Semantic Holism: An Introduction

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This is a paper about semantic holism. Semantic holism is a doctrine about the philosophically indispensable circumstances for something to have meaning. We therefore instigate our argument by endeavoring to view semantic holism in its philosophical context. The crucial contention of this paper is to resolve some fundamental issues like semantic similarity and dissimilarity, semantic atomism, holism, etc. It is also tries to resolve some issues related to the nature and scope of semantics.

Keywords: semantics, language, sense-reference, understanding, semantic atomism, semantic holism

Introduction

The man is a meaning-seeking creature in the meaningful world (E. A. Sherman & P. E. Sherman, 1987). To understand language, the human beings search for the meaning of language just as they search for food for their survival. The word "meaning" is used in a number of senses, such as sense, indicator, cause, effect, intention, explanation, purpose, significance, etc. It would be our endeavor to explore, discuss and evaluate some important issues in the theories of meaning.

Frege is the founder of modern logical semantics. He has introduced the sense-reference distinction. According to him, sense determines reference. The sense of a sentence is the thought it contains. The reference of the sentence is its truth values, truth or falsity. Thus, Frege has made the sense-reference distinction central to his logical semantics. As interesting and innovative as this view of Frege may be, there are still issues of meaning which can be problematic. There are sentences which use terms that have no reference in the world and subsequently they cannot be verified to be true or false. How about those expressions? For example: "golden-mountain", "unicorn", "squire-circle", etc. Are these expressions without any sense or meaning at all? It would be quite unintuitive to claim that they make no sense at all for words like golden mountain or unicorn abound in myths and fairy tales. We know what they mean and understand its role in the narratives. Our world of language or linguistic expressions would have been so much impoverished if we take Frege's criterion of meaningfulness and banish all non-referential terms or expressions from our language. Of course, Frege has a specific purpose in mind when he was working out his theory of meaning. He wanted to construct a language which could become the language of cognitive enterprises like science. Likewise, different people have given different accounts of meaning theory from their own perspectives. Some of the most important theories of meaning are use theory, referential theory, truth-conditional theory, verification theory, etc. However, in a broad sense, there are atomistic and holistic theories of meaning. Between these two, our attempt in this present

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work is to argue that meaning holism offers a more adequate and plausible theory of meaning. As such what follows would be an exploration of issues, views and doctrines involving meaning holism.

In order to understand meaning holism, let's understand the scope of the semantics itself. Semantics studies meaning, reference and truth of the sentences in a language. Language is related to the world. Therefore, semantics studies the relationship between language and the world. Besides, semantics in general has been one of the most important studies in linguistics, psychology, and philosophy of language. It is because semantics brings out the relation between language and mind and also the nature of meaning and reference. Semantics involves the speakers, the hearers and also the linguistic community at large. The speaker uses language to make a sentence thereby referring to the world. In this sense, the sentences accrue meaning and truth.

Fundamental Tenets Semantics

There are several fundamental questions raised by semanticists. I would like to reproduce some to get a feel of what study of semantics is like:

1. What are meanings? Are they in our heads or do they have independent existence somewhere?
2. Can all meanings be precisely defined?
3. Is there any relation between mind and language vis-à-vis meanings?
4. What is the connection between the word meaning and the context of its use?

The concept of meaning has various uses in our language. For example, we talk of the meaning of a word and also the meaning of a sign or symbol, such as the national flag etc.

While semantics primarily studies the meaning and reference of language, pragmatics studies the different kinds of use of language which the human beings make. Though semantics and pragmatics deal with language, they concerned with the different aspects of language.

The term "semantics" which is derived from the ancient Greek adjective "semantikos", which means "relating to signs" its noun form is "semeion" which means "sign". In general, semantics as a part of linguistic studies cover the various kinds of linguistic symbols, such as words, sentences etc. Of course, the non-linguistic symbols as well which can be studies by a theory of signs.

In philosophy of language, semantics has become important in recent years, because the question of meaning and reference have become important in the philosophical study of language. From Frege onwards, the most important question in philosophy of language has been about the relation between language and reality. But with Wittgenstein, the nature of use of language has become important. Therefore, both semantics and pragmatics have become part of philosophy of language. In philosophy of language, meaning is broadly called significance which means linguistic significance. Besides, meaning is also communicated which may be called communicated meaning. Within communicated meaning the core is the linguistic meaning which is communicated. In communicated meaning, there is not only linguistic meaning but also intentional meaning. This can be explained in the following diagram:

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┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│                 S                     │
│   ┌───────────────────────────────┐  │
│   │              CM                │  │
│   │   ┌───────────────────────┐    │  │
│   │   │         LM            │    │  │
│   │   │                       │    │  │
│   │   └───────────────────────┘    │  │
│   │                               │  │
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Significance (S)
Communicated meaning (CM)
Linguistic meaning (LM)
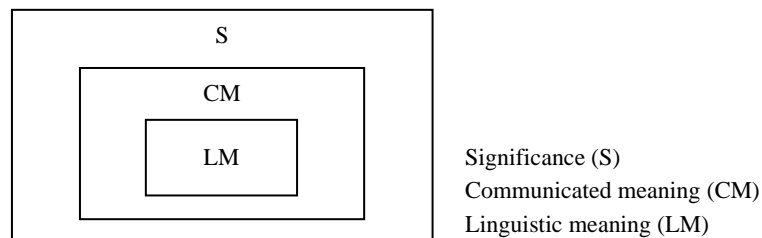
Language is central to communication, but the language should be meaningful otherwise language may not communicate. Therefore, we need meaning in order to communicate in our language. Meaning is inseparable as well as an indispensable aspect of our language. It arises, as the result of language-reality relationship, i.e., meaning arises when language meets the world. It possesses meaning when it stands for something. In other words, meaning thereby is about something other than the linguistic symbols call words or expressions. The difficulty is to relate those words with those things for which they stand or signify. Therefore, meaning is in part an attempt to define a one-one relation or function between words and their corresponding objects. As mentioned earlier, we normally encounter a problem when words do not correspond to objects. For example, words are, as "golden-mountain", "pegasus", "unicorn", etc. do not correspond to anything. Even if these words do not stand for any objects, we understand the meaning of these words when we communicate in our language.

Frege had indicated this in his semantics when he made a distinction between sense and reference. The words, like "golden-mountain" have sense though they do not have reference. For Frege, sense does not depend on reference. Michael Dummett, following Wittgenstein, holds a variety of use theory of meaning according to which a theory of meaning explains how language works. For Dummett, to understand a language, one has to understand the meaning of words and sentences as they are used in language. According to Quine (1969), "language is a social art" (p. 26) which we master through practice and we use not only to represent the world but also to communicate meaning to others. For Quine (1951), language is a part of human behavior. Thus, he takes behavioral psychology to be a part of linguistics. His famous slogan along this line of doctrine is this: "Meaning is what essence becomes when it is divorced from the object of reference and wedded to the word" (Quine, 1951, p. 22).

Scope of Semantic Theory

Linguistic semantics is not concerned with all meaning, but only the part that languages actually contain. Semantics, in this sense, concerns the semantic structures of the linguistic expressions. More technically, it is about grammaticalization patterns, or how languages figure up and express universal semantic space in grammatical form. This approach brings to light not only the traditional semantic issues, such as reference and naming but also like how much of semantics motivates syntax and whether semantics and pragmatics can be separated.

Semantics and syntax go together because while syntax studies the formal structure of language, semantics studies how language is related to the world. In this sense, semantics complements syntax by making language related to the world. Meaning as semantic concept covers the language world relationship. The most important aspect of semantics is its theoretical study of meaning reference and truth conditions of sentences. If includes

also the mental content which the sentences express. Thus, semantics takes the center stage of the philosophy of language.

According to Quine (1953), semantics as a study of language analyses the concept of meaning and reference (p. 130). He believes that meaning is not the Fregean sense which is located in a third realm because meaning is part the social behavior of the linguistic community. Meaning therefore, cannot be disassociated from the use of language in human life.

Hilary Putnam agrees with Quine to a great extent. For him, meaning is associated with the use of language in the human communities. Meaning arises only when human beings interact among themselves with the help of language.

Some Semantic Issues

Some of the issues in semantics could be discussed under the following heads:

1. The phenomena of synonymy and paraphrase: Here the relation of the sameness of meaning, for example, the fact that "fist" and "balled hand", " chocolate sprinkles" and " jimmies", and "John loves Mary's only sister" and synonymous, and the members of the latter are paraphrases.

2. The phenomena of semantic similarity and semantic difference: Words as "aunts", "cats", "cow", "sister", "woman", "actress", etc. are semantically similar one respect that there is a component common to the meaning of each, and the fact that "aunt", "dog", "stone", "leaf", "mountain", "car", etc. are semantically similar in a respect (i.e., the meaning of each of these words contains the concepts of a physical object) that contrasts with the respect in which "shadow", "mirror-image", "reflection", "lap", etc. are semantically similar.

3. The phenomena of antonymy: The semantic difference is called incompatibility of meanings for example: "open" and "close", "whisper" and "shout", "girl" and "boy" are antonymous.

4. The phenomena of superordination: Words as "finger" and "thumb", "dwelling" and "cottage", "human" and "boy" are semantically subordinate pairs.

5. The phenomena of meaningfulness and semantic anomaly: The fact that the expression "a smelly soap" is meaningful whereas "a smelly itch is not, as well as the fact that the sentences" "jars empty quickly" and "the man is falling upside down" are both meaningful but the sentences "shadow empty quickly" and "the hail is falling upside down" are semantically anomalous.

6. The phenomena of semantic ambiguity: It is the multiplicity of senses versus uniqueness of sense. For example, the fact that the word "button", "ball", "foot", "pipe", etc. have more than one sense and the fact that the sentence "there is no school anymore", "I have found the button", "take your pick", etc. have two or more senses.

7. The phenomena of semantic redundancy: The fact that "my female aunt", "an adult unmarried male bachelor", "a naked nude", etc. have senses that contain superfluous information, that is, that sense of the modifier is included in the sense of the head.

8. The phenomenon of analytic truth: Here the truthfulness of the sentence arises just by the virtue of the fact that the meaning of the subject contains information which is already contained the predicate. For example: "kings are monarchs", "uncles are males", etc.

9. The phenomena of contradictoriness: Here the falsities of the sentence is just by the virtue of the fact that the meaning of the subject contains information incompatible with what is attributed to it in the predicate. For example: "babies are adults", "uncles are woman", "and kings are female", etc.

10. The phenomena of inconsistency: Here the case is that the sentences are neither true together nor false together when they refer to the same individual but, rather, one must be true nor the other must be false. For example: "John is alive" and "John is dead".

11. The phenomena of syntheticity: Here the sentences are neither true nor false based on their meaning alone, that is, their truth or falsity is not settled by the language but depends on what is the case in actuality. For example: "babies are cuties".

12. The phenomena of entailment: Here the case is that the relation between two sentences is such that one sentence follows necessarily from the other by virtue of a certain logical relation, for example, "the car is red" it entails that "the car is colored".

13. The phenomena of presupposition: The fact that the interrogative "where is the key?" presupposes the truth of the declarative "the key is someplace" in the sense that the interrogative expression a question only in cases where the declarative that expresses its presupposition is true.

14. The phenomena of possible answer: Here is the case is that the sentences "John arrived on Monday", John arrives a minutes ago", "John arrived on Christmas Day", etc. are possible answers to "when did John arrive?" whereas "John loves to eat fruits" "John is Mary's brother", "Bill arrived yesterday", etc. are not.

15. The phenomena of self-answered question: Here the case is that the sentences are used or expressed questions that are answered in the asking. For example: "What is the colour of my red shirt".

Theories of Semantic Atomism

There are several theories in favor of meaning atomism but we will confine ourselves to the discussions of only a few of them:

Behavioral Semantics

The behavioral semantics as propounded by B. F. Skinner offers one of the old theories of meaning according to which the meaning of a sentence depends on the behavioral response that it contains to the stimulus coming from the external world. This theory is atomistic because it associates each sentence with an appropriate stimulus. This theory is not only an atomistic but also a reductionist because it reduces meaning to the stimulus-response mechanism.

Referential Semantics

The referential semantics holds that meaning of a word is the object it refers to. For example, the meaning of the word "fire" is the object fire. This theory is held by Bertrand Russell and many others. This theory applies mainly to the words in language and secondarily to sentences. According to Russell, the sentences have also reference namely, the facts in the world. The referential semantics cannot explain how the words, like "golden-mountain", can have meaning because there is no object to which this word refers. Besides, this theory cannot explain how the word, like "The Father of Nation", would have meaning when Mahatma Gandhi is no more. Moreover, one can arrive at the idea of referential semantics by assuming that truth values of sentences may depend upon "reference points". The reference points may not be actual; they may refer to a fact in the possible worlds. As such, under the possible world interpretation of reference points, referential semantics collapses to possible world semantics. For example, suppose a language L serves as a means of communication for two reference communities' r_1 and r. Under this assumption the pairs (0, 0), (0, 1), (1, 0) and (1, 1), 0 standing for falsity and 1 for truth, are all sequences of truth-values a sentence might acquire. The fact that

instead of dividing sentences into true and false, one might divide them into four "epistemic categories" which allow one to define various logical concepts that are not definable within standard two-valued semantics. Suppose for instance, that the two communities accept the same truth criteria for sentences of the form "it is a fact that α" (e.g., it is a fact that the population of the city of New York is greater than that of Copenhagen). Suppose moreover that those criteria define a sentence of the form "it is a fact that α to be true if α is true both under the truth conditions applied by r_1 and those applied by r". Let F stand for "is a fact". Then the truth table for the connective F would be the following (Wójcicki, 2003):

α	$F\alpha$
(1, 1)	(1, 1)
(1, 0)	(0, 0)
(0, 1)	(0, 0)
(0, 0)	(0, 0)

For someone who prefers to interpret F by appealing to possible world semantics, F is the necessity connective. From the formal standpoint, the possible world semantics and the referential semantics are reducible to one another. From the philosophical standpoint, the referential semantics has all the advantages of possible world semantics.

Russellean referential semantics is based on his logical atomism according to which the world contains atomic facts and the objects as their constituents. The atomic sentences in language correspond to the atomic facts in the world. Similarly, the names which constitute an atomic proposition refer to the object in the world. The objects for Russell are the sense-data which are parts of the world. In this context, Russell (2009) introduced the concept of logically proper names which stand for the sense-data, or better known as "this/that", in the world. Russell's referential semantics is a direct result of his logical atomism (pp. vii-viii). Russell (2009) said that his reason for calling his doctrine logical atomism is because he claims that the atoms that I wish to arrive at as the sort of last residue in analysis are logical atoms and not physical atoms. Some of them will be what I call "particulars"—such things as little patches of colour or sounds, momentary things—and some of them will be predicates or relations, and so on. The point is that the atom I wish to arrive at is the atom of logical analysis, not the atom of physical analysis (Russell, 2009). What exactly are logical atoms? He tells us that they are particulars, qualities, and relations, and he is evidently relying on the fact that, when we look at reality from a logical point of view, it seems to reduce to particular things possessing certain qualities and standing in certain relations to one another. At least, that is how we usually think and speak about it, and so that is how it has to be. If reality did not in fact fall apart in the way in which we carve it up in thought and speech, everything that we think and say about it would be radically mistaken (Russell, 2009). Russell chooses the expression "logical atomism" as a label for his philosophy. Russell's philosophy looked at as devoted to two principal themes, ontology and theory of knowledge. By "ontology" is meant a concern with establishing "what there is". By "theory of knowledge" is meant a critical examination of ways to justify our claims to know the truth about something or other. For Russell these two themes are closely entangled. Understanding this connexion in Russell's writings between these two themes is crucial to understand his theory of meaning (Munitz, 1981). For Russell:

> The analysis of the nature of meaning is part of the wider concern with formulating a theory of truth (of what can be known or said to be the case) and also, therefore, with what is real (or exists). With Russell, the consideration of the nature of meaning focuses on the role of language as the 'carrier' of meanings. (Munitz, 1981, p. 130)

As with Frege and Russell looks to logic as giving us the criteria by which we can confront and evaluate the everyday uses of language ("natural language") in the light of what a purified, ideal logical language would require. The logic to which Russell appeals is an "atomistic" one; its formal syntax is set out in *Principia Mathematica.* Russell claims that when I say that my logic is atomistic, I mean that I share the common-sense belief that there are many separate things; I do not regard the apparent multiplicity of the world as consisting merely in phases and unreal division of a single indivisible reality (Munitz, 1981).

Russell has discussed that atomic facts have metaphysical independence and this is indicated in the grammatical independence of the atomic proposition. However, the idea of general facts arises from statements like "All horses are white". There is no atomic fact corresponding to "all horses". How to judge the truth and falsity of such statements was the problem that Russell was faced with. In his book *Problems of Philosophy*, Russell (1936) talked about the problem posed by these general facts (or Universals) and the impulse to make them exceptions to the principle to correspondence and atomism. He even includes relations like "left of" '"north of", "between", etc. as universals or general facts of which there cannot be any correspondence to atomic facts (Russell, 1936). Further it can be said that "simple" and "complex" have both a strict and a figurative meaning. In the former sense which is of special interest to the logical atomists, only simplest entities exist with an exception of general facts. In the figurative sense, the "typewriter" can be complex (Wedberg, 1984).

Russell argues, "If we understand the meaning of a sentence, then we must find the direct acquaintance with all the constituents of the fact that correspond to the sentence" (Wedberg, 1984, Ch. V).

This is Russell's acquaintance principle. However, in order to elucidate the principle, one can quote Russell from his book *Problems of Philosophy*, Every proposition which we can understand must be composed wholly of constituents with which we are acquainted (Wedberg, 1984).

Fregean Semantics

The Fregean semantics is based on the distinction between sense and reference. According to this theory, both the sentences and the words compositing them have both sense and reference. In this semantics, there are two basic principles namely,

1. The compositionality principle;
2. The context principle.

According to the first principle, sentences are composed of words but according to the second principle, the words have meaning only in the context of the sentences. The first is a syntactic principle while the second is semantic principle. According to the latter, the sentence meaning is prior to word meaning. The word meaning is determined by sentence meaning because only in the context of sentence the word can have a meaning. The sense of a sentence is the thought content which is different from the idea which is expressed by the sentence. For example, "Socrates is mortal" expresses a thought which is objectively either true or false. The thought is different from the idea or the psychological content of the sentence. Thus, for Frege, sense is an objective entity which is different from the subjective idea.

Frege's semantics is atomistic because it analyses the sense of the sentences individually without taking

into account their connection with the system of language. Frege cannot be considered as a proponent of meaning holism because his accepts the compositionality principle. Besides, he takes the individual sentences as the bearers of meaning. What do sentences refer or correspond to? This question has been a subject of much suspicion and discussion. Some are of the view that Frege has got it all wrong when he opines that sentences refer to "the True and the False". Facts are especially strong candidates for being the referents of sentences because of their tie with truths. It is commonly held that the truth of a sentence resides in its correspondence with the facts. Tarski, for example, says: If ... we should decide to extend the popular usage of the term 'designate' by applying it not only to names, but also to sentences (Mendelsohn, 2005), then the following formulates the philosophical view of truth he seeks to make precise that a sentence is true if it designates an existing state of affairs. Viewed from this perspective, it would seem that Frege has got the analysis of sentences somewhat confused. A sentence does not stand for a truth value, one is inclined to say, but for a (possible) fact, and truth comes in when the (possible) fact named by the sentence obtains. The problem with supposing that sentences designate (possible) facts is, as we have already noted, that the fine distinctions wanted are not forthcoming. For, Frege all true sentences must name the same fact—the Great Fact, as Davidson calls it has remarked on the metaphysical character of Frege's notion of the True, "reminding one somewhat of the Eleatic doctrines of the 'One'". The resemblance is certainly striking. For the True, or the Great Fact or Reality, it appears to be an undifferentiated totality much like Parmenides' Being. But there is a very significant difference: Whereas Parmenides admitted Being, and Being only, Frege appears to admit both Being and Nonbeing. False sentences, too, are names. They are names of the False. So for Frege, there appears to be a Great Non Fact alongside of the Great Fact. However, if we have both a Great Fact and a Great Non Fact, then the neat relation between facts and truth no longer holds. Recall that facts were introduced in order to explain truth: A sentence was said to be true if the (possible) fact it named obtains. But, then, a false sentence, being false, stands for the Great Non Fact, and since the Great Non Fact obtains, the sentence must be true. Hence it turns out that if a sentence has any truth value at all, it has the truth value true. The idea behind the appeal to facts, however, is that a sentence is, metaphorically speaking, aimed at reality, and the sentence is true if it reaches its intended mark, and false if it does not. A natural attempt at patching up this account of truth would be to say that a sentence is true if and only if it names the Great Fact, and false if, and only if, it names the Great Non Fact. But this too fails. We do not expect reality to include both reality and unreality. We have been assuming that there is something outside the realm of sentences (or thoughts) in virtue of which sentences (or thoughts) are said to be true; and we had, quite literally, assumed the True to be that thing. We had attempted to fit the True into what was essentially a Correspondence Theory of Truth. But Frege explicitly rejects the conventional Correspondence Theory of Truth, and the True is not supposed to play anything like the role in his metaphysical scheme that Davidson and Godel would have us think.

Frege argues, "Truth does not consist in correspondence of the sense [of a sentence] with something else, for otherwise the question of truth would get reiterated to infinity" (Mendelsohn, 2005, p. 138).

Frege casts the Correspondence Theory as an account of our description of a picture, assumed to depict something, as being a true picture that it might be supposed from this that truth consists in a correspondence of a picture to what it depicts. Now a correspondence is a relation. But this goes against the use of the word "true", which is not a relative term and contains no indication of anything else to which something is to correspond. If I do not know that a picture is meant to represent Cologne Cathedral then I do not know what to compare the

picture with in order to decide on its truth (Mendelsohn, 2005). According to the Correspondence Theory, we are to imagine that we match up a picture with the item the picture is intended to represent, and if the two correspond, then the picture is said to be a true picture. But, Frege points out, truth itself is not a correspondence relation; rather, we must assume some correspondence scheme linking pictures with the things they are intended to depict. That is, we determine whether a particular picture is true by determining whether that picture in fact corresponds to the item it was intended to depict. But in that case, Frege argues, the attempt to define truth as correspondence leads to a vicious regress. But could we not maintain that there is truth when there is correspondence in a certain respect? But which respect? For in that case what ought we to do so as to decide whether something is true? We should have to inquire whether it is true that an idea and a reality, say, correspond in the specified respect. And then we should be confronted by a question of the same kind, and the game could begin again. So, the attempted explanation of truth as correspondence breaks down. The problem is that we do not lay down a correspondence scheme and afterward raise the question of truth: truth is already being assumed in the setting up of the scheme itself. So what are these objects, the True and the False? When we speak of names as expressions that refer to objects, and we suppose that we use these names to speak about these objects, then we believe we should be able to identify them in some way. If a true sentence stands for the True, we suppose the sentence is about it; then we look to find the object referred to and see whether it is of such-and-such a sort so as to render the sentence true or false. But things are altogether different for sentences. In the case of sentences, it appears that first we determine the truth value of the sentences and thereby determine the objects they stand for. Can this be right? Frege thinks that it is. It is a mistake, from Frege's point of view, to search for and examine these abstract objects themselves. This is just the path he admonishes us from following in the famous Context Principle "Never to ask for the meaning of a word in isolation, but only in the context of a proposition" (Weiner, 2011, p. 51). Despite several unsettled questions and dilemmas, Frege has given us a very fruitful and precise account of reference through his development of the compositionality principles. Frege not only pioneered the development of modern symbolic logic, but, with his compositionality principles, he developed a very powerful picture with strong metaphysical overtones. In this chapter, we have been drawing out his insights pertaining particularly to the notion of truth. What we have found, interestingly enough, using Russell as our foil, is that these metaphysical implications are not consequences forced upon us by his logical analysis. Rather, they are beginning to look more like assumptions within which Frege works his syntactic engine. Frege's analysis leads him to deny one of the best entrenched traditional accounts of truth, the Correspondence Theory, and to suggest accounts of truth that are more in line with the minimalist notions that prevail today. This is particularly noteworthy because we usually find the Correspondence Theory a hand maid to Realism. Frege's break with this tradition presents a challenge: Are we to regard Frege as a genuine Realist even though he rejects the Correspondence Theory of Truth, or is his rejection of the Correspondence Theory one more piece of evidence that he is not really a Realist at all? (Mendelsohn, 2005). Moreover, Frege has also provided reasons for supposing that a sentence does stand for something, not the least of which is the unified theory of language that emerges on this supposition. For example, supposing that a sentence stands for its truth value, we can regard a property like having *red hair* as a function that maps objects into truth values. While pursuing Frege's investigations into mathematics and logic, he was led to develop a philosophy of language. His philosophy of language has had just as much, if not more, impact than his contributions to logic and mathematics. Frege's influential paper "On sense and reference", Frege considered two puzzles about language and noticed, in

each case, that one cannot account for the meaningfulness or logical behavior of certain sentences simply on the basis of the denotations of the terms (names and descriptions) in the sentence. One puzzle concerned identity statements and the other concerned sentences with subordinate clauses such as propositional attitude reports. To solve these puzzles, Frege suggested that the terms of a language have both a sense and a denotation, i.e., that at least two semantic relations are required to explain the significance or meaning of the terms of a language.

In "Logic and Truth in Frege", the author had brought a number of apparently disparate elements of Frege's philosophy. His view of thoughts as belong to neither mental nor physical, but it is a third realm. That is, his rejection of any correspondence theory of truth, and his view of judgement and of logic. The central claim is that Frege's view of thoughts as subsisting in a third realm, which is best viewed not as an attempt "to explicate or ground the intersubjective objectivity of judgment", but rather as following from his most basic views of judgment and truth, views which are embedded in his conception of logic. Frege introduces "The Thought" as that "for which the question of truth can arise at all". As such, without any consideration of grounding communication or intersubjective agreement in judgement, so we can say Frege is already committed to denying that thoughts are either physical or mental. For Frege, some physical entities, such as sentences considered merely as marks or noises can be neither true nor false. Only the physical entities and the contents made of these physical entities are either true or false. Then one might wish to hold that such contents or thoughts, expressed are mental entities; and on this view truth would have to consist in some kind of correspondence between such mental entities and external reality. By his conception of logic, Frege is able to regard the sentences of logic as having content and as being true in the same way as every other true sentence. For him, the content of sentence determines what entities it applies to. Thus the sentences of logic will have content. They in fact will have maximal content since they apply to every entity. Like other true sentences, the sentences of logic will be true of the entities they apply to. What distinguishes the sentences of logic from other true sentences is not the sense in which they are true but rather that they are truths regarding every entity (Frege, 1956).

Verificationist Semantics

Logical positivists were committed to verification semantics because they held a verification theory of meaning according to which the meaning of sentence lies in its verification. By verification the positivist like A. J. Ayer and the Vienna circle philosophers believed verification in sense experience. However, they were interested in the possibility of verification rather than the actual verification. Accordingly, a sentence is meaningful if it could be in principle verified in a possible experience. The verification semantics explains meaning in terms of possible experience which could be relevant to decide whether the sentence is true or false. In this sense, verificationist semantics is indirectly a truth-based semantics. Quine has rejected verificationist semantics because it claims to decide meaning of the sentences in isolation by a mere appeal to sense experience. Quine's alternative is semantic holism is to be discussed later.

Picture Theory of Meaning

The picture theory of meaning is defended by early *Tractatus*. According to this theory, the propositions alone are meaningful according as they represent or picture possible states of affairs in the world. The picture theory is a theory of representation according to which language is a logical picture or representation of the world. The picture theory of meaning is unique because it explains the meaning or sense of a proposition in terms of its truth conditions. That is if we know the truth conditions of a sentence or proposition, we can

determine its meaning. It is also an atomistic theory because it committed to the individual sentence having meaning in isolation. Wittgenstein in his picture theory of meaning is committed to atomism because language itself consists of a number an atomic sentence which is logically independent of each other. Each atomic sentence has sense by virtue of being a logical picture of an atomic fact in the world. Wittgenstein also committed to logical atomism. In view of this, his semantic theory is bound to be atomistic in nature. Semantic atomism has been subjected to criticism by philosopher, like Quine and Putnam and others because it does explain how sentences are related to other sentences in a language. The atomistic theories discussed above have failed to take note of the fact that meaning cannot be assigned to sentence in isolation. The atomist had failed to understand how language actually works. The semantic holists have proposed an alternate meaning which is known as semantic holism.

Semantic Holism

Semantic holism holds that language function as a system of which the sentences are a part. In this picture of language, the sentences are the building blocks of a language. The sentences are so interlinked in the language that if we change the meaning of one sentence then we are compelled to change the meaning of many other sentences. This happens not only in ordinary language but also in any constructed logical language like the language of science.

The principle of semantics holism the meaning of an expression in a language is determined together so that they cannot be dissociated from one another. For example, the word "book" has meaning only in the language this word has a place. We cannot determine the meaning the word "book" without taking into account how the word is used in sentences of the language, e.g. "English". Similarly, sentences like "This is a tree" cannot have meaning except in the language in which the sentence occurs and also in connection with other sentences with which the sentence is related.

Quine's holistic theory of meaning expounds the Duhem-Quine thesis that sentences of a theory are closely connected with one another that one cannot be dissociated with other. The theory is a system of language in which the meaning and truth of sentences are so interlocked that we cannot determine the meaning of one sentence without taking in to account system as a whole. Therefore, Quine rejected the logical positivist's atomistic view of meaning theory. He, thus, develops an alternative approach or model in semantics that shows how meaning works holistically. To establish this theory, he offers arguments which are very much powerful. Firstly, he argued against analytic-synthetic dissection. He suggests that analytic-synthetic distinction creates a basic problem for the meaning holism, so the notion of analytic-synthetic distinction should be rejected. Secondly, he argued that the verification theory of meaning could not explain meaning, because sentences cannot be verified individually as sentences are related to other sentences and thereby, they from a corporate body of sentences. Thus, the semantic thrust of verifiability is wrong.

Conclusion

We have seen from the above discussions, how meaning or study of meaning called semantics constitutes an important branch of linguistics. Because the study of meaning has important relations to the world and its interpretations, it has found an important place in philosophy as well, philosophy of language in particular.

In philosophy of language, we noted that two theories are broadly associated with the study of meaning, namely, meaning atomism and meaning holism. We have highlighted some important theories of semantics

with reference to meaning atomism and subsequently highlighted some of the difficulties faced by them. Alternatively, we also noted that meaning holism offers a theory of semantics that appears more adequate and convincing. In what follows, we will consider various theories of meaning holism and problems associated with them and finally, propose and defend a moderate meaning holism.

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