

**PRAGMATIC PRINCIPLES AND LANGUAGE**

All credit for showing the place of mind in the process of acquiring knowledge goes to Kant. After Kant, it is Wittgenstein who takes a revolutionary position in his approach to the theory of knowledge. It is he who deserves recognition for showing the place of language in acquiring and judging knowledge. It may be said that Wittgenstein has replaced Kant's concept of mind by language. The place of language in Wittgenstein's approach to philosophy is as fundamental as the notion of mind in Kantian philosophy. Moore is the first philosopher to give credibility to our intuitions stemming from common sense and ordinary language. Though, Moore could make his impact on the method of philosophy, it is Wittgenstein who is remembered most for showing the place of language in doing philosophy. Austin, Ryle, Strawson, Hare, Searle, Putnam, Donnellan, Kripke etc., to mention only a few from a very long list, are known for their contributions to philosophy following the method of analyzing ordinary language.

There is no doubt that the ordinary language analysis coupled with one's linguistic intuitions about terms and their uses is well accepted as a valid method of doing philosophy today. Ryle, for example, by adopting this method ordinary language analysis, came to certain important conclusions about the human mind.<sup>1</sup> Speech act analysis has credibility mainly because the insights about the working of ordinary language are used in developing this method.<sup>2</sup> What is normally included under the title of

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*meta-ethics* is basically the analysis of value in ordinary language. Hare, for example, extensively uses this method in developing a theory about moral language.<sup>3</sup>

Individual philosophers, without making special efforts to organize the insights about the working of language have used the ordinary language analysis as a means to arrive at their own philosophical conclusions paying hardly any attention to their powerful method of doing philosophy. 'Pragmatics' is the name given to the study of language from the perspective of 'language as a means' as a part of semiology. It is a growing field drawing literature from the field of philosophy and linguistics.

The studies of linguists of the pragmatic aspect of language, often have been in the direction of understanding the mechanism of language. And some of them, perhaps, saw it as an alternative to Chomskian model of understanding language. Philosophers have found pragmatics to be quite close to what they have called 'ordinary language analysis'. They have often used isolated insights about the working of language in solving philosophical riddles without paying much attention to many of the underlying pragmatic principles of the language that they are using. As they have primarily concerned themselves with the theories of meaning, rules, and other related issues, they were forced to study pragmatics of language incidentally without which they would not have found it possible to explain, for example, what is 'meaning'. A fuller understanding of pragmatic aspects of the working of language is yet to be achieved despite numerous attempts by philosophers and linguists. This paper aims to put a step towards that by highlighting certain pragmatic principles, some of which may go otherwise unnoticed.

The speakers of any natural language have to adhere to, among other things, the pragmatic norms of the use of language,

is quite obvious. In any dynamic society, the activity of introducing new words, modifying the uses of the existing ones in order to express thoughts more rigorously or more precisely or in an unambiguous manner, introducing some change in the uses of the words, or creative deviation from the normal uses of words, etc., are inevitable. And all these activities are subsumed under the single heading 'pragmatics' in this essay.

Some of the pragmatic principles that we use to organise our language are not so obvious because we have internalised them. Some of these principles that we shall discuss in this paper are as follows : [ 1 ] the *Principle of Regularity in use* [ 2 ] the *Principle of the Economy of vocabulary*, [ 3 ] the *Elasticity or Rules*, [ 4 ] *Creative Uses of Words*, and [ 5 ] the *Concept of Enabling Institution*. It is not the case that only one pragmatic principle would be at work at a given time; they may all work together to facilitate the use of language.

#### 1. *Regularity in Use*

Every user of language knows this principle, though one might not be conscious of this. Frequent deviations from the normal use of words cannot be appreciated. Consider for the sake of argument the following example : a person uses a natural language always with one deviation from the normal use of one of the words that constitute his sentence. This deviation is such that he does not repeat is pattern of deviation every time he uses the same word in the same sentence; but would do it differently whenever he uses the same sentence again. Or he utters the same sentence second time, but this time he deviates in the use of some other word. Though the use of all the words except one, each time he utters a sentence, is in accordance with the accepted rules of the language, one would necessarily fail to understand his speech. This is because one cannot mark the

deviation from the normal uses of words, as he deviates every time he utters a sentence. We do not make any beginning in understanding any of the sentences he utters. Not even one sentence one could be sure of understanding when he spoke. Such deviations cannot be noted and taken into consideration while interpreting his sentence. Only in conjunction with the sentences that have been understood, the sentences that have not been understood can be put to certain interpretations. And marking a deviation from the normal use of a word requires certain new interpretation of rules for the use of the deviated word. And this could be done only on the basis of the sentences that have been understood. On the other hand, one can perfectly understand what a person intends to communicate even if he deviates from the normal uses of words provided that his deviation of the term is consistent and regular. Every time he uses the word, he should be using the word in the same manner in which he has used it earlier. This is how inquisitive parents understand their child's language even though a child's language does not conform to the rules of an adult language. Some children associate certain sounds with certain concepts in their own peculiar manners. This association is discovered by curious parents and communication is made possible. Deviation from the normal use of words is not an insurmountable problem; philosophical literature is full of such cases. The most notorious words which are known for their irregular behaviours in philosophy are 'knowledge', 'truth' and 'real'. Every landmark in philosophy is marked by the use of these words in certain deviant manners in the history of philosophy.

Formal languages take the regularity and consistency in uses of symbols or words for granted. It is not possible to define what is contradiction, for instance, without assuming that the uses of words are regular and consistent. The principle of

regularity in use, is a bare minimum of rational and purposive use of language.

One cannot hope to get any concessions from observing the strict rule of regularity and consistency in the use of words. In order to evoke a certain type of response in a person, even the poets who are known for their breaking of the conventional rules of language, have to make a careful choice of words depending on the contexts. A poet's effort in hunting for the right word to invoke a certain type of emotion in the reader shows that regularity in the use of words is prior to poet's deviation in the use of those words. Poets make use of the fact that language is used in a systematic and regular manner in formulating their sentences. Without there being regularity and consistency in the use of words by the people, poets would not have succeeded in invoking certain images in their poetry using the method of deviation from the normal uses of words.

## 2. *Economy of Vocabulary*

If the principles of regularity and consistency in the use of words apply to every word of a language, the principle of economy of vocabulary applies only to a selective group of words or expressions. There are mainly two ways in which one practises the principle of economy of vocabulary : [ a ] *Economy of Words*, [ b ] *Formulations of Compound Words*. The philosophical position of Quine, namely, that there are no words which are redundant in language is the other side of the principle of economy of vocabulary. There are no two words with identical meanings in a language because language is an efficiently evolved system—this is another way of stating the same principle of economy of vocabulary. The main aim of the principle of economy of vocabulary is to avoid duplication of words and their functions.

[ a ] *Economy of Words*

Even if one values clarity, one does not simply undertake a project to introduce new words for each sense of the various terms which are ambiguous. Introducing a new word is the last option that one exercises when everything else has failed. Imagine the number of words and the efforts on the part of the users of language that is needed if one were to replace the word 'Mary' by unique words in order to represent each individual called by this name all over the world. If there is any confusion due to the multiplicity of reference of the name 'Mary', we simply provide an identifying description of the person along with the name in question in the context for the identification.

One copes with the situation by simply distinguishing two or more senses of term for a limited purpose, instead of introducing a new word for every sense of a term burdening the rest of the speakers of the language having to remember those words. Moreover, in the case of clear homonyms, one can use the terms without ever stating different senses of them. For instance one is not put to any difficulty even if one does not state explicitly the different senses of the term 'cricket' while using this word. A situation where one is likely to use this term as the name of an insect would be quite different from the one where this term is used to refer to a game. This type of ambiguity does not create any serious practical problem for the users of language. Similarly, it serves no purpose to replace the term 'wicket' by three distinct words to distinguish the three senses of the term, namely, the batsman, the pitch and the stumps. The term 'wicket' in the sentence 'England has only two wickets in hand now' can never be confused with the pitch or stumps.

Homonyms are wrongly thought to be linguistic accidents by some philosophers.<sup>4</sup> There seems to be an optimum use of the

principle of economy of vocabulary underlying such linguistic accident. For instance, one could clarify the two or more notions that are associated with a term, or preferably coin new terms to use them as separate words. For instance, the term 'kite' as the name of a bird could be easily distinguished from the plaything, and one could use two separate words if one wants. 'Kite' as the name of a natural kind which cannot be confused with 'kite' which is a plaything. One does not take the trouble to assign new and distinctive words to different homonyms distinguishing their different senses, because one does not encounter any practical difficulty because of homonyms.

Even a homonym which denotes two or more complex notions could be used without stating its different senses explicitly. For instance, the term 'house' when used in different contexts denotes different complex notions. When used to refer to the place where humans inhabit, it means one thing; and when used to refer to industrial complexes it means quite another. Besides, when the term is used to refer to a body of elected representatives, as in the case of 'house of commons' it denotes yet another thing. But one does not find the necessity to coin separate words for these different senses of the term in question for all practical purposes

#### [ b ] *Formulations of Compound Words*

If having two or more senses attached to one word is one way of economizing on the vocabulary, then forming compound words by using the words in currency is another. In general, when the situation becomes very complex due to the expansion of knowledge or for other compelling reason, one normally compounds the existing words or introduces new expressions to meet the situation effectively. The uses of the term 'bank', for instance in a variety of contexts, posed the difficulty of obscurity of

meanings; and compound words were conveniently introduced, like, 'blood bank', 'question bank' etc., demarcating the different uses of the term 'bank' to meet the situation effectively. This is what must have been the reason why the use of term 'war' is extended beyond recognition. We have invented the ways of coping with situation of referring to different forms of wars using certain combination of the words which are in currency. We have now, 'world war', 'economic war', 'star war', 'civil war', 'cold war' etc. We can even anticipate the possible situations where the need would be felt to coin the compound words: 'communal war', 'sports war', 'cultural war' etc. No doubt that man is an economic user of words in language.

It is possible to compound words without burdening the speakers of language, and such a method is preferred for the obvious reason that it would help the speakers to keep their vocabulary within the manageable number. Surely, economy of vocabulary favourably affects the economical use of human memory. There are yet other less consciously used methods used by the members of a society which seem to be based on economic use of memory. This is no other method than adding new criteria for the uses of words while modifying or completely discontinuing the existing ones.

Certain criteria would be shared between the parent term and the newly formed compound word when we follow such a method. To consider the example of 'war' again, it is with the war spirit that we approve of economic sanctions against a country. Nonetheless, one does not fight economic war with guns and bullets. The specific criterion for identifying an economic war is different from that of a military attack. Non-cooperation may be the main thing that is shared between 'economic war' and 'cold war' on the one side, and 'war' on the other. 'Civil wars' have non-cooperation as a common



criterion with 'economic war'. 'Star wars' have certain other criteria common to military attacks. All wars share some resemblances; they belong to a family.<sup>6</sup>

### [ 3 ] *Elasticity of Rules*

Elasticity of rules is a unique feature of natural language which is absent in all artificial and formal language. Bending of a rule of a word could be from very inception of 'one use' in one context to frequent use of long durations. Some of the noteworthy types of cases of bending the rules of the use of words are : [ a ] providing operational definitions [ b ] extending the use of a term, [ c ] restricting the use of a term, and [ d ] metaphorical uses. Of these cases, operational definition lasts longer than the other two. In fact, some of the concepts in science are only defined operationally. 'Heat' for instance, is only defined operationally. On the other extreme, we have 'one time' bending of the rules of use of words occurs in certain metaphorical uses of words in poetry for example. Extending and restricting the uses of words could range from very temporary to relatively permanent bending of rules.

One is quite aware of the nature of arbitrariness of rules. But while considering arbitrariness of rules and uses of words, one does not take into consideration the fact that a certain word which has currency in language resists change of its use. This is obviously so because the advantage the word has will be lost once it is allowed to be used in a different manner. All stipulative definitions of words do not 'click', only some would have gained greater significance after the stipulated uses of the words. Here we may cite the logical positivists' use of the term 'meaningful' in the context of sentences as a good example of this kind where a stipulative use of the word has remained as a permanent feature of the term by scoring over its regular use and

acquiring a new sense for this use. But such cases are very rare. Most of the terms take time to 'adopt' themselves to the new uses acquiring new senses. All such cases which fall short of acquiring new senses can be said to be cases of using the words in special manners by bending the rules of words such as an attribute of a thing to be the essence of the object. Arbitrariness of the rules of the uses of words are marginally different from this. These new stipulations, though arbitrary, are guided by certain considerations. Arbitrariness of rules might refer to total arbitrariness between the symbols and symbolized through conventional rules.<sup>6</sup>

[ a ] *Operational Definitions*

A term can be defined operationally. It can be defined in any manner the way the user of the language finds fit. One way of defining a term operationally is to take a criterion to be the concept. That is, to take a criterion more seriously than the concept itself.

A definition of a term can be accepted as operational provided that the definition is in terms of one of the attributes of the object that the term in question stands for. That is, one might take a frequently found attribute of an object as a symptom<sup>7</sup> of its existence. And if there are any invariable attributes of that object, one could make a hypothesis about the presence of that property of the object on the basis of the existence of the object. And the existence of the object can in turn be inferred on the basis of the presence of a frequently found attribute of the object in question. And one may choose to use this very attribute of the object as a criterion for knowing the presence of the object as well as its necessary attributes by accepting it as a criterion by convention, And using a symptom as a criterion is the same as providing an operational definition by convention

in an arbitrary manner for the use of the word. For instance, 'tuberculosis' is defined operationally in terms of the presence of certain bacillus in the human body.

Any unit of measurement, is an operational definition, i.e., a unit of measurement is defined in terms of an invariable property of a substance which would be used for comparing the things that have the same property in multiples of the unit. A unit of weight is defined in terms of gravitational force that exerts on an object and this unit is used to compare the gravitational force exerted on different objects in multiples of this unit.

[ b ] *Extending the Uses of Terms*

When one extends the use of a word, one includes even the objects that do not normally come under the purview of the notion. For example, in the early phases of civilization, man believed that only movable things had life. He changed his view soon after he discovered that plants also respond to light, oxygen, water, minerals etc. This warranted a change in the use of the expression 'living being'. He chose to extend the use of the expression even to refer to plants which were not formerly included as part of its extension.

[ c ] *Restricting the Use of a Term*

The classical example of restricting a term is the Logical-Positivists' use of the terms 'true' and 'false'. They restricted the uses of the terms claiming that only descriptive statements could be true or false but not metaphysical and ethical. By restricting the use of the terms 'true' and 'false', Logical Positivists have restrained coining two more terms for expressing the specific senses they had in mind.

[ d ] *Metaphorical Use*

One may find it convenient to use a word in an extraordinary manner in a context. For instance, if one does not have a word to refer to a creature that one finds in the garden, one may refer to the creature by calling it 'lizard' being fully conscious of the fact that the creature in question is different from what is known as 'garden lizard' or only other form of lizard. That may serve the purpose of showing the creature to a friend and be pleased by the discovery of a new creature in one's own garden.

Stretching the use of words is a very common phenomenon. We use words in a metaphorical way sometimes overtly and on other occasions in a very subtle manner. Metaphorical use could be an easily recognizable phenomenon as is the following. When we say, 'Time and tides wait for none', one is expected to understand 'time' and 'tide' on the analogy of conscious beings. An example of a more subtle metaphorical use of terms is our attempt to understand the structure of an atom in terms of the structure of the solar system. We may try to understand in a yet another manner, the material world in terms of mathematical concepts such as positively charged protons and negatively charged electrons. Or for example, a male female distinction may be used in classifying material world. Though sentences using such concepts will be literally meaningless, one could take them to be metaphorically meaningful. That is to say, the rules that are invoked for comparison or metaphorical uses of words are not the normal criteria for the use of those words. Ryle points out that we speak of the human mind on the analogy of the human body or physical objects, and therefore we ask the wrong question as to where the mind exists.<sup>8</sup>

One speaks of the memory of a computer, but this is possible only when we take it in a metaphorical sense. A close analysis

of the use of the word 'memory' indicates that the two are different. Human memory, for instance, can fade over the years. And there is a sense of temporality, i.e., early memory and the memory of the experience of the recent past in the case of human memory. Such things are not applicable to computer memory. Computer memory cannot 'fade', and does not have temporality as a part of it; it is either fully there or wiped out partially or totally; but it can never fade like human memory. There can be a mix up of events in human memory. The sequence of events can change while retrieving what is stored in human memory. These things cannot happen to computer memory. We can safely claim that the concept of memory as applied so to computer is nothing but a stretched metaphorical use of the term in question.

Which is a metaphorical use and which is not, can perhaps be identified only after doing proper analysis taking case by case. However, when we use a term that is normally used to describe things that belong to a category to describe things which belong to another category we pay the price of linguistic oddity of sentences having no literal meaning for such exercises. Without the category jump a use of a word in a sentence does not turn out to be a metaphorical one. Only when we are clear that a statement is literally meaningless, can one take a metaphorical meaning of it into consideration. Literal meaning of a term is logically prior to metaphorical one. If one does not know literal meaning of a word one cannot use it in a metaphorical manner. This is because, normal use of a word is logically prior to its use in a deviant manner.

#### 4. *Creative Use*

Man's creative use of language is best exemplified in his uses of the word 'good'. One uses this word in variety of contexts,

and the rules for the use of this term are sometimes provided anew. Moreover, there does not seem to be a hard and fast rule in allowing the combination of this word with other words to form compound words. One can formulate a criterion for a 'good magnet' using superconductor material which has not yet been manufactured. Similarly, one can use one's own criterion to determine something to be good or bad. For instance, imagine that one has recently bought a car. And also imagine that one knows nothing about the technical details about the functioning of the different parts of the car. One can still venture evaluating the car, claiming that it is a good or a bad car even if one is totally unaware of the criteria normally used for evaluating cars. R. M. Hare gives many examples of this kind to argue that new criteria could be evolved by the users of language to use the word 'good' in an entirely new manner in a new situation.<sup>9</sup>

Not only that one could use words in a language creatively, but also one would notice creative uses of words. How does one know otherwise that Kripke has used the expression 'rigid designator' in a creative way? One knows the words 'rigid' as in the sentence 'Indian society is rigid as opposed to a permissive society'. One knows the word 'designator' as in the case of 'morning star' designating the planet Venus. But one cannot conclude that the expression 'rigid designator' means something that is rigid and that it is a designator together. 'Rigid designator' makes no sense unless treated as a metaphor, or a technical term having stipulated rules for its use; ordinarily, it is only a human being or a system governed by men which could be rigid, and not words. That is, the first symptom on the basis of which one can conclude that the expression cannot be interpreted literally. And hence, the conclusion: Kripke must have used this expression as a metaphor to express his unique thought-

Normally, the man in the street does not feel that his language is inadequate to express his thoughts and feelings. It is the creative thinkers such as philosophers, writers, scientists, to mention only a few, who feel the inadequacy of the language. They use language creatively in one or the other of the following manners. One uses a word creatively by over emphasizing one of the existing criteria over the rest. Sometimes, one coins a new word or an expression by providing criteria for the use of the expression. Besides, there are other situations where one uses the words creatively. For instance, using an evaluative word descriptively, or using a descriptive word evaluatively, are some of the other types of creative uses of word.

One can creatively introduce a new expression using the method mentioned above following the spirit of economy of vocabulary. The new expression has to be learnt independently of the existing vocabulary and hence does not reduce our efforts in learning and remembering it. For instance, one could have the following and many more expressions using the word 'good' denoting not a basic value, but a derived value from a set goal. 'Good car', 'good typewriter', 'good chronometer' etc. share no criteria with 'good' representing the basic value. They have independent criteria and their criteria have to be learnt independently in order to familiarize oneself with these expressions.<sup>10</sup> They do not belong to the same family sharing family resemblances. This is because the word 'good' denotes different type of notion than the word 'war' in the former example. The word 'war' shares its criteria with other expressions carved out of this term; while, the word 'good' denoting a basic value does not share any criterion with the expressions, because the sense in which the term combines itself with other terms in order to yield new expressions is different from the basic notion of good. The term 'good' designating a derived value from a set goal,

combines itself to form expressions in tune with our principle of economy of vocabulary.

### 5. *The Concept of Enabling Institution*

Invoking a new convention, or providing new criteria or modifying the existing one for the use of a word and a host of others, belong to the enabling institution of language. What an enabling institution is can be fruitfully explained by taking a parallel example from ethics. Promising is an act that can be performed by any human being. An agent does not acquire any obligation until he promises. Having promised someone of something, it becomes an obligation on the part of the person to keep the promise. 'Promising' as an institution makes it possible for one to come under an obligation if one so chooses. However, the institution of promising does not ensure anything about the content or fulfilment of promise. It also permits an agent to promise two people in such a manner that the agent cannot meet the obligations arising out of both the promises. Why should one promise in this manner without ensuring that one is in a position to meet the obligations arising out of these promises, is a different issue altogether; but the fact that it is possible to promise in such a manner indicates that 'promising' is an enabling institution. And these conflicting obligations that one has acquired are due to one's act of promising.<sup>11</sup>

'Enabling' is defined as opposed to 'directive'. A directive principle, for instance, does not give an agent the freedom to choose his course of action. There would hardly be any choice left to individuals to choose from either in the manner of their action or the goal of their action. Imperatives and commands are directives in this sense.

Language consists of many enabling institutions. Barring the failure of communication as the only dis-incentive to behave in



an inconsistent manner in the use of language, there are no 'directives' in language. Naming an object, conceptualizing from experiences, providing a new criterion or modifying the existing criteria for the use of a word, following or not following the conventional rules, using the words descriptively or evaluatively etc., are all possible because they are all enabling institutions in language. What an enabling institution does in the context of language, say of naming, is to make it possible to name or re-name an object the way one wants it. And similarly, the enabling institution of conceptualizing allows the users of language to conceptualize the way they want to suit their needs. Language allows us to use the words with their old rules and usages or modify them according to our perceptions and needs

[ a ] *Emphasizing a Name or a Criterion*

'Naming' being an enabling institution, it permits the user of the language to use a name [ i ] with the same word with the existing criterion, or [ ii ] with the same word with a new criterion for identifying the object, or [ iii ] with a new word with an existing criterion for identification of the object named or [ iv ] with a new word with a new criterion for identification. This enabling institution of language, permits him to use a name rigidly or nonrigidly. If the speaker wants to use a name rigidly then he has to emphasize the name against its criteria, and if he wants to use a name nonrigidly, he has to emphasize the criteria.

Both the proper names and definite descriptions work well as referring expressions. Depending on the context, one may choose between a proper name and a definite description for the purpose of referring to an object uniquely. Everything would be all right till someone challenges a definite description as a criterion for a name. If there is such a challenge claiming that a definite

description is either not a definite description at all for the reason that it describes more objects than one, or is a false description of the object, or is a description of some other object but not the object in question, then there can arise a dispute. If there arises such a dispute, whether definite description should overrule the name or *vice versa*, cannot be said in advance. Which one of the two should overrule the other, solely depends on the intention of the speaker. What we normally do in the absence of any dispute is to depend upon failure or satisfaction of criteria for the uses of words.

When a criterion for the use of a word is challenged, the normal criterion for its use is suspended for the moment. The dispute could be for one of the two following reasons : [ i ] The name is undisputed, but there is disagreement over the criterion for the use of that name. [ ii ] The criterion is undisputed, but there is a disagreement over the name for which it is a criterion. Depending upon various other considerations, one of the disputants would re-assign a name or a criterion or modify the existing ones by using the enabling institution of naming and resolve the controversy. The controversy over the issue of proper names between what is known as the Cluster Theory and the Causal Theory discussed by Kripke seems to centre around this issue of emphasizing of the one over the other of the two referring expressions.<sup>12</sup> Which of the two, whether a name or a definite description, should be treated as more basic is the issue that these two theories are eager to settle.

The issue of emphasizing one thing over the other is nothing but giving logical priority to one over the other. That is, in the logical description of the world, whether we should take name to be logically prior to a definite description or *vice versa*, is the issue. Viewing language from a meta-level, one is tempted to say that the definite description which serves as a criterion

to identify the object referred to can only have a secondary place, since in the absence of names one needs no criteria for name. Moreover, it is logical to think that criteria cannot be prior to names because criteria change but names do not.

To view the same problem from a different point of view, it sounds logical to claim that the enabling institution of naming could be used only if one knows what one is to name in advance before naming anything. That the thing that is being named has to be either perceived or conceived; and in either case there has to be some unique description of that very thing *prior* to one's using the enabling institution of naming; otherwise one cannot know what one has named. And if one does not know what one has named, it is as good as not naming anything.

The shift in the emphasis is possible only when there are two things which are interrelated. Moreover, which one, whether the name or its criterion, should be used with emphasis need not be decided in advance. In most cases it may not matter at all. Should there arise a dispute or doubt, which the speaker intends to emphasize, gets clarified from the context.

Imagine the following situation where the speaker provides criteria one after another for the identification of the place called 'Nariman Point' in Bombay. The speaker says: 'After coming out of the Churchgate station, one needs to turn right and keep going till one reaches the cross where one has to turn left in order go to the Life Insurance Corporation building. The place where you turn to your left is called 'Nariman Point'. If the hearer expresses a certain inability to follow the instruction or put it into practice, the speaker may offer another criterion: Keep going from Malabar hill towards the Churchgate railway station. Instead of taking a turn to your left near the railway station, go ahead. Soon you will notice a building called 'Air

India'. The turn to your left near that building is called 'Nariman Point'. If the hearer still fails to grasp the criterion, the speaker might offer yet another criterion stating that one could come to Nariman Point from Mantralaya. In his last attempt, the speaker may ensure that the hearer follows his criterion by sketching the approach road to 'Nariman Point' from a place familiar to the hearer.

Notice that the speaker has emphasized the name rather than the criterion for its use in the above example. The speaker did not consider any one of the criteria he listed to be essential for the identification of 'Nariman Point', though each and every criterion he stated was sufficient in itself to function as a proper criterion. Since he was familiar with the place and the name, the speaker could offer new criteria with ease to overcome the difficulty of his hearer in identifying the place.

One could imagine a situation in crime detection where a criterion is being used with emphasis against names by a police inspector of criminal investigation. He may weigh the finger prints on a sharp instrument suspected to be used by the criminal in committing the crime more than the names mentioned by an eyewitness. The inspector could be willing to reconsider the name of the criminal on the basis of the statement made by the eyewitness in the wake of some dispute about names. However, he may not agree on the point that the criterion of finger prints on the sharp instrument is not a genuine criterion at all, i.e., it does not identify any person uniquely.

In archaeological research, it may be advantageous to treat the inscription of a name on a wall as significant and the description of what the person named did as an over-estimation; or the description of what a person did as authentic but the name as inauthentic. One could easily multiply examples of this sort.

Essentially, this is what is highlighted by Donnellan in the case of a definite description though he does not draw the same conclusion from his example.<sup>13</sup> His own example is that of a person called 'Smith'. Smith was a noble person with whom no one was unhappy. Somehow Smith was found killed one day. In this example, 'Smith's murderer' is a referring expression, and some one makes the statement 'Smith's murderer is insane'. Donnellan gives two plausible interpretations following which one would assign opposite truth values to the same statement. The first interpretation of the expression 'Smith's murderer' is: the person is insane in the literal sense implying thereby the criminal should be treated in a mental hospital. The second interpretation of the expression is: having known how noble Smith was, someone opines that Smith's murderer must be an insane person, implying thereby there could have been no rationally acceptable reasons for murdering Smith and hence a harsh punishment should be awarded to the criminal. Donnellan claims that on one interpretation, namely, where one uses the definite description referentially, the statement may be false, i.e., the person who murdered Smith is not an insane person. And on the second interpretation if the speaker has used the definite description attributively, namely, that the one who has murdered Smith must have been insane in the sense that Smith was an excellent person who could not have troubled any one to get killed in this manner may be true. Thus, he notes that definite descriptions may be used referentially or attributively and that makes some difference to the truth value of the statement in which the definite description occurs.

We may note here that when a definite description is used attributively, it hardly refers to any one particular individual; any one who fits the description is the referent in such situations. On both the interpretations given above, the definite description

has been used with emphasis. That is, even if a person P is convicted for the murder of Smith after taking all the available circumstantial evidences into account, and subsequently even if there emerges any compelling reason to review the legal judgement in question, one cannot shift the emphasis of the criterion 'Smith's murderer' over to the name 'P' of the person convicted while reviewing the case. That is, one cannot begin reviewing the legal sentence against the person P taking 'Smith's murderer' as one of the criteria to identify him.

When a definite description functions as a criterion for fixing the reference of a name, the criterion has primacy over the name or the object named. Once the object is named, and one is able to use the name independently of the criterion, i.e., once the speaker is in a position to provide additional and independent criterion for identification of the object named, he is in a position to emphasize the name and use the name as a rigid designator.

Given a name in currency, the users of language could offer new criteria for fixing the reference thereafter or identifying the reference in different contexts; and given a criterion, the users of language can decide on the name and the object that satisfies the criterion.

#### [ b ] *Conceptualizing*

The enabling institution of conceptualizing is used mainly in two ways. One way is to conceptualize anything for the first time, and another way is to modify the existing conception. Formulating a new concept is done normally by formulating a criterion for the use of the word associated with it. And modification of a concept is done by altering the criterion, or by adding new criteria for the term associated with the concept.

A user of a natural kind term might want to emphasize the term or a criterion. And each user can emphasize either the term or criterion depending on his perception and need. The change of the criteria for the use of the word 'whale' is an example of this sort. Scientists, at a certain stage of development in zoology, felt the need to modify the classification: emphasizing zoological classificatory criterion, they decided to call whales 'mammals'.

A criterion is chosen arbitrarily as is the case with a proper name. In the example of angina discussed by Wittgenstein, to claim that such-and-such a bacillus is found in one's blood is to claim that the person is suffering from angina, provided that the presence of that bacillus in one's blood is taken to be the criterion for the disease angina. If the presence of the said bacillus in one's blood is not taken as a criterion, it serves as a symptom since the two are naturally related. Wittgenstein claims that doctors use names of diseases without ever deciding which phenomena are to be taken as criteria and which as symptoms.<sup>14</sup> One can generalize and cover a wider range of terms. The shift in our treatment of a phenomenon as a symptom to our treatment of the same phenomenon as a criterion or vice versa, is permissible in language. One and the same phenomenon could be treated as a symptom at one time, and a criterion at another time. Thus, our conception of angina largely depends on what we take as a criterion and what we take as a symptom.

It should be obvious by now that to claim that something is a criterion is not to claim that it is an essential criterion. Assigning a criterion for the use of term does not hinder one's further choice of criteria for the same term. Each and every word can be revised by providing new criteria or modifying existing ones. This is being done by creative writers all the time.

On the analogy of proper names, one can say that when one uses a common name with a certain emphasis, the criteria for identification of the objects referred to by the name in question are suspended for the time being. A new set of criteria including all the previous ones, or modified version of some of them, is introduced in the place of old criteria. Now, if the new set of criteria are not accepted as they come in conflict with the old set, naturally there arises a dispute. The dispute is largely linguistic. Only in those cases where there are ways of showing that a criterion is false, can the disputes be settled without invoking any arbitrary rules of language.

It should be noted, however, that a criterion cannot be shown to be false so easily. By showing that some cows are wild, one cannot show that cows are not domesticated. That is by showing that there are exceptions, one cannot show that a criterion is false. Since a term can have many criteria, giving counter examples does not help to prove that the criterion is false. In order to show that a criterion is false, one has to show that it does not identify even one individual of that kind. In the example of the term 'cow', one should be able to show that not even one cow is domesticated only then has one shown that 'domesticated animal' cannot be used as a criterion to identify cows and hence any further description based on this criterion of cows would be a false description.

As in the case of proper names, if one knows the object that is designated by a name, the person in question could provide more criteria than what he is familiar with in the initial stage for the identification of the object. This freedom and ability rests with users of language : to provide the same criterion with which he identified the object named first, or to provide a new one for his hearer. After having known what gold is, one is in a



position to offer any one of the attributes of gold which is unique in a context as an identifying description for the metal. And on another occasion, some other attribute of gold may be offered as a criterion for identification of the same metal by the same speaker. A criterion for identification of an object is always chosen from the available attributes of the object in a context.

A criterion is selected arbitrarily, and the speaker has the ability to select a property of a natural kind as its criterion if and only if he knows the conditions under which the criterion can serve as a criterion. That is, any true description of an object cannot serve as a criterion for identification of that object. 'A pet animal' cannot serve as a criterion for 'cat' in a general context where there are other pet animals. However, if the context were such that only one animal, namely, cat is the pet animal, it would serve as a criterion.

What is noteworthy from the discussion above is that one cannot claim that any criterion for identification of a natural kind may not be a universal criterion for no attribute of a thing seems to be its attribute unconditionally. However, within a certain domain of discourse, one could speak of absolute criteria for identification of certain natural kinds. For instance, one could speak of valency 79 as an absolute criterion for gold within a certain framework of science. No doubt, this criterion could be treated as the essence<sup>15</sup> of gold within the same framework.

However, the framework within which we are conceptualizing could be changed as a matter of choice. For instance, one could shift one's framework to the subatomic particles. From subatomic perspective, when a certain number of protons and the same number of neutrons etc. come to form an atomic structure,

collectively they produce a solid body having the properties  $p_1$  to  $p_n$  which are nothing but what are known in the ordinary transactions as the 'properties of gold'. There is no reason to believe that science would not advance any further and could not embrace a different theory of subatomic particles in the next decade. Human inability to conceptualize is the only limitation that is there for any shift in the perspective of any subject matter, may it be science or philosophy.

Under certain circumstances, it does not exhibit certain other attributes. Therefore, there cannot be any absolute criteria for gold applicable under all circumstances. For instance, when a woman has to find out whether her goldsmith has given her a golden necklace or not, the valency test is of no use. She has to decide whether the ornament is golden or not on the spot. Therefore, an attribute of gold can function as a criterion in a context, but it may not function the same way in some other context. And hence, by declaring an attribute of gold as essential or absolute, one has only sealed the possibility of changing one's perspectives in future. Any attempt to provide a universal criterion to be used for identifying gold under all circumstances would be frustrated.

However, it is possible to check the shift in the perspective in an arbitrary manner and claim an attribute of gold to be the essence of gold. That can be achieved only by insisting on an arbitrarily chosen criterion from one particular perspective alone. For instance, one could insist that gold should have an attribute 'x', otherwise we shall not consider it to be gold. By stipulating what is not going to be considered as gold, one has closed every possibility of adding any further criterion for the use of the term 'gold'.

One could fix one's perspective in an arbitrary manner and achieve success in producing essences of different natural kinds. By arresting the possibility at the level of human psychology<sup>16</sup> of viewing the same subject matter from different perspectives in an arbitrary manner, all that one would achieve is to produce certain analytic sentences. One such example from science is: 'Gold has valency 79'.

If the criteria of the concepts are sealed, then there is no possibility of any change of perspectives. For instance, if we limit our conception of natural right only to the right to live, we have eliminated the very possibility of including the right to freedom, or right to work in it; and hence no change of perspectives on the matter could be anticipated.

Note here that by insisting that only that thing which has the attribute *x* is gold, one has laid emphasis on the criterion rather than the name 'gold'. This would be a clear case of emphasizing a criterion over the term. In contrast, if one emphasizes the name 'gold', one would be open about the criteria for the identification of the object designated by the term. When 'gold' is used with emphasis, one cannot claim a particular criterion to be an essential criterion. 'Gold is not gold because it does not satisfy the criterion *x*'. Any context where one speaks of an essence, one speaks of a criterion with emphasis, and where one speaks of a name with emphasis, one does not insist on a criterion for the use of the term.

By having enabling institutions like naming and conceptualizing, language has facilitated man to think in a diverse manner about the things and values around him. It has made it possible for man to change and adapt himself to the demanding environ-

ment. The very continuation of the human species rests largely on its linguistic ability and efficiency.

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#### NOTES

1. See his discussion on 'Descartes' Myth' and 'Knowing How and Knowing That' in *The Concept in Mind*, by G. Ryle, Penguin Books [first published by Hutchinson 1949], pp. 13-24 and pp. 26-59.
2. See *How to do Things with Words* by J. L. Austin, Oxford University Press [first published by the Clarendon Press, 1962], Oxford, 1982.
3. See especially his discussion on 'good', 'meaning' and 'criteria' in R. M. Hare's *The Language of Morals*, Clarendon Press, 1952; *Freedom and Reason*, Oxford University Press, 1963 and *Moral Thinking*, Clarendon Press, 1981.
4. Kripke, S. *Naming and Necessity*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1972, 1980, pp. 7ff. Kripke thinks that it is a linguistic accident that we have the same name which designates different people. Also see J. W. Meiland's discussion on 'The problem of Ambiguous Reference' where he treats ambiguous reference as a problem. *Talking about Particulars* by J. W. Meiland, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1970, pp. 1-7.
5. See for his notion of 'family resemblance' *Philosophical Investigations* by L. Wittgenstein, [eds.] G. E. M. Anscombe, R. Rees, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1968, pp. 65-70.
6. Wittgenstein writes: 'For when I say that the rules are arbitrary I mean that they are not determined by reality in the way the description of reality is. And that means: it is nonsense to say that they agree with reality, e. g. that the rules for the words "blue" and "red" agree with the facts about those colours etc. See L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Grammar*, R. Rees [Ed.], trans. A. Kenny, Basil Blackwell, 1974, p. 246.

7. See for his notion of symptom *The Blue and Brown Books*, by L. Wittgenstein, Basil Blackwell, 1958, pp. 24-25.
8. See his discussion on 'category mistake', *The Concept of Mind*, pp. 20-24.
9. See his discussion on 'Meaning and Criteria' in *The Language of Morals*, pp. 94-110.
10. *The Language of Morals*, pp. 94-110.
11. See B. Freedman on enabling institution of promising, 'A Meta-Ethics for Professional Morality', *Ethics*, Vol. 89, 1978, pp. 8-9.
12. See Lecture I in *Naming and Necessity*. Also see the introductory remarks to *Naming, Necessity*, and *Natural Kinds* by S. P. Schwartz, Cornell University Press, 1977.
13. See K. S. Donnellan 'Reference and Definite Descriptions' in *Naming, Necessity*, and *Natural Kinds*, pp. 46 ff.
14. Wittgenstein, L., *The Blue and Brown Books*, Basil Blackwell, 1958, pp. 24-25.
15. Wittgenstein writes for example: 'I say, however: if you talk about essence-, you are merely noting a convention.' Remarks on the *Foundations of Mathematics*, [Eds.] G. H. Von Wright, R. Rees, G. E. M. Anscombe, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 3rd Edn., p. 65/74.
16. However, this kind of social and psychological pressure works only for a decade or two.

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