

## P R E F A C E

The present thesis, entitled "Empiricism and the problem of Meaning" has been developed to reveal a significant relation between meaning, truth and experience in the context of the philosophies of the empiricists, both classical and recent, the reason simply being that there is no meaning of experience common to all empiricists. Simply speaking, the consistent meaning of experience has not been carried out. Experience has various meanings as idea, sense-data, sense-experience, things, objects, states-of-affairs or facts and above all as structure. Therefore, our choosing the present topic has been prompted by two considerations. First, we should frankly admit that the empirical criterion of meaning as formulated by the empiricists either of the classical type or of the recent type (i.e. what we call logical positivism now a days) cannot solve the basic problem of meaning even in the primary sense. Secondly, the variations just emerged in the way of using experience in more than one sense have aroused the curiosity of the sensible man as to how to determine meaning. Even the traditional empiricists like Locke, Berkeley and Hume exemplify the using of experience in more than one way. That is why, alternative explanations, suggestions and criticisms have been offered by a number of critical exponents all of whom support varying measures showing the problem of meaning in the context of empirical philosophy. What is more characteristic of the recent trend of empiricism is that some twentieth century scholars

of the empirical tradition have brought experience to a logical conclusion. Logical positivists develop the theory of meaning under the verification theory through the logical analysis of language and experience in an Wittgensteinian manner as it was first shown in the *Tractatus*. But we cannot take it too far. Logical analysis is required, but meaning does not solely depend upon logical analysis minus other factors, viz. psychological, epistemological and a priori factors. Meaning depends upon the whole situation. So in wielding the meaning-situation subjective factors play a vital role which we shall try to show in the course of our discussion throughout the whole thesis. Meaning depends upon many factors and thus meaning has some related fields of knowledge, such as experience, truth, language, communication, verifiability, and confirmability. Notwithstanding these possibilities regarding meaning, what binds together all empiricists is that they try to restrict the use of experience only in a literal sense. By experience they wanted to mean the experiencing of particular existences. They did it from the objective side viewing their objective significance. But experience, if used this way, cannot take us far. The difficulty is due to the fact that all empiricists including the traditional ones sometimes wandered away from the true spirit of empiricism or they tried to restrict it to the limits of the perceptible, given world or they have been prompted by the idea to search after a basic element in knowledge. In both the senses as stated above, they wanted to make direct reference to things or objects. The search

for meaning is 'at once' a logical inquiry and an empirical investigation. This is more due to the over-emphasis upon the verifiability theory of meaning. Thus the meaning-problem is so touchy a problem that even a humble and ordinary man like myself, while philosophizing, is intrigued by this baffling problem. So there is not only that the meaning-problem has not been discussed, but the meaning-problem is such a problem which can be discussed again and again from a certain standpoint.

Secondly, the meaning-problem itself is very much an interesting problem from the epistemological view-point as well as from a practical aspect when we speak more and more of communication as a trend in many developing sciences. Otherwise, generalisations and a universal system of knowledge could not have been possible. As soon as we claim to have communication, we equally claim to have the meaningfulness and truth of these universal systems of knowledge, statements, rules etc. It is true indeed, that the problem of meaning and truth has been severally discussed, yet one feels encouraged to discuss this problem once again for the simple reason that no definite solution regarding the problem of meaning is at hand. On the other hand, there are alternative possibilities, suggestions and systematic analysis which actually encourage me to venture into this field. And what we have felt more striking is that, while discussing the problem of meaning, we also differ from those who have discussed and have been discussing the meaning-problem only in the light of ~~the~~ logical positivism alone. The meaning-problem is also characteristic of

the traditional empiricists. We may pause here a little that Locke in his Essay did not raise the problem of meaning save and except his discussion on language, ideas, signification and communication of ideas. Locke did not exactly utter the word, meaning, but in the course of his discussion on language and general signs which are made to stand for general ideas, it may be presumed that his analysis of language leads to the significance and, therefore, meaning of ideas. Locke himself was associated with the analysis of words, concepts which stand for ideas but clearly it does not reveal. An analysis of Locke's study of language, signification of words shows that the meaning problem was implicit in the writings of Locke. Frankly speaking, the British empiricists had a mind to develop the concept of empiricism in philosophy, but in the course of their discussion, the problem of meaning was occasioned by their analysis of language, signification and abstract and general use of terms etc. Similarly, Berkeley's achievement on idea, of course, supports our view that idea is meaning. Thus the problem of meaning is raised in Berkeley (Ref. The Principles of Human Knowledge by Berkeley, pp. 86, 91). Hume also says, the meaning of a word is an idea for which it stands or 'which it represents'. In Book I of the Treatise Hume develops the theme of meaning of something which 'the word represents or means'. Hume, of course, upholds the picture theory or the image theory of meaning. Hume says, an idea is a picture or an image. Therefore, our attempt

is also to show a historical development of empiricism as well as to make a comparative study, thereby forming a link between the two trends, both old and new in epistemology.

Therefore, we find that, for several reasons, the meaning-problem has become an allied problem to empiricism. The difficulties are apparently numerous and crushing. To speak more clearly, the determination of meaning in the context of experience is all the more a difficult task when we see that the true meaning of experience has been jeopardised both by a logically extended and a narrow meaning of experience. In the philosophies of Locke, Berkeley and Hume, even experience is not taken in its total sense and we know moreover, experience is not used in one single sense. So it is clear that the area of experience has not been properly measured and the problem becomes very acute when recent empiricists identify meaning with experience and meaning with truth unerrantly. Recent empiricists are of the opinion that experience cannot give us a notion of universality and that general statements are not the direct product of experience. They emphasize more and more upon the verifiability principle. 'The meaning of a proposition lies in its method of verification'. According to the principle of verifiability, a metaphysician's assertions are without meaning. The logical positivists thought that they had derived the principle of verifiability from the Tractatus. In the Tractatus Wittgenstein wrote, 'to understand a proposition means to know

'what is the case, if it is true'. Is meaning identical with truth - a question naturally arises. It is quite a step to identify a proposition's meaning with its method of verification. Wittgenstein, of course, wrote that the logical positivists misinterpreted him. It was his intention to get clear about the use of a sentence or word. Whatever its origin, it soon came to be regarded as the basic tenet of logical positivism which is more than to formalise the techniques of Mach and Pearson. The principle of verifiability is neither an empirical generalisation nor a tautology. If we strongly support the verifiability theory of meaning, it, then, follows that the ultimate referents or objectives are empirical facts. Logical analysis of the world of experience as pictured in propositions ascertaining the existence of the world would thus bring us to facts. Even serious difficulties arose when Schlick tried to explain what he meant by 'experience'. First, Schlick's earlier version of the verifiability theory (of meaning) identifies verifiability and hence meaning with its reducibility to experience. Experience "verifies" propositions and, therefore, the criterion of the solubility of a problem is its reducibility to possible experience. Secondly, his alienating the content from structure leads to the idea that scientific knowledge is always knowledge of structure as distinct from the 'enjoyment' or 'living through' of experience. In short, meaning is logical implication. As a result, they relate meaning and experience in a particular way. This is more due to the fact that they embrace the verifiability principle to determine both

meaning and truth in the field of experience. To speak of the *prima facie* view of experience, verification is important and some statements may be verified what are called basic propositions or protocol statements. We agree to the view that the recent empiricists or logical empiricists are right when they say that without any correspondence between language and fact, it is almost impossible to talk about the world at all. But the problem becomes a cumbrous one when we consider that language consists essentially of nothing but atomic propositions; that Wittgenstein conceives of language as truth-functional and that basic propositions do speak of everything. In retrospect, therefore, we say that we need verification of statements to strengthen our footholds in what we experience. Science cannot move without verification. Notwithstanding this, verification is not the ultimate criterion of judging things of the world of experience, since verification has to involve many difficulties, for example, the meaningfulness of private experience statements, the meaning and significance of false statements and of negative facts in the light of the truth-falsehood distinction. Even science cannot do its best if she has to depend upon verification at every step. And the meaningfulness of general proposition or general empirical statements cannot be actually verified; we do understand the meaning of a sentence without thinking in the least of its verifiability. Even Newton did not mean that his generalisations were not derived from experience regarding the law of gravitation etc. So there is no good reason to plead for verification in an

ultimate empirical sense; in modern terminology the empiricists try to solve the problem of meaning of universal statements by reducing them to a set of basic propositions which, they believe, are at least logically fundamental and the meaning of which can be directly determined by experience. If experience is a logically twisted experience, then statements minus experience and properties of things do mean only structure. And, therefore, recent empiricists hold a very startling view that experience for them means only structure. But our demands for meaning certainly do not stop with the formal structure of a sentence. We do not admire this type of logically twisted experience. Experience has a broader significance. The fundamental mistake lies with the empiricists is that they obviously deny that subjective experiences have any binding significance at all. They say, subjective experience cannot be made a subject-matter of our inter-subject understanding. But experience cannot be taken up from the impersonal view-point. It should be inter-personal. Therefore, in this sense, we shall try to show that experience has other meanings. In this sense, we shall also plead for a view of experience according to which experience does neither mean structure, nor does it mean mere experience of particular things or objects, nor does it mean the mere objectivity of thought, but experience means also the individual's own conscious experience through which an inter-subjective communication of truth, sharability of thoughts be possible.

Therefore, in the epistemic criterion of meaning we raise



such questions as what is empiricism? What is the meaning of empiricism? What is the area of experience? What are the conditions of the validity of experience? We have to strictly determine all these questions in the light of experience alone.

If we are substantially in agreement with what we said before, we can definitely show a significant relation between meaning and experience and meaning and truth. What is manifest from the above is that empiricists have taken diverse stands only due to the fact that they have taken experience in an objective way i.e., by experience they mean experience of only particular things.

Therefore, an attempt can be made plausible in Chapter I that an inter-subjective understanding is necessary both for communicable truth and meaning. A false denial of subjective experience just on the point of objectivity is not at all a happy commitment for the empiricists. Experience, although taken originally by them to reach a kind of certainty, was used in a very particular sense, and, therefore, meaning was committed to a particular aspect of experience. In Chapter II it is shown that we are confronted with certain difficulties if experience be the basis of meaning. If experience be the determinant of meaning, then, we cannot speak of universal statements and truth in general. In philosophy of language, semantic analysis is best exemplified when we make a comparative study between experience

and the meaning-content of its corresponding statement. In mere sense-perception of objects it is possible where the elements of knowledge are simple and where our knowledge is about particular objects. Yet the problem carries us further regarding the communication of truth in general. We do speak of both meaning and experience, because both meaning and experience presuppose a standard of truth equally communicable to and sharable by others. So we can, however, try to show a cementing relation between meaning, truth and experience which is possible due to the fact that our subjective experiences, if bound together, can give us a unity of knowledge. Chapter III is concerned with what is called the correspondence theory of truth. In this chapter we have tried to show that an alternative theory of correspondence can easily be formulated if we are able to bridge over a gap between those experiences which are observed and those which are not observed. Correspondence does not really mean this or that but correspondence means a correspondence having a wider significance. In Chapter IV it can be shown that for a joint programme of the meaning-truth relation, truth and falsehood distinctions are necessary in spite of our maintaining the correspondence theory of truth. We cannot show the relation between meaning and truth construed in a particular way. Otherwise, false statements could not have been meaningful. And we have tried to show that truth and falsehood notions negatively are also dependent upon our subjective experience which is obviously a fact to claim our objectivity in knowledge-relation. In Chapter V our deep concern

is that universal statements are also meaningful. Although it is ordinarily doubted how can universal statements be meaningful, when we see that the universal statement is not the direct fruit of experience, yet the finest solution is that universal statements and the meaningfulness of empirical statements are obviously the products of experience. No systematic study or enquiry is possible without generalisations and a universality of knowledge. In Chapter VI our concern is to show that communication is possible between the subjective minds. Our experiences, although subjective are yet to communicate to each other for ensuring a universal system of knowledge as well as for the communication of truth in general.

While proposing and chalking out the plan of my thesis, I, none the less, felt encouraged by my honest conscience to make a number of acknowledgements which I note here in this preface. My acknowledgement is due to Dr. Santosh Bandyopadhyay, M.A., Ph.D. formerly Director-Professor of the Department of Philosophy, Viswa-Bharati University for his personal inspiration and encouragement to undertake this great task and for his kindly giving me the permission to utilize the library of the centre of Advanced study in Philosophy of the same University now and then. In this connection I also remember the constant co-operation of Sri Ranjan Sen, M.A., Lib.Sc. of Viswa-Bharati University for using the books from the library. I also thank Sri Ramen Bose of North Bengal University for typing out the thesis in

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While writing this preface I also need to mention the works done by others. But in this short preface it is not possible to keep space for them all, although I shall mention them in the bibliographical column of my thesis. Therefore, with due apology I only mention some important works which have been most suggestive to me for the preparation of my thesis. Among the books consulted which I have felt most necessary for my purpose are C.R.Morris' Locke Berkeley Hume, Jonethan Bennett's Locke Berkeley Hume, O'Connor's Locke, Warnock's Berkeley, Basson's Hume, James Hoxon's Hume's Philosophical development, B.Russell's An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth, our Knowledge of the External World, Hume's Knowledge - Its Scope and Limits, The Problems of Philosophy, Bergmann's The Metaphysics of Logical Positivism, J.O.Urmson's

Philosophical Analysis, A.J.Ayer's The Foundations of Empirical Knowledge, The Problem of Knowledge, J.N.Mohanty's Edmund Husserl's Theory of Meaning, W.M.Urben's Language and Reality, O'Connor's Correspondence Theory of Truth, K.Polanyi's Personal Knowledge and John Hospers's An Introduction to Philosophical Analysis.\*

In this connection, I equally need to mention some important articles and compilations which have also been a great source of inspiration to me for collecting materials for my thesis. The important articles consulted are M.Schlick's "Positivism and Realism", "On the Meaning of Propositions" ("Positivism and Realism"), E.J.Durston's "Berkeley's Theory of Meaning", R.G.O'Shaughnessy's "On Having Something in Common" and Timothy, L.S.Sprigge's "The Privacy of Experience".

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\* Hospers' An Introduction to Philosophical Analysis has recently been published with a good deal of modifications, but his views are in many respects the same as those of the early editions.