PG PH S3 02
(DSC)

TWO YEAR MASTER'S DEGREE COURSE

(CBCS in Accordance with NEP 2020)

SEMESTER-III

CONTEMPORARY WESTERN PHILOSOPHY - I

PHILOSOPHY

Surya Kumar Bhuyan School of Social Sciences
KRISHNA KANTA HANDIQUI STATE OPEN UNIVERSITY

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COURSE INTRODUCTION

This course offers a comprehensive exploration of key developments in contemporary Western philosophy, particularly within the analytic tradition. Beginning with an overview of the nature, meaning, and scope of analytic philosophy, the course examines the foundational contributions of thinkers such as Bertrand Russell, G.E. Moore, and Ludwig Wittgenstein. Students will explore Russell's logic and logical atomism, Moore's defense of common sense and critique of idealism, and Wittgenstein's evolving views on language, meaning, and reality. The course further delves into John Dewey's pragmatic theory of knowledge and metaphysics, J.L. Austin's theory of language and speech acts, and William James' pragmatic theory of truth. It concludes with P.F. Strawson's concept of person, providing critical insights into identity and consciousness. By engaging with these thinkers, students will gain a solid understanding of core themes like logic, language, meaning, truth, and personhood that shape contemporary analytic thought.

This course consists of fifteen units. The first unit starts with "**Nature of Analytic Philosophy: General Introduction".** It includes the concepts like Meaning of Analytic Philosophy, Nature of Analytic Philosophy, Scope of Analytic Philosophy etc..

The second unit is '**'Russell: Logic & Philosophy". Russell's Concept of Logic**. This unit deals with issues like Bertrand Russell: Logic and the Essence of Philosophy, The Philosophical Method, Philosophy as Clarification, Influence on Analytic Philosophy, Logic and Epistemology, Criticisms of Russell's Logical Philosophy, The Problem of Meaning

The third unit is **"Russell's Logical Atomism"**. It deals with the issues like Meaning of Logical atomism, Explanation of Logical atomism, Characteristics of Logical atomism, Criticism etc.

The fourth unit is **"Moore's Defence of Common Sense"**. It basically discusses the concepts like what is common sense, Moore's defence of common sense, conclusion

The fifth unit is **"Moore's Refutation of Idealism"**. this unit discusses G.E.Moore views on Idealism, Refutation Of Idealism, Moore's Criticism on Kantian Idealism, The Refutation of Idealism, Moore's Criticism On Absolute Idealis, Criticism.

The sixth unit is **"Wittgenstein's Concept of Philosophy"**. The concepts included in this unit are Language, World, Isomorphic relation between language and the world, Philosophy etc.

The seventh unit is **"Wittgenstein's Concept of Saying and Showing"**. The topics discuss in this unit are What is saying of Wittgenstein, what is Showing of Wittgenstein, Criticism, Conclusion

The name of the eighth unit is '**Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Language Games'.** It deals with the issues like the Universal form of language, The Essence of language, Absolute simples, Language-Games, Family resemblance, Meaning as use, Private language

The name of the ninth unit is '**Family Resemblance of Wittgenstein**' It discusses the units like Wittgenstein and his philosophy, What is Family Resemblance, Wittgenstein's concept of Family Resemblance, Criticisms of the Family Resemblance Concept

The tenth unit is "**Picture Theory of Wittgenstein**". This unit discusses the Meaning of Picture Theory, Concept of Picture theory, Characteristics, Criticism

The elevenths unit is "**John Dewey: the Theory of Knowledge**". This unit will focus on the concepts like Dewey's View of Traditional Epistemology, Dewey On Darwin's Theory, The Error of Modern Epistemologists, The Error of Modern Epistemologists etc.

The twelfth unit is "**John Dewey' Theory of Metaphysics**". After reading this unit, one will understand the concepts like, Introduction to Dewey's naturalistic metaphysics, Analysis of the theory, Criticism, conclusion

The thirteenth unit is "**J.L. Austin's Theory of Language**". This unit deals with the issues Analysis of Austin's Philosophy of Language, meaning and truth, Speech act

The fourteenth unit is "**William James: Pragmatic Theory of Truth**". This unit discusses topics like 'Pragmatism' and pragmatism, The pragmatist maxim, Pragmatist theories of truth, The pragmatist tradition, Scepticism and fallibilism, The pragmatist conception of experience Representations etc.

The fifteenth unit is "**Strawson's Concept of Person**". The issues included in this unit are Brief outlook of Strawson's Concept of Person, Cartesianism and the "no-ownership doctrine", The concept of person as primitive, Appreciation and criticism of Strawson´s theory

While going through this course you will come across some boxes which are put on the left side or right side of the text. These boxes will give us the meanings of some words and concepts within the text. Apart from this, there will be some broad and short questions included under Activity and Check Your Progress in every unit. Activities will increase our thinking capacity because questions put in Activity are not directly derived from the text. But answers to the short questions are put in the section Answers to Check Your Progress. Besides, there are some text-related questions which are put in Model Questions. These questions will help you in selecting and mastering probable topics for the examination so that you can prepare for the examination with confidence.

UNIT 1: DEVELOPMENT OF ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY

UNIT STRUCTURE

1.1 Learning Objectives

1.2 Introdcution

1.3 Origin And Background

1.4 Nature Of Analytic Philosophy

1.5 Logical Atomism

- 1.5.1 Logical Positivism
- 1.5.2 Ordinary Language Philosophy
- 1.5.3 Common-Sense Philosophy

1.6 Contemporary Analytic Philosophy

- 1.6.1 Philosophy Of Mind
- 1.6.2 Philosophy Of Language
- 1.6.3 Philosophy Of Science
- 1.6.4 Philosophy Of Religion
- 1.6.5 Political Philosophy
- 1.6.6 Ethics In Analyitc Philosophy

1.7 Let us sum up

1.8 Further Reading

1.9 Answers To Check Your Progress

1.10 Model Questions

1.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to-

- explain the nature of analytic philosophy
- describe the history of analytic philosophy
- discuss the views of some analytic thinkers
- explain the trend of contemporary development in analytical philosophy

1.2 INTRODUCTION

Analytic philosophy, also called **linguistic philosophy**, is an approach to philosophical problems that dominanted Anglo-American philosophy from the early 20th century. The term 'analytic' conventionally indicates a method of philosophy that is characterized by an emphasis on argumentative clarity and precision.Central figures in this historical development are Gottlob Frege, Bertrand Russell, G.E. Moore, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and the logical positivists.

1.3 ORIGIN AND BACKGROUND

Analytic philosophy originated as a revolt against idealism most specifically in the work of Frege, Russell, Moore, and Wittgenstein. The English philosophy during the last decades of the 19th century was dominated by the German philosopher G.W.F.Hegel's absolute idealism. The strongest impetus of analytic philosophy came from their reaction against British Idealism, and their rejection of Hegel and Hegelianism. Analytic philosophy criticized the absolute idealism dominant then in Britain that were exemplified in the works of F. H. Bradley and J. M. E. McTaggart.

The analytic philosophers overthrow the idealist view that physical world is only a world of appearance. The first break from the idealist view occurred when Moore, in a paper entitled "The Nature of Judgment" (1899), argued for a theory of truth that implies that the physical world does have the independent existence that it is naively supposed to have. the history of the analytic movement has a strong antimetaphysical strain, and its exponents have generally assumed that the methods of science and of everyday life are the best ways of finding out the truth.

1.4 NATURE OF ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY

The development of analytic philosophy is most specifically the development of the conception of logical analysis as the distinctive form of analysis . Both Frege and Russerl made use of logical analysis as a

central strand in the analytic movement . It started with Frege's work on the *function-argument analyses*. According to this argument, simple statement like " Socrates is mortal' is not analysed into subject-predicate joined by the copula, but a fuction –argument form ('Fa') where 'Socrates' is the argment and 'x is mortal' is the function. The argument indicated by the variable 'x' is filled by the name 'Socrates' . Frege calls this the 'judgeable content' of the statement. He further develop quantificational theory, enabling him to analyze complex mathematical statements.

Russell develop the inductive rather than deductive process of logical analysis. His theory of descriptions, first presented in 'On Denoting' remains one of the celebrated topic in analytic philosophy. In this theory, (Ka) is rephrased as (Kb), which can then be readily formalized in the new logic as (Kc):

(Ka) The present King of France is bald.

(Kb) There is one and only one King of France, and whatever is King of France is bald.

(Kc) "*x* [*Kx*&"*y*(*Ky* '! *y* = *x*) & *Bx*].

Following is an outline on the development of the nature of analytic philosophy.

1.5 LOGICAL ATOMISM

The philosophy of Logical Atomism originated in the early 20th century with the development of analytic philosophy. Its principal exponent was the British philosopher Russell and the early work of Wittgenstein. Its origin can be trace back in Frege's development of predicate logic. According to this logic, Frege's argues that represent simple statements such as 'Socrates is mortal' not in subject-predicate form ('*S* is *P*', i.e., analyzing it into subject and predicate joined by the copula) but in function-argument form ('*Fa*')—taking 'Socrates' as the argument and '*x* is mortal' as the function, which yields as value what Frege calls the 'judgeable content' of the statement when the argument indicated by the variable '*x*' is filled by the name 'Socrates'.

Following the line of thought, Russerl in 1911, coined the term "logical atomism" and developed the theoy of logical atomism. The theory of logical atomism holds that the world consists of ultimate logical "facts" or "atoms" that cannot be broken down any further. Such atoms can be understood independently of other facts.

Logical atomism is the theory that the world is composed of independent facts. Knowledge is a copy, or a representation of these atomic fats. Knowledge of the world is gain only in limited bounded parts. This atomic knowledge or knowledge of this atomic facts is the most precise or accurate, for they constitute the simple, the smallest part of which the complex is comprised. A propsotion asserting an atomic fact is called an atomic propsotion. It is independent of any other atomic propostion.

Russell's theory of logical atomism consists of three interworking parts: the atomic proposition, the atomic fact, and the atomic complex. An atomic proposition, also known as an elemental judgement, is a fundamental statement describing a single entity. Russell refers to this entity as an atomic fact, and recognizes a range of elements within each fact that he refers to as particulars and universals. A particular denotes a signifier such as a name, many of which may apply to a single atomic fact, while a universal lends quality to these particulars, e.g. color, shape, disposition. Atomic complex is the system that consists of the corresponding atomic facts of the many atomic propsotins.

Wittgenstein in his *Tractatus* expanded and developed Russell's logical atomism into a comprehensive system. He explains his version of logical atomism as the relationship between proposition, state of affairs, object, and complex, often referred to as "Picture theory". He believed that these states of affairs can be expressed in the language of first-order predicate logic. So a *picture* of the world can be built up by expressing atomic facts in atomic propositions, and linking them using logical operators. He says that the objective of philosophy is not to arrive at theories, but to engage in activity, that is the logical clarification of thoughts and propositions. The *Tractatus* is based upon the doctrine of

Logical Atomism, the belief that statement are reducible by analysis to their simplest component, the ultimate of analysis and the apex of linguistic precision, thereby enabling one to construct an ideal language, eliminating confusion. The task of philosophy according to Wittgesntein was to clean up linguistic mistakes.

1.5.1 logical positivism

Logical positivism also known a logical empiricism is a philosophical movement that combines positivism with formal logic. It started in Vienna in the 1920s. The term "logical positivism" itself originated in the Vienna Circle in the 1920s. The Vienna Circle, was led principally by Moritz Schlick. Other prominent figures are Otto Neurath, Hans Hahn, and Rudolf Carnap.

Greatly influenced by the German philosopher Immanuel Kant's distinctiob between analytic and synthetic statements, as *a priori* and *a posteriori* ones respectively, the logical positivist denied the existence of any such synthetic *a priori* statements (as developed by Kant) and held that all *a priori* statements are analytic. According to the logical positivists, there are only two kinds of statements, analytic and synthetic, with all the first being *a priori* and all the second being *a posteriori*. The logical positivist has also been influenced by emperisist like George Berkeley and David Hume.

Philosophy, according to logical positivist should provide strict criteria for judging sentences as true, false and meaningless. And this judgment should be made by the use of formal logic coupled with empirical experience.

The development of logical positivist was highly influenced by the view that scientific knowledge is the only kind of factual knowledge. As scientific knowledge is empirical knowledge, logical positivism developed its best known theory of verifiability as the criterion of meaning. Also known as verification theory, it

asserts that a statement is meaningful if and only if it is empirically verifiable.Accordingly only statements that bare verifiable either by their analyticity or by empiricism were *cognitively meaningful*. As statements of metaphysics, ontology, and ethics, fail's this criterion, they were found *cognitively meaningless*. The logical positivist thereby rejected the metaphysical doctrines as not only false but also meaningless. They further conclude that while ethics and aesthetics were subjective preferences, theology and other metaphysics contained 'pseudostatements', that is neither true nor false.

A.J. Ayer's book, *Language, Truth, and Logic* can be thought of as a summary statement of and introduction to logical positivism for the English-speaking world. Ayer sets out the distinction between 'strong' and 'weak' verification. He says that a proposition is said to be verifiable, in the strong sense of the term, if, and only if, its truth could be conclusively established by experience.

Developments in logic and the foundations of mathematics, especially in the *"Principia Mathematica"* by the British philosophers Bertrand Russell and Alfred North Whitehead, also impressed the more mathematically-minded Logical Positivists. Another influential essay by Quine's, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism," (1951) makes a disposition of the supposed *analytic-synthetic distinction,* and of *reductionism.* According to Quine,each meaningful statement is equivalent to some logical construct upon terms which refer to immediate experience. This was central to the demise of logical positivism .

1.5.2 Ordinary Language Philosophy

Ordinary language philosophy also known as Linguistic Philosophy or Natural Language Philosophy is a philosophical

"theories" that uses non-technical everyday "ordinary" language to solve philosophical problems. According to ordinary language philosophy, philosophical problems frequently arise through a misuse or misunderstanding of ordinary speech.

Analytic philosophy during the late 1940s and 1950s, was possibly divided into two strains or camps, namely, ordinary language philosophy, led by John L. Austin, also known as 'Oxford philosophy,' and the later philosophy of Wittgenstein, which differed dramatically from his early work of the *Tractatus*. This break comes over the question whether analysis should be carried on primarily through and on ordinary language, or whether it should have a component of formal logic and formal language J.S. Austin in Oxford, emphasized the need to pay careful attention to our ordinary use of language. His speech-act theory, makes a distinction between locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. According to Austin, linguistic analysis can be employed as a tool in the construction of theories of language. He considers for example the various uses of the verbs like 'appear', 'look' and 'seem' as the following:

(1) He looks guilty.

(2) He appears guilty.

(3) He seems guilty.

There are clearly differences here, and thinking through such differences enables one to appreciate just how crude some of the arguments are for theories of perception that appeal to 'sense-data'.

1.5.3 Common–Sense Philosophy

The first major work of common-sense philosophy appears in Moore's paper " A Defense of Common Sense" (1925). Moore argue in favour of "the common sense view of the world," and insisted that any philosophical system whose

propositions contravene it can be rejected out of hand without further analysis.In this paper Moore argued against scepticism, that he and other human beings have known many propositions about the world to be true with certainty. Among these propositions are: “The Earth has existed for many years” and “Many human beings have existed in the past and some still exist.” Because skepticism maintains that nobody knows any proposition to be true, it can be dismissed. Furthermore, because these propositions entail the existence of material objects, idealism, according to which the world is wholly mental, can also be rejected.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: When the theory logical atomism came into light?

.....

.....

Q 2: Write the name of the propounder of logical atomism

.....

.....

Q 3: What is meant by logical atomism?

.....

.....

Q 4: Who is the author of Tractatus Logico Philosophicus

.....

.....

Q 5: What is the other name of logical positivism?

.....

.....

Q 6: When and where the term *logical positivism* was introduced?

.....

.....

Q 7: What is meant by ordinary language philosophy?

.....

.....

1.6 CONTEMPORARY THEORIES OF ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY

The notion of 'analytic philosophy' has largely expanded from the specific programs that dominated Anglophone philosophy before 1960 to a much more general notion of an 'analytic' style. Many philosophers and historians have attempted to define or describe analytic philosophy. During the 1950s, logical positivism was challenged influentially by Wittgenstein in the *Philosophical Investigations*, Quine in 'Two Dogmas of Empiricism', and Sellars in *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*. After 1960, Anglophone philosophy began to incorporate a wider range of interests, opinions, and methods.

1.6.1 Philosophy Of Mind

One branch of analytic philosophy that has been especially concerned with what is usually known as philosophy of mind or cognitive science is motivated by the logical positivist's interest in verification. Also known as logical behaviourism some of the prominent figures here have been Paul Churchland, Patricia Churchland, and Daniel Dennett.

The major debate concerned the philosophy of mind centre around the question of which materialist theory of the human mind, if any, was the correct one. The main theories were identity theory (also called reductive materialism), functionalism, and eliminative materialism.

One of the prominent figure of philosophy of mind, John Searle, suggest that the analytic thinkers obsession with the philosophy of language during the 20th century has been superseded by an emphasis on the philosophy of mind . A central focus of research in the philosophy of mind has been consciousness.

1.6.2. Philosophy Of Language

Philosophy of language is a comptemporary study tradition that investigate the relations between language, language users and the world. It also include an inquiry into the origins of language, the nature of meaning, the usage and cognition of language. It studies issues that cannot be addressed by other fields, like linguistics, or psychology. Major topics in the philosophy of language include the nature of meaning, intentionality, reference, the constitution of sentences, concepts, learning, and thought.

Philosophy of language in the Western tradition was strongly influenced by work of analytic thinkers like Gottlob Frege, Bertrand Russell, Ludwig Wittgenstein, J.L. Austin, Alfred Tarski, and W.V.O. Quine.

Kriper's for example, developed a philosophical theories of language by wedding the techniques of modal logic to a causal theory of reference. In his book *Naming and Necessity*, Kripeks put forth what has come to be known as "the modal argument" (or "argument from rigidity").He argued influentially that flaws in common theories of proper names are indicative of larger misunderstandings of the metaphysics of necessity and possibility.

1.6.3. Philosophy Of Science

Philosophy of science emerged as a distinct discipline only in the 20th century, as a rejection gainst the verificationism of the logical positivists, as well as the critiques of the philosopher of science. It was critical of the logical positivism movement, which aimed to formulate criteria for ensuring all philosophical statements' meaningfulness and objectively assessing them.

Thomas Samuel Kuhn formulation of paradigm shifts challenges the view of scientific progress as steady, cumulative

acquisition of knowledge based on a fixed method of systematic experimentation. In his book The Structure of Sceince (1962) Kuhn argue's that any progress is relative to a "paradigm," that is, the set of questions, concepts, and practices that define a scientific discipline in a particular historical period. moved on from positivism to establish a modern set of standards for scientific methodology.

Karl Popper on the other hand move on from positivism to establish a modern set of standards for scientific methodology. He rejected the classical inductivist views on the scientific method in favour of empirical falsification, according to which empirical sciences can never be proven, but can be falsified. He suggested the falsifiability criterion to judge the demarcation between science and non-science.

1.6.4. Philosophy Of Religion

While the early analytic philosophy tended to largely dismissed the subject of "religion" as part of metaphysics and therefore meaningless, some forms of contemporary analytic philosophy have proven very sympathetic to the philosophy of religion. Philosophers like William Alston, John Mackie, Alvin Platinga, Antony Flew, etc not only re-introduce new problems, but also re-study classical topics such as the nature of miracles, theistic arguments, the rationality of belief in God, concepts of the nature of God, and many more. Whereas Plantinga, Mackie and Flew debated the logical validity of the *free will defense* as a way to solve the problem of evil, Alston, worked on the nature of religious language.

1.6.5 Political Philosophy

A systematic study of contemporary analytic political philosophy started with the work of John Rawls book "A Theory of Justice" (1971) .His other notable work includes "Two Concepts

of Rules" and "Justice as Fairness". Rawls argued for a sophisticated defence of a generally liberal egalitarian account of distributive justice.

Analytic Marxism is another development of political philosophy that emerge as the school of work that seek to apply techniques of analytic philosophy modern social science such as rational choice theory to clarify the theories of Karl Marx and his successors. The best-known member of this school is G.A. Cohen. Cohen in his work *Karl Marx's Theory of History : A Defence* (1978) used logical and linguistic analysis to clarify and defend Marx's materialist conception of history.

1.6.6 Ethics in Analytic Philosophy

Whreas analytic philosophy focus on symbolic logic and empiricism, with no enthusiasm for doing ethics, ethics become a topic of interest wih the emergence of ordinary language philosopher. Thereafter philosophers working with the analytic tradition have gradually come to distinguish three major types of moral philosophy.

- Meta-ethics: it is a 20th century study of ethics that origated from the work of G. E. Moore's invitigation into the nature of ethical terms like 'good' and its theory of naturalistic fallacy on the one hand and Hume's distinction of is/ought on the other hand.

  Meta ethics is a study of ethics which investigates moral terms, statements and judgments. According to them , all statement about values both ethical and aesthetic are non-cognitive , that is they cannot b objectively verified or falsified. They are merely expression of emotion. Hence they are also called emotivist theory. Emotivism later evolved into more sophisticated non-cognitivist theories such as the expressivism of Charles Stevenson, and the universal prescriptivism of R.M. Hare.

- Normative ethics is a study which examines and produces normative ethical judgments. Analytic philosopher was sceptical of this theory . According to analytic philosophers, utilitarianism was the only non-skeptical type of ethics to remain popular. Other schools like virtue ethics, and deontology had renewed interest in ethics, against normative ethics.
- Applied ethics as a significant feature of analytic philosophy developed during 1970s as an investigates into how existing normative principles should be applied to difficult or borderline cases, often cases created by new technology or new scientific knowledge. Topics of special interest for applied ethics include environmental issues, animal rights, and the many challenges created by advancing medical science.



1.7 LET US SUM UP

- Analytic philosophy is a philosophical movement that emphasizes the study of language and the logical analysis of concepts. It often make use of formal logic, conceptual analysis, and, to a lesser degree, mathematics and the natural sciences.
- Analytic philosophy began near the turn of the century with the workd of Russerl, Moore and Wittgenstein. They analysed complex concepts and ideas through the use of symbolic logic that was codified by Russerl, Whitehead, and Frege.
- The development of analytic philosophy is marked by subsequent extensive work in later analytic and post-analytic philosophy that includesthe work carried out by Philippa Foot, R. M. Hare, J. L. Mackie, Alasdair MacIntyre, and others; political philosophy as done most notably by John Rawls and Robert Nozick; aesthetics as investigated by Arthur Danto; philosophy of religion as studied by Alvin Plantinga and Richard Swinburne; philosophy of language

carried out by many philosophers including David Kaplan, Saul Kripke, Richard Montague, Hilary Putnam, W.V.O. Quine, Nathan Salmon, and John Searle; and philosophy of mind as studied by Daniel Dennett, David Chalmers, Hilary Putnam and others. Analytic metaphysics also came into its own with the work of Saul Kripke, David Lewis, Nathan Salmon, Peter van Inwagen, P.F. Strawson, and others.



1.8 FURTHER READING

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6. Munitz, M. K, 1981, Contemporary Analytic Philosophy, Macmillan Publishing Co., New York.
7. Pradhan, R.C, 2001, Recent Developments in Analytic Philosophy, Indian Council of Philosophical Research, New Delhi.



1.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: In the early 20th century

Ans to Q No 2: Bertrand Russell and Wittgenstein

Ans to Q No 3: The theory of logical atomism holds that the world consists of ultimate logical "facts" or "atoms" that cannot be further analysed. Such atoms can be understood independently of other facts.

Ans to Q No 4: Wittgenstein

Ans to Q No 5: Logical positivism

Ans to Q No 6: In the year 1920 at Vienna Circle

Ans to Q No 7: Ordinary language philosophy is that philosophical doctrine which adopts the ordinary language as the tool of analytic philosophy in order to solve the philosophical problems.



1.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Objective questions

Q 1: What is analytic philosophy?

Q 2: What does the term 'analytic' mean in analytic philosophy?

Q 3: What is logical atomism?

Q 4: What are the principles of logical positivist?

Q 5: What is normative ethics?

Q 6: What is meta-ethics?

B) Short questions (Answer in about 100-150 words)

Q 1: What is the veification theory of positivism? Explain in brief.

Q 2: What are some of the topic discusss in 'Philosophy of mind'?

Q 3: Is metaphysical statement meaningless? Give reason for your answer.

C) Long questions (Answer in about 300-500 words)

Q 1: Who was Russerl? Discuss his contribution in the development of analytic philosophy .

Q 2: What is 'ordinary language philosophy'? Is it different from philosophy of language? Explain

Q 3: Discuss the concept of 'ethics' in analytic philosophy.

*** ***** ***

UNIT- 2: RUSSELL: LOGIC & PHILOSOPHY

UNIT STRUCTURE

1.1 Learning Objectives

2.2 Introduction

2.3 Russell's Concept of Logic

2.4 Bertrand Russell: Logic and the Essence of Philosophy

2.5 The Philosophical Method

2.6 Philosophy as Clarification

2.7 Influence on Analytic Philosophy

2.8 Logic and Epistemology

2.9 Criticisms of Russell's Logical Philosophy

2.10 The Problem of Meaning

2.11 Conclusion

2.12 Let Us Sum Up

2.13 Further Readings

2.14 Answer to Check Your Progress

2.15 Model Questions

2.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to :

- Know Bertrand Russell's contribution to the development of symbolic logic and its role in the foundations of mathematics, particularly through his works like *Principia Mathematica*.
- Explain the key features of Russell's *Theory of Descriptions* and its significance in resolving problems related to language, meaning, and non-existent entities.
- Describe the concept of *Logical Atomism* and how Russell used it to propose a correspondence between the structure of language and the structure of reality.
- Analyse Russell's philosophical method, emphasizing logic as the essence of philosophy, and his commitment to clarity, precision, and the elimination of metaphysical confusion.

- Know how to critically evaluate the limitations and criticisms of Russell's logical philosophy, including challenges to logicism, the neglect of ordinary language use, and the underemphasis on ethical and human concerns

2.2 INTRODUCTION

Bertrand Russell (1872-1970) was one of the most influential philosophers and logicians of the twentieth century. A mathematician, philosopher, and social critic, he played a central role in the development of analytic philosophy, promoting logical analysis as the primary tool for philosophical inquiry. His groundbreaking collaboration with Alfred North Whitehead on *Principia Mathematica* (1910-1913) transformed the relationship between logic, mathematics, and philosophy, laying the foundation for modern symbolic logic.

For Russell, logic was not merely a mathematical discipline or a set of formal procedures; it was the core method of philosophy itself. He believed that philosophical problems often stem from misunderstandings of language and logical structure. By employing precise logical tools, these confusions could be clarified or resolved. Russell's approach aimed to replace vague metaphysical speculation with clear, scientifically grounded analysis.

His conception of logic led to significant advancements in the philosophy of language, epistemology, and metaphysics, influencing generations of thinkers. This unit examines Russell's ideas on logic, his belief in logic as the essence of philosophy, the consequences of his logical method, and the criticisms he faced. It also highlights his lasting impact on contemporary philosophical thought.

2.3 RUSSELL'S CONCEPT OF LOGIC

The concept of logics that has been described by Bertrand Russell has been discussed as follows.

2.3.1 Logic as Symbolic Analysis

Bertrand Russell's concept of logic marked a significant evolution from the traditional Aristotelian framework. Classical logic, primarily based on syllogistic reasoning, was seen by Russell as too limited to handle the complexities of modern philosophical and mathematical problems. Instead, he embraced and advanced symbolic or mathematical logic, a more precise and formal system. For Russell, logic was not merely a set of rules for argumentation but a scientific method for analysing language, propositions, and their interrelations. He believed that logical form reveals the underlying structure of both thought and reality. By converting ordinary language into logical notation, philosophers could eliminate ambiguities, vagueness, and contradictions that often led to metaphysical confusion.

2.3.2 Logic and the Foundations of Mathematics

One of Russell's major philosophical contributions was his effort to establish the logical foundation of mathematics. In works like The *Principles of Mathematics* (1903) and *Principia Mathematica* (1910-1913), co-authored with Alfred North Whitehead, he pursued a project known as logicism. According to this view, all mathematical truths are reducible to logical truths. Russell argued that mathematical entities such as numbers, classes, and relations could be fully explained using logical terms. For example, the concept of "number" could be defined as a class of equivalent classes, and basic arithmetic operations could be derived from principles of set theory. His aim was to show that mathematics had no separate epistemological or metaphysical foundation apart from logic. Although this project faced challenges, especially due to the discovery of Russell's Paradox, it profoundly influenced both logic and the philosophy of mathematics.

2.3.3 Theory of Descriptions

Russell's Theory of Descriptions, introduced in his 1905 paper *On Denoting*, is considered one of his most significant contributions to logic and philosophy of language. The theory resolved problems associated with definite descriptions, especially those involving non-existent entities, such as "The present King of France is bald." Russell argued that such descriptions are not names but quantified logical expressions. The sentence can be Analysed as follows:

1. There exists an x such that x is the present King of France.
2. For all y, if y is the present King of France, then y is identical to x.
3. x is bald.

This logical reformulation avoided paradoxes and meaningless statements, becoming a foundational method in analytic philosophy and influencing thinkers like Wittgenstein and later philosophers.

2.4 BERTRAND RUSSELL: LOGIC AND THE ESSENCE OF PHILOSOPHY

According to Bertrand Russell logic is something that can be regarded to be the essence of philosophy. Let us discuss the about his concept of logic in details

2.4.1 Logical Atomism

Bertrand Russell developed the philosophical doctrine known as logical atomism, a theory that significantly influenced the course of twentieth-century analytic philosophy. Logical atomism posits that reality is composed of simple, discrete facts called atomic facts, each corresponding to an elementary proposition in language. This view was an extension of Russell's broader commitment to the logical analysis of language and the structure of reality.

Just as complex physical objects are made from atoms, Russell argued that complex propositions are built from simpler components. Language, when correctly analysed, reflects the world's structure. Each atomic fact represents a basic, indivisible event or state of affairs in the world, and each elementary proposition corresponds directly to one such fact. Complex statements, therefore, are constructed from combinations of these elementary propositions.

According to Russell, the structure of reality mirrors the structure of language, provided that language is properly and logically Analysed. Every meaningful proposition can ultimately be reduced to basic propositions that describe the simplest components of reality. This atomistic approach aimed to identify the foundational elements of knowledge and eliminate philosophical confusion.

For Russell, the main task of philosophy was to perform logical analysis, breaking down complex concepts into their simplest, most basic elements. Through this process, philosophers could eliminate ambiguities, contradictions, and metaphysical errors that often result from vague language or imprecise thinking. Logical atomism sought to provide a clear and precise account of how language relates to the world, establishing the foundations of knowledge.

This theory had a profound influence on later developments in analytic philosophy, notably on the early work of Ludwig Wittgenstein, whose *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* shares many of the same assumptions, and on the logical positivists of the Vienna Circle, who adopted and modified Russell's ideas in their own philosophical projects.

2.4.2 Logic as the Essence of Philosophy

Russell's philosophical methodology centred around his belief that logic is not merely a branch of philosophy but the very essence of philosophical inquiry itself. He viewed logic as the most

fundamental tool for clarifying thoughts, analysing concepts, and solving philosophical problems.

In contrast to the British idealism dominant during his early academic career, which emphasized metaphysical systems and abstract notions of reality, Russell championed a philosophy grounded in scientific rigor and logical precision. He rejected speculative metaphysics that lacked clear logical structure or testable propositions. For Russell, philosophy should adopt the same standards of clarity and argumentation as mathematics and the natural sciences.

Russell believed that philosophical problems often arise from linguistic confusions or a failure to recognize the logical structure underlying everyday statements. Logic, therefore, becomes the primary method for resolving these issues. Through logical analysis, philosophers can clarify the meanings of concepts, differentiate between what is meaningful and what is not, and avoid the traps of metaphysical obscurity.

This logical approach to philosophy was a revolutionary shift in the early twentieth century, marking a decisive move away from speculative metaphysics toward an emphasis on clarity, precision, and formal analysis. Russell's method laid the groundwork for the analytic tradition, which continues to dominate much of philosophy in the English-speaking world.

2.5 THE PHILOSOPHICAL METHOD

For Russell, philosophy is a method, not a body of doctrine. The philosophical method involves the logical analysis of concepts, aimed at clarifying thoughts and resolving confusions that arise from ordinary language. Rather than constructing grand metaphysical systems, philosophers should focus on identifying and correcting errors in reasoning and conceptual understanding.

Russell believed that many philosophical problems stem from misunderstandings of language and logic. By translating ordinary

language statements into precise logical form, philosophers can see more clearly the relationships between ideas and the assumptions embedded within them. This method allows for the resolution of philosophical puzzles that have persisted for centuries due to linguistic and conceptual confusion.

His approach contrasts sharply with traditional metaphysical speculation. For Russell, philosophy should be about breaking down complex ideas into simpler, more analysable components, much like mathematics reduces complex problems to simpler equations. This analytic method makes philosophical inquiry systematic and scientific, moving away from vague abstractions to concrete logical analysis.

2.6 PHILOSOPHY AS CLARIFICATION

A central goal of Russell's philosophical project was clarification rather than discovery. He argued that philosophy should not necessarily seek new facts about the world but should instead focus on clarifying the concepts and propositions we already use.

Logic provides the means for this clarification. According to Russell, philosophical analysis should:

- Identify ambiguous expressions and remove vagueness from discourse.
- Eliminate meaningless metaphysical speculation that lacks logical grounding.
- Analyse complex concepts to reveal their logical structure and component parts.

Russell famously said that philosophy should involve "the logical analysis of concepts". He believed that by carefully examining the language and logic of our statements, philosophers could resolve many traditional problems or show them to be based on misunderstandings. This process does not necessarily add new knowledge about the world but helps clarify what can be meaningfully said about it.

2.7 INFLUENCE ON ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY

Russell's emphasis on logic and analysis led to the rise of analytic philosophy, a movement that prioritises clarity, precision, and rigorous argumentation over speculative metaphysics. Analytic philosophers focus on problems related to language, logic, and epistemology, using formal tools to clarify issues and solve or dissolve philosophical puzzles.

Russell's method influenced a generation of philosophers, including:

- **Ludwig Wittgenstein**, particularly in his early work, the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*.
- G.E. Moore, who shared Russell's commitment to clarity and precision.
- The Vienna Circle, who developed logical positivism and sought to apply Russell's logical method to scientific language.

Russell's logical approach laid the foundation for major developments in:

- Philosophy of language, by analysing how language relates to the world.
- Philosophy of mathematics, through the logicist program.
- Epistemology, by clarifying the forms of knowledge.
- Metaphysics, approached not through speculative systems but through logical analysis.

The analytic tradition remains dominant in contemporary philosophy, and Russell's influence is a significant reason for this enduring legacy.

2.8 LOGIC AND EPISTEMOLOGY

Russell's emphasis on logic extended into his epistemology, the philosophical study of knowledge. He believed that a proper understanding of logical forms is essential for understanding the world.

Russell distinguished between two types of knowledge:

- **Knowledge by acquaintance**, which is direct and immediate, such as sense data or familiarity with a particular object.
- **Knowledge by description**, which involves knowing things through their descriptions, especially when we cannot observe them directly.

Logic serves as the bridge between these two types of knowledge. By clarifying the logical structure of descriptions, philosophers can better understand how indirect knowledge relates to direct experience.

For Russell, logic was not just a tool for mathematics or linguistic analysis but a fundamental part of human reasoning and understanding. Logical analysis helps us determine how concepts and propositions relate to the world and to each other, making it essential for epistemological inquiry.

This approach positioned logic at the centre of philosophy, not just for mathematics but for all rational inquiry. Logic, for Russell, provides the scaffolding of thought and language, enabling us to structure knowledge in a clear and reliable way.

2.9 CRITICISMS OF RUSSELL'S LOGICAL PHILOSOPHY

Despite his profound contributions, Russell's logical philosophy has faced various criticisms from contemporaries and later thinkers. Several important critiques are worth examining:

2.9.1 Limits of Logicism

Russell's logicism project, which sought to reduce all of mathematics to logic, encountered significant difficulties. The most famous problem was Russell's Paradox, which he discovered himself in set theory. The paradox arises from considering the set of all sets that are not members of themselves. If such a set exists, does it contain itself?

This paradox exposed a fundamental inconsistency in naïve set theory, undermining the logicist attempt to derive mathematics

purely from logical principles. Russell introduced the theory of types to avoid this paradox, but critics argued that this solution was artificial and overly complex.

Further problems arose with Kurt Gödel's Incompleteness Theorems (1931), which demonstrated that no sufficiently powerful formal system can be both complete and consistent. This result showed that Russell and Whitehead's attempt in Principia Mathematica to create a complete and consistent logical system for mathematics was impossible. Gödel's findings placed serious limitations on the logicist program and called into question the ultimate success of Russell's project.

2.9.2 Criticism from Ordinary Language Philosophy

Russell's focus on formal logic was also criticised by philosophers associated with ordinary language philosophy, such as Ludwig Wittgenstein (in his later work), J.L. Austin, and Gilbert Ryle. They argued that many philosophical problems stem not from formal logical errors but from misunderstandings of how language is used in everyday life.

Wittgenstein, in his later work Philosophical Investigations, rejected the idea that there is one fixed logical structure underlying all language. He introduced the concept of language games, where meaning is determined by use in specific social contexts. This view moved away from Russell's search for an ideal logical language and emphasized the pragmatic, contextual nature of meaning.

2.9.3 Overemphasis on Atomism

Russell's logical atomism has been critiqued for its reductionist tendencies. The idea that the world can be broken down into simple, independent atomic facts overlooks the interconnectedness of experience and meaning.

Later philosophers, such as W.V.O. Quine, argued for a holistic view of knowledge, rejecting the notion that individual propositions

can be isolated from the network of beliefs and experiences. Quine's web of belief concept contrasts with the atomistic picture, suggesting that knowledge is an interconnected system rather than a collection of discrete facts.

2.9.4 Neglect of Ethics and Human Concerns

Another criticism is that Russell's logical method tends to marginalize important areas of philosophy, such as:

- Ethics
- Aesthetics
- Political philosophy (despite Russell's own political activism and writings)

By focusing on logic and language, Russell may have neglected the existential, emotional, and moral dimensions of human life, which cannot always be adequately captured by formal analysis. Critics argue that philosophy should also address the lived experiences of human beings, not just abstract logical problems.

2.10 THE PROBLEM OF MEANING

Although Russell made important contributions to the analysis of language, his work did not fully resolve the broader philosophical problem of meaning. His theories focused on how language refers to objects or facts in the world, but later philosophers pointed out that meaning often arises from the practical use of language in specific contexts.

Ordinary language philosophers, influenced by Wittgenstein's later work, argued that meaning is not solely a matter of reference or logical form but is rooted in social practices, context, and communication. This critique led to further philosophical exploration of pragmatics, semantics, and the philosophy of language, areas that Russell's logical philosophy did not fully address.

2.11 CONCLUSION

Bertrand Russell's conception of logic and its role in philosophy revolutionized modern thought. He transformed logic from a narrow discipline focused on syllogisms and deduction into a powerful analytical tool capable of clarifying complex problems in mathematics, language, epistemology, and metaphysics.

Russell's belief in logic as the essence of philosophy led to the emergence of analytic philosophy, fundamentally changing how philosophers approach their work. His emphasis on clarity, precision, and logical rigor remains a hallmark of philosophical inquiry today.

Despite criticisms-from the limits of logicism to the neglect of ordinary language and human concerns-Russell's contributions remain foundational. His Theory of Descriptions, logical atomism, and efforts to ground mathematics in logic continue to influence contemporary debates in logic, the philosophy of language, and epistemology.

In the broader history of philosophy, Bertrand Russell stands as a figure who redefined the philosopher's task, replacing speculative metaphysics with rigorous logical analysis. While later thinkers have modified or rejected parts of his program, Russell's legacy endures as a champion of reason, clarity, and intellectual integrity.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Who was Bertrand Russell?

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Q 2: What is symbolic logic according to Russell?

.....

Q 3: What was the goal of Principia Mathematica?

.....

Q 4: What is logicism?

.....

Q 5: What problem does Russell's Theory of Descriptions address?

.....

Q 6: What is Logical Atomism?

.....

Q 7: How did Russell view the role of logic in philosophy?

.....

Q 8: What are the two types of knowledge according to Russell?

.....

Q 9: What was Gödel's contribution that challenged Russell's project?

.....

Q 10: Why did ordinary language philosophers criticize Russell?

.....



2.12 LET US SUM UP

- Bertrand Russell was a central figure in the development of analytic philosophy and modern symbolic logic.
- Russell viewed logic as the core method of philosophy, essential for clarifying philosophical problems.
- He advanced symbolic logic beyond traditional Aristotelian syllogisms to address complex philosophical and mathematical issues.
- Russell's project of logicism aimed to reduce all of mathematics to logical principles.
- In Principia Mathematica, Russell and Whitehead attempted to derive mathematics from set theory and logic.
- Russell's Theory of Descriptions clarified how language refers to objects, solving problems involving non-existent entities.
- The theory reformulated definite descriptions into logical expressions to avoid paradoxes and ambiguities.
- Logical atomism posits that reality is composed of atomic facts corresponding to elementary propositions.
- Russell believed that the structure of reality mirrors the structure of language when properly Analysed.
- He argued that philosophy should focus on logical analysis rather than speculative metaphysics.

- For Russell, philosophical problems often arise from linguistic confusions, which logic can resolve.
- He distinguished between knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description, connecting epistemology with logic.
- Russell's method laid the groundwork for analytic philosophy, influencing Wittgenstein, Moore, and the Vienna Circle.
- His logical philosophy faced challenges, including Russell's own paradox in set theory.
- Gödel's Incompleteness Theorems showed the limits of Russell's logicist program, proving that formal systems cannot be both complete and consistent.
- Ordinary language philosophers like Wittgenstein (later work), Austin, and Ryle criticized Russell's focus on formal logic.
- Russell's emphasis on logic revolutionized philosophy but was critiqued for neglecting ethics, aesthetics, and the practical use of language.



2.13 FURTHER READINGS

1) Russell, Bertrand. The Principles of Mathematics (1903)
2) Russell, Bertrand. On Denoting (1905)
3) Russell, Bertrand and Whitehead, Alfred North. Principia Mathematica (1910-1913)
4) Russell, Bertrand. Our Knowledge of the External World (1914)
5) Griffin, Nicholas. Russell's Idealist Apprenticeship (1991)
6) Monk, Ray. Bertrand Russell: The Spirit of Solitude (1996)



2.14 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q. No. 1: Bertrand Russell was a British philosopher, logician, mathematician, and social critic who played a major role in developing analytic philosophy and symbolic logic.

Ans to Q. No. 2: Symbolic logic, according to Russell, is a formal system that uses symbols to represent logical relationships, allowing for precise analysis of language and thought.

Ans to Q. No. 3: The goal of Principia Mathematica was to derive all mathematical truths from purely logical principles.

Ans to Q. No. 4: Logicism is the philosophical belief that all mathematics can be reduced to logic.

Ans to Q. No. 5: Russell's Theory of Descriptions addresses problems involving non-existent entities and ambiguous language expressions, such as "The present King of France is bald."

Ans to Q. No. 6: Logical Atomism is the theory that reality is made up of simple, independent atomic facts that correspond to elementary propositions in language.

Ans to Q. No. 7: Russell viewed logic as the essence of philosophy, using it to clarify thoughts, resolve conceptual confusions, and analyse language precisely.

Ans to Q. No. 8: Russell distinguished between knowledge by acquaintance (direct experience) and knowledge by description (indirect knowledge through logical descriptions).

Ans to Q. No. 9: Kurt Gödel's Incompleteness Theorems showed that no formal system, like Russell's logicist project, can be both complete and consistent, limiting the success of Russell's aims.

Ans to Q. No. 10: Ordinary language philosophers criticized Russell for ignoring how language functions in everyday use, focusing too much on formal logic instead.



2.15 MODEL QUESTIONS

(A) Very Short Questions:

Q. 1. In which years was Principia Mathematica published?

Q. 2. What is Russell's Theory of Descriptions mainly concerned with?

Q. 3. What is the central idea of Logical Atomism?

Q. 4. Name one philosopher influenced by Russell's logical method.

Q. 5. What type of philosophy did Russell oppose during his early career?

Q. 6. What paradox did Russell discover in set theory?

(B) Short Questions: (Answers in 150-200 words)

Q. 1. Explain Russell's contribution to symbolic logic and its significance in philosophy.

Q. 2. What is Russell's idea of logic as the essence of philosophy?

Q. 3. Describe Russell's Theory of Descriptions with an example.

Q. 4. What is the role of logical analysis in Russell's philosophical method?

Q. 5. Discuss the influence of Russell on analytic philosophy.

Q. 6. What are the major criticisms faced by Russell's logical philosophy?

(C) Long Questions: (Answers in 300-400 words)

Q. 1. Discuss Russell's project of logicism and explain the challenges it faced, including Russell's Paradox and Gödel's Incompleteness Theorems.

Q. 2. Critically examine the doctrine of Logical Atomism and its implications for the relationship between language and reality.

Q. 3. How did Russell's approach to epistemology integrate logic with the concepts of knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description?

Q. 4. Compare and contrast Russell's logical philosophy with the later philosophy of language developed by Wittgenstein and the ordinary language philosophers.

Q. 5. Evaluate the lasting impact of Bertrand Russell's logical method on modern philosophy, highlighting both his achievements and the limitations of his approach.

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UNIT- 3: LOGICAL ATOMISM: BERTRAND RUSSELL

UNIT STRUCTURE

3.1 Learning objectives

3.2 Introduction

3.2.1 Types of Language Analysis

3.3 Biography

3.4 Theory of Descriptions

3.5 Atomism: Its Meaning

3.6 Logical Atomism: Its Meaning

3.6.1 Logic as a tool of philosophy

3.6.2 Isomorphism

3.6.3 Facts and propositions

3.7 Sense-data

3.8 Let us sum up

3.9 Further readings

3.10 Answers to check your progress

3.11 Model questions

3.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to :

- know the meaning of the method of analysis advocated by Bertrand Russell.
- explain Russell's theory of definite descriptions.
- discuss the philosophy of logical atomism as advocated by Russell.
- understand various kinds of facts and propositions.

3.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit introduces to you the concept of logical atomism propagated by Bertrand Arthur William Russell. Towards the end of the

nineteenth century Bertrand Russell and G. E. Moore revolted against idealism at Cambridge led by Hegel, Bradley, Bosanquet etc. and brought about a new turn in the history of philosophy. This new turn is known as analytic philosophy. Analytic philosophy came to dominate different regions particularly in Great Britain and United States towards the end of the nineteenth century. The philosophical tradition called analytic philosophy is characterized by an emphasis on the analysis of language. They think that clarification of language can be used as an effective weapon to understand the world since it is in language that thought finds its expression.



LET US KNOW

Analytic philosophy: Analytic philosophy is a style of philosophy that came to dominate different regions more specifically in Great Britain and United States towards the end of the 19th century. The philosophical tradition called analytic philosophy is characterized by an emphasis on the analysis of language. They think that clarification of language can be used as an effective weapon to understand the world.

3.2.1 Types of Language Analysis

Analytic philosophy has two types of language analysis:

1. Artificial language analysis and
2. Ordinary language analysis.

1. Artificial language philosophy/Ideal language philosophy: Analytic philosophers like Russell and Ludwig Wittgenstein (early) emphasized on the formulation of an ideal language for philosophical analysis. This language which will be free from the ambiguities of ordinary language. Russell and Wittgenstein both developed the philosophy of logical atomism. They sought to solve philosophical problems by the analysis of language. According to Wittgenstein, the world is the totality of actual

states of affairs and that these states of affairs can be expressed by the language of first-order predicate logic. He said that language is a picture of reality. This theory of meaning is known as picture theory of meaning.

2. Ordinary language philosophy: Wittgenstein's philosophy had two phases. One is the early phase and the other is the later phase. His later philosophy was reflected in his work Philosophical Investigations. In contrast to the artificial language philosophy, Wittgenstein in his later philosophy, emphasized ordinary language analysis. This type of philosophy emphasizes the use of language by ordinary people. Gilbert Ryle, J. L Austin etc. are known as the ordinary language philosophers.

Russell used modern logic as a weapon to understand the nature of the world. Thus, the philosophy of logical atomism is an attempt to explain the nature of the world by means of mathematical logic. The phrase 'logical atomism' was used by Russell to describe a position which states that the world is made of logical atoms together with facts composed of these atoms. In his famous essay "Logic as the Essence of Philosophy" Russell remarked, "Schools should be characterized rather by their logic than by their metaphysic". In order to understand Russell's theory of logical atomism you must be acquainted with the biography of him first, because this theory cannot be understood unless one is acquainted with the philosophical background of Russell.

3.3 BIOGRAPHY

Bertrand Russell was born on May 18, 1972 into an English Whig family in Wales. Russell was a British philosopher, mathematician, historian, educational innovator, social critic, campaigner for peace. His parents died by the time he was four. So, Russell was brought up by their grandparents. His grandmother, Lady Russell was the dominant family figure for the rest of Russell's childhood and youth. Russell's adolescence was very lonely and he often attempted to commit suicide. He cited in his autobiography

that it was mathematics that hindered him from committing suicide. At the age of 11 his brother introduced him to a book of Euclid, which he considers to be one of the greatest events in his life. Russell was also deeply influenced by the works of P. B. Shelly and John Stuart Mill.

Russell won a scholarship to read for Mathematical Tripos at Trinity College, Cambridge and pursued his study there in 1890, taking Robert Rumsey Webb as his coach. He dedicated his first three years in Cambridge to study mathematics. But his keen interest in philosophy was deeply rooted in mind. During his study of mathematics, at the undergraduate level was not up to the mark and he did not find mathematics inspiring. After completing his study at Tripos he vowed not to study mathematics and made his excursion into the vast world of philosophy. Russell came in touch with the brilliant English idealist J. E. M McTaggart at Cambridge. Under the influence of McTaggart Russell proceeded to the direction of German idealism, either Kantian or Hegelian. Therefore, it is said that Russell started his career as an absolute idealist. But soon Russell revolted against idealism led by Hegel and Bradley. Towards the end of 1898 Russell joined hands with G. E. Moore, a fellow student at Cambridge and both of them led the British rebellion against idealism. Russell's first break with idealism was made in 1903 with the publication of the book The Principles of Mathematics. In 1905 he published famous paper 'On Denoting' in the journal 'Mind'. Russell, in collaboration with A. N. Whitehead authored the monumental Principia Mathematica (1910-13) in three volumes. Russell lived for 98 years and during this period he published over sixty books and many scholarly articles to his credit. He died on 2nd February, 1970 due to influenza.



ACTIVITY 3.1

- Why did Russell revolt against idealism advocated by Hegel and Bradley?

Answer.....

.....

.....

- What is the difference between ordinary language philosophy and artificial language philosophy?

Answer .....

.....

.....



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Define logical atomism.

.....

Q 2: Fill in the blanks:

a) ..... and ..... are the founding fathers of analytic philosophy.

Q 3: State whether the following statements are True or False

a. Russell is a realist/idealist philosopher.(True/False)

b. Wittgenstein/Russell is one of the founding fathers of analytic philosophy. (True/False)

C. Artificial language analysis is concerned with ordinary language/ symbolic language. (True/False)

d. Early/ Later Wittgenstein was influenced by Russell's artificial language analysis. (True/False)

e. Russell is an American/British philosopher. (True/False)

3.4 THEORY OF DESCRIPTIONS

According to Russell, some words point to things as their meanings, but some words do not express meaning referentially. In 1905 Russell wrote an essay "On Denoting" in the journal Mind. Here, he attempts to address the problem about how we can have sentences containing definite descriptions in which the definite descriptions denote nothing and yet the sentences turn out to be completely meaningful. This is known as Russell's famous theory of descriptions. In this essay Russell analyzes the logical form of the sentences containing denoting phrases. He divides these sentences into three groups:

1. Denoting phrases which do not denote anything, for example, 'the present king of France'.
2. Phrases which denote one definite object, for example 'the present king of England' (Edward VII at the time Russell was writing).
3. Phrases which denote ambiguously, for example 'a man'.

Definite descriptions involve the first two groups of denoting phrases, and indefinite descriptions involve the third group. Propositions containing descriptions typically appear to be of the standard subject-predicate form. But in Russellian analysis these propositions turn out to be different in form.

The fundamental point in this theory is that the grammatical form of a may not reveal its actual logical form. Russell gives the following example:

I met Jones.

I met a man.

Russell holds that there is a logical difference between the forms of these two propositions. The first proposition names an actual person, i.e. Jones. But the second proposition involves a propositional function, i.e. "The function 'I met x, and x is human' is sometimes true." Thus, according to Russell, an ordinary sentence may assert something, but actually it does not denote anything. It is by means of propositional function Russell shows the logical difference between the forms of these propositions. The following is the meaning of a propositional function:

Propositional function: A propositional function is defined as any expression containing an undetermined constituent, or several undetermined constituents, and becoming a proposition as soon as the undetermined constituents are determined. For example, 'x is a dog' is a propositional function, since no truth value is assigned to this. We do not know what 'x' means unless some value is put here.

Russell formulated the theory of descriptions to solve certain philosophical problems. The famous illustration that Russell gave of a sentence in which a definite description is present which denotes nothing

is: 'the present king of France is bald'. The descriptive phrase or the definite description found in the sentence is the following: 'the present king of France'. We know that at present there is no monarchy in France and therefore this phrase denotes nothing. Russell points out that in such sentences definite descriptions cannot actually function by denoting. According to Russell, the proposition 'the present king of France is bald' can be analyzed as the conjunction of three propositions. These three propositions are:

1. There exists at least one person who reigns in France at present.
2. There exists at most one person who reigns in France at present.
3. Whoever reigns in France at present is bald.

When the original sentence, i.e. 'the present king of France is bald' is translated into these three propositions then the constituent 'the present king of France' is found to be gone. We can see that the sentence is replaced by a propositional function which is not satisfied by any value and is therefore always false (the propositional function is 'x reigns at present in France.' Here no replacement of the variable x by any value will result in a true proposition). Russell showed that definite phrases like 'the author of Waverley' appeared as names in sentences, but these phrases disappear after analysis. He called these phrases 'incomplete symbols' which did not have meaning in isolation and became meaningful when used in a sentence.

Russell's theory of definite descriptions had many advantages.

1) This theory enables Russell to account for true negative existential judgments. A famous negative existential judgment is the following: 'the golden mountain does not exist'. This negative existential judgment, according to Russell cannot be understood as a statement about something which does not exist.

2) This theory enabled Russell to understand propositions like 'the author of Waverley is Scott' as something other than identity statements. Russell distinguishes between proper name and descriptions. Proper name is simple symbol, since it designates

an individual directly, and it has meaning in isolation. A description, on the contrary, does not designate an individual directly. That is why Russell calls it an 'incomplete symbol'. An incomplete symbol has no meaning in isolation but which obtains a meaning in a context with other symbols. The description 'author of Waverley' does not therefore mean 'Scott'. If it would have been the case, the resulting proposition would be 'Scott is Scott' which is a tautology. King George the fourth wanted to know whether Scott was the author of Waverley. George the fourth definitely did not want to know whether Scott was Scott.



ACTIVITY 3.2

- What is the difference between grammatical form of a sentence and the logical form of a sentence?

Answer

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.....

.....

- How did incomplete symbol play an important role in the in the philosophy of Bertrand Russell?

Answer .....

.....

.....



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: In which year Russell's famous paper 'On Denoting' was published?

.....

Q 5: What do you mean by Russell's theory of descriptions?

.....

Q 6: How many groups are there in which Russell divided the logical form of a sentence?

.....

Q 7: Give an example of a denoting phrase.

.....

.....

Q 8: Define: propositional function

.....

.....

.....

Q 9: State whether the following statements are True or False

a) Proper name is a complex symbol. (True/False)

b) According to Russell, grammatical form of a proposition is different from its logical form. (True/False)

C) Incomplete symbol is a complex symbol. (True/False)

Q 10: Give example of an incomplete symbol.

.....

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3.5 ATOMISM: ITS MEANING

The word 'atomism' comes from the Greek adjective 'atomos' which literally means 'indivisible.' The history of ancient atomism is not only the history of a theory about the nature of matter, but also the history of the idea that there are indivisible parts in any kind of magnitude-geometrical extension, time, etc. A number of important theorists in ancient Greek natural philosophy held that the universe is composed of physical 'atoms'. For example, in the 5th century BC, Leucippus and his pupil Democritus proposed that all matter was composed of small indivisible particles called atoms, in order to reconcile two conflicting schools of thought on the nature of reality. On the one hand, Heraclitus believed that the nature of all existence is change. On the other hand, Parmenides believed that all change is illusion. The metaphysical atomism of Leibniz states that there are innumerable spiritual atoms. These atoms are called monads and they are the centres of force. These monads are spiritual in nature. Again, David Hume advocated psychological atomism since he states that there are only 'impressions' and 'ideas'. He rejects both matter and mind.

Russell talks about a different kind of atomism which is known as 'logical atomism'. With the advent of analytic philosophy, philosophy turned towards language to understand the world.

3.6 LOGICAL ATOMISM: ITS MEANING

In 1912 Wittgenstein went to Cambridge. He met Russell there and they began to spend long time with each other. Wittgenstein used to listen to Russell's lectures. In 1918 Wittgenstein completed his monumental work Tractatus-Logico Philosophicus. In the same year Russell gave a series of lectures at Gordon Square, London on 'The Philosophy of Logical Atomism'. Russell calls his doctrine logical atomism because the atoms that he wishes to arrive at as the sort of last residue in analysis are logical atoms and not physical atoms. This means that the atoms he wishes to arrive at are the atoms of logical analysis and not the atoms of physical analysis.

By 'logical atoms' Russell means particulars, such as little patches of colour or sounds, momentary things and predicates or relations etc. But prior to that we need to understand did Russell apply logic as the 'essence' of philosophy.

LET US KNOW



Particular: Particulars are simple things. Russell defines particulars as terms of relation in atomic facts. He holds that 'this' or 'that' can be regarded to be particulars.

3.6.1 Logic as a tool of philosophy

Logic is said to be a 'tool' for every enquiry, because if an enquiry is not logical it cannot be called an enquiry. But in a more specific sense logic is used as a tool of philosophy because the techniques and results of logic are used by philosophers in the formulation of their theories in a much more important manner than

by non-philosophers. Russell and Wittgenstein sought to solve many philosophical problems by employing modern logic as a tool. Russell sought to establish a logically perfect language to solve philosophical problems. Logically perfect language is also known called 'artificial language' or 'ideal language'. Logically perfect language will have the perfect syntax and perfect vocabulary. A perfect language will reflect the logical structure of the proposition and the logical structure of the facts asserted or denied. Russell believes that ordinary language is quite adequate for ordinary purposes, however it is inadequate for logical analysis. Russell states that for philosophical purposes it is necessary to reconstruct ordinary language so that its fundamental structure becomes evident.

3.6.2 Isomorphism

Russell followed a special type of principle known as 'Occam's razor'. Occam's (or Ockham's) razor is a principle attributed to the 14th century logician and William of Ockham. The principle states that "Entities should not be multiplied unnecessarily." Russell used this principle to minimise the number of basic entities, thereby to minimise the possibility of error, and it was a passion for brevity for Russell.

According to Russell, there is a structural similarity between language and reality because of which language is capable of representing reality. This structural similarity between language and reality is called isomorphism. Russell begins his lecture on 'The Philosophy of Logical Atomism' with the concepts of 'fact' and 'propositions'. There is an isomorphic relation between fact and proposition. There is a one-to-one correspondence between fact and its corresponding proposition. In order to know the isomorphic relation between 'fact' and 'proposition' you have to know the meanings of these two terms first.

3.6.3 Facts and Propositions

i. **Fact:** According to Russell, a fact is a sort of thing that makes a proposition true or false. For example, if someone says 'It is raining', it will be true in a certain condition of weather and false in other conditions of weather. A fact is not a particular existing thing such as Plato, the river or the mountain. Russell states that when he speaks of a 'fact', he does not mean one of the simple things in the world, he means that a certain thing has a certain quality, or that certain things have a certain relation. For example, Napoleon is not a fact, but if someone says that 'Napoleon is ambitious' or 'Napoleon marries Josephine', he states a fact. A Fact cannot be said to be either true or false, there are just facts. They are independent of our thinking; they belong to the objective world.

ii. **Proposition:** A proposition states something. A proposition, for Russell, is an indicative sentence. It either asserts or denies something. It is that which we believe truly or falsely: 'typical vehicle on the duality of truth and falsehood'. A proposition is also defined as a complex symbol. It is complex symbol in the sense that it has parts that are symbols, for example, the word 'red' is a simple symbol, but the phrase 'roses are red' a complex symbol. Thus, propositions are complex symbols and the facts they stand for are also complex.

There are certain species which Russell considers to be valid:

- Atomic propositions and facts
- Molecular propositions and facts
- Existence propositions and facts
- General propositions and facts and
- Completely general (logical) propositions and facts.
- Intentional propositions and facts

iii. **Atomic Facts:** According to Russell, the simplest imaginable facts are those which consist in the possession of a quality by

some particular thing. For example, 'this is while' is such a fact. In other words, the simplest atomic fact is the possession by a 'particular' of a certain quality. Thus, there may be dyadic relation between two particulars, for example, 'A is next to B'. Likewise, for triadic relation three terms are required and so on. Generally, for n particulars we get n-adic relation. The infinite hierarchy of facts can be mentioned in the following way:

1. Monadic fact: A thing and a quality, e.g. 'this is white'.
2. Dyadic fact: Two things and a relation, e.g. 'A is next to B'.
3. Triadic fact: Three things and a relation, e.g. 'A gives B to C' etc.

Atomic facts correspond to the atomic propositions. These facts are the simplest kinds of facts which consist in the possession of a quality or relation by some particular or particulars. In every atomic fact there is one component which is expressed by a verb. This component, if it is a quality, is expressed by a predicate or an adjective.

A proposition is atomic, if it contains only one relation or predicate. An isomorphic relationship is thus seen between atomic proposition and atomic facts. Corresponding to the subjects (proper names) in an atomic fact there are terms (particulars) in an atomic proposition, similarly adjectives correspond to qualities, and verbs correspond to relations.

iv. **Molecular Propositions and Facts:** According to Russell, there are molecular propositions. Formal logic regards a proposition or a statement to be either true or false. The linguistic account of propositions holds the view that propositions are truth-functionally accountable. A truth function is defined as a compound expression whose value is uniquely determined by means of its component simple propositions. Defining a molecular proposition Russell wrote: "I call them molecular propositions because they contain other

propositions which you may call their atoms, and by molecular propositions I mean propositions having such words as 'or', 'if', 'and', and so forth". In other words, a molecular proposition is produced when two or more atomic propositions are conjoined. The words 'or', 'if', 'and' are known as logical constants are logical connective, since they are used to used to logically connect atomic propositions. There are different kinds of molecular propositions:

1. Conjunctive
2. Disjunctive
3. Implicative

Let us take an example: 'p and q' is a molecular proposition and it is to be regarded as truth-function as its truth value depends on the propositions p and q separately. The proposition The weather is cloudy today and Smita brings an umbrella is true provided the proposition The weather is cloudy today is true and the proposition Smita brings an umbrella is true separately. Propositions are the representations of facts. A proposition is true if it represents a fact and false if it does not represent a fact. Russell denies the existence of molecular facts. Russell did not admit the existence of molecular facts. He says: "I do not suppose there is in the world a single disjunctive fact corresponding to 'p or q'. It does not look plausible that in the actual objective world there are facts going about which you could describe as 'p or q'." (Ref L &K, p 209)

This means that the truth or falsity of the proposition 'p or q' depends upon two facts, one of which corresponds to p and the other to q. Russell's doubt regarding the existence of molecular facts comes to an end in his discussion of general facts.

v. **General propositions and facts:** A general proposition is defined as that which asserts or denies the truth of all values of a propositional function.

A general fact corresponds to a general proposition. Russell's acceptance of general facts can be seen from the following: Russell argues that general propositions are not equivalent to the conjunction of singular propositions. For example, the general proposition 'All men are mortal' cannot be established by a complete enumeration of each and every individual man's death, one is further to know that these are the 'all men' there are. To know that 'these are the all men there are' is to know a general proposition. But this knowledge does not come from induction or any inference. Hence, he says that the knowledge of general proposition is a primitive knowledge which is not derived from inference. Russell says: "…. when you have enumerated all the atomic facts in the world, it is a further fact about the world that those are all the atomic facts there are about the world, and that is just as much an objective fact about the world as any one of them are." (Ref, p 236)

Corresponding to the general propositions Russell feels obliged to admit the existence of general facts. A general fact is irreducible to any other fact.

Though Russell was hesitant to admit the existence of molecular facts in the beginning, he finds that the acceptance of general facts necessitates the admission of molecular facts as well. He says that in the example "trespassers will be prosecuted" or in "all men are mortal", he says that these sentences imply that if there is a trespasser, (it does not say that there is any), then he will be prosecuted. Similarly, "all men are mortal" has the implication that if x is a man, then he is mortal. It also does not assert that x really is a man or that x is mortal. Now if we are to admit that corresponding to general propositions there are general facts, we cannot deny the existence of molecular facts corresponding to the molecular propositions - the obvious implication of the general propositions.

vi. **Completely general (logical) propositions and facts:** A completely general proposition is defined as that which contains only variables and nothing else. However, Russell admits that there are some propositions which are expressed logically but they are not proved logically. E.g. 'there is at least one thing in the world'. This proposition is to be known empirically. (Ref, p 240)

vii. **Negative facts:** "Are there such facts as you might call the fact that 'Socrates is not alive'?" asked Russell in the lecture III of 'The philosophy of Logical Atomism'. He says that the idea of negative facts created a 'riot' at Harvard. Russell accepts correspondence theory of truth. If 'Socrates is alive' is false, it is because it is out of correspondence with facts. It is false because of the fact 'Socrates is not alive'. Hence, Russell admits negative facts. He states: "A thing cannot be false except because of a fact, so that you find it extremely difficult to say what exactly happens when you make a positive assertion that is false, unless you are going to admit negative facts. (Ref, p 214)

viii. **Intentional Facts:** There are some propositions which contain words like 'wishes', 'wants', 'believes' etc. The truth or falsity of these propositions cannot be established, for example the proposition 'John believes that the earth is flat' no truth value can be assigned to this propostion. Thus, the propositions about intensional facts cannot be treated truth functionally.



ACTIVITY 3.3

- What is the role of 'fact' in Russell's philosophy of logical atomism?

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- Distinguish between fact and proposition.

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CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 11: State the meaning of logical atomism

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Q 12: In which year Russell delivered his lectures on "The Philosophy of Logical Atomism" at Gordon's Square?

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Q 13: What is Occam's Razor?

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Q 14: What is Isomorphism?

.....

Q 15: State whether the following statements are true or false.

a) A fact is either true or false.(True/False)

b) Napoleon is a fact.(True/False)

C) The simplest imaginable facts are atomic facts.(True/False)

Q 16: What is truth function?

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Q 17: "Entities should not be multiplied unnecessarily". - state the name of the principle.

Q 18: Define: Atomic proposition.

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Q 19: Define: Molecular proposition.

.....

Q 20: Define: General proposition

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3.7 SENSE DATA

Russell, being a mathematician by background wanted certainty in philosophy too. Russell's quest for certainty is reflected through the opening line of *The Problems of Philosophy*: Is there any knowledge in the world which is so certain that no reasonable man can doubt it? When Russell talks about physical objects, he says that we cannot supposed to be in direct and immediate contact with the objects themselves. When

we see a table, we are not directly acquainted with the table as such. Instead, we are immediately acquainted here with the colour, hardness, shape etc. of the table and to know anything about the table; it is possible only through sense data. This means that knowledge of the table involves more than just awareness of sense data. It involves a belief that besides sense data, there is non-empirical something which causes sense data and also persists even when there are no sense data. In this context Russell says that which causes sense data, supposedly the physical objects, are not given in experience, hence they have only an inferential existence. Russell came to the conclusion that the existence of physical objects can be constructed out of the elements which are least *susceptible to doubt*. Defining or identifying sense-data Russell writes:

> Let us give the name of 'sense-data' to the things that are immediately known in sensation: such things as colours, sounds, smells, hardnesses, roughnesses, and so on. We shall give the name sensation to the experience of being immediately aware of these things. Thus, whenever we see a colour, we have a sensation of the colour, but the colour itself is a sense-datum, not a sensation. (Principles of *Mathematics*, p. 4)

Russell holds that when we begin to analyze our common knowledge, the first thing appears is that some of them are derivative and some are primitive. Knowledge involving inferences are called derivative while those accepted on their own account are called primitive. The immediate facts perceived by sight or touch or hearing are self-evident, that is, primitive, which means that they need not be proved by any argument. An example of derivative knowledge is: we unconsciously make assumptions, e.g. about the persistence of objects even when we are not actually perceiving them. Russell draws a vague but useful distinction between 'hard' data and 'soft' data:

> I mean by "hard" data those which resist the solvent influence of critical reflection, and by "soft" data those which, under the operation of this process, become to our minds more or less doubtful. *(Our Knowledge of the External World, pp. 77-78)*

Russell characterizes 'hard data' as those which can resist doubt; these are those propositions which are luminously certain. For example, facts of sense (i.e. of *our own* sense data), the laws of logic, recent memory, introspection, relations of time and space. Hard data are contrasted with soft data. Soft data are concerned with those propositions which are susceptible to doubt which include our knowledge of physical objects and other minds. Some common beliefs are excluded from hard data, for example, we cannot include our beliefs that object persists when we are not perceiving them, or that other people have minds because this belief arises from the psychological derivation from our perception of their bodies. Testimony of others is also excluded from hard data. The problem of the nature of external objects such as tables, chairs etc., according to Russell, a problem of justifying an inference from the perception of sense data to physical objects.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 21: Define: Sense-data

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Q 22: Give example: Sense-data

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Q 23: What is hard datum?

.....

Q 24: What is soft datum?

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3.8 LET US SUM UP

- Bertrand Russell and G. E. Moore revolted against idealism at Cambridge led by Hegel, Bradley, Bosanquet etc. and brought about a new turn in the history of philosophy that is known as analytic philosophy.
- Analytic philosophers like Russell and Ludwig Wittgenstein (early) emphasized on the formulation of an ideal language for philosophical

analysis. In contrast to the artificial language philosophy, Wittgenstein in his later philosophy, emphasized ordinary language analysis. This type of philosophy emphasizes the use of language by ordinary people.

- Russell calls his doctrine logical atomism because the atoms that he wishes to arrive at as the sort of last residue in analysis are logical atoms and not physical atoms. This means that the atoms he wishes to arrive at are the atoms of logical analysis and not the atoms of physical analysis.
- Definite descriptions are nothing but the sentences which denote nothing, still the sentences are meaningful, and so the sentences are to be known as definite descriptions.
- Proper name is simple symbol, since it designates an individual directly, and it has meaning in isolation. A description, on the contrary, does not designate an individual directly. That is why Russell calls it an 'incomplete symbol'.
- Occam's (or Ockham's) razor is a principle attributed to the 14th century logician and William of Ockham. The principle states that "Entities should not be multiplied unnecessarily."
- According to Russell, there is a structural similarity between language and reality because of which language is capable of representing reality. This structural similarity between language and reality is called isomorphism.



3.9 FURTHER READINGS

1) Russell, B. 1972, *Our Knowledge of the External World*, Sixth Impression, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London.
2) Russell, B. 1997, *My Philosophical Development*, Routledge, London and New York.
3) Russell, B. 2002, *History of Western Philosophy,* Routledge, New York
4) Russell, B. 2004, 'The Philosophy of Logical Atomism' in R.C. Marsh (ed.), *Logic and Knowledge*, Routledge, 29, West 35 Street, London and New York.

5) Russell, B. 2004, *Mysticism and Logic*, Dover Publications, Inc. Mineola, N.Y.

6) Urmson, J. O. 1956, *Philosophical Analysis*, Oxford University Press, London

7) Wood, A. 1999, 'Russell's Philosophy – A Study of Its Development', in A. D. Irvine (ed.), *Bertrand Russell: Critical Assessments,* volume I– *Life, Work and Influence*, Routledge, London & New York



310 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q. No. 1: Logical atomism is a doctrine which holds that the world is made of logical atoms together with facts composed of these atoms.

Ans to Q. No. 2: a) Bertrand Russell and G. E. Moore are the founding fathers of analytic philosophy.

Ans to Q. No. 3: a) Russell is a realist philosopher.

b) Russell is one of the founding fathers of analytic philosophy.

Artificial language analysis is concerned with symbolic language.

D) Early Wittgenstein was influenced by Russell's artificial language analysis.

E) Russell is a British philosopher.

Ans to Q. No. 4: 1905

Ans to Q. No. 5: There are some sentences containing definite phrases. These definite descriptions or phrases denote nothing and yet the sentences turn out to be completely meaningful. This is known as Russell's famous theory of descriptions.

Ans to Q. No. 6: Three groups

Ans to Q. No. 7: The present king of France

Ans to Q. No. 8: Propositional function: A propositional function is defined as any expression containing an undetermined constituent, or several undetermined constituents, and becoming a proposition as soon as the undetermined constituents are determined. For example, 'x

is a dog' is a propositional function, since no truth value is assigned to this. We do not know what 'x' means unless some value is put here.

Ans to Q. No. 9: a) False b) True c)True

Ans to Q. No. 10: The author of Waverley

Ans to Q. No. 11: The phrase 'logical atomism' was used by Russell to describe a position which states that the world is made of logical atoms together with facts composed of these atoms.

Ans to Q. No. 12: 1918

Ans to Q. No. 13: Occam's (or Ockham's) razor is a principle attributed to the 14th century logician and William of Ockham. The principle states that "Entities should not be multiplied unnecessarily."

Ans to Q. No. 14: According to Russell, there is a structural similarity between language and reality because of which language is capable of representing reality. This structural similarity between language and reality is called isomorphism.

Ans to Q. No. 15: a) False b) False c) True

Ans to Q. No. 16: A truth function is defined as a compound expression whose value is uniquely determined by means of its component simple propositions

Ans to Q. No. 17: Occam's Razor

Ans to Q. No. 18: A proposition is atomic, if it contains only one relation or predicate

Ans to Q. No. 19: A molecular proposition is produced when two or more atomic propositions are conjoined. The words 'or', 'if', 'and' are known as logical constants are logical connective, since they are used to use to logically connect atomic propositions and thereby, they form molecular propositions.

Ans to Q. No. 20: A general proposition is defined as that which asserts or denies the truth of all values of a propositional function

Ans to Q. No. 21: 'Sense-data' refer to those things that are immediately known in sensation: such things as colours, sounds, smells, hardnesses, roughnesses, and so on

Ans to Q. No. 22: Colour, roughness, hardness etc.

Ans to Q. No. 23: By "hard" data Russell means those which resist the solvent influence of critical reflection. Russell characterizes 'hard data' as those which can resist doubt; these are those propositions which are luminously certain. For example, facts of sense (i.e. of our own sense data), the laws of logic, recent memory, introspection, relations of time and space

Ans to Q. No. 24: By "soft" data Russell means those which, under the operation of this process, become to our minds more or less doubtful.



3.11 MODEL QUESTIONS

(A) Very Short Questions:

Q.1. What are the two phases of analytic philosophy?

Q 2. State two advantages of the theory of definite descriptions.

Q 3. State the two types of language analysis?

Q 4. Who are advocates of ordinary language philosophy?

Q 5. Who is the author of the essay Logic as the essence of philosophy?

Q 6. What do you mean by artificial language analysis?

Q 7. Give a definition of incomplete symbol?

Q 8. What is isomorphism?

Q 9. Name the philosopher who advocates psychological hedonism.

Q 10. State the meaning of Occam's razor principle.

Q 11. What is sense data?

B) Short Questions (Answer in about100-150 words)

Q 1. Briefly explain Russell's doctrine of definite descriptions

Q 2. What is Analytic Philosophy? Explain briefly

Q 3. Distinguish between fact and proposition.

Q 4. What is sense data? Briefly explain

Q 5. Write a short note on Occam's Razor.

Q 6. Write a note on Isomorphism.

Q 7. Distinguish between artificial language philosophy and idea language philosophy.

Q 8. Distinguish between proper name and descriptions.

Q 9. Make a brief distinction between 'hard data' and 'soft data'.

C) Long Questions (Answer in about 300-500 words)

Q 1. Explain Russell's doctrine of logical atomism.

Q 2. Explain various kinds of facts and propositions.

Q 3. Discuss the Russellian concept of sense data.

Q 4. Why logic is considered as a tool of philosophy? Discuss.

Q 5. Explain the concept of logical atomism.

Q 6. Discuss the different kinds of molecular propositions.

Q 7. What is analytic philosophy? Explain the two types of language analysis.

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UNIT 4 MOORE: A DEFENCE OF COMMON SENSE

UNIT STRUCTURE

4.1 Learning Objectives

4.2 Introduction

4.3 Defence of Common sense

- 4.3.1 Common sense belief as truism
- 4.3.2 Physical facts independent from mental facts
- 4.3.3 Denial of the Existence of God and immortality of the soul
- 4.3.4 Analysing common sense belief
- 4.3.5 Other Mind

4.4 Criticism

4.5 Let us sum up

4.6 Answers to check your progress

4.7 Further Reading

4.8 Model questions

4.1. LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- explain the concept of common sense
- explain common sense belief as truism
- describe how physical facts independent from mental facts
- discuss the denial of the existence of God and immortality of the soul
- analyse common sense belief
- explain the concept of other mind
- discuss the critical estimate of this theory.

4.2 INTRODUCTION

Moore appeal to common sense as a basic for solving philosophical problems. His defence of common sense is an important

aspect of rejecting idealism, according to which our ordinary common-sense view of the world is largely correct. Moore first explicitly championed this position in his 1910-11 lectures *Some Main Problems of Philosophy, where he tries to establish his conception of analytic philosophy.* He however describes most explicitly his analytical philosophical position in his essay 'A Defence of Common Sense' in 1925 where **he proposed that there is no basis for the belief that physical reality relies on mental reality.**He also argued that the true function of philosophy lay in its analysis of reality, not its definition of it. For example, when it is said that the sky is blue, it is true that the sky is blue because common sense cannot deny the truth of this statement. Philosophy according to Moore is not to define but to analyse such true statements.Moore latter approach a new way of defending common sense in his most famous paper, "Proof of an External World" (Moore 1939). This essay was sets to provide a proof of the existence of 'external objects or rather address the question, "what counts as an "external object"'. In the essay Moore claims that these are things whose existence is not dependent upon our experience.He argued that if he can prove the existence of any such things then he will have proved the existence of an "external world". He maintains that he can do this and he does this by holding up his two hands and saying, "here is one hand", as I make a certain gesture with the right hand and adding as I make a certain gesture with the left and saying "here is another". Moore goes on to argue that this demonstration of his hands was a "perfectly rigorous proof of the existence of external objects". This is because its premises certainly entail its conclusion and they are things, which he then knows to be true. Moore's position is clearly a version of representational realism, with its attendant difficulties about the status of sense-data and their independence of individual acts of sensation.

4.3. "A DEFENCE OF COMMON SENSE"

The essay "A Defence of Common Sense" is an influential essay by G.E. Moore, originallypublished in 1925. In this essay he attempts to refute idealism and skepticism by arguing that some of our beliefs about

the world are absolutely certain. These beliefs are common sense. He made two prescriptions: first, that truth of common sense statements is to be held beyond philosophical reproach and second, their proper analysis is to be conducted in terms of ordinary language. The essay is divided into five sections. Following is an elaboration of the each section.

4.3. 1. Common Sense Beliefs as Truism

The first section of the essay gave a list of propositions of common sense that are known with certainty to be true. For example Moore claims that propositions like, " My body has existed continuously on or near the earth…", " I am a human body", " My body existed yesterday" , are known with certainty to be true. He claims that *he knows* these and many other propositions to be *certainly and wholly true. He also claims to know with certainty that others* have also known the aforementioned propositions to be true of themselves, just as he knows them to be true of himself.

He argued that any philosophical position which maintains that any of these is neither untrue nor at least not known to be true is itself demonstrably false. Moore divided them into two groups. First, the idealist who denies the*truth* of the lists of beliefs. Second, the skeptic who denies that any of the propositions on the lists are *known* to be true. Moore by claiming that these propositions are *wholly* true,means to oppose the idealist, who would claim that no statement about some isolated object can be true *simpliciter*, since each object has its identity only as a part of the whole universe. And by claiming that these propositions of common sense are *certainly* true, Moore means to oppose the skeptic who would deny that we know anything with certainty. The former is indefensible, self-defeating and never consistently held as a basis of ordinary life. The latter is not only self-defeating and impractical but also logically inconsistent.

Thus, Moore concluded that we do really know all of these common-sense beliefs to be true.

4.3.2. Distinguishes physical facts from mental facts

In this section, Moore consider different specimens of mental facts and argued that every physical fact is neither logically nor causally dependent on mental facts.He classified three different kinds of "mental facts":

i) Facts which are like: "I am conscious now" and "I am seeing something now" in one of the two following respect : (*alpha*) in being the fact that some particular individual was conscious at some particular time (*beta*) in being a fact which involves or entails a fact of type (*alpha*), in the way that *seeing something* is a specific way of *being conscious*.

ii) Mental facts are experiences. For example, the experience of "being conscious now". Moore doubt that there are such facts, but admits that experiences, if there were any, would be mental facts.

iii) Mental facts are timeless experiences, for example. Being *timelessly* conscious.

Moore finally added a fourth kind of mental fact which asserts of any of the three kinds of mental fact mentioned above that there are mental facts of that kind. That is a kind of mental meta-fact.

Moore argues that there is no good reason to suppose that every physical fact is logically dependent on some mental fact. He also argues that every physical facts is not causally dependent on some mental fact because for example, there is no good reason to suppose that the fact that the earth has existed for many years past is causally dependent on any mental fact.

4.3.3 Denial of the Existence of God and immortality of the soul

In the third section, Moore neither argued nor discusses but merely dissociates himself from those philosophers who have

believed in the existence of God or the Immortality of the soul. He noted that not only does he think there are good reasons for believing that all material objects were created by God but neither does common sense gives reason to think that God exists at all or that there is life after death.

4.3.4 Analysing Common sense

The fourth section is concerned with the analysis of common sense propositions about perceived objects. He is certain that such propositions are ultimately about sense data which are not themselves identical with material objects. He cited the example, “Here is my hand” and gave three possibilities of how what we know in these cases is related to what we know about our sense data. That is what he sees when looking at his hand.

1. The sense datum itself is part of the surface of the human hand.
2. There is some relation R such that the surface of the hand has relation R to the sense datum.
3. A set of hypotheticals of the form “if condition them I would perceive a sense datum related to *this* sense datum in a particular way”. Here the condition and the particular relation vary, but the reference to the *this* sense datum is fixed.

The third alternative answer that Moore considers is based on Mill’s view that material things are “permanent possibilities of sensation”. For example, “ I am seeing a dice”. This has to be interpreted as, if I were to move my body in certain ways I should be directly apprehending certain sense data. For example, factual ones which I should not be apprehending as a result of these movements of my body, if my present visual experience were illusory or imaginary experience. Here first it is doubtful, whether we can think of the aforesaid conditioned of sense data without using some physical object terms. Secondly, it is doubtful, if there is any intrinsic-relation between the sense

datum that I am apprehending at the moment and the sense data that I should apprehend when certain other conditions are fulfilled. And even if there is any intrinsic relation, we do not know so far, how to explain the ontological nature of the relation as well as our knowledge of it. Thirdly, on this view, properties of the object are attributed to it in a sense that outrages a strong propensity to believe in their reality in the usual cases.

According to the second view, sense datum is a manifestation or appearance of the material things and that the relation between the two is an ultimate and unanalysable relation. To this Moore objected that it cannot explain how we can possibly know with regard to any of our sense data that there is one thing and one thing only which has to them such a supposed ultimate relation and how, if we do, can we possibly know anything further about such things. For example of what size or shape they are.

The first alternative is the monistic views that sense datum is identical with a part of the surface of material object. If this is so, then it will follow that:

a) sense data really do not have the qualities which they appear to have or else

b) we would have to admit that incompatible qualities can belong to the same things at the same time.

However since different people experience different sense data, in a particular respect while seeing the same physical surface, if the above mentioned view is true, then all these different sense data directly perceived by different people would have to belong to the surface simultaneously, which seems unlikely.

In view of the objections to each of the plausible alternatives concerning the relation between sense data and material things, Moore confesses that he does not know what this relation could be. He has consistently maintained a clear distinction between physical objects and sense data. No sense datum or part of a sense datum or collection of sense data can

possibly be a material object. In all his discussion he always maintains that physical objects are distinct from sense data and that we know of their existence. But it seems that he cannot be sure of the nature of the relation between sense data and physical objects. Moore suggests that there is a definite relation between sense data and material objects but we are not certain about the exact nature of the relation between the two. He sought out a strong possibility of finding out a correct analysis of the perceptual statements of common sense. He repeatedly explains that we do know for certain that material object exists and we also know for certain that sense data exist. And we further know that sense data are related to material object. Therefore, Moore position is clearly in opposition with that of the skeptics. Moore conclude that we are absolutely certain about the common sense belief but no analysis of the proposition has been offered that is even close to being certain.

4.3.5. Other Mind

In this section Moore was concern about the analysis of propositions about selves. While Moore believe that “there are other selves” and is convinced of the truth of such a statement as “I am now perceiving this sense data”, he had the gravest doubt about its correct analysis.

4.4. CRITICISM

A variety of problems surround the “Defence” of what Moore called common sense beliefs. The central question is whether he succeeds in defending them against the attacks of metaphysics is linked with the question whether a philosophical defense of such propositions is possible. This in turn with the question whether the propositions Moore lists as generally known truism are commonsense belief or even common belief. Taken together this three questions give rise to the metaphysical question as to what Moore is doing when he purports to defend common sense.

The critic argued that Moore used the term “Defence” only in the title of his paper and not at all when commending the “common sense view of the world” at the end of section one. This is a fact of extreme importance. Evidently, therefore what Moore conceived himself to be doing in section one was not to defend the common sense view of the world against rival views, for he was unveiling to conclude that such an idea made any sense in the first place. Moore went on in analysing whatever propositions of common sense are known to be true. Moore profess without regard for the certainly in the existence of such things as mental facts, sense data and selves. Many who have followed Moore in taking the role of common sense as central in philosophy have gone on to demand that the very terms of analysis, the very facts disclosed must be those of the common sense view itself. The common sense view of the world does not include from the start any such belief that perceptual; judgments are ultimately about sense data. The truth about perceptual judgment do not openly reside in the common sense view but have to be discovered by analysing common sense truth.

According to Moore, the analysis of perceptual propositions in terms of sense data might take any of three but only three different forms, yet in each of these he finds at least one serious flaw. Therefore, what then is one to conclude about that method of analysis itself. Given the strong affirmation of section one followed by the tortuous dead end constructs in section four, one is infact prompted by the “Defence” to reverse direction in favour of a wholly new approach to philosophical analysis. His defence of common sense leaves completely undecided the questions as to how the truism propositions which make up the common sense view of the world are to be analysed.

As Preston noted neither Moore’s defense of common sense nor his proof of an external world were universally convincing. Some misunderstood the latter as an attempt to disprove skepticism. Taken this way, it is clearly a miserable failure. However, as Moore himself later insisted, he never meant to *disprove*skepticism, but only to *prove* the existence of the external world.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What is meant by common sense, according to Moore?

.....

Q 2: Who is the author of the essay- *A Defense of Common Sense*?

.....

Q 3: Moore attempted to refute the two concepts through his essay *A Defense of Common Sense.* What are they?

.....

Q 4: Give two examples of common sense

.....

Q 5: What is sense-data?

.....

Q 6: Write the implication of the essay *A Defense of Common Sense*

.....

Q 7: What are three kinds of mental facts?

.....

Q 8: Bring out a distinction between sense data and physical object.

.....



4.5. LET US SUM UP

- Moore's affirmation of a common sense realist position was an important aspect of his rejection of idealism. While Moore is convinced of the truth of such statement as "I am now perceiving this sense-datum", he has the gravest doubt of what its correct analysis might be.
- Moore used the language of sense data theory to consider the analysis of his common sense proposition in the "Defence". Moore is making a dual perspective:

i) The truth of common sense statement is to be held beyond philosophical reproach and

ii) Their proper analysis is to be conducted in the terms of ordinary language and within the limits of its conventions.

- The "Defence" consists of five section of wholly unequal length, prefaced by a short paragraph in which Moore declare his aim of listing some major points of agreements with other philosophers.
- In the first and the longest section, he recites the propositions of common sense whose truth he claims to know with certainty. He then argues that any philosophical position which maintains that any of these is either untrue or not known to be true is demonstrably false.
- In section two, he consider different specimen of mental facts, then details his well-known view against supposing that every instance of a physical fact depends either logically or causally on the occurrence of some mental fact.
- The third section through transitionally related to the discussion of mental facts consists in itself neither argument nor discussion. Moore simply dissociates himself from those philosophers who have believed in the existence of God or the immortality of the soul.
- Section four involved a point of a very different order. That is the analyses of common sense propositions about perceived objects. Moore is certain that such propositions are ultimately about sense data which are not identical with material objects.
- He gives three different and unrelated method of ordinary language analysis of sense data namely: structural, lexical and thematic. However this analysis is far from satisfactory explanation. It fails to explain a significant problem, which rears its head and ultimately unresolved discussion on sense data. The whole of section five is even more glaringly tentative. It concerns the analysis of propositions about other selves.



4.6. FURTHER READING

1) Baldwin.T. "George Edward Moore", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy", Zalta. E.N (ed) http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/moore/
2) Moore, G. E. 1925: "A Defense of Common Sense" in J. H. Muirhead ed., *Contemporary British Philosophy*, London: Allen and Unwin, 193-223. Reprinted in Moore 1959, 126-148, and Moore 1993, 106-33.
3) Moore, G. E. 1939: "Proof of an External World," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 25, 273-300. Reprinted in Moore 1993, 147-70.
4) Moore, G. E. 1993: *G. E. Moore: Selected Writings*, ed. Thomas Baldwin, London: Routledge.
5) Preston.A. George Edward Moore. Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, http://www.iep.utm.edu/moore/#SH2c



4.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Common sense are nothing but our beliefs about the world, which are absolutely certain.

Ans to Q No 2: G.E. Moore

Ans to Q No 3: Idealism and Scepticism

Ans to Q No 4: *My body has existed continuously on or near the earth,I am a human body*

Ans to Q No 5: Sense data is a manifestation or appearance of the surface of the physical object.

Ans to Q No 6: The implication is-there is no basis for the belief that physical reality relies on mental reality.

Ans to Q No 7: 1) Mental facts are related to consciousness
2) Mental facts are experiences
3) Mental facts are timeless experiences

Ans to Q No 8: No sense datum can possibly be a material object; it is

just a manifestation or experience of the surface of the object. We know the existence of the object, but we cannot be sure of the existence of sense data. Moore holds that there is a definite relation between sense data and physical object but we are not certain about the exact nature of the relation between the two.



4.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Very short questions

Q 1: Cite two examples of common sense propositions

Q 2: Give one example each of physical fact and mental facts

Q 3: What is sense data?

B) Short questions (Answer in about 100-150 words)

Q 1: What does Moore understand by the concept of truism in his essay on "A Defence of Common sense"? Explain in brief

Q 2: What do you understand by physical facts? How is it different from mental facts?

Q 3: Is a common sense proposition analyzable? Give reason for your answer.

Q 4: What is sense-data? Is it related to material object?Does every physical fact logically dependent on any mental facts. Give reason for your answer.

C) Long questions (Answer in about 300-350 words)

Q 1: Is there any causal relation between physical fact and mental fact? Discuss after Moore.

Q 2: Explain after Moore the meaning of the statement, "This is my hand."1.

Q 3: Explain the meaning of sense data after Moore's essay on "A Defence of Common sense".

Q 4: What is sense-data? Is it related to material object?

Q 5: How does Moore analyze common sense proposition?

Q 6: What do you understand by Moore's common sense beliefs?

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UNIT 5: MOORE'S ON REFUTATION OF IDEALISM

UNIT STRUCTURE

5.1 Learning Objectives

5.2 Introduction

- 5.2.1 G.E.Moore
- 5.2.2 Idealism

5.3 Refutation Of Idealism

- 5.3.1 Moore's Criticism on Kantian Idealism
- 5.3.2 "The Refutation of Idealism"
- 5.3.3 Moore's Criticism On Absolute Idealism

5.4 Criticism

5.5 Conclusion

5.6 Let us sum up

5.7 Further Reading

5.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

5.9 Model Questions

5.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to :

- define idealism and its core principle
- explain Moore's criticism on Kant's idealism
- define the different meaning of esse is percipi
- discuss Moore's distinction between object and object of sensation
- explain Moore's refutation of idealism
- explain Moore's criticism on Absolute Idealism

5.2 INTRODUCTION

Moore's refutation of idealism started with his critical response to Kantian idealism. He argues that Kant's conception of morality as founded on *a priori* principles of practical reason is untenable. He was

also critical of Hegel's Absolute idealism and his views that were endorsed by Bradley and Mc Taggart, with whose works Moore was more familiar. Moore's most famous argument against idealism are contained in his paper 'The Refutation of Idealism'. It is an argument against the one claim that all Idealists according to Moore considers necessary to their position – the claim that "*esse* is *percip*i" (to be is to be perceived). Moore in this paper aim to prove that this claim is false in all the sense ever given to it. Moore's final critical response to idealism concerns his rejection of the Absolute Idealism or the philosophy of monism that characterised British idealism. He argues that idealist conception of organic whole is self-contradictory and its internal realtion involves a logical fallacy.

5.2.1 G.E. Moore

George Edward Moore (1873-1958) was an important British philosophers of the first half of the twentieth century. He was one of the trinity of philosophers at Trinity College Cambridge (the others were Bertrand Russell and Ludwig Wittgenstein) who founded the analytic tradition in philosophy. He was Professor of Philosophy at the University of Cambridge and the editor of the influential journal *Mind*. Moore's paper 'The Refutation of Idealism'(1903) was originally published in *Mind* in 1903. It was Moore's most famous criticisms of idealism. *A*mong other Moore's most famous works includs his book Principia Ethica, (1903)and his essays, 'A Defence of Common Sense', (1925) and 'A Proof of the External World' (1939).

5.2.2 Idealism

Idealism is a philosophical doctrine which asserts that reality is fundamentally mental or immaterial. Idealist maintained that knowledge is not independent of mind. They assign crucial importance to ideal or spritual. There are different types of idealism namely subjective idealism , objective idealism, absolute idealism and transcendental idealism . Beginning with Kant,

German Idealists such as Hegel, Fichter, Schelling and Schopenhauer dominated nineteen-century philosophy. This tradition, which emphasized the mental or 'ideal' character of all phenomena, birthed idealistic and subjectivsit schools ranging from British Idealism to phenomenolism to existentialism .

5.3 MOORE'S REFUTATION OF IDEALISM

Moore was antagonistic towards the idealism that dominated British philosophy. He believe that there is too much dogmatic slumbering in the camp of the idealists. One of the most important parts of his philosophical development was his break from the idealism. His revolt against idealism came between 1898 and 1903 when Moore published the first major anti-idealist essay especially 'The Nature of Judgment' (1899) which comes largely from his 1898 Dissertation and 'The Refutation of Idealism' (1903). His final aspect of critical response to idealism is found in the paper 'External and Internal Relations' (1919).

5.3.1 Moor's criticism on Kantian Idealism

Moore was critical of Kant's idealism . He assused Kant of bluring the distinction between 'the psychological faculty of making judgments and inferences' on the one hand and that which is 'true and objective' on the otherhand. The first is psychological while the seoncd is rational and objective. That is, it is a distinction between thought on the one hand and what is objective or real on the other. This distinction, Moore maintains, 'cannot be either done away or bridged over'. He attack Kant for wrongly regarding the truth of the *a priori* principles of morality, as constituted by the structure of the rational will. That is Kant account of the *a priori* embodies a radical confusion of sound logic and irrelevant psychology. Moore rejected Kantian conception of the *a priori* as a muddles form of subjectivism or psychologism. Hence Kantian conceptions of the a priori priciples of practical reason is untenable. Moore extended this line of thought to a general criticsm of Kant's conception of the *a priori.*

Moore's criticism of Kantian account of idealism as implicited in his crticism of *a priori* knowledge can be formulated in two ways . First , he accuses Kant of trying to bridge over the gulf between a thought and its truth. Second, Kant cannot account for the necessity of his synthetic *a priori* principles. This is because the principle of a priori, must be themselve either contingent or necessary. If they are contingent, they cannot provide a basis for the necessity of the *a priori* principles and if they are necessary, then there must be synthetic *a priori* principles characterising these necessities . These *a priori* principles cannot be explained by refernce to the mind's opeation. It could not therefore be a logical basis from which their necessity could be deduced.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS



Q 1: Write the name of the philosopher who is associated with the essay 'Moore's Refutation of Idealism'

……

……

Q 2: Write the definition of idealism.

……

……

Q 3: Who are known as the trinity of philosophers?

……

……

Q 4: Write the name of the book in which Moore reaction against idealism.

……

……

Q 5: What are the different types of idealism?

……

……

5.3.2 The Refutation of Idealism

In this essay Moore rejected the core principle of idealism and offered a distinctly realistic alternative. He claimed that idealist simply assume without evidence the truth of their most important principle. The essay is a respond to the metaphysical idealism advocated by F.H Bradley and George Berkey. According to Moore every form of idealim, relies on the principle expressed by Berkeley , "esse est percipi" or " to be is to be perceived". This belief that, everything is an object of expereince in some mind. That is, existence of an object depends upon its being perceived by some mind. Berkeley even postulates the existence of God as a supreme being who perceives all object, at all time, thus ensuring their contineous existence.

The Idealist Thesis:

Moore formulated the idealist argument as follow : since A is B and B is C and C is D, therefore A is D. Here the first step A is B is "esse is percipi" and the last step, A is D is that " reality is spritual". By the chain of inference of the sort " esse is percipi", idealist according to Moore begins from " to be is to be perceived" through expereince to that "reality is spritual'. Moore task was to dispute the idealist support for this single most trivial proposition namely "esse is percipi" that will subsequently refute an argument for the idealist thesis that 'reality is spritual'. Here it may be noted that Moore aim is not to argue that the idealist thesis that reality is spiritual is false. He is rather arguing that (any or all) arguments based on the claim that " to be is to be perceived" are flawed. That is Moore is not here to refute the idealist thesis . He is only refusing the idealist argument for that thesis . This, he does so, not by showing that the claim " esse is percipi" is false, but by showing that the idealist way of arguing for that claim leads to contradiction.

Meaning of esse is percipi:

Moore begins by examining the meaning of 'esse is percipi'. According to him, there are atleast three sense of 'esse is percipi'. First the words 'esse' and 'percipi' have precisely the same meaning. That is the word 'esse' is used to signify nothing either more or less than the word 'percipi'. The two words are precisely synonyms. For example it is analogous to 'bachelors are unmarried adult human males'. Hence esses is absolulety identical with what is meant by percipi. Second, the meaning of 'percipi' is part but not all of the meaning of 'esse'. For example it is analogous to ' bachelors are male'. This is a relation of analytic containment. Third, is a relation of synthetic necessity. It is synthetic because it is a claim about the world and the nature of reality and not merely about the way we use words or concepts. It is necessity because it is a claim whose negation is in a sense ' inconveivable'. Here, esses is percipi asserts that wherever you have x you also have percipi and that whatever has the property of x also has the property that it is experinced.

When idealist philosophers say 'esse est percipi' Moore's questions is : what reason have they for saying so? The idealist means that 'esse' is necessarily 'percipii'. This means that being perceived is a necessary condition for existence. To this Moore questioned , what is the sort of necessary connection they assert between 'esse' and 'percipi'? The sort of necessary connection they assert is that which exist between a thing and its qualities. That is, the relation of blue to the consciousness of blue is conceived to be exactly the same as that of the 'colour' blue to the blue 'bead'. Now if the relation is between a thing and its qualities, then it follow that to say ' a thing is' means that 'it is perceived'. This is because if a thing exists, its qualities must exist. Moore argue that this however is an error.

Object and Object of Sensation :

According to Moore, idealist is led into this error by an analysis of experience into two and only two constituents namely- content and existence. For Moore there should be a third constituents in expereince namely, a unique element called consciosuness . In other word a unique relation of consciousness to the "object". This relation of knowing is unique and it is present in the sensation of 'blue' or in any independent thing of which 'I am aware'. In other words 'sensation of blue' is like consciousness or awareness of blue which is different from the object of awareness. That is 'object of sensation' is a distinct element in sensation, different from the 'object' itself. That is on this view, the 'sensation of blue' is different from an object, a blue bead or a blue beard , just as the object blue bead is different from the object blue beard. This is because the 'sensation of blue' contains consciosuness where as the object blue bead or blue beard does not . In other words the existence of blue object is quite distinct fom the existence of the sensation of blue object.

Now a sensation of blue differs from a sensation of green because blue and green are different 'object of sensation'. However a sensation of blue resembles a sensation of green because both are cases of consciousness. Again conscionsess which sensations of blue and sensations of green have in common is different either from blue or green. To say that the consciouness of blue exist and the consciousness of green exist, is to say that consciousness also exists. Now consciousness is obviously mental and at time the sensation of blue exists in my mind and at some time it does not . But the point is, if the sensation of blue includes both consciousness and blue, then when the sensation of blue exists in my mind three different alternative arises. That is either :

a) consciouness exists alone;

b) blue exists alone;

c) consciousness and blue exist.

To say (b) is to say something different from (c). and to say that they are the same is to contradict oneself. That is to say that the sensation of blue exists and the sensation of green exists is to say that consciousness also exists, for it is consciouness which is common to both sensations. It is consciousness in virtue of which both are sensations. Now since consciousness is a necessary element in sensation, (b) cannot be the case. Then either (a) or (c) is the case. Therefore the existence of blue (b), cannot be the same thing as the existence of the sensation of blue. We are therefore left with either (a) or (c), but not both together. From this it follow that the object of sensation must be different from the sensation itself. This is because to claim that blue is the same as consciouness plus blue, is to claim that a part is the same as a whole of which it is only part, or else to identify it with something which it is not, namely the other parts.

Whenever we have a sensation, consciousness and its object exist together. Since consciousness and its object always exist together, philosophers according to Moore has fail to realised that we can distinguished the consciousness (of blue) from the object (blue) just as we can distinguish a sensation of blue from a sensation of green. Now consciousness is obviously mental, but there is no reason whatsoever for concluding that the blue must also be mental. This argument does not provide the ground for concluding that the object blue is not mental. But it remove the ground for concluding that it is mental. Hence this argument destroys idealism by destroying one of the strongest reasons for beleiving that blue is mental.

Implications of Moore's arguments :

Three consequences follow from this :

i) when i have a sensation of blue, my awareness is related to something outside. Therefore the idealists problem of how we are to get out of our circle of ideas does not arise. This

is because to have a sensation is already to be outside it.

ii) Blue (or any colour) exists in the same sense as my expereince of it exists.

iii) The object has exactly the same nature both when we are aware of it and when we are not aware of it. Knowing therefore makes no difference to the object known.

If the analysis of Moore is right, it would follow that, the relation of knowing is 'external' to the object known and the subject that knows.that is in having a sensation, we are oputside the circle of our own ideas and thus reach out to something which is independent of our expereince of it. Henceforth there is no reason to think that the proposition esse is percipi is true and no reason to think that all objects depend for their existence upon the mind to think about them .

Lastly Moore made a distinction between object of sensation and content . According to Moore object of any sensation or mental expereicne is distinct from content . This is because, content can be the content of a perception, thoughts and volitions. That is, I can perceive something blue, I can think of something blue or I can will somehting to be blue. In all thses cases, the content may be the same. That is, the content is, indeed, something distinct from the particular expereince of it .



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 6: What is the main essay of idealism?

.....

Q 7: What is meant by esse is percipi?

.....

Q 8: Is esse necessarily percipi?

.....

5.3.3 Moore's criticism of Absolute idealism

The final aspect of Moore's critical respond toward idealism concerns his rejection of absolute idealism . Moore's criticsm on Absolute idealism is especially characteristic of Bradley's idealism according to which reality exists as an organic whole that are essentially inter related. Hence the Absolute is the one real thing. This is also called the theory of monism which was characteristic of Britsh idealism . Moore's paper on 'External and Internal Relation' (1919) focus on the idealist conception of internal relations which is the core of monist thesis.

First Moore began by characterising an organic whole as the whole that would not be what it is but for the existence of the parts, and the parts would not be what it is but for the existenbce of the whole. Moore maintianed that the concept of an organic whole is self-contradictory. He starts by introducting the assumption that the parts of an organic whole 'contian analytically' the whole of which each is a part. If so, it follow that the parts are not even 'distinct object of thought'.

Second, Moore critisied the internal relations of Absolute idealism. Absolute idealism requires that since everything is part of an organic whole, there is a necessary connection between every aspect of things and therefore all relations must be internal. Moore's argument against this thesis starts from the claim that it conflicts with our common snese conviction that things are not essentially inter-related . This is because a change to one thing in one respect does not necessitates changes to everything else. Moore when on to show that the thesis that all relations are internal involves a logical fallacy. He inferred from Leibniz' Law, the uncontentious principle that things which differ in their relations must differ in their identity too. The argument applying Morre's concept of entailment runs as follows:

1. Leibniz' Law states that

   xRy entails (*z* = *x* '! *zRy*),

where ''!' is the truth-functional conditional

2. Since entailment is a necessary connection, one might infer *xRy* '! Necessarily (*z* = *x* '! *zRy*)

3. From (2) one can immediately infer *xRy* '! Necessarily (*x* = *x* '! *xRy*)

4. Since *x* = *x* is itself a necessary truth, one can now infer *xRy* '! Necessarily (*xRy*) which expresses the thesis that all relations are internal.

Moore present here a sophisticated piece of informal modal logic. He observes that the step from (1) to (2) is invalid. It confuses the necessity of a connection with the neccisity of the consequent.

How far Morre's argument is acceptable is a questioned . Critic argues that Bradley's reason for his Absolute idelaism do not involve the model fallacy that Moore identifies. This is becasue Bradley's dialectic rest on a diiferent thesis about the inadequacy of thought as a representation of reality, and thus that one has to dig rather deeper into Bradley's idealist metaphysics both to extract the grounds for his monism and to exhibit what is wrong with it.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 9: Define monism?

.....

.....

Q 10 : Is there a necessary internal relation between part and whole?

.....

.....

Q 11: Is the concept of organic whole self-contradictory?

.....

.....

5.4. CRITICISM

In his paper on 'The Refutation of Idealism', Moore begins his criticism against idealist with the statement aserting that the universe is spiritual. His definition of spiritual included all objects in the universe that includes chairs, tables and mountians. Here it can be argued that Moore has taken for granted the existence of the subject and assumes that the idealist argues that the object is in reality like the subject. Moore does not consider the possibility of an idealistic perspective according to which neither subject nor object may lay claim to real existence. Moore has infact misunderstood the nature of the metaphycial thesis offered by idealist.

Second criticism is directed against the three interpretaiton Moore offered for the 'esse is percipi'. His three interpretaiton are namely 1) that the words "esse" and "percippi" are synonymous; (2) that esse is not absolutely identical with what is meant by percipi, however the former includes the latter as a part of its meaning and (3) that "whereever you have esse you also have percipi that whatever has the property x also has the property that it is expereinced".

According to Moore the idealist interpretaion of esses is percipi necessirily fits into the third alternative. Whatever is, is expereince. First this implies that esse is percipi necessarily requries a distinction between an experiencer and an expereinced. This requires an acceptance of the subject-object duality. Second it also assume that the reality is a whole, in which part of which is not experienced. But if expereince is the expereince of objects, and if we then take the object away, there is no expereince. That is experience is empty. On the other hand, if there is no object, we are not taking anything away but merely asserting only what it is .

The third major criticism of Moore's argument is directed towards Moore's distinction between consciousness and object of sensation. According to Moore, we have in every sensation two distinct terms (1) 'consciousness', in respect of which all sensations are alike and (2)

somehting else, in respect of which one sensation differs from another . He calls this second term the 'object' of a sensation. According to this analysis there are two distinct elements in sensation, namely consciosduness and the object of consciousness. But the question is are there really two disitnct elelemts in sensation. According to the critic the only way to settle the case is by appealing to introspection. That is, it is on the basis of introspection that one can check whether or not there is a duality within sensation.

Moore arrived at his conslucison that there are two distinct elements because consciousness is a name given to all cases of sensation on the ground that while individual sensations differ from each other, they all nontheless share in common the characteristic of being sensations. Hence if individual sensations differ from each other, and yet, are all equally consciousness then it follows for Moore that each sensation differs from each other sensation qua content. For Moore, since individual sensation differ from one another, and all are equally conscious, it follows that consciousness is something distinct from its contents. Moore also analysis sensation or ideas as

"a case of 'knowing' or 'being aware of' or 'experiencing' somehting". According to the critic, this anaysis assume sensation as a case of subject knower "knowing" an object. That is sensation in this analysis is different from the object known. Later on Moore analysis the sensation like 'I am aware of blue' to mean both my awareness has to blue as well as being of blue. That is Moore admits that awaress can be blue as well as being of blue.

The critic argues that if awareness is blue then it makes no sense to say that it can be of blue as well. If awareness is of a blue then we need not become aware of it . The critic argues that the only possible alternative is that it is not a blue awareness of which we a re becoming aware, but it is a blue simpliciter of which we are becoming aware. If this is is the case, then we must first have the blue before knowing it. But this, even on Moore's acount is not possible. Hence there follows two alternative. First , if there is already a blue awareness there would seem

to be no need to become aware of it or else why do we refer to it as a blue awareness. Second, if it is a blue simpliciter, we could have a sensation without knowing. But his Moore himself does not allow.

What Moore intends in this analysis is to assert that sensation is comprised of two distinct elements, consciousness and the object of consicouness. To have a sensation is already to be aware of something which is other than consciousness. But the critic point is that , Moore's anaysis is dependend upon his having access to that to which, he has no access, namely a blue in itself. If the blue Moore speaks about is a blue awareness , then he would not have to become aware of it . In this case there are not two items, consciousness and its object . If on the other hand, the blue Moore speaks about is that of which he muct become aware before he can know it as blue, then it must be that he can have a blue before he knows it as blue. But this is impossible because the question is how could one 'have a blue" wihtout knowing it was blue. Hence the only alternative according to the critic must be that, "having a blue" is discovering a blue awareness. In other word, blue and consciosness of blue are not two distinct elements, but one. If this is the case, Moore's argument for 'The Refutation of Idealism' is not actually an argument for the 'refutation of Idealism' but rather an argument on its behalf.

5.5 CONCLUSION

Although Moore's refutation of idealism is highly questionable and his essay on *The Refutation of Idealism* is uncharitable to idealism, the idealist's postion is untenable in a radical sense. In a few words it may be summaried that Moore confuse what the idealist is attempting to do. He argues that the idealist contradicts himself in his thesis that the object of expereince is inconceivable apart from the subject because it means that that the idealist thinks 'yellow' is 'absolutely identical' with 'the sensation of yellow'. But the question is how can 'yellow' be 'absolutely identitcal' with 'the sensation of yellow?' In other words, how can 'yellow' be 'absolutely identical' with the sensation of itself?

Idealist implicitily has to presuppose the necessary distinction between 'yellow'and 'the sensation of yellow' , if he is to offer a coherent account of the identity of colour sensation. This leads to contradiciton because the idealist is implicitely presuppoisng what he explicitily denies. That is it conflicts with to our common snese thinking about the world. For example that in our ordinary langauge or conceptual scheme, 'yellow' is not distinguished from 'the sensation of yellow'. Hence it may be concluded that although there is lapps in Moore's account of refutaion of idealism, idealism simply does not provide th best explanation of how we expereince reality. Moore himself later expressed that his essay on *The Refutation of Idealism* was 'very confused' and embodied a 'good many down-right mistakes'. Nevertheless Moore's break with idealism with his refutation of idealism remains a decisive significance in the development of analytic philosophy .His critique of the idealism helped to break its hold on Anglo-American thought.



5.6 LET US SUM UP

- Moore's criticism of idealism is a general criticism against what he calls modern idealist. He assert that modern idealist are bound together by a chain of inference that begin from the thought or expereinced of the phrase 'esse is percipi'. That is all idealist argument starts from 'to be is to perceice (or think or expereince)' to 'reality is spiritual'. Moore in the essay on 'The Refutation of Idealism' attemp to refute this line of reasoning by attaching the claim that esse is percipi, which originated from Berkeley.
- Moore begins by examining the meaning of esse is percipi. He argues that what is meant here is that esse includes percipi. That is, the predicate 'exist' is to be defined as 'is perceived' plus some additional x. That is being perceived is a necessary but insufficient condition for existence. Moore's task is to argued that this is not so.

- The crux of the argument is that idealist cannot consistently hold that blue is simply identitical with the sensation of blue. Just because sensation involves consciousness plus a certain content, and the two always exist together it soes not follow that they are inseparable. In fact the point is that they are separable . That is blue is separable from the sensation of blue . That is blue is different from the senation of blue. This is because, all of our sensations are modes of conscionsess, they must have certain commonalities, certain properties of consciousness *qua* consciousness. Hence sensation of blue is similar to sensation of green because both has the common elelment namely consciousness. However sensation of blue is different from sensation of green because the objects of sensations are different , one is blue , the other is green. The point is that blue is the object of our sensation and it cannot be strictly identitical with the sensation (of blue). What we have in this sensation is that there exists the awareness of blue that is certainly knowable.
- Now awareness is mental, therefore awareness of blue is also mental. According to Idealist awareness of blue entials the existence of blue . Moore thinks that this is inconsistent. This is because awareness of blue is awareness of my own mental states and it does not justify the conclusion that blue exists. It also does not justify the conclusion that blue is mental.



5.7 FURTHER READING

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5.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No.1: G.E.Moore

Ans to Q No. 2: Idealism is that theory of reality which maintaints that reality is fundamentally mental and non-objective. Reality has no existence independent to mind in relation to the external world, it is completely dependent on mind.

Ans to Q No 3: G.E. Moore, Bertrand Russell, and Ludwig Wittgenstein

Ans to Q No 4: 'External and Internal Relations'- (1919)

Ans to Q No 5: Subjective idealism, Objective idealism, and Absolute Idealism, and Transcendental Idealism

Ans to Q No 6: 'Esse-est-percipi'

Ans to Q No 7: The meaning of 'esse-est-percipi' is to 'exist is to be perceived'. That means 'existence depends on perception'. 'Esse' means 'to exist', 'est' means 'is' and 'percipi' means 'to be perceived'.

Ans to Q No 8: Yes

Ans to Q No 9: According to the theory, there is only one reality as an existence of the world, is called monism.

Ans to Q No 10: Yes

Ans to Q No 11: According to the idealists, 'esse' is essentially 'percipi'. However, G.E. Moore rejects this as an error.



5.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Very short questions

Q 1: Name the philosopher who is related to the essay 'The Refutation of Idealism'

Q 2: Define idealism.

Q 3: Who are known as the 'trinity of philosophers'?

Q 4: Name the book of G.E.Moore, which shows the critical response to idealism.

Q 5: What are the different types of Idealism?

Q 6: What is monism?

Q 7: Is there any essential relation between part and whole?

Q 8: Is the concept 'organic whole' contradictory?

Q 9: What is the core essay of the idealists?

Q 10: What is meant by 'esse –est-percipi'?

Q 11: Is 'esse' essentially 'percipi'?

B) Short Questions (Answer each question in about100- 150 words)

Q 1: What are the main tenent of idealism ?

Q 2: Does consciousness and object of consciousness necessary exist together? Give reason for your answer.

Q 3: Is awareness always mental ? Why?

Q 4: How did Morre criticise Kantian Idealism?

Q 5: What are three interpretation of esse is percipi according to Moore?

Q 6: What is the role of 'esse is percipi' in idealist argument ?

Q 7: Does esse includes percipi? Explain

Q 8: What do you understand by object and object of sensation.

Q 9: Is there any difference between awareness of blue and awareness of green ? Give reason for your answer.

Q 10: Is there a distinction between colour as qualities of material objcts as in 'blue bead' and colour as expereinced qualities as in 'seeing blue' or 'sensation of blue'.

Q 11: What do you understan by 'content' ? Is it different from object of sensation?

D) Long Questions (Answer in about 300-500 words)

Q 1: Give an account of Morre's refutation of Idealism.

Q 2: Is the 'esse' necessarily 'percipi'? Justified your answer.

Q 3: Discuss Moore's account of consciousness and object of consciousness.

Q 4: Is Moore's criticism of idealism tenable? Give reason for your answer.

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UNIT 6: WITTGENSTEIN'S CONCEPT OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIT STRUCTURE

6.1 Learning Objectives

6.2 Introduction

6.3 Language:

6.4 World

6.5 Isomorphic relation between language and the world

6.6 Philosophy

6.7 Let us sum up

6.8 Further readings

6.9 Answers to check your progress

6.10 Model questions

6.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to :

- Explain Wittgenstein's concept of philosophy.
- Analyse Wittgenstein's idea of language, world, fact, and proposition.
- Explain isomorphic relation between language and the world.
- Explain Wittgenstein's distinction between philosophy and science.
- Analyse Wittgenstein's understanding of method of philosophy.

6.2 INTRODUCTION

Wittgenstein, the Austrian philosopher, was one of the influential figures of twentieth century. His only published work *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, represents his earlier thought which is considered as Early Wittgenstein and his posthumously published work *Philosophical Investigations* represents his later thought which is considered as Later Wittgenstein. For both early and later Wittgenstein, the central element

was language. He was interested in language for the sake of philosophy. Wittgenstein initiates his journey towards philosophy with an aim to 'deal with the problem of philosophy'. His understanding of 'philosophy' is very much peculiar than the other philosophers. Philosophy, according to Wittgenstein, aims at logical clarification of thought and thereby draws limits to thoughts. However drawing limits to thought is not possible therefore Wittgenstein focuses on language, the expression of thought and draws limits of language. Wittgenstein treats thought and language in the same way. Kenny comments "The philosophy of *Tractatus* aims to show what is thinkable by showing what is sayable, to mark the limits of thought by setting the limits of language"(Kenny 16-17). Therefore, Wittgenstein opines the view that philosophy emphasis on the clarification of proposition.

6.3 LANGUAGE

According to Wittgenstein, philosophy must place language at its core to address philosophical problems. He argues that these problems arise due to misunderstandings of the logic of language *(Preface, TLP)*. With the intent of resolving them, Wittgenstein considers language to be the central element of his philosophical inquiry. Therefore, he considers philosophy as a critique of language-a process that enables the discovery of the true logical form of language. What lies beneath language, its logical form, is what truly matters in philosophical speculation.

But an important question emerges: if language already functions in a logical order, why is it necessary to focus on its logical form? Wittgenstein addresses this by stating, *"Language disguises thought. So much so, that from the outward form of the clothing, it is impossible to infer the form of the thought beneath it, because the outward form of clothing is not designed to reveal the form of the body, but entirely for different purposes" (TLP 4.002)*. This means that language, instead of making thoughts transparent, often conceals them. Therefore, Wittgenstein emphasizes the need for a critique of language-a process of uncovering its logical structure. Without this, language will continue to disguise our thoughts, leading to philosophical confusion. Thus, understanding the logical structure of everyday language

is essential for clarifying our thoughts, and this must be a key concern of philosophy. He strongly supports the logical analysis of language, as it helps in revealing the thought embedded within it. This is why Wittgenstein asserts, *"Philosophy aims at the logical clarification of thoughts"* (TLP 4.112).

Thoughts remain unclear unless the underlying structure of language is made explicit. However, this does not mean that thoughts are inner, private experiences in a subjective sense. Rather, they are the content of linguistic expressions, and language provides their structure. Wittgenstein insists that there is no thought independent of language-all thoughts are shaped by language. Therefore, understanding the logic of language is essential for making thoughts transparent.

A fundamental aspect of Wittgenstein's view is that language is a picture of reality. He argues that this picturing relation is possible because the logical form of language mirrors the logical form of the world. According to him, there is a direct correspondence between language and reality, making it possible for language to represent the world accurately. However, to fully grasp this language-world relation, one must understand the structure of language, the structure of reality, and the nature of this picturing process.

Wittgenstein defines language as the totality of propositions. Among these, elementary propositions are the simplest, as they do not contain other propositions within them. Instead, they are composed of names, which are not themselves propositions. However, Wittgenstein uses the term "name" in a specific technical sense. For him, a name is something that cannot be defined further. This means that words like *cow, square, or Socrates* do not qualify as names in the Wittgensteinian sense, since they can still be further defined-for instance, a cow can be described as a four-legged animal. According to Wittgenstein, a true name must refer to something absolutely simple, meaning it cannot be broken down further. If a name refers to something complex, it will require a definition, and therefore, it will not qualify as a name in Wittgensteinian sense. Thus, he opines:

"A name cannot be dissected any further by means of a definition: it is a primitive sign" (TLP 3.26).

6.4 WORLD

At the very beginning of his book Tractatus, Wittgenstein writes:

The world is all that is the case (TLP 1).

The world is the totality of facts, not of things (TLP 2).

At first glance, these remarks of Wittgenstein may seem puzzling if we consider it from the common-sense perspective. The reason for the puzzlement is that, from a common-sense perspective, the world is the totality of things, and it is the things that are the constituents of the world. But for Wittgenstein, whatever the world is totality of, a complete list of them ought to tell us what the world is like, ought to provide a complete description of the world. But if the world is the totality of things, this description is left out. For instance, when describing a room, merely listing the objects within it does not provide a full depiction. The way those objects are arranged in the room is equally important. This arrangement-the way objects relate to one another-is what Wittgenstein refers to as a fact. Though, from the common-sense perspective the view of Wittgenstein, that '*the world is totality of fact*' may seem puzzling at first, the stated consideration makes the remarks of Wittgenstein compelling. Thus, for Wittgenstein, the world divides not into things but into facts. As such, it is fact that bears the most basic kind of reality.

According to Wittgenstein, facts themselves are complex. They consist of simpler facts, and when broken down further, they lead to atomic facts-the simplest, indivisible states of affairs. Unlike complex facts, atomic facts have no facts as their constituents; instead, they are composed of objects or simples, which are not facts themselves. In this way, atomic facts serve as the ultimate building blocks of reality. Wittgenstein argues that if one were to know all atomic facts, along with the fact that these are all that exist, one would have a complete description of the world.

Fact for Wittgenstein is a determinate combination of objects. Therefore, according to Wittgenstein, facts, ultimately being the combination of objects, have objects as their constituent. For this reason, he writes:

"Objects make up the substance of the world. That is why they cannot be composite" (TLP 2.021).

Thus, Wittgenstein considers object as simple. Here a question arises-if it is the object that makes up the substance of the world, then why not objects are the '*most basic kind of reality*'. But the reason is that objects have no existence apart from facts. So, it is facts alone that can exist of themselves, independent of anything else. As such, Wittgenstein accepts the view that objects are always in combinations with other objects and one cannot imagine object excluding from its possible combinations with others.

According to Wittgenstein, though objects are simple, but there is no object that can be imagined without its combination with other objects. The important feature of object mentioned by Wittgenstein is that objects are unalterable and subsistent, it is only their configuration or arrangement that is changing. Thus, the combinations of objects i.e. state of affairs determines the structure of a fact. For this reason, he writes: *"The totality of existing states of affairs is the world"* (TLP 2.04).

6.5 ISOMORPHIC RELATION BETWEEN LANGUAGE AND THE WORLD

Wittgenstein is of the opinion that there is an isomorphic relation between language and the world. This isomorphic relation is based on the constituents of the world and language. As discussed in the earlier section, for Wittgenstein, a name can only refer to something without parts, meaning something simple. When discussing the structure of the world, he identifies objects as what is truly simple. He connects these ideas when he states, *"A name means an object. The object is its meaning"* (TLP 3.203).

For Wittgenstein, names denote objects, and it is these objects that give names their meaning. He further explains that names are the fundamental components of elementary propositions, and a name only appears in a proposition within the framework of an elementary proposition (TLP 4.23). This means that if there is no corresponding object, the elementary proposition-which consists of names-will lack reference and

thus be meaningless. Since the meaning of a proposition depends on the meaning of its elementary propositions, the absence of objects ultimately results in the entire proposition being meaningless.

Wittgenstein presents a structured relationship between language and the world, which can be roughly outlined as follows:

Language	World
Propositions	→ Facts
Elementary propositions	→ States of affairs
Names	→ Objects

According to Wittgenstein, every component of the world i.e. reality has a linguistic counterpart. In language, a name stands for an object, and the existence of that object is a necessary condition for the name to be meaningful. Objects do not exist in isolation; they are always arranged in a certain configuration with other objects, forming states of affairs. These states of affairs, in turn, correspond to elementary propositions, which are structured arrangements of names. This is how language connects with reality.

Interestingly, Wittgenstein does not provide specific examples of what he means by "objects," "names," or "elementary propositions" in his works. The reason for this is that he is not conducting an empirical investigation but a logical one. It is the task of empirical sciences, not philosophy, to identify actual instances of these elements. Wittgenstein, being a logician, is not interested in such matters. Wittgenstein is certain that there must be such things as elementary propositions, and hence names and objects, even though he admits that he cannot think of any single example of one.

For Wittgenstein, the world is all that is the case (TLP 1), and propositions inherently represent what is the case. Since elementary propositions picture reality, they play a crucial role in representing the world. Wittgenstein emphasizes that a complete description of the world is possible if all true elementary propositions are given, along with an indication of which are true and which are false (TLP 4.26). However,

elementary propositions do not possess truth or falsity on their own; rather, their truth value is determined by facts. This dependence of propositions on facts highlights the idea that language must always remain tied to reality to be meaningful.

Because language is limited to what can be represented in facts, it cannot go beyond the world. Wittgenstein insists that understanding this inseparable relationship between language and the world is essential to grasping the nature of meaning. Language has sense only when it is confined to describing the world. In other words, language always has the world as its background, and it is always about the world-this is the limit of language. As Wittgenstein puts it, *"Empirical reality is limited by the totality of objects. The limit also makes itself manifest in the totality of elementary propositions"* (TLP 5.5561).

Wittgenstein further argues *"the totality of true propositions is the whole of natural science"* (TLP 4.11).

Therefore, according to Wittgenstein, it is the propositions of the natural sciences that can only be said. As for Wittgenstein, there is one-to-one relation between the elements of the world and language; thereby language is all about the factual world. The factual world, for him is the limit of language's representation. Language cannot go beyond the factual world.

6.6 PHILOSOPHY

Wittgenstein specifies that *"Philosophy is not one of the natural sciences. (The word 'philosophy' must mean something whose place is above or below the natural sciences, not beside them)"* (TLP 4.111). Wittgenstein further argues, *"The totality of true propositions is the whole of natural science"* (TLP 4.11).

Therefore, according to Wittgenstein, it is only the propositions of the natural sciences that can be said. For Wittgenstein, there is a one-to-one relation between the elements of the world and language; thus, language is entirely about the factual world. The factual world, for him, is the limit of language's representation-language cannot go beyond the factual world.

Therefore, Wittgenstein maintains the view that language is the whole corpus of the natural sciences. However, he further argues, *"The correct method in philosophy would really be the following: to say nothing except what can be said, i.e. propositions of natural science"* (TLP 6.53).

This remark of Wittgenstein suggests that there can be no philosophical propositions. Since all propositions are part of the totality of natural sciences, and philosophy can never be one of the natural sciences, there are no philosophical propositions. He writes, *"Philosophy sets limits to the much-disputed sphere of natural science"* (TLP 4.113). For Wittgenstein, philosophy is associated with a unique understanding whose foundation is not provided by science. Now, the question arises: what does philosophy aim at? Regarding this, he opines,

Philosophy aims at the logical clarification of thoughts. Philosophy is not a body of doctrine but an activity... Philosophy does not result in 'philosophical propositions' but rather in the clarification of propositions. Without philosophy, thoughts are, as it were, cloudy and indistinct: its task is to make them clear and to give them sharp boundaries (TLP 4.112).

Therefore, Wittgenstein writes, *"Philosophy does not result in 'philosophical propositions' but rather in the clarification of propositions"* (TLP 4.112). According to Wittgenstein, philosophy should not be considered a body of doctrine; instead, philosophy is an activity (TLP 4.112). He argues that propositions, as they simply state facts, can never have a place in a book of philosophy.

Now, the question arises: if philosophical works do not consist of doctrines, what constitutes a philosophical work? Wittgenstein maintains the view that philosophical work consists of elucidations. Embracing elucidations reflects that philosophy, instead of focusing on a theory-building approach, looks for the clarification of propositions. The clarification of propositions highlights what can be said via language and what cannot be said via language. Therefore, Wittgenstein comments:

The correct method in philosophy would really be the following: to say nothing except what can be said, i.e. propositions of natural science-i.e. something that has nothing to do with philosophy-and then, whenever

someone else wanted to say something metaphysical, to demonstrate to him that he had failed to give a meaning to certain signs in his propositions. Although it would not be satisfying to the other person-he would not have the feeling that we were teaching him philosophy-this method would be the only strictly correct one(TLP 6.53).

From these words of Wittgenstein, it is reflected that what can be uttered or said has nothing to do with philosophy, and the task of philosophy is to highlight this point. Therefore, according to Wittgenstein, *"most of the propositions and questions to be found in philosophical works are not false but nonsensical. Consequently, we cannot give any answer to questions of this kind, but can only point out that they are nonsensical"* (TLP 4.003). For Wittgenstein, the problems that philosophers in the past dealt with, although they seemed real, are nonsensical and, hence, are not real problems. These problems do not actually exist.

"Philosophy is thus not the endeavor to investigate realms of being and to discover new truths, new facts" (Pitcher 158). Wittgenstein maintains the view that philosophy *"will signify what cannot be said, by presenting clearly what can be said"* (TLP 4.115). Therefore, what is important here is what cannot be said. What cannot be said is reflected in what can be said.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Why does Wittgenstein place language at the center of philosophy?

.....

Q 2: Why is it necessary to analyze the logical form of language?

.....

Q 3: What is the main goal of philosophy, according to Wittgenstein?

.....

Q 4: What is the relationship between language and thought in Wittgenstein's view?

.....

Q 5: What does Wittgenstein mean by 'elementary propositions'?

.....

Q 6: What does Wittgenstein mean by "The world is the totality of facts, not of things" ?

.....

Q 7: What are atomic facts according to Wittgenstein?

.....

Q 8: Why are objects not considered the most fundamental reality in Wittgenstein's view?

.....

Q 9: What role do states of affairs play in Wittgenstein's philosophy?

.....

Q 10: What happens if an elementary proposition lacks a corresponding object?

.....

Q 11: How does Wittgenstein structure the relationship between language and the world?

.....

Q 12: What is language according to Wittgenstein?

.....

Q 13: According to Wittgenstein, what is the correct method in philosophy?

.....



6.7 LET US SUM UP

- According to Wittgenstein, philosophy must place language at its core to address philosophical problems. He argues that these problems arise due to misunderstandings of the logic of language
- A fundamental aspect of Wittgenstein's view is that language is a picture of reality. He argues that this picturing relation is possible because the logical form of language mirrors the logical form of the world. According

to him, there is a direct correspondence between language and reality, making it possible for language to represent the world accurately.

- Wittgenstein defines language as the totality of propositions. Among these, elementary propositions are the simplest, as they do not contain other propositions within them. Instead, they are composed of names, which are not themselves propositions.
- For Wittgenstein, the world is all that is the case (TLP 1), and propositions inherently represent what is the case. Since elementary propositions picture reality, they play a crucial role in representing the world. Wittgenstein emphasizes that a complete description of the world is possible if all true elementary propositions are given, along with an indication of which are true and which are false.
- Wittgenstein insists that understanding this inseparable relationship between language and the world is essential to grasping the nature of meaning. Language has sense only when it is confined to describing the world. In other words, language always has the world as its background, and it is always about the world-this is the limit of language.
- According to Wittgenstein, it is the propositions of the natural sciences that can only be said. As for Wittgenstein, there is one-to-one relation between the elements of the world and language; thereby language is all about the factual world. The factual world, for him is the limit of language's representation. Language cannot go beyond the factual world.
- Wittgenstein specifies that "Philosophy is not one of the natural sciences. (The word 'philosophy' must mean something whose place is above or below the natural sciences, not beside them)" (TLP 4.111).
- For Wittgenstein, philosophy is associated with a unique understanding whose foundation is not provided by science.
- According to Wittgenstein, philosophy should not be considered a body of doctrine; instead, philosophy is an activity.
- According to Wittgenstein, the correct method in philosophy would really be the following: to say nothing except what can be said, i.e. propositions of natural science-i.e. something that has nothing to do with philosophy



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6.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q. No. 1: Because he believes that philosophical problems arise due to misunderstandings of the logic of language.

Ans to Q. No. 2: Because language disguises thought, making it difficult to see its true meaning without analyzing its structure.

Ans to Q. No. 3: To achieve logical clarification of thoughts.

Ans to Q. No. 4: Thought is structured by language, and there is no thought without language.

Ans to Q. No. 5: Elementary propositions are the simplest propositions that do not contain other propositions within them.

Ans to Q. No. 6: Wittgenstein argues that the world is not just a collection of objects but a collection of facts-the way objects are arranged in relation to one another.

Ans to Q. No. 7: Atomic facts are the simplest, indivisible facts that do not have any other facts as their components. They serve as the fundamental building blocks of the world or reality.

Ans to Q. No. 8: Objects do not exist independently; they only exist within facts. A single object cannot be imagined in isolation from its possible combinations with others

Ans to Q. No. 9: States of affairs refer to specific arrangements of objects, which determine the structure of a fact. The world, according to Wittgenstein, is made up of all existing states of affairs.

Ans to Q. No. 10: If an elementary proposition lacks a corresponding object then it becomes meaningless, as its names would have no reference.

Ans to Q. No. 11: Wittgenstein describes the structure of language and world as follows:

Language ? World

Propositions ? Facts

Elementary propositions ? States of affairs

Names ? Objects

Ans to Q. No. 12: According to Wittgenstein, language is the totality of propositions. Language represents the factual world, and its limits are the limits of what can be meaningfully said.

Ans to Q. No. 13: To say only what can be said, which means stating propositions of natural science and demonstrating when others use meaningless expressions. This is the only correct method of philosophy.



6.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

(A) Very Short Questions:

What did Wittgenstein consider the main element of his philosophical speculation?

Q. 1. According to Wittgenstein, what is the ultimate constituent of the world?

Q. 2. According to Wittgenstein, what is the ultimate constituent of language?

Q. 3. According to Wittgenstein, what is the world the totality of?

Q. 4. According to Wittgenstein, to what does a name refer?

B. Short Questions (Answer in about 200 words)

Q. 1. Why does Wittgenstein say that objects are unalterable?

Q. 2. How does Wittgenstein define a complete description of the world?

Q. 3. What does Wittgenstein mean by 'language disguises thought'?

Q. 4. Why does Wittgenstein argue that language is limited to the world?

Q. 5. Why do words like 'cow' and 'square' not qualify as names in Wittgenstein's sense?

Q. 6. What is the relationship between language and the world in Wittgenstein's view?

C. Write Short Notes On (Answer in about 200 words)

Q. 1. Facts

Q. 2. Language

Q. 3. World

Q. 4. Philosophy

Q. 5. Method in philosophy

D. Long Questions (Answer in about 500 words)

Q. 1. How does a proposition represent reality, according to Wittgenstein

Q. 2. How does Wittgenstein believe philosophy sets limits to natural science?

Q. 3. How does Wittgenstein define Philosophy?

Q. 4. How, according to Wittgenstein, does philosophy differ from science?

Q. 5. What is the correct method in philosophy, according to Wittgenstein, and why?

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UNIT 7: WITTGENSTEIN'S CONCEPT OF SAYING AND SHOWING

UNIT STRUCTURE

7.1 Learning Objectives

7.2 Introduction

7.3 Limits of Language: What can be said

7.4 What can be shown

7.5 Philosophy

7.6 The ambiguity of showing

7.8 Let us sum up

7.9 Further readings

7.10 Answers to check your progress

7.11 Model questions

7.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to :

- Explain Wittgenstein's concept of saying and showing
- Know Wittgenstein's idea of limit of language
- Describe Wittgenstein's distinction between saying and showing
- Analyse how Wittgenstein's notion of saying and showing paves the way for his philosophy.

7.2 INTRODUCTION

In Wittgenstein's philosophy, the distinction between saying and showing holds a significant place, as he considers it the central problem of philosophy. Tractatus presents an intricate discussion on this distinction, aiming to clearly separate what can be said from what can only be shown.

In a letter to Russell, Wittgenstein expresses his concern that "the main content or the message of Tractatus, that is misunderstood by

the British philosophers. According to Wittgenstein, "The main point is the theory of what can be expressed by proposi-tions - i.e. by language - (and, which comes to the same, what can be thought) and what cannot be expressed by propositions, but only shown; which, I believe, is the cardinal problem of philosophy."

This distinction between saying and showing plays a crucial role in dissolving philosophical problems. Wittgenstein's idea aligns with his famous statement from the preface of Tractatus: "The whole sense of the book might be summed up in the following words: what can be said at all can be said clearly, and what we cannot talk about we must pass over in silence."

7.3 LIMITS OF LANGUAGE: WHAT CAN BE SAID

Wittgenstein asserts that the world is "all that is the case", and propositions by its very nature represent what is the case. However, what a proposition means is not reflected in the proposition itself; in order to understand it, we must rely on an analysis that will help us reach the elementary proposition, and depending on the elementary propositions, we can infer the meaning of that particular proposition. Wittgenstein writes, "If all true elementary propositions are given, the result is a complete description of the world. The world is completely described by giving all elementary propositions, and adding which of them are true and which false" (TLP 4.26). The dependency of the truth value of the proposition in the facts reflects the point that language has a limitation, it cannot go beyond facts. Wittgenstein's goal in his philosophical speculation is to highlight this very limitation of language. Therefore, Wittgenstein relies on an analysis of language and reveals the underlying structure of language. The analysis of language uncovers its logical form, which in turn defines both the nature and the boundaries of language. It is the logical form of language which determines the nature and function of language and thereby determines the boundaries or the limits of language. The limits of language are drawn from the within, because this limit is determined by the logical form of language.

For Wittgenstein, understanding the structure of the world through language is crucial, as language and the world are inseparably interlinked. Because of this inseparable relation a language will have sense as long as it is confined to world only. In Wittgensteinian sense, in order to be called a sensical language, the proposition must represent the fact of the world. The world is always there in language as the background, and language is always about the world. This is the only limit of language. But Wittgenstein is interested in language not for the sake of language, but for the sake of philosophical problems. Thus, he writes:

".. Philosophy does not result in 'philosophical propositions', but rather in the clarification of propositions." (TLP 4.112).

Rather than constructing theories, philosophy should focus on clarifying propositions. This is why Wittgenstein argues that philosophy is not a natural science; instead, it must define the boundaries of natural science (TLP 4.113). According to him, natural science consists entirely of elementary propositions, leading him to state:

"The correct method in philosophy would really be the following: to say nothing except what can be said, i.e. propositions of natural science" (TLP 6.53).

According to Wittgenstein's understanding of language, language is equivalent to the descriptive language for the reason that proposition describe, depicts, and represents possible facts in the world. Therefore, the totality of true propositions, for Wittgenstein, is the whole of natural science (TLP 4.11). Accordingly, Wittgenstein argues that what can be said is the propositions of natural science.

7.4 WHAT CAN BE SHOWN?

By identifying "what can be said," Wittgenstein simultaneously draws attention to "what cannot be said." The limits of language are thus determined by what can be meaningfully expressed-language cannot go beyond this point.

Furthermore, Wittgenstein asserts that *"All propositions are of equal value"* (TLP 6.4), meaning there is no hierarchy among them-all

serve the same function of describing the arrangement of objects or facts. From this, another significant claim follows: since the world is contingent, no proposition can be necessary. Language, mirroring the world, can only reflect the world's accidental occurrences. As a result, what is necessary or absolute-what Wittgenstein refers to as the "Higher"-cannot be captured in words. He emphasizes this by stating:

"Propositions can express nothing that is higher" (TLP 6.42).

Since the Higher exists beyond the world, it is "transcendental," placing it beyond the reach of language. Consequently, any attempt to speak meaningfully beyond the world results in nonsense. Wittgenstein clearly demarcates what can be done with language and what lies beyond its limits-once language crosses this boundary, it enters the realm of nonsense. However, it is important to understand Wittgenstein's use of the term "nonsense." In his philosophy, nonsense does not mean absurd or meaningless in the conventional sense; rather, it refers to that which cannot be expressed in language.

Although certain things cannot be expressed via language yet they make themselves manifest. He writes *"There are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words. They make themselves manifest. They are what is mystical"* (TLP6.522). Wittgenstein holds the idea that although we have strong feelings about art, ethics, religions and meaning of life yet nothing can be said about them. Therefore, the mystical or transcendental cannot be represented by the methods of natural science, and we cannot break it down into its basic parts. The essence of all higher values exists outside the physical world-beyond the realm of observable facts and their related situations-and consequently, we cannot make meaningful statements about them. They belong to the domain of showing. We are condemned to perpetual silence about them (Pitcher 161.) Therefore, Wittgenstein writes: *"What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence."* (TLP 7)

Wittgenstein's notion of showing should not be considered as mere antithesis. There is a dichotomy between two yet there is an inner interdependence. "The act of saying, if done cor-rectly according to the criteria of what can be said, leaves space for showing to manifest itself;

on the other, showing is the background against which saying becomes meaningful" *(Shlomy Mualem* 45). Wittgestein expresses to Engelmann: And this is how it is: if only you do not try to utter what is unutter-able then nothing gets lost. But the unutterable will be - unutterably - *contained* in what has been uttered! (Engelmann 7).

P.M.S. Hacker categorizes following truths/things under the group of showing

(i) The harmony between thought, language and reality
(ii) Semantics
(iii) Logical relations between propositions
(iv) Internal properties and relations of things and situations
(v) Categorial features of things and type classifications
(vi) The limits of thought
(vii) The limits of reality and the logical structure of the world
(viii) Metaphysical principles of natural science:
(ix) Metaphysics of experience
(x) Ethics, aesthetics and religion

All these things cannot be uttered but can be shown only in language.

7.5 PHILOSOPHY

Wittgenstein's examination of language, along with the distinction between saying and showing, ultimately shapes his understanding of philosophy. He asserts, *"The correct method in philosophy would really be the following: to say nothing except what can be said, i.e. propositions of natural science"* (TLP 6.53). He further maintains, *"The totality of true propositions is the whole of natural science"* (TLP 4.11). This suggests that, for Wittgenstein, only the propositions of natural science can be meaningfully expressed.

As for Wittgenstein, there is a fundamental relation i.e., one to relation between the elements of the world and language, thereby language is all about the factual world. The factual world, for him is the limit of

language's representation. Language cannot go beyond the factual world. Therefore, Wittgenstein maintains the view that language is the whole corpus of the natural sciences. However, Wittgenstein specifies that "Philosophy is not one of the natural sciences. (The word 'philosophy' must mean something whose place is above or below the natural sciences, not beside them.)" (TLP 4.111). This remarks of Wittgenstein suggests that there can be no philosophical propositions. Since all propositions are totality of natural sciences and philosophy can never be one of the natural sciences and therefore there is no philosophical propositions. He writes: "Philosophy sets limits to the much-disputed sphere of natural science" (TLP 4.113) Therefore, Wittgenstein writes: "Philosophy does not result in 'philosophical propositions', but rather in the clarification of propositions" (4.112).

Thus, Wittgenstein rejects the idea of philosophy as a body of doctrine. Instead, he argues that philosophy is an *activity* (TLP 4.112). Wittgenstein argues that propositions as they simply state a fact can never have the place in a book of philosophy. Now, the question is that if philosophical works are not consists of doctrine what is the constituting element of philosophical work? Wittgenstein maintains the view that philosophical work consists of elucidations. By engaging in elucidations, philosophy does not construct theories but instead clarifies propositions. This clarification reveals what can be said through language and, more importantly, what cannot be said. In this regard, Wittgenstein states:

The correct method in philosophy would really be the following: to say nothing except what can be said, i.e. propositions of natural science-i.e. something that has nothing to do with philosophy-and then, whenever someone else wanted to say something metaphysical, to demonstrate to him that he had failed to give a meaning to certain signs in his propositions. Although it would not be satisfying to the other person-he would not have the feeling that we were teaching him philosophy-this method would be the only strictly correct one. (TLP 6.53)

From these words of Wittgenstein, it is reflected that what can be uttered or said can have nothing to do with philosophy and the task of philosophy is to highlight this point. Therebefore, according to Wittgenstein,

"most of the propositions and questions to be found in philosophical works are not false but nonsensical. Consequently, we cannot give any answer to questions of this kind, but can only point out that they are nonsensical" (TLP 4.003). For Wittgenstein, the problems that traditional philosophers engaged with, though appearing real, are in fact nonsensical and do not actually exist. In his view, philosophy does not involve discovering new truths or facts but rather demonstrating the limits of what can be meaningfully said (Pitcher 158).

Wittgenstein further asserts that philosophy *"will signify what cannot be said, by presenting clearly what can be said"* (TLP 4.115). What is crucial, therefore, is not merely what can be said but also what cannot. The latter becomes evident through the former.

7.6 THE AMBIGUITY OF SHOWING

Wittgenstein's letter to Russell, cited earlier, reflects his acknowledgment that the notion of showing holds a central place in his philosophy. It is widely accepted that the distinction between what can be said and what can be shown plays a significant role in his thought. However, a closer reading reveals that there are two distinct categories of showing found in his writings. This duality also introduces a tension within his remarks, as evident in the following statements:

"Propositions show what they say: tautologies and contradictions show that they say nothing" (TLP 4.461)

"What can be shown cannot be said" (TLP 4.1212)

This apparent contradiction suggests that showing operates on multiple levels. One distinction that emerges is between what is shown through symbols and what shows itself independently of any symbolic system.

According to Donald W. Harward, the first type of showing can be described as demonstrative-it involves presentation in a way that engages both saying and showing. It resembles a form of communication or teaching, where something is actively displayed or conveyed to an audience. This kind of showing can be said to involve both language and

intention. For example, pointing out that a phrase is in English is not something one needs to say; it is evident in the phrase itself. In this way, the phrase shows that it is in English, without needing to explicitly state it.

The second type is reflexive-it occurs without an audience and does not rely on verbal articulation. It is what shows itself inherently and cannot be said in any direct manner. While demonstrative showing may be accompanied by explanation, reflexive showing is silent-it is revealed by the very form or presence of what is being shown.

Another perspective introduces a distinction between a proposition's external and internal relations. External relations concern the proposition's sense-what it represents or how it relates to possible states of affairs. Internal relations, on the other hand, pertain to the formal, logical properties that allow the proposition to have sense in the first place. This view maintains that saying and showing are not opposed but interdependent. Showing, in this regard, underlies the very possibility of saying. A proposition can only have a truth-value because it is already structured in a way that shows its logical form.

From this perspective, when Wittgenstein says, "What can be shown cannot be said," the point is not that propositions or pictures are incapable of expressing anything about the world, but that their form and structure do not carry truth-values and thus cannot be directly stated. What a proposition shows is its own possibility-the structure that allows it to be meaningful. When one asserts a proposition, one is affirming the reality of a possible state of affairs already shown in its sense.

Thus, the proposition models a possible situation (its sense), and by asserting it, one says that this situation actually obtains. The proposition, in this way, shows more than it says-it reveals internal and external relations, but these relations themselves cannot be said. They are not representable in further propositions; they only manifest within propositions. This complex and often elusive doctrine of showing stands at the core of Wittgenstein's early philosophy. While he clearly aims to distinguish sharply between what can be said and what can be shown, his treatment of showing remains enigmatic. There seems to be a dual structure within

the doctrine: one kind of showing is immanent-embedded within the symbolic system itself-and the other transcendent-pointing beyond what language can express, revealing the limits of thought, language, and even reality itself.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: How does the distinction between saying and showing help in philosophy?

.....

Q 2: What is Wittgenstein's famous statement in the preface of Tractatus?

.....

Q 3: What does Wittgenstein mean by 'showing'?

.....

Q 4: Why does Wittgenstein say that language has limits?

.....

Q 5: How are language and the world related in Wittgenstein's view?

.....

Q 6: Why does Wittgenstein reject philosophy as a body of doctrine?

.....

Q 7: What does Wittgenstein mean by "The correct method in philosophy would really be the following: to say nothing except what can be said" (TLP 6.53)?

.....

Q 8: What is the totality of true propositions, according to Wittgenstein?

.....

Q 9: What can be said, according to Wittgenstein?

.....

Q 10: Why does Wittgenstein claim that no proposition can be necessary?

.....

Q 11: What does Wittgenstein mean by "Propositions can express

nothing that is higher" (TLP 6.42)?

.....

Q 12: What is Wittgenstein's view on the mystical?

.....

Q 13: Why does Wittgenstein believe we must remain silent about certain things?

.....

Q 14: What is the constituting element of philosophical work, according to Wittgenstein?

.....

Q 15: What is the task of philosophy in relation to metaphysical claims?

.....



7.7 LET US SUM UP

- In Wittgenstein's philosophy, the distinction between saying and showing holds a significant place, as he considers it the central problem of philosophy.
- According to Wittgenstein language has a limit and cannot go beyond that limit. The task of philosophy is to highlight that limit of language.
- Wittgenstein relies on an analysis of language and reveals the underlying structure of language. The analysis of language uncovers its logical form, which in turn defines both the nature and the boundaries of language.
- For Wittgenstein, understanding the structure of the world through language is crucial, as language and the world are inseparably interlinked. Because of this inseparable relation a language will have sense as long as it is confined to world only.
- In Wittgensteinian sense, in order to be called a sensical language, the proposition must represent the fact of the world. The world is always there in language as the background, and language is always about the world.

- According to Wittgenstein's understanding of language, language is equivalent to the descriptive language for the reason that proposition describe, depicts, and represents possible facts in the world. Therefore, the totality of true propositions, for Wittgenstein, is the whole of natural science (TLP 4.11). Accordingly, Wittgenstein argues that what can be said is the propositions of natural science.
- By identifying "what can be said," Wittgenstein simultaneously draws attention to "what cannot be said."
- Although certain things cannot be expressed via language yet they make themselves manifest. Therefore, they But can be shown.
- According to Wittgenstein, ethics, aesthetic, religion etc. belongs to the domain of shown.
- Wittgenstein's examination of language, along with the distinction between saying and showing, ultimately shapes his understanding of philosophy. He asserts, "The correct method in philosophy would really be the following: to say nothing except what can be said, i.e. propositions of natural science" (TLP 6.53). He further maintains, "The totality of true propositions is the whole of natural science" (TLP 4.11). This suggests that, for Wittgenstein, only the propositions of natural science can be meaningfully expressed.
- What can be uttered or said can have nothing to do with philosophy and the task of philosophy is to highlight this point. Therefore, according to Wittgenstein, "most of the propositions and questions to be found in philosophical works are not false but nonsensical. Consequently, we cannot give any answer to questions of this kind, but can only point out that they are nonsensical" (TLP 4.003).



7.8 FURTHER READINGS

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6) Mualem, Shlomy. "*What Can Be Shown Cannot Be Said: Wittgenstein's Doctrine of Showing and Borges' 'The Aleph.'" Variaciones* Borges 13 ,2002, pp. 41-56.

7) Pitcher, George. *The Philosophy of Wittgenstein*.Prentice Hall of India, 1972.

8) Pradhan, R. C. *The Great Mirror: An Essay on Wittgenstein's Tractatus*. Kalki Prakash, 2007.

9) Sarkar, Priyambada. *Language, Limits, and Beyond: Early Wittgenstein and Rabindranath Tagore*. Oxford University Press, 2021.



7.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q. No. 1: It helps dissolve philosophical problems by clarifying the limits of what can be meaningfully said.

Ans to Q. No. 2: "What can be said at all can be said clearly, and what we cannot talk about we must pass over in silence."

Ans to Q. No. 3: 'Showing' refers to that cannot be expressed through language but are in the transcendental realm. For example, religion, ethics, aesthetics etc..

Ans to Q. No. 4: Language is limited because it can only describe facts; it cannot go beyond them. It cannot meaningfully express anything outside of factual reality.

Ans to Q. No. 5: Language and the world are inseparably linked; language has meaning only when it describes the world. A proposition must represent a fact to be meaningful.

Ans to Q. No. 6: According to Wittgenstein, philosophy should not produce theories but should instead clarify propositions. Philosophy does not

generate new knowledge like natural science but clarifies what can be meaningfully said (TLP 4.112).

Ans to Q. No. 7: He means that philosophy should avoid making unverifiable metaphysical claims and should restrict itself to clarifying propositions of natural science.

Ans to Q. No. 8: The totality of true propositions is the entirety of natural science (TLP 4.11).

Ans to Q. No. 9: Only propositions of natural science can be meaningfully said. Anything beyond this, such as metaphysics, ethics, or aesthetics, cannot be meaningfully expressed in language.

Ans to Q. No. 10: Since the world is contingent, language-mirroring the world-can only describe what happens accidentally, not what is necessary.

Ans to Q. No. 11: He means that language cannot express absolute or transcendental truths, such as ethics, aesthetics, or metaphysics.

Ans to Q. No. 12: The mystical cannot be put into words, but it makes itself manifest. It lies beyond the limits of language.

Ans to Q. No. 13: Because some things-such as ethics, aesthetics, and religion-cannot be meaningfully expressed in language, they must be "passed over in silence" (TLP 7).

Ans to Q. No. 14: Philosophy consists of elucidations, which clarify propositions rather than formulating doctrines.

Ans to Q. No. 15: Philosophy's task is to show that metaphysical claims fail to give meaning to certain signs in their propositions, rendering them nonsensical.



7.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

(A) Very Short Questions:

Q. 1. What is the central problem of philosophy according to Wittgenstein?

Q. 2. Name one domain that belongs to showing.

Q. 3. Are saying and showing related?

Q. 4. What can be said?

Q. 5. Can philosophy give us new knowledge?

Q. 6. What can be meaningfully said according to Wittgenstein?

B. Short questions (Answer in about 200 words)

Q. 1. If philosophy is not a natural science, what is its role?

Q. 2. What is the correct method in philosophy?

Q. 3. Why does Wittgenstein reject philosophy as a body of doctrine?

Q. 4. Why does Wittgenstein believe that most philosophical questions and propositions are nonsensical?

C. Long Questions (Answer in about 500 words)

Q. 1. How is Wittgenstein's understanding of philosophy related to the distinction between saying and showing?

Q. 2. How does Wittgenstein define the limits of language?

Q. 3. How does Wittgenstein describe the relationship between saying and showing?

Q. 4. "What can be shown cannot be said" (TLP 4.1212) - Elaborate.

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UNIT 8: WITTGENSTEIN'S LANGUAGE GAMES

UNIT STRUCTURE

8.1 Learning Objectives

8.2 Introduction

8.3 The Universal form of language

- 8.3.1 The essence of language
- 8.3.2 Absolute simples

8.4 Language-Games

- 8.4.1 Family resemblance
- 8.4.2 Meaning as use
- 8.6.1 Private language

8.4 Criticism

8.5: Let Us Sum Up

8.6 Further readings

8.7 Answers to Check Your Progress

8.8 Model Questions

8.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to :

- discuss the universal form of language
- explain the essence of language
- describe the absolute simples
- analyse the concept of language games
- interpret the concept of family resemblance
- evaluate meaning as use
- illustrate the concept of private language

8.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit will introduce you to the concept of language games. It is undoubtedly a radical concept of philosophy of language and brings out the diverse functions of language by repudiating the picture theory of

language in Wittgenstein's later philosophy. The other important concepts like family resemblance, meaning as use, private language etc. follows from the integral concept of language games.

8.3 THE UNIVERSAL FORM OF LANGUAGE

Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* holds that any proposition presupposes the universal form of language. An elementary proposition is a combination of names. And in order to understand the proposition one must 'know' the objects in some sense for which the names stand. Any proposition carries with it the whole of 'logical space'. This concept of Wittgenstein is concerned with the viewpoint that there is an essence of propositions. The essence of propositions is "the essence of all propositions, and thus the essence of the world." (T-5.4711) The essence of propositions is "the same as "the universal form of proposition" has been proved by the fact that all propositions 'must be foreseeable". (Note books p-89)

Wittgenstein's later work *Investigations* denounces the early view that each proposition carries with it the universal form of language. A sentence presupposes a 'Language game', but a language game will be a small segment of the whole of language. In *Investigations* (Sec.2) Wittgenstein gives an example of language-games, that is a builder and his worker. The building materials are blocks, pillars, slab, and beam. The builder utters one of the words and his helperbrings the building materials that he has understood by calling out his master. Wittgenstein names this process of actions and language through the example of a builder and his worker as language-games. In *Brown Book*, we find an analogy of someone's describing chess without mentioning pawns. And this act of describing chess without pawns is an incomplete language-game, but the description of chess as a game of playing is after all a simpler language game. *(Blue and Brown books, p-77)* This simpler language-game neither pre-supposes chess, nor a part of playing. On the other hand, the example of a builder and a worker (Sec.2) implies its use in descriptions or questions.

8.3.1 The Essence of Language

Wittgenstein in *Tractatus* holds the view that there is the essence of language, just as it assumes that there is a universal form of language which is considered common to all numbers. But *Investigationsrejects* this viewpoint. According to this viewpoint, there is nothing common to different forms of language games, just as there is not something common to all games like board game, cricket game, card games, ball games etc. One of the remarkable features of Wittgenstein's later philosophy is that there is not a unique feature of language or there is not an essential structure of language out of which the different forms of language can be depicted. Therefore, the views of early Wittgenstein had been rejected by his later philosophy of language.

Early Wittgenstein held the view that ultimate elements of language are names that designate simple objects, but later *Investigations* did the view that the words either simple or complex have no absolute meaning. Rather they are used within a particular language-game, so the words in a language game can be simple or complex. As for instance, is one's visual image of a tree simple or composite? The answer to this question does not make any sense if we do confine our attention to the trunk or to the branches of the tree. When we stipulate our concentration to the trunk of the tree, then the idea will be simple. In contrast to this, the answer will be composite when we discuss the tree from the points of trunk and its branches. Through this example Wittgenstein attempted to show that the issues of simple and composite objects are relative to the concept of language game. The *Tractatus* idea is that the notion of simplicity is not a relative concept; rather all concepts of language are grounded on it. So, it is a super concept in *Tractatus*. In another sense, it is an image concept, but the problem is that how to apply it, again no where in *Tractatuswe* find the example of this absolute simple.

Wittgenstein in *Investigations* rejects the viewpoint of absolute simple, because *Investigations* view it as philosophical illusion. According to Investigations, an imaginary concept like absolute simple cannot satisfy our need played by a language game which can make a sharp boundary between games and activities. The imaginary or ideal concept does not make any connection between games and activities. Therefore, the *Investigationsraises* the issue of generality or complete exactness, so the issue is, why should there be general or we talk about general? The concept of precision and exactness are relative to some particular purpose. As for instance,the guests are to arrive exactly at one o'clock, but this notion of exactness would not employ the instruments and measurements of an observatory. *Investigations* assertion is-"No single ideal of exactness has been laid down, we do not know what we should be supposed to imagine under this head." (Sec-88) It can be held the view that there are different kinds of exactness or precision for different purposes, so the concept of exactness or precision is stipulated to one purpose, rather it can have different uses in relation to different purposes. But the supposition isthat there is a certain state of complete exactness underneath of our everyday speech and that logical analysis can bring it to light. In this context the *Tractatus* view is that there is a complete analysis of proposition.

In case of searching for the ideal of perfect exactness, we will become dis-satisfied with ordinary words and sentences, because we do not find an actual or pure structure of language in our day to day language. Therefore, *Investigations* points out that "Do not think but look." There is not a hidden process in our language. So, Wittgenstein writes: "Philosophy simply puts everything before us and neither explains nor deduce, whatever is hidden is of no interest to us."

8.4 LANGUAGE GAMES

The conception that language is a picture has been replaced by Wittgenstein himself in his later thought that language has different functions. The term 'language game' is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the speaking of language is part of an activity, or form of a life." (PI.23)

The examples of language games are: obeying and giving orders, describing the appearance of an objects, expressing sensations, giving measurements, constructing an object from a description, reporting an event, speculating about an event, forming and testing a hypothesis, presenting the results of an experiment in tables and diagrams, making up a stories; and reading it- playacting, singing catches, guessing riddles,telling jokes, solving a problem in practical with arithmetic, translating from one language into another, asking, cursing, greeting, and praying. These language games are examined in order to understand language. It can be viewed that the meaning of a word is determined by its use in a language game. The meaning of a language has a role in our form of life. That is why Wittgenstein means- 'To imagine a language means to imagine a form of life.' There is no common feature involved incase of our language-game.

8.4.1 Family Resemblance

The most important question is: what is common to all these activities? The response is, instead of asking what is common to all these activities, rather it can be said that there is nothing common to all these activities and the activities are related to one another in many different ways. It is because of this relationship to all the different activities of language we call them all 'language'. As for instance, by the word games Wittgenstein means board games, card games, ball games, Olympicgames,and so on. What is common to all? Wittgenstein's reply is- Do not say "There must be something common, or they would be not called "games". If you

look at them you will not see anything common to all. In stead of common, you will see similarities among games or language. To find the answer of the question, Wittgenstein repeats-"Do not think, but look." As for instance, when we play games like board games, card games, tennis game, ball games etc. we find some common features or similarities with the other game, and also we find some features in one game which are absent in the other. Are all games dealt with winning or losing? Or does all games relate to competition among players? Or are all games concerned with amusement? Significantly, in ball games there is winning and losing, but in case of a child who throws a ball to the wall and catches it again, here the feature like winning or losing is absent. Again, we can make a comparison between chess and tennis. Here we find the difference between chess and tennis in case of skill and luck. Again, we can mention of the play of ringa-ringa-roses, here the features like winning and losing, competition among players, luck and skill is absent, on the other hand the feature like amusement is present and which is absent in the other games of tennis, ball-games etc., Therefore, it is said in the *Investigations* that we see a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss crossing: sometimes similarities of detail.

Wittgenstein in this context involves a most important concept that is family resemblance. Just as games have some features or similarities avoiding the common feature among them, so also in a family weget some features or similarities among the members in the context of colour of eye, hight, gait, temperament etc. Therefore, Wittgenstein holds that games form a family.

Wittgenstein's concept of language games has an affinity to Aristotle's concept of categories. According to Aristotle, categories are kinds of 'things that are to be said'. Aristotle holds the view that a statement makes sense only if it belongs to a category. Similarly, Wittgenstein also holds the view that a statement or an expression makes sense only by its use in a context.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: State whether the following statements are True or False

a) According to Tractatus, there is a universal form of language. (True/False)

b) The notion of simplicity in Tractatus is a super concept or image concept. (True/ False)

c) 'Do not think, but look' is a saying of early Wittgenstein. (True/ False)

Q 2: What is language-game? (Answer in about words)

.....

.....

Q 3: Write an important feature of Wittgenstein's later philosophy.

.....

Q 4: Where does Wittgenstein mention 'simpler language game'? (Answer in about words)

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ACTIVITY

What do you mean by the essence of all propositions?

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8.4.2 Meaning as Use

Wittgenstein in *Investigations* rejects the picture theory of meaning that is the central of the *Tractatus*. Both early and later work of Wittgenstein was concerned with the question, how can a sentence say something, how can a language represent reality? The first sentence of the Blue Book is, what is the meaning of a

word? This also relates to the question that is 'what is the meaning of a sentence?"-both early and the later work of Wittgenstein concentrates on the same question, but the later view of Wittgenstein is entirely different from the early work that he made. In stead of accepting the early view that language has a meaning because it is a picture, his remarkable or revolutionary viewpoint is that the 'meaning of a sentence is its use" explains that use determines the meaning of a sentence.

Wittgenstein mentioned the use of a sentence in many places. For instance, "But doesn't the fact that sentences have the same sense consist in their having the same use?" (Investigations, sec.20); there are "countless, different kinds of use of what we call 'symbols', 'words', 'sentences' (sec 23).

Wittgenstein's *Investigations* is a critique of his early work. He says that we do not always understand a sentence even if the sentence is grammatically correct and also the words used in the sentence we understand. For example, "if someone says, 'this is here", he should ask the question in what circumstances this sentence is actually used. There it does make sense." (Sec. 117)Similarly, "A philosopher says that he understands the sentence 'I am here"-he means something by it thinks something, even when he does not think at all how, on what occasions, this sentence is used."(Sec:514)

Wittgenstein in this context opines that sentences have sense only in special circumstances, because we do not understand the sense in those circumstances.

Here Wittgenstein's later view is totally different from the early view, because early view holds that an elementary proposition is a combination of name, if we able to understand the names that refer to, then only we understand the sentence. Here, the subject of circumstances does not come into account like the later view forwardedby *Investigations* in *Tractatus*. The sentence, 'I am here', itself does not show the meaning unless it is used. Again by simply

looking at the sentence we cannot determine its meaning unless it is used by someone in a context. So, Wittgenstein denies the early view that is "we understand the sense of a propositional sign without its having been explained to us." (Tractatus, 4.02)

Wittgenstein does not hold the view that the words- meaning and use are synonymous. By the 'use' of an expression he means the special circumstances, the surroundings in which it is spoken or written. The use of an expression means the language game in which it plays a part. It is a mistaken idea that by the use of an expression Wittgenstein means the ordinary use of an expression or its correct use.Their view is that he was an ordinary language philosopher. But it can be viewed that Wittgenstein studied any use of language, real or imaginary which may stimulate a philosophical problem. For instance, he involved language games which did not correspond to any actual use of language. (Blue and Brown Book, pp.103-104)To Wittgenstein, "Language games objects of comparison which are meant to throw light on the facts of our language by way not only of similarities, but also of dis-similarities." (Inv. Sec.130)

The *Tractatus* points out that language is composed of names. And the meaning of a name is simple object. And, therefore, the sense of a sentence emanates from the names that compose it. One name stands for one thing, another for another thing and the combination of objects pictures a state of affairs. So, naming is prior to the sense of…….. A sentence says something because it is composed names that stand for things. There are two objections found in *Investigations* against the priority of names. Firstly, the meaning of a word is never the thing, if there is one that corresponds to the word. (Sec: 40)

Secondly, before one can find out what a name stands for one must already have mastered the language game to which the name belongs. In order to learn the name of a colour, a direction, a sensation, one must have some grasp of the activities of placing

colours in an order, of reading a map, of responding to the words, gestures, and behaviour which are expressions of sensation. By regularly pointing at something and saying it does not mean that we get the meaning, rather it can be said that the meaning of a word comes through use and special circumstance under which it is used.

In the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein says that words are pictures of reality and words that picture the reality are fit to indicate the meaning of proposition with words and in contrast to this the words which does not picture the reality is false. It is like cognitions that do not mesh. *Investigations* mentions-"When a sentence is called senseless it is not as it were its sense that is senseless." (Sec. 500) In stead of saying the proposition, 'my head is asleep', is dealt with the clash of meanings, or the word 'head' is incompatible with the meaning of asleep, it can be said in the *Investigations* that we do not perceive a clash of meanings. But we do not know what behaviour and circumstances go with this sentence. It is not that it cannot have a use. The fact is that it does not have a use, we do not know in what circumstances one should say it. "Look at the sentence as an instrument, and at its sense as its employment." (Sec 421)

Another most important criticism of the picture theory of meaning is that how we should apply the picture. Suppose, someone showed you a 'drawing picture of a cube' and request you to bring him a one of those things related to the picture of a cube, and to pleze him at your effort you bring him a triangular prism instead of a cube. There is not only one way of taking the drawing was possible, rather we can take it in other way also. Again, we can interpret the drawing of a cube in diverse ways. As for instance, there is a picture in a room represents an old man walking up a steep path leaning on a stick? But the question is that could we interpret or explain the picture of an old man as sliding down the hill in that position? The second picture is more natural than the first one and the important thing is that there is not anything intrinsic related to the picture. To be clear, the picture of a green leaf can be understood not only in

one way; rather we can understand it to be a representation of the colour green, or of a specific shade of green, or of a leaf shape in general, or of a particular shape of a leaf, or of foliage in general, and so on. Therefore, the meaning of the picture theory that a sentence is a picture, cannot be the fundamental explanation of the sense of sentences. Wittgenstein holds that meaning of a language does not consist in a picturing relation between words and things. Rather he holds that meaning of a word is determined through its use in different contexts. Therefore, language has no single or unique function of language which can determine the meaning of expression or statement.

Wittgenstein in *Tractatus* views that philosophical problems arise when we misunderstand the logic of our language. While *Investigationssays* that 'philosophical problems arise when language goes on holiday.' The remedy is not found by constructing a systematic philosophical theory. Rather the remedy is to look at how language actually works. Philosophical problems are not empirical problems; rather philosophical problems are solved by looking into the workings of our language. Wittgenstein remarks, what is your aim in philosophy? To show the fly the way out of the fly bottle. Wittgenstein in this context makes a difference between surface grammar and depth grammar. By the word 'grammar' he means logic which is associated with the logic of a given linguistic activity. There are many kinds of linguistic activity; therefore there are many different ways in which the 'grammar' of language works. This is known as depth grammar.To Wittgenstein, philosophers become trapped in the fly bottle, because they notice only the 'surface grammar'. By the word 'surface grammar' Wittgenstein means grammatical similarity or hidden structure of language. It forbids us to think of the diverse functions of language. Wittgenstein calls the grammatical Investigations as 'Grammatical enquiry'.

Wittgenstein rejects the empiricist view that meaning is grounded in sensory experience. There are two reasons of rejecting

this view. The first one is- one does not teach the meaning of words by setting up an association in the learners mind between the word and an experience of some object or situation. Secondly, our attaching meaning to an expression on different occasions of using it does not consist in having the same experience or going through the same mental process each time.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 5: Whether the following statements are True or False

a) Language is a part of an activity or form of life. (True/ False)

b) There is a unique feature found in language game. (True/ False)

c) Wittgenstein holds that games form a family. (True/False)

d) Investigations rejects the picture theory of meaning. (True/ False)

e) Wittgenstein is an ordinary language philosopher. (True/ False)

f) According to Wittgenstein, words are pictures of reality. (True/ False)

Q 6: Who says, "Do not think but look".

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Q 7: What is family resemblance? (Answer in about words)

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Q 8: Do you find any link between Wittgenstein's concept of language games and Aristotle's concept of categories? (Answer in about…… words)

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Q 9: What do you mean by the use theory of meaning? (Answer in about…… words)

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Q 10: "Philosophical problems arise when language goes on holiday"- state the meaning of the statement. (Answer in about….. words)

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Q 11: Make a distinction between surface and depth grammar. (Answer in about….. words)

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ACTIVITY

Is use theory of meaning the best explanation of meaning? Explain

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8.4.3 Private Language

The idea that the content of a rule can be fixed only by a practice provides a transition to one of the most important subtle topics of the *Investigations* that is the concept of private language.

The conception that a sentence is a picture was replaced in Wittgenstein's thought by the conception that the sense of a sentence is determined by the circumstances in which it is used. As for instance, swinging a stick is a strike and pushing a piece of wood is a movement in the circumstances of games. Similarly, saying some words is making a decision in certain circumstances. In one set of circumstances saying a particular sentence would be asserting

something; in other words saying those words would be asking a question, again others it would be repeating what someone had said.

Wittgenstein's technique was to describe different cases of deciding, asserting, intending, expecting, and so on. The purpose of this was to show that when one utters some words that express, for instance, a decision one cannot pick out anything that occurred (for example, a thought, an image, some spoken words, a feeling).

Wittgenstein rejects the case of mental occurrence with an argument. If a decision or expectation or sensation were state or event that was logically independent of the circumstances, there none or not even the subject of the supposed event could ever determine that it had occurred.

Firstly, how would we learn what deciding is? In reply it can be viewed that as circumstances are supposed to be irrelevant, one could not learn it by observing it. One would have to learn what deciding is from one's own case. Wittgenstein remarked, 'If I knew it only from my own case, then I know only what I call that, not what anyone else does." (Inv. Sec.347) It would be unverifiable whether two people refer to the same phenomenon by the word 'deciding'. Again one cannot be satisfied by saying that "I know what I call deciding". Again we cannot determine right or wrong in case of private object. Wittgenstein holds that "the private object constantly changes but you do not notice the change because your memory constantly deceives you." (Inv. P-207)

Wittgenstein's rejection of private language is an outcome of his new conception of meaning. Language requires rules, and by following a rule we imply a customary way of doing something. It cannot be the case that only once in a life time a rule is to be followed. (Sec-195) According to the concept of meaning, an expression has a meaning only if there is a regular, auniform, connection between saying the expression and certain circumstances. A person can be guided by a sign post only if there is a regular way of responding to signpost.The meaning of an expression is its use means that

meaning is determined by its use. Wittgenstein made a significant connection between the nature of meaning and his attack on 'private' mental contents by saying that following a rule is a practice and therefore one cannot follow a rule "privately" (Sec. 202)

It is true that there are mental events like feelings, images etc. involved in our language, but it might be the case that they are absent in language when we hear a sentence. That is why, the act of saying that the mental events constitute understanding cannot be accepted. Understanding cannot be considered as a process. As for instance, understanding language like knowing how to play chess is a state rather than a process. But, it is not a state of some hidden mental mechanism. According to one version of mental mechanism doctrine, to understand the meaning of a word means to call up an appropriate image in connection with it. As for instance, 'bring me a white flower', it indicates that we must have already an image in our mind regarding the words we use in a sentence. It is true that mental images pass through our minds. But it is not the case that they render meanings on the words we use. The images are nothing but the pictures illuminating a written text in a book. The other version of the mental mechanism doctrineshows that meaning is a mental process. And it involves the concept of private language found in Wittgenstein's book *Philosophical Investigations*.

The concept of ostensive definition has played a crucial role in the epistemology of Russell and logical positivists. Private language is indirectly connected with knowledge by acquaintance. But Wittgenstein clears that knowledge by acquaintance is not the same thing as knowledge of the word's meaning. Acquaintance with the object will not be adequate in case of getting the meaning of a word. As for instance, we may explain the word 'tove' by pointing to a pencil and say that this is 'tove'. This explanation would not be satisfactory because by the word 'tove' we may understand that 'this is a pencil', 'this is round' or 'this is wood', and so on. The acts of confronting and uttering a sound are not sufficient in case of naming something.

On the other hand it can be viewed that the acts of asking and giving names can be performed only in the context of a language game. As for instance, we can take the word 'pain'. The word 'pain' acquires its meaning according to person's own private experience. But Wittgenstein shows that we cannot get meaning of a word in this way. Wittgenstein means that in case of private occurrence the word of correctness and incorrectness is irrelevant. Wittgenstein's argument is that there cannot be a language whose words can only be known to the individual speaker of the language.

Wittgenstein's attack on private definition through language games leads to the rejection of solipsism and the possibility of private language depends on the existence of the public and social world.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 12: Whether the following statements are True or False

a) Private language is one of the most important topics of Investigations. (True/False)

b) The concept of meaning is the basis of the rejection of private language. (True/False)

c) To Wittgenstein, one can follow a rule privately. (True/False)

d) The issue like solipsism is connected with private language. (True/False)

e) Meaning is determined by its use. (True/False)

Q 13: How does Wittgenstein reject the private language argument? (Answer in about words)

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Q 14: What is ostensive definition? (Answer in about words)

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8.7 LET US SUM UP

- Wittgenstein in *Tractatus* holds that any proposition presupposes the universal form of language. This concept of Wittgenstein holds the opinion that there is an essence of propositions. The essence of proposition indicates that there is a universal form of language has been replaced by later Wittgenstein through the concept of language-games or uses of language in different contexts.
- By rejecting or denouncing the essence of all propositions Wittgenstein holds the view that there is not a unique feature or common feature of language. Rather language has diverse kinds of functions by involving the concept of language game in a different style.
- The *Tractatus* idea is that the notion of simplicity is not a relative concept; rather all concepts of language are grounded on it. So, it is a super concept in *Tractatus*. In another sense, it is an image concept.
- The *Investigations* rejects the viewpoint of absolute simple, because *Investigations* view it as philosophical illusion. According to *Investigations*, an imaginary concept like Absolute simple cannot satisfy our need played by a language game, which can make a sharp boundary between games and activities. The imaginary or ideal concept does not make any connection between games and activities. That is why, the Investigations raises the issue of generality or complete exactness.
- Perfect exactness or ideal exactness does not advocate ordinary words or sentences, because we do not find an actual or pure structure of language in our ……..Therefore, Investigations points out "Do not think but look".
- There are different functions of language.As for instance, giving orders, constructing an object from a description, play an event, play acting etc. Language games held that the meaning of a word is determined by its use in language game. Apart from this it also holds that there is no common feature inherent in language.

- Wittgenstein views that meaning of a language does not consist in a picturing relation between words and things. Rather he holds that meaning of a word is determined through its use in different contexts. Therefore, language has no single or unique function of language which can determine the meaning of an expression or statement.



8.8 FURTHER READINGS

1) Kenny, Anthony ed.(1994). *The Wittgenstein Reader*. Blackwell Publishing
2) Gralying, A.C. 1988. *Wittgenstein: A Very Short Introduction* Oxford Publishing
3) Gracia, J.E. Jorge, Reichberg M. Gregory & Schumacher N. Bernard. ed.(2003). *The Classics of Western Philosophy*. Blackwell Publishing
4) Kenny, Anthony. 2007. Philosophy in the Modern world. Oxford. Clarendon Press
5) Border M. Donald. ed. (2000). *Encyclopedia of philosophy*. Macmillan



8.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q. No. 1: a) True b) True c) False

Ans to Q. No. 2: The concept of Language games indicates the diverse functions of language in different contexts. As for instance, saying some words is making a decision in certain circumstances, again saying a particular sentence would be asserting something, in other words saying those words would be asking etc.

Ans to Q. No. 3: a) There is not an essential structure of language.

Ans to Q. No. 4: Blue and Brown Book

Ans to Q. No. 5: a) True b) False c) True a)True d)True e) True

Ans to Q. No. 6: Later Wittgenstein

Ans to Q. No. 7: The concept of family resemblance is a metaphorical concept. It indicates that just as in a family there are resemblances among

the different members of a family, so also there are some similarities found among different games, but there is nothing common among the different games. Therefore, it is clear that Wittgenstein points out that games form a family. Metaphorically, Wittgenstein says that there is not a uniform feature or function of language. In this way, Wittgenstein involves a concept of family resemblance.

Ans to Q. No. 8: The concept of language games has an affinity to Aristotle's concept of categories. Aristotle holds the view that a statement makes sense only if it belongs to a category. Similarly, Wittgenstein also holds the view that a statement makes sense only by its use in a context.

Ans to Q. No. 9: The use theory of meaning asserts that meaning is not determined by a picturing relationship between words and things, rather meaning is determined through its use in different contexts by following a rule.

Ans to Q. No. 10: This is a metaphorical statement of Wittgenstein's later philosophy. Through this saying he holds the view that philosophical problems arise when philosophical concepts go outside the practical situations. As for instance, if you ask, what is good? Then the answer will be problematic, on the other hand, if you ask, is the quality of shirt good? Then the answer will not be complex. Therefore, Wittgenstein holds that the scope of philosophy is not confined to a limited space, from where we cannot outside comfortably. Therefore, he asserts that philosophical problems arise when go outside from practical situations. That is why, he repeats the line- we must bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use.

Ans to Q. No. 11: By the word 'surface grammar' Wittgenstein means the similar grammatical structure of language or unique structure of language that is also known as the logical form of language. While the depth grammar means the diverse form of language by overlooking the unique structure of language. Therefore, Wittgenstein in his later phase of philosophy endorses the depth grammar.

Ans to Q. No. 12: a) False b) True c) True d) True e) True

Ans to Q. No. 13: Wittgenstein's rejection of private language comes through the use theory of meaning. He in this respect holds the view that language requires rules and rules cannot be privately followed. According to the use theory of meaning, an expression has a meaning only if there is a regular and uniform connection between saying the expression and certain circumstances. In case of private language, Wittgenstein opines that there is not a hidden mental mechanism in case of understanding of language. He, therefore, emphasizes that language is a rule following activity in a language game, and not a private kind of affair engrossed in oneself. That is why, Wittgenstein denies the possibility of private language in a language game.

Ans to Q. No. 14: Ostensive definition is concerned with pointing to a something in order to find out the meaning. It also can be compared with Russellian way of processing knowledge that is knowledge by acquaintance. Ostensive definition is not a satisfactory way in case of determining the meaning of a word like knowledge by acquaintance. It provides only mere knowledge of the word rather than imparting a sufficient kind of knowledge of a thing.



8.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

(A) Very Short Questions:

Q. 1. Mention the Wittgenstein's book in which we find a criticism of early Wittgenstein.

Q. 2. What is language-game?

Q. 3. Give an example of language-game.

Q. 4. Who is the author of Blue and Brown Books?

Q. 5. What is incomplete language-games?

Q. 6. State a remarkable feature of Wittgenstein's later philosophy.

Q. 7. Wittgenstein is an ordinary language philosopher. Is it a correct statement?

Q. 8. Early Wittgenstein says, 'Words are pictures of reality". Is it a correct statement?

B. Short questions (Answer in about100-150 words)

Q. 1. What do mean by the universal form of language? Explain briefly.

Q. 2. Write a brief note on essential form of language

Q. 3. Distinguish between surface grammar and depth grammar.

Q. 4. Write a short on language-games.

Q. 5. Briefly explain the concept of family resemblance.

Q. 6. Explain briefly the use theory of meaning.

Q. 7. Distinguish between picture theory and use theory of meaning.

Q. 8. What are two grounds of rejecting the empiricists view on meaning? Briefly point out.

c) Long Questions (Answer in about 300-500 words)

Q. 1. Does later Wittgenstein prescribe the essence of language? Explain

Q. 2. 'Do not think but look'- Explain this statement.

Q. 3. Explain the concept of language games.

Q. 4. Does the concept of family resemblance denounce the theory of universality? Explain

Q. 5. Explain the use theory of meaning.

Q. 6. Do you find any distinction between picture theory and use theory of meaning? Explain

Q. 7. 'Use determines the meaning of language"-Discuss this statement.

Q. 8. Do you perceive any distinction between early and later view of Wittgenstein? Explain.

Q. 9. Does the meaning of language consist in a picturing relation between words and things? Explain.

Q. 10. 'Philosophical problems arise when language goes on holiday'- Describe this statement.

Q. 11. Is the concept of private language possible in Wittgenstein's philosophy of language? Explain.

Q. 12. Does the concept of private language play dominantrole in case of determining the meaning of language? Discuss

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UNIT 8: FAMILY RESEMBLANCE OF WITTGENSTEIN

UNIT STRUCTURE

9.1 Learning objectives

9.2 Introduction

9.3 Wittgenstein and his philosophy

9.4 What is Family Resemblance?

9.5 Wittgenstein's concept of Family Resemblance

9.6 Criticisms of the Family Resemblance Concept

9.7 Let us sum up

9.8 Further readings

9.9 Answers to check your progress

9.10 Model questions

9.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to :

- understand the concept of "family resemblance" as introduced by Ludwig Wittgenstein in his later philosophy.
- critically examine the rejection of classical essentialism-the idea that all instances of a concept must share necessary and sufficient conditions.
- explain how Wittgenstein uses the analogy of family traits (such as eye colour or nose shape) to illustrate how concepts can be loosely connected without a fixed essence.
- apply the idea of "language-games" to demonstrate how the meaning of words arises from use, not from fixed definitions.
- analyse how the family resemblance model challenges traditional classification systems in philosophy, linguistics, and cognitive science.
- explore the implications of family resemblance for understanding complex concepts like "game," "art," or "justice."

- identify criticisms of the family resemblance theory, including issues of vagueness, cognitive plausibility, and practical limitations.
- evaluate the relevance of family resemblance in contemporary contexts, such as legal reasoning, scientific classification, and educational frameworks.
- appreciate Wittgenstein's influence on modern thought, especially in how language is seen as dynamic, context-based, and socially grounded.

9.2 INTRODUCTION

Contemporary Western philosophy has been shaped by a strong focus on logic and language. Ludwig Wittgenstein played a major role in this development. His ideas significantly influenced several key philosophical movements, including Analytic Philosophy, Logical Positivism, and Ordinary Language Philosophy, and he continues to impact more recent traditions like Hermeneutics and Postmodernism.

This unit will briefly outline Wittgenstein's philosophy specially the concept of family resemblance. The concept of family resemblance is central to Ludwig Wittgenstein's later philosophy, particularly as articulated in his work "Philosophical Investigations (1953)". Ludwig Wittgenstein's concept of family resemblance represents one of the most influential ideas in 20th-century philosophy of language. This concept fundamentally challenged traditional approaches to meaning and classification. Wittgenstein used family resemblance to argue against the classical view that meaningful concepts must have essential, defining characteristics shared by all instances. Instead, he proposed that many concepts are held together by overlapping similarities, much like the resemblances found among members of a family. This revolutionary idea has had profound implications for philosophy, linguistics, cognitive science, and our understanding of how language functions in everyday life.

9.3 WITTGENSTEIN AND HIS PHILOSOPHY

Considered by some to be the greatest philosopher of the 20th century, Ludwig Wittgenstein played a central, role in mid-20th-century analytic philosophy. He continues to influence, and incur debate in, current philosophical thought in topics as diverse as logic and language, perception and intention, ethics and religion, aesthetics and culture, and even political thought. There are two commonly recognized stages of Wittgenstein's thought- the early and the later-both of which were taken to be pivotal in their respective periods.

In this orthodox two-stage interpretation, it is commonly acknowledged that the early Wittgenstein is epitomized in his "Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus". By showing the application of modern logic to metaphysics, via language, he provided new insights into the relations between world, thought, and language and thereby into the nature of philosophy. It was in his later work, especially in Philosophical Investigations, that Wittgenstein took a bold step by questioning all of traditional philosophy, even the ideas he had earlier supported. His new way of thinking avoided rigid systems but still helped in truly understanding old philosophical problems. In more recent time, this division has been questioned: some interpreters have claimed a certain unity between all stages of his thought, while others talk of a more nuanced division, adding stages such as the middle Wittgenstein and the post-later Wittgenstein.

9.4 WHAT IS FAMILY RESEMBLANCE?

Family resemblance refers to the way certain terms or categories are connected not by a single common feature but by a series of overlapping characteristics, much like the members of a family. For example, consider the word "game." Not all games share a single defining feature-some involve competition, others are played for fun, some require equipment, and so on. However, games are related to each other through a network of similarities, just as members of a family may share various traits (eye color, nose shape, temperament) without any single feature

being present in all. Wittgenstein uses this analogy to argue that many concepts in language do not have rigid boundaries or essential definitions. Instead, their meaning is fluid and context-dependent.

Family resemblance refers to a pattern of similarities that connects members of a group without requiring any single characteristic to be present in all members. The term derives from the observation that family members often share various physical features- some might have the same nose, others the same eyes, still others the same chin-but no single feature is necessarily shared by everyone in the family. What makes them recognizably related is the crisscrossing network of similarities that runs throughout the group. In philosophical terms, family resemblance suggests that categories and concepts are not defined by necessary and sufficient conditions but rather by a complex web of overlapping similarities. This challenges the classical theory of concepts, which held that all instances of a concept must share certain essential properties. Instead, family resemblance proposes that membership in a category is determined by bearing sufficient similarity to other members, even when no single property is universal to all members. The concept extends beyond mere physical similarities to encompass functional, behavioural, structural, and contextual resemblances. It suggests that our cognitive categorisation processes are more flexible and nuanced than traditional philosophical theories have assumed, allowing for gradations of membership and fuzzy boundaries between categories.

9.5 WITTGENSTEIN'S CONCEPT OF FAMILY RESEMBLANCE

To illustrate the relationship of language-games to one another, Wittgenstein uses the concept of 'family resemblances. The members of a family share many similar features, such as eye colour, temperament, hair, facial structure, and build. However, there will be no one particular feature that they all share in common. A son may have his father's eyes, mother's hair, and uncle's smile. With this analogy, Wittgenstein is attacking

the theory of essentialism, which is the Platonic thesis that for things to be classed together they must share some essence. Wittgenstein's point, however, is that while our modes of discourse are all examples of language, the fact that they belong to the same category does not imply there is a single essence they all possess. Instead, the different language-games 'are related to one another in many different ways'. Instead of general explanations, and definitions based on sufficient and necessary conditions, there are 'family resemblance' among the various uses of a word and among various language games. The meaning of a word is located in the logical form which is common to all uses of that word, but in the 'complicated network of similarities, overlapping and criss-crossing'. In Philosophical Investigations, Wittgenstein writes: "We see a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail." This perspective allows for flexibility and variation in how language is used, accommodating the diversity of real-world examples and avoiding the pitfalls of overly rigid definitions. Wittgenstein's concept of language-games shows that the meaning of a word depends on its use in specific social contexts, not on fixed definitions. This links to his idea of family resemblance, where words share overlapping similarities across different uses, rather than a single common feature. Together, they emphasize that meaning is fluid, not rigid.

Wittgenstein's family resemblance concept also connects to his ideas about "forms of life" and the contextual nature of meaning. He argued that words derive their meaning not from fixed definitions but from their use within particular social and cultural contexts. The meaning of a word is not determined by its correspondence to some abstract essence but by its role in the various language-games in which it participates. This approach has significant implications for how we understand concepts like art, religion, knowledge, and justice. Rather than seeking necessary and sufficient conditions for these concepts, Wittgenstein's approach suggests we should examine the network of similarities and differences that connect various instances of these concepts in actual usage.

9.6 CRITICISMS OF THE FAMILY RESEMBLANCE CONCEPT

Despite its influence, Wittgenstein's concept of family resemblance has faced several significant criticisms from philosophers and cognitive scientists. These criticisms generally fall into several categories: problems with vagueness, concerns about cognitive plausibility, challenges to explanatory adequacy, and questions about practical application.

The vagueness problem argues that family resemblance concepts are too imprecise to be philosophically useful. Critics contend that without clear boundaries or defining criteria, family resemblance fails to provide adequate guidance for classification decisions. This criticism suggests that while the concept may describe how people actually categorize things, it doesn't provide normative guidance for how they should categorize them. The lack of clear criteria can lead to inconsistent applications and makes it difficult to resolve disputes about category membership.

Cognitive scientists have raised concerns about the psychological plausibility of family resemblance. Some argue that empirical research in cognitive psychology suggests that people do rely on prototypes or typical examples when categorizing, which may involve identifying central or essential features. The prototype theory, developed by Eleanor Rosch, suggests that categories are organized around best examples rather than being completely open-ended networks of similarities. This research appears to challenge Wittgenstein's rejection of essential properties in favour of a model that still recognizes some features as more central than others. The explanatory adequacy criticism argues that family resemblance concepts fail to explain why certain similarities are relevant while others are not. Critics point out that not all similarities are equally important for categorization, some resemblances seem more significant than others in determining category membership. For instance, functional similarities often appear more important than superficial physical

similarities in many categorization tasks. Family resemblance theory, critics argue, doesn't adequately explain this differential weighting of similarities.

Some philosophers have also argued that Wittgenstein's examples do not necessarily prove his point. They contend that even if we cannot immediately articulate the essential features of concepts like "game," this doesn't mean such features don't exist. The difficulty in defining a concept may reflect limitations in our analytical abilities rather than the absence of underlying essential properties. This criticism suggests that more sophisticated analysis might reveal the common features that Wittgenstein claimed don't exist. Additionally, practical criticisms have emerged regarding the application of family resemblance in legal, scientific, and educational contexts. In these domains, precise definitions and clear criteria are often necessary for practical decision-making. Critics argue that family resemblance concepts may be too flexible for contexts that require determinative judgments and consistent application of standards. Finally, some critics argue that Wittgenstein's rejection of essentialism goes too far, suggesting that while many concepts may exhibit family resemblance patterns, this doesn't mean that all concepts lack essential features. They propose a more nuanced view that recognizes both family resemblance concepts and concepts with more determinate boundaries, arguing for a pluralistic approach to understanding different types of concepts rather than applying family resemblance universally.

Wittgenstein's concept of family resemblance revolutionized philosophical discussions about language and meaning. By shifting the focus from essential definitions to overlapping similarities, he provided a more flexible and realistic account of how language works in practice. However, the approach also invites questions about precision and the limits of linguistic flexibility.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Who introduced the concept of "family resemblance" in philosophy?

A) Bertrand Russell

B) Ludwig Wittgenstein

C) John Locke

D) Immanuel Kant

.....

Q 2: The idea of family resemblance is mainly discussed in which of Wittgenstein's works?

A) Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus

B) Blue and Brown Books

C) Philosophical Investigations

D) Culture and Value

.....

Q 3: According to the concept of family resemblance, the meaning of a word is based on:

A) Its dictionary definition

B) Necessary and sufficient conditions

C) Its use and overlapping similarities

D) Scientific categorization

.....

Q 4: Which classical theory does Wittgenstein challenge with his idea of family resemblance?

A) Rationalism

B) Idealism

C) Essentialism

D) Empiricism

.....

Q 5: Which of the following is not used by Wittgenstein as an example to illustrate family resemblance?

A) Games

B) Languages

C) Tools

D) Mathematical formulas

.....

Q 6: What is the main idea behind "language-games" in Wittgenstein's philosophy?

A) Language is abstract and mathematical

B) Language functions like logical symbols

C) Words gain meaning through their practical use

D) All languages share universal grammar

.....

Q 7: One major criticism of family resemblance is that it is:

A) Too rigid

B) Too mathematical

C) Too vague and lacks clear criteria

D) Not applicable to everyday language

.....

Q 8: Which cognitive theory poses a challenge to Wittgenstein's view of categorization?

A) Dualism

B) Prototype Theory

C) Behaviorism

D) Structuralism

.....

Q 9: According to critics, Wittgenstein's idea may not work well in:

A) Aesthetic analysis

B) Everyday conversation

C) Legal and scientific contexts

D) Cultural studies

.....

Q 10: Wittgenstein's shift from essentialist to use-based meaning reflects his move from:

A) Early empiricism to rationalism

B) Tractatus to Philosophical Investigations

C) Logic to theology

D) Existentialism to phenomenology

.....



8.7 LET US SUM UP

- This unit focuses on Ludwig Wittgenstein's later work, especially *Philosophical Investigations,* where he critiques traditional philosophy and essentialist definitions.
- Wittgenstein proposes that many concepts do not have a single defining essence but are connected through overlapping similarities, much like traits shared among family members.
- He challenges the Platonic idea that all instances of a concept must share necessary and sufficient conditions, offering a more flexible understanding of meaning.
- Wittgenstein illustrates his point using "language-games" to show how words derive meaning from use, not fixed definitions, and are related through various similarities.
- The meaning of words is not rigid but context-dependent, shaped by social practices, forms of life, and cultural usage.
- Wittgenstein uses the example of "games" to show how diverse items in a category may lack a single common feature but still belong together due to shared traits.
- Critics argue that family resemblance is too vague, lacks explanatory clarity, and may not be suitable for fields that require precise definitions, such as science or law.
- Despite criticisms, the idea of family resemblance revolutionized theories of language and meaning and remains influential in philosophy, linguistics, and cognitive science.



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9.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q. No. 1: B) Ludwig Wittgenstein

Ans to Q. No. 2: C) Philosophical Investigations

Ans to Q. No. 3: C) Its use and overlapping similarities

Ans to Q. No. 4: C) Essentialism

Ans to Q. No. 5: D) Mathematical formulas

Ans to Q. No. 6: C) Words gain meaning through their practical use

Ans to Q. No. 7: C) Too vague and lacks clear criteria

Ans to Q. No. 8: B) Prototype Theory

Ans to Q. No. 9: C) Legal and scientific contexts

Ans to Q. No. 10: B) Tractatus to Philosophical Investigations



9.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

(A) Very Short Questions:

Q. 1. What kind of boundaries do family resemblance concepts have?

Q. 2. Which earlier work of Wittgenstein focused on logical structure?

Q. 3. What analogy does Wittgenstein use to explain family resemblance?

Q. 4. In which book did Wittgenstein present the idea of family resemblance?

Q. 5. What is meant by "language-games" in Wittgenstein's philosophy?

Q. 6. Why is family resemblance criticized for vagueness?

Q. 7. What is the primary difference between early and later Wittgenstein?

Q. 8. Who introduced the concept of family resemblance in philosophy?

Q. 9. Give one example Wittgenstein uses to explain family resemblance.

Q. 10. What does the term "family resemblance" challenge in classical philosophy?

B) Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q. 1. How does Wittgenstein's later philosophy differ from his early views in terms of language and meaning?

Q. 2. Explain the concept of "criss-crossing similarities" in Wittgenstein's theory of family resemblance.

Q. 3. What role do "forms of life" play in understanding the meaning of language, according to Wittgenstein?

Q. 4. How does the example of different types of games support the idea of family resemblance?

Q. 5. Why does Wittgenstein reject the classical idea of necessary and sufficient conditions for concepts?

Q. 6. What are some limitations of applying the family resemblance model in legal or scientific classification?

Q. 7. How does the concept of family resemblance relate to Wittgenstein's critique of essentialism?

C) Write short notes on (Answer in about 150 words)

a) Wittgenstein's Contribution to Philosophy

b) The Concept of Family Resemblance

c) Family Resemblance and Language-Games

d) Criticisms of the Family Resemblance Concept

e) Role of Language-Games in Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy

f) Early vs. Later Philosophy of Wittgenstein

D) Long Questions (Answer in about 300-500 words)

Q. 1. Critically examine Wittgenstein's concept of family resemblance. How does it challenge the classical theory of meaning based on essential definitions?

Q. 2. Discuss the transition from Wittgenstein's early philosophy (as seen in the Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus) to his later philosophy (Philosophical Investigations), focusing on his views about language and meaning.

Q. 3. How does Wittgenstein use the concept of "games" to illustrate family resemblance? Explain with examples how this challenges rigid categorizations.

Q. 4. Analyze the philosophical and practical implications of Wittgenstein's rejection of necessary and sufficient conditions in defining concepts.

Q. 5. Evaluate the criticisms against the theory of family resemblance. Do these criticisms undermine Wittgenstein's argument? Discuss with reference to cognitive science and practical applications.

Q. 6. Examine the relevance of Wittgenstein's idea of family resemblance in contemporary fields such as law, science, education, and linguistics.

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UNIT 10: WITTGENSTEIN: PICTURE THEORY OF MEANING

UNIT STRUCTURE

10.1 Learning objectives

10.2 Introduction

10.3 Picture theory of meaning

10.3.1 Elementary proposition

10.3.2 Philosophy is a critique of Language

10.4 Evaluation

10.5 Let us sum up

10.6 Further readings

10.7 Answers to check your progress

10.8 Model questions

10.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to :

- explain the picture theory of meaning
- discuss the early saying of Wittgenstein-Philosophy is a critique of language
- discuss critically the picture theory of meaning

10.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit introduces to you Wittgenstein's picture theory of meaning. Ludwig Josef Johann Wittgenstein is one of the greatest philosophers of the twentieth century. His celebrated *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus* and *Philosophical Investigations* are the two models of his philosophising. He is best known as a genius. As a genius, he came to the philosophical world under the network of philosophy of language.

The theory of meaning is one of the basic concepts of semantics. The picture theory of meaning is also concerned with the meaning of

words and sentences through the logical analysis of language. It also discusses the other concepts. They are such as:

- elementary proposition
- *Philosophy is a critique of language*, and
- evaluation of this theory.

10.3 PICTURE THEORY OF MEANING

The picture theory of meaning is the most important concept in Wittgenstein's early philosophy. It holds that there is a hidden structure or essence in every form of propositions or sentences. The picture theory of meaning came to his mind when he saw in a magazine a motorcar accident being represented in a law court by means of small models. They also could be used to construct different types of propositions for the exposition of the accident. This pictorial representation stimulated his mind to formulate the picture theory of meaning.

The picture theory of meaning entails that "A proposition is a model or picture of reality." It maintains that the truth or falsity of a proposition can be evaluated through the picture or model it represents of the situation. Wittgenstein writes -"A proposition can be true or false in virtue of being a picture of reality."

Language divulges the structure or form of reality. He talks about the logical structure of propositions embedded in language. He writes- "proposition communicates a situation to us, and so it must be essentially connected with the situation. And the connection is precisely that is its logical picture. Wittgenstein writes: A proposition states something only in so far as it is a picture. Wittgenstein presents his picture theory of meaning as a paragon to focus on the underlying structure of language. The underlying structure manifests the reality, which is not conspicuous in proposition.

10.3.1 Elementary proposition

Wittgenstein's picture theory of meaning is a theory of the meaning of propositions. All propositions are analysed into ultimate

proposition i.e., elementary proposition. This kind of proposition focuses on the inarticulate structure of proposition. He asserts that an elementary proposition is constituted by names. An elementary proposition is nothing but the conceptual or logical structure of propositions. He explores the essence of a proposition through the picture theory of meaning. He called it by different names like pictorial form, pictorial relationship, representational form and logical form.

Wittgenstein holds that our natural language or colloquial language cannot express the logical form of language. Thus, Wittgenstein feels that an artificial language or symbolic language or logical language is required to disclose the inward form of thought, which is regarded as the essence of proposition. He writes: "In order to understand the essential nature of a proposition, we should consider, hieroglyphic script which depicts the facts that it describes." And he again says "A proposition shows how things stand if it is true, And it says that they do so stand." As for the relation between the proposition and the state of affairs Wittgenstein asserts- "a proposition communicates a situation to us and so it must be essentially connected with the situation. And the connection is precisely that is its logical picture." Russell in this context writes- "the logical picture of a fact, Wittgenstein says, is a gedanke. A picture can correspond or not correspond with the fact and be accordingly true or false, but in both cases, it shares the logical form with the fact."

Wittgenstein views that the logical form of proposition becomes prominent through analysis. He asserts that logical picture makes clear the relation between the proposition and the states of affairs. And it can bring out the true or false picture of propositions. The logical form is the common structure of all propositions. Every proposition is analysed into that form, which can depict the logical form, the essence of all propositions. Warnock writes that the account of language Wittgenstein gives in the *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus*

is……. intended to be an exposition of the essence of language; an account of its concealed foundation; an excavation, so to speak, to its deepest level."

It is primarily the similarity of the concatenation that makes anything a picture. All pictures, even the pictures in the ordinary sense have the form of the objects they picture. There is a correspondence between a picture and the pictured fact. This common feature between the picture and the object is indicated as the form of representation. He writes:

"If a fact is to be a picture, a fact must have something in common with what it depicts."

Edward Paul maintains that there are different kinds of pictures, different method of projections. But all pictures must have the same logical form in order to be able to picture reality at all, either truly or falsely. The logical form is called "the form of reality."

Wittgenstein in his picture theory of meaning shows the correspondence between the picture and the model of reality. He holds that a proposition is true when the state of affairs reflected by the picture exists. Otherwise, the proposition will be false. He in this context lays emphasis on the relation between language and reality. Reality becomes conspicuous through logical analysis of language.

The picture theory is an account of the nature of thought. Wittgenstein writes- 'A thought is a proposition with a sense'. Similarly, he points out- 'The totality of proposition is language'. Language becomes accessible through thought-process. Again, the thought-process is related with the logical picture, which is embedded in the propositions. So, he insists upon analysis of language into elementary propositions, which represent the logical picture of reality. It is the underlying structure of the proposition hidden in the thought process. So, Wittgenstein frequently uses words like thought, proposition, language, sense etc. to radiate the picture theory of meaning.

10.3.2 Philosophy is a Critique of Language

Wittgenstein formulates the picture theory of meaning to clarify the obscurities in language through logical analysis. The business of philosophy, according to him, is not to solve the philosophical problems, but to dissolve them by showing that they are pseudo problems. So, he views that Philosophy is a critique of language. Wittgenstein writes:

"Most of the propositions and questions to be found in philosophical works are not false but non-sensical……..Most of the propositions and questions of philosophers arise from our failure to understand the logic of our language."

Russell clarifies that philosophical problems emerge due not understanding properly the logical form of language. He divulges that philosophical problems can be resolved through grammatical investigation. He asserts that philosophical problems emerge because certain kinds of philosophical statements are clothed in misleading grammatical forms. According to him, 'we must examine the grammar of the statement. We will find, in some cases, that when we formulate the statement in terms of its 'logical form', the problem will be solved." Wittgenstein too in his earlier work lays much emphasis on grammatical similarity or surface grammar. His assertion is that philosophical problems are engendered by surface grammar. Because surface grammar insists on the similar or uniform structure of propositions, i.e., uniform grammatical form.

Wittgenstein through his critique of language has put a demarcation between ideal language or artificial language or logical language and colloquial language. He in his *Tractatus* insists on the former, because his view is that ordinary language creates puzzlement and ambiguities. Again, natural language or ordinary language deals with the diverse functions of language or language games. Therefore, Wittgenstein, in his *Tractatus* stops the process of using natural language. Because he supports only one function of

language in his earlier philosophy i.e., to extract the logical form. He, therefore, corroborate the logical analysis of language. Because it represents the logical picture of the world. He believes that propositions are analysed into elementary propositions that represent the structure of the facts or the states of affairs.

Russell also employs logical analysis of language to arrive at the final residue, i.e., atomic propositions which represent the structure of the world. Russell's belief is that when a proposition corresponds to a fact then the corresponding proposition is true. Otherwise, the proposition will be false. Russell's approach to get the picture of reality through analysis is known as logical atomism. So, there is a similarity in this context between Russell and earlier Wittgenstein. Because both put importance on logical analysis of language to focus on the logical form of propositions, which, they thought, represented the reality.

Wittgenstein's critique of language asserts that the logical analysis of language is the strategy through which philosophical problems can be resolved. The proper task of philosophy is to clarify the logical form of language. Because it removes the puzzlement and confusions rooted in philosophy. Thus, he writes- "Philosophy aims at the logical clarification of thought. Philosophy is not a body of doctrine but an activity." He completely abandons the time-honoured conception of philosophy as the pursuit of reality and values. The traditional efforts of metaphysicians to find meaning in their statements on the basis of non-empirical methods and criteria, i.e., by combining the intuition of self-evident truths with deductive methods or by postulating the ground work of metaphysical systems as necessary pre-suppositions of experience, are rejected."

Therefore, it is clear that Wittgenstein is not only a critique of language but also a critique of traditional philosophical problems. His critique of language makes it clear that he was a staunch advocate of logical analysis of language. His main purpose in his *Tractatus* is to excavate this form of language. Logical analysis

indicates the pictorial form of language. Because it can depict the hidden form of language. So, his view is that when we fail to make a relation between the picture and the fact then philosophical problems emerge. That is why; he talks about the importance of logical form of presentations. We are told "The goal of philosophical critique is the discovery of the real logical form of language. The logical form is the most important aspect of language that has to be brought into the open by analysing of language."

It can be asserted that propositions cannot represent or focus the logical form unless it is analysed by the logical analysis of language. Logical analysis of language reflects the logical form or hidden structure of propositions. So, he views that it is the panorama of all propositions. Wittgenstein's technique of logical analysis of language can remove the philosophical problems engendered by linguistic confusions. So, his technique to dissolve the philosophical problems can be regarded as the therapy. Thus, his philosophy is therapeutic.

10.4 EVALUATION

The picture theory of language violates the conventions of the language we use. The sentences of the languages we use are of linear structure. They are not maps of the facts they describe. This interpretation thus concedes that the picture theory is inconsistent with the characteristic feature of language. Maps are no doubt perspicuous representations. We find in a map or a diagram an ideal case of a one-to-one correspondence between a picture and the situation depicted. But the essential difference between a map and a proposition is that while the first one is two dimensional, the latter is one-dimensional. Wittgenstein describes propositions as pictures. But a proposition may be a picture of a situation without being a two-dimensional structure. So, we are in a dilemma- if the propositions are one-dimensional structure, they cannot express all the possible modes of configuration of a given number of objects; if on the other hand, they are two dimensional structures, then they cease to

be linguistic propositions and become maps. If we accept the second, it makes the picture theory inconsistent with the general nature of language. Wittgenstein in his earlier work has discredited the role of ordinary language. Instead of ordinary language, he advocates logically perfect language. But later Wittgenstein abandons this view of language. He holds that it will be wrong to say that language follows some fixed rules. Hence, later Wittgenstein makes a distinction between surface grammar and depth grammar. Surface grammar tries to focus on uniform appearance or structure of a sentence, which leads to logically perfect language. But later Wittgenstein changes this style of philosophising in the context of language and views that language is instrument and has diverse use. Here his view is that philosophical problems emerge when language goes on holiday. By this metaphorical sentence, he implies that when words are to be used from outside of ordinary context, philosophical problems come to light. Hence, it can be emphatically asserted that Wittgenstein's later work encompasses around the circle of ordinary language.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: How did picture theory come to Wittgenstein's mind?

.....

.....

Q 2: What is picture theory of meaning?

.....

.....

Q 3: What is elementary proposition?

.....

.....

Q 4: What are the other names of elementary proposition?

.....

.....

Q 5: What is the common structure of all propositions?

.....

.....

Q 6: Philosophy is a critique of language- write the meaning of the statement.

.....

.....

Q 7: Language goes on holiday- write the meaning of the statement.

.....

.....



10.5 LET US SUM UP

- Picture theory holds that there is a hidden structure or essence in every form of propositions or sentences. The picture theory of meaning came to his mind when he saw in a magazine a motorcar accident being represented in a law court by means of small models. They also could be used to construct different types of propositions for the exposition of the accident.
- Wittgenstein's picture theory of meaning is a theory of the meaning of propositions. All propositions are analysed into ultimate proposition i.e., elementary proposition. This kind of proposition focuses on the inarticulate structure of proposition. He asserts that an elementary proposition is constituted by names. An elementary proposition is nothing but the conceptual or logical structure of propositions.
- Russell clarifies that philosophical problems emerge due not understanding properly the logical form of language. He divulges that philosophical problems can be resolved through grammatical investigation. He asserts that philosophical problems emerge because certain kinds of philosophical statements are clothed in misleading grammatical forms.
- Wittgenstein is not only a critique of language but also a critique of traditional philosophical problems. His critique of language makes it clear

that he was a staunch advocate of logical analysis of language. His main purpose in his *Tractatus* is to excavate this form of language.

- Wittgenstein holds that our natural language or colloquial language cannot express the logical form of language. Thus, Wittgenstein feels that an artificial language or symbolic language or logical language is required to disclose the inward form of thought, which is regarded as the essence of proposition.



10.6 FURTHER READINGS

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4) Bhattacharyya, Bhaskar (2014). *Analytic Philosophy of Wittgenstein*. EBH Publishers India (Ltd)



10.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q. No. 1: B) Wittgenstein's picture theory came to his mind when he saw in a magazine a motorcar accident being represented in a law court by means of small models. They also could be used to construct different types of propositions for the exposition of the accident.

Ans to Q. No. 2: The picture theory of meaning is the theory of meaning of propositions. It holds that a proposition is a model or picture of reality. It maintaints that truth or falsity of a proposition can be evaluated through the picture or model it represents of the situation.

Ans to Q. No. 3: An elementary proposition is nothing but the conceptual or

logical structure of proposition. It is also the ultimate analysis of proposition.

Ans to Q. No. 4: He called it by different names like pictorial form, pictorial relationship, representational form, and logical form.

Ans to Q. No. 5: logical form

Ans to Q. No. 6: Philosophical problems emerge out of the linguistic confusions or due to not understand the logic of our language. Wittgenstein consists that philosophical problems can be resolved through grammatical investigations.



10.7 MODEL QUESTIONS

(A) Very Short Questions:

Q. 1. What is elementary proposition?

Q. 2. What is the picture theory of meaning?

Q. 3. What are the different names of elementary proposition?

Q. 4. Write the name of the book of Wittgenstein.

B) Short questions (Answer the questions within 100-150 words)

Q. 1. Explain briefly the picture theory of meaning.

Q. 2. What is elementary proposition? Explain in brief.

Q. 3. Write a short note on logical form.

Q. 4. Philosophy is a critique of language- Briefly explain this statement.

Q. 5. Briefly explain the distinction between logical language and natural language

Q. 6. How does philosophical problems arise? Explain in brief

C) Long questions (Answer the questions within 300-500 words)

Q. 1. Explain critically the picture theory of meaning.

Q. 2. Philosophy is a critique of language- Explain this statement.

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UNIT 11: JOHN DEWEY: THE THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

UNIT STRUCTURE

11.1 Learning Objectives

11.2 Introduction

11.3 Dewey's View of Traditional Epistemology

11.4 Dewey On Darwin's Theory

11.5 The Error of Modern Epistemologists

11.6 Conclusion

11.7 Let Us Sum Up

11.8 Further Readings

11.9 Answer to Check Your Progress

11.10 Model Questions

11.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to :

- explain Dewey's rejection of the spectator theory of knowledge and explain why he emphasised active engagement with the world over passive observation.
- analyse Dewey's critique of Cartesian dualism, focusing on his argument for the naturalistic and functional role of human intelligence in problem-solving.
- explain how Dewey incorporated Darwin's theory of evolution into epistemology, emphasising knowledge as an adaptive and evolutionary process.
- discuss the importance of experimentation and inquiry in Dewey's theory of knowledge, comparing it to the scientific method.
- know to identify and evaluate the key errors of modern epistemologists according to Dewey, including their pursuit of absolute certainty and the separation of theory from practice.

- know to explore the connection Dewey draws between knowledge, education, and democracy, recognizing the social, communal, and cooperative dimensions of inquiry.

11.2 INTRODUCTION

John Dewey (1859-1952) was a leading figure in American philosophy, especially known for his contributions to pragmatism, education, democracy, and epistemology. As one of the founders of the philosophical movement known as instrumentalism, a branch of pragmatism, Dewey redefined many traditional philosophical concepts, most notably the nature of knowledge. For Dewey, knowledge was not a static set of truths but an active process of inquiry intertwined with human experience and practical consequences.

Dewey was profoundly influenced by Charles Darwin's evolutionary theory, and he applied this evolutionary perspective to epistemology, ethics, and logic. He argued that traditional epistemology failed to account for the dynamic, adaptive, and experiential nature of human knowing. His theory of knowledge was revolutionary because it rejected the separation of mind and world, of subject and object, and instead focused on experience, problem-solving, and growth.

This essay explores Dewey's critique of traditional epistemology, his interpretation of Darwin's theory and its philosophical implications, and his analysis of the errors of modern epistemologists.

11.3 DEWEY'S VIEW OF TRADITIONAL EPISTEMOLOGY

Let us now discuss about the John Dewey's point of view regarding the traditional epistemology.

11.3.1 Critique of the Spectator Theory of Knowledge

One of Dewey's central criticisms of traditional epistemology was directed at what he called the spectator theory of knowledge.

This theory, prominent in the works of Descartes, Locke, Hume, and Kant, viewed knowledge as a passive process wherein the mind observes reality and records facts. According to this view, the knowing subject stands apart from the object of knowledge, attempting to create a mirror-like representation of reality.

Dewey rejected this model, arguing that knowledge is not a matter of contemplation but of active engagement with the world. In his view, knowledge arises from problem-solving activities where human beings interact with their environment. The traditional view, he believed, isolated knowledge from action and experience, leading to an artificial and sterile conception of epistemology.

11.3.2 The Dualism of Mind and World

Dewey criticized the Cartesian dualism that separates mind from matter, subject from object, and reason from emotion. He argued that this separation creates insoluble problems in epistemology, such as the problem of scepticism, because if the mind is cut off from the world, how can it ever be sure that its ideas represent reality?

Instead, Dewey proposed a naturalistic account of knowing. He suggested that human beings are part of nature, not outside observers of it. Our minds are evolved tools for coping with problems in our environment. Knowledge, therefore, is instrumental and functional, helping us adapt to changing circumstances rather than aiming at abstract or eternal truths.

11.3.3 Knowledge as a Process, not a Product

Traditional epistemology treats knowledge as a finished product-a set of propositions or beliefs that correspond to reality. Dewey argued that this view misses the dynamic and ongoing nature of inquiry. For him, knowing is an activity, a continuous process of investigation where hypotheses are tested, revised, or abandoned based on experience.

This approach led Dewey to emphasize experimental methods of knowing, similar to the methods of modern science. He believed that inquiry should be empirical, fallible, and open to revision. This contrasts sharply with the traditional search for certain, indubitable knowledge, as seen in the works of Descartes or Kant.

11.3.4 The Social Character of Knowledge

Dewey also emphasized the social dimension of knowing. He believed that knowledge is not the product of isolated minds but is developed through collaborative inquiry and communication. For Dewey, education and democracy are closely linked to epistemology because they provide the environments in which intelligent inquiry can flourish.

Traditional epistemology, by focusing on individual certainty, neglected this communal aspect of knowledge creation. Dewey insisted that communication, dialogue, and shared experiences are essential for developing valid knowledge.

11.4 DEWEY ON DARWIN'S THEORY

11.4.1 Darwin's Influence on Dewey

Dewey acknowledged Charles Darwin's theory of evolution as a philosophical watershed. In his famous essay "The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy" (1910), Dewey argued that Darwin's ideas forced philosophers to rethink fundamental concepts, including knowledge, ethics, and metaphysics.

Before Darwin, philosophers generally believed in fixed essences, static categories, and permanent truths. Plato's theory of forms, Aristotle's classification of species, and even Kant's categories assumed a stable, unchanging reality. Darwin, however, demonstrated that life is a process of continuous change, driven by adaptation and natural selection.

This evolutionary perspective profoundly influenced Dewey's epistemology.

11.4.2 The Evolutionary Model of Knowledge

Dewey applied Darwin's evolutionary model to human intelligence and knowledge. Just as species evolve to survive in their environments, ideas and methods of inquiry evolve to solve new problems. Knowledge, then, is not about mirroring reality but about improving our capacity to interact successfully with the world.

For Dewey, thinking evolved as a biological function to help organisms deal with problematic situations. When habits fail, reflective thought begins. This process is not aimed at achieving timeless truths but at resolving practical difficulties. Thus, inquiry is a form of adaptive behaviour.

11.4.3 Continuity between Nature and Mind

Dewey rejected the notion of a radical separation between nature and human thought. Darwin showed that human beings are part of the natural world, and their minds are natural products of evolutionary processes. Therefore, Dewey argued for a continuity between biological evolution and the growth of knowledge.

This perspective led him to redefine reason and intelligence not as fixed faculties but as tools for problem-solving that have evolved over time. Inquiry becomes an instrumental activity, helping organisms to adjust to their environment, much like tools help in physical survival.

11.4.4 The Role of Experimentation

Darwinian thinking also influenced Dewey's emphasis on experimentation and inquiry. Since the world is constantly changing, no belief or method can be final. Instead, beliefs must be tested through experience, just as organisms test new behaviours through trial and error.

Dewey's experimentalism in epistemology mirrors the scientific method. Hypotheses are proposed not as dogmas but as working assumptions to be confirmed, revised, or discarded in light of new evidence.

11.5 THE ERROR OF MODERN EPISTEMOLOGISTS

Dewey believed that modern epistemologists, despite advancements in logic and science, still made fundamental errors because they retained certain pre-Darwinian assumptions.

11.5.1 The Quest for Absolute Certainty

Modern epistemologists, like the traditional ones, often sought absolute foundations for knowledge. Whether through rationalism or empiricism, philosophers like Descartes, Locke, and Kant tried to find indubitable starting points for knowledge. Dewey considered this an unrealistic and unnecessary goal.

In a world of constant change and uncertainty, the search for fixed, eternal truths is misguided. Dewey argued that fallibility is a natural part of human inquiry, and therefore epistemology should focus on methods of correction and revision rather than on guarantees of certainty.

11.5.2 Separation of Theory and Practice

Another major error was the separation of theory from practice. Traditional and modern epistemologists often treated knowledge as theoretical contemplation, disconnected from the practical needs of life.

Dewey rejected this dualism. For him, knowledge is inherently practical and it serves the function of helping people adjust to their environment, solve problems, and improve conditions of life. Even theoretical science has practical origins because it emerges from real-life challenges that require intelligent solutions.

11.5.3 Ignoring the Context of Inquiry

Modern epistemologists often ignored the context in which knowledge is developed. Dewey argued that knowing is not done in a vacuum. Inquiry always arises from concrete situations where there is some problem, doubt, or uncertainty that demands resolution.

Dewey called this the context of inquiry, and he believed that epistemology must begin by examining the conditions under which inquiry takes place. This stands in contrast to traditional approaches, which begin with abstract questions about representation and justification.

11.5.4 Overemphasis on Language and Propositions

Dewey also critiqued the modern tendency to reduce knowledge to linguistic propositions. For many philosophers, knowing means having true beliefs or justified propositions. Dewey believed this view is too narrow.

While language is important, Dewey argued that experience, action, and experimental testing are equally essential. Knowledge is not just about describing reality but about changing it, interacting with it, and resolving difficulties. Thus, knowledge is a tool for transformation, not merely a set of statements.

11.5.5 Failure to Integrate Science and Philosophy

Despite the rise of modern science, Dewey believed that philosophy often failed to integrate scientific methods into its epistemology. While scientists engage in hypothesis formation, testing, and revision, philosophers clung to outdated methods focused on deduction and a priori reasoning.

Dewey wanted philosophy to adopt the experimental spirit of science. He saw the scientific method as the most advanced form of human inquiry, but not because it discovers final truths-instead, because it is self-correcting, empirical, and flexible.

11.6 CONCLUSION

John Dewey's theory of knowledge represents a radical shift from traditional epistemology to a pragmatic, experimental, and evolutionary approach. By rejecting the spectator theory of knowledge, Dewey emphasized experience, action, and problem-solving as the core of human knowing.

His interpretation of Darwin's evolutionary theory provided a new model for understanding knowledge as a dynamic, adaptive process. For Dewey, ideas and beliefs evolve in much the same way as organisms do, through trial, error, and adaptation to the environment.

Dewey's critique of modern epistemologists focused on their obsession with certainty, their separation of theory from practice, and their neglect of the social and practical contexts of inquiry. He believed that philosophy must align itself with the methods of modern science, emphasizing inquiry, experimentation, and continual revision.

In today's world, Dewey's insights remain relevant. His emphasis on education, democracy, and communal inquiry reflects his belief that knowledge grows through participation, communication, and cooperative problem-solving. Dewey's epistemology thus serves as a guide for practical intelligence and responsible citizenship, fostering a more flexible, adaptive, and inclusive approach to knowledge.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Who was John Dewey and what are his major contributions?

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Q 2: What is instrumentalism according to John Dewey?

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Q 3: How did Dewey redefine the concept of knowledge?

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Q 4: Which scientific theory had a major influence on Dewey's epistemology?

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Q 5: What is the "spectator theory of knowledge" that Dewey criticized?

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Q 6: Name two philosophers associated with the spectator theory of knowledge.

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Q 7: Why did Dewey reject Cartesian dualism?

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Q 8: How did Dewey view the relationship between mind and world?

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Q 9: What does Dewey mean by "knowledge is a process, not a product"?

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Q 10: Why did Dewey emphasize the social character of knowledge?

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Q 11: How did Darwin's evolutionary theory influence Dewey's epistemology?

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Q 12: What role does experimentation play in Dewey's theory of knowledge?

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Q 13: According to Dewey, why is the quest for absolute certainty a mistake?

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Q 14: What is meant by the "context of inquiry" in Dewey's philosophy?

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Q 15: How does Dewey connect knowledge with democracy and education?

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11.7 LET US SUM UP

- John Dewey was a major American philosopher known for pragmatism, instrumentalism, and educational reform.
- Dewey rejected the spectator theory of knowledge, which treats knowledge as passive observation.
- He criticized the Cartesian dualism separating mind from matter, proposing a naturalistic and interactive model of knowing.
- For Dewey, knowledge is a dynamic, continuous process, not a static product.
- Collaborative inquiry and communication are essential to knowledge formation.
- Influenced by Darwin's theory of evolution, Dewey saw knowledge as an adaptive, evolutionary function.
- Thinking evolves to resolve problems, similar to how species evolve to adapt.
- Dewey emphasised experiment, trial, and error in the process of knowing.

- He criticized modern epistemologists for seeking absolute certainty and separating theory from practice.
- Dewey believed knowledge should serve life's practical needs and adapt to changing circumstances.
- He warned against reducing knowledge to mere linguistic propositions, insisting on the importance of experience and action.
- Dewey urged philosophy to adopt the scientific method of experimentation and revision.
- His instrumentalism views ideas as tools to cope with and transform the environment.
- Dewey linked epistemology with democracy and education, promoting participatory inquiry.
- His theory remains relevant for promoting practical intelligence, cooperation, and flexible thinking.



11.8 FURTHER READINGS

1) Dewey, J. (1910). *The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy and Other Essays in Contemporary Thought*. New York: Henry Holt and Company.
2) Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*. New York: Macmillan.
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4) Dewey, J., & Bentley, A. F. (1949). *Knowing and the Known*. Boston: Beacon Press.
5) Hickman, L. A. (1992). *John Dewey's Pragmatic Technology*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
6) Boisvert, R. D. (1998). John Dewey: Rethinking Our Time. Albany: State University of New York Press.
7) Ryan, A. (1995). *John Dewey and the High Tide of American Liberalism*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

11.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q. No. 1: John Dewey was an American philosopher known for his contributions to pragmatism, education, democracy, and epistemology.

Ans to Q. No. 2: Instrumentalism is Dewey's view that ideas and knowledge are tools or instruments used for solving problems and adapting to life.

Ans to Q. No. 3: Dewey redefined knowledge as an active process of inquiry, emphasizing experience, action, and practical consequences, rather than static truths.

Ans to Q. No. 4: Dewey was profoundly influenced by Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, which shaped his views on knowledge as adaptive.

Ans to Q. No. 5: The spectator theory of knowledge treats knowing as a passive process where the mind merely observes reality and records facts.

Ans to Q. No. 6: Descartes and Locke are two philosophers associated with the spectator theory of knowledge.

Ans to Q. No. 7: Dewey rejected Cartesian dualism because it separates the mind from the world, leading to problems like scepticism.

Ans to Q. No. 8: Dewey viewed the mind and world as continuous and interactive, with the mind functioning as a tool evolved to solve problems in the environment.

Ans to Q. No. 9: By saying "knowledge is a process, not a product," Dewey meant that knowing involves ongoing inquiry, testing, and revision, rather than the discovery of final truths.

Ans to Q. No. 10: Dewey emphasized the social character of knowledge because learning and inquiry are collaborative activities, developed through communication and shared experiences.

Ans to Q. No. 11: Darwin's theory led Dewey to see knowledge as an evolving, adaptive function, similar to biological evolution.

Ans to Q. No. 12: Experimentation is central to Dewey's epistemology; beliefs are tested, confirmed, or revised based on real-world experiences.

Ans to Q. No. 13: The quest for absolute certainty is mistaken, according to Dewey, because the world is constantly changing, making certainty impossible and inquiry always provisional.

Ans to Q. No. 14: The context of inquiry refers to the specific situations of doubt or problem-solving that trigger the need for knowledge and investigation.

Ans to Q. No. 15: Dewey connects knowledge with democracy and education because both involve participation, dialogue, and cooperative problem-solving, which are essential for growth and social progress.



11.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

(A) Very Short Questions:

Q. 1. What is John Dewey's instrumentalism?

Q. 2. Which scientific theory heavily influenced Dewey's epistemology?

Q. 3. What is the spectator theory of knowledge according to Dewey?

Q. 4. How does Dewey define knowledge?

Q. 5. Why did Dewey emphasize experimentation in his theory of knowledge?

(B) Short Questions (Answer within 150-200 words)

Q. 1. What is the dualism of mind and world, and how did Dewey criticize it?

Q. 2. How did Dewey view the relationship between inquiry and problem-solving?

Q. 3. What is Dewey's concept of the "context of inquiry"?

Q. 4. How does Dewey's theory of knowledge differ from Descartes' or Kant's approach?

Q. 5. Why does Dewey believe communication is essential for the development of knowledge?

(C) Long Questions (Answer within 400 words)

Q. 1. Explain Dewey's critique of the spectator theory of knowledge and discuss its implications for epistemology.

Q. 2. Discuss Dewey's application of Darwin's evolutionary theory to human knowledge and intelligence.

Q. 3. What are the main errors Dewey identifies in modern epistemologists, and how does he propose to correct them?

Q. 4. How does Dewey's theory of knowledge integrate experience, action, and experimentation into the process of inquiry?

Q. 5. Analyse the connection Dewey makes between knowledge, education, and democracy. Why is this relationship central to his philosophy?

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UNIT 12: JOHN DEWEY'S THEORY OF METAPHYSICS

UNIT STRUCTURE

12.1 Introduction

12.2 Learning Objectives

12.3 Dewey's Naturalistic Metaphysics: An Overview

12.4 Analysis of Dewey's Metaphysical Theory

12.5 Criticism of Dewey's Metaphysics

12.6 Criticisms

12.7 Let Us Sum Up

12.8 Further Readings

12.9 Answer to Check Your Progress

12.10 Model Questions

12.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to :

- Explain Dewey's concept of naturalistic metaphysics and his rejection of traditional dualisms.
- Know the significance of experience in Dewey's metaphysical framework as a transactional and interactive process.
- Analyse how Dewey integrates scientific methods with metaphysical inquiry to study the generic traits of existence.
- Explain the criticisms of Dewey's metaphysics, including concerns about vagueness, scientism, and relativism.
- Know how Dewey's metaphysics emphasizes growth, continuity, and practical engagement with real-world problems.

12.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit is trying to introduce to you about the John Dewey's concept of metaphysics. John Dewey (1859-1952), one of the most

prominent figures of American pragmatism, contributed extensively to philosophy, education, and social theory. While he is often associated with epistemology, logic, ethics, and educational reform, Dewey also offered a distinctive approach to metaphysics. However, his metaphysics was not traditional in the sense of positing immutable realities beyond experience. Instead, Dewey developed a naturalistic metaphysics, integrating empirical inquiry with philosophical reflection on human experience and the natural world.

For Dewey, metaphysics is not about transcendent realities but about the systematic and reflective analysis of the structure and processes of nature, including human experience. He rejected dualisms such as mind/body, appearance/reality, and subject/object, which dominated classical metaphysical thought. Dewey sought to reconstruct metaphysics in the light of scientific advancements and Darwinian evolutionary theory, leading to a process-oriented, empirical metaphysics grounded in change, growth, and continuity.

His metaphysical reflections are primarily found in his works like "Experience and Nature" (1925) and "Logic: The Theory of Inquiry" (1938). Dewey's approach can be characterized as instrumental, experimental, and pragmatic, aiming to bridge the gap between philosophy and scientific methods.

This unit explores Dewey's theory of metaphysics, analysing its core ideas, examining its implications, presenting the criticisms it faced, and concluding with its philosophical significance.

12.3 DEWEY'S NATURALISTIC METAPHYSICS: AN OVERVIEW

Now let us discuss about the John Dewey's analysis of metaphysics.

12.3.1 What is Metaphysics According to Dewey?

In traditional Western philosophy, metaphysics has been understood as the study of the fundamental nature of reality, focusing

on what exists beyond the physical world. This includes investigations into abstract entities such as God, the soul, or universal forms. Classical metaphysical systems often sought to uncover eternal, unchanging truths that lie behind the world of appearances. However, John Dewey rejected this traditional view of metaphysics. He argued that metaphysics should not be concerned with supernatural realities, transcendent beings, or immutable substances. Instead, Dewey proposed a naturalistic and empirical approach to metaphysics that focuses on the world of experience and the patterns observable within it.

For Dewey, metaphysics is not about escaping from the world of change and process into a realm of timeless truths. Rather, it is about studying the "generic traits of existence", a phrase he famously used in his work *Experience and Nature* (1925). By "generic traits," Dewey referred to the common features that characterize all forms of existence, such as interaction, continuity, and growth. He believed that these traits can be understood through empirical observation and scientific inquiry, not through speculative reasoning detached from experience.

Dewey sought to eliminate speculative metaphysics and replace it with a scientifically-informed philosophical reflection. For him, metaphysics should help humans better understand their place in nature by analysing how experience operates within the broader evolutionary and natural processes of the world. This makes Dewey's metaphysics pragmatic, dynamic, and rooted in lived reality.

12.3.2 Naturalism and Experience

At the core of Dewey's metaphysics is naturalism. He viewed the universe as a dynamic, evolutionary process without recourse to supernatural or metaphysical absolutes. Everything, including consciousness, reason, values, and culture, that is part of nature. Human experience is not separate from nature but is a part of the natural evolutionary continuum.

For Dewey, experience is the medium through which humans interact with the world. Unlike subjective idealists who treat experience as a private mental event, Dewey's notion of experience is transactional. It involves an active engagement between the organism and the environment. Experience is fundamentally natural, biological, and social, and it includes both perceiving and doing, both inquiry and transformation.

12.3.3 Continuity and Evolution

Dewey's metaphysics is heavily influenced by Darwin's theory of evolution. He believed that Darwin's ideas demolished static metaphysical categories. Reality is not a set of fixed essences but a continuous process of change and development. Human consciousness, values, and knowledge evolve as part of this natural process. Dewey's metaphysics, therefore, is dynamic, historical, and emergent.

12.4 ANALYSIS OF DEWEY'S METAPHYSICAL THEORY

12.4.1 Reconstruction of Metaphysics

John Dewey advocated a fundamental reconstruction of metaphysics, challenging the long-standing traditions of Western philosophy. Historically, metaphysics has been concerned with separating reality into fixed, dualistic categories: material vs. spiritual, body vs. mind, nature vs. culture, and appearance vs. reality. Dewey criticized this dualistic framework as artificial and misleading. He believed such distinctions create unnecessary separations that obscure the continuity of experience and the natural world.

Dewey proposed a unified view of reality, where these distinctions are not viewed as ontological divisions but as functional differences within a continuous process. For him, metaphysics

should not be about speculating on a world beyond experience but about studying how humans interact with and make sense of the world they live in.

His reconstructed metaphysics focuses on:

- **Empirical inquiry into the nature of existence:** Metaphysics must be rooted in observation and experience rather than abstract speculation.
- **Integration of science and philosophy:** Rather than standing apart from scientific investigation, philosophy should complement scientific methods to reflect on broader existential patterns.
- **Practical engagement with the world:** Dewey emphasized that philosophy must be practical and experimental, dealing with real-world problems rather than retreating into theoretical abstractions.

By reconstructing metaphysics in this way, Dewey shifted philosophy from a search for eternal truths to a process of inquiry into the conditions and patterns of lived experience.

12.4.2 The Role of Experience

For Dewey, experience is central to metaphysics, but not in the traditional sense of internal consciousness or subjective perception. Dewey's concept of experience is interactive and transactional. It represents the continuous engagement between humans and their environment. Experience involves both "doing" and "undergoing"-human beings act upon the world, changing it through behaviour, and in turn, the world affects them, leading to new perceptions and adaptations.

Dewey's view of experience is:

- **Natural and biological:** Experience arises from the interaction of living organisms with their surroundings. It is not something separate from life processes but an extension of them.

- Social and cultural: Human experience is shaped by language, traditions, institutions, and shared meanings. Culture influences how individuals interpret and respond to their environment.
- Instrumental: Experience serves as a tool for adaptation and problem-solving. Humans use experience to adjust to changing situations and to develop new methods of coping with challenges.

This perspective leads to a form of naturalized phenomenology, where values, meanings, and symbols are not seen as transcendent but as products of evolutionary, biological, and social development. Human consciousness and culture are extensions of natural processes rather than metaphysical exceptions.

12.4.3 Generic Traits of Existence

In his metaphysics, Dewey identifies certain "generic traits of existence", which are universal features found in all experiences and phenomena. These traits are not metaphysical absolutes or supernatural entities but empirical patterns observed through interaction with the world.

The generic traits include:

- **Interaction:** All things exist in a state of interaction with other things. Nothing exists in isolation.
- **Change:** The world is in constant flux. Reality is dynamic, not static.
- **Continuity:** There is a linkage between past, present, and future through ongoing processes.
- **Growth:** Life involves adaptation, evolution, and the development of new capacities.
- Situation: All events occur within specific contexts, and meaning arises from particular situations.

Dewey believed that by studying these generic traits, metaphysics could provide a scientific and empirical account of reality, free from speculative assumptions.

12.4.4 Transactional Realism

Dewey replaces the traditional subject-object dualism with a transactional model of realism. In this view, knowledge is not about representing or mirroring a reality "out there." Instead, knowing is an active process, in which the knower participates in the world and helps shape it.

The knower and the known are part of the same continuous process. Human inquiry is not about discovering hidden truths but about finding effective ways to interact with and transform the environment. This leads to instrumentalism, where concepts, theories, and metaphysical categories are seen as tools or instruments. Their value lies in how well they help humans cope with reality, solve problems, and adapt to new conditions-not in whether they perfectly reflect some ultimate, unchanging reality.

12.4.5 The Role of Science

Dewey placed great emphasis on science as the most successful method of inquiry. He believed that philosophy and metaphysics should adopt the experimental, empirical methods of science, including observation, testing, and revision. However, Dewey did not advocate for a rigid separation between scientific inquiry and everyday life. For him, science and ordinary experience are continuous. Both involve interacting with the environment, observing outcomes, and adjusting behaviour accordingly.

Metaphysics, therefore, should:

- Recognize the evolutionary and experimental nature of knowledge.
- Avoid absolutist claims or fixed dogmas.

- Be open to revision based on new experiences and discoveries.

This approach keeps philosophy flexible, dynamic, and responsive to human needs

12.4.6 Metaphysics and Values

Unlike classical metaphysics, which often separates facts and values, Dewey argued for their integration. He believed that value judgments are part of the natural world because they emerge from human interactions with the environment. Ethics, aesthetics, and social ideals are not fixed in a transcendent realm but are functions of biological and cultural evolution.

This leads to a naturalized ethics, where moral values are experimental and context-dependent. They are subject to growth and change, much like scientific hypotheses. Moral inquiry, like scientific inquiry, involves trial, error, and adaptation.

Dewey's integration of metaphysics and values reflects his broader pragmatist commitment to grounding philosophy in human experience and practical life.

12.5 CRITICISM OF DEWEY'S METAPHYSICS

While Dewey's metaphysics has been influential, it has also faced significant criticism:

12.5.1 Ambiguity and Vagueness

Some critics argue that Dewey's concept of metaphysics is too vague or diluted. By broadening metaphysics to include the "generic traits of existence," Dewey may have blurred the line between science, philosophy, and metaphysics, making metaphysics less rigorous and precise.

12.5.2 Rejection of Traditional Metaphysics

Dewey's outright rejection of transcendent realities and metaphysical absolutes has been criticized by traditional philosophers. Critics claim that Dewey's metaphysics neglects questions of ultimate reality, such as the existence of God, the nature of consciousness beyond the physical, or the purpose of existence. For thinkers rooted in classical metaphysics, Dewey's naturalism seems reductionist.

12.5.3 Overemphasis on Science

Dewey's emphasis on scientific methods as the model for all inquiry has led some to accuse him of scientism-the belief that only science can provide genuine knowledge. Critics argue that human experiences like art, religion, and introspection cannot be fully explained by naturalistic methods.

12.5.4 Problem of Relativism

Dewey's experimental approach to values raises the concern of relativism. If values are products of social and biological processes, are there any objective moral standards? Critics worry that Dewey's metaphysics may lead to ethical subjectivism, where all values are equally valid or invalid depending on cultural context

12.5.5 Difficulty in Application

Some scholars find Dewey's metaphysical ideas difficult to apply in practical philosophy. His transactional realism and instrumentalism may work well in scientific and educational contexts, but applying them to complex metaphysical debates (e.g., free will vs. determinism, mind-body problem) can be challenging.

12.5.6 Neglect of Ontology

Dewey's focus on process and function tends to neglect ontology, or the question of "what exists." By concentrating on how entities interact rather than what they fundamentally are, Dewey is seen as sidestepping traditional ontological issues.

12.6 CONCLUSION

John Dewey's theory of metaphysics represents a radical departure from classical metaphysical traditions. Rooted in pragmatism and naturalism, his metaphysics focuses on experience, continuity, growth, and empirical inquiry. He reconstructs metaphysics as a reflection on the generic traits of existence as revealed through human interactions with nature.

Dewey's metaphysics is dynamic, process-oriented, and evolutionary. It integrates science, ethics, and social life into a unified philosophical framework. By emphasizing the transactional relationship between humans and their environment, Dewey dissolves the traditional dichotomies of mind/body, subject/object, and fact/value.

However, his approach is not without limitations. Critics argue that Dewey's metaphysics is too dependent on science, risks relativism, and avoids deeper ontological questions. Yet, his work remains relevant, especially in fields that value pragmatic, adaptive, and empirical approaches to knowledge.

Dewey's metaphysics invites us to view the world not as a static collection of entities but as a continuous flow of experience, inquiry, and growth. In doing so, he offers a vision of philosophy that is practical, experimental, and engaged with the real problems of life.

His metaphysical project encourages modern thinkers to remain open, flexible, and responsive to change-qualities that are crucial in an ever-evolving world.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Who is John Dewey and what fields did he contribute to?

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Q 2: What is the core idea of Dewey's metaphysics?

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Q 3: Which works of Dewey primarily discuss his metaphysical ideas?

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Q 4: How does Dewey define metaphysics in Experience and Nature (1925)?

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Q 5: What does Dewey reject in traditional metaphysics?

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Q 6: What is meant by Dewey's "naturalistic metaphysics"?

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Q 7: How does Dewey view the role of experience in metaphysics?

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Q 8: What are the "generic traits of existence" according to Dewey?

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Q 9: How does Dewey integrate science with metaphysical inquiry?

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Q 10: What is "transactional realism" in Dewey's philosophy?

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Q 11: How does Dewey relate metaphysics and values?

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Q 12: What are some criticisms of Dewey's metaphysics?

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12.7 LET US SUM UP

- Dewey's metaphysics is naturalistic, rejecting supernatural entities and focusing on empirical experience.
- He defines metaphysics as the study of the "generic traits of existence", such as interaction, change, and growth.
- Dewey criticizes traditional metaphysics for creating artificial dualisms like mind/body, nature/culture, and fact/value.
- Experience is central to Dewey's philosophy and is seen as a transactional process between humans and their environment.
- Dewey emphasizes continuity and evolution, influenced by Darwin's theory, viewing reality as dynamic and constantly developing.
- His metaphysics involves reconstructing philosophy to integrate science and empirical inquiry rather than relying on speculative reasoning.
- Dewey replaces subject-object dualism with transactional realism, where knowledge is an active process of participation and transformation.
- He connects metaphysics with values, arguing that ethics and social ideals are products of biological and cultural evolution.
- Critics accuse Dewey of vagueness, scientism, relativism, and neglecting traditional ontological questions.
- Dewey's metaphysics promotes a pragmatic, experimental approach to life, encouraging adaptation, inquiry, and growth in response to real-world problems.



12.8 FURTHER READINGS

1. 1. Dewey, J. (1925). *Experience and nature*. Chicago: Open Court Publishing Company.
2) Dewey, J. (1938). Logic: *The theory of inquiry*. New York: Henry Holt and Company.
3) Boisvert, R. D. (1988). *Dewey's metaphysics*. New York: Fordham University Press.
4) Hickman, L. A. (1998). *Reading Dewey: Interpretations for a postmodern generation*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
5) Sleeper, R. W. (1986). *The necessity of pragmatism: John Dewey's conception of philosophy*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.



12.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q. No. 1: John Dewey was a leading figure in American pragmatism who contributed to philosophy, education, logic, ethics, and social theory.

Ans to Q. No. 2: The core idea of Dewey's metaphysics is the analysis of the "generic traits of existence" through experience, focusing on change, growth, and continuity within nature.

Ans to Q. No. 3: Dewey's metaphysical ideas are primarily discussed in his works Experience and Nature (1925) and Logic: The Theory of Inquiry (1938).

Ans to Q. No. 4: In Experience and Nature (1925), Dewey defines metaphysics as "an account of the generic traits of existence."

Ans to Q. No. 5: Dewey rejects the traditional metaphysical focus on transcendent realities, supernatural beings, and immutable substances.

Ans to Q. No. 6: Dewey's naturalistic metaphysics refers to a scientific and empirical approach that studies human experience as part of the natural world.

Ans to Q. No. 7: Dewey views experience as transactional, involving active interaction between humans and their environment, where doing and undergoing are continuous processes.

Ans to Q. No. 8: The generic traits of existence, according to Dewey, include interaction, change, continuity, growth, and the situatedness of events.

Ans to Q. No. 9: Dewey integrates science with metaphysics by adopting experimental methods, empirical observation, and a commitment to revising knowledge based on new experiences.

Ans to Q. No. 10: Transactional realism is Dewey's concept that knowledge involves active participation with the world, where the knower and the known are part of the same process.

Ans to Q. No. 11: Dewey relates metaphysics and values by arguing that values emerge from biological and cultural evolution, making ethics a natural and experimental process.

Ans to Q. No. 12: Criticisms of Dewey's metaphysics include claims of vagueness, over-reliance on science, relativism, and neglect of traditional ontological questions.



12.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

(A) Very Short Questions:

Q. 1. What is the main focus of John Dewey's metaphysics?

Q. 2. Name one of Dewey's key works where he discusses metaphysics.

Q. 3. What is meant by the term "transactional realism" in Dewey's philosophy?

Q. 4. What scientific theory influenced Dewey's metaphysical thought?

Q. 5. How does Dewey view the relationship between facts and values?

(B) Short Questions (Answer in around 150-200 words)

Q. 1. Explain how Dewey's concept of experience differs from traditional philosophical notions of experience.

Q. 2. What are the "generic traits of existence" according to Dewey, and why are they central to his metaphysics?

Q. 3. Discuss Dewey's critique of traditional metaphysics and his proposal for its reconstruction.

Q. 4. How does Dewey integrate scientific methodology into his metaphysical framework?

Q. 5. What are the major criticisms directed at Dewey's metaphysical theory?

(C) Long Questions (Answer in around 400 words)

Q. 1. Describe in detail Dewey's theory of naturalistic metaphysics and its departure from classical metaphysical traditions.

Q. 2. Analyse Dewey's concept of "transactional realism" and explain how it dissolves the traditional subject-object dualism.

Q. 3. Discuss the role of Darwinian evolutionary theory in shaping Dewey's metaphysical ideas, especially concerning change and growth.

Q. 4. How does Dewey connect metaphysics with ethics and values, and what are the implications of this connection for moral philosophy?

Q. 5. Critically examine the relevance of Dewey's metaphysical approach in contemporary philosophical and scientific contexts.

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UNIT 13: J.L. AUSTIN'S THEORY OF LANGUAGE

UNIT STRUCTURE

13.1 Learning objectives

13.2 Introduction

13.3 Austin's speech act

13.3.1 Characteristics of Performative utterances

13.3.2 Necessary Conditions of Performatives

13.3.3 Types of Speech acts

13.4 Let us sum up

13.5 Further readings

13.6 Answers to check your progress

13.7 Model questions

13.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to :

- explain the concept of Austin's speech act
- discuss the characteristics of performative utterances
- discuss the necessary conditions of performatives
- explain the different types of speech acts

13.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit introduces to you Austin's speech act theory. John Langshaw Austin is a leading spirit of ordinary language philosophy or linguistic philosophy. His book *How to do Things with words* introduces himself as a genuine supporter of ordinary language philosophy views that the business of philosophy is not puzzle solving. His emphasis on ordinary language can be discussed under the distinction between constatives and performatives. Austin's speech act theory bears a very close affinity in technique and style with Wittgenstein's theory of language-games.

This unit includes the issues like- characteristics of performative utterances, necessary conditions of performatives, and types of speech acts.

13.3 AUSTIN'S SPEECH ACT

Austin's philosophy of language rests on the concept of speech act. He holds it as the technique of ordinary language analysis. His view is that acts are performed with the help of words or sentences. There are different kinds of acts. Just as acts are performed in playing football or cricket or making ornaments or in building houses etc. so also there are various types of speech acts like stating, swearing, reporting, questioning etc. In this context, David E. Copper points out two important points Austin's insistence on Speech act--- i) To discover what the sentence was being used to say, we must look at the total act performed by the speaker with the aid of the sentence. ii) there is the pragmatic justification that by etuding sentences as parts of total speech acts, unsuspected contributions to various philosophical debates may be derived.

It is evident that Austin's concepts of speech acts like constatives and performatives explore extrinsic and intrinsic structures of language. He identifies that speech act may be constative and performative. He by the performative utterance explicates that it is the utterance of doing an act. It is not true or false, rather it is an act-oriented utterance. While, constative utterance is an utterance of a sentence or statement which is either true or false. As for instance, 'the dog is on the mat', can be asserted to be true or false, but the utterance like 'I promise', 'I swear', 'I apologize', are neither true nor false, but the speaker performs some act thereby. These utterances are performative. In the context of performative utterance, an act is performed by the speaker immediately when the utterance is made. In case of performative utterance, the verb like 'to apologize', 'to swear', 'to guarantee', are not used to describe or report something like 'he is apolozing', or 'I am swearing', but are used to describe or report something like 'he is apolozing', or 'I am swearing', but are used to perform certain acts.

13.3.1 Characteristics of Performative utterances

Austin has given two characteristics of performative utterances. They are respectively-

i) A: They do not 'describe' or 'report' or constate anything at all. Therefore, are not 'true or false'; and

ii) B: The utterance of the sentence is a part of the doing of an action, which again would not normally be described as, or as; saying something.

13.3.2 Criterion for distinguishing Performative utterance from Constative utterance

Austin puts - "we must ask: is there something precise way in which we can definitely distinguish the performative from the constative utterance? And in particular, we should naturally ask first whether there is some grammatical criterion for distinguishing constative from the performative utterance. There are two distinct criteria given by Austin. They are as follows:

The first criterion is grammatical criterion. According to this criterion, the using of the verb in the sentence/statement must be in the first-person present tense. As for instance, 'He is swearing', 'I apologized', are not considered as performatives. Because the mentioned utterances are not made in the first-person present tense. It also entails that acts are not performed immediately by uttering the sentences. Again, the sentences like 'I apologized', 'He warned', are not considered as performative also because the above sentences/statements serve to describe or report the action performed by the speaker or somebody else in the past tense. Therefore, performative utterances are made to perform an act in the first-person present tense alone. As for instance, 'I name this road Lacit Borphukan Road', here the utterance is not used by the assertor to report or describe. Rather, it is used to perform the act of naming the road after Lacit Borphukan.

The second criterion is vocabulary criterion. According to this criterion, the word 'here by' is used in the sentence/statement. As for instance,

i) You are 'here by' authorised by

ii) He is 'here by' ordered to vacate….

iii) Passengers are 'here by' warned against crossing

Austin by the word 'here by' shows that it is utilised as instrument for effecting the act of 'warning', 'authorising', 'ordering', etc. So, he writes that the word 'here by' is a useful criterion that the utterance is performative.

An utterance is an act, what we talk or speak is an activity or act. So, the utterance is an act means performing or doing an act. But there is a difference between the utterance as an act and the utterance as content. As for example, the sentence, 'this day is very hot', can be explained from the two directions. One is from the utterance as an act and the other is from the utterance as content. The former identifies that the utterance is happy or unhappy, felicity or infelicity, fire or misfire. While, the later holds that the utterance as content is true or false.

Truth and falsity are the distinguishing marks of constatives, while happy or unhappy, felicity or infelicity are the distinguishing marks performatives. Austin says-

"Performatives utterances are not indeed false but in general unhappy. And for this reason, we call the doctrine of the things that can be and go wrong on the occasion of such utterances, the doctrine of infelicities."

13.3.3 Necessary Conditions of Performatives

Austin gives some necessary conditions for smooth functioning of performatives. (A-1) There must exist an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect, that procedure to include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances, and further,

(A-2) The particular persons and circumstances in a given case must be appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked.

(B-1) The procedure must be executed by all participants both correctly and

(B-2) Completely.

(T-1) Where, as often, the procedure is designed for use by persons having certain thoughts or feelings, or for the inauguration of certain consequential conduct on the part of any participant, then a person participating in and so invoking the procedure must in fact have those thoughts or feelings, and the participants must intend so to conduct themselves, and further.

(T-2) must actually so to conduct themselves subsequently

Austin holds that making an utterance is a speech activity. Activity comes into light when the utterance made by the speaker is performed. Speech acts denote various activities (stating or warning or promising etc.) Austin's both performative and constative utterances imply speech acts. Therefore, dissolving the distinction between the two propounds the new concept, i.e., speech act theory.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Who is the author of the book- How to do things with words?

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Q 2: What are the different kinds of speech acts?

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Q 3: What is performative utterance? Give an example

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Q 4: What is constative utterance? Give an example

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Q 5: What is meant by grammatical criterion?

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Q 6: What is the difference between utterance as an act and utterance as content?

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Q 7: State the distinguishing marks of constatives and performatives

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13.3.4 Types of Speech acts

Austin formulates three types of speech acts. They are respectively-

i) Locutionay act

ii) Illocutionary act

iii) Perlocutionary act

Locutionary act can be exposed as such whenever we make an utterance, we perform an act, what Austin calls locutionary act. As for instance, 'what is your name?', here we perform an act i.e., locutionary act. Austin says, "Locutionary act includes the utterance of certain words in a certain construction, and the utterance of them with certain meaning."

In saying something (performing a locutionary act) we perform another kind of act. It can be shown through examples as such- If I ask, 'what is your name?' I have performed in this context a locutionary act. But locutionary act can produce different kinds of speech acts (i.e., in making a promise or in issuing an order or in asking question etc.) in the context of utterance of a statement. Austin calls such acts illocutionary act. So, locutionary utterance

is the initial stage to perform illocutionary act. It provides a force to perform illocutionary act. Therefore, illocutionary act is known as illocutionary force. Therefore, he writes- "to state is surely every bit as much to perform an illocutionary act as, say, to warn or to pronounce."

The last act can be explained as such- when we say something we perform a locutionary act and in performing locutionary act we perform another kind of act, i.e., perlocutionary act. It imparts certain effects upon the feeling, thoughts or actions of the audience or of the speaker. Therefore, it is perlocutionary act. For instance, when I say -Do this work, I perform an act i.e., locutionary act (utterance of the statement). And in performing the locutionary act I order someone to perform the intended act (illocutionary). And by this utterance I see that the act is performed (perlocutionary). To sum up, here I have performed locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary act.

Austin's performative and constative utterances and his speech act theory are basically dealt with ordinary language. His locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts are the best device to unveil the defects of ordinary language.

Austin's three types of speech acts namely locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary act imply the different functions of language. Like Wittgenstein's language games or forms of life he wants to show that language is not confined to one function. Here Austin also like Later Wittgenstein seems to corroborate the depth grammar through the illocutionary or perlocutionary force of language. Austin involves the speech act theory in order to bring out the different functions of language. Similarly, Wittgenstein also involves the concept of language games or forms of life in order to point out the multifarious functions embedded in language. Hence, it can be opined that Wittgenstein's speech act theory is same from the standpoint of its aim and objective.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 8: What is locutionary act?

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Q 9: What is illocutionary act?

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Q 10: What is per-locutionary act?

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13.4 LET US SUM UP

- Austin's philosophy of language rests on the concept of speech act. His view is that acts are performed with the help of words or sentences. There are different kinds of acts. Just as acts are performed in playing football or cricket or making ornaments or in building houses etc. so also there are various types of speech acts like stating, swearing, reporting, questioning etc.
- According to Austin, speech act may be constative and performative. He by the performative utterance explicates that it is the utterance of doing an act. It is not true or false, rather it is an act-oriented utterance. While, constative utterance is an utterance of a sentence or statement which is either true or false.
- Austin formulates three types of speech acts. They are respectively- i) Locutionay act, ii) Illocutionary act, iii) Perlocutionary act
- Locutionary act implies that whenever we make an utterance, we perform an act, what Austin calls locutionary act. As for instance, 'what is your name?', here we perform an act i.e., locutionary act.
- Locutionary utterance is the initial stage to perform illocutionary act. It provides a force to perform illocutionary act. Therefore, illocutionary act is known as illocutionary force.

- When we say something, we perform a locutionary act and in performing locutionary act, we perform another kind of act, i.e., perlocutionary act. It imparts certain effects upon the feeling, thoughts or actions of the audience or of the speaker. Therefore, it is perlocutionary act.
- Austin formulates the speech act theory in order to bring out the different functions of language. Similarly, Wittgenstein also involves the concept of language games or forms of life in order to point out the multifarious functions embedded in language.



13.5 FURTHER READINGS

1) Austin, J.L. (1961). How to Do things with Words. Clarendon press. Oxford
2) Ammerman, Robert R (ed.) (1965) Classics of Analytic Philosophy (Tata McGraw- Hill Publishing Company, Bombay- New Delhi
3) Bakhle, S.W. (1987). Nature and Development of Linguistic Philosophy. Dattsons- Nagpur 1)
4) Bhattacharyya, Bhaskar (2014) Analytic Philosophy of Wittgenstein. EBH Publisher (India)



13.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q. No. 1: Austin

Ans to Q. No. 2: Locutionary, Illocutionary, and perlocutionary act

Ans to Q. No. 3: It is the utterance of doing an act. It is not true or false, rather it is an act-oriented utterance. For instance, 'I promise', 'I swear', I apologize'.

Ans to Q. No. 4: It is the utterance of saying. For instance, the dog is on the met.

Ans to Q. No. 5: The utterance is an act means performing or doing an act and the utterance as content means to determine truth or falsity of

the utterance. As for instance, the former identifies that the utterance is happy or unhappy, felicity or infelicity, fire or misfire. While the later holds that the utterance as content is true or false.

Ans to Q. No. 6: Truth and falsity are the distinguishing marks of constatives, while happy or unhappy and felicity or infelicity are the distinguishing marks of performatives.

Ans to Q. No. 7: According to Austin, whenever we make an utterance, we perform an act. Austin calls it locutionary act. For instance, what is your name, is an example of locutionary act.

Ans to Q. No. 8: In the context of utterance of a sentence, we perform different kinds of speech acts contextually. Austin calls it illocutionary act. For instance, the utterance, what is your name? Indicates different contexts of activities, i.e., in making a promise or issuing an order or in asking question etc.

Ans to Q. No. 9: When we say something, we perform a locutionary act and in performing locutionary act, we perform another kind of act, i.e. Perlocutionary act. For instance, when I say, do this work; I perform an act that is locutionary. And in performing the locutionary act, I order someone to perform the intended act (illocutionary act). And by this utterance, I see that the act is performed.



13.7 MODEL QUESTIONS

(A) Very Short Questions:

Q. 1. Write the author's name -How to do things with words.

Q. 2. What is meant by performative utterance?

Q. 3. What is constative utterance?

Q. 4. Give an example of constative utterance.

Q. 5. Give an example of performative utterance.

Q. 6. What is locutionary act?

Q. 7. What is illocutionary act?

Q. 8. What is perlocutionay act?

Q. 9. What are two criterions for distinguishing performative utterance from constative utterance?

B. Short questions (Answer in about 100-150 words)

Q. 1. What is performative utterance? Explain in brief with suitable examples.

Q. 2. What is constative utterance? Explain in brief.

Q. 3. What are the three types of speech acts? Explain in brief with suitable examples.

Q. 4. What is grammatical criterion? Explain in brief.

Q. 5. Write a short note on speech acts.

C. MODEL QUESTIONS (Answer in about 300-500 words)

Q. 1. What are the characteristics of performative utterances? Discuss

Q. 2. How do we distinguish constative from performative utterance? Explain

Q. 2. What are the types of speech acts? Explain with suitable examples.

Q. 3. What are the necessary conditions of performatives? Explain

Q. 4. What are the criterions for distinguishing performative utterance from constative utterance? Discuss.

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UNIT 14: WILLIAM JAMES: PRAGMATIC THEORY OF TRUTH

UNIT STRUCTURE

14.1 Learning Objectives

14.2 Introduction

14.3 Pragmatism: The Background

14.4 Key Themes of Pragmatism

14.5 The Pragmatic Theory of Truth in general

14.6 William James on the Pragmatic Theory of Truth

14.7 Characteristics of William James Pragmatic Theory of Truth

14.8 Contrast of the Pragmatic Theory of Truth with Other Theories of Truth

14.9 Religious and Ethical Implications of Pragmatic theory of Truth

14.10 The Theory of Pragmatism in the Philosophy of Other Thinkers

14.11 Criticism and Response of the Pragmatic Theory of Truth

14.12 Legacy and Influence

14.13 Applications of the Pragmatic theory of truth in Other Disciplines

14.14 Contemporary Relevance of the Pragmatic Theory of Truth

14.15 Let Us Sum Up

14.16 Answers to Check Your Progress

14.17 Further Readings

14.18 Model Questions

14.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to :

- know the background of the theory of Pragmatism
- know the key themes of Pragmatism
- william James Pragmatic theory of truth and its characteristics
- contrast the Pragmatic Theory of Truth with Other Theories of Truth

- know the religious and ethical implications of Pragmatic theory of Truth
- know the criticism against the theory and its responses
- gather knowledge about the legacy and influence of the Pragmatic theory of truth
- know the applications of the Pragmatic theory of truth in Other Disciplines and its contemporary relevance

14.2 INTRODUCTION

William James (1842-1910), a key figure in American philosophy and psychology, is renowned for advancing pragmatism. As a Harvard professor, he contributed significantly to psychology, religion, and epistemology. In *Pragmatism* (1907) and *The Meaning of Truth* (1909), James proposed the pragmatic theory of truth, defining truth as what works practically in life rather than strict correspondence with reality or mere coherence. Influenced by Charles Sanders Peirce, James expanded pragmatism by emphasizing that beliefs are true when they produce useful, successful outcomes. His dynamic, experience-based view of truth remains influential and challenges traditional philosophical approaches.

14.3 PRAGMATISM: THE BACKGROUND

Pragmatism emerged in late 19th-century America as a response to rigid metaphysical systems and abstract European epistemologies. It refocused philosophy on real-world problems, emphasizing process, change, and lived human experience. Rather than asking what an idea is in some absolute sense, pragmatists ask: What difference does it make? What are its practical consequences? The roots of pragmatism trace back to empiricists like Locke, Hume, and Kant, but it became a distinct philosophical tradition through thinkers like Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, and John Dewey.

Charles Sanders Peirce introduced the term "pragmatism" in the 1870s, proposing the pragmatic maxim-that the meaning of an idea lies in

its practical effects. He later renamed his approach "pragmaticism" to set it apart from broader interpretations. William James expanded and popularized pragmatism, applying it to truth, religion, and human psychology. In his view, truth is not fixed but becomes true through practical verification-what works in life and experience. John Dewey further developed pragmatism, particularly in education, democracy, and social reform. Dewey's "instrumentalism" emphasized learning through doing and saw knowledge as a tool for solving problems, not contemplating eternal truths. Pragmatism thus became a dynamic, action-centred philosophy.

14.4 KEY THEMES OF PRAGMATISM

Pragmatism, a philosophical tradition that began in the late 19th century, centers on the idea that thought and knowledge must be rooted in practical experience and action. Founded by thinkers like Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, and John Dewey, pragmatism emphasizes flexibility, experimentation, and the functional value of beliefs in navigating human life. The following are some of its key themes:

1. **Practical Consequences as the Test of Meaning and Truth:** A foundational theme in pragmatism is the belief that the meaning of ideas lies in their practical consequences. Charles Peirce stated that to understand a concept, we must ask what practical difference it would make if it were true. William James extended this to truth itself, arguing that a belief is true if it "works"-that is, if it proves useful and reliable in guiding action and solving problems. Truth is thus not absolute or static, but dynamic and validated through experience.

2. **Fallibilism and Anti-Foundationalism:** Pragmatists hold that no belief is beyond revision. All knowledge is provisional, fallible, and subject to change in light of new evidence or better reasoning. This outlook rejects the idea of certain, indubitable foundations for knowledge (anti-foundationalism), favoring a flexible, adaptive approach to inquiry. For pragmatists, philosophy should not aim to build unchanging systems, but should remain open to correction and growth.

3. **Instrumentalism and the Function of Ideas:** Pragmatists see ideas and theories as tools (or instruments) rather than mirrors of reality. John Dewey, in particular, emphasized this instrumentalist view, arguing that concepts are created to help humans adapt and respond to their environment. Ideas are judged not by their correspondence to an abstract reality but by their effectiveness in resolving specific problems.
4. **Experience and Experimentation:** Experience plays a central role in pragmatism. Knowledge arises from active engagement with the world, not from passive contemplation. Pragmatists view inquiry as an experimental process, akin to scientific investigation. Like scientists, humans test beliefs through action, revise them based on results, and learn from their failures and successes.
5. **Pluralism and Open-Mindedness:** Pragmatism embraces pluralism-the idea that there can be multiple valid perspectives or truths depending on context and purpose. This openness fosters tolerance and democratic dialogue, allowing different viewpoints to be tested and evaluated through lived experience. William James, for instance, defended a pluralistic universe in which individual beliefs and religious experiences could have genuine value.
6. **Human-Centered Approach:** Unlike abstract metaphysical systems, pragmatism is grounded in the needs, struggles, and aspirations of human beings. It considers the human condition-social, ethical, and emotional-as central to philosophical inquiry. This orientation gives pragmatism a practical and often reformist tone, especially in Dewey's work on education, politics, and democracy.

Pragmatism is a forward-looking, dynamic philosophy that values practical success, openness to change, and human experience as the basis of meaning and truth. Its key themes remain highly relevant in contemporary debates across science, ethics, education, and politics. Pragmatism developed as a reaction against speculative metaphysics and aimed to reconnect philosophy with everyday human concerns. By focusing on what ideas do rather than what they are, pragmatism remains one of the most influential and adaptive philosophical traditions in the modern world.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: State whether the following statements are true or false

a. Pragmatism arose as a reaction against abstract, rigid metaphysical systems and sought to refocus philosophy on real-world human problems and experiences. (True/ False)

b. Charles Peirce, a logician and philosopher of science, is credited with first introducing the term "pragmatism" in the 1870s. (True/ False)

c. Experience has no role in pragmatism. (True/False)

Q 2: Briefly explain the definition of Pragmatism (Answer within 30 words)

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Q 3: Explain the key themes of Pragmatism (Answer within 60 words)

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14.5 THE PRAGMATIC THEORY OF TRUTH IN GENERAL

William James's pragmatic theory of truth emphasizes that truth is not a static correspondence between statements and objective reality but is instead determined by practical consequences. According to James, a belief or idea is true if it proves useful, satisfactory, or beneficial in real-life experience. Truth is verified through the outcomes it generates and its utility in guiding successful action. In *The Meaning of Truth* (1909), James states: "The true is the name of whatever proves itself to be good in the way of belief, and good, too, for definite, assignable reasons." This highlights two key points: First, truth is a process of verification-ideas become true as they are confirmed in experience. For example, a scientific theory becomes

true when experiments validate its predictions. Second, truth is what works- it must resolve doubt, guide action effectively, and produce beneficial results. Importantly, James does not equate truth with mere subjective preference; beliefs must have practical applicability and experiential confirmation. His view contrasts with the Correspondence Theory, where truth matches objective reality, and the Coherence Theory, where truth fits within a logical belief system. James combines elements of both but insists that truth is tested through real-world practice, as illustrated by his example of a lost man finding safety through his belief.

14.6 WILLIAM JAMES ON THE PRAGMATIC THEORY OF TRUTH

William James (1842-1910), a pioneering American philosopher and psychologist, is one of William James, one of the most influential figures in the development of pragmatism, redefined the concept of truth by linking it closely to human experience, practical outcomes, and usefulness in daily life. His views are most clearly articulated in *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking* (1907) and *The Meaning of Truth* (1909). In these works, James presented a radically new way of thinking about truth- not as a fixed correspondence between belief and objective reality, but as something that "happens to an idea" when it proves useful, meaningful, and workable in experience. This dynamic, human-cantered approach emphasized truth as a process rather than a static state, laying the foundation for a philosophy grounded in action, experience, and problem-solving.

Pragmatism arose in the United States in the late 19th century as a reaction against the abstract and idealistic philosophies dominant in Europe. Its central aim was to reconnect philosophical inquiry with the real, practical concerns of human life. Charles Sanders Peirce, the founder of pragmatism, introduced the idea that the meaning of any concept lies in its practical effects. William James expanded this idea into a full-fledged theory of truth, making pragmatism accessible to a broader audience.

James was motivated by the limitations he saw in traditional theories of truth. The correspondence theory holds that truth is the agreement between belief and objective reality, while the coherence theory defines truth as consistency within a system of beliefs. James did not completely reject these ideas but found them too rigid and disconnected from lived human experience. He sought a middle path that could capture the evolving, dynamic nature of human thought and knowledge.

The central idea of James's pragmatic theory of truth is that truth is what works in practice. Truth is a property of beliefs or ideas that prove useful, reliable, and effective in guiding action and resolving doubt. As James puts it, "Truth is what works in the way of belief. Truth is the name of whatever proves itself to be good in the way of belief, and good, too, for definite, assignable reasons." (The Meaning of Truth, 1909). In this view, truth is not a fixed correspondence to some external reality but is verified through experience. A belief becomes true as it is tested and confirmed in actual practice.

James emphasized that verification through experience is essential. Truth is not static but dynamic-a process of becoming. He wrote, "The 'true,' to put it briefly, is only the expedient in our way of thinking." Here, "expedient" refers to what works consistently over time, not to mere convenience.

James illustrated his theory with examples. If someone believes that a certain path in the forest leads to safety, and by following it they find safety, that belief is verified and considered true. Similarly, scientific theories are true not because they correspond to an abstract reality but because they predict phenomena and solve problems effectively.

James clarified that truth is not purely subjective or relative. Truth emerges through human inquiry and practical engagement with the world, but it must be consistently verified by experience. It is not invented at will but constructed through interaction with reality.

14.7 CHARACTERISTICS OF WILLIAM JAMES PRAGMATIC THEORY OF TRUTH

To appreciate William James's pragmatic theory of truth, it is essential to understand the broader philosophy of pragmatism. Pragmatism

is not a single doctrine but a method of resolving philosophical problems by focusing on practical consequences. Originally coined by Charles Sanders Peirce and later expanded by James, pragmatism asserts that the meaning and truth of concepts are found in their observable effects and real-world applications. For James, truth is not an abstract reflection of reality but a dynamic process tied to human action and belief. Truth is verified and validated through experience, not discovered as a pre-existing, static fact.

James's pragmatic theory of truth redefines truth in terms of utility, function, and practical outcomes. According to this theory, a belief becomes true when it works effectively in real-life situations, solves problems, and guides action. James famously stated, "Truth happens to an idea. It becomes true, is made true by events." Truth is therefore not a final product but a continuous process of testing and verification through experience. Ideas are true when they prove reliable, useful, and satisfactory over time.

The pragmatic approach highlights that the meaning and truth of beliefs are determined by their practical consequences. If a belief leads to successful results, resolves doubt, or aids in navigating the world, it is pragmatically true. This view is not purely subjective; beliefs must consistently work across various experiences and be verifiable by others. Pragmatism walks a middle path between rigid absolutism and relativism, recognizing that truth depends on human context without being arbitrary.

James's pragmatism also embraces pluralism and flexibility. Different beliefs may work in different situations or for different communities, allowing multiple truths to coexist. This pluralistic outlook promotes tolerance, openness, and adaptability, which are essential in a diverse and changing world.

Another key feature is fallibilism-the belief that all truths are provisional and subject to revision. Truths are never final; they must withstand continuous testing and can be updated or replaced when better solutions arise. This mirrors the scientific method, where knowledge evolves through experimentation and correction.

James extended pragmatism beyond strict logic by integrating emotion, will, and values into the concept of truth. In works like The Will to

Believe, he argued that beliefs also need to satisfy moral and existential needs. For example, religious or ethical beliefs may be considered true if they provide meaning, inspire action, and contribute to moral growth, even if they are not empirically proven.

Pragmatism emphasizes communal verification of truth. Ideas must work not just for individuals but for broader society. Truth emerges through social interaction, dialogue, and shared inquiry. This collaborative process fosters democratic exchange and resists dogmatism.

In conclusion, James's pragmatic theory of truth views truth as a human-centred, evolving process. It emphasizes practical consequences, experiential validation, and social relevance, making it an adaptable philosophy that continues to offer valuable insights in areas such as science, ethics, politics, and education.

14.8 CONTRAST OF THE PRAGMATIC THEORY OF TRUTH WITH OTHER THEORIES OF TRUTH

The pragmatic theory of truth, most famously articulated by William James, offers a distinct alternative to classical theories by grounding truth in human experience, practical consequences, and action. Unlike traditional accounts that define truth in static or abstract terms, pragmatism views truth dynamically-as something that happens to an idea when it proves useful, workable, and verifiable through lived experience. To understand the significance of this approach, it is helpful to contrast it with three major classical theories: the correspondence theory, the coherence theory, and the deflationary (or minimalist) theory.

The correspondence theory of truth is one of the oldest and most widely accepted traditional accounts. It holds that a statement is true if it corresponds to an objective fact or reality. For example, the claim "snow is white" is true if snow in fact is white in the real world. Key features include the idea that truth is objective, mind-independent, and based on a static relationship between language and reality. In contrast, the pragmatic theory sees truth as evolving-a belief becomes true if it works successfully

in practice and proves useful in guiding action. William James acknowledged that correspondence is part of truth but argued that it must be verified through human experiences. For instance, the belief that "the Earth orbits the Sun" is true not only because of physical reality but also because it enables successful scientific predictions and practical advancements.

The coherence theory of truth defines truth as logical consistency within a system of beliefs. A statement is true if it fits harmoniously into an interconnected web of ideas without contradictions. This theory focuses on systematic unity and is often associated with idealist and rationalist philosophies. However, pragmatism agrees that coherence is important but argues it is not sufficient. A belief system may be internally coherent but practically useless or disconnected from reality. Pragmatism requires that beliefs also "work" in real-life situations, solve problems, and guide effective action. For example, a fictional story may be logically consistent, but unless it has practical applications or influences real-world actions, it would not be considered "true" in the pragmatic sense.

The deflationary (or minimalist) theory of truth holds that the concept of truth is not a substantial property. Saying "It is true that snow is white" simply repeats the statement "snow is white." According to this view, truth is a linguistic convenience that adds nothing of substance. Pragmatism, however, insists that truth has real significance because it affects how we live and act. For pragmatists, the meaning of truth lies in its consequences and usefulness. For example, claiming "Democracy promotes equality" is not just about linguistic endorsement; pragmatism asks whether this belief leads to better societies, social justice, or practical outcomes.

Philosophically, the contrasts reveal that pragmatism emphasises usefulness over pure objectivity, dynamic growth over static certainty, and practical application over abstract theorizing. Truth is tested by experience, action, and social verification, not by mere correspondence or consistency. This makes pragmatism flexible, adaptive, and suited for addressing complex real-world problems in science, education, politics, and ethics.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: State whether the following statements are true or false

a. According to William James, truth is verified through its consequences and utility in guiding successful action. (True/False)

b. William James argued that beliefs are not only verified intellectually but also by how they satisfy our psychological and moral needs. (True/False)

c. Coherence alone is not sufficient for truth unless the beliefs also lead to successful experiences and outcomes in the real world. (True/False)

Q 5: Briefly explain the statement "Truth as What Works". (Answer within 30 words)

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Q 6: Briefly compare the Pragmatic theory with the correspondence theory of truth. (Answer within 60 words)

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14.9 RELIGIOUS AND ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF PRAGMATIC THEORY OF TRUTH

The pragmatic theory of truth, as developed by William James, has significant implications for religion and ethics. Pragmatism, rooted in the belief that truth is what "works" in practice and leads to positive outcomes, shifts the focus of truth from abstract absolutes to lived human experiences. This perspective reshapes how we understand religious faith, moral values, and ethical decision-making.

In his essay The *Will to Believe* (1897), James argued that religious beliefs can be considered true if they have positive, transformative effects on human lives, even when they cannot be scientifically verified. For James, religious faith presents a "genuine option"-a decision that is momentous, unavoidable, and not resolvable through purely intellectual reasoning. In such cases, pragmatism allows belief to be grounded in the practical and moral consequences of holding it. If belief in God leads to a more meaningful life, inspires ethical behavior, and provides psychological or spiritual comfort, then it is pragmatically justified. According to James, "If the hypothesis of God works satisfactorily in the widest sense of the word, it is true." This does not imply that truth is purely subjective, but rather that it must be validated through real-life experiences and positive effects.

James extended this pragmatic perspective to ethics. He argued that moral values are not absolute or fixed but emerge from human needs, social interactions, and the consequences of actions. Ethical principles are tested by their capacity to promote well-being, harmony, and progress. Morality, in this sense, is not a set of eternal rules but a flexible, evolving practice aimed at improving human life. For instance, concepts like justice or compassion are meaningful and true if they lead to social cooperation, reduce suffering, and contribute to personal and communal flourishing.

A crucial implication of James's pragmatism is pluralism and tolerance. Since different beliefs may work well for different individuals or communities, there may be multiple "true" ways to live or believe. This does not imply a nihilistic relativism but encourages openness to diverse perspectives, fostering dialogue and mutual respect in a pluralistic world. Pragmatism thus promotes humility and an anti-dogmatic attitude, asking us to judge beliefs not by metaphysical proofs but by their practical consequences.

Beyond James, other thinkers expanded pragmatism. Charles Sanders Peirce, the originator of pragmatism, focused on the "pragmatic maxim"-the idea that concepts gain meaning through their practical effects. Peirce viewed truth as the ideal end of communal inquiry over time. John Dewey extended pragmatism into education, ethics, and politics, promoting

instrumentalism, where ideas are tools for problem-solving and growth. George Herbert Mead applied pragmatism to social psychology, arguing that the self emerges through social interaction. Richard Rorty developed neo-pragmatism, rejecting foundationalist philosophy and emphasizing language, contingency, and solidarity. Hilary Putnam integrated pragmatism with analytic philosophy, advocating for "internal realism" and moral pluralism. Cornel West developed "prophetic pragmatism," linking philosophy to social justice and cultural criticism. Jürgen Habermas, though not a pragmatist, shares with pragmatism the idea that truth emerges from social communication and cooperative inquiry.

Together, these thinkers show how pragmatism remains relevant across fields, addressing ethics, religion, politics, and society in a dynamic, human-centred way.

Pragmatism, far from being a narrowly American or early 20th-century movement, has deeply influenced and been reinterpreted by numerous philosophers across time and continents. From Peirce's logic to James's pluralism, Dewey's educational reform, Rorty's linguistic turn, and West's social critique, pragmatism has shown itself to be a flexible, evolving, and socially responsive philosophy.

Its core idea, that truth is not static but emerges through experience, action, and communal inquiry-continues to inspire thinkers grappling with real-world challenges in philosophy, ethics, politics, and beyond. In the hands of these thinkers, pragmatism remains not only a philosophical method but a living, transformative approach to truth, knowledge, and human progress.

14.10 CRITICISM AND RESPONSE OF THE PRAGMATIC THEORY OF TRUTH

The pragmatic theory of truth, as developed by William James, redefines truth not as static correspondence with objective reality but as a quality of beliefs that "work" in guiding life. According to this view, a belief is true if it proves useful, satisfactory, and effective in solving problems and navigating experience. However, this theory has faced substantial criticism

from classical and contemporary philosophers. Critics argue that pragmatism confuses truth with utility, risks subjectivism, undermines scientific objectivity, and lacks clear criteria for what "works." James responded to these challenges with nuanced defences.

One major criticism is the confusion between truth and utility. Critics claim that just because a belief is comforting or practically useful does not make it factually correct. For example, believing in a lucky charm may make someone feel better but does not make the charm effective in reality. James responded by emphasizing long-term consequences and experiential consistency. For him, truth is not about temporary usefulness but about beliefs that withstand the test of time, integrate with broader knowledge, and are repeatedly verified through practical engagement.

Another objection is that pragmatism leads to subjectivism or relativism, making truth seem personal and variable. James acknowledged that pragmatism introduces a human-centred aspect to truth but insisted it does not reduce truth to private preference. Pragmatic truth requires public verification and inter-subjective agreement. Beliefs must work consistently, not just for an individual but across a community and over time, ensuring that truth remains tethered to shared human experiences rather than personal whims.

Some critics argue that pragmatism undermines scientific objectivity, claiming that science aims for truth about reality, not just what "works." James and other pragmatists did not reject scientific truth but reframed it as a practical enterprise. For James, scientific theories are tools for predicting phenomena and solving real-world problems. Their truth is demonstrated by their practical success, predictive power, and coherent integration with another verified knowledge. Pragmatism thus aligns with the scientific method, where inquiry, experimentation, and revision define the pursuit of truth.

Critics also accuse pragmatism of circular reasoning, claiming that saying a belief is true because it works and works because it is true adds no real explanatory value. James responded that this is a misunderstanding.

Pragmatism does not assume prior truth but treats truth as the outcome of successful engagement with the world. Truth emerges from beliefs that continue to function reliably and harmoniously with experience.

Another objection is that pragmatism ignores metaphysical reality by focusing solely on human constructs of truth. James did not deny external reality but argued that all knowledge is mediated through human experience. Even in areas like mathematics or ethics, truths are meaningful because of their practical indispensability and consistent application.

Finally, critics say pragmatism lacks clear criteria for what counts as "what works." James addressed this by insisting on public, practical, and long-term testing, ensuring that useful beliefs are not arbitrary but verified by consistent results across varied situations.

The religious and ethical implications of James's pragmatism are profound. In The Will to Believe, he argued that religious faith can be justified if it leads to meaningful and transformative life experiences. Similarly, in ethics, pragmatic truth is about beliefs and values that promote human flourishing, not abstract absolutes.

In summary, William James's pragmatic theory of truth offers a flexible, dynamic, and human-centred framework. It ties truth to lived experience, communal inquiry, and practical success, providing a guide for living ethically and meaningfully in a changing world.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 7: Explain in short, the relation between Pragmatism and Religion.

Q 8: State whether the following statements are true or false

a) William James argued that religious beliefs can be true if they positively shape human lives, even if they are not verifiable in the scientific sense. (True/False)

b) For John Dewey, ideas are tools for problem-solving, and truth is a function of the successful resolution of real-life problems. (True/False)

c) William James pragmatism is more pluralistic and human-centered, emphasizing the subjective and emotional dimensions of belief. (True/False)

d) According to the Pragmatic theory of truth, truth is not a cause but a result of successful practical engagement with the world. (True/ False)

e) The religious and ethical implications of William James's pragmatic theory of truth offers a flexible, human-centered framework for evaluating belief and morality-not on abstract or absolute grounds, but on the basis of real-life consequences. (True/ False)

Q 9: Briefly summarise the Criticism and Response of the Pragmatic Theory of Truth.

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14.11 LEGACY AND INFLUENCE

William James's pragmatic theory of truth has had a profound and lasting influence on philosophy and various other fields. Unlike classical theories that define truth as a static correspondence with reality, James redefined truth as what "works" in human experience-what is useful, verifiable, and adaptable across time. For James, truth is not merely about accuracy but about practical consequences: beliefs are true if they help solve problems, guide meaningful action, and survive the test of experience. This flexible and human-cantered approach has shaped American philosophy, education, psychology, ethics, and religious thought.

John Dewey, influenced by James, expanded pragmatism into education, politics, and social reform. Dewey applied the pragmatic method to democratic participation and social progress, arguing that truth and knowledge emerge through inquiry, experimentation, and cooperation. His "instrumentalism" treated ideas as tools, validated by their ability to resolve

real-life challenges. This pragmatic influence led to progressive education reforms, emphasizing experiential learning and critical thinking over rote memorization.

Richard Rorty further advanced pragmatism by applying it to postmodern philosophy. For Rorty, truth is not about mirroring an objective reality but about solidarity and social coherence. He argued that beliefs gain significance through cultural practices and communal conversations rather than through isolated logical proof. This interpretation shifted the focus of truth from static facts to evolving social dialogues.

Pragmatism's influence also extended beyond philosophy. In **law**, the legal realism movement applied pragmatic ideas to argue that laws should be interpreted based on their social consequences, not as rigid codes. In **ethics**, pragmatism supports a flexible, consequence-driven approach to morality, where ethical truths are judged by their ability to promote human well-being and social harmony. In **religion**, James's The Will to Believe justified faith as a legitimate human response, grounded in personal transformation and life improvement, rather than metaphysical proof.

Contemporary relevance of pragmatism is evident across disciplines. In today's world of rapid technological change, cultural diversity, and global crises, the pragmatic theory offers a dynamic approach to truth. It promotes **adaptability**, encouraging inquiry, revision, and continuous learning in fields like environmental science, medicine, and artificial intelligence. Scientific theories are valued for their predictive success and problem-solving capabilities, aligning with the pragmatic view that truth evolves through practical application and ongoing verification.

Pragmatism also fosters **pluralism and tolerance**. In a multicultural society, it allows multiple perspectives to coexist and be tested based on their real-world outcomes rather than rigid adherence to absolute truths. This is essential for democratic dialogue, intercultural communication, and interfaith discussions.

Moreover, pragmatism **resists both dogmatism and relativism**. While it acknowledges that truth is contextual and human-centred, it

demands public and communal validation over time. Truth is not whatever an individual believes, but what proves reliable, useful, and consistent in shared experience.

In conclusion, William James's pragmatic theory of truth remains profoundly relevant. It has transformed the concept of truth from a static reflection of reality into a practical, evolving guide for human life-encouraging inquiry, social cooperation, and ethical progress across multiple domains of modern society.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 10: State whether the following statements are true or false

a) Pragmatism strikes a balance between absolutism and relativism. (True/False)

b) William James's pragmatic theory of truth redefines truth as that which proves itself in the "marketplace" of human experience. (True/ False)

c) Pragmatism never emphasizes that truth is not eternal and unchanging, but something that evolves through practical consequences, social inquiry, and verification over time. (True/False)



ACTIVITY 14.1

- Briefly explain the Contemporary Relevance of the Pragmatic Theory of Truth

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14.12 LET US SUM UP

- William James (1842-1910) was a prominent American philosopher and psychologist, widely recognized as one of the founding figures of the pragmatist movement in philosophy.
- James's most influential philosophical work lies in his formulation of the pragmatic theory of truth, which he presented in Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking (1907) and The Meaning of Truth (1909).
- Pragmatism emphasizes process, change, and they lived experiences of individuals in a pluralistic world.
- Charles Sanders Peirce, the Originator, a logician and philosopher of science, is credited with first introducing the term "pragmatism" in the 1870s.
- Pragmatism is a distinctly American philosophical tradition that emerged in the late 19th century as a response to the abstract metaphysics and rigid epistemologies of European philosophy. It emphasizes practical consequences, experience, and action as the key components in understanding concepts such as meaning, truth, and knowledge.
- The intellectual roots of pragmatism can be traced back to earlier empiricist thinkers like John Locke, David Hume, and especially to the influence of Immanuel Kant, but it crystallized as a formal philosophical approach in the United States. Its founding figures include Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, and later John Dewey.
- A foundational theme in pragmatism is the belief that the meaning of ideas lies in their practical consequences.
- Pragmatism is a forward-looking, dynamic philosophy that values practical success, openness to change, and human experience as the basis of meaning and truth. Its key themes remain highly relevant in contemporary debates across science, ethics, education, and politics.
- The central idea of James's pragmatic theory of truth is that truth is

what works in practice. He defines truth as a property of beliefs or ideas that prove useful, reliable, and effective in guiding action and resolving doubt.

- The pragmatic theory accepts fallibilism-the idea that all truths are provisional and subject to revision in light of new evidence or better reasoning. No belief is immune to re-evaluation, and all knowledge is open to correction.
- James also applied his pragmatic theory of truth to religion and ethics, particularly in his lecture "The Will to Believe." He argued that religious beliefs can be true if they positively shape human lives, even if they are not verifiable in the scientific sense.
- One of the most common criticisms of the pragmatic theory is that it seems to confuse truth with usefulness. Just because a belief is helpful, comforting, or practically effective does not necessarily mean it is true.
- Another objection is that pragmatism ignores or denies metaphysical reality, treating truth merely as a human construct rather than something that corresponds to an independent world. This raises concerns about whether pragmatism can account for truth in areas like mathematics, metaphysics, or moral absolutes.
- Later thinkers, such as John Dewey and Richard Rorty, expanded and revised James's ideas. Dewey applied pragmatism to social and political problems, while Rorty interpreted truth as a function of solidarity rather than objectivity.
- The legacy of William James's pragmatic theory of truth is both deep and wide-ranging. It challenged traditional epistemology by grounding truth in human experience, practical consequences, and verification through action.
- The pragmatic theory of truth, primarily developed by William James, remains highly relevant in today's complex and dynamic world.
- The pragmatic theory of truth remains highly relevant because it speaks directly to the practical needs, uncertainties, and pluralisms of contemporary life.



14.13 FURTHER READINGS

1) James, William. Pragmatism: *A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking*. 1907.
2) James, William. *The Meaning of Truth*. 1909.
3) Russell, Bertrand. *A History of Western Philosophy*. 1945.
4) Dewey, John. *The Quest for Certainty*. 1929.
5) Rorty, Richard. *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. 1979.



14.14 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q. No. 1: (a) True (b) True (c) False

Ans to Q. No. 2: Pragmatism is a philosophical approach that evaluates ideas and beliefs based on their practical consequences, usefulness, and real-world effects, emphasizing experience, action, and change over abstract principles.

Ans to Q. No. 3: Pragmatism views ideas as tools judged by practical outcomes, not abstract truths. It values experience, fallibility, experimentation, pluralism, and human needs, promoting flexible, action-based inquiry over rigid systems.

Ans to Q. No. 4: (a) True (b) True (c) True

Ans to Q. No. 5: According to James, a belief is true if it proves useful in practice and resolves doubt through experience. Unlike correspondence or coherence theories, pragmatism defines truth by its real-world, successful outcomes.

Ans to Q. No. 6: The correspondence theory holds that truth is a static, objective match between statements and external reality. In contrast, pragmatism sees truth as dynamic, verified through experience and practical success over time.

Ans to Q. No. 7: One of James's most influential contributions is his essay The Will to Believe (1897), where he defends the right to hold religious beliefs even in the absence of conclusive evidence. According to James, religious questions often present themselves as "genuine options"-they are momentous, unavoidable, and not decidable on purely intellectual grounds. In such cases, pragmatism allows belief to be based on the practical and moral effects of holding the belief rather than on empirical proof alone.

James argues that belief in God or religious faith can be considered true if it leads to positive, transformative experiences-if it helps the believer live more meaningfully, behave more ethically, and feel more connected to a larger reality. In his view, truth is "made" as beliefs prove their value in life, not discovered as a pre-existing fact. "If the hypothesis of God works satisfactorily in the widest sense of the word, it is true." (The Will to Believe, 1897)

This does not mean truth is arbitrary or purely subjective. Rather, James emphasizes experiential verification: religious beliefs must show themselves to be fruitful, consistent, and helpful in dealing with life's challenges. If they produce real effects-such as inner peace, moral strength, or communal solidarity-then they fulfill the pragmatic test of truth.

Ans to Q. No. 8: (a) True (b) True (c) True (d) True (e) True

Ans to Q. No. 9: William James's pragmatic theory of truth has faced several criticisms, notably that it confuses truth with usefulness. Critics argue that a belief may be helpful yet false. James responded that pragmatic truth is not about momentary utility but long-term, verifiable success across experiences and contexts.

Others charge pragmatism with subjectivism or relativism, but James insisted that truths must be publicly tested and work across communities, not just for individuals. He also countered concerns about undermining scientific objectivity, arguing that science itself operates pragmatically-through hypotheses, experiments, and practical outcomes.

The accusation of circular reasoning-that beliefs are true because they work and vice versa-is rebutted by emphasizing that truth emerges from consistent practical success, not as a precondition. Critics also say pragmatism ignores metaphysical reality. However, James held that truth arises through human interaction with the world, without denying an external reality.

The last concern about the vague notion of "what works" are met by emphasizing structured, long-term verification through shared inquiry. For James, truth is dynamic and fallible, yet rigorous, evolving through continual testing and refinement. Pragmatism, then, offers a practical, experience-based alternative to static theories, grounded in human engagement with the world.

Ans to Q. No. 10: (a) True (b) True (c) True (d) True



14.15 MODEL QUESTIONS

(A) Very Short Questions:

Q. 1. Mention any one characteristic of Pragmatism.

Q. 2. In which books did William James formulated his Pragmatic theory of truth?

Q. 3. Who had originally coined the term "Pragmatism"?

Q. 4. Mention any two key themes of Pragmatism.

Q. 5. What are the two key components of James theory?

Q. 6. What do you mean by "truth as what works"?

Q. 7. Who is the author of the book "The Will to believe" and when?

Q. 8. Name two philosophers associated with the theory of Pragmatism other than William James.

Q. 9. Who were the foundational figures of classical pragmatism?

(B) Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q. 1. Explain briefly the concept of Pragmatism.

Q. 2. Give a brief explanation about William James Pragmatic theory of truth.

Q. 3. Briefly discuss upon the idea of practical consequences as the test of meaning and truth.

Q. 4. Explain briefly the idea that truth as a human construct.

Q. 5. Discuss briefly any two criticisms and its responses of the Pragmatic theory of truth.

Q. 6. Briefly contrast and compare the Pragmatic theory of truth with the Correspondence theory of truth.

(c) Short Notes on (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q. 1. Key Themes of Pragmatism

Q. 2. Characteristics of William James Pragmatic Theory of Truth

(D) Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q. 1. Explain the background of Pragmatism in your own words.

Q. 2. What is Pragmatism in general? Discuss.

Q. 3. Describe the Pragmatic theory of truth in William James in detail.

Q. 4. Explain in detail about the contrast of the Pragmatic theory of truth with other theories of truth.

Q. 5. What are the religious and ethical implications of Pragmatic theory of truth? Explain.

Q. 6. What is the form of Pragmatism in the philosophy of other thinkers? Discuss.

Q. 7. Explain and examine the criticism and responses of the Pragmatic theory of truth.

Q. 8. Discuss about the legacy and influence of the Pragmatic theory of truth in contemporary western philosophy.

Q. 9. What are the applications of the Pragmatic theory of truth in other disciplines? Explain.

Q. 10. Discuss in detail about the characteristics of William James Pragmatic theory of truth

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UNIT 15: STRAWSON'S CONCEPT OF PERSON

UNIT STRUCTURE

15.1 Learning Objectives

15.2 Introduction

15.3 What is the Concept of Person?

15.4 Strawson on No-ownership theory

15.5 Strawson on Cartesianism

15.6 Strawson's distinction between P- and M -Predicates

15.6.1 Strawson's view on P-predicates

15.6.2 Bernard William's view on Strawson's concept of p-predicates

15.7 Let Us Sum Up

15.8 Further Readings

15. 9 Answers to Check Your Progress

15.10 Model Questions

15.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to :

- explain Strawson's Concept of person
- learn the Cartesian Concept of person
- describe the No-ownership theory
- discuss the incoherence of the No-ownership theory
- explain the concept of P-Predicates
- distinguish between P- and M- predicates

15.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit introduces to you Strawson's concept of person. Strawson's Concept of person is found in the third Chapter of his celebrated work Individuals which is subtitled Essays in Descriptive Metaphysics. As suggested by the subtitle, Strawson is here engaged in describing the

actual structure of our thought about the world and not in presenting a better structure as done by revisionary metaphysics. The basic concepts included in this unit are:

- What is person, according to Strawson?
- Strawson's analysis of Cartesian dualism
- Strawson's distinction between P and M Predicates
- Bernard William's view on Strawson's concept of P- predicates

15.3 WHAT IS THE CONCEPT OF PERSON?

In ordinary usage the word 'person' is taken to be synonymous with the word man. But in Strawson's terminology the word person is used in a special sense although it is not different from the ordinary sense.

Strawson begins his essay by distinguishing persons from non-persons. He uses the expressions 'ourselves and states of ourselves' to represent persons and their states and 'what is not ourselves or states of ourselves' to represent non-persons and their states. While speaking of ourselves ordinarily we ascribe to ourselves many things, such as actions and intentions (I am doing this, I want to do this), sensations (I am in pain), thoughts and feelings (I think, I am angry), perceptions and memories (I see this, remember this), and many other things. Again, we also speak of ourselves not only in terms of such temporary conditions of sensations, perceptions and feelings, but also in terms of relatively permanent characteristics such as height, weight, colouring, shape, size etc. (I am five foot tall, weigh fifty kilo, of fair complexion).

Strawson points out that these two ways of speaking about ourselves are different. While it is obvious that the second way of speaking in terms of height, weight, colouring, shape and size are also the way in which we speak of material bodies (the pillar is five foot tall, weighs fifty kilo, of brown colour), the former way of speaking in terms of actions and intentions, sensations, thoughts and feelings etc. is not applicable to material bodies. These states of consciousness are peculiar to ourselves alone. What Strawson goes to emphasize at this point is that while speaking of ourselves

as five foot tall and as being happy or angry, we ascribe both - physical characteristics and states of consciousness - to the very same thing. That is, I admit of both, physical states and states of consciousness, at the same time in the same sense. In other words, it may be said that Strawson does not recognize the dichotomy between mind and body insofar as a person, the same person, can be spoken of in either of the ways - in terms of his thoughts and feelings, or in terms of his height and weight.

At this point Strawson goes to consider two possible reactions to his thesis that both physical characteristics and states of consciousness are ascribed at the same time to one and the same thing, viz. persons. These reactions are to the effect that it is a linguistic illusion that we ascribe both these states to one and the same thing.

The *first reaction* Strawson considers is from the camp of the Cartesians, that is, from the followers of Descartes. According to them, what we call a person is actually a combination of two distinct substances belonging to two different types, each of which has its own characteristic states and properties. None of the states or properties belonging to one substance can ever be possessed by the other. Hence, the Cartesians challenge the claim of Strawson that both states of consciousness and physical characteristics are ascribed to one and the same thing. Rather, they opine that states of consciousness are ascribed to one substance while the physical states are ascribed to the other.

15.4 STRAWSON'S VIEW ON NO-OWNERSHIP THEORY

The *second reaction*, Strawson thinks, comes from Wittgenstein and Schlick. It maintains a view that our states of consciousness are not ascribed to anything. This view is called by Strawson 'no-ownership' or 'no-subject' doctrine of the self. In order to illustrate this 'no-ownership' doctrine Strawson takes the help of an example given by Wittgenstein of the two uses of 'I' in the two sentences 'I have a toothache' and 'I have a bad tooth'. These two sentences, although grammatically similar, are completely different in nature.

The sentence 'I have a bad tooth' says that there is a bad tooth in my mouth. This bad tooth is in my possession in the same sense that a match box is in my possession when I say 'I have a match box'. This 'I' as appeared in this sentence is logically equivalent with 'Skinner' (a different person) because there is nothing peculiar about my having the match box than Skinner's having the match box. Both I and Skinner are of the same status. One important point is to be taken note of is that when we put 'I' and 'Skinner' on a same level, then we put emphasis on the physical aspects alone. That is in this sentence both I and Skinner are understood only as physical bodies. This use of the word 'I' is the possessor sense. But this possessor sense of 'I' is different from the non-possessor sense as represented by the sentence 'I have a toothache'. A toothache is an experience, a state of consciousness which, according to Wittgenstein, cannot be possessed by anyone. Hence, there is no place for an ego to own the experience.

Strawson here distinguishes, within the Wittgensteinian scheme, between two senses of the verb 'to have': *having1 and having 2*. The first kind 'having' is characterized by the logical transferability of ownership as in the case of a match box or a car. But experiences (e.g. a toothache) are not owned in this sense as its ownership cannot be so transferred. This kind of having is *'having 2*' and cannot be called a having at all. So, experiences are not owned by anything except in the dubious sense of being causally dependent upon the state of a particular body. But in the Cartesian scheme an Ego is feigned in order to provide an owner, in a logically non-transferable sense, to experiences. But the No Ownership theorist maintains that since a non-transferable ownership is not possible, there is no need to imagine an Ego for the purpose, and Ego should be eliminated from the picture altogether. Belief in Ego is because of confusion.

Strawson, however, does not think that the theory is coherent. In his analysis, the theory believes only in that kind of 'having' where the ownership is logically transferable so that a statement that 'I have X (a match box)' becomes a contingent statement, because the 'X' which I have now could be had by someone else also. Now that they also believe that experiences can be had by someone in the sense that they are causally dependent on

the state of a particular body, the owning of these experiences must be in the transferable sense. This implies that the statement that 'I have a toothache' is also a contingent statement. The statement takes the form in the hands of the theorist like "All my toothaches are had by (uniquely dependent upon the states of) body B". What Strawson points out here is that the theorist cannot drop the possessive word 'my' without contradicting his own position. For one thing, the word 'my' cannot be simply dropped, in which case the sentence would be "All toothaches are causally dependent upon the states of body B" because it is an obviously false statement. If on the other hand, he goes to replace the word 'my' with the expression 'person P's' then also he cannot get rid of a possessive word. But if he goes to reduce the word to 'body B's' then the sentence would be 'All body B's toothaches are causally dependent upon the states of body B'. Obviously, the sentence then becomes a tautology or a necessary truth. But the theorist maintains that all sentences asserting possession are contingent sentences, because he does not believe in any kind of possession where ownership is not transferable. Thus, the theorist has to find himself in a dilemma: he cannot either drop the possessive word 'my' or if he drops it then he cannot maintain his own position that ownership is always transferable, and that since the experiences are said to be owned by the ego in a non-transferable sense, they are not owned by anything. This inability to drop the word 'my' or any other possessive word like yours, his, theirs or that person's, while referring to experiences is because of the fact that experiences, e.g., a toothache, a headache, pleasure or pain, are particulars of a sort such that they cannot be understood without reference to a person. "States, or experiences, one might say, owe their identity as particulars to the identity of the person whose states or experiences they are" (Strawson Individuals, P.97).

Pointing to this internal incoherence of the No ownership theory Strawson goes to establish that the states of consciousness and experiences are necessarily possessed by a particular person in the logically non-transferable way. For it is not possible that a particular state or an experience that actually belongs to one should have been possessed by someone else.

At this point, Strawson also goes to state that a particular state of consciousness or an experience has got two aspects of ascribability: one with respect to oneself, and the other with respect to others. That is, the experience of toothache can be ascribed to myself, as in the sentence "I have a toothache" and to another as in the sentence "Mr. X has a toothache". The important point here is that in both the ascriptions the state refers to the same state; 'toothache' has the same meaning in both the cases. The dictionary does not have two sets of meanings - one for first person use and another for second- and third-person use of a particular state.

We can observe here that with this thesis of two-way ascribability of states and experiences Strawson tries to avoid the problems given rise to by the theses of no-ownership theory and the Cartesianism. Also, it is supposed to have solved the problem of other minds.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: State whether the following statements are True or False.

a) Strawson's concept of person is found in his book 'Individuals'. (True/False)

b) Strawson emphasizes that we ascribe both-physical characteristics and states of consciousness to the very same thing. (True/False)

c) According to the Cartesians, a person is not a combination of two distinct substances. (True/False)

d) According to the second reaction, our states of consciousness are not ascribed to anything. (True/False)

e) Strawson says that the No-ownership theory is coherent. (True/False)

Q 2: What do you mean by the concept of person, according to Strawson? (Answer in about 50 words)

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Q 3: What is meant by Cartesian concept of person? (Answer in about 50 words)

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Q 4: What is 'No-ownership theory'? (Answer in about 50 words)

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ACTIVITY: 15.1

Do you find any difficulties of 'No-ownership theory' advanced by Strawson? Discuss

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15.5 STRAWSON ON CARTESIANISM

Descartes advocated of two substances - mind (ego) and body. Each of the two is diametrically opposed in character to the other; mind is non-physical and body is physical. Hence for him, mind cannot possess any of the physical characteristics such as length, breadth, height, weight etc. Similarly, body also cannot have any of the states of consciousness such as thought, feeling, willing etc. Therefore, it is not possible, according to him, to ascribe both types of characteristics to one and the same thing. In other words, all states of consciousness and experiences are ascribed to the ego. This ego is the owner of our experiences.

But Strawson points out a serious difficulty with the Cartesian thesis of an ego owning our experiences. The difficulty lies in the fact that in order to ascribe a state or an experience to something, that 'something' should be identifiable and individualizable. But the problem is that in the absence of any physical characteristics an ego remains unidentifiable and unindividualizable; that is, we cannot point to anything and say that it is an

ego, because anything without shape, size, colour or other physical attributes cannot be pointed at as 'it'. 'It' means a thing that is distinguished from other things, and the basis of this distinction is physical characteristics such as colour, shape and the like. It is distinguished means it is individuated and identified. But ego cannot be so identified in absence of the physical attributes. Hence, the question of ascribing states and experiences to it does not arise.

Strawson here considers a defence of Cartesianism: the ego or the subject of consciousness can be thought to be identified indirectly with reference to the particular body to which the subject stands in a special relation. But such a solution is of no use, because in that case there would be no point in ascribing experiences to an ego rather than to the body. Moreover, there is the logical possibility that there may be more than one subject attached to one and the same body. "The uniqueness of the body does not guarantee uniqueness of the Cartesian soul" (Individuals, P. 101).

What Strawson thinks is the way to come out of this difficulty is to acknowledge the primitiveness of the concept of person. "What I mean by the concept of a person is the concept of a type of entity such that both predicates ascribing states of consciousness and predicates ascribing corporeal characteristics, a physical situation &c. are equally applicable to a single individual of that single type" (Individuals, pp.101-102).

What Strawson means by calling the concept of person a primitive concept can be explained in his own words in the following way: "We are tempted to think of a person as a sort of compound of two kinds of subjects: a subject of experiences (a pure consciousness, an ego) on the one hand, and a subject of corporeal attributes on the other." But Strawson points out a lot of difficulties in maintaining this duality. After considering all these difficulties he, therefore, concludes that the concept of person is logically prior to that of an individual consciousness. "The concept of a person is not to be analysed as that of an animated body or of an embodied anima" (p. 103). However, he does not rule out the possibility of an ego existing as a secondary entity. "A person is not an embodied ego, but an ego might be a disembodied person, retaining the logical benefit of individuality from having been a person" (p. 103).

15.6 STRAWSON'S DISTINCTION BETWEEN P AND M PREDICATES

Strawson makes it a point to be noted that one can ascribe states of consciousness to oneself only when one ascribes or is prepared to ascribe them to others. These 'others', including oneself, are of a type of entity that can be individuated, that is, they must admit of both the states of consciousness and the corporeal characteristics at the same time. Here Strawson makes a distinction between two kinds of predicates that are applied to persons. The first kind of predicates are those that are also applied to material bodies to which states of consciousness are never applied. He calls this first kind **M-predicates** which include predicates like "weighs 10 stone", "is in the drawing room" etc. The second kind of predicates consists of "all other predicates we apply to persons" like "is smiling", "is going for a walk" as well as "is in pain", "is thinking hard" etc.

Strawson insists that both these two types of predicates are ascribed to one and the same thing, viz. persons. The concept of a person is a primitive concept in the sense that it is not analysable into a particular consciousness (mind) and a body, because a person is not a combination of a mind and a body. He also says that there is no 'type ambiguity' between 'I' and 'Smith'; that means, 'I' and 'Smith' are not individuals of two different types. Type ambiguities are found only in case of predicates like 'is in the drawing room', and 'is hit by a stone'; because they have completely different meanings when applied to a person and when applied to a material body.

15.6.1 Strawson on P- Predicates

Of the two kinds of predicates, P and M, the latter is not at all problematic - they are but predicate ascribing material properties. But what Strawson means by 'P-predicates' requires special care to be understood. This is because under the heading P-predicate, he includes all those which "we would not dream of applying to material bodies." In other words, P-predicates are ascribed to persons only. All P-predicates are however, not consciousness predicates like 'is

intelligent' or 'is in a pensive mood', but still "they imply the possession of consciousness on the part of that to which they are ascribed" (p.105). Thus, 'is going for a walk' is not a consciousness predicate since it has nothing directly to do with consciousness, but still it is a P-predicate because it is exclusively applied to a person and not to anything else.

A P-predicate is ascribed to others on the strength of observation of their behaviour. But this behaviour on the part of others is not just a sign from which the presence of a state of consciousness is to be inferred. Rather, Strawson emphatically states that behaviour is the logically adequate criteria for ascribing P-predicates to others. The argument from analogy of one's own case for applying states of consciousness to another does not arise at all, because Strawson maintains that a state of consciousness can be ascribed to something only when that 'something' can be identified; and this identifiability depends upon its having a physical body. So the sceptical doubt about the presence of a state of consciousness in another does not arise. One's behaviour logically justifies ascription of a state of consciousness to one. But one does not rely upon this behaviour criterion to apply some of the P-predicates to oneself, as for example, 'am angry', 'am sad', 'am happy' etc. But in case of some other class of P-predicates that concerns assessment of character ('am honest') or capability ('can lift 50 Kg weight'), one has to rely on the same behaviour criteria even in order to apply them to oneself. Strawson here considers a possible difficulty - the difficulty of resolving the question: which of the ascriptions of P-predicates- first person ascription or third person ascription- is primary? There seems to be two contrary approaches. Suppose we write Px as the general form of expression for ascription of P-predicates. Now, according to one version, x is to be replaced by 'I' in the primary sense, and its replacing with any other second or third person pronoun or noun is secondary and derivative. On the other hand, according to the other version, x is to be replaced by 'he', 'that person' and other third person pronoun or noun in the primary sense. In that case the use of 'I' in

place of x would be secondary and not proper. But, Strawson maintains, "it is essential to the character of these predicates that they have both first- and third-person ascriptive uses, that they are both self ascribable….and other-ascribable…" (p.108). To learn their use is to learn both aspects of their use. That is; to ascribe these P-predicates to oneself one has to know how to ascribe them to others. One also has to admit that others can also ascribe them to themselves as well as to those who are different from themselves. And in both the ascriptions it means the same thing. Strawson here gives the example of the mental state of depression. When Mr. X says, "I am depressed" it is a feeling on X's part, but it is a particular set of X's observable behaviour for others. But it is the same thing in both the cases. "X's depression is something, one and the same thing, which is felt, but not observed, by X, and observed, but not felt, by others than X" (109). This line of thinking can rid us of the dichotomy between philosophical scepticism and philosophical behaviourism.

Throughout the essay (Essays in Descriptive Metaphysics) Strawson takes great care to establish that the states of consciousness are ascribed to one and the same thing, to which also are ascribed physical situations etc. And that these ascriptions of consciousness predicates have two aspects - self ascriptive and other ascriptive. Both being the aspects of the same status, neither is primary to the other. He further maintains that this line of thinking is possible only when the primitiveness of the concept of person is acknowledged.



LET US KNOW

Skepticism: It is the denial that knowledge or even rational belief is possible either about some specific subject matter or in any area.

Behaviourism: It holds that mental states are logical constructions out of dispositions to behaviour. In other words, it describes the mental aspects of a person, so it is a shorthand for describing the various dispositions to behavior that the person possesses.

15.6.2 Bernard Williams View on Strawson's Concept of P-Predicates

Bernard Williams in his book *Problems of the Self* (Ch. 7) points out certain difficulties in the concept of P-predicates as stated by Strawson. Certain P-predicates have nothing peculiarly to do with consciousness; as for example, in case of 'is playing ball', 'is coiling a rope' or 'is in drawing room'. "For once we see that many P-predicates are highly corporeal, we may begin to wonder which corporeal predicates really are M-predicates" (B. William: Problem of the Self, p.123). These predicates are mostly dominated by physical movements on the part of the person concerned. Hence they are not characteristically different from M-predicates. Again, the predicate is *running down hill* can be meaningfully applied to a person, a dog, and also to a stream. Now, in the Strawsonian scheme it would be a P-predicate in case of person while it would be an M-predicate in the other two cases.

It may be mentioned here that when applied to a stream, 'is running down hill' is a figurative use of the predicate borrowed from its original and appropriate use in case of a person. However, it may be said to be a lapse in Strawson not to speak anything about lower animals. A dog runs in the same sense in which a man runs. But whether we can call a predicate applied to a lower animal a P-predicate, Strawson is silent on this point.

Again, although Strawson is against any analysis of the concept of person into a body and an ego, he still maintains that ego can have a logically secondary type of existence. "A person is not an embodied ego, but an ego might be a disembodied person, retaining the logical benefit of individuality from having been a person" (*Individuals*, p.103). But this assertion of existence of a disembodied ego is not in conformity with his concepts of individuation and identification. For a disembodied ego, by definition, does not possess any of the physical characteristics and, hence, cannot be either

individuated or identified. Again, following his definition of a person as a type of entity to which both physical as well as conscious states are ascribed at the same time, we probably cannot call a disembodied ego, even if there is one, a (former) person as this ego does not admit of any physical states.

Despite these loopholes, Strawson's concept of person occupies a very unique position in modern analytic philosophy.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 5: State whether the following statements are True or False: a) According to Descartes, we cannot ascribe both physical characteristics and states of consciousness to one and the same thing. (True/False)

b) Strawson says that the concept of person is a primitive concept. (True/False)

c) According to Strawson, the concept of person is analyzable into a mind and a body. (True/False)

d) Strawson says that P-predicates are ascribed to persons only. (True/False)

e) Bernard Williams is not a critic of Strawson's concept of person. (True/False)

Q 6: How does Strawson criticize the Cartesian concept of ego? (Answer in about 104 words)

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Q 7: Distinguish between M-predicates and P-predicates.(Answer in about 110 words)

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Q 8: What do you mean by Strawson's concept of P-predicates? (Answer in about 88 words)

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ACTIVITY: 15.2

Is Strawson's view on the concept of Person satisfactory?

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Do you support Bernard Williams's criticism on Strawson's concept of P-predicates? Discuss

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15.7 LET US SUM UP

- I Strawson holds that both physical characteristics and states of consciousness are ascribed at the same time to one and the same thing, viz. Persons.
- I Strawson's concept of person is a primitive concept in the sense that it is not analysable into a particular consciousness (mind) and a body, because a person is not a combination of a mind and a body. He also says that there is no 'type ambiguity' between 'I' and 'Smith'; that means, 'I' and 'Smith' are not individuals of two different types.
- I According to the Cartesians, a person is actually a combination of two distinct substances - mind and body, each of which has its own characteristics.

- According to the 'No-ownership theory', our states of consciousness cannot be ascribed to anything.
- Strawson goes to establish that the states of consciousness and experiences are necessarily possessed by a particular person in the logically non-transferable way.
- Strawson points out that a particular state of consciousness or an experience has got two aspects of ascribability: one, with respect to oneself, and the other, with respect to others.
- According to Strawson, the concept of a person is the concept of a type of entity such that both predicates of consciousness and predicates of corporeal characteristics are equally applicable to single individual.
- Strawson makes a distinction between M-predicates and P-predicates. M-predicates can also be applied to material bodies to which states of consciousness are never applied. P-predicates consist of all other predicates such as smiling, walking, thinking etc. which we apply to persons.
- Strawson insists that both M-and P-predicates are ascribed to one and the same thing, viz. Persons.
- Strawson's concept of person is also not free from difficulties, yet it occupies a very unique position in modern analytic philosophy.



15.8 FURTHER READINGS

1) Sen, P.K.&Verma, R.R.(1995) (ed) *The Philosophy Of P.F. Strawson*. New Delhi: I.C.P.R.
2) Strawson, P.F.(1974). *Freedom and Resenement and Other Essays*. London. Metheun &Co. Ltd.,
3) Shaffer, J. A. : (1988) *Philosophy of Mind. New Delhi*. Prentice Hall of India Pvt. Ltd.
4) Ghose, R. : (1990) *The Idea Of a Person*. Calcutta: Punthi Pusta



15.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q. No. 1: a) True b) True c) False
d) True e) False

Ans to Q. No. 2: According to Strawson, the concept of person is a primitive concept, because it is not analyzable into a particular mind and a body. He says that both M-predicates and P-predicates are ascribed to one and the same thing, viz. persons. A person is not a combination of a mind and a body. The concept of person is logically prior to that of an individual consciousness. It is not to be analysed as that of an animated body or of an embodied anima.

Ans to Q. No. 3: According to the Cartesians, a person is actually a combination of two distinct substances belonging to two different types. These two distinct substances are mind and body. Each of them has its own characteristic states and properties. They say that states of consciousness are ascribed to one substance while the physical states are ascribed to the other.

Ans to Q. No. 4: Wittgenstein and Schlick maintain a view that our states of consciousness are not ascribed to anything and this view is called by Strawson 'No-ownership theory' of the self. We may illustrate the 'No- ownership theory' with the help of an example of the two uses of 'I' in the two sentences: 'I have a toothache' and 'I have a bad tooth'. Although these two sentences are grammatically similar, they are completely different in nature. In the sentence ' I have a bad tooth', we put emphasis on the physical aspect alone. But Wittgenstein says that a toothache is an experience, a state of consciousness which cannot be possessed by anyone.

Ans to Q. No. 5: a) True b) True c) False d) True e) False

Ans to Q. No. 6: According to the Cartesians, all states of consciousness and experiences are ascribed to the ego. But Strawson in this regard points out a serious difficulty that in order to ascribe a state or

an experience to something, that something should be identifiable and individualizable. But the problem is that in the absence of any physical characteristics an ego remains unidentifiable and unindividualizable. Because, anything without shape, size, colour or other physical attributes cannot be pointed at as 'it'. So, an ego cannot be identified in the absence of the physical attributes. Hence, the question of ascribing states and experiences to it does not arise.

Ans to Q. No. 7: Strawson makes a distinction between M-predicates and P-predicates. M-predicates are predicates of ascribing material properties. M-predicates can also be applied to material bodies to which states of consciousness can never be applied. But P-predicates are predicates of ascribing properties to persons only. P-predicates consist of all other predicates which we apply to persons. M-predicates include predicates like 'weighs 10 stone', 'is in the drawing room' etc. P-predicates include predicates like 'is smiling', 'is going for a walk', 'is in pain', 'is thinking hard' etc. Thus, it becomes clear that P-predicates can be ascribed only to persons; on the other hand, M-predicates can be ascribed to both persons and material bodies.

Ans to Q. No. 8: According to Strawson, P-predicates are predicates of ascribing properties to persons only. P-predicates include all other predicates which we apply to persons only. They can never be applied to material bodies. However, all P-predicates are not consciousness predicates like 'is intelligent' or 'is in a pensive mood'. He says that 'is going for a walk' is not a consciousness predicate since it has nothing directly to do with consciousness, but still it is a P-predicate because, it is exclusively applied to a person and not to anything else.



15.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

(A) Very Short Questions:

Q. 1. What are the two distinct substances, according to Descartes?

Q. 2. Give examples of P-predicate

Q. 3. Give an example of M-predicate.

Q. 4. What are the two substances advocated by Descartes?

Q. 5. Who advocates the no-ownership theory?

B. Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q. 1. What are the reactions considered by Strawson?

Q. 2. What is Person for Strawson?

Q. 3. What is 'M-predicates'?

Q. 4. What is 'P-predicates'?

Q. 5. What are the two aspects of the ascriptions of consciousness predicates?

Q. 6. What is 'No-ownership theory?

Q. 7. Briefly comment on the view that the concept of person is a primitive concept.

C. Distinguish between (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q. 1. First reaction and Second reaction on persons.

Q. 2. M- predicates and P-predicates.

Q. 3. Cartesianism and No-ownership theory.

D. Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q. 1. Critically discuss the No-ownership theory.

Q. 2. Discuss Cartesianism in the light of Strawson.

Q. 3. Critically discuss Strawson's concept of P-predicates.

Q. 4. How would you resolve the conflict between First and Second reactions on persons?

Q. 5. Do you think that Strawson's concept of person is satisfactory? Give reasons for your answer.

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