RECONSTRUCTION OF ROLES AND SHORTCOMINGS OF ANALYSIS IN PHILOSOPHY TOWARDS THE ENHANCEMENT OF PHILOSOPHICAL DISCOURSES

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ABSTRACT

Philosophical Discourse is significantly meaningful when the ideas and issues are articulated by the medium of Analysis. It is however instructive to state that analysis fundamental could be construed in conceptual and linguistic dimensions. This brings forth the indispensability of language in analysis and enhances philosophical discourse. In this paper, I intend to articulate and the roles and shortcomings of analysis in philosophical discourse. I also intend to state that analysis is the hallmark of philosophy and it could establish a criterion that distinguish between meaningful and nonsensical sentences. It is my contention and submission that in philosophical discourse and logical and language analysis are key in resolving philosophical puzzles.

Keywords: Reconstruction, analysis, language, philosophical discourse.

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INTRODUCTION

It is a trite that a considerable diversity of views exists among philosophers regarding the nature of analysis (conceptual or linguistic). Some have been primarily concerned with clear and unambiguous. Others have been more concerned with determining the general conditions that must be met for any linguistic utterance to be meaningful; their intent is to establish a criterion that will distinguish between meaningful and nonsensical sentences.

Still other analysts have been interested in clarifying the meaning of specific words or phrases as an essential step in making philosophical assertions creating formal, symbolic languages that are mathematical in nature. Their claim is that philosophical problems can be more effectively dealt with once they are formulated in a rigorous logical language. By contrast, many philosophers associated with the movement have focused on the analysis of ordinary, or natural, language. Difficulties arise when concepts such as time and freedom, for example, are considered apart from the linguistic context in which they normally appear. Attention to language as it is ordinarily used is the key, it is argued, to resolving many philosophical puzzles.

Historically, analysis as a method of philosophy one can say is as old as the Greeks-philosophy itself. Several of the dialogues of Plato (428-347), for example, are specifically concerned with clarifying terms and concepts. Nevertheless, this style of philosophizing has received dramatically renewed emphasis in the 20th century. Influenced by the earlier British empirical tradition of John Locke (1632-1704), George Berkeley (1685-1753), David Hume (1711-1776), and John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) and by the writings of the German mathematician and philosopher Gottlob Frege (1848-1925), the 20th-century English philosophers George Edward Moore (1873-1958,) and Bertrand Russell (1872-1970) became the founders of this contemporary analytic and linguistic trend. As students together at the University of Cambridge, Moore and Russell rejected Hegelian idealism, particularly as it was reflected in the work of the English metaphysician F. H. Bradley, who held that nothing is completely real except the Absolute. In their opposition to idealism and in their commitment to the view that careful attention to language is crucial in philosophical inquiry, they set the mood and style of philosophizing for much of the 20th century English-speaking world.

However for Moore, philosophy was first and foremost analysis (Ita 43). The philosophical task involves clarifying puzzling propositions or concepts by indicating less

puzzling propositions or concepts to which the originals are held to be logically equivalent. Once this task has been completed, the truth or falsity of problematic philosophical assertions can be determined more adequately. Moore was noted for his careful analyses of such puzzling philosophical claims as "time is unreal," analyses that then aided in determining the truth of such assertions.

Hence Bertrand Russell, strongly influenced by the precision of mathematics, was concerned with developing an ideal logical language that would accurately reflect the nature of the world. Complex propositions, Russell maintained, can be resolved into their simplest components, which he called atomic propositions. These propositions refer to atomic facts, the ultimate constituents of the universe. The metaphysical view based on this logical analysis of language and the insistence that meaningful propositions must correspond to facts constitute what Russell called logical atomism. His interest in the structure of language also led him to distinguish between the grammatical form of a proposition and its logical form. The statements "John is good" and "John is tall" have the same grammatical form but different logical forms. Failure to recognize this would lead one to treat the property "goodness" as if it were a characteristic of John in the same way that the property "tallness" is **a** characteristic of John. Such failure results in philosophical confusion.

WHAT IS ANALYSIS?

Analysis is a general term that refers to systematic examination of the nature or cause of something. The development of modem science has created several specialized forms of analysis. Stephen H. Phillips put it thus;

> Analysis school subscribes to a metaphysical dualism (the claim that two types of things ultimately exist) of individual souls and nature. The school is devoted to the analysis of nature, in order to aid one's

knowledge ...self-conscious, and aloof from nature. ...it takes a similar metaphysical stance, though it also pursues a psychological. Although few modem philosophers find substantial merit in (the) metaphysical claims, many find profound psychological wisdom in (analysis) literature (par 14).

This is to say, with the conscious application of analysis, one gets to acquire the knowledge of what is being sought for in its very nature. Hence, analysis enables the researcher to have a psychological and intellectual satisfaction from the knowledge so pursued to know. However, the connection of metaphysics o the analysis by Stephen is very dissatisfactory thereby making and returning knowledge to the beclouding and concealing nature it originally was.

Nevertheless, for us to make a correct presentation of the role of analysis in philosophy, it will be germane to consider the tenets and the two approaches (formalists and the informalists) of analytic philosophy.

THE ROLE OF ANALYSIS IN PHILOSOPHY

The role of analysis in philosophy is that which need not be over stressed. It is important as the effort of philosophy to reveal and make comprehensible the world to the less sophisticated minded people. This is the reason that philosophers assumed that through philosophical reflection and analysis the nature of the world is being revealed (Popkin andStroll 282). By this, philosophers out of curiosity to understand and be enabled to manipulate their environment for the benefit of humankind, they reflect on the nature of the environment to proffer explanation.

However, this role to some is "abstractive" (too abstract) that an ordinary mind could barely understand or comprehend the inherent intricacies. For where a reflection has been done and there is no understanding stemming from diverse circumstances, the effort

of reflection is defeated. Hence, to avoid and aid comprehension, analysis of these respective reflections became important and imperative. Furthermore, analysis is important in that by the act of analysis, the subject matter becomes the explication of the universals, concepts, theories. Language that purport to be the driver or conveyer of knowledge is being critically considered which threatens the edifice of knowledge reflection has been able to erect.

Furthermore, the existence of ambiguous, vague or imprecise words calls for analysis in philosophy to resolve generated controversies and disputes. Hence, to resolve these disputes and controversies, the definition of terms or words becomes imperative. Here, definitions tend to clarify the meaning of words, phrases and symbols. Definition may be conceived of as a logical method, an analytic device to be specific, which makes it possible to distinguish, identify and construct some objects or things (Effiwatt 343). This deals with words, ideas, concepts and propositions. John Locke in his *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding of 1960* conceived of words as signs of ideas and ideas as signs of things. He put it thus;

> For since the things the mind contemplates are none of them besides itself present to the understanding, it is necessary that something else, as a sign or representation of the thing it considers should be present to it. And these are ideas (169).

This implies that the mind can only make known its content through the vocalization of words which contains the ideas. Hence, we may chose to inform, to express and evoke similar feelings in others and to direct through request and outright command (Copi& Cohen, 33).

Furthermore, within this perspective, it is germane to note that words simply mean "any sound or combination of sounds (or its written or printed symbol) recognized as a part of speech conveying an idea or alternative ideas and capable of serving as a member

of the whole of, or a substitute for a sentence" (Flower 65). It can therefore be said that words are means of creating in others an awareness of what we know or think (Effiwatt 342). It is on this ground that John Locke regard language as a whole to have the primary function of being a great conduct whereby man conveys their discoveries, reasoning and knowledge from one to another (135).

The role of analysis in philosophy can be enunciated as;

(1) Analysis aids in the increase of our knowledge of a particular concept, words when broken down to its atomic component by definition or analytic strive.

(2) It helps philosophers to remove ambiguity inwords. As earlier stated, disputes and disagreements can arise out of words that are not clearer to us, but analysis helps to bring about an end to such linguistic disputes and disagreements thereby getting rid of ambiguous and vague words.

(3) It removes totally or to the barest minimum all forms of vagueness in the use of words and as such, we come to accept and have a common meaning for certain terms.

(4) It explains things theoretically and so makes potent predictions on the behaviour of those substances denoted by words.

(5) Analysis influences one's attitude and braces his/her emotions in a separate way.

The fundamental duty of analysis is to clear ambiguity and vagueness by clarifying, describing and delineating the distinguishing or defining characteristics of concepts. It must be noted here that clarification implies to make explicit what is implicit in concepts.

More so, analysis functions to the point of removing or correcting errors in reasoning, and resolves genuine and verbal disagreements. For when a term or word has more than one distinct meaning in a given context and the context fails to clarity the intention, then it is ambiguous.

Whereas the role of analysis have been examined, whereas the onus of this paper is

to examine both the role and short coming of analysis in philosophy, it therefore suffices that at this juncture we examine carefully the short coming of analysis in philosophy.

THE SHORTCOMING OF ANALYSIS IN PHILOSOPHY

However, it is noteworthy and interesting to know that in spite the novels of analysis in philosophy, it has its own short coming. This are;

(1) The different proponents of analysis both in the form of definitions and analytic philosophers have failed to prove that even with the potency of analysis, the breaking down of words can still lead to a infinite regress. This is, if a given is to be analyzed, it has the tendency of making or bring about beclouding thought in the bid to analyzing it. The analyst may hardly find a simpler alternative that will replace it.

(2) Furthermore, by analysis of philosophical propositions intended to aid adequate comprehension, meaning may hardly have stability. For when a certain proposition is made under a given circumstance, its analysis may actually not grant to that proposition the *ab initio* originality of meaning but with variegated relative or alternative meanings which are not entirely or strictly the same.

(3) However, upon further analysis of these respective different seemingly similar meanings, the divergent views will further widen the scope or contexts within whichits words are used thereby ascribing (possibly) different meanings to that given proposition. Hence, suffice it to say that analysis has an important role as well as bedeviled by short coming.

SUMMARY/CONCLUSION

The commitment to language analysis as a way of pursuing philosophy has continued as a significant contemporary dimension in philosophy. A division also

continues to exist between those who prefer to work with the precision and rigor of symbolic logical systems and those who prefer to analyze ordinary language. Although few contemporary philosophers maintain that all philosophical problems are linguistic, the view continues to be widely held that attention to the logical structure of language and to how language is used in everyday discourse can often aid in resolving philosophical problems.

Although no specific doctrines or tenets are accepted by the movement as a whole, analytic and linguistic philosophers agree that the proper activity of philosophy is clarifying language, or, as some prefer, clarifying concepts. The aim of this activity is to settle philosophical disputes and resolve philosophical problems, which, it is argued, originate in linguistic confusion.

However, difficulties arise when concepts such as time and freedom, for example, are considered apart from the linguistic context in which they normally appear. Attention to language as it is ordinarily used is the key, it is argued, to resolving many philosophical puzzles.

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