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## **Semantic Naturalized and Semantic Holism: Quine's Account**

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**Abstract:**

*Semantics is the philosophical and scientific study of meaning in natural and artificial languages. Semantic Naturalism is a metaphysical doctrine about the status of semantic propositions. Isomorphism is the structural identity of two languages or one-to-one correspondence of two propositions. To say of two languages are isomorphic is to say that they have the same structural identity or logical form. If there is an isomorphism from  $P$  to  $Q$ , then there is no structural difference between the two rings. The ring  $Q$  can be thought of as a copy of  $P$ . Let  $P$  be a ring. The map  $id: P \rightarrow P$  is then obviously a ring isomorphism. Semantic holism is a theory of meaning in which meaning is a multidimensional phenomenon where meaning belongs to the whole of a language-game and is itself a whole in the sense that it is neither a composite entity nor it is a single content. This paper proposes to examine the central notion of how semantics is naturalized in Quine's Philosophy. And also this paper will focus upon the relationship among naturalized semantics, isomorphism and semantic holism. Quine has quoted it, but expression of the naturalizing urge can be found much earlier in the history of philosophy.*

**Keywords:** *Semantics, Naturalized, Holism, Phenomenology, Language-game, Epistemology etc*

### **1. Introduction**

Quine has raised several questions with regard to meaning in language and communication, and his approach to these issues has been that of a thoroughgoing naturalist. Within the naturalistic framework Quine claims that meaning is indeterminate, reference is unknowable, ontology is relative, theories are underdetermined by experience, and the truth value of any statement can be revised. I will try to explain in what sense these claims are to be understood and how far these claims can be defended. Philosophically, this paper tries to show that Quine is a very systematic philosopher and his solutions to the problems in different areas of philosophy such as ontology, epistemology, philosophy of mind and language are based on his naturalistic commitments. In the end, this can be said that Quine has been successful in establishing a new form of semantics.

#### **Background of Semantics:**

Semantics is the study of meaning in language. Particularly, it is the study of how meaning is structured in sentences, phrases, and words. The term "semantics" has been derived from the Greek word "*semantikos*" which means "to mean" or "to signify". In general, however, semantics generally refers to how meaning is conveyed through the symbols of a written language. Semantics can be understood when it is contrasted with another linguistic term, syntax. Syntax is the study of rules regarding how symbols are arranged. Syntax is the study of the structure of a language while semantics is the study of the meaning of a language. In the study of semantics, it is important to recognize the generally accepted meaning of a word or term rather than the literal meaning. For example, say a woman named 'ALLIDER' was trying to describe the way that her daughter looks. She might say, "She isn't as tall as her father, but she looks exactly like her Aunt Drew. If the listener knew both the father and the aunt of the daughter who is being described then this information would probably help him to imagine what she looked like. So this is the case that there should be closeness between both listener and speaker. It often uses synonymy and antonymy in its investigations. It is quite common to describe the world around us in terms of opposites and commonalities. So also the same exercise is applied by linguists when they use synonyms and antonyms to describe a word, phrase, or sentence. Theories of semantics attempt to describe the meaning of words and how they can change in different situations. There is a denotation for every word that is its direct or literal meaning, but words can also have connotation, or implied meaning. Some words or phrases create a feeling that goes beyond literal meaning. For example, the phrase "sitting on seashore" has a simple literal meaning but might also conjure up thoughts of relaxation, warm sunshine, and happy memories of vacations for the listener. In this way, the meaning of the phrase is expanded and changed by the connotation that goes along with it.

Semantics is the study of the meanings of linguistic expressions, either simple or complex, taken in isolation. Semantics is the theoretical explanation of the way in which the meaning of sentences depends on the meaning of their parts. The term 'semantics' is sometimes also used to describe the study of the relation between language and the world. Basically it is used to describe anything relevant to meaning.<sup>1</sup>Semantics is the study of meaning. It is a wide subject within the general study of language. An

<sup>1</sup>Micheal Morris, An Introduction to the Philosophy of Language, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, 2007, P. 315.

understanding of semantics is essential to the study of language acquisition (how language users acquire a sense of meaning, as speakers and writers, listeners and readers) and of language change (how meanings alter over time). It is important for understanding language in social contexts, as these are likely to affect meaning. It is thus one of the most fundamental concepts in linguistics. The study of semantics includes the study of how meaning is constructed, interpreted, clarified, disguised, explained, simplified negotiated, contradicted and paraphrased.

## 2. What Is The Use Of Semantics In Philosophy?

The study of the relation between language and things which is unavoidable is called semantic theory of meaning. In philosophy of language, the 'meaning' and 'definition' are two core areas. Before giving the meaning or the definition of the term 'philosophy', it is desirable to what we understand by the words 'meaning' and 'definition'. It is not possible to properly assess the value of the definition of the term 'Philosophy' unless we understand the words 'meaning' and 'definition'. Because of 'semantics', i. e., the study of the relation of language to things has been recognized as an unavoidably important branch of philosophy these days.<sup>2</sup>

## 3. Types Of Semantics

There are several types of semantics which are individually crucial to each other. These are Ideational semantics, Behaviorist semantics, Referential semantics, Possible-world semantics, Fregean semantics, Truth-conditional semantics and Conceptual-role semantics.

According to John Locke, is the idea associated with ideas in the mind of anyone who knows and understands that expression? That the ideational account of meaning, as Locke's view is sometimes called ideational semantics. He held that linguistic meaning is mental and words are used to encode and convey thoughts, or ideas. According to him, it requires that for a successful communication, the hearer correctly decode the speaker's words into their associated ideas. As stated by the American psychologist B.F. Skinner, the study of linguistic meaning is more "scientific," which is proposed that the correct semantics for a natural language is behavioristic. The meaning of an expression is as uttered on a particular occasion which is either the behavioral stimulus that produces the utterance, the behavioral response that the utterance produces, or a combination of both. Consequently his account of semantics is called behavioristic semantics. John Stuart Mill, pursued the intuition that linguistic expressions are signs of something other than themselves. He suggested that the meaning of an expression is whatever that expression applies to, thus removing meaning from the minds of its users and placing it squarely in the world. According to him, a referential semantics is that the entire one learns when one learns the meaning of anything which is that it applies to that only and to nothing else. Ex: a referential semantics is that entire one learns when one learns the meaning of tomato is that it applies to tomatoes and to nothing else. For the case of referential semantics, the compositionality is respected and that the meaning of red tomato is a function of the meanings of red and tomato, because red tomato will apply to anything that is both red and a tomato. But what about expressions that apparently refers to nothing at all, such as unicorn? A referential semantics would appear to be committed to the view that expressions such as unicorn, Santa Claus, and Sherlock Holmes are meaningless. It is supposed to explain the meaning of an expression is determined not only by what it applies to in the actual world but also by what it would apply to in different "possible worlds." According to possible-world semantics, the meaning of a proper or common noun is a function from possible worlds (including the actual world) to individuals or things: given a possible world as input, the meaning returns as output the individual or thing that the noun applies to in that world. Ex: The descriptions the first president of the United States and the husband of Martha Washington are not synonymous because one can imagine circumstances in which the former would apply and the latter would not, and vice versa. The meaning of the first president of the United States determines that the expression applies to George Washington in the actual world but to other individuals in other possible worlds. According to Frege, the meaning of an expression consists of both the referent and the sense of an expression contributes systematically to the truth or falsehood (the "truth value") of the sentences in which the expression occurs which is called Fregean Semantics. Ex: if Smith does not know that George Washington was the first president of the United States, then Smith believes that George Washington chopped down a cherry tree can be true. Davidson attempted to account for semantics theory meaning not in terms of behaviour but on the basis of truth so it is called the truth-conditional theory of semantics. In order to avoid having to distinguish between meaning and character, some philosophers, including Gilbert Harman and Ned Block, have recommended supplementing a theory of truth with what is called conceptual-role semantics which is also known as cognitive-role, computational-role, or inferential-role semantics. According to this approach, the meaning of an expression for a speaker is the same as its conceptual role in the speaker's mental life.<sup>3</sup>

## 4. Isomorphism And Meaning Naturalized

Isomorphism is the structural identity of two languages or one-to-one correspondence of properties or two propositions. To say of two languages are isomorphic is to say that they have the same structural identity (logical form). In Wittgenstein's Tractatus, a proposition is a picture that is isomorphism with a correspondence state-of-affairs. There are two versions:

- Stronger version: the names will stand in a relation of reference to the world.
- Weaker version: only rational facts will be symbolized by relational sentence. There is no requirement of a sentence will have reference to a relation in the world.

<sup>2</sup>Laxmi Devi, A Hand Book of Philosophical Analysis, Manisha Publications, Cuttack, 1998, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Ernest Lepore, 'Semantics', in Encyclopedia Britannica, 1768.

According to Carnap, if two sentences are logically equivalent and have the same number of corresponding components then they are intentionally isomorphic.

### 5. Naturalization Of Meaning And Semantics

Naturalization of meaning is an attempt to study semantic meanings of linguistic expressions, primarily as natural objects generated by syntax. Human individuals are capable with ability to recursively and hierarchically manipulate linguistic representations that can be assigned to corresponding sentences. This is simply an undeniable fact in nature, as anybody can readily conclude through introspection regarding numerous facts about structural ambiguity and the limitless possibility of embedding a sentence into a larger one.

### 6. Five Reasons For Naturalizing Meaning

Several considerations motivate Naturalization of meaning. I will briefly list five of them:

- Naturalization of meaning can avoid involving in bio-semantic theory the intractable complexity of human intentionality, which has been attacking hundreds of years of serious rationalist investigations. Under Naturalization of meaning, the object of study is safely defined as the properties of linguistic expressions impressed out by syntax, nothing more. Thus it avoids getting into the ground of language use. A form of free action that is carried out by a person for any number of purposes he might have in his intention.
- Naturalization of meaning fits properly under the title of methodological naturalism, a position that studies, and seeks theoretical understanding of, human language with the same rationale and methodology as are adopted to investigate other natural objects. We don't have to start our inquiry by presupposing any prior conception of semantics, such as that semantic theory must be denotational, representational or truth-conditional.
- Naturalization of meaning can provide a purely internalist theory of meanings. Any reference to I-language external postulates, such as prescriptive rules, communicative success, reference to mind-external objects and to truth judgments against individuals world knowledge, is naturally excluded under Naturalization of meaning.
- Naturalization of meaning, if successful, can explain (not just formalize or describe) semantics in terms of syntax and its computational principles.
- Hypothesizing that syntax largely determines semantic interpretation; Naturalization of meaning seeks a maximally simple and transparent conception of the syntax-semantics interface. If successful, the resultant theory of syntax and semantics will meet the minimalist program for (bio) linguistic theory.

### 7. The Character Of Natural Language Semantics

In this paper I will examine the nature of the semantic component in the grammar from the perspective of minimalist syntax. Minimalism is a program, with a lot of room for different theoretical articulations. Here I will argue that something like the simplest picture for syntax fits closely with the simplest picture for semantics. Crucially, for this happy marriage to be possible, cyclic spell-out is required. The end result is, I will argue, a step in the right direction of naturalizing semantics.

Dretske's naturalizing the Mind sets out the case for holding that mental states in general are natural representors of reality. Mental states have functions; for many states the function is to indicate what is going on in the world. Among such indicator states are beliefs. The content of these states is given by what they are supposed to represent. So if a state is supposed to indicate that it's dark, then "it's dark" is the content of the state. Thus we can characterize how the organism takes things to be, its subjectivity, by noting first what physical (neural) state it is in, and second what the biological indicator function of that state is. Thus the mind and meaning are naturalized.

### 8. Conclusion

I came to the conclusion that the semantics theory of meaning is very much closed with natural language which represents to the world which we refers to the thing for making a sense of that thing. In the field of isomorphism, semantics play a vital role approach to meaning of the words/sentences. Here to get the meaning of the words/sentences we have to understand that the structure/logical form of the sentences and we have to focus on those sentences in holistic manner. Because in the meaning of a sentence does not contains only in that sentence rather involved in some other sentences which are belongs to that sentence. According to the Quine's philosophy, basically in his area of meaning he suggested that the meaning has net-work busyness it means in language sentences are connected with each other. It means absence of one another's meaning may not be fulfilled (in his book, *Ontological Relativity*). I understand that the semantics is a crucial and core part of the philosophy of language and which mostly needy section for is constructed, interpreted, clarified, disguised, explained, simplified negotiated, contradicted and paraphrased to study the meaning of the sentences.

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