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Genesis of Analytic Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

The school of analytic philosophy has made a noticeable impact on academic philosophy in various regions in the world most Great Britain and the United States since the early twentieth century. It originated around the turn of the twentieth century as G.E. Moore and Bertrand Russell broke away from what was then the dominant school in the British Universities Absolute Idealism. Many would also include Gotlob Frege as a founder of analytic philosophy in the late nineteenth century. Urmson writes "Russell and Moore, the co-founder of the analytic movement, were at first in reaction against Bradley and the Neo-Hegelian philosophers a reaction only the stronger because both Moore and Russell had been admirers and, more or less, followers of Bradley in their philosophical youth."1 When Moore and Russell articulated their alternative to idealism, they used linguistic idioms frequently basing their arguments on the 'meanings' of terms and 'propositions'. Additionally, Russell believed that the grammar of natural language often is philosophically misleading and that the way to dispel the illusion is to re-express propositions in the ideal formal language of symbolic logic, there by revealing their true logical form. Because of this emphasis on language, analytic philosophy was widely though perhaps mistakenly taken to involve a turn toward language as the subject matter of philosophy, and it was taken to involve an accompanying methodological turn towards linguistic analysis. Thus on the traditional view, analytic philosophy was born in this linguistic turn. The linguistic conception of philosophy was seen as novel in the history of Philosophy. For this reason analytic philosophy is reputed to have originated in a philosophical revolution on the grand scale not merely in a revolt against British idealism, but against traditional philosophy on the whole.

Keywords : Analytic method, Realism, Idealism, Propositions, Meaning Internal, External, Atomism.

Introduction:

Analytic Philosophy was a dominant philosophical school of the twentieth century, which made a great impact on the development of philosophical thoughts in contemporary western philosophy. This school developed in its tendencies of using the method of analysis as a philosophical tool. Analytic philosophy underwent several internal micro-revolutions that divide its history into five phases. The first phase runs approximately from nineteenth century to nineteen hundred ten. It can be characterized by the quasi-platonic form of realism initially endorsed by Moore and Russell as an alternative to idealism. Their realism was expressed and defended in the idiom of 'propositions' and 'meanings' so it was taken to involve a turn toward language. But its other significant feature is its turn away from the method of doing philosophy by proposing grand systems or broad synthesis and its turn toward the method of offering narrowly focused discussions that probe a specific, isolated issue with precision and attention to detail. By 1910, Moore and Russell had abandoned their propositional realism. Moore in favour of a realistic philosophy of common sense, Russell in favour of a view he developed with Ludwig Wittgenstein called logical atomism. The turn to logical atomism and to ideal-language analysis characterizes the second phase of analytic philosophy, approximately 1910 to 1930. The third phase approximately 1930 to 1945 is characterized by the rise of logical positivism, a view developed by the members of the Vienna Circle and popularized by the British philosopher A.J. Ayer. The fourth phase approximately 1945 to 1965 is characterized by the turn to ordinary-language analysis, developed in various ways by the Cambridge philosophers Ludwig Wittgenstein and John wisdom and the Oxford philosophers Gilbert Ryle, John Austin, Peter strason and Paul Grice. The fifth phase beginning in the mid 1960s and continuing beyond the end of the twentieth century is characterized by eclecticism or pluralism. During the 1960s criticism from within and without caused the analytic movement to abandon its linguistic form. Linguistic philosophy gave way to the philosophy of language, the philosophy of language gave way to metaphysics, and this gave way to a variety of philosophical sub-disciplines. This post linguistic analytic philosophy cannot be defined in terms of a common set of philosophical views or interest, but it can be loosely characterized in terms of its style, which stands to emphasize precision and thoroughness about a narrow topic and to deemphasize the imprecise or cavalier discussion of broad topics.

Tendencies of Analytic Philosophy : In its earlier phases analytic philosophy was difficult to define in terms of its intrinsic features or fundamental philosophical commitments. Initially, it was opposed to a British idealism, and then to 'traditional philosophy' at large. Later, it found itself opposed both to classical phenomenology (for example, Husserl) and its offspring, such as existentialism and also 'continental' or 'postmodernism' philosophy (Heidegger Foucault and Derrida). Though classical Pragmatism bears some similarity to early analytic philosophy, especially in the work of C.S. Peirce and C.I. Lewis, the pragmatists are usually understood as constituting a separate tradition or school.

Bertrand Russell and Moore rebelled against both Kant and Hegel. "Moore led the way, but I followed closely in his footsteps... I felt... a great liberation, as if I had escaped from a hot house onto a windswept headland. In the first exuberance of liberation, I became a naive realist and rejoiced in the thought that grass really is green."[2] This important event in Russell's own intellectual history turned out to be decisive for the history of twentieth century philosophy as a whole; for it was this evolutionary break with British idealism, then the most influential School of philosophical thought in the British Universities that birthed analytic philosophy and set it on the path to

supplanting both idealism and philosophy as traditionally conceived and practiced.

British Idealists F.H. Bradley and J.M.E. Mc Taggart claimed that the world, although it naively appears to us to be a collection of discrete objects (this bird, that table, the Earth and the sun, and so forth), is really a single indivisible whole whose nature is mental, or spiritual, or Ideal rather than material. "In Bradley they found the idea of the world as a single, indivisible whole, the attempted isolation of any element in which involves distortion and partial falsehood; there are no self-contained facts short of Reality as a whole-the Absolute."[3]

Thus idealism was a brand of metaphysical monism. It was also a form of what we would now call anti-realism, since it claimed that the world of naive or ordinary experience is something of an illusion. Their claim was not that the objects of ordinary experience do not exist, but that they are not, as we normally take them to be, discrete. Instead, every object exists and is what it is at least partly in virtue of the relations it bears to other things-more precisely, to all other things. This was called the doctrine of internal relations. Since, on this view, everything that exists does so only in virtue of its relations to everything else, it is misleading to say of any one thing that it exists. The only thing that exists is the whole-the entire network of necessarily related objects. Correspondingly, the Idealists believed that no statement about some isolated object would be true, since, on their view, to speak of an object in isolation would be to ignore the greater part of the truth about it, namely, its relations to everything else.

Moore and Russell started to defend a thoroughgoing realism about what Moore called the "common sense" or "ordinary" view of the world. This involved a lush metaphysical pluralism, the belief that there are many things that exist. It was not this pluralism, however, nor the content of any of his philosophical views, that inspired the analytic movement. Russell writes, "I think that Moore was most concerned the rejection of idealism, while I was most interested in the rejection of monism. The two where, however, closely connected. They were connected through the doctrine as to relations, which Bradley had distilled out the philosophy of Hegel. I called this 'the doctrine of internal relations', and I called my view 'the doctrine of external relations'. The doctrine of internal relations held that every relation between two terms expresses, primarily, intrinsic properties of the two terms and, in ultimate analysis, a property of the whole which the two compose."[4]

It was the manner and idiom of Moore's philosophizing. First, Moore rejected system-building or making grand synthesis of his views, preferring to focus on narrowly defined philosophical problems held in isolation. Second, when Moore articulated his realism, he did so in the idiom of "propositions" and "meanings." There is a noteworthy ambiguity as to whether these are linguistic items or mental ones. Russell called himself a logical atomist; he sustained attacks on the doctrine of internals relations. Logical atomism was a reaction against an extreme realism which had replaced the philosophy of Bradley for both Moore and Russell.

"In the article 'the Nature of judgement; Moore argued that in judgement the mind was contemplating a wholly independent concept, which Bradley unduly psychologized and in the famous 'reputation of idealism', he claimed that the idealists had by a verbal play confused the wholly independent object of sense (which can be called a sensation), with the sensation which is part of our mental history."[5]

"Moore's views about propositions are that "propositions" and "meanings" have an ideal existence-the kind of existence traditionally attributed to Platonic Forms. Secondly, it is clear that "propositions" and "meanings" are primarily neither ideal nor mental nor linguistic, but real in the sense of "thing-like". For

Moore and the early Russell, propositions or meanings were "identical" to ordinary objects-tables, cats, people.

In a famous paper called. "A Defense of common sense" Moore seems to argue that the common sense view of the world is built into the terms of our ordinary language, so that if some philosopher want to say that some common sense belief is false, he thereby disqualifies the very medium in which he expresses himself, and so speaks either equivocally or nonsensically.

Moore argues that each common sense proposition has an "ordinary meaning" that specifies exactly what it is that one knows when one knows that proposition to be true. This "ordinary meaning" is perfectly clear to most everyone, except for some skeptical philosophers who seem to think that for example the question, "Do you believe that the earth has existed for many years past?" is not a plain question, such as should be met either by a plain "yes" or "No," or by a plain "I can't make up my mind," but is the sort of question which can be properly met by; if all depends on what you mean by 'the earth' and 'exists' and' years'..."

Moore thought that to call common sense into question this way is perverse because the ordinary meaning of a common sense proposition is plain to all competent language-users. So, to question its meaning, and to suggest it has a different meaning, is disingenuous. Moreover, since the bounds of intelligibility seem to be fixed by the ordinary meanings of common sense preposition, the philosopher must accept them as starting points for philosophical reflection. Thus, the task of the philosopher is not to question the truth of common sense prepositions, but to provide their correct analysis or explanations.

Moore's use of the term "analysis" in this way is the source of the name "analytic philosophy." Early on in analytic history, Moorean analysis was taken to be a matter of rephrasing some common sense proposition so as to yield greater insight into its already-clear and unquestionable meaning. For example, just as one elucidates the meaning of "brother" by saying a brother is a male sibling or by saying it means "male sibling," so one might say that seeing a hand means experiencing certain external object which is exactly what Moore claims in his paper "Proof of an External world".

The argument of that essay runs as follows. "Here is one hand" is a common sense proposition with an ordinary meaning. Using it in accordance with that meaning, presenting the hand for inspection is sufficient proof that the proposition is true-that there is indeed a hand there. But a hand according to the ordinary meaning of "hand," is a material object and a material object according to the ordinary meaning of "material object," is an external object, an object that isn't just in our mind. Thus since we can prove that there is hand there, and since a hand is an external object, there is an external world, according to the ordinary meaning "of external world."

These examples are from papers written in the second half of Moore's career, but his "linguistic method" can be discerned much earlier, in works dating all the way back to the late 1800s-the period of his rebellion against idealism. Even in Moore's first influential paper, "The Nature of Judgement" he can be found paying very close attention to propositions and their meanings. In his celebrated paper, "The Refutation of Idealism," Moore uses linguistic analysis to argue against the idealist slogan *Esse est percipi* (to be is to be perceived). Moore reads the slogan as a definition or as he would later call it, an analysis; just as we say "bachelor" means "unmarried man," so the idealist says "to exist" means "to be cognized." However, if these bits of language had the same meaning Moore argues, it would be superfluous to assert that they were identical, just as it is superfluous to say "a bachelor is a bachelor." The fact that the idealist sees some need to assert the formula reveals that there is a difference in

meanings of "to be" and "to be perceived" and hence a difference in the corresponding phenomena as well.

Moor's most famous meaning-centered argument is perhaps the "open question argument" of his Principa Ethical. The open question argument purports to show that it is a mistake to define "good" in terms of anything other than itself. For any definition of good-"goodness is pleasure," say-it makes sense to ask whether goodness really is pleasure (or whatever it has been identified with); thus every attempt at definition leaves it an open question as to what good really is. This is so because every purported definition fails to capture the meaning of "good."

Mooer's great historical role consists in the pact that he has been perhaps the first philosopher to sense that any philosophical statement that violates ordinary language is false and consistently to depend ordinary language against its philosophical violators. Although previous philosophers occasionally had philosophized about language, and had in their philosophizing paid close attention to the way language was used, none had ever claimed that philosophizing itself was merely a matter of analyzing language. Moore did not make this claim either, but what Moore actually did as a philosopher seemed to make saying it superfluous in practice. Thus, though it took some time for the philosophical community to realize it, it eventually became clear that this new "linguistic method" Pioneer by Moore constituted a radical break not only with the British idealists but with the larger philosophical tradition itself. To put it generally, philosophy was traditionally understood as the practice of reasoning about the world. Its goal was to give a *logos* a rationally coherent account of the world and its parts at various levels of granularity, but ultimately as a whole and at the most general level. There were other aspects of the project, too, of course, but this was the heart of it. With Moore however, philosophy seemed to be recast as the practice of linguistic analysis applied to isolated issues.

Conclusion : Thus the rise of analytic philosophy, understood as the relatively continuous growth of a new philosophical school originating in Moore's "linguistic turn," was eventually recognized as being not just the emergence of another philosophical School, but as constituting a "revolution in Philosophy" at large.

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