

Analytic vs. Continental Philosophy: Space for the Lived Experiences

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ABSTRACT: Analytic philosophical trend dealing specifically with the syntax and semantics of language, analyses meaning only in terms of the written and spoken words. Contrary to the Continental trend which is claimed to be a-linguistic, their main concern is to analyze language in a structured way, so as to solve the traditional logical and philosophical problems which they consider to be the result of improper use of language. Challenging their stand the main argument of this paper is that such structured analysis of language cannot do justice to our lived experiences which are much expressive than the written or spoken words. Here it is argued that language in all possibilities can be understood in a better way by appealing to the continental philosophical trend of phenomenology, which far from being a-linguistic, analyses language in light of the lived embodied experiences expressed in non-syntactic ways. Phenomenology allows language to be comprehended as it is and considers it to be a self-manifesting phenomenon rather than something to be structured and controlled. Hence a possible cross-fertilization is sought to understand language in a broader sense accommodating the lived experiences coming out of the imprisonment of structured linguistic analysis maintained in the analytic philosophical trend.

KEY WORDS: Analytic philosophy, language, lived experiences, phenomenology

I. INTRODUCTION

The philosophical debate concerning the division between continental and analytical philosophy reflects irresolvable outcome. While analytic philosophy is primarily considered to be a philosophy of language, continental philosophy is claimed to be a-linguistic, being more bound to the world of things themselves. Moreover it is observed that analytic writings get more appreciated pertaining to their simplicity, clarity and stylistic consistency maintained in the structured, logo centric ways of linguistic analysis. But human life encompasses many shades which cannot be reduced to symbolic linguistic representations or scientific experimentations. What then if we want to express the unstructured, embodied human experiences of our day-to-day living? Positive response in this regard is found in the phenomenological trend initiated by Edmund Husserl and later reinterpreted by Martin Heidegger and J.P. Sartre which takes care of such lived human experiences even while interpreting language and meaning. Hence with a comparative note the paper tries to bring out the impact of the existential phenomenological tradition in dealing with the lived experiences of the embodied human being in linguistic references.

II. LANGUAGE AND THE ANALYTIC TRADITION

Analytic philosophers, following the line of Gottlob Frege mostly “aim for argumentative clarity and precision; draw freely on the tools of logic; and often identify, professionally and intellectually, more closely with the sciences and mathematics, than with the humanities” (Blattner n.d.). The specific emphasis of the analytic trend has been to solve the traditional philosophical problems by logically analysing concepts, terms and propositions. According to the analytic philosophers much of the confusions in philosophy are caused by the improper use and understanding of language. They try to come to a common consensus on a particular style of philosophical conversation following some particular rule and their yardsticks for linguistic refinement are appropriation of simplicity, clarity and concision of expression (Humphries 1999). May be in different ways but with the same intension of clarity in language and philosophical thought different analytic philosophers have offered various forms of logical, linguistic and conceptual analysis over the years. Though there are criticisms and reinterpretation within the trend itself, their goal of clarity and logical rigour remains the same. As Humphries notes, “the discourse which permits their differences to be aired shows a remarkable stylistic consistency...” (Humphries 1999). It may be because the analytic writings follow a particular set of rules of writings explicitly set by Russell. Nevertheless, the analytic philosophers’ crave for too much precision and certainty has somehow made its analyses rigid like mathematics and natural sciences. The belief of the analytic philosophers of being able to resolve fundamental philosophical questions through the application of rigorous

logico-linguistic science deters them from doing justice to the lived experiences of our daily life. However, the modified views of Austin and Wittgenstein cannot be overlooked.

It is to be understood that our lived experiences cannot be interpreted in such reductionist way. In the book "The Present Personal: Philosophy and the Hidden Face of Language" Hagi Kennan argues that the more structured and informative use of language has failed to reflect on the humanistic demands of philosophical thinking. Hence he emphasises on making "a philosophical attempt to capture the personal at the heart of the structural at a time when the singular seems either to have disappeared into the propositional, or to have taken flight into a more radical non-propositional *it*." The words are not just readymade there to be analysed and interpreted scientifically. Words also carry some personal intrinsic attachment (Kennan 2004). Reason being the standard rule of evaluation in analytic philosophy, judges everything in the scientific way allowing no space for the lived experience of the embodied human being. But human life encompasses many shades which cannot be reduced to symbolic linguistic representations or scientific experimentation.

III. PHENOMENOLOGICAL INPUT FOR LIVED MEANING OF LANGUAGE

Intervention of the phenomenological tradition is found operative here in getting back to the lived experiences of the human world even being within the periphery of linguistic discussion. Considering from the analytic philosophy's point of view phenomenology always appears to be dealing with the non-linguistic, as phenomenologist's concern is with the things in themselves. It is largely defined as a philosophy of *seeing*; a tradition, basically concerned with the world itself, with the non-linguistic silent world (Benoist 2008, 217). But it is to be noted that the living, conscious subject, understood phenomenologically, has a synthetic link not only with its own experiences, past and future, but also with the meaning that interconnect with the lived world and other subjects. The horizons of meaning, in other words, transcend the individual subject, and yet that transcendence is maintained within the subject through its temporalizing activity of consciousness (Rodemeyer 2008).

The phenomenological trend initiated by Edmund Husserl, minimises the importance of the logical analysis of concepts or language and concentrates on the rigorous description of our immediate experiences. He considers phenomenology as operating at the fundamental level of knowledge on which any truths of conceptual or linguistic analysis would have to be based. The Phenomenological trend emphasizes on reviving our contact with reality taking our mindset away from the arid academic discussion of philosophical problems found in nineteenth century philosophy (Moran 2000). Contrary to the narrow traditional philosophy, Phenomenology claims to offer a holistic approach to the relation between objectivity and consciousness. It studies conscious experiences as experienced from the subject's point of view. Jocelyn Benoist (2008) considers Husserl to be one of the authors who has contributed to lay the foundations for what is today called "theory of meaning" at the beginning of the 20th century. Husserl judges meaning as not the result of the causal encounter of intentionality with the 'outside', but there is 'inside', where intentionality is supposed to reside, a specific range of activities that are exclusively concerned with meaning. So Husserl discards any reductive theory of meaning, and considers meaning as an original phenomenon. Meaning is said to be original and irreducible form of intentionality.

The newness of phenomenology is that it gives the object to be sensed as itself. The object of intentional experience always carries a sense within and Phenomenology is the description of things as they are given to consciousness. Further phenomenology is the study of the process of appearing. Hence the things themselves are not bare objects; they are given with their senses. It is the presence of the things always and already interpreted in terms of sense; so to say *the things speak*. Thus, phenomenologically interpreted, Austin's claim that "our senses are dumb" gets a challenge here (Austin insists on the fact that "our senses do not tell us anything, true or false") (Benoist 2008). Hence it can be said that any linguistic achievement is caught in a web of non-linguistic relations.

Language has remained a basic theme of concentration in Heidegger's philosophy as well, since he considers Language as the house of Being, "In its home man dwells." Language is one of the disclosures of the being of Dasein. As the main thesis of Heidegger's phenomenology is to make manifest the matters or objects as they manifest themselves (Moran 2000), hence he believes that to reach the essence of language, to bring language as language to language, we have to hear language as itself, rather than something else. This means to bring the essence of language to itself, to speak in language its own essence. Hence instead of analyzing language by putting it into different structures the best way is to let language be experienced as language. There are different languages in our life that we come across that cannot be incorporated in any of the set norms but still they are equally important for us, say the language of nature. Whenever we hear some sound, we hear them with some meaning, as a sound of this or that. It is not necessary to be something spoken to convey meaning. When we think language essentially, as a self-manifesting phenomenon, we experience language, then, as a possibility or a granting, an essence that allows manifestation, rather than as something we do, make, or control. (Heidegger 1982) According to Heidegger we never stand outside language and hence cannot explain it as a tool

or instrument of our expression. It can neither be said to represent a fact as a picture nor is it a sign for transmission of meaning.

Thus even if concentrating on the so called non-linguistic forms of access to the world, phenomenology considerably contributes to the rootedness of language. Only going through the phenomenological interpretation of the 'things in themselves' we can also realize that the silence of the senses is only epistemic. In reality *silence is really noisy* as it makes a difference (Benoist 2008, 223). Language need not always be spoken according to the phenomenologists, as silence itself is defined in relation to words. The pause in music is also meaningful equally. This silence is a moment of language. As Sartre says, being silent means refusing to speak and hence it also implies speaking in a sense (Sartre 2012).

IV. CORPOREALITY AND LANGUAGE

The most significant input of phenomenology in the treatment of meaning and language is its emphasis on corporeality. Phenomenology never advances any argument on human affairs leaving aside its embodied nature. As Rodemeyer notes, "the body retains language as much as consciousness does." He argues language to be a paradigm that essentially reveals the retaining activity of both the body and consciousness. When one learns a new language, say a foreign language, it is not only his mouth or tongue and vocal cord involved in the formation of words. Rather his entire body, his gesticulations and his stance with regard to the interlocutors, reveals the involvement of the whole body in language and communication" (Rodemeyer 2008)

Further phenomenological analysis also supplies inputs to challenge the post-modern argument which emphasizes on the superiority of written or spoken language in giving meaning over the embodied experiences. Phenomenological explanations of embodied experiences reveal that in certain cases bodily experiences may take superior role in constitution of meaning over the written and spoken language without their already having a place in linguistic discourse. Rodemeyer (2008) tries to strengthen this stand with the illustration of the doctor-patient dialogue where the patient does not find any suitable language to express his physical uneasiness meaningfully. He goes on describing his experiences and finally the doctor finds some word to name the disease. It is possible that after some further diagnosis the particular disease gets some new name later on. Thus it can be argued that sometimes embodied experiences gives meaning to a language (Rodemeyer 2008). Though such instances cannot be universalized, yet they are not insignificant too.

V. CONCLUSION

From the above discussion we may come to the point that the difference between analytic and continental philosophy is not water tight and the claim that the realm of phenomenology is limited to the non-linguistic silent world is also unjustified. Though the two trends show difference regarding their prime concerns, serious analysis of both the trends may lead to fruitful cross fertilization and may help us to understand language in a broader sense accommodating the lived experience of embodied human beings coming out of the imprisonment of structured linguistic analysis maintained in the analytic philosophical trend.

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