

Chapter - v

**On the possibility of Autonomy
of
Analytic Statement**

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Our earlier discussion has shown that analytic statements as distinguished from non-analytic statements are of considerable interest to philosophers. As underlying reason it has been pointed out, once we know that a certain statement is analytic, we know it to be true without any further investigation of the world. Hence, general tendency is to treat analytic statements as autonomous statements and it is said that whereas observation of the world is required to know the truth of non-analytic statements, autonomy of an analytic statement seems to be the essence of it.

Now, the point is that from the preceding chapter it appears that the process of understanding an expression cannot go without referring to intended meaning or context. Hence, referring to intended meaning or speaking of context-dependence stands as question-mark before analyticity of the so-called analytic statements.

In this connection, arise two important answer-begging questions such as,

- (a) Is it really possible to draw a clear-cut distinction between analytic and non-analytic statements?
- (b) Can we speak of eternal truths in connection with analytic statements?

However, the above two questions should not be considered as questions totally different from each other. Rather, they should be viewed as somehow interdependent. In fact, to deny the distinction between analytic and non-analytic statements is nothing but rejection of the concept of eternal truth. In the same manner, rejection of the concept of eternal truth is another way to deny the very existence of the so-called analytic statements.

Anyway, discussion on the above two questions is not at all an easy task, since it has far-reaching consequences on other philosophical issues pertaining to metaphysics, epistemology and so on. Hence, without going into details, I propose to discuss here two main lines of thought adopted by the philosophers in connection with the above questions. And in this respect, I would like to show that since literal meaning is not the only concern of analytic statements and since such statements somehow depend on full-blooded meaning, it becomes somewhat difficult to draw a rigid distinction between analytic and non-analytic statements.

In connection with the possibility of rigid distinction between analytic and synthetic statements some philosophers are of opinion that it is not only the case that such distinction cannot be drawn rather, thinking of such distinction is merely an illusion. They deny the existence of a totally separate class of statements called analytic statements. Now, in order to establish this particular view, philosophers have taken different measures. Hence, with a view to deny the existence of such distinction Quine

has adopted two stand-points. From one stand-point he has tried to explain the notion of analyticity with the help of some allied concepts like synonymy, self-contradictory, necessary, etc. on the assumption that if any one of these could be satisfactorily explained, then other concepts could be explained in terms of it. Now, in absence of a satisfactory explanation of any of these concepts, Quine rejects the notion of analyticity as unexplained one. From another stand-point, he considers 'experience' as the final court of appeal and points out that it would be wrong to think that a class of statements which are accepted once as true, would be true for ever. In other words, according to Quine it would be wrong to identify analytic truth as eternal truth. Quine thinks that in principle, possibility of revision belongs to any statement whatsoever. Hence, no statement is immune to revision. Regarding the possibility of revision Quine holds that our conceptual system is a massive alliance of beliefs which face the tribunal of experience collectively and not independently and when trouble strikes revisions can come.¹ Thus, possibility of revision does deny not only the sharp distinction between analytic and non-analytic statements, but eternal truths involving in analytic statements as well.

1. Quine, W.V.O., "Two Dogmas of Empiricism", in From a Logical Point of View, Harvard University Press, 1953, p. 41.

Philosopher like Morton G. White also felt the need for dropping the myth of a sharp distinction between analytic and synthetic statements. With this end in mind he has put forward the following arguments. Firstly, he points out that the term 'self-contradictory' used in the definition of analytic statement 'the negation of an analytic statement would be self-contradictory' is an ambiguous term. It becomes really difficult to decide exactly in what sense the term should be considered. Now, in whatever sense it may be used, this particular term may be taken in the sense of producing some discomfort. If it be the case, White thinks, discomfort produced by denying an analytic statement like 'All men are rational animal' and discomfort produced by denying synthetic or non-analytic statement like 'Snow is white' would only be a matter of degree.¹ Hence, speaking of rigid distinction between these two types of statements becomes somewhat difficult.

Secondly, White thinks that any attempt to explain analyticity in terms of synonymy would be of no avail since the notion of synonymy itself lacks a proper criterion.

Following another line of thought, some philosophers, on the contrary, argues that our use of analytic statement not only points to the very existence of analytic statements, but to the clear-cut distinction between analytic and synthetic as well.

1. White, Morton, G., *The Analytic and the Synthetic: An Untenable Dualism*, in Semantics and the Philosophy of Language, ed. by Linsky, L., University of Illinois Press, 1952, pp. 281-282.

According to them, it is really hard to believe that there is no distinction between two statements like 'All bachelors are unmarried' and 'There is a book on this table'. Hence, they are of opinion that philosophers who try to ignore the distinction between analytic and synthetic statements, actually possess some beliefs which are somewhat incorrect. One such belief is that there are analyticities and synonymies of a deeper nature that can be discovered not by the lexicographer or by the linguist but only by the philosopher.¹ Another such belief considers expressions like analyticity, synonymy, etc. as technical expressions and thinks that they can not be satisfactorily explained. In fact, philosophers possessing such beliefs fail to realise that expressions like analyticity, synonymy, etc. would not be required to be explained if they had not previous usages. According to Grice and Strawson,

"There can be no law where there is no customs,
or rules where there are not practices".²

Anyway, my point is that since literal meaning is not the only concern of analytic statements, drawing of any sharp distinction between analytic and non-analytic statements becomes somewhat difficult. And for showing it we can go through the following two definitions of analytic statements.

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1. Putnam, Hilary, Mind, Language and Reality, Cambridge University 1986, pp. 36-37.
 2. Grice, H.P. and Strawson, P.F., "In Defense of a Dogma", in Classics of Analytic Philosophy, (ed. by Ammerman, Robert R., Tata McGraw Hill Publishing Co. Ltd., p. 349.

According to one, 'in an analytic statement the predicate repeats the subject in whole or part'. Another definition points out that 'negation of an analytic statement would be self-contradictory'. Now, following the definitions although it may appear that analytic statements are quite independent of context, a little reflection would enable us to show that analytic statements are not totally context-independent.

In the first place, in order to understand the repetition of 'bachelor' into 'unmarried man', 'procrastination' into 'putting things off', 'oculist' into 'eye-doctor' etc. what is required is the prior knowledge that 'bachelor' and 'married man', 'procrastination' and 'putting things off', 'oculist' and 'eye-doctor' are but synonymous expressions. The knowledge of synonymy is all that enable us to recognise the analytic statements and hence, regarded as context of such statements.

Secondly, it has been said that the negation of an analytic statement 'Rose is rose' would involve self-contradiction. Now, the point is that, without having a concept of rose the negation of the above statement does not involve self-contradictoriness. According to Justus Hartnack, to have a concept about something implies the existence of something which is independent of the person who knows the concept. The concept is that which determines how the relevant words and expressions are used; in other words, concept determines the rules of depth grammar. Now, since such rules carry with them a certain necessity the violation of rules

involves contradictions.¹ Hence, knowledge of rules along with its application is regarded as context here.

That analytic statement does not exclusively depend on literal meaning can be shown by the following facts.

(i) If literal meaning were the sole concern of analytic statements and intension would not be counted as a factor at all, then statements like 'Dunlop is Dunlop', 'Rabindranath is Rabindranath' would be treated simply as analytic statements. Now, the fact is that although the above statements appear as analytic in their surface structure, actually they are not so.

(ii) While trying to get the pupil acquainted with the synonymous words, a teacher may utter the expression 'bachelors are unmarried men'. Here, the expression in any way, would not be counted as analytic statement. In fact, this particular use stands on the way to treat 'bachelors are unmarried men' as analytic statement.

(iii) If analytic statements were quite independent of context and literal meaning were the only concern of such statements, then all the sentences constructed out of synonymous terms as defining in a dictionary could be counted as analytic.

Anyway, the above account clearly points out that the literal meaning is not all to determine analyticity of a statement.

1. Hartnack, Justus, Language and Philosophy, Mouton, Paris, 1972, p. 21.

In other words, we are in need of something other than literal meaning to determine analyticity. Hence, if analytic statement be called as context-free statement, it is only immediate or remote context we are referring to.

Now, the moment we arrive at the point that it is impractical to think of rigid distinction between analytic and synthetic statements, we get the instant answer of the question namely, 'can we speak of eternal truths in connection with analytic statements?' In fact, in absence of a rigid distinction these two types of statements cannot be treated as exclusively separate class of statements. Accordingly it follows that analytic or eternal truth and synthetic or contingent truth cannot be treated as totally two distinct types of truth. According to Sibajiban Bhattacharyya, due to change of the concept of eternal truth the distinction between analytic and synthetic has been reduced to a difference in degree. Propositions of logic and pure mathematics considered as eternal truth down the ages, seem to have suffered at the hands of modern logicians. Hence, it becomes somewhat difficult to maintain that eternal truths would remain the same forever and forever. And consequently, it would be difficult also to speak of analytic statement as such, rather analytic to a relative system.¹

1. Bhattacharyya, Sibajiban, "The Concept of A priori", in The Visva-Bharati Journal of Philosophy, Vol. II, Number I, August 1965, p. 39.

The above discussion shows that attempt to clarify the notion of analyticity leads to the requirement of clarification of two other allied concepts such as, concept of synonymy and the concept of meaning. In course of discussion on these three notions, it has been noticed that each of the notions had to face certain questions peculiar to its own. Now, in addition to such questions, two general questions may also be raised in the following form:

(i) Should we consider any of these three notions as more fundamental at least in the present context?

(ii) If clarification of the notion of analyticity requires the help of the other two notions such as synonymy and meaning, would it be possible to draw a line of distinction between the sphere of epistemology and the sphere of language?

In connection with (i) I would like to point out that the earlier discussion on the three notions such as analyticity, synonymy and meaning reveals the fact that in the present context, the role of synonymy is more fundamental than the remaining two. Synonymy plays a significant role in explaining analyticity on the one hand and the meaning on the other. A little reflection on analyticity and meaning would make the point clear.

Anyway, an analytic statement has been defined as a statement in which 'predicate is already contained in the subject'. Now, in order to understand the underlying principle of an analytic

statement we are to know what is meant by the phrase 'predicate is contained in the subject'. And to know it we have no other way than to look at the notion of synonymy. It is only with the help of this notion that we come to know how an expression can repeat itself in guise of another expression. Thus, one who does not know that 'oculist' and 'eye doctor' are synonymous expressions would fail to grasp the statement 'An oculist is an eye-doctor' as an analytic one. Without the presupposition of the notion of synonymy, analytic statements like 'Bachelors are unmarried men', 'Procrastination means putting things off', 'Gradually means bit by bit' can in no way be explained. Hence, philosophers feel the need to find out the criterion of synonymy. It has been thought that it is only with the help of such criterion that analyticity can properly be explained. Hence, sometimes it is said that analyticity of a statement follows from the synonymy of the terms involved therein.

In the same way it can be pointed out that one's understanding of the notion of meaning necessarily presupposes his understanding of the notion of synonymy. According to Alston,

".... in saying what the meaning of an expression is, what we do is not to designate some entity which could be called the meaning of the expression, but rather to exhibit another expression which has some sort of equivalence with the first".¹

1. Alston, P., "Meaning and Use", in The Theory of Meaning, ed. by Parkinson, G.H.R., Oxford University Press, 1978, p. 146.

Hence, without the prior knowledge of the notion of synonymy meaning of an expression can in no way be determined. Now the point is that with the help of the notion of synonymy we can determine not only meaning of an expression, but can convert theories of meaning into theories of synonymy. If meaning of an expression would always be another expression, question like 'what do we mean by meaning of an expression' should not arise. Hence, the basic question of meaning 'what would be the criterion to determine meaning of an expression?' would turn into the question 'what would be the criterion to determine a synonymous expression serving as meaning of another expression?' As a result, the so-called theories of meaning would take the following forms. 'The meaning of an expression is its referent' would turn into 'the meaning of an expression is another expression having the same referent', 'the meaning of an expression is an idea' would be 'the meaning of an expression is another expression evoking the same idea', 'the meaning of an expression is its use' would turn into 'meaning of an expression is another expression having the same use' and so on. Moreover, the role of synonymy is equally significant even when 'meaning of an expression' is considered as understanding a process. The particular process involves two types of meaning such as, intended meaning and received meaning. And it is only on the synonymy of these two types of meaning that understanding an expression depends. Absence of such synonymy results in misunderstanding or misinterpretation.

Hence, it appears that without taking into account the fundamental role of synonymy, any explanation of the notion of analyticity and the notion of meaning would bound to be incomplete.

Now, in connection with (ii) it can be said that since explanation of a concept of epistemology, i.e. analyticity cannot go without explaining two concepts of language such as, synonymy and meaning, question may naturally arise regarding the jurisdiction of different branches of philosophy in general and epistemology and language in particular. In dealing with such question, I think it necessary to know the exact relation between philosophy and language. Philosophy has been defined as understanding and appreciating of life and universe. Now, thinking and understanding of life and universe means thinking and understanding of certain problems formulated in a language. Hence, language is a necessary condition (though not sufficient) for philosophical thought.¹ In fact, without a language it is hard to think, to understand and so on. And from this it does not follow that philosophical problems and problems of language are identical, that is to say, area of discussion in respect of philosophy and language is the same. It is only to say that since philosophical problems are formulated in a language they have some sort of dependence on language. Hence, clarification of the problems of language is a necessary step to

1. Hartnack, Justus, Language and Philosophy, Mouton, The Hague, Paris, 1972, p. 9.

understand philosophical problems properly. Thus, language makes its appearance as a distinct branch of philosophy and has been considered as a subject of study.

Anyway, as a distinct branch of philosophy, language should not be considered in the same way as epistemology or other branches of philosophy are considered. Philosophy of language should better be treated as an area in the philosophical investigation of conceptual knowledge. It is that area which seeks to learn what can be learnt about conceptual knowledge from the manner in which such knowledge is expressed and communicated in a language.

A little reflection will show us that due to the pervasive nature of language problems concerning language crop up in almost all the branches of philosophy and consequently, it becomes somewhat difficult to mark a clear-cut jurisdiction of language. Metaphysics as a branch of philosophy has been roughly characterised as an attempt to formulate the most general and pervasive facts about the world and some philosophers have tried to get at some of these fundamental facts by considering the fundamental features of the language we use to talk about the world. Alston thinks that, Plato points to the pervasive nature of language while he says that if a number of individuals have a common name, we assume them to have a corresponding idea.¹

1. Alston, P., Philosophy of Language, Prentice-Hall of India Private Ltd, New Delhi, 1988, pp. 1-2.

Like metaphysics, logic as a branch of philosophy is very much concerned with language. Logic has been defined as an attempt to devise criteria for separating valid from invalid inferences. Now, analysis of an inference depends on an analysis of the statements that figure as premises and conclusions. According to Alston, the form of statement on which depends the validity or invalidity of an inference is nothing but the kinds of terms the statements contain and the way in which these terms are combined in the statement.¹

Epistemology or science of knowledge meets with language in connection with a number of problems and among those the problem of analyticity is mentionworthy. Regarding analytic knowledge questions arise in the following forms: In what way the particular notion of analyticity can be explained? That is to say, in what way an analytic statement expressing analytic knowledge can be identified? Can we identify such a statement as merely an a priori statement? Or, can we identify an analytic statement as merely a necessary statement? Again, since in an analytic statement the subject term and the predicate term are but synonymous expressions or expressions having the same meaning question may arise : Can the notion of analyticity be defined in terms of the notion of synonymity? Or, in terms of the notion of meaning? Hence, questions concerning

1. Alston, P., Philosophy of Language, Prentice-Hall of India Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1988, p. 3.

analytic knowledge inevitably lead to the questions like 'what it is for an expression to have meaning? 'What do we mean when we say that two expressions are synonymous?'

All the above questions make one point clear that explanation of some concepts of epistemology presupposes explanation of some concepts involving in language. Hence, the problems of epistemology may turn into problems of language in normal course admitting no sharp demarcation between these two branches of philosophy. And I think that since philosophy deals with the conceptual knowledge of the universe as a whole, any clear-cut demarcation among the different branches of philosophy should not be entertained. Though there are differences among the various branches of philosophy, a deeper understanding reveals that such differences are not fundamental ones; they are rather apparent and imposed distinctions.