeterminacy applies there is *no fact of the matter* even to within the acknowledged under-determination of the theory of nature.

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<sup>84</sup>See Chomsky, N., “Quine’s Empirical Assumptions”, in D. Davidson and J. Hintikka (eds.), *Words and Objections: Essays on the Work of W. V. Quine*, op. cit., pp. 66-67.

We think there are two points to be noted. First, indeterminate theory is not merely an under-determined one; and secondly, an indeterminate theory cannot be viewed as issuing in statements true or false of the world. It may perhaps be the case that an indeterminate theory is under-determined and its under-determination remains even after some underdetermined theory has been chosen from each branch of science. Under-determination of any sort has been created where there remains floppy between **observation** and **theory**. However, indeterminacy is something different. It is created out of slippage between **total theory and theory**. According to Quine, in case of indeterminacy **linguistic theory** shares this fate; whereas in case of under-determination **natural science** shares this fate. Thus, the debate or dispute between Quine and Chomsky is to determinate whether linguistic theory is one of the natural sciences or not. In this regard, Thomas Ricketts says, “The disagreement between Quine and Chomsky is not a clash of rival theories addressed to the same data but a difference over what counts as data, over the terms we take for granted to represent data.”<sup>85</sup> For Ricketts, Quine is primarily concerned with *human noise emission*; Quine is primarily concerned with a point only about evidence. Quine’s position here not belongs to ontology, but to the methodology of ontology. In this regard, it is in some sense or other linked with epistemology. We think Quine’s methodology of ontology cannot be fully detached from epistemology. It is indeed reflected in his remarks when he says that “we can investigate the world, and man as part of it, and thus find out what cues he could have of what goes on around him. Subtracting his cues from his world view, we get man’s net contribution as the difference. This difference marks the extent of man’s conceptual sovereignty – the domain within which he can revise theory while saving data.”<sup>86</sup> One may acquire or learn observation sentences through theoretical language. In this way, observation leads evidence to scientific

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<sup>85</sup> Ricketts, T., “Rationality, Translation, and Epistemology Naturalized”, *Journal of Philosophy*, LXXIX, 3 (March 1982), p. 136.

<sup>86</sup> Quine, W. V. O., *Word and Object*, op. cit., p. 5.

theory. This is how a ‘vital’ partnership between the theory of language and the theory of scientific evidence is made possible.

Quine inclines to say that within the realm of indeterminacy *there is no fact of the matter* on the basis of which one comes to know which translation manual happens to be correct or incorrect. In this context, Quine says, “The intended notion of fact of the matter is not transcendental or yet epistemological ... it is ontological, a question of reality, and to be taken naturalistically within our system of the world.”<sup>87</sup> Why does Quine rule out the relevance of epistemology in indeterminacy? According to Quine, it would be a mistake if one assumes of indeterminacy as an epistemological matter. It seems to us that Quine very often talks in favour of linguistic evidence or data and methods. Even in his *Word and Object*, Quine speaks in favour of the *objective data*<sup>88</sup> and of possible data and methods. He persists with the same even in his *Pursuit of Truth*<sup>89</sup>. In this regard, he also speaks in favour of linguist’s methods. One can also involve with tentatively identifying and translating observation sentences and then make an attempt to identify analogous of our logical constants by considering utterances made of two or more observation sentences. Besides, one may also take the help of *analytical hypothesis* through which one can come to know about how utterances may be analyzed into units towards forming or constructing new sentences. Thus, for Quine, translation manual always requires a highly schematized account of the procedures. Of course, Quine adopts heuristic reasons to talk in terms of linguist’s evidence or data even though he denies the relevance of epistemology in indeterminacy. In fact, we notice ontological question instead of epistemological question when the whole truth about

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<sup>87</sup> Quine, W. V. O., “Things and Their Place in Theories”, in W. V. Quine, *Theories and Things*, op. cit., p. 23.

<sup>88</sup> Quine, W. V. O., *Word and Object*, op. cit., p. 28.

<sup>89</sup> See Quine, W. V. O., *Pursuit of Truth*, op. cit., p. 38.

the world would not suffice to settle the issue. The questions: what counts as a 'truth about the world' here? What are the facts? These questions are not epistemological, they are ontological.

Translation manual is indeterminate because there always creates a gulf between *the evidence of the linguist and the facts about what dispositions speakers of the given language have*. This gap creates *ordinary inductive uncertainty* according to Hylton, but it does not appear as disquiet to Quine. It has already been noted that Quine is more interested to envisage his linguist at the beginning along with what is observable and what can be inferred from the ordinary uses of scientific method. He does not put any question to the use of scientific method. As a result of that, it can be said that the gap created out of inductive certainty of the linguist and the facts does not give rise to indeterminacy. Instead of this, the so-called indeterminacy is concerned with the gap between the *facts and the transition* in which the question whether the facts be sufficient to determine a unique translation manual concerns the most. Thus, only sorts of facts are relevant to Quine, because only facts of nature bear the correctness of translation. That is where Quine remarks that only mutually incompatible manuals of translation conform to all the same overall states of nature. This position of Quine reminds us his alleged behaviourism. It would be difficult to recognize Quine as a behaviourist, but many would say that Quine is an alleged behaviourist. In fact, Quine elsewhere in his many writings admits the relevance of behaviourism in linguistics. He goes on to say that 'in linguistics one has no choice', but to be a behaviourist. This position is particularly relevant in case of acquisition of language, i.e., in case of how language is learnt. As far as acquisition of language is concerned, there we observe a considerable debate between mentalist and behaviourist. Chomsky, for example, claims that acquisition of language is mental, inner. In this regard, Chomsky brings back the relevance of innatism expounded by Descartes long back. Following Descartes, Chomsky actually introduces

a new form of innatism. He claims that every normal child at the time of his or her birth biologically acquires a mental organ in the left hemisphere from where language is being generated spontaneously. He then calls it **Transformation Generative Grammar (in short TGG)**. He also calls it scientific grammar having deep and surface structure. Contrary to Chomsky, the behaviourist holds that one can acquire or learn language from external sources. Quine being an alleged behaviourist remarks, “Each of us learns his language by observing other people’s verbal behaviour and having his own faltering verbal behaviour observed and reinforced or corrected by others.”<sup>90</sup> Thus, we notice a diametrically opposite position taken by both Quine and Chomsky. This debate is philosophically a fascinating context. We will come back to this issue when we compare Quine with Chomsky at later stage. At this juncture, we, following Quine, can say that there remains nothing in linguistic meaning ‘beyond what is to be gleaned from overt behaviour in observable circumstances’<sup>91</sup>. We understand Quine as a radical empiricism because of his development of natural epistemology. Accordingly, it is natural for Quine to adhere with the perception that ‘our information about the world comes only through impacts on our sensory receptors’<sup>92</sup>. This position of Quine in some sense or other influences others, particularly, the linguist. Learning of language, Quine says, is an inter-subjective transition among linguistic community. Here getting the mastery over language matters the most. Thus, there is nothing wrong to claim after Quine that indeterminacy is a sort of claim that mutually irreconcilable manuals of translation can conform to all the same behavioural dispositions. Such behavioural disposition, Quine says, are nothing but the only facts of nature that bear on the correctness of translation.

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

### 3.7 Indeterminacy of Reference

So far we have outlined the idea of indeterminacy after Quine. Quine initially was in favor of **holophrastic indeterminacy**. Holophrastic indeterminacy is a kind of indeterminacy which gives more importance of the translation of whole sentence instead of indeterminacy of reference. However, this does not make sense to assume that Quine was not interested regarding **indeterminacy of reference**. Reference always plays an important role in any form of language. In this sequel we mainly focus on **indeterminacy of reference** after Quine. We think that Quine's concept or idea of indeterminacy of reference is more perceptible than holophrastic indeterminacy and one can adequately defend it by citing concrete examples. Accordingly, it would be natural to focus on indeterminacy of reference first. The immediate question is: how does the indeterminacy of reference come about? We think that a suitable answer of this question can be found in Quine's perception of contextual meaning. Unlike the referential semantists, Quine was in favour of contextual meaning. The reason is simple. As a naturalist epistemologist Quine cannot rule out the context while interpreting meaning. As we know that the problem of meaning in some sense or other is associated with reference. The reference of a sentence makes the sentence either true or false, or in short, meaningful. Even at times, one may ascribe meaning to sub-sentential parts of language. The principle of compositionality as expounded by Frege is a case in point. Quine in this regard says that "words ... owe their meaning to their role in sentences."<sup>93</sup> Words, according to Quine, do not have any independent meaning. This clearly suggests that Quine was in favour of holistic interpretation of meaning where priority of sentence meaning over word meaning has been recognized. According to Quine, it is natural to say that ascriptions of meaning are accountable only to the use of sentences, where the sentence can

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., p. 37.

adequately be used correctly or incorrectly without linguistic context. Thus, Quine very often is interested to find out the distinction between ascriptions of meaning to sentences and ascription of meaning to sub-sentential units of language. The meaning of sub-sentential language can be ascribed more than one ways to ascribe the meaning to sentences. However, the correctness or incorrectness can only be ascribed in the case of sentential meaning, but in no way in the case of sub-sentential units of language. Having said this, it can assumed after Quine that if the meanings of sub-sentential units of language are fully compatible with ascriptions of meaning to sentences, then in such a case there is nothing wrong to assume the meanings of sub-sentential units of language as correct.

Even though we are talking of correctness or incorrectness about the ascription of meaning to sentences and also address the issue of compatibility and incompatibility while determining the meaning of language, but still it should be kept in mind that the functionality of language is being progressed within the horizon of indeterminacy. Many would perhaps be shaky enough about the indeterminacy of language because of its ambiguity. Quine does not belong to this camp. According to Quine, indeterminacy of language is a natural phenomenon of language and there is nothing wrong. Having said this, attempt should be made to talk of meaningless vague. According to the referential semantics, the fundamental relation between language and the word or reality is based on referential relation. We notice the same in early Wittgenstein. According to Wittgenstein, a proposition pictures a fact. The parts of proposition are names and the parts of fact, if there be any, are objects. A name denotes or refers to an object. Thus, the relationship between language and worlds are the relationship between the constituents of proposition and the constituents of fact. Wittgenstein has established this relationship with the help of *pictorial form*. Quine does not agree with this sort of interpretation of language developed by the whole host of

semantics. Unlike the semantics school, Quine inclines to say that the relationship is not between the name and object, rather between **sentences and sensory stimulations**. Thus, in a sense, Quine in this regard adheres to the behaviourist account of language. Quine finds the insight of his theory in the case of observation sentences.

According to Quine, observation sentences are **unstructured**. Such sentences acquire the meaning with regard to their relation to sensory stimulation. Quine strongly denies any ontological feasibility in proto-observation sentences. Proto-observation sentences are incapable to refer because reference, according to Quine, is more complex than anything going on that level. Reference requires pronouns, plural endings, copulas of identity and of predication, the contrast between singular and general terms. These linguistic contents are not present in proto-observation sentences. According to Quine, observational sentences can be referential if such sentences become an integral part of more sophisticated theory containing identity, plurals, and so on.

It, thus, seems to us that Quine conceives different types of observation sentences, such as, fully fledged observation sentences and other than fully fledged observation sentences. He then goes on to say that fully fledged observation sentences are part of more sophisticated theory. They desire to have ontological claims. This does not make the sense to say that Quine denies his earlier position of stimulus response theory. His theory of meaning undoubtedly is based on stimulus response. In this regard, it can be said that fully fledged observation sentences are in some sense or other linked with observation sentences based on stimulus response. Such links, Quine says, consist ultimately in ‘the conditioning of sentences as responses to sentences as

stimuli'.<sup>94</sup> Thus, as far as stimuli response is concerned, Quine remained uncontroversial in his own position. According to Quine, two sorts of factors are relevant to the correct use of language and to meaning. First, the links between sentences and sensory stimulation cannot be evaded. Secondly, the sorts of links one can precept among sentences had already been specified in the previous paragraph. As far as indeterminacy of reference is concerned, these two factors deal with sentences. As a result of that, it can be said that sub-sentential units impose no independent constraint upon an account of language. Thus, following Quine, we can say that the so-called semantic account of sub-sentential components may not be treated basic. Rather 'it is derivative upon the semantic account of complete sentences.'<sup>95</sup>

As a proponent of holistic interpretation of meaning, Quine intends to say that it may perhaps be the case that the ability to understand and produce sentences which we have never heard before completely depends upon our combining sub-sentential parts of language. These sub-sentential parts of language in some sense or other are familiar to us from its use in other sentences. Let us make this point more explicit. For example, a logical connection between sentences may be thought of as summing up infinitely many facts of the form. In most general cases, when it is appropriate to assert those sentences, it would equally be apposite to assert this one. This process, of course, is not the process where we can examine one after another. Rather we examine it on the basis of the *logical form* of the sentence under consideration. Of course, in the case we attribute forms to sentences. As the meaning of sub-sentential parts of language is derivative upon the meanings of sentences, reference of the sentence, according to Quine, would equally be derivative upon the meanings of sentences. As a result of that there is no point in saying after Quine that the referential aspect of meaning is basic in the real sense of the term.

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<sup>94</sup> Quine, W. V. O., *Word and Object*, op. cit., p. 11.

<sup>95</sup> Hylton, P., *Quine*, op. cit., p. 206.

Nor we can say that the same is given. Rather it is safe for us to assume that the referential aspect of language is constructed or derivative. In this regard, Quine says, “Reference and ontology recede thus to the status of mere auxiliaries. True sentences, observational and theoretical, are the *alpha and the omega* of the scientific enterprise. They are related by structure, and objects figure as mere nodes of the structure. What particular objects there may be is indifferent to the truth of observation sentences, indifferent to the support they lend to theoretical sentences, indifferent to the success of the theory in its predications.”<sup>96</sup>

Why does Quine think that reference is indeterminate? Quine, we think, finds indeterminacy of reference because for him reference is derivative. There is more than one way that reference could be derived. Thus, we do not have the fixity of reference. There is no point in saying that referential connection with regard to denotation or with regard to connotation is the only way to determine the meaning of linguistic expression. Nor can we say that the reference of an expression would remain the same all without exception. It is to be noted here that when we talk of reference, we certainly talk of with regard to objects. As the world is the totality of objects, objects are supposed to be the basic constituents or fabric of the world. However, the role of objects is not as much important in epistemology than in semantics. According to Quine, objects are secondary in epistemology but primary in semantics. There are alternative ways of assigning reference; naturally there are number of ways through which the reference of an expression can be demonstrated. In this regard, Quine introduces the idea of a *proxy function*. What does it mean? It means that the reference of a sentence or proposition is determined on the basis of *one to one function*. Here a new sentence would be reconstructed on the basis of the original version under any circumstances without being compromised the truth value. In modal logic we can

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<sup>96</sup> Quine, W. V. O., *Pursuit of Truth*, op. cit., p. 31.

construct a theorem with the help of transformational rules that can be applied on any given axiom. Now, the theorem must preserve the same truth-value of the axioms from which it has been constructed. The *proxy-function* is a sort of sentence to sentence connection and it makes no difference between the original sentence and the reconstructed sentence under consideration. In proxy-function, the original sentences and the reconstructed ones are not two different languages, rather one language described in two different ways. However, at the level of constituent parts, one may find notable difference. For example, ‘Rover’ is the name of dog. The point is that does ‘Rover’ refer to the family pet or other than family pet. Let us try to cognize this issue with regard to translation. There may be more than one translation of a sentence but it there remains unsettleability to which of the translation is correct. Thus, unsettleability of translation, according to Quine, is supposed to be an intrinsic feature of indeterminacy of translation. Many would say that indeterminacy is an inability to dig out some fact, but Quine thinks the other way round. According to Quine, it would be prudent enough to presume that ‘there is no fact to be got at’.

In this regard, one may relate *indeterminacy of reference* with *ontological reduction* because they are in some sense or other relies on a technique of mapping objects which can serve the same function. However, unlike superficial similarities, the differences between them are more prominent. Indeterminacy of reference, according to Quine, actually hinges more *on internal mapping within a given ontology*. As a result of that, ‘reference would seem now to become nonsense not just in radical translation but at home’.<sup>97</sup> Ontological reduction, on the other hand, is primarily concerned with the relationship between two ontologies.

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<sup>97</sup> Quine, W. V. O., *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays*, op. cit., p. 47.

According to Quine, translation of language is the only manual through which one can understand other. In this regard, first person meaning of language holds the upper hand. It would indeed be a matter of translation through which one comes to know the utterance of others. But the problem is that if translation manual is taken to be the only way of understanding the expression of others, then it would lead to an endless regress. To avoid such endless regress, we have to have some other kind of understanding of language which does not require translating manual. In this regard, one may think of private language as an obvious candidate. In this regard, we may remember Ayer. According to Ayer, there are some basic propositions which are exclusively to the person concerned which does not require further interpretation or verification. Carnap called such statement 'protocol statement'. They are exclusively private in nature. Thus, it may be said that the so-called real meaning actually hinges in my language. If it does, then the only way to comprehend the language of someone else actually hinges on to translate the language of others into my language. However, it rests on a presupposition. The presupposition is that here the linguist, being an inventor of first person meaning, has to have the full mastery over language. In a situation like this, the linguist might think that within the sphere of radical translation the meaningfulness of the target language actually depends on the translation with regard to the real meaning of his own language. Thus, in a sense, it may be presumed that the so-called radical translation is nothing but an indirect approach to meaning. Here one thing should be kept in mind that Quine does not interpret indeterminacy from epistemological sense, because radical translation manual is no way associated with the claim or justification of knowledge. Instead of epistemological sense, Quine perhaps interprets it in terms of ontological sense. Here Quine was more pronounced to talk of linguistic evidence. The radical translation does not tell us about what meaningfulness is; rather it tells us only how the linguist can come to know the

meaning of another language by way of translating it. Translation of one language by means of another language does not make sense to say that we do not give importance of the face value of language. The first thing is that translation is made possible within our mother language. Here translation means different ways of paraphrasing within the same language. This is how we can understand the language of others. It may perhaps be the case that even within the same linguistic community one may not understand the language of other. In such a case one would respond to the other what he said. Thus, to understand someone's utterances is not in the usual case to translate them; rather it is simply to be predisposed to respond to them in appropriate ways. Quine says, "In practice we end the regress of background languages by acquiescing in our mother tongue and taking its words at face value".<sup>98</sup> Thus, to know about the meaning of other's words is simply to know our use of them. To know we do use the words of other is to know the meaning of other words or language. But what kinds of uses are relevant? In this regard, Quine certainly deny the mentalist terms of meaning. In this regard, one can find the philosophical debate between Chomsky and Quine regarding the acquisition of language. Chomsky being an interpreter of mentalistic tradition would like to say that one can acquire language by means of innate ideas. The acquisition of language, according to Chomsky, is innate. Quine thinks the other way round. As a proponent of physicalism, Quine thinks that one can acquire language from external sources.

Thus, the use of language is more important than our translating of it. In fact, to take the words of our language 'at face value' is not to attribute special meanings to them. It is simply using them instead of asking or seeking an explanation of their meaning. As far as our *use of language* is concerned, there is no issue of indeterminacy. A translation manual is a sort of linguistic

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

device or practice in which one can translate the language of other in his *own way*. As far as reference is concerned, we do, of course, agree to take that 'rabbit' denotes rabbits. However, when we say that a term denotes, what we are asserting is simply part of our ordinary language. When we say that the sentence "'Rabbit' denotes rabbits", the second use of the word 'rabbit' is an ordinary use. There is no point in saying that by way of accepting it, one transmits some sort of guarantee against indeterminacy of reference. According to Quine, within the sphere of home language (ordinary or native language), reference seems to be unproblematic as we observe in the case that 'London' denotes 'London' or 'Rabbit' denotes 'Rabbits'. It would remain true even within the Tarskian paradigm. He then asserts that '**inscrutability of reference emerges only in translation**'.<sup>99</sup> Thus, for Quine, indeterminacy of reference is an integral association of translation manual. Here the behavioural potency of Quine is vividly expressed. To understand language of native speaker is nothing but the mastery of fluent expression of the translator of the language. The fluent speaker of language comes to know the meaning of language in proper. In this regard Quine remarks that 'knowing what expressions mean *consists*, for me, in being disposed to use them on appropriate occasions.'<sup>100</sup> The user of language sometimes knows better what he actually means than others do. Even if one says something ambiguously, he comes to know in what sense he is intended to say. In the speaker-hearer linguistic communication, ambiguity if there be any appears in most general cases to the hearer. The speaker even in the ambiguous communication is very much aware of the sense he intended to say.

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<sup>99</sup> Hahn, L. E. and Schilpp, P. A., (eds.), *The Philosophy of W. V. Quine*, op. cit., p. 460.

<sup>100</sup> Orenstein, A. and Kotatko, P., (eds.), *Knowledge, Language and Logic*, op. cit., p. 420.

### 3.8 Arguing For and Against of Indeterminacy

There are many philosophical arguments already developed *for and against* of Quine's famous theory indeterminacy of translation. Quine's concept of indeterminacy of translation actually appeared as *a philosophical peril* to dismantle many well established philosophical theories. It goes against First Philosophy. It paves the way of conceptual relativism. However, this does not make the sense to say that his theory is free from begging questions. Many criticisms have already been laid on against Quine's theory of indeterminacy of translation. In this sub-section we try to explicate the arguments developed *for and against* Quine's theory of indeterminacy of translation. It seems to us that in his later work Quine was in favour of *hypothetical status* of indeterminacy of translation. It is one of the decisive philosophical positions that Quine has adhered to. However, many commentators expressed their serious reservation regarding this philosophical position of Quine. Before Quine, it has been stated that there is not more than *one way* of satisfying it. Quine denies it. He does not think that there is only one monolithic way on the basis of which translation manual functions. If it does, then it would be treated as an *unexamined notion of synonymy* which entails uniqueness of translation. According to this view, uniqueness of translation is overwhelmingly the most reasonable and plausible view. Kant in the past developed the concept of analyticity with the help of this model of translation. We also notice the impact of Kant in post Kantian philosophical thought. Even the radical semanticists stake the opportunity of uniqueness of translation as the plausible view. However, Quine thinks the other way round. Quine has clearly stated that there is no point to accept or adopt an undefined notion of synonymy in translation manual. In fact, the genesis of translation does not rest on an unexamined notion of synonymy; rather the very philosophical objective of translation is to facilitate smooth interaction in a diverse ways. **Quine claims that if there is one way of**

**translation according to classical or traditional epistemologists, then there is nothing wrong in presuming that there is more than one way of translational manual.** In this way, Quine offers us the concept of *holophrastic indeterminacy* of translation that has been accepted by the linguistic as *radical translation*. Thus, by introducing holophrastic indeterminacy, Quine actually offers us the possibility of manifold ways of translation. If translation is to be monolithic then surely it would be determinate. But for Quine, translation is indeterminate.

Quine in his book *Word and Object* offers us a systematic account of the idea of indeterminacy. He says that the task of the linguist is to recuperate man's current language from his currently observed responses. In this regard, the linguist collect all the objective data as the forces to reveal native 'meanings' based on stimulus responses. In this process, the linguist 'ends up with native 'meanings' in some quite unrestricted sense ... of all possible native sentences.'<sup>101</sup> Here Quine bangs on the stimulus meaning of native utterances. Stimulus meaning, according to Quine, 'may be properly looked upon ... as the objective reality that the linguist has to probe when he undertakes radical translation.'<sup>102</sup> Here translation of observation sentences seems prominence towards acquiring stimulus meaning. In his *Roots of Reference*, Quine equally puts emphasize on 'verdict functions' or popularly known as truth-functions. On the basis of 'verdict-functions', one may come to know whether two or more 'stimulus-synonymous' would fall under the same verdict in any given stimulus conditions. This assessment would be prerequisite to find out the distinction between sentences which are 'stimulus-analytic' and sentences which are 'stimulus contradictory'. Such facts, Quine thinks, actually 'cover all the available evidence'<sup>103</sup>. In this regard, Quine introduces a new system of method known as 'analytical hypotheses'. Such

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<sup>101</sup> Quine, W. V. O., *Word and Object*, op. cit., p. 28.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., p. 70.

hypotheses actually require the linguist to analyze utterances and to attribute significance to their parts. Thus, analytical hypotheses are answerable to evidence. However, when we say that indeterminacy is true, they are not hypotheses in the ordinary sense because in such a case they are not answerable to evidence. 'They exceed', Quine says, 'anything implicit in any native's dispositions to speech-behaviour.'<sup>104</sup> Within the sphere of indeterminacy of translation, Quine enables to accommodate rival systems of analytic hypotheses which are associated with equally successful manual of translation. The advantage of indeterminacy of translation is that once the translation was in place and one happens to know any part of it, he almost is certain to duplicate it rather than come up with a genuine alternative. This will open up more than one possible analytic hypothesis. In this process one has only to reflect on the nature of possible data and methods to appreciate the indeterminacy. Quine also narrates the same in his *Pursuit of Truth*. Here Quine says, "These reflections leave us little reason to expect that two radical translators, working independently on Jungle, would come out with interchangeable manuals."<sup>105</sup>

The same is being reflected in the case of under-determination because such theory by evidence tells us that more than one theory is compatible with a given set of observation sentences. That means in Quine's model we can reasonably ascribe more than one theory to the speakers of the target language. According to Quine, any translation will be as correct as any other, so long as the net empirical implications of the theory as a whole are well-kept-up in translations. Accordingly, there is no point in saying which of two glaringly unlike translations of individual sentences is right. The other notable flexibility of Quine's theory of indeterminacy is that it takes holophrastic indeterminacy in the same way as indeterminacy of reference. Indeterminacy, Quine says, is 'a conflict of parts seen without the wholes'. In the case of indeterminacy of reference,

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Quine, W. V. O., *Pursuit of Truth*, op. cit., p. 47.

the whole were sentences and the parts were sub-sentential. However, in the case of holophrastic indeterminacy, the whole is *our total theory* and the parts are *individual sentences*. Holism thus shows that it is only our theory *as a whole* that is answerable to evidence towards determining the true unit of empirical meaning. Very similar way, indeterminacy arises because there is more than one way that the meaning of the whole can be shared out among the parts. Thus, one may think that Quine comes to think of indeterminacy as a conjecture. Thus, there are considerable advantages underlying in Quine's theory of indeterminacy of translation.

This does not, however, make sense to say that Quine's theory of indeterminacy is free from begging questions. Many criticisms have been raised against Quine's theory of indeterminacy of translation. The first kind of objection claims that Quine while developing his theory of indeterminacy ignores facts which are extremely relevant. By doing so, Quine leaves out something essential. According to Quine, nothing seems to be relevant in the context of this theory which at least is not available to the translator. In this regard, he asserts that there is nothing in linguistic meaning beyond what is to be gleaned from overt behaviour in observable circumstances. It is indeed true to say that only creatures with normal human generic endowment are capable of learning language to the relevant behaviour. Here only that legacy and the kind of brain that result from it, play a crucial role in language. We have complex higher order dispositions in the learning process. However, unlike Chomsky, Quine was non-committal whether such higher order dispositions themselves are innate or not. According to Chomsky, the higher order mental dispositions are innate. In this regard, Chomsky brings back the relevance of old innatism within the process of acquisition of language. Quine, contrary to Chomsky, does not admit innatism in the process of learning of language. However, he intends to say that in the process of learning of language the propensity to form them must be there. Thus, it has been

assumed that human beings **share an innate generic endowment** which plays a crucial role in their acquisition of language. However, the debate between Chomsky and Quine is centered whether the so-called innate generic endowment might determinate translation. Quine was not a firm believer of innatism. Quine is a physicalist. Naturally, he talks in favour of physical language. Quine inclines to say that even a full understanding of neurology would in no way resolve the indeterminacy of translation. Quine gives importance on observational data rather than an innate generic endowment even though he does not deny the relevance of an innate generic endowment. As a physicalist, Quine always insist on observational data. The point is that if Quine's observational data are being taken into account then surely a neurophysiological explanation will not determine translation. This position of Quine has been criticized by the internalists to a great extent. Quine intends to say that it would be the case that if translations are each attuned with all behaviour, then each of them would equally be attuned with any explanation of that behaviour provided that 'the description of what is to be explained is an acceptable term'. What counts relevance to Quine is not, of course explanation, but the linguistic data. In this regard, Quine remarks, "It disciplines data, not explanation."<sup>106</sup> Critiques, however, express serious reservation about Quine's position. As a proponent of linguistic behaviourism, Quine while developing this position does not find the relevance of level description. However, it may be argued that any account of language involves a level of description amalgamated between the behaviour and the brain. There is no question of doubt that the nerves system of different persons are different objects altogether. As a result of that a level of description is prerequisite to talk about what is common to all users of the language. There lies the relevance of a level of description what Quine does not anticipate while developing his position. Instead of an intermediate level of description, Quine talks of dispositions as a state of person's nervous

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<sup>106</sup> Orenstein, A. and Kotatko, P., (eds.), *Knowledge, Language and Logic*, op. cit., p. 417.

system. However, it has been criticized by saying that there we hardly find any description of that state with regard to nerves and neurons. Quine, of course, does not think that we need anything of this sort towards creating our dispositions legitimate. Having said this, Quine may be criticized by saying that dispositions of any sort as anticipated by him 'will play no role in determining translation'.

Secondly, it may be presumed that as far as indeterminacy is concerned Quine's linguist is *too limited and narrow from methodological outlook*. Hookway raises question on the legitimacy of translation as conceived by Quine. In this regard, Hookway gives an example in terms of a maxim. He says, "A community is more likely to have terms for rabbits than for undetached rabbit parts or stages in their histories."<sup>107</sup> A theory can be developed as a whole but not in a fragmented manner. Quine perhaps is too transparent as far as his theory of indeterminacy of translation is concerned. Quine in fact rules out any coercion while developing his theory of translation. As **a relativist conceptualist, physicalist and naturalized epistemologist**, Quine is not a believer of maxim. In fact, a maxim actually offers a sensible reason for preferring one manual of translation instead of another without giving any reason for thinking it true. However, it seems to Hookway that Quine's approval of indeterminacy of translation actually hinges on a gulf between what is being justified by the physical facts and what serves our practical needs in looking for translation manual. Thus, in a sense, Quine in some sense or other offers merely a *subjective or pragmatic* approach while developing his theory of translation. This creates serious problem as far as understanding his theory is concerned. In fact, Quine within his paradigm perhaps unable to substantiate why one of two translation manuals is correct and the other is incorrect. Alternatively, it can be said that it would be difficult on the part of Quine to justify

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<sup>107</sup> Hookway, C., *Quine* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), p. 135.

adequately why one translation manual may be accepted as correct and true and the other is not. According to Hookway, Quine perhaps would like to say that a manual may not be accepted so long it does not conform to stimulus meaning. If it does then it may perhaps be the case that two manuals satisfying the conditions set forth must be accepted as fully correct even though it may be the case that one manual is inferior than the other.

Peter Hylton, however, does not agree with Hookway. He claims that this is not the right way to read Quine. He seems this reading arbitrary and subjective at length. We think the concept of translation manual needs to be clarified first. We have to know under what condition a translation manual is to be correct. A translation manual is to be correct within the sphere of *fluent dialogue and successful negotiation*<sup>108</sup> with speakers of other language. If the concept of translation manual is conceived in this way then certainly, Hookway's position about Quine appears to be suspicious. Hylton further observes that Quine is right for not preconceiving any fixed maxim. Any maxim in the true sense of the term does not allow different or alternative interpretation or translation within the same level. In fact, within the paradigm of translation manual as conceived by Quine, the role of a fixed and determinate stringent maxim is nil. In this regard one may recall Kant. While developing the deontological approach of ethics, Kant put emphasized more on moral maxims which are universalizable and inviolable in nature. A moral maxim must be universalizable; otherwise it should not be treated as a moral maxim. The same will be noticed in the maxims of physics, logic, and geometry. As translation manual is naturalized, transparent and indeterminate, it does not work within the straight jacket of maxim. According to Hylton, to say that a linguistic community conforms to the maxim is to say that all acceptable translations of the language of that community obey the maxim. But this cannot be

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<sup>108</sup> See Hylton, P., *Quine*, op. cit., p. 224.

the case as we have alternative translation manuals, violation of maxim cannot be ruled out. As Quine was in favour of *holophrastic indeterminacy*, he does not think to have a unique translation within the system. Even one cannot find a unique answer within the realm of translation manuals. The basic task of language is to communicate between the speaker and the hearers. This is the sole task of language. Quine's translational manuals allow us to communicate. However, communication may not be completely trouble-free communication because the communicators may have different belief systems or predisposed by some complex grammar. However, this does not vitiate the purpose of communication. The very intention of the communicators is to make their communication successful. Strawson in his book *Individuals* equally emphasized on successful communication between the communicators. However, Quine differs from Strawson in a big way. Quine is a conceptual relativist whereas Strawson was a proponent of uniform and a core conceptualist. Strawson, unlike Quine, advocates a uniform conceptualism possessed by all. In this regard, Strawson was influenced by Kant. Quine is critical about Kant's analyticity. In his 'Two Dogmas of Empiricism', Quine vehemently criticizes Kant. In this regard, Quine goes on to say that First Philosophy had been vitiated by stringent Dogmas. One famous dogma is associated with Kant on the basis of which Kant developed his theory of the distinction between analytic and synthetic judgments. Other dogma is associated with Carnap on the basis of which he developed reductionism. Quine was critical of such dogma based philosophical theories. Thus, in a sense, Quine goes against so many well established philosophical theories. He stands against Kant, Strawson, Carnap and Noam Chomsky each of which developed revolutionary philosophical theories. Thus, in a sense, Quine's philosophy has been treated as revolutionary because of its inextricable relationship with other well established philosophical theories.

Quine's theory does not allow us to have a determine theory because as a conceptual relativist and physicist. Quine tells us that any scheme of translation is underdetermined relative to the evidence for it. It would equally be true in the case of physics as well. It should however be kept in mind that while developing his theory, Quine's basic philosophical foundation is ontological rather than methodological or epistemological. On the basis of his ontological outlook Quine inclines to say that the totality of truth about the world fails to determine translation. As a result of that even the best theory of physics associated with the truth about the world remained to be underdetermined. When Quine reads something as 'equally good', he reads it in the methodological or epistemological sense where evidence and observation take the upper hand. However, he uses the same phrase from ontological sense. In replaying Chomsky, Quine affirms that theory in physics is an ultimate parameter in the sense that there is no legitimate first philosophy higher or firmer than physics. Being a physicalist, Quine considers physical facts as real facts. Accordingly, he emphasized on a physical conception of 'fact of the matter' in which he rules out the possibility of anything arbitrary and anything a priori in physical facts. Thus, the genesis of Quine's physicalism is that it enables to preserve its simplicity and its clarity within the realm of a physical conception of 'fact of the matter'.

### **3.9 Philosophical Significance of Indeterminacy of Translation**

The philosophical significance of Quine's theory of indeterminacy of translation is revolutionary because of its positive and negative impact on other well established philosophical theories. Any philosophical theory approaches towards determinism. This is the genesis of philosophy. Quine's theory at least in its face value runs the other way round. As a result of that his theory 'has

become the most discussed of all his philosophical conclusions.’<sup>109</sup> This theory works under two assumptions. First, translation manuals are underdetermined by the evidence very similar to the hypotheses used in science. Secondly, it implicitly inquires why translation manuals are not like hypotheses in the sciences. It then reveals that scientific hypotheses count as either true or false whereas the question of truth and falsity in the case of translation manuals simply does not arise. This position of Quine has been criticized by Chomsky and Rorty. Even though they along with Quine have accepted that translation is underdetermined but unlike Quine, they do not find any significant difference between translation manuals and scientific hypothesis.

In this regard one has to know about meaning. Meaning is defined in terms of verification, falsification or confirmation along with the line of logical positivism. Since translation has been accepted as under-determination there is no point in determining the meaning along with the line of principle of verification set forth by the logical positivists or referential semanticists. In fact, it is the translation of the whole sentence that matters the most instead of talking of the translation of the individual sentences. Thus, according to Quine, it bears no sense to correlate sentences that have same meaning while engaging with translation manuals. Moreover, as a proponent of **physicalism** Quine adheres to the view that meaning and other intentional entities are of no help in explaining what goes on in the physical world. From ontological point of view there we do not have any reason to assume that there are such intentional entities. In fact, Quine was in favour of the *death of meaning*. For Quine, linguistic philosophers have been almost totally wrong about meaning. Realistically, Quine’s philosophical position is nearly tantamount to disbelieving in meaning. Quine denies the analytic-synthetic distinction because he presumes that there is nothing analytically true. The analytic-synthetic distinction does not resemble with red-orange

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<sup>109</sup> Follesdal, D., “Volume Introduction”, in D. Follesdall (ed.), *Indeterminacy of Translation (Philosophy of Quine)*, A Garland Series, New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc. 2001), p. xi.

distinction, rather it is a vague one. Therefore, there is no point in assuming that there is something true or false a priori or necessarily. The analytic-synthetic distinction is meaningless; nothing is analytic or analytically true. All truth or falsity is synthetic. Harman in this regard says, "Quine's message is that the analytic-synthetic distinction, intensional objects or psychological states, meaning, and propositions, in short meaning as conceived by certain linguistic philosophers, all this, any of this, is no better off than witches, the ether, phlogiston, or God; and God is dead."<sup>110</sup> In Dummett phrase "the concepts of analyticity and syntheticity are spurious, on the ground that it is impossible to give non-circular definitions of the related terms."<sup>111</sup> Even Quine denies the proposal of conventional truth. A conventionalist goes on to say that meaning determines on the basis conventional use of an expression. For example, 'Copper is a metal' is true by virtue of meaning or by virtue of convention. Quine, however, denies the position of conventionalism as he thinks that it would eventually lead to either circularity of an infinite regress.

The other philosophical implication of translation manual is that by way of developing this theory Quine goes on to deny that a sentence has a meaning or expresses a proposition. Quine inclines to say that an adequate account of desire, belief, etc., must treat psychological states as attitudes towards sentences rather than as attitudes towards propositions. For Quine, an adequate account of translation by no means is directed towards preserving meaning. Within the sphere of translation manuals there are no such intensional objects as meanings or propositions. This position of Quine not only goes against Kantian epistemology, it equally goes against the philosophical position of referential semanticists and logical positivists.

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<sup>110</sup> Harman, G., "Quine on Meaning and Existence, I", *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>111</sup> Dummett, M., "The Significance of Quine's Indeterminacy Thesis", *Ibid.*, p. 99.

The pertinent question at this juncture is: how the determinacy of translation would enable us to make sense of the notion of proposition? To find a suitable answer of this question, one has to adhere to the concept of synonymous. If translations were determinate then in such a situation one could define two sentences as synonymous just in case the one is translated into the other by a fully acceptable translation between the language of the one and the language of the other. In such a case, a proposition would thus be a set of synonymous sentences. While replying to Alston, Quine says, "I keep urging that we could happily hypostatize meanings if we could admit synonymy. We could simply identify meanings with the classes of synonyms."<sup>112</sup> Having said this, Quine thinks that the very idea of a set of synonymous expressions is extremely narrow relative to the idea of meanings and propositions used in analytic philosophy. In fact Quine was reluctant to conceive meaning with regard to truth and falsity. For Quine, there are other considerably better provisions to explain our understanding of language. One may conceive meaning in terms of thought, i.e., either as a mental entity or as an abstract entity. If meanings are mental, then they can be known by introspection. But the concept of introspection, according to Quine, is unscientific. If meanings are abstract entities, then they may be comprehended through epistemic contact between language users and meaning. In such a case, one may cognize an expression by way of grasping its meaning. This position was held by Frege and Russell as well. In either case there must be some epistemic relation between the speaker and the meaning. Now, if the meaning is a set of synonymous linguistic expressions, the matter would altogether be different. In fact, Quine thinks that meanings interpreted as sets of synonymous expressions do nothing at all to explain the understanding of language.

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<sup>112</sup> Hahn, L. E. and Schilpp, P. A., (eds.), *The Philosophy of W. V. Quine*, op. cit., p. 73.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### ANTI-NATURALISM AND ANTI-REDUCTIONISM: A DEBATE BETWEEN QUINE AND KANT AND QUINE AND CARNAP

Within the sphere of analytic philosophical tradition, we read Quine as a critique. His theory of naturalized epistemology actually hinges on his very interpretation of meaning. Besides, being a critique, Quine involves in conflict with other well-known philosophical theories previously developed by original philosophers, such as, Kant, Carnap and Chomsky. In this sequel, we propose to analyze and examine Quine's debate with other philosophers. Quine, while developing his theory of meaning, criticizes Kant's well-established distinction between analytic and synthetic judgments. He then criticizes the reductionism of Rudolf Carnap. Accordingly, this sequel may be segmented into two sub-sections. In **Section One**, an attempt will be made to show in what sense Kant's distinction between analytic and synthetic judgment has appeared to Quine as the First Dogma of empiricism. In **Section Two**, an attempt will be made to examine and explicate in what sense Carnap's reductionism appeared as the Second Dogma of empiricism to Quine.

#### SECTION ONE

##### ANTI-NATURALISM: A DEBATE BETWEEN QUINE AND KANT

Quine in his "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" appeared in *The Philosophical Review* in 1951 raised some serious philosophical issues that would go against Kant as well as Carnap. According to Quine, Kant is responsible to create a philosophical dogma that would lead the distinction between analytic and synthetic. In this section, an attempt would be made to explore the root of

the debate between Kant and Quine regarding First Philosophy. In his paper Quine challenges two doctrines which are directly or indirectly linked to Logical Positivism. The first challenge is the analytic-synthetic distinction and the second challenge is the belief that there are propositions which future experience can never cause us to reject as false. There is no question of doubt that the analytic-synthetic distinction has a prolonged philosophical history particularly in modern and contemporary philosophy of epistemology. Even the contemporary distinction is foreshadowed in the writings of Leibnitz, Hume and Kant. Logical positivism also made the distinction between logically true and factually true. Quine raises a serious question about the feasibility or legitimacy of such philosophical distinction. According to Quine, both dogmas are 'ill-founded'. One dogma is directed towards 'blurring of the supposed boundary between speculative metaphysics and natural science'. The other one is shifting toward pragmatism.

Let us look in brief the background for analyticity that was linked with the first dogma. It was claimed that Kant's distinction between analytic and synthetic truths was foreshadowed in Hume's distinction between *relations of ideas* and *matters of fact* and Leibniz's distinction between *truths of reason* and *truths of fact*. Leibniz conceived truths of reason with regard to possible-world. For him, truths of reason remained as true in all possible-worlds. Thus, in a sense, it is universally and necessarily true. Alternatively, it can be said that truths of reason are those truths which can never be false. Very similar to this, analytic statements defined as statements whose denials are self-contradictory. Let us make this point clear in the light of Kantian analytic judgment. While developing analytic proposition or judgment, Kant sets out two important features of analytic judgment, such as, (i) in all analytic judgment the predicate is *overtly* or *covertly* contained in the subject term. It means that in the case of analytic statement, the predicate concept is already contained in the subject concept and (ii) the denial of an analytic

statement clearly leads to self-contradiction. According to Kant, this is true not only a particular analytic judgment, it would equally be true in all analytic judgment. That means the principle of which an analytic judgment is determined as universal and necessary. Any judgment that would be determined by the principle of universality and necessity would be a dogma oriented judgment. This is clearly a philosophical dogma or philosophical decorum that can never be violated to text whether a statement is analytic or not.

Quine, however, goes against such philosophical dogma based on strict principles. Quine immediately finds two important loopholes of Kantian formulation of analytic statement just stated. The first one is that 'it limits itself to statements of subject-predicate form, and secondly, it appeals to a notion of containment which is left at a metaphysical level.'<sup>113</sup> While giving a further clarification, Kant inclines to say that a statement is analytic when it is true by virtue of meanings and independent of fact. According to this formulation, we have to know the concept of meaning which is presupposed while giving the definition of analytic statement. According to Quine, *meaning* cannot be identified with *naming*. In this regard, Quine refers Frege's example of "Morning star" and "Evening star" and Russell's example of "Scott" and "the author of Waverly" where terms can name the same thing but differ in meaning. Meaning is the cognitive account of naming. According to Quine, the distinction between meaning and naming is no less important at the level of abstract terms. For example, the terms "9" and "the number of the planets" name one and the same abstract entity but they are unlike in meaning. Here astronomical observation was required to determine the sameness of the entity in question. Careful study would reflect that the example contains singular terms, concrete and abstract nature. According to Quine, when a singular term purports to name an entity, abstract or

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<sup>113</sup> Quine, W. V. O., "Two Dogmas of Empiricism", in Robert R. Ammerman (ed.), *Classics of Analytic Philosophy* (Bombay-New Delhi: Tata McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, 1965), p. 197.

concrete, a general term does not. However, it may be the case that a general term would be true of an entity. The class of all entities of which a general term is true is called the extension of the term. Very similar to the meaning of a singular term and the entity named, we can equally distinguish between the meaning of a general term and its extension. For example, the general terms ‘creature with a heart’ and ‘creature with kidneys’ are perhaps very similar in extension but unlike in meaning. Thus, one must be careful about the very concept of meaning. For Quine, misunderstanding or misconception about meaning with extension is less common than confusion of meaning with naming in the case of singular terms. Having said this, one thing should be kept in mind that it is indeed a commonplace in philosophy to oppose *intension* (meaning) to *extension*, or in different terms, *connotation to denotation*.<sup>114</sup> The modern or contemporary notion of intension or meaning is deeply linked with the Aristotelian notion of essence. For Aristotle, it was essential in men to be rational, accidental to be two-legged. Here rationality is involved in the meaning of the word ‘man’, while two-legged is not. However, two-legged may at the same time be involved in the meaning of ‘biped’, while rationality is not. Thus, it makes no sense to say, from the doctrine of meaning of the actual individual, who is at once a man and a biped, that his rationality is essential and his two-legged accidental and vice-versa. In this context, Aristotle said that ‘things had essences, but only linguistic forms have meanings. Quine says, “Meaning is what essence becomes when it is divorced from the object of reference and wedded to the word.”<sup>115</sup>

Quine further contends that when we discuss about meaning, the notion of object comes into consideration. What sorts of things do have meanings? In this regard, one has to keep in mind the distinction between *meaning* and *reference*. Whether meaning and reference are distinct or not is

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., p. 198.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

a tricky philosophical issue. In our case, we have to show that meaning and reference are distinct. That means once the theory of meaning is sharply parted from the theory of reference, we can then say that the primary business of the theory of meaning simply *the synonymy of linguistic forms*. This sort of meaning is completely obscure and may be abandoned according to Quine.<sup>116</sup> Quine further goes on to remark that there are various types of analytic statements. In this regard, he acknowledges two different classes of analytic statements, such as, *logically true* and *merely true*. The statement “No unmarried man is married” is logically true. It is not only true, but would remain true under any and all reinterpretations of ‘man’ and ‘married’. However, there is also a second class of analytic statement such as “No bachelor is married” which truth remained intact by putting or substituting synonyms for synonyms. As the term ‘unmarried man’ is synonymous with ‘bachelor’, we can substitute the term ‘unmarried man’ in place of the term ‘bachelor’ and hence can get the analytic statement “No unmarried man is married”.

Quine’s problem is not with the first class of analytic statement, but with the second class of analytic statement where the principle of substitution has been taken into account on the basis of synonymy. It is shown how the second class of analytic statement can be reduced into the first class of analytic statement which is logically true or true by definition and seems to be warranted in any sort of situation whatsoever. But how do we find that ‘bachelor’ is defined as ‘unmarried man’? Who defined it in the desired fashion and when? Had it been defined with regard to the nearest dictionary and thereby accept the lexicographer’s formulation as law? For Quine, ‘this would be to put the cart before the horse.’<sup>117</sup> As Quine’s reading, a lexicographer is nothing but an empiricist scientist “whose business is the recording of antecedent facts; and if he glosses “bachelor” as “unmarried man” it is because of his belief that there is a relation of synonymy

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., p. 199.

between those forms, implicit in general or preferred usage prior to his own work.”<sup>118</sup> Since the notion of synonymy is purely linguistic matter, it needs further clarification, presumably in terms relating to linguistic behaviour. Where there is a scope of clarification, a report of observed synonymy, it cannot be granted as an absolute criterion. Quine is suspicious about the legitimacy of the term synonymy that has been used in the case of second class of analytic statement. Quine says that definition is not an activity exclusively of philologists. Philosophers and scientists very often tend to ‘define’ a recondite term by paraphrasing it into terms of familiar vocabulary. Such attempt does not make any significant because it is like the philologist’s, a pure lexicography and nothing more than that. We do not have adequate necessary and sufficient conditions on the basis of which something can be accepted legitimately on linguistic front that two terms are properly synonymous. Such requisition on synonymy front is far from clear according to Quine. They are grounded in usage and hence it can be said that definitions reporting selected instances of synonymy come as reports upon usage. Even there are alternative types of definitional activity which does not limit itself to the reporting of preexisting synonymies or explication in Carnapian term, an activity to which philosophers are given. Quine says, “In explication the purpose is not merely to paraphrase the definiendum into an outright synonym, but actually to improve upon the definiendum by refining or supplementing its meaning.”<sup>119</sup> For Quine, any word worth explicating has some *contexts* which are clear to be useful and the very purpose of explication is to preserve the usage of these favored contexts while sharpening the usage of other contexts. What is more important to Quine is not that “the definiendum in its antecedent usage be synonymous with the definiens, but just that each of these favored contexts of the definiendum, taken as a whole in its antecedent usage, be synonymous with the corresponding context of the

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., p. 200.

definiens.”<sup>120</sup> Quine’s over-all perception is that definition except in the extreme case of the explicitly conventional introduction of new notations, hinges on prior notions of synonymy. As a result of that, it can be asserted after Quine that the very notion of definition does not hold the key to synonymy and analyticity. An extreme sort of definition which does not require prior synonymies can survive because here the definiendum becomes synonymous with the definiens simply because it has been created expressively for the purpose of being synonymous with the definiens. Therefore, it may be concluded after Quine that the very concept of definition does not help us to formulate analytic proposition.

#### **4.1.1 Interchangeability**

Interchangeability is another approach through which one can formulate analytic proposition. It is said that the synonymy of two linguistic forms consists simply in their interchangeability in all contexts without change of truth-value. Interchangeability, in Leibniz’s sense means *salva veritate*. Accordingly, it is claimed that the synonyms “bachelor” and “unmarried man” are everywhere interchangeable *salva veritate*. This again is problematic to Quine as he finds that with the help of synonymy and interchangeability something may be turned from true to false and vice-versa. For example, ‘unmarried man’ and ‘bachelor’ are synonymous and hence the proposition ‘All unmarried men are bachelors’ is analytic and true. Now, if the term ‘bachelor’ is substituted by another synonymous term, such as, ‘bachelor of arts’ and thereby formulate the proposition ‘All unmarried men are bachelors of arts’, then it would be turned as false. There are many other cases where we find the same situation. The question thus remains whether interchangeability *salva veritate* is supposed to be strong enough condition for synonymy or on the contrary some heteronymous expressions might be thus interchangeable. Of course, we are

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

not concerned here with synonymy in the case of complete identity in psychological associations or poetic quality, rather we are very much concerned about cognitive synonymy. As per as cognitive synonymy is concerned, it can be said that any analytic statement could be turned into logical truth by putting synonyms for synonyms. Accordingly, to say that ‘bachelor’ and ‘unmarried man’ are cognitively synonymous is to say no more nor less than the statement: *All and only bachelors are unmarried men*, is analytic. The question before us whether such cognitive interchangeability is a sufficient condition for *cognitive synonymy*. The answer would be affirmative like the following: *Necessarily all and only bachelors are bachelors* is evidently true. Here the modal term *necessity* is applicable to analytic statement because it would strengthen the truth claim of analytic statement. Now if ‘bachelor’ and ‘unmarried man’ are interchangeable *salva veritate* from the perspective of cognitive synonymy, then we have the following analytic statement: *Necessarily all and only bachelors are unmarried men*, where the term ‘unmarried men’ is replaced in place of ‘bachelors’. Now, to say that it is analytic is to say that the sentence from which it is derived is also analytic and hence the terms replaced in between are cognitively synonymous.

This, however, does not exhaust the anxiety of Quine. For Quine, the condition of interchangeability *salva veritate* varies in its force along with the variations of the richness of language at hand. Even here we are working with a language rich enough to contain the adverb ‘necessarily’ which is particularly relevant in the case of analytic statement. The question then is: Does the adverb really make sense? If it does, then it makes the sense to say that we have already made satisfactory sense of ‘analytic’. Then are we not involving into circularity? For Quine, even though our argument is not emphatically circular, but it is something like it. For Quine, interchangeability *salva veritate* is to be meaningless if it is not relativized to a language whose

extent is specified in relevant respects. There is an indefinitely large number of one place-predicates and many place predicates and the rest of the language is logical. Even abstract singular terms naming classes, classes of classes etc., are contextually definable. The language of this type is extensional in the sense that any two predicates which do agree extensionally, i.e., are true of the same objects, are interchangeable *salva veritate*. It should be noted here that in an extensional language, interchangeability *salva veritate* is no assurance of cognitive synonymy of the desired type. Accordingly, it can be said after Quine that the terms ‘bachelor’ and ‘unmarried man’ are interchangeable *salva veritate* in an extensional language assures us no more than the statement : *All and only bachelors are unmarried men*, as cited above is true. According to Quine, “there is no assurance here that the extensional agreement of “bachelor” and “unmarried man” rests on meaning rather than merely on accidental matters of fact, as does the extensional agreement of “creature with a heart” and “creature with kidneys.””<sup>121</sup>

Of course, we have to appreciate the relevance of extensional agreement as the nearest appropriation to synonymy. Having said this, there still remains a problem because extensional agreement actually tumbles far short of cognitive synonymy for explaining analyticity in the desired sense. However, if a language contains an intensional adverb ‘necessarily, then in such a case interchangeability *salva veritate* in such a language provides a sufficient condition of cognitive synonymy. But the problem here is that such a language would be intelligible subject to the notion of analyticity has already been understood in advance. There we thus sense circularity. Therefore, Quine inclines to say that the effort to explain cognitive synonymy first for the sake of deriving analyticity from it is again perhaps the wrong approach on the part of Kant. Instead of that, one might try to explain analyticity without appeal to cognitive synonymy.

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid., p. 204.

The same explanation works for any other pair of one-place predicates and it can equally be extended in many-place predicates as well. In this sense, singular terms may be said to be cognitively synonymous when the identity mark placed in between them is analytic. The same practice can equally be made in **biconditional** statement as well.

Quine equally brings back the relevance of semantic rules towards explicating analyticity. For Quine, analyticity in its inauguration is definable by appeal to a realm of meanings and the appeal to meanings gave way to an appeal to synonymy or definition. However, it eventually seems that definition and synonymy are turned out to be inadequate for having a clear cut picture of analyticity. Quine in this regard says, “But definition turned out to be a will-o-the-wisp, and synonymy turned out to be best understood only by dint of a prior appeal to analyticity itself. So we are back at the problem of analyticity.”<sup>122</sup> According to Quine, the notion of analyticity about which we express our anxiety is a purported relation between statements and languages. However, the gravity of this is not discernibly less for artificial languages than for natural ones. Artificial language is guided by semantical rules and it would be completely foreign in natural language. Carnap has given preference on artificial language while developing his reductionism. For Quine, from the point of view of the problem of analyticity, ‘the notion of an artificial language with semantical rules is a *feu follet par excellence*’<sup>123</sup>. Semantical rules towards determining the analytic statements of an artificial language are of interest only in so far as we already understand the notion of analyticity. Accordingly, they are of no help in gaining this understanding. However, Quine affirms that hypothetical languages of an artificially simple kind could be believably useful in clarifying analyticity provided that if the mental or behavioural or cultural factors are supposed to be relevant to analyticity. For Quine, a merely an irreducible

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid., pp. 204-5.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., p. 207.

character is unlikely to throw light on the problem of explicating analyticity. Of course, the concept of truth depends on both language and extra-linguistic fact. For example, the statement ‘Brutus killed Caesar’ would be treated as false if the world had been different in certain ways. It would also be false if the word ‘killed’ happened rather to have the sense of ‘begat’. This clearly reflects that the truth of a statement is somehow analyzable into a linguistic component and also a factual component. It thus seems reasonable after Quine that in some statements the factual component should be null. Such statements are analytic statements. If it would be the case then it would be very difficult to draw a clear cut distinction between analytic and synthetic judgments. Quine thus concludes by saying that “for all its a priori reasonableness, a boundary between analytic and synthetic statements simply has not been drawn. That there is such a distinction to be drawn at all is an unempirical dogma of empiricists, a metaphysical article of faith.”<sup>124</sup>

## SECTION TWO

### ANTI-REDUCTIONISM: A DEBATE BETWEEN CARNAP AND QUINE

Quine in his “Two Dogmas of Empiricism” criticizes Carnap. According to Quine, Carnap is responsible for making philosophy a dogma oriented enterprise. Carnap has led the dogma based on reductionism. It states that ‘the belief that each meaningful statement is equivalent to some logical construct upon terms which refer to immediate experience.’ Alternatively, it can be said that the belief that there are certain propositions which no experience can ever lead us to reject. Quine first met with Carnap after returning from Europe to America in 1993. Initially, Quine was fond of Carnap’s philosophy. In this regard Hylton remarks, “No philosopher had greater

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

influence on Quine than Rudolf Carnap.”<sup>125</sup> Quine says, “Carnap was my greatest teacher. ... I was very much his disciple for six years. In later years his views went on evolving and so did mine, in divergent ways. But even where we disagreed he was still setting the theme; *the line of my thought was largely determined by problems that I felt his view presented.*”<sup>126</sup> As a result of that Quine has dedicated his first philosophical monograph *Word and Object* to Carnap. However, Quine in his paper entitled “Truth by Convention” published in 1936 took some philosophical perception that actually anticipated as a rejection or even refutation of certain fundamental doctrines of Carnap’s philosophy. Of course, it was the fact that Quine’s initial reception of Carnap’s work was very friendly and they were involved in philosophical discussion in important ways. Of course, Quine took Russell seriously before his encounter with Carnap. The most important aspect of Carnap’s philosophy is that it was oriented out of important philosophical dogmas. Accordingly, Carnap like Kant was responsible for designing philosophy on the foothold of dogmas. Carnap’s epistemology is the idea that fundamental epistemic principles serve to define the terms of a language and as definitions these principles are at bottom matters of convention. According to Carnap, any sentence whose truth is established by the ***convention alone is analytic***, i.e., true in virtue of the meaning of the expressions involved. This position of Carnap appeared as a dogma to Quine. According to Quine, this was the basic problem of First Philosophy or the so-called classical or traditional epistemology as developed by Kant, Carnap and others as well. First Philosophy was oriented on the basis of many dogmas and it goes against philosophical growth. There can be little question that Quine’s “Truth by Convention” (henceforth TC) expresses some doubts about analyticity. However, it was reflected particularly from Benacerraf’s observation that TC had ‘clearly, convincingly, and decisively’

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<sup>125</sup> Hylton, P., *Quine*, op. cit., p. 32.

<sup>126</sup> Quine, W. V. O., “Homage to Rudolf Carnap”, in W. V. Quine, *The Ways of Paradox and Other Essays*, op. cit., p. 41.

refuted “the view that the truths of *logic* are to be accounted for as the products of convention.”<sup>127</sup> Even Putnam more recently called TC as a crucial break with the whole *conventionalist theory*.<sup>128</sup> According to Richard Creath, neither Benacerraf, nor Putnam gave a historical account; rather each of them was deeply engaged in a substantial philosophical argument of his own. Each of them was rightly offering Quine’s credit for an important contribution to that argument.

We think that the insight of TC lies in the perception that logic is a matter of convention and it would be true besides Carnap as well. Having said this, it should be kept in mind that TC is not a decisive break with analyticity as developed by Carnap and other reductionists. Nor does it offer a decisive and conclusive argument against Carnap’s views on the conventionality of logic *per se*. What Quine’s paper does do is even more subtle and important towards developing an approach to the problem of language and knowledge within which it is highly doubtful that Carnap’s notion of analyticity can plausibly be reconstructed. In our sense, Quine’s TC appears as a mark of revision of the very conception of analyticity prevailing within the realm of First Philosophy or traditional epistemology. The impact of Quine’s TC is philosophically colossal as it is integrated with so many other unpublished philosophical manuscripts which gave several arguments in favour of the doctrine that logic is to be conceived as a matter of linguistic convention. Of course, it was a reality that Quine initially find himself uncomfortable towards outright rejection of the concept of analyticity.

It is know that Quine first met with Carnap in late 1992 in Vienna and they were better acquainted in Prague thereafter. At that time, Quine was deeply involved with his doctoral

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<sup>127</sup> Benacerraf, P., “Mathematical Truth”, *Journal of Philosophy*, LXX (1973), p. 676.

<sup>128</sup> See Putnam, H., “Convention: A Theme in Philosophy”, in H. Putnam, *Realism and Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 172.

degree at Harvard. He was enjoying travelling fellowship in Europe. On his return to United States, he became a member of the first group of Junior Fellows of the Harvard Society of Fellows. This position actually paved Quine the way of developing research work within the enlightened environment. In November 1934, Quine gave a series of three lectures on Carnap entitled “The A Priori”, “Syntax”, and “Philosophy as Syntax” respectively which remained unpublished. The first lecture comprehends Quine’s substantive argument for making logic and mathematics true by convention which eventually helped him a lot to rework into TC. The second lecture contains a precise summary of some important notions from Carnap’s “Logical Syntax of Language” where Quine accentuated that syntax is to include not only rules of grammar but also rules of inference (logic). The rules of inference or logic are called transformation rules by Carnap and it may be thought of as an implicit definition for a notion of direct consequence. This, in turn, is used to define the key concepts of analyticity and synonymy. The third and final lecture contains a wide-ranging discussion of Carnap’s thesis that *philosophy is all about of syntax and nothing else*. Here Quine is particularly interested to outline the view that there are some sentences which appear to be about extra-linguistic objects and which may be construed as being in fact about expressions of various kinds. Here Quine brings the concept of quasi-syntactical. For Quine, sentences which are misleading in nature are called quasi-syntactical and investigation of such sentences shows “how to banish possibilities in favour of talk directly of sentences and relations among sentences.”<sup>129</sup> It states that properties and relations can be replaced in favour of one or more place predicates. At that time, Quine was passionate not only about ontological economics, but also about Carnap’s program in general. He closes his lecture with the remark: “This is not the end of Carnap’s contribution; rather it is only the

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<sup>129</sup> Creath, R., “The Initial Reception of Carnap’s Doctrine of Analyticity”, in D. Follesdall (ed.), *General, Reviews, and Analytic/Synthetic (Philosophy of Quine, A Garland series, New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc. 2000)*, p. 323.

starting point.”<sup>130</sup> According to Quine, Carnap’s philosophy is worthy not because of the fact that he advances a negative doctrine, not because of the fact that he attempt to construe philosophy as trivial, but because of the fact that he was concerned about to have a clear picture of philosophy by way of overcoming philosophical muddles and thereby laying the foundation of a rigorous and fruitful study of the logic of science. For Carnap, the worthy of philosophy is found in the clear and vivid foundation of the logic of science. It is the *logic of science*, the analysis, criticism and refinement of the methods and the concepts of science that Carnap respects as the most *defensible province of philosophy*. Thus, it seems to us that Carnap addressed a reductionist account of philosophy based on the foundation of logic of science where sufficient care has been given to proper analysis of language, what Carnap precisely termed as *the syntax of language* or *in short syntax*. On the basis of this, Carnap draws the conclusion that philosophy is syntax. It is supposed to be the cornerstone of his reductionism. He delimited philosophy within the realm of syntax and in this regard he acknowledges that his achievement stands independently of the thesis that no meaningful metaphysics remains beyond syntax. If there is any sort of metaphysics, it should be structured within the realm of syntax. However, it would be a matter of great philosophical concern about the success and acceptability of the claim.

Carnap was a *radical reductionist*. It asserts that every meaningful statement is held to be translatable into a statement, true or false, about immediate experience. Radical reductionism in some form or other is linked with the verification theory of meaning. The language that Carnap adopted in his reductionism was not a sense-datum language in the narrowest conceivable sense, but it included the notations of logic applicable in higher set theory. It is thus be treated as artificial language of pure mathematics. The ontology implicit in it comprised not only sensory

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid. See also R. Creath (ed.), *Dear Carnap, Dear Van: The Carnap-Quine Correspondence and Related Work* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1990), p. 102.

events but classes, classes of classes, and so on. In the process of constructions or reductions, Carnap exploits the resources of modern logic with sufficient clarity and ingenuity and in turn succeeds in defining a wide array of important additional sensory concepts. In fact, he has been treated as the first empiricist who, not gratified with stressing the reducibility of science in terms of immediate experience, took serious steps towards carrying out the reduction as the mark of analyticity. Even if we think that Carnap's starting point of reductionism is by far satisfactory, but still it can be said that his constructions were only a fragment of the full program. However, the dogma of reductionism has continued to influence the thought of empiricists. The notion is, of course, implicit in the verification theory of meaning. According to Quine, Carnap's dogma of reductionism can survive in the supposition that each statement in isolation can admit of confirmation. However, Quine's counter suggestion issuing essentially from Carnap's doctrine of the physical world in the *Aufbau*, is that 'our statements about the external world face the tribunal of sense experience not individually but only as a corporate body'. Quine further claims that the dogma of reductionism is essentially connected with the other dogma which states that there is a distinction between the analytic and the synthetic.

According to Quine, the two dogmas, one anticipated by Kant and the other by Carnap, are identical as far as their root or locus is concerned. The truth of statements does obviously depend both upon language and upon extra-linguistic fact and it carries in its train, not logically but all too naturally. It is a sort of feeling or realization that the truth of a statement is somehow analyzable into a linguistic component as well as a factual component. The factual component, Quine opines, actually boils down to a range of confirmatory experiences where the linguistic component in extreme case is all that matters, a true statement is analytic. However, Quine says that it is nonsense to speak of a linguistic component and a factual component in the truth of any

individual statement. Putting everything into perspective, Quine still believes that the unit of empirical significance is the whole of science where there is no place of dogma. Thus, Quine in a sense seeks empiricism without the dogmas. As an empiricist, Quine thinks of the conceptual scheme of science as a tool for predicting future experience in the light of the past experience. Physical objects are conceptually imported not by definition in terms of experience, but simply as to the gods of Homer. The myth of the physical objects, Quine asserts, is epistemologically superior to most in that it has proved more efficacious than other myths as a device for working a manageable structure into the flux of experience. According to Quine, Carnap takes a pragmatic stand on the question of choosing between forms, scientific knowledge. Having said this, his pragmatism leaves off at the imagined boundary between the analytic and the synthetic. In repudiating such a boundary, Quine espouses a more through pragmatism. In this context, Quine says, "Each man is given a scientific heritage plus a continuing barrage of sensory stimulation; and the considerations which guide him in warping his scientific heritage to fit his continuing sensory promptings are, where rational, pragmatic."<sup>131</sup> In this sequel we are not so much interested to acknowledge Carnap from Quine's perspective. So far it has been discussed in what sense Carnap's philosophy has been recognized as philosophically worthy. It also seems that Quine is not just Carnap's expositor; he is more about Carnap's defender. Quine's first lecture on Carnap contains three sections of which the first deals with definition, the second reflects in what sense or how to edge definitions or linguistic conventions so as to render a large part of logic true by definition or by convention, and the third and final section engages to resolve the question of how far this conventionalizing is to work. The lecture, in general, is directed to shield the claim that *a priori is analytic*. However, Quine has in mind with an informal specification of the

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<sup>131</sup> Quine, W.V.O., "Two Dogmas of Empiricism", in W. V. Quine, *From a Logical Point of View: 9 Logico-Philosophical Essays* (Cambridge: Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1953; revised edition, 1980), p. 46.

intended sense of analytic. In this regard, Quine says, “Analytic judgments are consequences of linguistic fiat.”<sup>132</sup> The sanctity of analytic judgment actually hinges on the very perception of synonymy and substitution on language front. Traditionally, it was held by Kant and everyone recognizes the a priori character of analytic. However, there are some non-analytic or synthetic judgments, such as; the propositions of geometry are also a priori according to Kant. In this regard, Quine responds by saying that ‘the development of foundational studies in mathematics during the past century has made it clear that none of mathematics, nor even geometry, need rest on anything but linguistic conventions of a definitional kind. In this way it becomes possible to relegate geometry to the analytic realm, along with the rest of mathematics.’<sup>133</sup> This we think is a serious degradation of both mathematics and geometry at the hand of Quine.

Now, owing to explicate and examine towards defending the doctrine that the *a priori is all analytic*, Quine goes on to start with definition. In this regard, Quine distinguishes two kinds of definitions, such as, explicit and implicit. Explicit definition is nothing but simply a convention of abbreviation and implicit definition of a word says that a specific set of sentences containing the word are to be accepted as true conventionally. Here their truth constitutes *the meaning of the word*. Thus, in a sense both definitions, implicit as well as explicit, are conventions overriding the use of words. Explicit definition unlike implicit definition is necessarily relative as it specifies the use of a given word relative to other words whose previous definitions are presupposed. Having said this, it is true to say that in our ordinary conventional life, we have little to do with the so-called deliberate definition, rather we are used to learn our language

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<sup>132</sup> Quine, W. V. O., “Lectures on Carnap”, Unpublished, in the collection of W. V. O. Quine, p. 2 (Quoted in R. Creath “The Initial Reception of Carnap’s Doctrine of analyticity”, in D. Follesdall (ed.), *General, Reviews, and Analytic/Synthetic*, op. cit., p. 324, by permission of W. V. O. Quine”). See also R. Creath (ed.), *Dear Carnap, Dear Van: The Carnap-Quine Correspondence and Related Work*, op. cit., p. 48.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., pp. 2-3.

through psychological conditioning. However, as our thought on a topic seeks to accuracy, clarity and precision the informal use of words must give way to usage deliberately defined. Quine is focused on a detailed suggestion as to how this giving way might take place. Let us suppose that we begin at a stage where no deliberate definition has taken place. Let us further assume that for some word K, consider all of the sentences in which K occurs that we now accept. Among the sentences no discrepancy is drawn between a priori and empirical. Here we have a body of doctrine in which our task is to frame our definition of K that all of the accepted K sentences come out true under that definition. For Quine, this is supposed to be the highest and perhaps the only standard of adequacy to which definition under consideration can be held. However, this may leave room for alternative definitions or even incomplete ones. This, however, does not vitiate the very objective of definition because even incomplete definitions are unobjectionable because by hypothesis the truth of all accepted K sentences is preserved. Quine further contends that number of recognized K sentences may be infinite. In such a case, we simply specify that each sentence in that set is to be taken conventionally as true. This is an implicit definition.

It may perhaps be the case that some of the recognized K sentences may contain other words, say H, and accordingly may be accepted as H sentences. In order to decide whether to provide for the sentence under the definition of K or under that of H, we need to draw a slightly technical distinction such as: “Any sentence which contains a word H ..., and which remains unaffected in point of truth or falsity by all possible substitutions upon the word H ..., will be said to involve H vacuously.”<sup>134</sup> Here by the term ‘possible substitution’, Quine means to say about ‘grammatically possible substitutions’. However, Quine does not think that non-vacuous

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

engagement of a word in sentence is irrelevant; rather he anticipated it as essential component of the sentence. For example, in the sentence ‘Within any class of two apples there is at least one apple’, the word ‘two’ is used materially but the word ‘apple’ is used only vacuously. This distinction, according to Quine, is useful in the case of an accepted sentence involves a word vacuously and it will much more convenient to provide for that sentence in the definition of words involved in that sentence materially.<sup>135</sup> As far as mathematics and logic are concerned, there remains the possibility of massive scheme of definition. However, Quine does not show that such a massive scheme of definition is possible even in principle. We certainly can make a great many things true by convention which we cannot do ordinarily. There may have some sentences where we would not bother to make them analytic. There remains scope for revision and we have some choice as to where to make revision. Here our choice is largely guided by the tendency to dislodge as little of the previous doctrine as we can compatibly with the ideal of unity and simplicity in the resulting doctrine. However, if every sentence were made analytic, then the required revision would involve unnecessary and unwanted fluidity in the definitions of our words. In this sense we may confidently make logic and mathematics analytic along with those parts of the empirical sentences we shall be least willing to revise. But how does it relate to the a priori? The a priori is analytic suggests that the a priori has the character or property of inward necessity. Here we have framed definition in a certain way, where the set of accepted sentences is given in advance as well as complete with an indication of those sentences accepted most firmly.

Quine proposes to reject a synthetic a priori sentence. For him, it actually allows us to peruse the foundations of mathematics as well as the logic of science without encountering extra-logical

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

questions as to the source of validity of our a priori judgments. Moreover, it shows that all metaphysical problems are gratuitous and as a matter of fact the rejection of metaphysics depends on a priori gratuitous metaphysics. Thus, on the three parts of the lecture, the first embraces implicit definition, presenting a method of accepted sentences which ultimate objective is to determine the set of sentences by true definition. In the second part of the lecture, Quine shows how the elementary parts of logic may be made true by convention. He then suggests how the method may be extended to the rest of logic, to mathematics, and beyond. Finally, in the third part of the lecture, Quine raises and answers a question about how much of the body of our belief should accept by convention. Analyticity, for Carnap, is an epistemic notion and hence it concerns the manner of justification of a given belief. Here the justificational structure is constitutive of the belief in question. As a result of that, there can be no question of having a set of beliefs and then overlaying them with this or that epistemic system. Here if a set of beliefs is given, a system of justification is presupposed. Since Quine's method of accepted sentences seems to be about a body of existent belief, there can be no question of where the limits of analyticity ought to lie. Here the normative structure of our language is based on empirical matter. Here one should not bank on accepted sentences, rather one has to look at what sentences justify what other sentences, what sentences may be justified in ways other than by inference.

What language we ought to adopt? Or what the limits of analyticity ought to be? According to Carnap, the issue of how to structure a language is a proposal about what shall be taken as sentences and what the rules of inference shall be. Further Carnap suggests that it would be pragmatically inconvenient to choose a language in which any sizeable portion of the descriptive sentences is determinate. In a sense, it would be more convenient to allow theoretical change within a language than to have the required changes from one language to another. In this regard,

Quine is fully agreed with Carnap. However, Quine goes beyond this. He says that either in our current language or in one that we ought to choose, the analytic will coincide with the deeply entrenched. Why it should correlate with being fully justifiable on the basis of convention alone is a further question. Quine's whole approach here is psychological rather than epistemic. This actually creates a gulf between Carnap and Quine about the perception of analyticity. Carnap here fully banks on epistemic justification whereas Quine fully banks on psychological aspect. We do not intend to say that what Quine asserts has been objectionable, rather we intend to say that it marks a divergence from Carnap. Quine hints that conventionalism is preferable to metaphysical intuition or mystic insight as a source of justification. The debate between Carnap and Quine stands as Quine comes no closer than this to addressing the epistemic core of Carnap's conventionalism. The debate between Carnap and Quine has been sustained even though they were remarkably modest enough during the early stages. At one stage, Quine is championing Carnap's doctrines including those on convention and analyticity. Even we do not find a decisive break even in the lectures on Carnap. The lectures do not contain any decisive refutation of the view that logic is a product of convention.

However, speaking of a contrast between analytic or conventional truth on one hand and non-conventional truth on the other, Quine goes on to say that 'it is less the purpose of the present inquiry to question the validity of this contrast than to question its sense.'<sup>136</sup> It, thus, means that analyticity is asserted without sense or as request for further clarification or as anything in between. Now, if TC is an attack on or a refutation of analyticity or convention, that must come with what is new in TC. What is new in TC is more nearly a request for clarification by Carnap than an attack. The overall theme of the paper TC is based on the perception that logic and

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<sup>136</sup> Quine, W. V. O., "Truth by Convention", in W. V. Quine, *The Ways of Paradox and Other Essays*, op. cit., p. 70. See also O. H. Lee (ed.), *Philosophical Essays for A. N. Whitehead* (New York: Longmans, 1936).

mathematics are true by convention while the physical sciences are not. In this sense, definition creates no truth because they are neither premises, nor even claims of any kind. Accordingly, logic is not true by definition. For Quine, since all contexts of our new word are meaningless to begin with, neither true nor false, we are free to run through the list of each context and pick out as true such ones as we like. Those selected become true by fiat, by linguistic convention, not surely by strict and rigorous definition. For those who would question them we have always the same answer, “you use the word differently.”<sup>137</sup> Quine takes psychological view rather than epistemic underpinning of making logic and mathematics true by convention, and Carnap does the other way round. It may perhaps be the case that Quine did not realize properly how fundamentally his psychologistic view differs from Carnap’s normative epistemology. Carnap while reading notes on TC of Quine met the challenge to distinguish logic and mathematics from physics and botany by drawing the distinction, not at the level of doctrine, but at the level of languages. For Carnap, the language of logic and mathematics is determinate whereas the language of physics and botany is not. Quine of course does not make such distinction because as a relativist his interpretation of language is different from Carnap. As a reductionist, Carnap favored and stick to artificial or logical language; Quine’s understanding of language is no longer artificial in nature. Our perception is that Carnap’s notion of analyticity was itself epistemic; there could be no better way to defend it than to exhibit its epistemic role. Since Carnap’s concept of analyticity and reductionism has been developed and grown up within the realm of classical epistemological womb, Quine denies Carnap’s position. Being a relativist and to some extend physicalist and behaviourist, Quine takes initiatives to free philosophy from the womb of dogmas.

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid., p. 83.

It, thus, seems to us that there underlies a general disagreement between Quine and Carnap over analyticity. It should be kept in mind that Carnap was not the only philosopher to have used the notion of analyticity. Therefore, it should be treated as one sided discussion if Quine disagrees with Carnap alone regarding analyticity. The idea of truth in virtue of meaning or truth by definition is the hallmark of analyticity Carnap like others does share. Quine banks on this perception and expresses his dissatisfaction to Carnap. Quine, being an empiricist, takes empirical attitudes towards meaning if it would be suitable for 'philosophical and scientific purposes'.<sup>138</sup> Quine's general perception is that the idea of meaning cannot simply be taken into account for granted and accordingly used it as a philosophical tool like the proponents of First Philosophy do. Instead, it should be treated as the available for philosophical use only to the extent that *'we are able to make empirical sense of it'*. Quine insists in favour of offering a cognitive account of language which would be purely naturalistic in character and makes no appeal to an unconstructed notion of meaning. Carnap, on the other hand, banks in favour of artificial language instead of natural language while illuminating his perception of analyticity. As a result of that Carnap's idea of analytic-synthetic distinction is straightforward than Quine. Quine from his naturalized epistemological perspective rules out any clear-cut distinction between analytic and synthetic judgments. Quine, thus, rejects any version of analyticity based on stringent philosophical canon. He does not think that the concept of analyticity as developed by the classical epistemologists including Kant has any philosophical significant. He, therefore, rejects the idea that there is a defensible distinction which will play the role that Carnap allotted it. According to Carnap, the analytic-synthetic distinction has a clear epistemological impact which Quine rejects out rightly. For Quine, it has no bearing as far as epistemological significance is concerned. Thus, in a sense Quine rejects the epistemological implications of

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<sup>138</sup> Quine, W. V. O., *Theories and Things*, op. cit., p. 184.

holism as the mark of the *Principle of Tolerance*. Thus, their difference and disagreement about the perception of analyticity and the distinction between analytic and synthetic is fundamental and it has far reaching philosophical implications.

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## CHAPTER FIVE

### ACQUISITION OF LANGUAGE: A DEBATE BETWEEN QUINE AND CHOMSKY

Quine criticizes and rejects the mentalistic interpretation of meaning developed by Noam Chomsky. In this chapter, an attempt would be made to explore the ground of controversy between Quine and Chomsky regarding acquisition of language and other epistemological accounts. Noam Chomsky denies Quine's claim that there persists an asymmetry between under-determination of theory on one hand and indeterminacy of translation on the other hand. According to Chomsky, indeterminacy of translation is primarily associated with epistemology or theory of knowledge. In this regard, there is nothing wrong in assuming that indeterminacy of translation is nothing but a sort of under-determination. Moreover, Chomsky finds indeterminacy uninteresting simply for the fact that here the translator very similar to any scientist goes beyond the data available to them. However, Chomsky fails to realize that Quine's ontological point is the denial of meanings as entities. Besides, he perceives the notion of fact of the matter as an epistemological notion. In this regard, he goes on to say that there is no fact of the matter either to physics or to translation and as a result of that we cannot rule out the possibility of skeptical doubts. Here both manuals and theories are under-determined. As a result of that, both lack a fact of the matter.

In his learned paper 'Quine's Empirical Assumptions', Chomsky goes on to raise a question by saying whether there underlies an asymmetry between physics and translation with regard to under-determination and indeterminacy. Here he intends to say that there is no point of accepting indeterminacy of translation in addition to under-determination theory. According to Eve Gaudet, Chomsky commits a mistake here in rejecting the idea that there is an asymmetry

between the two cases just cited above. The mistake is entrenched in his understanding of ‘the notion of fact of the matter as an epistemological notion and his reading of indeterminacy of translation as an epistemological thesis.’<sup>139</sup> Chomsky, however, does not intend to say that the indeterminacy thesis is false; rather he is deeply concerned about its relevance. For him, this theory is itself uninteresting because it is just the mere replica of the theory of under-determination. Thus, in a sense, it should be comprehended as a redundant theory. Quine, however, does not agree with Chomsky. Quine’s statement about analytical hypotheses is true even though the question has been raised to unearth its important. Now, it is undeniable from Quine’s perspective that if a system of analytic hypothesis in the real sense of the term ‘goes beyond evidence’ then it is possible to conceive alternatives compatible with the evidence very similar to Quine’s ‘genuine hypotheses’ about stimulus meanings and truth-functional connectives. Thus, it may be claimed with sound ground that the situation in the case of ‘common sense knowledge’ is no different from the case of physics. Accordingly, Chomsky inclines to say that physics and translation are on a par. He then concludes by saying that neither translation nor physics in the real sense of the term ‘has a fact of the matter’ in the line of Quine’s perception.

As a firm believer of innate idea, Chomsky certainly would conflict with Quine. Quine is a conceptual relativist. In this regard, Quine differs from Kant as well as from Strawson. Kant talks in favour of a unified conceptual scheme and Strawson followed Kant in this regard. However, Quine thinks the other way round. For Chomsky, Quine’s theory is nothing but a simple version of familiar skeptical arguments that can equally be applied to physics or for that matter to his

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<sup>139</sup> Gaudet, E., *Quine on Meaning: The Indeterminacy of Translation*, op. cit., p. 72.

‘genuine hypotheses’<sup>140</sup>. According to Chomsky, serious hypotheses concerning a native speaker’s knowledge of English or concerning the essential properties of human language, i.e., the innate schematism would determine what counts as linguistic data and what intellectual structures are developed on the basis of these data. It will eventually go beyond the evidence. Otherwise, they would be without interest. On the basis of the background so far discussed Chomsky intends to say that ‘there is no fact of the matter either to physics or to translation’ simply on the grounds that manuals and theories are both under-determined by evidence and thus both go beyond the evidence. This position of Chomsky that goes against Quine would be treated as a mistake. In this regard, Gibson offers us a correct interpretation. According to Gibson, Quine’s understanding of the term ‘fact of the matter’ is primarily naturalistic and physicalistic. Accordingly, when Quine goes on to say that there is a fact of the matter to physics and no fact of the matter to translation, he is thinking about physical facts. Besides, he is talking from *within* an already accepted naturalistic-physicalistic theory.<sup>141</sup> While illuminating Gibson’s rebuttal of Chomsky’s reading, let us review how Gibson describes Quine’s naturalism in *Enlightened Empiricism*. Naturalism has two usages, an affirmative and a negative. In its negative usage, ‘naturalism’ actually means the denial of ‘the first philosophy’, i.e., of classical or traditional epistemology. Quine’s naturalism in its negative sense thus leads us to claim that the project of founding science on a class of non-scientific truths is condemned to failure. This perception of Quine is linked with his holism where it has been claimed that many of the sentences of our scientific theories do not have their own unique content in the true sense of the term. Now, if Quine’s holism is true, then traditional rationalists’ philosophers must abandon their project because they usually deduce all scientific truths from non-scientific a priori truths. In such a case

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<sup>140</sup> Davidson, D. and Hintikka, J., (eds.), *Words and Objections: Essays on the Work of W. V. Quine*, op. cit., p. 66.

<sup>141</sup> Hahn, L. E. and Schilpp, P. A., (eds.), *The Philosophy of W. V. Quine*, op. cit., p. 143.

one has to access the empirical content of theories taken as wholes. It would then be impossible to differentiate between analytic and synthetic judgments. However, empiricists who have defended a traditional epistemology must abandon their project of rational reconstruction of scientific discourse from certain a posteriori non-scientific truths and norms. Even from the doctrinal side of epistemology, the project of deducing scientific knowledge from experience has been unrestrained since Hume. The problem of induction remains even if we could express scientific discourse with regard to observation alone. Empiricist like Carnap from the perspective of conceptual side of epistemology desired to attempt a rational reconstruction or reduction of scientific discourse with regard to observation, logic, and set theory. This is how scientific theory gains clarity. Whether holism within this paradigm can retain its position is a matter of boundless debate. Many would say that holism affects the empiricists' traditional epistemology if we add to holism *a verificationist theory of meaning*. Accordingly, theories must be taken as a whole. They cannot be translated sentence by sentence into the language of observation, logic, and set theory. Thus, for Eve Gaudet, holism informs Quine's argument for naturalism understood in its negative sense, i.e., *as the denial of traditional epistemology*.

However, careful study would reflect that Quine has also used naturalism in an affirmative sense to mean *scientism*. According to Quine, scientism amounts to the claim that it is acceptable for epistemologists to use the findings of science to justify science. By way of approaching this, Quine actually favours his realism which states that "the robust state of mind of the natural scientist who has never felt any qualms beyond the negotiable uncertainties internal to science."<sup>142</sup> In this regard, Eve Gaudet remarks: "if Quine's realism is adopted, the new epistemologist's use of scientific findings to justify science is legitimate, for Quine's realism

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<sup>142</sup> Quine, W. V. O, *Theories and Things*, op. cit., p. 72.

involves the acknowledgement that even skeptical challenges presuppose science itself. Skeptical doubts are themselves scientific doubts. Quine's point here is not to say that the skeptic's appeal to science is illegitimate, but rather that both the skeptic and the epistemologist need to make use of science."<sup>143</sup> Thus, it seems to us that Quine's holism serves to defend the negative usage of 'naturalism'. Of course, one has to work within the framework of a scientific theory, because it is within this theory that reality is identified and described.

Now, let us back to Chomsky's critical outlook of Quine's epistemological reading. Gibson does not intend to say that Chomsky ignores Quine's naturalism completely. Chomsky insists on the negative aspect of naturalism while repudiating the asymmetry between physics and translation. To Chomsky, translation and physics are on a par because both the translator as well as the physicist works within a tentative theory of the world. In physics we may work within the framework of a tentative theory. In fact, Chomsky acknowledges the first aspect of naturalism and in this context; he inclines to say that the translator is working within a theory of the world. But when he denies to physics a fact of the matter Chomsky shows that he misses the second aspect, i.e., positive aspect of Quine's naturalism. Quine's naturalism is a species of realism concerning the idea that our experiences of nature are nothing but experiences of the real. Alternatively, it can be said that Chomsky actually overlooks the fact that Quine's naturalism involves not only the assumption that we are always working within the framework of a particular theory but also that it is within this theory where reality is identified and described. We consider that the ontology of this theory as the actual furniture of the world. According to Eve Gaudet, Chomsky perhaps fails to recognize that Quine's naturalism in some sense or other is deeply involved with the idea "that the theory within which one is working fixes the fact of the

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<sup>143</sup> Gaudet, E., *Quine on Meaning: The Indeterminacy of Translation*, op. cit., p. 75.

matter, fixes the ontology of the moment.”<sup>144</sup> This is the big mistakes, Gaudet opines, committed by Chomsky. Translation always remains indeterminate, whereas physics is not. Chomsky fails to recognize it. Accordingly, it can be said that Chomsky dodged one important aspect of Quine’s naturalism. Chomsky fails to acknowledge the ontological commitment of Quine’s naturalism and without recognizing it; he brings the epistemological issue as prominent. He denies *a fact of the matter* to both physics and translation on the grounds that translation manuals as well as theories are both under-determined by evidence. This position of Chomsky is primarily epistemological in nature. This is vividly reflected when Chomsky attributes Quine by saying that “the assumption that although in physics we may work within the framework of a tentative theory, in studying language (or learning language, or translating, or interpreting that we hear), this is not possible.”<sup>145</sup> Chomsky further contends that there can be no fixed set of analytic hypothesis concerning language in general. In fact, one needs a new set for each language for each speaker of each language. This actually paves the way of denying the universal approach of language and this problem is faced by the linguist. In this regard, Chomsky criticizes Quine on the ground that he (Quine) does not rely on the perception that ‘the physicist is working within the framework of a theory whereas this is not the case for the translator’. While defending on the asymmetric relationship between a physicist and a translator, Quine wrongly presumes, Chomsky opines, the very idea that they do not have the same epistemological resources. This position of Chomsky about Quine is again false according to Gaudet as he thinks that Quine does not repudiate that the translator works within the background of a theory of nature as anticipated by Chomsky. It is indeed reflected in Quine’s reply to Chomsky. Quine says, “Though the linguistics is of course a part of the theory of nature, the indeterminacy of

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>145</sup> Davidson, D. and Hintikka, J., (eds.), *Words and Objections: Essays on the Work of W. V. Quine*, op. cit., pp. 65-66.

translation is not just inherited as a special case of the under-determination of our theory of nature. It is parallel but additional. Thus, adopt for now my fully realistic attitude towards electrons and muons and curved space-time, thus failing in with the current theory of the world despite knowing that it is in principle methodologically under-determined. Consider, from this realistic point of view, the totality of truths of nature, known and unknown, observable and unobservable, past and future. The point about indeterminacy of translation is that it withstands even all this truth, the whole truth about nature.”<sup>146</sup>

The above remarks of Quine clearly suggest that he does not want to deny that a translator works ‘within a theory of nature’. In fact, he intends to say that ‘linguistics is of course a part of the theory of nature’. Of course, a translator does work within our theory of nature, but the very fact is that there is no point in assuming that it is an absolute constraint. It may perhaps be the case that a theory may not be absolute parameter in physics but may be an absolute parameter in translation. According to Quine, if the translator faces indeterminacy additional to under-determination of theory, it is because theory is an absolute parameter in physics, but is not the same in translation. This clearly reflects a failure of parallelism between physics and translation. In this regard, it can be said that there are no objects behind the translator’s data whereas there are objects behind the physicist’s data. This point is very important. A translator translates a script without taking the help from any object and this is unlikely in the case of a physicist. The relevance of ontology may be overlooked or so to speak is indifferent to the choice between behaviourally equivalent translation manuals, but not to the choice between empirically equivalent theories. Thus, there is no point in saying that Quine is wrong for not providing the translator with the framework of a theory of nature. Chomsky seems to think that Quine assumed

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid., p. 303.

that the translator suffers from a lack of epistemological resources, or so to speak, mental resources. This position is again problematic because realistically Quine relies on behaviouristic assumptions rather than mentalist ones.

Chomsky further states that while developing the indeterminacy thesis, Quine sharply distinguishes between the construction of analytic hypotheses on the basis of data and the postulation of ‘stimulus meanings of observation sentences’ on the basis of data. The latter, Quine himself recognizes, involves uncertainty of the normal inductive kind. The same is true, apparently, about the inductive inference involved in translation of sentences containing truth-functional connectives. In such cases, Chomsky opines, induction leads us to ‘genuine hypotheses’ which are sharply distinguished from the ‘analytic hypotheses’ to which reference is made in the discussion of indeterminacy of translation. Hence, it seems that Quine has in mind a distinction between ‘normal induction’ which does not involve serious epistemological problem and ‘hypothesis formation’ or ‘theory construction’ which involves epistemological problem. According to Chomsky, Quine has intended to make such distinction but ended with far less than obvious one. It is not at all clear what Quine is presuming when he passes over the ‘normal uncertainty of induction’ within the realm of radical translation. In this regard, Chomsky says, “It would then be necessary for him to justify the empirical assumption that the mind is natively endowed with the properties that permit “normal induction” to “genuine hypotheses”, but not “theory construction” with some perhaps narrowly constrained class of “analytical hypotheses.”<sup>147</sup>

Thus, Chomsky inclines to say that Quine’s indeterminacy thesis relies on a distinction between two radically different kinds of hypotheses without taking any recourse of empirical evidence. In

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

fact, Quine does not provide empirical evidence for the distinction. Rather he provides arguments, provides his behaviouristic view of linguistic meaning. Quine says that there are no meanings as entities. It is because of the ontological vacuity. For this, a translator needs a radically different kind of hypothesis. Analytic hypotheses are no longer genuine hypotheses according to Quine. It is not because of an epistemological lack in the translator's mind, rather there are no entities for those hypotheses to be right or wrong about, and contrary to what is the case with the physicist's hypotheses. Quine, in contrast to what Chomsky has said, is justified when 'he distinguishes two kinds of hypotheses and thereby sees in translation an indeterminacy additional to under-determination of theory.'<sup>148</sup> According to Chomsky, Quine developed his theory with the background of psychology and stimulus response. As a result of that the theory of indeterminacy suffers from inconceivability. In this regard, he draws some unsubstantiated empirical claim about 'what the mind brings to the problem of acquisition of language' as an innate property. It has, Chomsky opines, historical interest and nothing else. Chomsky further claims that Quine's thesis of indeterminacy is simply a version of familiar skeptical arguments which can be applied in physics as well. However, Gaudet inclines to say that it was a mistake on the part of Chomsky to assess Quine because Quine has adequately justified his position about asymmetric relationship between a physicist and a translator. He repeatedly asserts that there are no meanings as entities. Chomsky, of course, reprimands Quine for not providing empirical evidence for indeterminacy additional to under-determination of theory. Quine has in mind a different objective for not doing it. Quine twigs to a firm empiricist approach to language and in this regard he prefers behaviouristic approach of meaning. Quine in fact intends to say that if we

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<sup>148</sup> Gaudet, E., *Quine on Meaning: The Indeterminacy of Translation*, op. cit., p. 79.

approach language and meaning from a purely empirical perspective, then in such a case we will never be justified 'in relying meanings, or to supposing meanings as entities.'<sup>149</sup>

We think that the whole debate between Chomsky and Quine actually hinges on the very perception of the asymmetric relationship between a physicist and a translator. Chomsky denies Quine's position in this regard. His position is based on the following arguments. First, he asserts that Quine's indeterminacy of translation actually derives from epistemic facts where the translator does not work within the framework of a theory of nature. Here the analytic hypotheses go beyond the data. Secondly, he suggests that Quine's indeterminacy of translation is either a claim about the mind's contribution to the problem of language learning or a version of familiar skeptical arguments. The second point is more important than the first one. Chomsky actually has been a firm believer of innatism and, in this regard, he actually indebted to Descartes. He acknowledged Descartes' contribution of innate ideas. However, Descartes innatism was regarded as the primary source of knowledge whereas Chomsky's innatism is primarily concerned with the acquisition of language. That is why Copper remarked that Descartes innatism is known as *old innatism* whereas Chomsky's innatism has been attributed as *new innatism*. In this regard, Chomsky introduces the mentalistic turn of language. According to Chomsky, every native speaker at the time of his or her birth biologically preoccupied a linguistic organ placed in the left-hemisphere of the brain from where language is spontaneously generated. Chomsky named it as Transformational Generative Grammar (in short TGG). Thus, acquisition of language, for Chomsky, is internal. Chomsky called it I-language. This is where the debate between Quine and Chomsky actually hinges on. However, the proponents of Quine incline to say that Chomsky in fact fails to read Quine properly. He in fact fails to see that

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid., p. 80.

Quine's indeterminacy of translation actually comes from a *lack of reality*. It is the main failure that leads Chomsky to fail to see the asymmetry between indeterminacy of translation and underdetermination of theory. According to Eve Gaudet, 'Gibson perhaps is right in tracing Chomsky's error to his epistemological conception of this issue.'<sup>150</sup>

We think that the impact of analytic-synthetic distinction was not concerned within the classical epistemologists, even its impact is revealed in Chomsky as well. Here let us take a brief reflection of such distinction in the light of Quine and Chomsky. We have already seen that Chomsky differs from Quine on many important philosophical accounts. Quine took the behavioural position as far as the development and acquisition of language whereas Chomsky takes mentalistic interpretation as far as the acquisition of language. For Quine, acquisition of language is primarily external whereas for Chomsky it is primarily internal. Thus, there develops two different types of language, such as, Public language (hence forth PL) and Internal language (hence forth IL). PL draws attention to the fact that someone's knowledge of it is attributed on the basis of public phenomena. A language in this sense is an association of sounds with ideas and understating PL is knowing the association. However, acknowledgement of PL is not in itself a commitment to behaviourism. It does not impede a concern with the hidden, inner mechanisms underlying our linguistic behaviour, i.e., the possession of IL in Chomsky's sense. Here we can refer Putnam's metaphor 'twin-earth' to clarify the distinction between PL and IL. The hypothetical planet, twin-earth, on which all things are exactly as they are here except that the watery-looking liquid in the rain and lakes which people drink is not made of H<sub>2</sub>O. From scientific point of view, this liquid appears to the contrary, is not really water, since their conception of water is of something chemically similar to the 'stuff' we call 'water'. However,

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid., p. 81.

from laymen's perspective, it is quite proper to say 'The water on twin-earth is not made of H<sub>2</sub>O'. From that perspective the liquid is water. Since the ordinary conception is of stuff having same observable role what we call 'water'. Accordingly, one can distinguish the scientific as well as the theoretical perception from the ordinary and observable conception of water. We observe the same in language front as well. Assume that there is on twin-earth a language that appears to be English but which turns out on scientific exploration that would appear different from those occurred in us at first sight. Again here one can presume a psychologist's conception of language which does not suit with IL. Thus, one can distinguish from this the more behaviouristic, folk conception, of course in a different way. Thus, one may anticipate a behaviourist account of language along with the line of Quine. The point, of course, is that if such fairly behaviourist conception of language exists at all, what could possibly be the point of isolating and articulating it if one would not perhaps be the firm believer of behaviourism like Chomsky, Katz and others. The plausible reply perhaps would be the case that there underlies a philosophical motive. The very conception of public language persists under the sphere of folk psychology. Accordingly, when conceptual confusions from language front arises vis-à-vis about meaning, translation, reference, truth, holism, atomism, etc., they arise for that conception of language and attempt to resolve such linguistic muddles by means of perspicuous view of it. Philosophical problems are very much linguistic in nature and by any means of imagination they are no longer scientific in nature. Problems of philosophy appear not because of the fact that we do not know how the mind-brain works; rather we are fallen victim to some linguistic confusion. Language is nothing but just like a tool in the tool box. Ordinary or PL language has versatile uses, multifarious uses and it would be very difficult to tackle ordinary language. Quine knows it and also appreciates it through his principle or theory of indeterminacy of translation.

Indeterminacy is very much there in language in every level and there is no need to block it or criticize it. It is the means of the growth of language. Even there are paradoxes resulting from fallacious reasoning about language as we ordinarily and pre-theoretically conceive of it. One has to have a clear characterization of that conception.

Thus, when we talk into this matter after Quine and Chomsky, we have to keep in mind about the division of language. It is natural to divide the systematization of a PL into two parts, such as, syntax and the other semantics and pragmatics. As per the syntax is concerned the trouble comes from our notion of the rules of language. Rules of language are not sufficiently ties to the facts of linguistic behaviour. Along with Quine's line of thought, we can say that one's expressions of belief form an inextricably interconnected system of sentences evolving under the impact of experience, of course, subject to constraints of conservation and global simplicity. This position goes in favour of Quine's understanding of language in three different ways. Quine's model actually is concerned about sentences but not about propositions. Accordingly, it can be said that certain sentences are revisable in the contexts of their meanings and this sort of revision makes the distinction between analytic and synthetic vulnerable. According to Quine, this is possible because sentences have no individual empirical contents or verification conditions, analyticity, synonymy, etc. Accordingly, sentences cannot be characterized by reference to the empiricist's own conception of meaning, namely, verification. Since empiricist model eschews semantic notions, it means that they play no explanatory role in understanding the evolution of science. Thus, there are some reasons to agree with Quine's skepticism about the notion of analyticity, i.e., truth by virtue of the rules of language, subject to the fact that we constrain our attention to PL. What camp does Quine belong? Does he belong to PL or IL? Quine has been regarded as conceptual relativist. Certainly, he would prefer PL instead of IL or artificial language.

According to Quine, in psychology one may or may not be a behaviourist but in linguistic one has no choice because here each of us learns his language by observing other people's verbal behaviour. We actually depend strictly on explicit behaviour in observable situations. This position of Quine differs from Chomsky. Chomsky classifies two different levels of grammar, such as, deep structure and surface structure. Observable behaviour actually is the surface structure of grammar and it would not be the real structure. The real structure is deep structure where the role of innate idea matters the most. Being a behaviourist, Quine inclines to say that our command of PL fits all external checkpoints where our utterance or our reaction to someone's utterance can be appraised in the light of some shared situations. Our mental life between checkpoints is indifferent to our rating as a matter of language. Therefore, there remains nothing in linguistic meaning then beyond overt behaviour in 'observable circumstances'.<sup>151</sup> In this regard, Quine's position is similar to Wittgenstein's position appeared in his *Blue Book* where Wittgenstein remarks, that in practice if you were asked which phenomenon is the defining criterion and which is a symptom, you would in most general cases were not be in a position to give a reply to the question except by making an arbitrary decision *ad hoc*. Doctors will use the names of diseases without ever deciding which phenomena are to be taken as criteria and which as symptoms. This need not be a deplorable lack of clarity. We do not use language according to strict rules, it has not been taught by means of strict rules either. Quine says, "Perhaps the doctrine of indeterminacy of translation will have little air of paradox for readers familiar with Wittgenstein's latter-day remarks on meaning."<sup>152</sup>

The above observation clearly suggests that Quine is against the mentalist interpretation of language as developed by Chomsky. He does not accept the relevance of IL. Nor does he accept

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<sup>151</sup> Quine, W. V. O., "Indeterminacy of Translation Again", *Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 84 (1987), p. 5.

<sup>152</sup> Quine, W. V. O., *Word and Object*, op. cit., p. 77.

the foundation of semantics based on ideal or artificial language. As a relativist, Quine, unlike Chomsky, Carnap and others, does not accept any stringent rules and principles on the basis of which the workability of language can be evaluated. The most pertinent question that may be taken up whether the notion of 'semantic rule' whose application is indeterminate with respect to a public language, might become objective once we open the door to non-behavioural evidence and turn out attention to hidden mechanisms. Here the response would perhaps be yes. It may be thought in support of the view that the knowledge of some truly inner language, i.e., an IL, is stored in a certain component of the mind/brain and it contains amongst other things various postulates which are transmitted to that area of the brain in which beliefs are stored. At the same time there might be evidence that under certain circumstances certain contents of the language faculty are revised, constituting a change in language. Such changes are pragmatically, but not epistemologically, driven. The result from a practical desire is to achieve an overall simplification in our network of belief-representations. According to Chomsky, the concept of analyticity is deeply rooted and associated with innateness. Quine denies it. He says that we can explain the concept of analyticity in a determinate manner without taking the reference of innateness. For Quine, there is nothing wrong in assuming that an innate might concern contingent matters of fact and as a result of that might be revisable in the light of experience without any meaningful change of language. Moreover, it should be taken into account after Quine that an IL has shown to be pragmatically valuable.

It thus seems to us that the concept of analyticity as developed by classical and traditional epistemologists within the realm of First Philosophy can adequately be retained within the philosophical scheme of Chomsky. This so happens that the concept of analyticity does not bear any sense without preconceiving the notion of innate ideas. Descartes long back had admitted it

and Chomsky again revived it in the twentieth century. Thus, in a sense, Chomsky does not have any debate with the classical epistemologists towards making analytic-synthetic distinction. Quine goes against Chomsky in this regard. Chomsky does not admit innate ideas very similar to Descartes. However, there are some other philosophers, namely, Katz, who besides PL and neural IL, admits language as a *platonian object* deeply associated with inter-related abstract facts. The speakers of such a language have or do possess some intuitive access to some of the facts in that language. In addition, there are more theoretical, linguistic facts which explain the intuitively evident ones. Having said this, we think that Quine's skepticism about the analytic-synthetic distinction is plausible subject to its understanding with regard to the folk conception of language as a claim about PL. It is, however, not justified as a thesis about IL. If our language is taken to be the PL, then there is in principle no way of finding out which systematization is correct. If we renounce behaviourism and in turn allow ourselves to countenance the existence of IL, it is then possible to have an objective sense of analyticity. What then is wrong to proceed with Carnap instead of Quine? We think Quine's objection is not merely to the notion of determinate analyticity, but to the epistemological model, or in short, reductionism. Reductionism states that for each empirical hypothesis there is such a thing as *the set of possible observations that would verify it and the set that would falsify it*. Accordingly, it can be presumed that Quine's holistic alternative appears as a better approach of the evolution and justification of our belief expressions or definitions. Thus, even if one is pursuing the concept of analyticity, there is no need to adopt the philosophical strategy of Carnap, Chomsky and others. Moreover, the new theory of analyticity deeply linked with IL is quite different from the old one. In particular, analytic truths were thought to be obvious, but I-analyticity in line with Chomsky and others will desire erudite techniques to uncover. Therefore, it may be thought that the

concepts of I-analyticity, synonymy, rule of language, truth of meaning, pragmatic question, etc., cannot be presumed to have epistemological implications. Further, it should equally be recorded that the intuitive property of analyticity is simply not the same property as I-analyticity because the former is a participant in the behavioural facts of PL, whereas the latter is an internal, intrinsic, individual, neural characteristic. Accordingly, it would perhaps be the case that the former may be indeterminate and the latter determinate.

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## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

Willard Van Orman Quine has played a crucial role in the realm of philosophy in general and analytic philosophy in particular during the second half of twentieth century. Initially, he was known as a logician but subsequently he had been regarded as a general philosopher and extended himself into the province of logic and language, metaphysics, ontology, epistemology and communication and what not. He has been regarded as a prolific *critique of philosophy*. Even though he began his carrier with logic, but his work in logic was philosophically motivated and gradually focused more and more on serious and much concerned philosophical issues. He sharpened the ontological issues and discussed ontological commitment. Together with Nelson Goodman, he explored the possibility of being a nominalist. However, unlike Goodman, he settled for a platonic realism which eventually took an absorbing new turn towards indeterminacy of reference. The other important dimension of Quine's naturalized epistemology in particular and his main contribution to philosophy in general is *his skeptical standpoint towards meaning and other related notions*, such as, analyticity and modality developed by the proponents of classical and traditional epistemology in the name of **First Philosophy**. His philosophical skepticism grew into a major titivating of previous philosophical views on communication and the relation of language to the world. It was first appeared in "Truth by Convention" in 1936 and after that particularly from 1943 onwards, a number of articles were published and directed in some sense or other against modal notions, such as, possibility and necessity. However, in 1951, Quine actually sketched an alternative view on meaning in "Two

Dogmas of Empiricism” and further extended in his *Word and Object* where Quine criticized modalities into modal contexts.

We think Quine’s main concern, his criticism of the notions of logical necessity and possibility, analyticity and traditional views on meaning remains vibrant. His critical and skeptical position about **First Philosophy**, in fact make philosophy more worthy and interesting in the real sense of the term. He accentuated more on the problem of meaning even in his *Word and Object* and along with other philosophers and linguists; he viewed on *the public nature of language*. We think that Quine’s major philosophical achievement is that he has taken this idea of public nature of language seriously that many philosophers finds it difficult to accept. His main idea *indeterminacy of translation* has widely been discussed and his fundamental ideas concerning the public nature of language has been refined and partly revised in his later writings.

We think that the whole program of Quine’s naturalized epistemology actually hinges on the very perception about the concepts of *semantics and epistemology*. In his *Word and Object*, Quine stressed what we perceive and what we take others to perceive plays a very significant role in *language learning and language use*. The problem with **First Philosophy** is that it admits non-naturalized epistemological contents or backed up by some philosophical dogmas based on stringent rules and principle. Quine’s philosophical gravity actually hinges on his very perception of naturalized epistemology. Quine’s epistemology is naturalistic in the sense that it contains natural science based on empirical psychology. It would be a sort of epistemology that provides an account of the evidential bases of natural science including empirical psychology. In his *Word and Object*, Quine endeavored to do this in terms of **stimulus and response** which are empirically but not publicly accessible. Quine applies this in language learning and he contended that language must be accessible to the members of the community in their daily lives. *From*

*Stimulus to Science* (1995), Quine has sought to find out a way of dealing with what others perceive without begging the questions of meaning and translation. This philosophical enterprise involves the whole range of Quine's philosophical insights, his views on epistemology and ontology, on causality, natural kinds, time, space and individualism. In a nutshell, it can be said that Quine has created a new way of looking at these basic issues of philosophy by introducing the philosophically forceful theory in the name of naturalized epistemology which eventually ventured and created various others integrated philosophical interpretations for the benefit of the new beginners. Through his theory of naturalized epistemology and indeterminacy of translation manuals, Quine offered us a transformed philosophical landscape for the forthcoming generations of philosophers to explore. We think that Quine's concept of naturalized epistemology is integrated with various others philosophical insights, such as, the analytic-synthetic distinction along with the related notions including verificationism, holism, stimulus meaning, observation sentences, translation manuals, ontological commitment, indeterminacy of reference, truth, realism, physicalism, classes and grammar.

We think that Quine's naturalized epistemology appears as a revolt against traditional epistemology or what may be termed as **First Philosophy**. What then is wrong with First Philosophy? Quine's simplistic reply is that First Philosophy or classical epistemology is guided by philosophical dogmas. What then is wrong with philosophical dogmas? Quine's replay is that such philosophical dogmas do not bear any sense within the realm of public or natural language. Philosophical dogmas can be found relevant to a certain context only within the straight jacket of logical or artificial language. It would vitiate the dimensional functions of language. His philosophical program in the name of naturalism is based on his rejection of any form of knowledge other than ordinary knowledge *vividly manifested in common sense and in science*,

*i.e., in psychology, economics, sociology and history.* Thus, by the term science Quine means natural science. In this sense Quine's naturalism would be treated as a replica of empiricism. Quine's naturalism does not allow any philosophical decision based on a distinctively philosophical standpoint that would eventually allow philosophical reflection to prescribe standards as a whole. That was the main reason of Quine's revolt against classical epistemologists, particularly, Kant and Carnap and mentalist like Chomsky and his followers. Kant's position of analyticity was problematic to Quine because it is based on philosophical dogma or stringent rules. The sanctity of Kant's analytic and synthetic distinction eventually rested on the clarification of the meaning of language. When it was said that in the case of analytic statement, the predicate concept is contained, overtly or covertly, in the subject concept (for example, all bachelors are unmarried), it is actually known just by proper analyses of the meaning of the terms as used as subject and predicate in a subject-predicate proposition. Quine then claims that such stringent dogma does not make any sense within the realm of public or natural language having evaluative epistemological insight or language dealing with psychological contents as well as stimulus responses. The analytic-synthetic distinction thus appears as a dogma that can only be retained on the basis of so many stringent and inviolable articulated rules and presuppositions. This cannot be accepted when we are talking in favour of public language and also believe in conceptual relativism within the paradigm of natural science and common sense. Quine's position in this regard is very simple and clear. He finds philosophical scope of criticizing Kant because his understanding of naturalism actually allows him to do it. For him, naturalism in the real sense of the term can be comprehended within the sphere of science itself. His understanding of naturalism in the real sense of the term can be recognized within the womb of natural science. As a result of that there is no place for prior

philosophy. Reality cannot be identified apart from natural science. Thus, there is no theory distinct from science and naturalism in Quine's sense that must reflect 'science from the womb of science'.

Quine was equally vocal against Carnap as well. He in this regard says that out of two dogmas of empiricism, the second dogma was created by Carnap. Carnap was a radical reductionist. He drew logical conclusion on the basis of artificial language based on logical canons, forms and structure. Of course, by way of criticizing Carnap's reductionism, Quine equally criticizes all other reductionists. The problem with reductionism is that it anticipated the theory of knowledge on the basis of some uniform and universal standards and as a result of that *it has transcended the realm of natural science or in short naturalism*. Carnap while developing his reductionism clearly rejects the idea that philosophy gives us knowledge of the world; the philosopher's activity is higher-order. Quine, by contrast, is concerned with the most general features of the world. For Quine, in Neurath words, *we are like sailors who must rebuild their boat on the open sea*. Reductionism is functioning on the basis of external standpoint. As a result of that, it would overlook or bypass the crucial philosophical standards of clarity, of evidence, and of justification and interpretation available in natural sciences. He does not think that philosophy consists of attempting to solve eternal and unchanging problems as it was reflected in the case of First Philosophy and for which analysts and reductionists including Kant and Carnap respectively were responsible. Rather, he favours the very idea that the problems of philosophy are *historically conditioned* which can be solved just by looking at our common sense backed up by natural sciences. In this regard, we may reckon Quine as a radical empiricist in the sense that like the empiricists of the past he acknowledged common sense as the mark of empiricism and he added more with that by incorporating the relevance of natural science with common sense.

We think that Quine's debate against Chomsky is philosophically revolutionary in a different sense. Chomsky has not been treated as the proponent of First Philosophy by any means. Nor even we can say that he is an epistemologist in the real sense of the term. Chomsky is a mentalist who gives a different interpretation of language. In this regard, he is deviated from semantics and pragmatics. It should be kept in mind that the linguistic revolution of twentieth century was begun with the appearance of semantics followed by pragmatics. These two schools of philosophy were mainly responsible for the so-called linguistic revolution. Each of these school used language from external perspective to know about reality or ontology. Chomsky offered us a different interpretation of language what he termed it as internal language, popularly known as I-language. According to Chomsky, language is internal and the primary function of language is internal but not external. In this regard, Chomsky brings the second linguistic revolution in philosophy by offering us an internal application of language. While in doing so, Chomsky acknowledged Descartes innate idea and accordingly affirmed its relevance in acquisition of language. This may be treated another dogma after Quine. Quine, of course, considers the acknowledgement of innate idea as a philosophical dogma or philosophical standard without which acquisition of language is not possible. We do believe that Quine's debate with Chomsky is two-fold. First, for Chomsky acquisition of language is purely internal creation based on internal and cognitive grammar what Chomsky termed as **Transformational Generative Grammar** whereas for Quine, acquisition of language is external and behaviouristic in nature. Secondly, as a believer of innate idea, Chomsky has a different interpretation of the concept of analyticity and in this regard his perception would be in congruence with the classical epistemologists which Quine does not accept. Considering the philosophical debates between Quine with Kant, Carnap, Chomsky and others, many would charge *Quine as a negative*

*philosopher*. We do not think so. In our sense, such charge actually developed out of philosophical mistake because it would arise from a failure to recognize how systematic a thinker Quine actually is. We sense and read Quine as a genuine and rare philosophical critique. In most general cases, his philosophical theories appeared and developed as the criticism of other well established philosophical theories. His very idea of naturalism or naturalized epistemology is a case in point. While developing his naturalized epistemology, Quine actually offers us two philosophical projects, such as, *epistemological and metaphysical*, more in a constructive outlook rather than a negative outlook. He was very much clear that linguistic concepts do not have any epistemological bearings in the real sense of the term. Even Quine anticipates various degrees of epistemology. In this regard, he acknowledges *normative epistemology* which perhaps would be relevant in naturalized epistemology in a loose sense of the term. He completely denies the concept of meaning developed with regard to definitions; instead he acknowledges the same with regard to *various contexts*. He says that the concept of meaning is determined with regard to definitions does not bear any sense and we have no need for it.

In short, it can be said that Quine's naturalized epistemology voices against any sort of *philosophical standard* based on external rules and principles. Even Quine's denial of a distinction, we do reckon, between the a priori and the a posteriori is intimately linked with his attitudes towards *analytic-synthetic distinction*. He thinks that such distinction perhaps might be worthy to the classical analysts, but it does not serve any philosophical work. He denied Carnap on that front as well. He talks in favour of *seamlessness of knowledge* which he thinks science and common sense can adequately offer. He denies any sort of external bondage in philosophy; rather he claims that *philosophy seeks to understand our theory from within*. Accordingly, he inclines to say that there is no a priori part which can be drawn upon prior to experience and

prior to natural science. This philosophical position goes against naturalized epistemology. Quine voices in favour of physicist's knowledge just like 'there is a table in front of me'. If this would be the case while acquiring knowledge, then it would be difficult to imagine a priori knowledge in the real sense of the term. As Quine conceives knowledge as seamless, unified, and continuous, science, in his view, is continuous with common sense. Knowledge has to be maximized with regard to clarity and objectivity and in this regard Quine banks on to 'purify the language of science'. Quine has twined common sense experience with science as even though he believes that experience is worthy for philosophical and scientific clarification and analysis, but still it is ill-suited for use as an instrument of philosophical clarification and analysis. Thus, even though in some sense or other Quine has been recognized as an empiricist but he should be treated as a radical empiricist by way of twining common sense experience with science. Quine was vocal against classical epistemologists simply because he thought that they used so many philosophical concepts, such as, a priori, analyticity, reductionism, innate idea etc., which are not sufficiently clear and precise in the desired sense.

We think it would be wrong to treat Quine as a proponent of disparaging critique. He does not claim that terms such as 'means' or 'understand' as used by classical epistemologists are senseless, nor does he intend to say that they should be wholly banished from the language, rather he inclines to say that there is no reason to insist on high standards *of clarity and precision*. They must be accepted for philosophical and scientific purposes. They would be accepted if they fulfill the standards of clarity, otherwise he is willing to dismiss these terms. He finds fall short of those terms used for making distinction between analytic and synthetic, to explain the concept of analyticity, to explain the concept of internal grammar and above all to explain the concept of reductionism. The other distinctive aspect of Quine's theory of meaning is

that he accentuates more on sensory stimulation and the physical forces which impinge sensory surfaces and thereby stimulating our sensory nerves. This position becomes him a behaviourist and physicalist as well. Thus, Quine designs his naturalism is a 'finding of natural science itself where our information about the world comes only through impacts on our sensory receptors.' This position of Quine again reaffirms his empirical standpoint. There are some observation sentences which are directly correlated with sensory stimulations. For Quine, science is 'refined common sense' and hence is an extension of common sense. It is justified by the fundamental fact that it is only through the impact of energy on our sensory surfaces, and consequent stimulations, of our sensory nerves, that we find out anything about the world. Thus, for Quine, 'our theory' or 'our system of the world' is based on our 'knowledge as something public', not merely 'public in principle', but actually accessible as well as sharable. Since all knowledge must be thought of linguistic, our theory of the world must be embodied in language. Accordingly, an acquisition of one goes hand-in-hand with an acquisition of the other. In this regard, Quine differs from Chomsky. For Quine, a child makes primitive vocal responses to stimulation, being encouraged in some responses and discouraged in others. In this process, the full catalogue of sophisticated language gradually emerges as this process continues. For Quine, it is possible to give a naturalistic account of this process and there is no need for granted ideas such as meaning and understanding. Chomsky thought the other way round. For Chomsky, acquisition of language is completely internal. As per as acquisition of language is concerned there is a continuous process of internalization of language. The debate stands because unlike Chomsky, Quine takes the behaviourist account of language.

Quine equally voices about the cognitive account of language. For Quine, there is to the meaning of cognitive language and to the knowledge which is embodied in that language. In this regard,

Quine inclines to say that ‘we enable us to see whatever there is to see about the evidence relation, i.e., the relation borne by theory to the observations that support it.’ Such position bears the sense of cognitive language. Interestingly Quine also talks of metaphysics. His celebrated article: ‘What There Is’ actually represents the ontology of Quine. The method of Quine’s metaphysics is primarily clarification and simplification of our theory of the world. Our theory as thus clarified tells us what it is when we are really committed to believing. Quine, of course, does not insist that there is a metaphysical source of knowledge distinct from what the natural science relies upon. Metaphysics in Quine’s sense is not a rival to the science. Metaphysics, for Quine, is required at making theory safe for the acquisition of logic. It would further benefits to have the clarity and prosperity of the syntax of logic. Quine, thus, does not renounce metaphysics, nor does it embrace it in the traditional sense, rather he reinterprets it, naturalizes it, for making it responsible to the idea of the best language for accommodation our natural science. His understanding of ‘our science’ is just what we take ourselves to know about the world, which enhances its objectivity, clarity, simplicity and fruitfulness. It would be a process of refinement through language, a further way of refining and improving our knowledge. Following Hylton, it can be said that ‘there is thus every reason that our knowledge, as improved in this way, gives us the best available picture of reality’.

We think that Quine’s notion *of the matter of fact* is not clear in Quine’s texts. Apart from some unequivocal claims to the effect that the notion is ontological, physicalistic and naturalistic, Quine is not sufficient to give a clear cut picture to his readers. Therefore, in order to grasp the notion of fact of the matter, readers have to make multiple links with the particularities of Quine’s position on physicalism, ontology, and naturalism. Besides, Quine also insists on talking of factuality and fact of the matter and also talking about extra-linguistic reality in terms of

objects. We think Quine conceives factuality and truth are relative to a theory and his readers might be wondering to extract the difference between ascriptions of truth and ascriptions of factuality. We also observe after Quine various formulations of his theory of indeterminacy of translation and we do believe that such variations should not be treated as substantive because within these variations, the core thesis remains intact. It seems to us that Quine's argumentation about naturalized epistemology actually moved on from an insistence on physicalism to an insistence on behaviourism. This is indeed a theoretical and textual evolution and argumentation that has been developed by Quine. Of course, it might be the case that Quine's argumentation for indeterminacy of translation changed at times in regard to the importance it assigned to physicalism, his behaviourism, but such change in argumentation should not be treated as a far-reaching change. Is Quine a behaviourist? Of course, it would be the case that Quine initially does not bank on behaviourism; rather it was part of the argumentation from the beginning. Even though Quine does not fully acknowledge behaviourism initially, but it can be said such approach was the source of the indeterminacy. Alternatively, it can be said that Quine's source of indeterminacy was behaviourism. If it would indeed be the case, why it does not treat as important in Quine's philosophy? This change is not drastic one because it is supposed to be a change in the arguments for the thesis, but it is not at all associated with the content of the thesis.

Quine elsewhere has claimed that his notion of naturalized epistemology is physicalistic, ontological and naturalistic, but one has to have a deep understanding of his positions on physicalism, ontological and naturalism in order to apprehend the insight of Quine. Ironically many critics and commentators knowingly or unknowingly overlooked such concepts. For example, according to Gibson, Quine's notion of fact of the matter has been overlooked by Chomsky and Rorty. One must appreciate the fact that Quine's naturalism involves a *robust*

*realism*. We think that in his treatment of the notion of fact of the matter, Quine actually has left to the reader the task of making the links *with physicalism, ontology, naturalism and realism*. This is indeed a huge responsibility to the commentators for understanding Quine's naturalized epistemology properly. The other knotty issue in Quine's naturalized epistemology is associated with the confusion between indeterminacy of translation and its asymmetry with underdetermination. We think, Quine invokes physicalism in his defense of indeterminacy, but at the end he acknowledged that physicalism is in fact irrelevant to this argumentation. Here he claims that instead of physicalism, linguistic behaviourism avails to entail indeterminacy of translation. Thus, it would be really difficult to treat Quine as a consistent behaviourist. He may perhaps be treated as qua-behaviourist or contingent behaviourist according to me. This position should not be conceived undesirable in Quine because he always invokes relativist standpoint. He has been treated as conceptual relativist.

As per as epistemological relevance is concerned, again we have noted various philosophical position. Unquestionably, a serious confusion has been raised over asymmetry between the standpoint of physicalism and naturalism. We do not rule out the epistemological relevance in Quine's thesis. Indeed, Quine has epistemological reasons for adopting the ontological position that the indeterminacy of translation thesis constitutes. Thus, even if it would be treated as a mistake to take the content of the indeterminacy thesis as being epistemological, philosophers such as Noam Chomsky and Richard Rorty, and may be to some extent Dagfinn Follesdal, are not wrong in anticipating that certain epistemological considerations are relevant to this issue. We think that Quine's arguments for indeterminacy are of an epistemological nature. This is so because at times, he invokes the epistemological data available for semantics. Even closer inspection would reveal it very well that at some passage in Quine's writings where he shields

indeterminacy of translation shows that the text can easily lead readers to think that the issue is very much epistemological. Having said this, with regard to expressions, such as, justification, ground, evidence, which are very much epistemic in nature, the readers may easily be led to think that Quine's indeterminacy of translation expresses an epistemological lack rather than an ontological one. This position of Quine offers a herculean task to Quinean readers. Quine's 'Epistemology Naturalized' actually offers little clue about what Quine has in mind. The article rather put emphasizes more on the 'verification theory of meaning'.

We think that Quine's theory of indeterminacy of translation and under-determination of theory are equally attractive to both scientists as well as philosophers. Under-determination of theory should matter to any philosophers or scientists who are interested in the link between evidence and theory, the links between observation and theory. Of course, we have different perception as well regarding the same. Some would say that Quine's indeterminacy of translation has a more limited interest and it matters only those philosophers and scientists who are particularly interested in meaning. We have noted after Quine that indeterminacy of translation appears in the context of the thought experiment of radical translation and against the reification of meanings. Even Quine points out that field linguist or broad semantic are not interested in translation rather in interpretation. According to Quine, translation is not the objective of field linguist. Rather a field linguist is more interested towards implementing fluent dialogue and successful negotiation with the natives. His understanding is interpretation which is broader than translation. Donald Davidson appreciates interpretation than translation. Translation is narrower than interpretation to extract the inner meaning of the sentence. In this spirit Quine goes on to say that indeterminacy does not appear in practice. It would equally be true even in the case of radical translation. Rather indeterminacy of translation concerns the inter-linguistic case and is

interesting basically in the context of the project of replacing First Philosophy known as traditional or classical epistemology. We do reckon that Quine's indeterminacy of translation is based on translational reduction of knowledge to the language of observation by a naturalized epistemology where we can continue to talk about meanings. Following Eve Gaudet, it may be concluded that 'indeterminacy of translation has an interest that is limited to philosophical and scientific discussions about meaning'. Having said this, there may have another consideration through which indeterminacy of translation should interest even the semantic. Moreover, Quine's indeterminacy of translation shows us that we cannot tell what people mean independently of a chosen translation manual. This does not hamper the progress of translation. Translation is fine and should go. The very insight of Quine's indeterminacy of translation is that it tells us that what people mean is not something, that it is not an object in our world. All we have access to be what people actually say. Thus, within the realm of translation manuals, combination happens. However, it might not be as deep as we ordinarily have anticipated. There is no sense to the question of the quality of communication over and above overt behaviour. In this context Quine says, "Who is to say to what degree we talk past one another between checkpoints?"<sup>153</sup> Quine's indeterminacy of translation affirms the impossibility of individuating not only meanings, but also any other kind of intensional entities or mental contents. Here the ordinary conception of the mind itself is importantly affected.

We think that Quine's naturalized epistemology addresses Quine as *naturalist*, *physicalist*, and *an empiricist*. As a naturalist, (i) Quine accepts there is no successful first philosophy, and (ii) it is up to science to tell us what there is (ontology) and how we know what there is (epistemology). As a physicalist, (i) Quine rejects mentalistic semantics in the context of

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<sup>153</sup> Hahn, L. E. and Schilpp, P. A., (eds.), *The Philosophy of W. V. Quine*, op. cit., p. 75.

philosophy of language, (ii) Quine denies mind-body dualism in the context of philosophy of mind, and (iii) Quine accepts ontological physicalism in the context of general ontology. And as an empiricist Quine admits two cardinal tenets of empiricism such as (i) whatever evidence there is for science is sensory evidence, and (ii) all inculcation of meanings of words must rest ultimately on sensory evidence. Thus, in a nutshell, it can be said that Quine's acceptance of *physicalist ontology and an empiricist epistemology* is based on scientific findings. To sum it up in a few words, Quine's systematic philosophy amounts to an attempt to elaborate a thoroughgoing and uncompromisingly naturalistic account of both the world and our knowledge of it. Moreover, his naturalism paves the way of **indeterminacy of translation** what Quine attributed as *radical translation*. Putting everything into perspective, we can understand Quine as a *fallibilist* as even though he advocates naturalized epistemology which is based on science, but at the same time he recognizes that even science changes over time and that someday science could conceivably withdraw its support for physicalism and/or empiricism. Thus, we think that Quine's commitments to physicalism and empiricism are firm but tentative.<sup>154</sup>

But before concluding the thesis, I do feel privilege to response some of the questions raised by scholars in the **Pre-Submission Seminar Presentation**. I salute to my beloved teachers for their worthy and valuable comments. The first question that has been raised is: Whether Quine develops a new foundationalism towards developing Naturalized Epistemology? Undoubtedly, Quine's naturalized epistemology has revolted against classical or traditional epistemology. For Quine, the problem with classical or traditional epistemology is that it is functioning under epistemic dogmas or foundation. Quine with the help of his proposal **Naturalized Epistemology** attempts to show the limitations and problems of classical epistemology in claiming knowledge

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<sup>154</sup> See Gibson, Roger F. (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Quine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 9.

in various sphere of epistemic dimension. Putting everything into perspective, we can say that Quine's naturalized epistemology may be treated as new form of epistemology or modified version of traditional epistemology which may be treated as fruitful within the sphere of commonsense and natural sciences. Therefore, we may be cautious of conceiving Quine's naturalized epistemology as the new foundationalism of epistemology *per se*. Rather, we find comfortable to conceive Quine's *naturalized epistemology* as a revised version of classical or traditional epistemology which eventually helps classical or traditional epistemology to coup up with the new epistemic needs and demands.

The second question raised is: Whether Quine's naturalized epistemology has a simile with Wittgenstein philosophical discourse? Precisely speaking, Wittgenstein is a focal linguistic philosopher who gives less emphasis on epistemic inquiry. On the other hand Quine's naturalized epistemology deals with issues which are predominantly epistemological in nature. Wittgenstein was a linguistic philosopher and as a linguistic philosopher he is most concerned about the very nature of language because he uses language as a philosophical method. Quine is not concerned about the method of language; rather he is concerned about the acquisition of language and the functional aspect of language. In short, we can say unlike Wittgenstein the epistemic inquiry is more prominent for Quine's philosophy.

The third question is: What are the constituents of science according to Quine? The term '**science**' Quine applies broadly. Quine referring the term *science* not only to the 'hard' or natural sciences, but also psychology, economics, sociology, history, and even other descriptive disciplines. By the term *science* Quine does not mean *philosophy of science* rather a set of reflections on the nature of science within the same empirical spirit that animates scientific inquiry. He conceives science from within the resources of science itself with the perception of

epistemological dimension and ontological dimension. His naturalized epistemology consists of his attempt to provide an improved scientific explanation of how we have developed elaborate scientific theories on the basis of sensory input. In this regard he puts emphasis on the explanatory power of empirical science.

It is important in understanding Quine to appreciate that he takes naturalism in a very serious and important way. The world of science and the world of commonsense have widely been accepted by Quine's naturalism. Quine also claims that naturalism based on science. Quine rejects the idea that there is a fundamental epistemological distinction, which Quine calls his *naturalism*. Even by *naturalism* Quine mean the denial of a first philosophy, i.e., classical or traditional epistemology. However, Quine does not repudiate epistemology altogether. There remains naturalized epistemology, i.e., *the scientific study of man's acquisition of science*. Quine claims that knowledge, mind and meaning belong to the same world. Equally, they are to be studied in the same empirical spirit that animates natural science. That is why, in Quine's epistemology there is no room for a prior philosophy. He also seems to conceive that natural science as an inquiry into reality. In other words, in Quine's thought there can be no sharp distinction between *science and philosophy or science and epistemology*. Thus, philosophy and science are continuous with one another because 'a scientist is a man who uses words and a philosopher is a man who talks about such words'. For Quine, science and philosophy of science must be in same conceptual scheme. Alternatively, science and philosophy are not mutually exclusive fields. Thus in a nutshell, it can be said that the ultimate aim of Quine's work in 20<sup>th</sup> century scientific philosophy is the emphasis on knowledge and its objects as the primary concern of philosophy is an emphasis on the 'True'. This is an emphasis on science, particularly on natural sciences. The important feature of scientific philosophy is to take natural sciences as paradigmatic of all

knowledge. Accordingly, Quine claims that ‘epistemology is concerned with the foundation of science.’

Finally, we do believe that Quine’s theory of naturalized epistemology is still worthy of philosophical consideration. Quine’s skeptical position appears not as a revolt to dismantle the well-known philosophical theories developed under the womb of **First Philosophy**; rather it should be appreciated as a constructive approach towards revisiting these theories in the contexts of recent philosophical development. In our sense Quine’s skeptical of traditional epistemology should not be counted as an alternative approach to philosophy, rather it should be treated as a viable means of revisiting the targeting theories. In most general cases, Quine is sufficient enough to defend himself towards his own reservation about these theories. Putting everything into perspective, we would like to conclude that Quine’s naturalized epistemology might be considered as a constructive philosophical theory through which theories developed under the head First Philosophy can be revisited and linked with the modern development of philosophy of language.

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#### **OTHER RELATED ENTRIES**

analytic-synthetic distinction, a priori justification and knowledge, epistemology: naturalism in, logic: second-order and higher-order, logic and ontology, naturalism, ontological commitment, Quine, Willard van Orman: New Foundations, anomalous monism, underdetermination, of scientific theories, metaphysics, Wittgenstein, Ludwig

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# PUBLICATIONS

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**Sabitri Devi**

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## Quine on Indeterminacy of Radical Translation

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*Hasen Ali Ahmed*

### **Abstract**

The strategy of this paper is to examine after Quine what the indeterminacy of translation amounts to; in what sense indeterminacy of translation will take up indeterminacy of reference; whether indeterminacy of translation worthy of philosophical inquiry. In the history of linguistic philosophy Quine occupies a controversial position. In one sense he denies Kantian position of analytic-synthetic distinction; in another sense he differs from Strawson by advocating conceptual relativism and thirdly and more importantly, he equally differs from Noam Chomsky by advocating linguistic behaviourism. Radical translation in itself goes against Chomsky's I-Language. Radical translation is a systematic method of translating the language of a group of people where the linguist has no prior contact with the language, nor with anyone who has any knowledge of it. Quine terms his concept of radical translation as 'indeterminacy of radical translation', because here two linguists independently engaged in radical translation might come up with different and irreconcilable translation manuals each of which according to Quine would be successful. The question that needs to be taken care of: In what sense two irreconcilable translation manuals would be successful? In this regard Quine develops two doctrines of which one concerns the translation of complete sentences and the other concerns not the translation of sentences but rather of parts of sentences. As far as the first doctrine is

concerned two translation manuals even though may give translation of given a sentence non-equivalently, but each would be fully acceptable. This brings the relevance of conceptual relativity of Quine. The other doctrine gives due attention to the parts of language where two fully acceptable translations may give different translations of sub-sentential parts of language and where translation is associated with refereeing expression what has been philosophically termed as 'indeterminacy of reference'. Even though Quine was non-committal about 'indeterminacy of reference' and stick to the term 'indeterminacy', however later on he occasionally uses the term 'holophrastic indeterminacy'. This paper will address the concept of holophrastic indeterminacy of translation and its significance in the domain of philosophy of language. We think all these issues have been the subject of great controversy and further attention deserves worthy of philosophy.

What is indeterminacy of translation? What does it mean? Why is it called radical? How does a translation manual successful within the horizon of indeterminacy? A translation is indeterminate if it is relative and subjective in nature, where the translator does not acquire any prior knowledge, information regarding the language he has translated. It has been attributed as radical because even though such translation differs from other translation but this does not vitiate the acceptability of translation. Every translation even if indeterminate in the true sense of the term would be acceptable and hence radical according to Quine. Thus, it can be said that a translation manual would be successful if it translates any sentence of the one language by a synonymous sentence of the other. Quine, however, expresses his reservation regarding the term 'synonymous'. As a conceptual relativist, Quine hesitates in presupposing the relevance of synonymy in successful translation manual. Instead of this, he perhaps would prefer manual's efficacy in facilitating 'fluent dialogue and successful negotiation'<sup>1</sup> with the speakers of the translated language. Quine says, "The practical purpose of such a manual would be inculcation in us of fluency and effectiveness in the native language...I picture the whole enterprise as directed to the holistic objective of communication."<sup>2</sup> In these sense incompatible translation manuals arising out of different linguists would equally be successful.

I think while developing successful translation manuals, Quine actually boils down two important philosophical positions. In one sense,

he boils down the theory of unified core of human thinking as expounded by Strawson. According to Strawson every individual possesses a unified conceptual scheme through which successful communication between the speaker as well as the hearers is made possible. Quine thinks the other way round. He denies Strawson by advocating conceptual relativity. Secondly, he denies Chomsky. According to Chomsky acquisition of language is mental, innate and hence biological in nature. He claims that every normal native speaker at the time of his or her birth innately possessed a linguistic organ placed in the left hemisphere of the brain from where language through **Transformational Generative Grammar (TGG)** is spontaneously generated. Thus, for Chomsky acquisition of language is mental, not physical. Contrary to this, Quine thinks that acquisition of language is not mental or internal as Chomsky presupposed, rather one can acquire and develop language through behavioural process and manual efficacy is the outcome of behavioural contribution, nothing else. Quine says, "Each of us learns his language by observing other people's verbal behaviour and having his own faltering verbal behaviour observed and reinforced or corrected by others."<sup>3</sup>

The question then is: Does indeterminacy of translation threaten the practice of translation? Quine does not think so. For him indeterminacy of translation does not pose any threat to the translation, nor can it be said problematic and paradoxical in nature. What Quine insists here is that translation is made possible in more than one ways and it would perhaps be the case that one translator would reject the other's translation of a given sentence.<sup>4</sup> If we have two translation manuals, we employ them alternatively, translating one sentence by one manual, then the next sentence by other manual, the next by the first, and so on. However, if the alternative use of translation manuals destroys our fluent interaction with the speaker of the target language, then in such as situation the two manuals count as different and incompatible.

The question then is: whether indeterminacy of translation is an ontological matter or an epistemological matter? To make this point clear let us know the very meaning of the Quinian term 'indeterminacy'. According to Quine indeterminacy is the claim that *there is nothing to discover*. In this sense Quine conceives indeterminacy of translation as an ontological matter. However, some commentators have interpreted indeterminacy epistemologically. For them as there is a uniquely correct translation as Quine suggests, but our evidences do not uniquely

determine a single theory of the world and hence do not suffice to determine it uniquely. Chomsky says, "...serious hypothesis concerning a native speaker's knowledge of English...will 'go beyond the evidence'"<sup>5</sup>. Chomsky notes that the indeterminacy conjecture is not that two manuals of translation may each be compatible with the available evidence; rather each may be compatible with all of the facts about the world. Quine from the realistic point of view replies Chomsky by saying that where indeterminacy applies, there is no fact of the matter even to within the acknowledged under-determination of a theory of nature.<sup>6</sup> In the same manner Quine again repeats the point by saying that there is "no fact of the matter" as to which translation manual is correct. He goes on to say, "The intended notion of fact of the matter is not transcendental or yet epistemological...it is ontological, a question of reality, and to be taken naturalistically within our system of the world."<sup>7</sup>

The question then is: If indeterminacy of translation is not an epistemological matter, then why does Quine discuss it in terms of linguistic evidence or data? Indeed, Quine often talks about the linguist's evidence or data. Even in his *Word and Object*<sup>8</sup> Quine speaks of 'the objective data and of possible data and methods'. Likewise in his *Pursuit of Truth*<sup>9</sup>, Quine remarks that 'our only data are native utterances and their outwardly observable sentences'. Even though Quine talks about linguistic data on the construction of a translation manual, but his point is not merely rhetorical. However, by saying so, Quine has intended to claim that the whole truth about the world would not suffice to settle the issue. This is an ontological question, but not an epistemological one. But then what counts as a 'truth about the world' here? Quine answers by saying that it would be facts about the dispositions of the speakers of the language which correlate their observable behaviour with observable circumstances. In this sense mutually incompatible manuals of translation conform to all the same overall states of nature.

**Indeterminacy of reference** There are a good numbers of linguistic philosophers who adhere to the view that the fundamental relation between language and the world is referential relation. For them language matters to philosophy because language refers something extra-linguistically and the meaning of the sentence is determined on the basis of what the sentence refers to, i.e. the referential connection constitutes the meaning of the sentence under consideration. Quine, however, thinks the other way round. According to Quine the fundamental relation

between language and the world is *not referential relation*; it is not a relation between parts of language and objects, rather it is a kind of relation *between sentences and complete sensory stimulations*. According to Quine any sentence get its meaning simply from the relation to sensory stimulation what he terms as '**photo-observation sentence**' where there is no point of ontological claims. Reference, Quine opines, is more complex than going on that level. Unlike sensory stimulations, reference requires pronouns, plural endings, copulas of identity and of predication, the contrast between singular and general term and above all in the case of reference the observation sentences become part of ideal language, a more sophisticated theory that incorporates identity, plurals, and so on.

According to Quine two sorts of factors are appropriate to the correct use of language and thus to meaning. First, links between sentence and sensory stimulation and second, the sorts of links among sentences indicated in the paragraph. Both of these sorts of factors deal with sentences. Here reference would be indeterminate because the semantic account of sub-sentential units is not basic. It is derivative upon the semantic account of complete sentence. Since it the sub-sentential parts of language that refer, reference is derivative upon the meaning of sentence. Thus, the referential aspect of language is not basic, not given, it is constructed or derived. Quine in this regard says, "Reference and ontology recede thus to the status of mere auxiliaries. True sentences, observational or theoretical, are the alpha and the omega of the scientific enterprise. They are related by structured, and objects figure as mere modes of the structure."<sup>10</sup>

According to Quine as reference is derivative, there lies indeterminacy of reference. The thesis of the indeterminacy of reference is that there is more than one way that it could be derived. There is more than one way we could attribute reference to our terms while still preserving the relation of sentences to sensory stimulation and to one another. In this regard, Quine employs the idea of *proxy function*. However, Quine admits that there are alternative ways of ascribing reference, the matter 'admits of trivial proof'. This point can be demonstrated in a number of ways and perhaps the simplest and certainly the one is the idea of a *proxy function*. The idea here is that we take one-to-one function,  $f$ , and defined over the objects to which our beliefs apparently commit us. This function, Quine claims, maps any given object on to the rest of space-time.

Quine then claims that *holophrastic indeterminacy* arises in the same way as indeterminacy of reference. Indeterminacy, Quine opines, **is a conflict of parts seen without the wholes.** In the case of indeterminacy of reference, the whole were sentences, and the parts were sub-sentential. In the case of holophrastic indeterminacy, the whole is our total theory, or a large chunk of it, and the parts are individual sentences. The idea behind the latest argument is that holism shows that it is only our theory as a whole that is answerable to evidence. Holism might thus be taken to show that it is our whole theory that is in that sense the true unit of empirical meaning. On this line of thought, indeterminacy arises because there is more than one way that the meaning of the whole can be shared out among the parts. According to Quine there is thus no reason to think that the translation must be determined. Quine after all comes to think of indeterminacy as a conjecture. Quine's all important observation is that any translation will be as correct as any other, so long as the net empirical implication of the theory as a whole are preserved in translation. But it is to be expected that many different ways of translating the component sentences, essentially different individually, would deliver the same empirical implications for the theory as a whole. Deviations in the translation of one component sentence could be compensated for in the translation of another component sentence. Insofar, there can be no ground for saying which of the two glaringly unlike translations of individual sentences is right.

### Significance of indeterminacy

What then is the significance of Quine's **holophrastic indeterminacy**? How the indeterminacy of translation would enable us to make sense of the notion of a proposition? If translation were determinate, then we could define two sentences as synonymous just in case the one is translated into the other by a fully acceptable translation between the language of one and the language of other. The same will happen in the case of two sentences of the same languages. We could then identify the proposition expressed by a given sentence with the set of sentences which are, in this sense, synonymous with it. Accordingly, a proposition would thus be a set of synonymous sentences. Quine in this regard says, "I keep urging that we could happily hypostatize meanings if we could admit synonymy. We could simply identify meanings with the class of synonymous."<sup>11</sup> However, Quine rejects the

concept of synonymous expressions because the idea of a set of synonymous expressions is an extremely thin notion relative to the idea of meanings and propositions mostly figuring in analytic philosophy. In fact, Quine speaks of the *indeterminacy conjecture* as directed against the idea that there are propositions. What he means is that it is directed against the idea that the concept of a proposition can be shown to be empirically well grounded. Unlike proposition, Quine's physicalistic account of language is meant precisely to show that we can account for the phenomena of language-use without relying on a non-empirical notion of meaning, or anything of the sort.

Thus, we think Quine's indeterminacy of translation bears manifolds of philosophical significance. In one hand he rejects the analytic-synthetic distinction of Kant by boiling it down the principle of synonymy. On the other hand, he rejects the unified core of human thinking as advocated by Strawson. According to Strawson successful communication between the speaker and the hearer is made possible because both of them have the same conceptual framework. Quine rejects Strawson on that account. Unlike Strawson, Quine develops **conceptual relativism** because in one sense his indeterminacy of translation is the outcome of conceptual relativism. Thirdly and more important, Quine also denies the mentalist interpretation of Chomsky. Chomsky opines that every native speaker at the time of his or her birth innately possessed some linguistic organ known as left hemisphere from where language has been generated spontaneously. Chomsky termed as **Transformational Generative Grammar**. Quine again denies Chomsky. According to Quine acquisition of language is not mental; rather it is the outcome of our external behaviour. Thus, the Quine's proposal of indeterminacy of translation appears as a philosophical theory which goes against many well-established philosophical theories as discussed above. In this regard, Quine's theory of indeterminacy of translation helps us to judge *Quine as a critique of philosophy*.

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## BOOK REVIEW

**Eve Gaudet**

Quine on Meaning: The Indeterminacy of Translation

(Eve Gaudet, *Quine on Meaning: The Indeterminacy of Translation*  
Continuum, 2006, 145 pp., ISBN 0826487203)

### Reviewed by

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Eve Gaudet's celebrated book *Quine on Meaning: The Indeterminacy of Translation* appears as a concise book to Quine's views. The book is probably the most comprehensive single authored presentation of Quine's philosophical issues, such as, under-determination thesis, indeterminacy of meaning and translation thesis. It focuses on a much debated and radical topic in philosophy of language. The reader may be inclined to review this book for short summaries and treatment of the larger Quinean view of cognitive meaning and translation. This is one of the most exciting developments in analytic philosophy. It will be exciting to those who appreciate Quine's semantic theses. In her concluding chapter Gaudet said, "Indeterminacy of translation that should interest anybody who has even only broad semantic interests" (p. 140). Quine's semantic theses centered on what he claimed indeterminacy thesis. This is an extreme theory that denies the possibility of determinate meanings in the classical sense. For Quine language is a social activity rather than a private one. Man's understanding about language depends on the observations on the listener's responses towards the language. It reveals that the responses of different people towards the same linguistic expression may differ greatly. As a result of that there arise all kinds of understandings which eventually lead to the source of indeterminacy of translation.



In fact, in Gaudet's interpretation, the Indeterminacy thesis originates in Quine's epistemology. According to Quine, the primary goal of epistemology is to provide a factual account of how our theory of the world can come up from observation. Afterwards, it develops into the *naturalistic*, *physicalistic* and *behaviouristic* conception of language, which deserves the general background of the outcome of indeterminacy. In *Epistemology Naturalized*, "Quine tells us about the theoretical context of his interest in indeterminacy of translation" (p. 1).

Eve Gaudet's book on *Quine on Meaning: The Indeterminacy of Translation* contains twelve chapters along with Acknowledgements and a small index. She dedicated it to her husband *Alexandre*. It is important to note that she left one page intentionally blank before and after the contents. The book is the outcome of her Ph. D. thesis at Washington University in St. Louis. In her acknowledgements, Gaudet offered thanks to dissertation committee members Robert B. Barrett, Joseph Ullian and Roger F. Gibson. Again, she offered special thanks to her husband Alexandre Laroche, to her parents Jean-Rene Gaudet and Jacqueline Hagan, and also to her friend Sarit Smila. The book offers not only a lucid and compelling summary of Quine's views, but also provides invaluable clarifications, reformulations, and substantive updating. This actually has prompted me to review her book.

The first Chapter of this book starts with the Introduction. In it, Gaudet has addressed the roadmap of the book and on the basis of it she opened up an overview of the rest of the book. Gaudet explains Quine's under-determination of theory in connection with the doctrinal side of epistemology and indeterminacy of translation. Gaudet defends the arguments offered by Quine when she says, "Quine's indeterminacy thesis is crucial in the justification of the abandonment of traditional epistemology in favor of a naturalized epistemology, an epistemology conceived as a chapter of empirical psychology" (p. 4), and, "Under-determination of theory is almost universally admitted, for, even intuitively, it is easy to acknowledge that there is creation on our part in the building of theories. That is to say, our theories are not mere mirrors of the world. We build them, and we are active through the building process, whence the possibility of creating different theories on the same observational basis," "whereas there is no fact of the matter (reality) to the choice between empirically (behaviorally) equivalent



translation manuals, there is a fact of the matter (reality) to the choice between empirically equivalent physical theories" (p. 5). Thus, Gaudet favours the Quinean orthodoxy as developed by Roger F. Gibson and Dagfinn Føllesdal. She highlights the complex and difficult interrelated issues of the philosophy of Quine.

From Chapters 2 to 6, Gaudet proposes her interpretation of Quine's position on the issue of the asymmetry of factuality between theory choice and translation choice or physics and translation. In Chapters 2 and 3, the author begins with an interpretation of Quine's very idea of "facts of the matter". According to Quine, fact of the matter is a question of *ontology*, a question of *what there is* or extra-linguistic reality. Again, an attempt has been made to describe the relation Quine sees between facts of the matter and truth. By the term 'fact', Quine means physical facts. Being a physicalist, Quine always relishes physical theory as the ultimate parameter regarding the nature of truth. In short, facts of the matter determine truth.

From Chapter 4-6 Gaudet sharply focuses and discusses of the indeterminacy of translation and how it differs from under-determination of theory via evidence. To say that there is no guarantee that two testable theories have same empirical content are also empirically equivalent. Thus, the notion of two behaviorally equivalent translations and two empirically equivalent theories can be logically incompatible. It is striking to note that *evidence* is the issue of *how we find out about the world* and epistemology focuses on the issue *how we find about the world*. Thus, *how we find about the world* is a question of *method* and *evidence*. Evidence is sensory evidence and science is the paradigm of evidence according to Quine.

In Chapter 7 and 8 the author has briefly brought out both Chomsky's misunderstanding and Rorty's misunderstanding regarding the same issue. After a threshold discussion, both Chomsky and Rorty envisage the view that Quine's indeterminacy of translation thesis amounts to an epistemological claim and in this regard there is no difference between indeterminacy of translation and under-determination. The author, however, does not agree with them. For him, they make a naive of the mistake and fail to situate the debate in a genuine way. Thus, the author defends Quine against common misreading of his (Quine's) texts.



In Chapter 9 the author offers an analysis of the position of Michael Friedman, by attributing it as "Friedman's misunderstanding". According to Friedman, Quine's "indeterminacy" theory suffers from causal explanation. However, the author gives a different account of "indeterminacy". The author, however, thinks the other way round. He inclines to say Friedman perhaps makes a mistake by pointing causal crisis in Quine's theory of indeterminacy. She thinks that Quine's theory of indeterminacy does not suffer from causal crisis; rather it falls short of identity of meanings.

In Chapter 10, the author has discussed the debate between Gibson's and Follesdal's views. Here she critically examines Follesdal's early writings, "Indeterminacy of Translation and Under-determination of the Theory of Nature" (1973), where he is tempted by an epistemological reading of the issue as Gibson mentioned. In 1973 paper, Follesdal deviates from Gibson on the character of the indeterminacy thesis. But in his later writings, Follesdal, makes an important contribution to the debate in "Indeterminacy and Mental States" (1990), agrees with Gibson by viewing that the issue is ontological. He claims that while the content of the indeterminacy of translation thesis is ontological, the arguments for it are epistemological. Again, he asserts that physicalism is irrelevant to the argumentation for indeterminacy of translation. For Gaudet, this is an important step in the ongoing discussion that neither Gibson nor Quine had made before. In this Chapter an attempt has been made to show that Follesdal has given the clearest, consistent and most tenable account of what the asymmetry between physics and translation amounts to (cf. chapter 10).

In Chapter 11, the author discusses and evaluates some critical views and opinions resulting from contemporary cognitive science. However, the author claims that some reasons are skeptical about the denial of the asymmetry between indeterminacy of translation and under-determination of thesis based on the promises of cognitive science. Here it is worthy to note that by "science" Quine means "scientific theory". Quine's indeterminacy of translation is based on his naturalism and his adherence to scientific realism. Being a scientific realist, Quine believes that all facts are physical facts and all explanations are physical explanations. Thus, epistemology is not outside science but is part and parcel of it, i.e. it is the psychology of our cognitive process.



The last and final Chapter of the present book is conclusion. In the concluding Chapter the author defies her own interests that “under-determination of theory and indeterminacy of translation should matter to scientists and philosophers” (p. 138). On the whole, the author contributes to the discussion about the asymmetry between indeterminacy of translation and under-determination of theory and concludes that Quine’s “indeterminacy of translation is justified, and determinacy of translation is not” (p. 142).

In Gaudet’s eyes, Quine granted that the key of translation cannot be determined in man’s mind but be open to different explanation. There is no question of doubt that Quine denies that there is anything called right translation, all translations being equally available. Accordingly, alternative translation manuals are possible because there remains a gap between native language and the language of translator, and no translation manual is fully determined by speech dispositions of native speakers. That is why a serious under-determination of theory follows. In Gaudet’s interpretation, Quine says that physical theories are underdetermined. They are underdetermined by past observations as future observations could conflict with them. Thus, the under-determination of physical theory consists in the fact that a physical theory transcends all observational evidence, and so, many competing physical theories can be built from the same set of observational basis (evidence). In other words, the under-determination thesis claims that language, theory and the translation manual all suffer from the fact that they never perfectly match experiences and that they leave room for alternative theories to be possible. It reveals that Quine takes the under-determination thesis to apply to our global system. A global under-determination afflicts our theories and beliefs as well as our language. This contributes to the fact that translation themselves remain quite indeterminate and that meaning in the traditional sense is dead. Therefore, translation should not be judged by the criterion of right or wrong, and the criteria should be multiple. To speak correctly, the indeterminacy translation thesis is mainly of two aspects--one is the indeterminacy of meaning which affects any native expression to maintain a specific meaning, the other is the inscrutability of reference which affects the terms of the untouched language.

Thus, nobody can evade the utility of Gaudet’s present book on Quine’s views. In it, her continuing strain of contention running via the



relevant related literature in interpretation and evaluation of Quine's systematic philosophy. Gaudet discusses Quine's indeterminacy of translation thesis and the distinction between indeterminacy of translation thesis and under-determination of theory both negative and positive way. She, however, favours Quine after critical examination of the difference between indeterminacy of translation thesis and under-determination of theory by evidence as mentioned above.

Gaudet insists that the indeterminacy thesis is that it is mainly an ontological claim rather than an epistemological one as it is not concerned with our inability to discover which of two alternative translations is correct, but with the fact that there is nothing to be discovered at all (so that the alternative translations are, in a sense, both correct). It is true to say that ontology and epistemology are concerned with different issue. Ontology hinges on the issue of "what there is," and "what a question of truth is" (cf. p. 39). We have elsewhere mentioned above that epistemology investigates/focuses how we get our knowledge of the world or how we know what there is. How we know what there is or how we come to know the metaphysical features of reality is a question of method and evidence. For Quine, "the evidence has to be sensory" (p. 102). Accordingly, epistemology is empiricism. Epistemology is not a theory of truth but a theory of evidence. It does not purport to tell us what there is, but what evidence there is for what there is. What is important to realize is that in Quine's naturalistic framework epistemological and metaphysical projects are strictly correlative. The epistemological project deals with the relation of our theories and language to the world, and the metaphysical one deals with the world itself. The transition from epistemology to metaphysics is marked by one of the doctrines for which Quine is most famous, i.e., the indeterminacy of translation and the indeterminacy of reference. Thus, an appreciation of the significance and the possibility of indeterminacy is major evidence of a full understanding of Quine's naturalistic view of language.

In the present book, Gaudet not only recall but also criticizes the leading cognitivist and mentalist Noam Chomsky. She says, "Chomsky reads indeterminacy of translation as an epistemological claim," and so "Chomsky fails to see that Quine's ontological point is the denial of meanings as entities" (p. 72). For Gaudet, Chomsky fails to see that Quine is "not mentalistic" (p. 78).



In fact, Quine deviates from Chomsky and thereby criticizes Chomsky. Quine conflicts with Chomsky by denying the mentalistic interpretation of language with the help of his theory of behaviourism. According to Noam Chomsky, acquisition of language is mentalistic in nature. Every normal human being at the time of his or her birth can acquire a linguistic organ known as left hemisphere which is biological and genetically given. That means every normal human being innately possessed an internal mental organ for which acquisition of language is made possible. Therefore, according to Chomsky acquisition of language is mentalistic in nature. But according to Quine a child can acquire and develop his language through behaviour. He learns language from the society, from the community, from his kinder garden and from his parents and so on. Accordingly, acquisition of language is not mental rather it is external and physical. Quine being a physicalist rejects mentalistic semantics in philosophy of language. He insists on approaching language use behaviourally which is not simply the consequence of prejudice.

In Gaudet's interpretation, Quine's philosophical method has mostly been scientific, empirical and behavioural in nature. Even though Quine focuses on so many philosophical aspects but his philosophy of language predominantly hinges on his view of naturalism. Quine was a proponent and leading campaigner of naturalistic epistemology. Quine has rejected any form of knowledge other than our ordinary knowledge expressed in commonsense and in science. According to Quine the methods and techniques of natural science are the source of knowledge about the world. The world of science and the world of commonsense have widely been accepted by Quine's naturalism. Quine also claims that naturalism based on science. Quine entirely rejects the idea that there is a fundamental epistemological distinction, which Quine calls his naturalism. The ultimate aim of Quine's work in 20th century scientific philosophy is the emphasis on knowledge and its objects as the primary concern of philosophy is an emphasis on the 'True'. This is an emphasis on science, particularly on natural sciences. The important feature of scientific philosophy is to take natural sciences as paradigmatic of all knowledge. For Gaudet, Quine claims "epistemology is concerned with the foundation of science" (p. 1).

A central aspect of Quinean naturalism is the rejection of first philosophy, a theoretical standpoint somehow prior to natural science



and capable of justifying it. "Naturalism" means the denial of a first philosophy, i.e., of traditional epistemology" (p. 74). However, Quine does not repudiate epistemology altogether. There remains naturalized epistemology, i.e., the scientific study of man's acquisition of science. Quine claims that knowledge, mind and meaning belong to the same world. Equally they are to be studied in the same empirical spirit that animates natural science. That is why, in Quine's epistemology there is no room for a prior philosophy. He also seems to conceive that natural science as an inquiry into reality. In other words, in Quine's thought there can be no sharp distinction between science and philosophy or science and epistemology. Thus, philosophy and science are continuous with one another because a scientist is a man who uses words and a philosopher is a man who talks about such words. For Quine science and philosophy of science must be in same conceptual scheme. Therefore, science and philosophy are not mutually exclusive fields.

Gaudet's pivotal interpretative thesis designates Quine as the naturalist, the physicalist and the empiricist. As a naturalist, (i) Quine accepts there is no successful first philosophy, and (ii) it is up to science to tell us what there is (ontology) and how we know what there is (epistemology). As a physicalist, (i) Quine rejects mentalistic semantics in the context of philosophy of language, (ii) Quine denies mind-body dualism in the context of philosophy of mind, and (iii) Quine accepts ontological physicalism in the context of general ontology. And as an empiricist Quine admits two cardinal tenets of empiricism such as (i) whatever evidence there is for science is sensory evidence, (p. 36), and (ii) all inculcation of meanings of words must rest ultimately on sensory evidence. Thus, in a nutshell, it can be said that Quine's acceptance of physicalist ontology and an empiricist epistemology is based on scientific findings (cf. chapter 2, 4 & 12 specially). To sum it up in a few words, Quine's systematic philosophy amounts to an attempt to elaborate a thoroughgoing and uncompromisingly naturalistic account of both the world and our knowledge of it.

Finally, a closer acquaintance with Quine's thinking tells us that, according to him, linguistic meaning is a function of a particular system. Since term-by-term or statement-by-statement translation is impossible. But this is Quine's holism in a different terminological sense. According to his holistic view a particular segment of the corporate body of science is the unit of significance. May be Gaudet is



right to show that Quine's chief doctrines come into a cohesive project as his "scientificism" (p. 75) leads to his new form of empiricism, and that to his "holism," (pp. 74-75) and in turn to his behaviourism too. The latter falls out as a special case of his scientificism. Undoubtedly, his behaviorist orientation in turn accounts for his rejection of meaning etc. When the elements of this complex system are spelled out, his affirmation that philosophy is simply an extension of science seems just original, not paradoxical. These are the main thesis of this book. Gaudet perhaps most closely, clearly and simply approaches all these issues.