

Introduction

INTRODUCTION

Down the ages, philosophers have agreed that the task of philosophy is nothing but understanding and appreciating of life and universe. Now, the very fact that to understand life and universe properly, it is utmost important to enquire into the conditions, factors and limits of understanding — is a phenomenon realised by the philosophers only in the modern period. Although sporadic germ of epistemology or criticism of knowledge has been noticed in the history of thought, it is Kant who looked into the problems of knowledge from an entirely different angle. Instead of considering knowledge as a fact, Kant enquired into the logical conditions that render knowledge possible. In fact Kant lays his emphasis on epistemology or theory of knowledge so much as to define philosophy as the criticism of cognition and thereby introduces many important concepts to refer to different aspects of knowledge, one such important concept introduced in Kant's theory of knowledge is the concept of analyticity. In his Critique of Pure Reason, Kant defines understanding 'as the faculty of judging'.

Now, judgments which are considered by Kant as the necessary element of knowledge have been classified by him as analytic and synthetic. In an analytic judgment the concept of the predicate is contained in the concept of the subject, while in a synthetic judgment the concept of the predicate stands outside the concept of the subject. Analytic judgment is uninformative. It merely

analyses the subject concept. On the other hand, synthetic judgment is informative and tells us something about the subject.

Anyway, since Kant, the task of clarifying the notion of analyticity has been considered as a major one in carrying out any discussion on the problem of knowledge. Now, the particular task of clarification is not at all an easy task as it appears at the outset. However, the Chapter-I named 'Analyticity' points out the major obscurities involving in Kant's explanation of an analytic judgement that led philosophers after Kant to interpret an analytic statement in many ways. Among them four interpretations such as, (1) Analytic statements are a priori statements, (2) Analytic statements are necessary statements, (3) Analytic statement is a statement the truth of which follows from the meanings of the words involved, (4) Analyticity of a statement follows from the synonymity of the terms involved therein, have been discussed. During the discussion it has been noted that each interpretation instead of facing the difficulties peculiar to its own, suffers from some common limitations. One of such limitations is to consider all analytic statements as statements belonging to single class. In fact, each interpretation does ignore the fundamental distinction between two types of analytic statements like 'No unmarried man is married' and 'All bachelors are unmarried men' and thereby tries to explain all analytic statements by single criterion. Another limitation commonly shared by each interpretation is the

limitation of being indifferent to the possibility of revision in our conceptual system. Since the sole task of philosophy is understanding the universe, we cannot really ignore the totality of the so-called knowledge. And to cope with the advancement of knowledge we have no other way than to accept possibility of revision in our conceptual system. Now, the point to be noted that acceptance of revision would stand as a question-mark before the concept of analyticity. However, discussion on two such common limitations of the above interpretations along with their consequences have also been discussed in Chapter-I.

Chapter - II includes different attempts that have been made to explain one of the fundamental notions of language named synonymy with a view to clarify the notion of analyticity. In reply to the basic question of synonymy 'what makes two expressions synonymous?' Philosophers have introduced different criteria such as interchangeable criterion, criterion of extensional identity, criterion of intensional identity and so on. The discussion on some criteria leads to the conclusion that in ordinary language no two expressions can be exactly synonymous. Ordinary language as distinguished from artificial one, is highly context-dependent. A good number of expressions involving in ordinary language derive their meaning from the context in which they are used. And the point is that the greater the dependence of a language on context, the lesser is the possibility of two expressions being exactly synonymous.

However, the factors that stand as obstacles on the way to get exact synonymy of two expressions lie in the very nature of ordinary language. Some such factors along with the question whether perfect synonyms of two expressions is at all possible or not have been discussed in Chapter - II named 'synonymy'.

Discussion on the notion of synonymy leads to the conclusion that in ordinary language, instead of speaking of exact synonymy of two expressions we can rather speak of degrees of likeness of meaning. And hence arises the need to explain the notion of meaning. Philosophers have come forward to explain meaning from different angles. As a result, we come across different theories of meaning, such as, the referential theory, the ideational theory, the use theory, the truth theory and so on. These different theories along with their limitations have been discussed in Chapter-III named 'meaning'.

Failure of the different theories to explain meaning puts before us the following question : Is it possible to construct a theory of meaning at all?' Now, in connection with the above question, I think that three factors are supposed to lie as obstacles on the way to get a theory of meaning. They are (i) different attitudes of philosophers towards three aspects of language such as, syntax, semantics and pragmatics, (ii) failure to distinguish between two stages of language such as, learning stage and compositional stage, (iii) failure to realise the

multi-various uses of single expression in ordinary language. Anyway, the difficulty to construct a theory of meaning should not lead us to conclude that meaning cannot be explained at all. However, in order to get an adequate account of meaning what I think necessary is to adopt two negative and one positive stand-points. One of the negative stand-points warns us that a meaning-statement can in no way be identified with an identity-statement. That these two types of statements do not belong to the same class can be shown by the fact that requirement for understanding a meaning-statement is quite different from understanding an identity-statement. Another negative stand-point cautions against the attitude to overlook the fundamental role of synonymy in understanding meaning of an expression. In fact, if it be admitted that meaning of an expression would be nothing else but another expression, then the so-called theories of meaning can easily be converted into theories of synonymy. The positive stand-point, on the other hand, directs us to look at the understanding of meaning merely as a process. Now, the point is that if meaning of an expression be viewed as a process, it would not be possible to speak of meaning in any absolute sense and consequently, possibility of formulating a theory of meaning would be very meagre. This point will be discussed in chapter-IV.

Now, referring to context in understanding meaning of an expression casts doubt on the autonomy of the so-called analytic statement. Chapter-V includes the discussion that if literal meaning is not the only concern of analytic statement and if meaning of such statement be somehow dependent on context, it becomes somewhat difficult to draw a rigid distinction between an analytic and non-analytic statement. At the end of chapter-V, I have tried to show a reconciliation of epistemology and philosophy of language by pointing to the fundamental role played by the notion of synonymy in explaining analyticity on the one hand and meaning on the other.