

Chapter - II

Synonymites

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SYNONYMIITY

After traversing a long way ordinary language has reached its present enriched stage. Language, which was conventionally created by man for the purpose of communication has now become the object of studies and research. Clarification of some basic concepts involving in language have been considered as a major task by the analytic philosophers of the twentieth century. Among others, two such important concepts are the concept of meaning and the concept of sameness of meaning or synonymy. In fact, these two concepts are very fundamental concepts of language and hence rightly deserve the attention of philosophers.

However, in the present chapter, I would like to throw some light on the notion of synonymy or sameness of meaning with a view to clarify the notion of analyticity.

Now, prior to the discussion on the notion of synonymy it becomes necessary to decide the proper attribution of synonymy. In this connection, question arises in the following form : 'Between words or sentences which one would be considered as the proper attribution of meaning'? Since meaning is used in course of talking about words as well as sentences, the same holds good also in case of synonymy or sameness of meaning. However, philosophers are not of the same opinion regarding the attribution of synonymy. Hence, it has been noticed that while discussing the notion of synonymy, some philosophers have referred to synonymy of words and some to synonymy of sentences.

Importance of the notion of synonymy

As an important notion of language, synonymy draws attention of the philosophers for the following reasons:

1) Synonymy and clarification of the notion of meaning.

History of thought reveals the fact that different theories of meaning trying to identify meaning as entity of a sort, have asked some questions about meaning which are practically unanswerable. These questions are : What sort of entity is a meaning? What kind of relation holds between a linguistic expression and the sort of entity called meaning of it? etc. It is only in recent time that philosophers have realised that the above questions should not be regarded as genuine questions at all since based on metaphysical assumption that meaning as a sort of entity must be specifiable. Instead these philosophers look for an account of 'What it is for an expression to have "meaning?" or 'what are we doing when we say, 'What a particular expression means?' And the answer of the above questions necessarily presupposes the notion of synonymy. It can easily be pointed out that identification of meaning of an expression is nothing but exhibiting another expression synonymous with it, for example, the meaning of an expression 'procrastination' can be clarified by using a synonymous expression 'putting things off'. Hence, for better understanding of the meaning of a linguistic expression the notion of synonymy plays a significant role.

According to Quine:

"Once the theory of meaning is sharply separated from the theory of reference, it is a short step to recognizing as the primary business of the theory of meaning simply the synonymy of linguistic forms and the analyticity of statements".¹

2) Synonymy as a defining characteristic of analyticity.

In our earlier discussion on 'Analyticity' we have noticed that according to some philosophers, a type of analytic statements requiring empirical investigation of linguistic usage are actually based on the notion of synonymy. It is thought that statements like 'A bachelor is an unmarried man', 'An oculist is an eye-doctor' are regarded as analytic as 'bachelor' and 'unmarried man', 'oculist' and 'eye-doctor' are but synonymous expressions. This leads some philosophers to hold that at least a type of analytic statement can be defined in terms of synonymy.

Thus, Quine points out that among the two classes of analytic statements one class is logically true statements. The peculiarity of this type of statement, such as 'No unmarried man is married',

1. Quine, W.V.O., "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" in From A Logical point of view, Harvard University Press, 1953, p. 22.

lies in the fact that it remains true under all reinterpretations of its components other than logical particles. The peculiarity of the second type of analytic statements, such as 'No bachelor is unmarried' according to Quine lies in the fact that it can be turned into logically true statements by putting synonyms for synonyms i.e. by putting 'unmarried men' for its synonym 'bachelor'.¹ Now, in connection with the explanation of analytic statement in terms of synonymy one point should be noted that while philosopher like Quine thinks that particular one type of analytic statements can be explained in terms of synonymy, some philosophers go so far as to explain all analytic statements whatsoever in terms of synonymy. Thus, Ayer writes:

"Our knowledge that no observation can ever confute the proposition ' $7+5=12$ ' depends simply on the fact that the symbolic expression ' $7+5$ ' is synonymous with ' 12 ', just as our knowledge that every oculist is an eye-doctor depends on the fact that the symbol 'eye-doctor' is synonymous with 'oculist' "².

1. Quine, W.V.O., "Two Dogmas of empiricism" in From a logical point of view, Harvard University Press, 1953, p. 22-23

2. Ayer, Language, Truth and Logic, Penguin Books, 1978, p. 113.

3) Synonymity involving in translation

The notion of sentence-synonymy is presupposed in the notion of translation. Now, as a notion 'translation' may be applied in different contexts. They are :

a) when a translation and the expression of which it is a translation belong to the same language, such as from English to English,

b) when a translation and the expression of which it is a translation both belong not to the same language - that is to say, a translation from English to Bengali,

c) translation from poetry into prose.

In each of the above cases of translation, the notion of synonymity plays a very fundamental role. In this connection, Mates, Benson writes:

"A body of discourse A is a translation of another body of discourse B if and only if there is a correspondence between the meaningful parts of A and those of B such that corresponding parts are synonymous".¹

1. Mates, Benson, "Synonymity" in Semantics And The Philosophy of Language, ed. by Linsky, L., University of Illinois Press, 1952, p. 112.

4) Synonymity involving in communication

The notion of sentence-synonym plays an important role in our everyday discourse. In fact without presupposing this particular notion we cannot communicate with fellow beings and hence, very little can be done with a language.

5) Synonymity in indirect quotation

The role of synonymity in the method of using indirect quotation is not a negligible one. According to Quine,

"In indirect quotation we do not insist on a literal repetition of the words of the person quoted, but we insist on a synonymous sentence; we require reproduction of the meaning".¹

Thus, synonymity being a very fundamental notion of language, have duly attracted the attention of different philosophers at different times. And to deal with this notion of synonymity philosophers have pointed out different circumstances under which two expressions are regarded as synonymous. They are :

- (a) if two expressions evoke the same mental idea or image,

1. Quine, W.V.O., "Notes on Existence And Necessity" in Semantics And The Philosophy of language, ed. by Linsky, L., University of Illinois Press, 1952, p. 84.

- (b) if two words have the same intension,
- (c) if two words are interchangeable salva veritate
ie. without altering truth values of the sentences
in which these expressions occur.
- (d) if two words have the same extension,
- (e) if two expressions perform the same illocutionary act.

SECTION - II

Let us discuss the above criteria one by one and see how far they have been able to tackle the basic question regarding the notion of synonymy. The question is : 'under which circumstances two words are called exactly synonymous?'

(a) Synonymy in terms of evoking the same idea.

Taking word as the mark of 'idea', this criteria tries to define synonymy in terms of evoking the same mental image. It is thought that corresponding to each word there is an idea or mental image. And the ideas with which we do our thinking can exist and function independent of language. Linguistic expressions are only the marks of ideas. Hence, according to this criterion what is required to count two linguistic expressions as synonymous is that the idea evoked by one of the expressions would also be evoked by another. In other words, two expressions should stand for the same mental image.

Now, a little reflection will show that the above criterion suffers from the following difficulties :

In the first place, the criterion fails to point out the exact sense in which the word 'idea' should be taken in the present case. In fact, the term 'idea' is a vague term. It can be used in more than one sense. For example, when somebody says, 'I have no idea what are you saying' the term 'idea' is taken here as derivative from the notion of understanding. Hence, it would be improper to use the term 'idea' only to mean something like mental image.

Secondly, it is something difficult to believe that when somebody utters an expression or understands an expression he has to associate an image with each expression. In fact, expressions like 'if', 'all', 'may', 'at' etc, cannot be associated with any image at all. Difficulty persists even in case of ordinary noun-phrases also. Thus, according to D.E.Cooper it is really hard to believe that corresponding to noun-phrases like 'four-dimensional space', 'mathematical point', or 'superego' etc there must be some images.¹

1. Cooper, D.E., Philosophy and the nature of language, Longman, London, 1975, p. 22.

Thirdly, this criterion fails to realise that the power of imagining can in no way be treated as means to grasp the meaning of an expression. In this connection D.E.Cooper writes:

"If knowing the meaning of a word was a matter of having the right images, it would seem to follow that a person who is very poor at imagining is correspondingly poor in his understanding of meanings".¹

Fourthly, it is hard to think that in each case the use of a particular expression would evoke the same mental image. Now, if mental images are considered as variable, we are to believe that corresponding to variation of mental image meaning of an expression would also be different and this is really an absurd conclusion.

(b) Synonymity in terms of having the same intension

Some philosophers try to explain the notion of synonymity in terms of intension or connotation of the concerned expressions. Generally, intension of an expression comprises the associations it has in the minds of the people who use it. Now, here these philosophers take the term 'intension' in somewhat different

1. Cooper, D.E., Philosophy and the Nature of Language, Longman, London, 1975, p. 22.

sense. In other words, the sense which they intend to attach to 'intension' is quite different from usual sense. In fact, their standpoints may be described as logical rather than psychological. Now the point is that although these philosophers intend to explain synonymy in terms of intension all of them have not used 'intension' in the same way. Thus, according to C. I. Lewis having the same intension of linguistic expression means nothing more than equivalence in analytic meaning while Carnap thinks that two expressions would be regarded as synonymous only if they are intensionally isomorphic or they have the same intensional structure.

A careful reflection on the notion of 'equivalence in analytic meaning' and 'intensionally isomorphic' would point to the fact that 'intension' in none of the above two senses would be really helpful to explain synonymy. Now, C. I. Lewis writes:

"Two expressions are equivalent in analytic meaning,

(1) if at least one is elementary (i.e., not complex) and they have the same intension, or (2) if, both being complex, they can be so analyzed into constituents that (a) for every constituent distinguished to either, there is a corresponding constituent in the other which has the same intension, (b) no constituent distinguished in either has zero intension or universal

intension, and (c) the order of corresponding constituents is the same in both, or can be made the same without alteration of the intension of either whole expression".¹

Thus Lewis considers 'round excision' and 'circular hole' as synonymous expressions due to their equivalence in analytic meaning while two expressions 'equilateral triangle' and 'equiangular triangle' are not synonymous instead of having the same intension.²

Now, in connection with Lewis's version question may arise : Can synonymy of expressions be explained in terms of equivalence in analytic meaning in all cases?

According to Carnap, the concept of 'equivalence in analytic meaning' is not very much helpful to the purpose for which it is proposed.³ Lewis thinks that the above concept is applicable only to sentences that are not factual rather L-determinate. A sentence is L-determinate if and only if the semantical rules, independently of facts, suffice for establishing

1. Carnap Rudolf, Meaning and Necessity, University of Chicago Press, 1947, pp. 60-61.

2. Carnap, Rudolf, Meaning and Necessity, University of Chicago Press, 1947, p. 61.

3. Ibid, p. 60.

its truth-value while a sentence is factual if and only if there is at least one state-description in which it holds and at least one in which it does not hold. Anyway, with the help of the following example, consisting of four sentences, Carnap wants to show that following Lewis' version two sentences that should be treated as synonymous can easily be treated as non-synonymous:

- (i) two is an even prime number;
- (ii) two is between one and three;
- (iii) the number of books on this table is an even prime number;
- (iv) the number of books on this table is between one and three.

According to Lewis' definition, (i) and (ii) are not synonymous because they are L-true, analytic; while (iii) and (iv) are synonymous because they are factual, synthetic.

Carnap says,

"it seems to me that it would be more natural to regard (iii) and (iv) also as non synonymous, since the difference between them is essentially the same as that between (i) and (ii). The logical operation which leads from (i) to (ii) is the same as that which leads from (iii) to (iv); it is the transformation of 'n is an even prime number' into 'n is (a cardinal number) between one and three".¹

1. Carnap Rudolf, Meaning and Necessity, University of Chicago Press, 1947, p. 60

Now, let us look at the Carnap's notion of intensional isomorphism as a criterion to explain synonymy. The notion of intensional isomorphism is explained in terms of logical equivalence extending beyond full sentences to cover various sentence parts. Logical equivalence is intended as explicatum for mutual logical implication or entailment. That is to say, the condition for logical equivalence is that it is impossible for one of the two sentences to be true and the other false. Thus, whereas an identity sentence ' $a=b$ ' says that a is the same individual as b , logically equivalent sentence ' $p=q$ ' means that p and q are equivalent if they hold for the same individual. Now, according to the intensional isomorphic criterion two expressions would be synonymous when they are not only logically equivalent as a whole, but consist of parts in such a way that corresponding parts are logically equivalent to one another and hence have the same intension. Thus, Carnap thinks that in a language \underline{s} containing numerical expressions and arithmetical factors — the two expressions ' $2+5$ ' and ' II sum V ' are intensionally isomorphic since ' $+$ ' and ' sum ' are L-equivalent and the numerical signs ' 2 ' and ' II ', ' 5 ' and ' V ' are L-equivalent to one another.¹

1. Ibid., p. 56

Though at first sight the notion of intensional structure looks very much promising, it cannot explain synonymy in all cases of linguistic expressions due to the following limitations:

Firstly, an expression can be intensionally isomorphic to another expression without being isomorphic to the definitional expansion of the later expression. For example, if we assume as L-true a sentence of the following form:

$$1. \quad A_m = A_n$$

the above sentence will be intensionally isomorphic to

$$2. \quad A_m \stackrel{====}{=} A_m$$

now the sentence (1) is not intensionally isomorphic to

$$3. \quad (X)A_m X \stackrel{====}{=} A_m X$$

which is the definitional expansion of the sentence (2). Sentence (1) will not be intensionally isomorphic to sentence (3), as (3) contains a designator '(X)' which cannot be matched to a designator in (1).

Secondly, intensional structure cannot explain synonymy of belief-sentences. For instance, if M and M₁ are abbreviations of two different but synonymous sentences, the following two sentences

1. Whoever believes that M_1 , believes that M .
2. Whoever believes that M , believes that M_1 .

would have the same intensional structure or would be regarded as intensional isomorphic. Now, the point is that while the first sentence is true beyond doubt, the second one cannot be treated as such. Anybody may doubt that whoever believes that M , believes that M_1 .

Thirdly, the term 'intension' is a vague term. Generally, the intension of an expression consists of the associations it has in the minds of the people who use it. Accordingly, intension of an expression may vary from person to person. Hence, two expressions having the same extension or denotation may not have the same intension. According to John Hospers, except the technical terms having little connotation, most of the words that are used in our daily life are rich in connotation. Hence, the range of thoughts, images, attitudes and feelings suggested by these words are different from those of even their close synonyms. He writes:

"consider the difference between 'sweat' and 'perspire', 'earth' and 'world', 'father' and 'daddy'. Poetry, the effect of which depends on richness of connotation, must accordingly employ the language of daily life, and would be sterile if it employed to any great degree a scientific or technical vocabulary".¹

1. Hospers, John, An Introduction to Philosophical Analysis, Allied Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1967, pp. 48-49

(c) Synonymity in terms of interchangeability of expressions

According to interchangeable criterion two expressions are synonymous in a language L, if and only if they may be interchanged in each sentence in L without altering the truth value of that sentence. This criterion looks at the problem of synonymity from the stand-point of words and holds that in order to consider two words as synonymous, what is required is the characteristic of interchangeability of the concerned words. Thus, two words 'bachelor' and 'unmarried man' are regarded as synonymous as the replacement of one by another does not affect the truth value. Thus, truth value of the following two sentences

A) 'Ram is an unmarried man'.

B) 'Ram is a bachelor'.

remains the same instead of the replacement of 'unmarried man' by 'bachelor'.

A little reflection will show that the criterion does not hold good in all cases. In good many cases replacements of the synonymous expressions yield statements which undoubtedly affect the truth value. Thus, due to the replacement, a true statement,

A') 'Ram wants to know whether a bachelor is an unmarried man', turns into a statement,

B') 'Ram wants to know whether a bachelor is a bachelor', which is undoubtedly false.

Secondly, in case of 'belief - sentence' this criterion is of no avail at all. A true statement,

C) 'Ram believes that an eye-doctor is an eye-doctor' may turn into a false one.

D) 'Ram believes that an eye-doctor is an oculist' without having Ram's idea of 'oculist'.

Here, truth value of the statement does depend, not on the objective fact that the meanings of 'eye-doctor' and 'oculist' are the same, but on Ram's knowing of the particular expression 'oculist'.

Thirdly, this criterion refers only to synonymous expressions occurring in the same language. In practice, what is required is a more general criterion to test synonymy of expressions occurring in different languages.

Fourthly, this interchangeable criterion suffers from circularity. According to Cooper,

".... in order to know that two expressions are interchangeable in all non-recalcitrant sentences, one would already have to know that they are synonymous - in which case one cannot use interchangeability as a taste for synonymy".¹

(d) Synonymy in terms of extensional identity

Sometimes an attempt has been made to define the notion of synonymy in terms of extensional identity of linguistic

¹. Cooper, D.E., Philosophy and the Nature of Language, Longman, London, 1975, p. 172

expression. Thus, it is said that two or more linguistic expressions would be considered as synonymous only if the expressions do apply to exactly the ^{Same} thing. In other words, expressions having the same extension would be regarded as synonymous. The extension or denotation of a term is the class of all actual or possible things to which the term correctly applies. Hence, according to this criterion synonymy or sameness of meaning would depend only on the sameness of extension.

Now, the point is that this criterion is not very much helpful to explain the notion of synonymy. In fact, there are clear cases where extensional identity cannot guarantee the sameness of meaning. Two expressions 'unicorn' and 'contour' although refer to the same extension, i.e. null; clearly differ in meaning. Now, from the above example it should not be concluded that the inadequacy of this criterion lies only in case of terms referring to null class, and difficulty would not persist if they have the same extension, and that extension is neither zero nor universal. Now the point is to be noted that difficulty still persists when referring class is not at all null. David Cooper writes:

"To show that two expressions are synonymous, it is not enough to show that they apply to all and only the same things. 'Creature with a heart' and 'Creature with a kidney' may apply to all and only the same things, but are plainly non-synonymous".¹

1. Cooper, D.E., Philosophy and the Nature of Language, Longman, London, 1975, p. 172

The above limitation of the criterion of extensional identity leads some philosophers to modify the criterion itself. Goodman, for example, introduces two types of extension — primary extension and secondary extension as criterion to explain the notion of synonymy and holds that two terms would have the same meaning if and only if they have the same primary and secondary extension.¹ Goodman considers the extension of a predicate by itself as primary extension while the extension of any of its compounds as secondary extension. Thus, although 'unicorn' and 'centaur' have the same primary extension would not be regarded as synonymous being different in their secondary extension. 'Centaur-picture' refers to things which 'unicorn-picture' does not. Hence, 'centaur' and 'unicorn' are not synonymous.

Now, the point is that introduction of two types of extension fails to serve the purpose of explaining the notion of synonymy. Since, following the above account no two expressions would have the same primary and secondary extension i.e. the same meaning.

(e) Synonymy in terms of the same illocutionary act

Guided by the idea that the meaning of an expression should be determined solely in terms of what the speakers do by using

1. Goodman, Nelson, "On Likeness of Meaning" in Semantics and the Philosophy of Language, University of Illinois Press, 1952,

language, some philosophers have tried to explain the notion of synonymy in terms of the illocutionary action performed by the speaker by uttering words or sentences. Now, considering speech-act or an act which a person performs with the aid of words or sentences as the basic unit of study, Austin thinks that each speech-act would consist of three sub-acts and these acts are named by him as — locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary.

Locutionary action is the physical act involved in saying something.

Illocutionary action is what we do in saying something as opposed to the locutionary act of saying something.

Perlocutionary actions are the effect of the utterance produced upon the feelings, thoughts, or actions of the hearers.

Now, philosophers who consider illocutionary action as the defining notion of synonymy, reject perlocutionary action on the ground that being consisted of the effects of the utterance of linguistic expression produced upon the feelings, thoughts or actions of the hearers, such action may or may not respond to what is being said. According to these philosophers saying something is nothing but doing something. And from this standpoint it appears that illocutionary actions consisting of what the speakers do while using language, may rightly serve as a criterion to determine the notion of synonymy. However, according to this criterion two words would be regarded as synonymous if and only if they make

the same contribution to the illocutionary act potentials of the sentences in which they occur. Thus, synonymy of two words 'bachelor' and 'unmarried man' would consist in the fact that they make the same contribution to the illocutionary act potentials of the sentences 'He is a bachelor' and 'He is an unmarried man'.

Now, in connection with this criterion question may arise in the form : 'How far introduction of illocutionary act does really help us to explain the notion of synonymity?' In other words, would synonymity be truly defined in terms of illocutionary action?

In connection with the above question, it can be pointed out that although reference to the illocutionary action has some sort of advantage, the particular criterion does not fully serve the purpose for which it has been proposed. This criterion rightly draws our attention towards the purpose of using language. Moreover, concentration on the illocutionary action among the above-mentioned three types of action, does minimise the labour of finding out the specified sense in which use of language should be taken for the present purpose.

Now, the point is that despite the above advantages, the introduction of illocutionary action as a criterion to explain the notion of synonymity suffers from the following limitations:

Firstly, two expressions may be regarded as synonymous even when they do not perform the same illocutionary action.

According to Cooper,

"--- the two sentences 'This is a good clock' and 'This clock does the job it was designed to do with great precision' would no doubt be used differently - the first, mainly, to commend, and the second mainly, to report".¹

Secondly, two expressions can be regarded as synonymous without knowing that they involve the same illocutionary act. Hence, to know the illocutionary act of the concerned expressions cannot be counted as a necessary condition for explaining synonymy.

Lastly, understanding the illocutionary act of a particular expression presupposes the understanding of the meaning of that expression. Therefore, to know that two expressions do perform the same illocutionary act is to know already that they have the same meaning. Hence, arises circularity.

SECTION - III

The above discussion on the different criteria of synonymy clearly points to the fact that each criterion suffers from limitations peculiar to its own and consequently, none of them has been able to explain the concept of synonymy. Hence, according

1. Cooper, D.E., Philosophy and the Nature of Language, Longman, London, 1975, p. 41

to these criteria no two expressions are exactly alike in meaning.

Now, non-availability of clear explanation of synonymity puts before us a few answer-begging questions:

- 1) Is such non-availability a problem peculiar to ordinary language? or, to both artificial language and ordinary language?
- 2) What factor, if any, stands on the way to get exact synonym?
- 3) Would non-availability of exact synonym direct us to accept any other standpoint peculiar to ordinary language?

In order to deal with question (1) what is necessary is to know the peculiarities of ordinary language as well as artificial one. In this connection, the following points of difference between the two types of language — ordinary and artificial can be mentioned.

(1) An artificial language is a formal system governed by specified rules. In such system certain rules specify what meaning and denotation is to be attached to certain elements of the vocabulary.

Unlike artificial language ordinary language is not a calculus governed by exact rules. Wittgenstein, who considers communication through linguistic expression of ordinary language as playing a game, thinks that a rule in ordinary language stands as sign-post leaving open about the way one has to go.¹

1. Wittgenstein, Ludwig, Philosophical Investigation, Oxford, 1957, p. 39e.

(ii) Expressions of artificial language consist of purely cognitive meaning. They are significant in virtue of their functional character only; for example, expressions used in physics or mathematics signify and refer to certain physical operations and numerical relations. Such expressions do not bother about serving any particular purpose either of the speaker or of the hearer.

On the other hand, the dispositions of the speaker, emotional effects of the hearer cover an important part of what is called by meaning of an expression involving in ordinary language.

(iii) In an artificial language universe of discourse is predetermined while in case of ordinary language universe of discourse is not predetermined, rather determined by respective context.

(iv) An artificial language has no bearing on compositional aspect, whereas an ordinary language with its emphasis on compositional character does serve the various purposes of life from common place utterances denoting things around us to our poetic imagination. In fact, if ordinary language with its creativity, spontaneity is comparable only to a flowing river, an artificial language in that case may be compared with an inundated irrigation canal. That is to say, with its limited dependence on rules and norms an ordinary language can fabricate its own world which an artificial language conspicuously lack.

However, ordinary language as distinguished from artificial one is highly context-dependant. A good number of expressions

involving in ordinary language derive their meaning from the context in which they are used. Now, the point is that the greater the dependence of a language on context, the lesser is the possibility of two expressions of being exactly synonymous.

In connection with question (2), it can be said that since problem of exact synonym is a problem peculiar to ordinary language, factors standing as obstacles on the way to get exact synonym lie in the very nature of ordinary language. Among others, the following factors deserve special attention.

(i) Context dependence - Many expressions used in ordinary language derive their meaning from the context in which they are used and consequently, stand as an obstacle on the way to get exact synonym. In this connection White, Morton, G. refers to Mill's view regarding the term 'man'. According to John Stuart Mill, a biologist might regard as the synonym of 'man', 'mammiferous animal having two hands', and not 'rational animal'; although in common usage 'rational animal' is the synonym of 'man'.¹

(ii) Emotive force - Emotive force is an important factor that stands on the way to get the exact synonym of two expressions. For example, the two expressions 'He is a stool pigeon' and 'He is an informant for the police' would not be regarded as exactly

1. White, Morton, G., "The Analytic and the Synthetic : an Untenable Dualism" in Semantics and the Philosophy of Language, ed. by Linský, L., University of Illinois, 1952, p. 285.

synonymous due to the attitudinal force. According to John Hospers:

".... in saying 'He's a stool pigeon' one is taking responsibility for having an unfavourable attitude towards him and is not taking any such responsibility in saying 'He's an informant for the police' ".¹

(iii) New coinage - Ordinary language sometimes coins new expressions by permutation and combination of the already existing vocabulary and consequently, such new coinage cannot be exactly substituted. Thus, although the expressions 'earth' and 'ground' are alike in meaning, new coinage 'earthy qualities in people' cannot be replaced by 'groundy qualities in people'.

(iv) Creative aspect - Creative aspect of ordinary language also stands as a bar to get exact synonym. Expressions used in ordinary language are not always confined merely to give information. On the contrary, such expressions sometimes attempt to evoke feelings, images etc. to fabricate a world of their own space, time and events. Now, expressions fabricating such unreal world cannot be exactly substituted by any other expressions. According to John Hospers,

"Shakespeare's line 'Can't thou not minister unto a mind diseased?' does not have the same effect as 'can't you help a lunatic?' ".²

1. Hospers, John, An Introduction to Philosophical Analysis, Allied Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1967, p. 52

2. Hospers, John. : An Introduction to Philosophical Analysis, Allied Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1967, p. 50

(v) Proverbs and metaphors - Proverbs and metaphors as used in ordinary language cannot be substituted exactly. The following two expressions 'too many cooks spoil the broth' and 'Life is just a Cherry-cream pie' can be cited as examples of a proverb and a metaphor respectively. According to D.E. Cooper

"Try replacing 'cooks' by some putative synonym like 'culinary workers' in the first And try replacing 'cherry' by pulpy drupe from a species of prunus' in the second. Both the proverb and the metaphor become absurd as a result".¹

In connection with question (3), it can be said that since factors standing on the way to get exact synonym clearly points to the fact that no two expressions in ordinary language ever have exactly the same meaning, some philosophers propose to introduce the concept of degrees of synonymity or sameness of meaning. The concept has been explained in the following ways:

"When we say that two terms have the same meaning, we usually indicate only that their kind and degree of likeness of meaning is sufficient for the purposes of the immediate discourse".²

The above version clearly points out that requirements for having synonymous expressions are not something fixed rather,

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1. Cooper, D.E., Philosophy and the Nature of Language, Longman, London, 1975, p. 168.
 2. Goodman, Nelson, "On Likeness of Meaning" in Semantics and the Philosophy of Language, ed. by Linsky, L., University of Illinois Press, 1952, p. 73.

they vary greatly from discourse to discourse. The version stresses on the point that since synonymity of two expressions is a function of their semantics, any account of synonymity in ordinary language would bound to be futile without concentrating on variation of requirement. In this connection Goodman writes:

"If we overlook this variation and seek a fixed criterion of sameness of meaning that will at once conform to these differing usages and satisfy our theoretical demands, we are doomed to perpetual confusion".¹

Now, as a result of introducing the concept of degrees of synonymity in ordinary language, synonymy of two expressions would not be a matter of exact synonymy rather a matter of more or less likeness of meaning. Quine writes:

"..... the ultimately fruitful notion of synonymy will be one of degree : not the dyadic relation of a as synonymous with b, but the tetradic relation of a as more synonymous with b than c with d".²

However, the point to be remembered here is that introducing of degrees is not enough to explain the notion of synonymity. We are still in need of a criterion to consider two or more linguistic expressions having greater or lesser degree of likeness of meaning.

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1. Goodman, Nelson, "On Likeness of Meaning" in Semantics And the Philosophy of Language, University of Illinois Press, 1952, p. 73
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