

# MILLER'S DREAM

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## Contents

Critical Common Sense and the Humanities <i>Myron Miller</i> .....	03
Is JTB Really Knowledge? <i>M. Ahsan Cheema</i> .....	15
Logical Atomism <i>Talha Minhas</i> .....	26
Problem of Evil <i>Qurat ul Ain</i> .....	53
A Critical Review of Conservatism <i>Muzafar Shah</i> .....	61

### *Editor's Note*

It is a great honor for me to present to you the 3<sup>rd</sup> issue of Miller's Dream, which is a peer-review journal for students at Forman Christian College (A Chartered University) to present their papers on Philosophy. The purpose is to promote quality research and philosophy.

The 2015 issue consists of papers that explore analytic philosophy, political philosophy and philosophy of religion. These are all important topics because each one of them deals with contemporary philosophical issues like the problem of evil,

Gettier's problem, logical atomism and neoliberalism and political philosophy.

This year, an essay from Dr. Myron Miller has also been added (that was to be presented at the Philosophy Symposium 2015). The essay explores the current political situation and religious extremism in a very interesting way.

Lastly, I would like to thank the editorial team of Miller's Dream 2015. I would especially like to extend my gratitude towards Dr. Mark Boone, Dr. Myron Miller and Dr. Ghazala for their endless support and help through the various steps of the publication.

*Danish Bashir.*

**Critical Common Sense and the  
Humanities:**

Of the Making of Good Citizens There is No  
End\*  
Myron Miller

A saying attributed to Albert Einstein goes, "The true sign of intelligence is not knowledge but imagination". One might ask how Einstein knew that this is true. Not everything famous people say is true just because they are famous, even famous in this case for very creative ideas. Even so, the statement has a ring of truth to it, especially since it is only when Einstein began to give imaginative to illustrate relativity, rather than mathematical formulae demonstrating its logical elegance. The former made it possible for the rest of us to begin to get on board with it; the latter simply left most of us puzzled at best.

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\* Trading on what king Solomon said, that of the making of books there is no end (Ecclesiastes 12: 12), with each new generation needing those books the claim may be even more true of the need to

The claim that imagination takes precedence over knowledge, however, at least for the humanities, creates a puzzle. On the one hand, in moral judgments about the kind of behavior that dignifies what is meant to be human seems to require that we understand what is expected of us in the context of our decision. On the other hand, the rules that define what behavior is consistent with human dignity are external to any individual human being. We as individuals don't make up the rules; we either embrace or reject them.

This is not, strictly speaking of course, a contradiction, since it is possible to take responsibility for embracing or rejecting some specific expectation or rule, in whatever way this expectation or rule might be justified. The clash, emerges when

produce good citizens. The puzzle that we examine here may explain why this is so. By the way, he concluded from this that we may grow weary in much study. This is not to say we shouldn't rise to the task!

we ask whether embracing or rejecting a particular expectation makes us truly human. This is an extremely timely question nested in an extremely important issue. While new in urgent confrontation, the challenge, is as old as the desire imbedded in all humans to do what is right by whatever determines the right. It takes on a fresh urgency, however, in the light of the great harm that is inflicted on non-conformists. Who is it that best contributes to the welfare of all? Is it the one who obeys what is expected of her/him or is it the one who takes no set of expectations or rules as externally required of any of us?

The philosopher Robert Paul Wolff argues in his *In Defense of Anarchism*<sup>1</sup> that the external restraints of civil law enforced by legal officers of the courts undermine good citizenship. His position is that unless a person acts because something is the right

thing to do, not because there is a law, one cannot be a responsible citizen and there for not a good citizen. Actions that merely reflect a rote matching with a particular law is acting under an external constraint, but responsibility can only be obtained when one acts because the law being followed is judged by the actor as justified. A “good” citizen seeks the best possible society in which to live so evaluates the worthiness of each law as it may apply to a specific act.

A difficulty with his solution, namely that the autonomy of personal law-like intuitions guided by the principles of reason that permeates human thinking, is that we are left without an ability to resolve conflicts when seemingly different claims to these principles justify clashing conflict. A good case in point is the horror that many have expressed over the bulldozing

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Paul Wolff. *In Defense of Anarchism* with a New Preface. (Berkeley, CA; The University of California Press, 1970), passim.

destruction of the unique historical monuments of the ancient civilizations of Nimrud near Mosul in Iraq. It was the ancient capital of Assyria, a location mentioned in an historical record acknowledged in principle as scripture by IS. The irony of this is justified not because it advances the cause IS seeks to accomplish, but because the rational principles used to apply law to their cause requires that this be done. The media<sup>2</sup> has quoted an IS spokesperson as saying “When God Almighty orders us to destroy these statues, idols and antiquities, we must do it, even if they’re worth billions of dollars.”

The problem with this judgment, of course, is what is imbedded in the conditional clause of the justification, namely, “When God Almighty orders . . . .”

The antiquities are priceless just because in the view of alternative cultural structures they trace something of the history of humanity struggling to establish social structures that benefit the greatest number of all. The earlier attempts to achieve this good for all, it is pointed out, may have been flawed, but they reveal something about us that is important. The mistakes and errors at worst serve to show what should not be done—if we remove them we may make those mistakes all over again.

Wolff’s solution leaves this conflict at a stale mate. Both IS, on the one hand, and all those historians and antiquities scholars who vehemently oppose the destruction going on in northern Iraq, on the other, appeal to what they each extract as intuitive judgments justified from a law for

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example, [abc.news.com/International/isis-destruction-ancient-city-artifacts-war-crime/story?id=29441874](http://abc.news.com/International/isis-destruction-ancient-city-artifacts-war-crime/story?id=29441874), Mar 6, 2015, 12:46 PM ET, accessed 3/7/2015. Dawn’s report does not provide the IS justifications for their actions but at

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1167910/outrage-horror-as-is-destroys-ancient-city-in-iraq>, for March 7, 2015, they provide a litany from Middle Eastern authorities who repudiation them.

social order and individual welfare. While this is an extreme example, there are minor cases all the time. The laws regulating sexual lifestyles in various countries and in pockets within countries that have otherwise broad allowances for such lifestyles is a fundamental challenge to “Wolffian” solutions. The problem is that the subjective condition for reason in each case is based on a foundation of laws judged essential for social order and individual welfare but which are not shared by all those extracting the laws that justify the behavior.

Notice that it is not merely the way that this issue is stated that requires a philosophical approach to solving it. It may have looked like this as that the problem was staged at the outset, namely by reference to

justifying a particular set of laws as having a particular foundation of some sort (in the nature of reason, the structure of humanity, God’s will, what is utile for the happiness of the greatest number, etc.), but the examples clearly show that the problem is a practical one, or, better, one that requires a solution in the practical evaluation of the real life relationships among human beings. Should any individual or group come out of a defended solution without full dignity for what it means to be a human being, then the solution would be defective.

Appealing to conflicting foundational law systems, however, is not the central issue facing the subjectivist solution.<sup>3</sup> As Jeremy Bentham, in the context of 19<sup>th</sup> Century, opposed the

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<sup>3</sup> To refer to Wolff’s solution to this dilemma as a subjectivist solution is misleading, since he does not argue that we support human dignity when we are guided by how we feel. This would lead to social chaos. Here what is meant is that each individual has a rational ability that is founded on how each individual functions as a human being. These are the internal conditions of rational evaluation on the

basis of which specific feelings are themselves judged by the individual and others as the justification for specific actions. Emanuel Kant called this the inner spring of action a phrase that is imbedded in one of the forms he used to express the Categorical Imperative, namely, “We ought always to act on that inner spring of action (impulse) that you can at the same time will to be a universal law,

justification of English law as developed by the great legal philosopher and jurist Sir William Blackstone in his classical set of commentaries on English law. Blackstone based law on the concept of divine right for both the throne and the parliament to make and implement the laws of society.

Bentham argued that this leads to contradictions among laws extracted by rational intuition from that concept.<sup>4</sup>

The issue, then, is whether, on the one hand, there is an external law that can be justified as applying to all humans whatsoever and wherever they may be, or whether, on the other, there is a set of common rational principles that are innately human, imbedded in every human being by

virtue of being human. If we choose, on whatever grounds, the former we will have to find some unifying principle that brings together the competing claimants to an external transcultural law. If we choose. On whatever grounds. The latter it is clear that we assume that there is some rational guide imprinted in the rational processes of every human being and imperfectly used by all.

Each of these options has a difficulty. The first has the challenge of buying universal agreement by becoming nearly empty, that is, unable to determine how any particular law is to be applied in any specific place or time. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights espoused by the United Nations has this feature, as do the

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withal." (*Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Part II).

<sup>4</sup> *An Introduction to the Fundamentals of Morals and Legislation*. Available at the Library of Economics and Liberty, <http://www.econlib.org/library/Bentham/bnthPML.html>. Bentham's argument is actually worse than that this justification of law leads to contradictory laws. In fact, he maintains, it undermines the very respect in the citizenry that the law needs in order to

appeal to obedience. In Bentham's England a person could be hung for treason if found hunting rabbits for food on the Sabbath, since the Sabbath was a divine law and, since divine law is the foundation of the civil law, to violate the civil law forbidding Sabbath day hunting was an act of treason, requiring the punishment of execution. If one could be executed for Sabbath hunting for rabbits, then one might as well commit any crime whatsoever; the punishment was the same.

Mosaic Ten Commandments. We might all agree that murder, for example, is wrong and forbidden and yet rigorously disagree on what is a case of murder; or that stealing is wrong, but disagree that taking something owned by someone else is a case of stealing. A famous example of the latter was given by Plato<sup>5</sup> (a bit modified here) in the challenge as to whether we should keep or return a knife, put in trust to us by a friend who fears in a moment of despair he will use it to kill himself. Surely to keep for ourselves what belongs to and that is requested subsequently by a friend would fit the definition of stealing, but surely no one would condemn keeping the knife. It seems obviously right that keeping the law in this case would not be right. And “seems” here

appeals to an intuition that appears common to any rational person.

This seems to lead us directly to the second alternative, since there appears to be an agreement that a particular conclusion is warranted even when it has not been drawn from any particular, external to the disputants, law. However, the latter has the problem that rational principles, if they follow the rules of inference for one person, they have to follow the same rules for everyone. It is very tempting at this point to claim that we can tell those cases of genuine stealing or murder, etc., by common sense. The challenge is that common sense produces conflicting conclusions in all areas of decision making. This is no clearer than in the issue as to whether an action can be

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<sup>5</sup> *The Republic*, trans. Benjamin Jewett. Book I; Release Date: August 27, 2008 [EBook #1497] Language: English Character set encoding: ASCII\*\*\* START OF THIS PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE REPUBLIC \*\*\*Produced by Sue Asscher, and David Widger; <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1497/1497-h/1497-h.htm>. The actual reasoning goes like this: Socrates says, “Suppose that a friend when in his

right mind has deposited arms with me and he asks for them when he is not in his right mind, ought I to give them back to him? No one would say that I ought or that I should be right in doing so, any more than they would say that I ought always to speak the truth to one who is in his condition.” To which Cephalus responds “You are quite right, . . .”

performed in a particular place or at a particular time. We have a belief, common to all cultures or historical periods, that an action or event is identifiable by locating its place in context. Personal and corporate responsibility requires that this be true. In a court trial, if this could not be established no adjudication could be made.

There is no issue, of course with the commonly held belief (held without regard to cultural or historical distinction) that the physical world is constantly changing; it is relentlessly modifying itself both as to the location of the objects in the physical world as well as the dimensions, character, and shape of the objects in the physical world. Common sense, then, requires that an event occurs as an instant, or collections of instances in a physical context. It is this that allows us to measure when and where

something happens, how long it happens, and what size the object(s) involved in the happening is(are). But since this is so, it is not possible to locate any particular object or event at a place in a specific time. This problem with common sense is as old as at least Zeno of Elea, with whose paradoxes reflective mathematicians and others puzzle about to this day. However, as I have said elsewhere, "Common sense is, after all, our last resort of appeal, even to the testing of our most sophisticated rational theorizing".<sup>6</sup>

The key to resolving the issue of subjective rationality by means of a critical common sense, therefore, has to lie in understanding and accepting the ambiguity of human perspective. This is not the same as recognizing the limitation of human reason and perspective, though it includes this. A word or term is ambiguous if in a

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<sup>6</sup> Myron Miller. *Developing an Uncommon Common Sense*. (Lahore, Pakistan: Self Published, 2012), p. vii.

context of its use the word or term could be understood as being used in more than one of its legitimate meanings. In the English sentence “Upon entering the foyer there was affected an amazing entrance,” we won’t know what is being said until we are clear on the use of “entrance”. If the emphasis in its oral use is placed on the first syllable, the sentence is referring to an architectural structure like the foyer of the Faisal Masjid. If, however, the oral emphasis is placed on the second syllable, the sentence is referring to something like a spiritual or ecstatic experience. The first names something external to the speaker while the second names what is happening in the speaker. In the case of determining what ought or ought not to be done, the common sense application of how an action affects another group or individual demands a disambiguation of the application of one’s judgment in the same way we disambiguated

the term. This takes, as Einstein would insist, imagination. It requires that the judgment take into account the affected perspectives of all involved in the action or event.

This would appear to be less of a challenge for scientific reasoning. Surely a hypotheses proposed to account for the occurrence of some phenomena should be easy to apply. The facts, after all, are what they are. However, this is simply not the case, as the history of science, as well as religion, illustrates repeatedly. There have been individuals executed for claiming that the sun is the center of the solar system or sacrificed in order to placate the gods and guarantee a bountiful harvest. The power of a commonly held belief that may be wrong but vested with survival value for the individual or the group is very difficult to overcome. It can be overcome if and only if a competing common sense belief, that is, a

belief that in its hypothetical form also accounts for the data needing an explanation, is given a conflict free opportunity to be tested to determine its value in accounting for the facts in question. This is the challenge of being fundamentally human in an enlightened self-interested way.

Few in our world would challenge the importance of rejecting the geo-centric hypothesis or that sacrificing a virgin to the volcano god has any common sense value. Surely none would mount a campaign to reinstate these as the only acceptable beliefs. The reason that we would not is not merely that they have been superseded by “better” hypotheses or beliefs more compatible with the acceptable feelings of the majority. The reason lies closer to the reality that nothing is to be gained by pursuing hypotheses that, however effective they may have been in explaining the information available to the common person, that is, the person of the

everyday life, they leave unexplained critical or perhaps even new information.

The remnants of an otherwise rejected belief, like the earth is flat, do remain as a part of everyday speech and with a residue of explanatory power. In the everyday experience of the common person we still talk about the sun rising in the morning and setting in the evening, even though, so far as I know, no one believes that this is what the sun does. Despite this, no one would accept defending the hypothesis that the earth really is the center of the solar system even though our language matches this view. There are far more serious examples of dragging suppressed hypotheses into the world, using linguistic remnants of the long replaced

hypotheses to justify atrocities against innocent sisters and brothers.<sup>7</sup>

What the humanities must do, and it is really the only discipline area that has the capacity and tools to do, is to develop in our students and among our colleagues the common sense of critically challenging every belief. Every belief is honored by asking “why should anyone believe  $x$ ?” Every hypothesis, however, engrained in the social and cultural consciousness, is there to explain something in human experience. Equally, every hypothesis or belief so engrained needs to be open to challenge and re-evaluation. That is our basic job description, but we are warned by what

happened to Socrates, John Huss, Moritz Schlick, and myriads of others, many of whose names will never be known to us, that ours is a risky business. The question is not whether we ought to challenge the entrenched beliefs of an individual or a group, but how we are to do it and whether we are willing to accept the cost of being misunderstood. Our path is Hardened, black and white, moral distinctions, distinctions whose adherents are not willing to test these distinctions by the criteria of how those distinctions may or may not be universalizable by any rigorous standard simply will not succeed in a world that is rapidly coming together with traditionally

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<sup>7</sup> Hippocrates, for example, opposed the accepted philosophy of medicine being practiced by the physicians at Cnidus. He supported the hypothesis that symptoms of an illness had a cause which if identified would eliminate the symptoms when the cause was eliminated. This seems like a common sense hypothesis, but one that was opposed by the entrenched belief coming from Cnidus that symptoms revealed an imbalance in the basic fluids of the body, which when brought back into balance would cause the symptoms to disappear. See, for

example, Hakim Mohammed Said *Traditional Greco-Arabic and Modern Western Medicine: Conflict or Symbiosis?* (Karachi, Pakistan 1975). Hippocrates in essence experimented with patients looking for causes, since that was the hypothesis that was driving his methodology. Underlying this, however, was that in all treatment do your patient no harm. That is a critical common sense rule that can be more widely applied in the resolution of human conflict and social unrest.

distinct traditions and cultures facing each other. Only a critical common sense will give space for all to live with each other. The humanities holds the key to addressing with the hope of solution the most important issues for human survival that have every existed.

Suppose, for example, the hypothesis that the earth in one more generation will be so burdened by a bloated and profligate use of its resources that no life would be able to continue. Should we, then, eliminate a proportion of the human population to guarantee the survival of the human race as a whole? Could common sense accept that there is no requirement that the human race continue? Could common sense condone, or even encourage, the conflict and violence that would surely emerge if the resources became so scarce that no one but the very clever and/or the very strong would have any hope of surviving? Would common

sense, in our critical sense of “common sense” (of method rather than a set of beliefs) require that there be a prohibition of producing any more children? Would a critical common sense be a useful tool at all?

These and many more are exactly the questions that need to be addressed by practitioners of those of us in this noble enterprise. Ideas by themselves, historical or modern, are only suggestions; it is the argument and evidence sifted by a critical common sense that will be able to meet the critical challenges of a world swiftly coming together. The conviction that what some authority or text says is to be accepted simply because it is authoritative for any reason whatsoever does not have the ability to address the complexity of a multi cultured but intricately connected world. The ambiguity (not obscurity) of our commonly held beliefs demands that we stop directing others toward a favorite or traditional

solution because it is favorite or traditional. Traditional or favorite solutions may be just what is needed but not because they are traditional or favorite but because they have passed the demands of critical common sense.

If all this is so, then to accept the view that there exists a text or person that settles all human beliefs, as opposed to an open ended methodology for the formation of beliefs, makes it impossible to be human and to perform the tasks of the humanities. If the history of this challenge is correct, there will always be the need to assist those who have not yet tasted of the sweet waters of release from the dogmatism of commonly held beliefs. Yet the respect for others and the conviction that others are worthy of my best efforts to help them achieve the very best of what they are capable is the very core of our mission. It would seem, then, that of the making of good citizens there is

no end and that the only tool available for the greatest number of people is the method of a critical common sense that lays bare the hidden ambiguities and moral traps embedded in the beliefs that are commonly held.

## Is JTB Really Knowledge?

M. Ahsan Cheema

One might wonder that in the history of philosophy a paper with this title has been written before and that one is correct in thinking so; a paper with this topic has indeed been written before, a paper which is not only philosophically significant but is also like an earthquake that crippled the very foundations of epistemology. This paper consisted of two counterexamples to the very basic definition of knowledge, which is, justified true belief. This paper was written by Edmund Gettier, a very brief critique on something that had stood unchallenged for at least the last two thousand years.

My aim in this paper is to explore different views that came in response to Gettier's two page problem and I also aim to provide a solution to this puzzle. In doing so I will take all the help that I can, from

Wittgenstein and his language games and I will show that Gettier's counter example does not affect knowledge or the definition of knowledge. The argument that I would certainly use is that Gettier takes knowledge too exclusive of person, in short, the truth value and the justification are considered regardless of the use of the statement and its context. I would like to argue that we should always consider the language game that one plays in order to remove any misunderstandings.

### I

Edmund Gettier in his famous paper presented us with two major counterexamples. Both of them based on the thesis that Joseph Margolis summarizes in his paper *The Problem of Justified Belief* very well.

"For any proposition  $P$ , if  $S$  is justified in believing  $P$ , and  $P$  entails  $Q$ , and  $S$  deduces  $Q$  from  $P$  and accepts  $Q$  as a

result of this deduction, then *S* is justified in believing *Q*". (The Problem of Justified Belief, Joseph Margolis)

The first counter example consists of a case when two people apply for the same job, and only one of them is appointed. Now person *A* believes that that person *B* will get the job and as it happens, *A* counts the number of coins in *B*'s pocket. The president of the Company assures person *A* that *B* will get the job. So, *A* is justified in believing that *B* will get the job and *B* has ten coins in his pocket. From this *A* deduces a series of statements as follows:

i. *B* will get the job and *B* also has ten coins in his pocket.

ii. The president of the company assures *A* that *B* will get the job.

iii. The person with ten coins in his pocket will get the job.

*A* is justified in believing iii to be the case, because 'iii' is entailed by 'i' because

of 'ii'. As it happens *A* gets the job instead of *B* and *A* also has ten coins. Now 'iii' is justified belief and is a true statement but is not knowledge.

When the first case is not enough, Gettier proposes another riddle for epistemologist to think on. Gettier asks of us to imagine *A* knows *B* and *A* also believes that *B* owns a Ford automobile. The reason for *A* to believe that *B* owns a Ford is that throughout his life he saw *B* driving a Ford automobile. *A* also knows *C* of whose whereabouts *A* is not aware of, so *A* proposes three propositions:

1. Either *B* owns a Ford or *C* is in *X*.

2. Either *B* owns a Ford or *C* is in *Y*

3. Either *B* owns a Ford or *C* is in *Z*.

All of the three statements mentioned above are entailed in the statement

*B* owns a Ford.

As it happens, *B* does not own a Ford, on the contrary he perhaps had it rented and *C* actually happens to be in *Z*. The statement is true and is perfectly justified and yet is not knowledge (Is Justified True Belief Knowledge, Getteir).

Gettier builds a very strong case against JTB but there might have been some loop holes left open for others to tear apart. The first and the foremost critique that comes is from the argument of probability. By the virtue of logic, all inductive statements are considered probable and by the virtue of logic, any statement that is deduced from the first statement is less probable with its justification. The probability of *A* being justified in the first statement is much more than the last one, so the reliability of justification decreases as limits of the first statement increase. Now in the first case when *A* believes in the statement 'i' he is more justified than when

he is while believing the statement "iii" and due to which the reliability of the statement decreases and because of which it should not be considered knowledge. I. Thalberg explains this with the following analogy:

"The analogy between risk-taking and believing may help clarify my objection. How much you have to wager, and the odds at which you bet, need not be specified. The point of comparison is this: just as you want to win as many bets as possible, you want to have correct beliefs as often as possible. And, if you are to be justified in betting or believing, your evidence must show that your prospects of winning satisfy a minimum standard. Now it is obvious that Smith's evidence makes it less reasonable for him to gamble on the conjunction" (In Defense of Justified True Belief, Thalberg)

Graham Dawson believes that this problem in epistemology occurs only when Justified True Belief is considered both

necessary and sufficient condition for Knowledge. He also believes that Armstrong's response to the problem, maintaining Reliable true belief as the necessary and sufficient condition for knowledge is also unjust. His arguments, in his paper, provided sufficient reason for his solution that on the contrary JTB and RTB are the necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge:

$$(p \text{ Bap Jap}) \cdot Rap \leftrightarrow Kap.$$

Where  $p$  is a statement,  $Bap$  ( $a$  believe  $p$ ),  $Jap$  ( $a$  is justified in believing),  $Rap$  ( $a$  reliably believes in  $p$ ) and  $Kap$  ( $a$  Knows  $p$ ) (Justified True Belief is Knowledge, Graham Dawson).

Graham also establishes that justification is not just finding evidence for something to be; on the contrary he borrows his justification from Popper and asserts that a true belief is only justified when it passes

through a justification assessment which he calls Comprehensively Critical Rational.

“A promising way of trying to solve this problem is to abandon the attempt to justify our beliefs, though not by taking refuge in the enervating sanctuary of scepticism. Bartley has put forward the doctrine of comprehensively critical rationalism (CCR), which identifies rationality in belief with criticism rather than justification” (Justified True Belief is Knowledge, Graham Dawson).

## II

These were some responses that I thought were worth mentioning, and some of the responses I would like to incorporate with my own solution, namely of *Joseph Margolis* and *John Dreher*; although I would like to discuss Linda's Zagzebski's paper *the inescapability of Gettier's problem*. I believe that it is evident from the title of the paper what Zagzebski establishes

in this paper. In this paper she picks on the contemporary theories of knowledge, especially on the warrant theory (Alvin Plantinga, one of the major contributors), and builds cases similar to that of Gettier's (the cases of barn and the wife in particular). And from this she concludes that knowledge is possible only because of the addition of *good luck* to the justified belief (The Inescapability from Gettier Problem, Linda Zagzebski). And this she proposes as a solution to the problem. She also gives a secondary solution to the problem which she calls "Defeasibility", which is, undefeated justified (warrant) true belief (The Inescapability from Gettier Problem, Linda Zagzebski); where defeaters are statements that renders a particular statement false.

If we consider Zagzebski's language, then we will not only suffer with intense skepticism but we might also render as all knowledge null and void. Let me give you

an example from one of most prosperous domain of sciences, namely psychology. I will in this example focus on the clinical application of this domain and will consider one psychologist, namely *A*, who is not only considered a pioneer in his field but is also well known for identifying patients suffering from depression. Now imagine that *A* notices a person *B* and his behavior intrigues him. *A* is certain that this person is suffering from depression, *A* quickly cross checks with the Diagnostic symptoms manual and is completely justified that this person is depressed and *A* also truly believes that this person is depressed; but in actual this person is not depressed on that particular moment. After two days *A* sees this person again and now this person is actually depressed due to some personal tragedy, and *A* now asks the person if that person is depressed and *B* will claim to be depressed. But did *A* have knowledge before this particular moment?

Linda will argue that two days prior to *B*'s actual depression *A* was justified (warrant) and believed with bad luck, but when *A* asked *B*, when *B* was actually depressed, he had knowledge due to shift in luck. As I mentioned above that this kind of analysis will not only make one skeptical about everything but will also reduce the reliability and certainty of the structure of knowledge.

### III

Now, one should really ask what even certainty is. Certainty philosophically may be considered infallible, in lay man's terms it may mean confidence. But can someone doubt certainty? Can something be certain and uncertain at the same time? And one must beg the question that what is doubt? Can I say that '*x* is *y*' and still say that it is possible to doubt it? These are the questions that one must ask before we establish the foundations of knowledge that can defend assaults from problems as Gettier

proposes. Still can one say 'I am certain that *x* is *y* but I doubt it', then one must answer the question what is doubt? Can doubt be possible without justification? If yes then can I say that 'I doubt *x* is *y*' without providing any reasons? Probably not, then there is a need that I must reiterate the question, can one say I am certain *x* is *y* without justification? Karl popper might say that the question 'what is knowledge' is in itself a wrongly put question, and the reason is that it begs for authority, one the other hand one must ask the question that 'how can one avoid doubt or how can one be certain?'

"The traditional question of the authoritative sources of knowledge is repeated even today- and very often by positivists and by other philosophers who believe themselves to be in revolt against authority.

The proper answer to my question ‘How can we hope to detect and eliminate error?’ is, I believe, ‘By *criticizing* the theories or guesses of others and – if we can train ourselves to do so – by *criticizing* our own theories or guesses’” (Conjunctures and Refutations, Popper, pp. 26).

Still the question remains intact, can one statement be certain and uncertain at another time? Perhaps Russell in his paper *On Denoting* establishes that well when he talks about the denoting phrases. Imagine if you were alive in 1850 and living somewhere in Mughal India and someone uttered a statement that ‘*the present Mughal king of India is bald*’, that statement will not only be considered true but also certain; certain because all of India were to see the king, they would affirmed the fact. If I am to utter this statement now, and claim it to be certain then there is a strong probability of doubt, because there is *nopresent Mughal*

*king of India*. So in his paper Russell says that every denoting phrase is prone to time, hence the certainty of every statement is prone to time as well (On Denoting, Russell).

One might find certainty and doubt to be timely, that is, at one point one statement or belief is certain and at another time that statement can be doubted and rendered uncertain, or perhaps reduced null and void, but the question which might seem paradoxical or contradictory is, can one statement or belief be certain or uncertain at the same time? One must be inclined to believe that this statement is indeed paradoxical, but it is not. In *Philosophical Investigation* Wittgenstein talks about the language games, if I were to interpret language games, or if I were to use a synonym replacing language game, I would certainly choose (alongside Wittgenstein, Justus Hartnack, William H. Brueing and

Douglas B. Rasmussen) contextual. Now if I were to consider the same statement, *the present Mughal King of India is bald*, and attribute it to a friend in humor who is actually bald, then this statement will hold not only true but certain because of the language game.

“The idealist’s question would be something like: ‘what right have I not to doubt the existence of my hand?’ (And to that the answer can’t be: I know that they exist.) But someone who asks such a question is overlooking the fact that a doubt about existence only works in a language-game. Hence, that we should first have to ask: what would such a doubt be like?, and don’t understand this straight off” (On Certainty, Wittgenstein, 24).

In another occasion in the same book Wittgenstein says:

“One may be wrong even about ‘there being a hand here’. Only in particular

circumstances one can be wrong- only in certain circumstances one can’t be” (On Certainty, Wittgenstein, 25).

Wittgenstein argues that knowledge is not something separate from human beings but is as much part of human beings as any other human phenomenon, Austin in his essay *other minds* and Rasmussen in his essay *Austin and Wittgenstein on ‘Doubt’ and ‘knowledge’* backs Wittgenstein’s thesis that knowledge is not separate from humans, all knowledge is Human knowledge (On Certainty, Wittgenstein; Philosophical Investigations, Wittgenstein; Other Minds, Austin; Austin and Wittgenstein on ‘Doubt’ and ‘knowledge’, Rasmussen).

One must now wonder that how this is all related to Gettier’s puzzles? Then one should know that Gettier problems has no ground against the definition of knowledge; for what Gettier ignores while presenting this paradox is the language games. Coming

back to Gettier one must know that Gettier is only considering one language game, and from that language game Gettier is attacking another language game. An analogy to describe will be same of Columbus, when he discovered North America and thought he was in India. In both the first and the second case Gettier is using logical syntax only, which one might find explained in *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus*, and is completely forgetting the meaning and interaction of the person with the truth. In the context of the first case the 'iii' statement is neither justified nor certain, why? Firstly, the denoting phrase shifts from specific to general with probability reducing from one to anyone who owns that specific amount of coin. Secondly the statement fails that instance when *A* gets the job instead of *B*, in short justification is lost as soon as *A* gets the job.

It might seem confusing, because we all assume that Gettier seems logically coherent when Gettier considers that *A* entails  $A \cdot B$ , and if someone comes out from a logic's class, will consider the case of that Gettier presents evident, although I would argue that Gettier is using a language game that contains the reference only to the logical deductive justification. But in the case of statement "iii" "the person with ten coins in the pocket" is used by *A* as a non-ambiguous direct reference to the person *B*, and the statement as a whole is set in a language game that refers to another statement that *B* will get the job. If the statement is used otherwise, which Gettier uses is an error committed, a misunderstanding of the language game.

In the second case, again Gettier falls prey to the same mistake. In context *A* is only certain of *B*'s owning a Ford, even if *C* is in *Z* and the statement *Either B owns a*

*Ford or C is in Z* the justification will be lost as soon as *B*'s owning Ford is rendered False due to language game (context).

The major Critique that one owes to Gettier is that Gettier removes the human Element from knowledge and destroys the objectivity of the world outside humans. The other critique that one owes to Gettier is that he refuses to consider the semantics and language-games (contextual). Lastly, one owes to Gettier for unveiling the weakness of the definition in the language game where only logical syntax (or symbolic logic) exists.

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## Logical Atomism

Talha Minhas

Hume was of the view that our thoughts are reducible to two kinds of logical constructs, namely 'matters of fact' and 'relations of ideas'.<sup>1</sup> This view is considered to be the fundamental postulate of modern empiricism as it brings out the element of scientific inquiry, inspired by the method of induction, to try to bring philosophy closer to a more systematic and clearer point of view. In this inquiry, meaning and syntax are of much value. These two components are the dividing line between two kinds of knowledge, namely the logical and the empirical.<sup>2</sup> For Hume, meaning is simply the association or impressions of events, logical or empirical, with ideas. If these ideas or notions make valid associations with reality, only then they may be meaningful.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, he brings out the understanding of these

associations of ideas by introducing concepts such as *resemblance*, *contiguity* and *causation*. These characteristics are what give coherence to our explanation of reality.<sup>4</sup>

In the beginning of the twentieth century, Moore and Russell were working on a logical model of empiricism, which was constituted by the fundamental notions of meaning and truth functions. These systems aimed at rendering the function of logic to solve linguistic shortcomings in empiricism by reducing the explanatory power of empirical analysis to logical analysis or analytical empiricism. The most successful outcome of these efforts was logical positivism. This movement was most popular during the third and fourth decade of the twentieth century. The most notable proponents of this school were Russell, the early Wittgenstein, Carnap and Ayer. The most notable piece of document to be

associated with the birth of analytical philosophy is Russell's "On Denoting", published in 1905. In this paper, Russell introduced the basic functions of what a logical system of analysis would look like. He introduced various concepts that constitute logical analysis, such as propositional function, general propositions, meaning with respect to 'denoting phrases', and logical truth/falsehood etc.

Later, Russell would derive a system of logical analysis that fundamentally reduces all empirical knowledge to components of linguistic analysis, which is constituted in his famous Theory of Logical Atomism. He takes inspiration from his former pupil, Wittgenstein, and develops a full-length method of analysis which promises philosophical clarity on the basis of the meaning of constituent 'atoms' of logical analysis.

In this paper, I will have an inquiry of the Theory of Logical Atomism followed by its challenges and how it faces these challenges. Furthermore, I would briefly discuss the challenges to logical positivism, in general, in light of Quine's famous 1951 paper, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism"; and, a brief criticism to his refutation of the analytic/synthetic distinction shall be provided. There are three major sections of this paper: introduction to the Theory of Logical Atomism; challenges to logical positivism and Atomism by Quine and Russell; and finally, some possible solutions to Quine's refutation (the solution rests on the notion that examination of a co-extensional language necessarily shows analyticity).

The scope of my present discussion will stretch towards building a thesis that explains and, consequently, retains Russell's Atomism, and defends Positivism. One of

my goals is to provide and emphasize how Positivism may be defended against Quine's refutation of the analytic/synthetic distinction. My defense questions Quine's argument from circularity of 'synonymy', and it aims to show that a logical examination of analyticity with respect to extension will provide necessary reason to show that analyticity holds.

The first section is concerned with the philosophic background of Russell's Theory of Logical Atomism; it deals with the fundamental concepts of Atomism, such as 'particulars', 'predicates', 'object-words' etc., and its roots in Hume and Positivism.

The second section deals with challenges to Positivism by Russell and Quine. It highlights the problem of verification and analytic/synthetic distinction. Furthermore, I will discuss Strawson and Grice's response to Quine's refutation. Gillian Russell's paper 'Quine on

the Analytic/Synthetic Distinction' is also included in my analysis of Quine's thesis; followed by this is my solution to Quinian refutation. Then, I will discuss some challenges to Atomism and some responses to these challenges. It is also my goal, in this paper, to show that Atomism is still relevant to contemporary analytic language philosophy.

## I

It would be appropriate to start by defining what we mean by 'logical atomism'; there is much ambiguity regarding this that needs to be clarified in order to make way for the following study. Logical atomism is simply a method of analysis in language to confirm whether or not bodies of knowledge are clear in their meaning. It should be easier for our purposes not to dabble into a full-length study of meaning; however, it will be discussed, to some extent, later on in order

to have necessary agreement. This method, *ex facie*, allows logical analysis to judge what it is that an empirical science needs to be rendered useful and strong. This is one of the most ambitious goals of this method. A consequence of this method is philosophical clarity in the sense that the inquiry generated from this method gives thorough freedom to reason in a coherent manner. In the following, I will examine the theory of logical atomism.

Logical atoms are the simple parts of language that, when conjoined, make a complex whole with proper meaning and coherence. These atoms are the constituents that partake in a language to share the goal of clarity in meaning. There are various kinds of 'atoms' involved in this analysis: particulars, predicates, propositional functions and so on are all 'atoms'. Logical atoms are defined as the simplest components of a language; without them, it

would not be possible to construct a coherent and meaningful language.

According to Russell, logical atomism is the name of a method that adopts the view that a complex structure has simple constituents and that these constituents can be analyzed and classified into logical components, such as 'particulars', 'atomic facts', 'predicates', etc.<sup>5</sup> The 'atoms' that Russell refers to are not atoms of physical nature; rather they are logical simples: a logical atom, strictly speaking, is the simplest form of designation that stands for something meaningful. In other words, a logical atom may simply be a relation between the name of an object and its meaning. In the following, Russell briefly speaks of logical atoms:

The reason that I call my doctrine logical atomism is because the atoms that I wish to arrive at as the sort of last residue in analysis are logical atoms and not physical atoms. Some of them will be what I call "particulars" – such things as little patches of color or sounds, momentary things – and some of

them will be predicates or relations and so on.<sup>6</sup>

What follows from this is a study into three basic distinctions involved in the Theory of Logical Atomism, namely 'particulars', 'predicates' and 'orders of language'. The first two are the kinds of words that have extensions of the physical nature in a language. The third distinction takes up on the matter of classification of language and the relations among 'atomic' and 'molecular' facts. The distinction between atomic and molecular facts is one that is of much concern as Russell considers this distinction to be very useful to understand 'atomicity', and comes back to them frequently.

Let us go back to the origin of this kind of theory of logical reductionism. In 1905, Russell published a paper entitled 'On Denoting', which concerned itself with the study of the functions of denotation, also known as extension. In this paper, Russell

introduced what he called 'propositional functions'. A propositional function is 'a form of words with an undetermined variable',<sup>7</sup> that when substituted with a value – a particular or a denoting phrase – becomes a proposition. The propositional function is an instance of what it is like to 'denote' something. A denoting phrase is the kind of thing that becomes a meaningful utterance simply because it denotes or designates a quality to a word. The paper introduced two kinds of knowledge and built to a theory that successfully managed to further clarify the ambiguities and incompleteness in Meinong's theory of denotation. The thesis of the paper is as follows: a denoting phrase may have one or a combination of three possibilities, namely it denotes something which is not known by direct acquaintance, or it denotes something that is definite, or it denotes something ambiguously.<sup>8</sup> The denoting phrase

expresses a relation or description of an object. The meaning of the object of denotation sometimes has the denotation itself, which shows that the knowledge we have by acquaintance and the knowledge we have by description is the kind of knowledge that involves denoting phrases *in* the meaning of what the denotation designates. For example, when 'the author of *Waverly*' and 'Scott' are observed together, they denote one thing, but one of them is the denotation and the other is the denoting phrase *in* the meaning.<sup>9</sup>

This brings the question of logical relation into the paradigm of analysis which allows a descent into what we know as logical reductionism, because this kind of study involves an inquiry of logical functions to explain linguistic relations. We may now begin with an analysis of the logical positivist school.

The logical positivist school emerged with the influential Vienna and Berlin Circles; the founders and leaders of these groups were Schlick and Reichenbach, respectively. These schools were basically of the view that a new kind of empiricism should come out of the preceding English empiricism. This new kind of philosophy, in their opinion, should adhere to a more systematic and logically consistent view of science based on the verifiability of different kinds of knowledge. Out of this school came the famous analytic/synthetic distinction and the Principle of Verification. The famous proponents of logical positivism were Wittgenstein, Russell, Ayer and Carnap.

Let us review what Ayer considered to be the most important claims of logical positivism. According to Ayer, there are two kinds of knowledge worthy of philosophical discourse: the kind of knowledge that can be arrived at by mere speculation and logical

inference; and the kind of knowledge that can be empirically verified. These two kinds of knowledge are categorized into two kinds, namely the analytic kind and the synthetic kind. In *Language, Truth and Logic*, Ayer mentions that the goal of philosophical analysis is one that critically challenges 'metaphysical dogmas', and this is achieved by means of logical analysis.<sup>10</sup> For Ayer, philosophy is regarded only as a 'department of logic.'<sup>11</sup>

The influence of Humean analysis is evident in *Language, Truth and Logic*; the analytic/synthetic distinction is highly inspired from Hume's epistemology. Ayer, in strong agreement with the logical positivists, constructs a criterion of significance to judge whether or not a proposition is meaningful. The goal of such a philosophy is to do away with the ambiguities in philosophical discourse due to which major misconceptions arise.

Metaphysics is challenged quite strongly in the beginning of the book; and, it becomes a full-blown critique of traditional philosophy by the end of the book.

The text presents to us a function of philosophy and the kinds of propositions that are subject of inquiry in popular philosophical discourse. The goal of philosophy, in Ayer's opinion, is to give definition to concepts *in use*.<sup>12</sup> Where the dictionary provides definitions in the sense that they are synonymous in nature; on the contrary, philosophy gives what may be called the *cognitive definitions*.

Furthermore, Ayer extends his discussion to the thesis that there are fundamentally two ways of declaring a proposition meaningful; this criterion is the product of the requirement of the positivists to limit philosophical analysis to only those propositions that may be admitted as meaningful as opposed to nonsense and un-

indicative. Ayer states that an *a priori* statement is one that is analytic in nature; an analytic statement is one that is necessarily true; thus, the subject of an analytic statement necessarily follows from its predicate. Such a proposition is one that, when negated, produces a contradiction.<sup>13</sup> What follows from this is the fact that analytic statements need not any empirical evidence to show their truth; they are rendered true by mere speculation. On the contrary, there are those propositions whose truth depends fundamentally on empirical evidence; these propositions may only be rendered probable at best, and never certain.<sup>14</sup>

Let us come back to Logical Atomism. In 1918, Russell gave a series of lectures entitled "The Philosophy of Logical Atomism", in which he concerned himself with introducing, by showing, the fundamental concepts involved in his

version of Logical Atomism.<sup>15</sup> These lectures are considered to be one of the initial contacts of Atomism with modern empiricists, the earliest being Wittgenstein's version of Atomism. Russell's ambition regarding this system is deeply rooted in his mathematical influence on his philosophy. The fundamentals of Logical Atomism include the following: that there are 'atomic' and 'molecular' facts; that there are various levels of logical relations between particular(s), which stand for monadic or polyadic relations in language; that there are logical complexes which could be shown as a function of ascending orders of arrangement of facts. These, together as a whole, make up for most of the system Russell had in mind for the construction of a logical language that aims for coherence and philosophical clarity. Let us see to it that we understand these basic points of Logical Atomism.

In Russell's understanding, knowledge as a whole is constituted by complex structures or relations of what may be called simple propositions or particular facts and their derivatives (general facts);<sup>16</sup> these different kinds of facts make it possible for us to accomplish the goal of communication and construction of a language that serves the purpose of showing or explicating the matters of philosophy, as opposed to a vague and ambiguous everyday language. And, it is the goal of Logical Atomism to point out the kinds of relations built into the philosophical language and to fix, wherever necessary, the ambiguities of philosophical discourse. For this, the most important distinction to which Russell points is the atomic/molecular fact distinction.

Preliminarily, each fact is represented by a set of two propositions such that each proposition has a fixed truth-value; thus, there are only two possible

outcomes of a particular fact: one corresponds to the fact such that it is true, whereas, the other corresponds to the fact such that it is false.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, it is to be made clear that these facts are not what may be called true or false; rather it is the proposition(s) corresponding to the fact which is assigned a truth-value.<sup>18</sup>

An atomic fact is one that expresses the simplest relation between a particular(s) and a quality. A monadic relation may be such that it has only one particular involved, and a relation with a quality; a dyadic relation is such that it has two particulars involved and a relation with a quality; similarly, a triadic relation is that which has three particulars and a relation with a quality and so on.<sup>19</sup> For an instance of a monadic relation, consider the proposition "Socrates is mortal" – in this, the particular is "Socrates" while the quality is "mortal", thus the relationship will be called a

monadic relation. Similarly, an instance for a dyadic relation may be expressed by the proposition “This is to the left of that”, in which there are two particulars and a relation.<sup>20</sup>

Facts, in general, must have three most fundamental constituents; without these, a fact may not be expressed in propositions. These are particulars, predicates and relations of qualities. We have discussed the relations of qualities earlier, which gave us a vague idea about the nature of particulars and predicates involved in atomic and molecular facts. To move further into an understanding of particulars and predicates, we must first try to define these terms. A particular may be defined as the “term of relation in atomic facts”.<sup>21</sup>

These particulars can exist independent of any proposition, but they are applicable only for brief moments. Particulars such as ‘the present King of France’ are proper names,

and they are what the subject in propositions becomes.<sup>22</sup>

Predicates are defined as “words that designate a quality”, which means that a predicate is simply a relation of what it is to have a name for something; however, it must be clear that a predicate is not the same as a name.<sup>23</sup> Coming to understand this is crucial while attempting to explain different kinds of facts. A predicate involves the understanding that it occurs only as a thing which explains the nature of something (designates a quality) or a subject. For instance, the sentence “x is small” describes a predicate. This predicate will always occur as a quality of something in relation to itself or some other particular.<sup>24</sup>

Let us come to molecular facts. We may define molecular facts as those that have more than one atomic fact. A molecular fact is such that it consists of two or more atomic facts connected with words

such as “or”, “and” etc. In pure logical sense, a molecular fact has two or more propositions, each corresponding to an atomic fact.<sup>25</sup> The sole purpose of introducing molecular facts in this discussion is this: atomic facts are not the only thing that may take the whole task of explaining the physical world in language; therefore, it is imperative that higher order languages need attention to a particularly more capable order of language that could express the complexity of arrangement in it. Russell calls the simplest of these ordered languages as the “object-language”. This whole point should be left at that, but I will come back to it later.

Let us see now what Russell means when he says there are negative facts. A negative fact, according to Russell, is the negation of a proposition expressing a fact; or, an incompatibility of a proposition with another proposition that expresses the

original fact which is negated.<sup>26</sup> This view is important for two reasons: negative facts allow us to understand clearly how propositions express facts; and, these kinds of propositions are wholly logical which increases the probability of a proposition to become philosophically clearer. Let us look at an example and abandon this discussion: consider the proposition “This is not red” and call it  $q$ , which expresses a negation of another proposition “This is red” (let us call it  $p$ ). In other words, we may express the negative fact appropriately as “not: this is red”, which is the same as saying that  $q$  is incompatible with  $p$ .<sup>27</sup>

Let us now come back to the object-language and the hierarchy of languages. This classification is purely based on the logical necessity of understanding functions a language has to show degrees of complexity in knowledge. There is a hierarchy within any language regarding

various functions it carries: there is initially an 'object-language', followed by a 'secondary language', a 'tertiary language' and so on. The 'object-language' consists of only words that are fundamentally associated with objects when they are present to the mental faculty of the speaker or the hearer.<sup>28</sup> The nature of object-words is such that they have meaning independent of the objects they designate, once it is associated with them. You understand an object-word by having repeated direct acquaintance with the object. This is logical in the sense that the word itself 'stands' for the sensations the object invokes when it occurs; the designation becomes the most fundamental requirement for the object-word to be considered meaningful. The truth or falsehood of sentences of the object-language is the matter of a higher order language. The nature of a secondary language is more significant in terms of the

truth or falsehood of all utterances in the object-language.<sup>29</sup> We should try to understand what it means to declare a proposition of the object-language true; similarly, we should understand what it means to declare it false. In a secondary language we only examine propositions of the primary language, i.e., we are not logically allowed to examine higher order languages in a secondary language; logical analyses in higher order languages apply only to preceding orders.<sup>30</sup> The reason for such a claim is that a proposition may be declared true only if we can show a definite relation affirming what is expressed in the proposition; similarly, we can say a proposition is false only if we can show that there is no sufficient evidence available to affirm what the proposition expresses. It may be said that a language *about* the nature of an object-language is beyond the scope of object-language itself; therefore, such a

higher order language may be called a 'metalanguage'.

## II

Let us now examine a few effects of Logical Positivism and Atomism on contemporary philosophy; we shall see how Positivism had diffused in only a couple of decades after it was started, especially after Quine's famous 1951 paper "Two Dogmas of Empiricism". I will examine some challenges to Atomism in the light of contemporary philosophy, and see whether or not it is possible to retain what is left of Atomism and build on it. I will also take a detour in the present discussion by saying some things of great concern in Quine's refutation of logical positivism.

In 1949, Russell suggested a few logical inadequacies concerning the criteria of meaning in the Positivist school among other concerns, namely the problem of verification.<sup>31</sup> There are two central

concerns in his paper; one refers to the incompleteness of the principle of verification, while the other concerns the inferential problem of 'existence-propositions'. Let us examine these concerns.

According to Russell, the positivists seem to be unmoved when the principle of meaning vaguely explains propositions about the limitation of classes of predicates. This raises some questions as to the ability of the principle to have much logical value. Consider, for example, the proposition 'all A is B'.<sup>32</sup> To say it is 'verifiable' is to say that there is at least one A that is a B, and also there is no A that is a non-B. However, in case if an 'x' is found, which is not a member of A, that is a B, we may say that there is a class A' which includes all members of A and 'x', for which B is true. From this, Russell extends, the initial proposition may be 'verified' on the basis if

there is a single object, which may or may not be a member of A, which is known to be a B.<sup>33</sup> Thus, we have a paradox.

Another concern Russell speaks about in this paper is regarding the inferential nature of 'existence-propositions'. The concern is that every statement of a particular propositional function is not capable of inferring any truth about the inductive evidence of our experience other than the mere logical possibility of the existence of its members. The logical nature of such propositions is such that these propositions may not satisfy the goal of predicating the classes of possible experiences.<sup>34</sup>

At the end of his paper, Russell shows a much deeper concern regarding the positivists' attitude toward empiricism, in general. The positivists are to some extent being unempirical when it comes to the principle of verification. The mere goal of

general propositions is one that requires, at least in Russell's understanding, evidence that can be shown empirically to consider such propositions probable from a 'finite number of observations'.<sup>35</sup>

Let us now turn to a famous and critical refutation of the logical positivist position by W.V.O. Quine. In 1951, Quine published a paper that put serious questions to the authenticity of the claim of the positivists, yet the nature of which is still relevant to contemporary analytical philosophers. The paper, entitled "Two Dogmas of Empiricism", is concerned with criticizing two things: the famous analytic/synthetic distinction in positivism is nothing short of a nonsensical position in itself, and logical reductionism is not possible with the laws of modern empiricism. Quine's thesis is to provide a solution to these 'dogmas' by suggesting a

'holism' that rescues science from immense ambiguities.

The two most important goals of Quine's thesis are to show that the traditional analytic/synthetic distinction in modern empiricism is a 'dogma' that should be disposed of, and that logical reductionism is a subsequent method following the rather 'radical' lines of positivism, which provides no practical use in scientific analysis. The topic that concerns me most in the present discussion is that of the refutation of the analytic/synthetic distinction, for this refutation directly undermines the positivists' position.

Quine approaches the analytic/synthetic distinction by saying that it is the center point of discussion in modern empiricism for two reasons: that it claims to simplify analysis of the theory of knowledge; and that it gives necessary grounds for the criteria of meaning. His

critique has three folds – each is shown to terminate on an ambiguous point of uncertainty: analyticity with respect to definition; analyticity with respect to interchangeability; and, analyticity with respect to semantical rules. My goal is to show how analyticity can be justified by showing a logical synonymy between two types of 'analytic' statements:

- 1). No unmarried man is married.
- 2). No bachelor is married.<sup>36</sup>

These statements are apparently analytic due to the fact that the subject-terms in both statements are synonymous; however, Quine contends to show that they are not synonymous. He begins his analysis by contending that a relation of synonymy may be shown between these two terms, to show analyticity, if either the two are synonymous with respect to their definition, or they are synonymous if they are interchangeable *salva veritate*, or they are

synonymous with respect to semantical rules.<sup>37</sup> However, it is settled that all three are redundant due to the fact that they all require a pre-existing notion of analyticity for an analysis of analyticity itself; therefore, they are rejected, rendering the distinction meaningless and nonsensical. I would like to add that there is an underlying discussion of synonymy with respect to transient nature of the meaning of particulars. I will discuss that in the following section(s).

As a response to these concerns, Strawson and Grice have addressed these issues in a subsequent paper entitled "In Defense of a Dogma". The counter argument these positivists had provided suggest that Quine's method of refuting the analytic/synthetic distinction is rather radical, while at times, it is nonsensical and absurd.<sup>38</sup> There are, in their view, a few noted ways to criticize any notion involving

a philosophical distinction between two or more concepts: that it is a vague distinction; or it is ambiguous, or it can be criticized if it is not useful to philosophical discourse etc. However, it is not on any of these reasonable grounds that Quine rejects the distinction. Quine's rejection is unreasonable for a number of reasons: he rejects the distinction which had been used in traditional empiricism, by continental and English empiricists, quite consistently, while in agreement over its existence; and, the nature of the distinction is such that its application and characteristics were agreed upon at repeated occurrences.<sup>39</sup> It is primarily on these grounds that Quine's denial of the existence of this distinction is unreasonable. However, further analysis shows that the rejection requires a further explanation of the notion of analyticity itself, which is inadequately supported in Quine's thesis for two reasons:

(1) It would seem to involve providing an explanation which does not incorporate any expression belonging to the family-circle. (2) it would seem that the explanation provided must be of the same general character as those rejected explanation which do incorporate members of the family-circle (i.e., it must specify some feature common and peculiar to all cases to which, for example, the word “analytic” is to be applied; it must have the same general form as an explanation beginning, “a statement is analytic if and only if...”).<sup>40</sup>

In this, Quine fails.<sup>41</sup>

Let us abandon this. There is another version of the Quinian refutation by a contemporary analytical philosopher, Gillian Russell, in a paper entitled “Quine on the Analytical/Synthetic Distinction”. She is particularly sympathetic about Quine’s contention in “Two Dogmas”, and argues that his thesis is of philosophic weight in the sense that it criticizes the unwarranted belief in the existence of analytic statements. According to Russell, there are three possible ways to defend Quine’s efforts of defining analyticity: definition by immediate

inference (meaning-lite); definition by interchangeability; and, definition by extension-determination.<sup>42</sup> She maintains that Quine argues that analyticity has meaning-lite, but no extension. Furthermore, I would also second to her doubt that the explicit argument Quine provided for showing that there is no extension of analyticity has substantial reason. She reproduces in her paper that the following are the key points Quine is willing to admit:

1. If there is such a thing as synonymy, then there is a satisfactory analysis of analyticity in terms of it.
2. Abbreviating definitions are transparent cases of synonymy (so there is such a thing).
3. There is no satisfactory analysis of analyticity.<sup>43</sup>

Let us examine analyticity, briefly, one last time and abandon this discussion.

Here, we may look at the case for a 'transparent case of synonymy' in the following way: a predicate may be represented by a set of abbreviations that stand for the larger set that is the predicate itself. We must understand the application of the concept of transient cases of predication as well to admit of more complex predicates through historical analysis. Examples for transparent and transient cases of abbreviating a predicate by its extension are real numbers. It may be that for Quine, an extensional analysis of analyticity can provide substantial grounds for warrant; however, it is not the case in his thesis. An extension must be shown to have a necessary relation between the predicate and the members of the class it represents to declare any member of the class of this predicate as *extensionally synonymous*. We may also infer from this the following: sets of classes of predicates may exist and have

*extensionally synonymous* relations with each other. Let us call these sets *co-extensional*. In a co-extensional language, all propositions must necessarily be analytic.

It is objected, by Quine, that there is no extension of 'analytic' propositions. To this objection, in my view, there could possibly be only one response: an appeal to observation shall suffice that there exist sets of predicates whose members are non-fictitious in the logical sense, i.e., they are not empty sets. The particulars that take part in these 'analytic' propositions are logically consistent throughout the hierarchy of any logical language. Let us take a predicate '2', which is clearly understood to have an extension in the sense that its class is not an empty set.<sup>44</sup> If we say 'two sets of objects in pairs of two are '2'' when there are two pencils and two balls on a desk, we represent the members of the predicate '2' in a logical manner; whereas, the proposition

would be analytic. Therefore, all the members of this set, when put together in a relation in an indicative proposition, would give us a necessary relation. This relation is precisely what logical empiricists mean by analyticity.

Let us now examine the possibility whether or not Quine's refutation of Positivism affects Atomism. A Quinian empiricism expects a form of 'confirmation holism' that rejects analytic propositions in the sense that scientific knowledge replaces the traditional distinction. This thesis, however, fails to affect Atomism. The goals of Atomism are not mere verification and confirmation of bodies of knowledge; it examines and identifies the various logical components that partake in any body of knowledge to achieve philosophical clarity. Quine challenges analyticity and logical reductionism, but he fails to provide substantial grounds for rejecting a

philosophical tradition that promotes and facilitates scientific method of inquiry. His refutation is ill-grounded for two reasons: Quine inaccurately analyzes analyticity in terms of synonymy (whereas, I contend that it is possible to explain analyticity in terms of co-extensionality); and, logical reductionism is misunderstood by Quine such that it follows from this the doctrine that pre-supposes the allegedly circular argument for analyticity. In other words, logical reductionism is rejected on the presumption that it follows from the weak analytic/synthetic distinction.

### III

In the preceding section, we have discussed some challenges to logical positivism. We have also discussed some responses to the positivists' position. Now, we must discuss some challenges to logical atomism. We shall also examine some

possible solutions to the raised concerns and criticisms.

It may be argued that Russell's atomistic philosophy comes out of the mixture of mathematics, logic, and empirical doctrines. These disciplines are brought together in a systematic manner to show that the logical nature of linguistic analysis can be shown in complex structures consisting of logical simples. What may be inferred from this pertains to the following: "how pertinent could this system become to contemporary analytical philosophy?", "What are the limitations to the application of an atomistic world view?" These are few of the concerns that need to be addressed.

Let us understand in what ways Russell's atomism emerges out of the three mentioned disciplines of philosophy. We have seen that atomism is characteristically a position that builds on a model of mathematical principles of functions. The

most relevant occurrence of such a principle is the concept of propositional-function. The propositional-functions are the simple rules of procedure, which give us meaningful propositions. These propositions may either be of first order predicates, second order, or higher.

Modern Logic is well grounded in the rules of inference and proofing methods. These methods and rules are products of rigorous analysis of the simplest forms of formal reasoning. Mathematics borrows some of these rules of inference and replacement and uses their application to have a coherent system of numbers and their properties. All this is elementary and widely agreed upon.

Following in the footsteps of these above mentioned disciplines of philosophy, the logical positivist school emerged. The fundamental goal of this school was to define a system that challenges the

traditional philosophical discourse and introduce a criterion to judge whether or not a body of knowledge is logically coherent. This was all an effort to create a logical reductionism and a kind of empiricism that takes inspiration and authenticity from mathematics and logic. Out of positivism, a rigorous form of logical reductionism emerges called logical atomism. This philosophy aims at bringing out the simple aspects of philosophical analysis into discussion that render a body of knowledge probable. One of the most ambitious goals of atomism is to achieve philosophical clarity; this is possible once the nature of linguistic analysis is understood, and it is exercised to flush out all ambiguities from the overall body of knowledge.

Let us see what challenges atomism may face regarding this notion. One challenge regards the logical value of atomism. It calls attention to the notion of

atomicity of any system in language, either empirical or logical. According to atomism, a language is reducible, by means of analysis, to mere logical simples which are the fundamental constructs of language. Russell names a few of these logical constructs, such as atomic and molecular facts, particulars, predicates etc. Reducing the complexity of language to convenient simples so as to make philosophical analysis easier is a highly simplistic view of language. Such a challenge, although speculative in nature, requires a justification of the principle of radical logical reductionism. The theory of logical atomism presupposes that for a body of knowledge, if it is the aim of a philosopher to analyze it, there has to be a logically simple version, which consists of only the fundamental facts regarding it and the relations that are true. This version is rather vague and ambiguous at this level, and it raises concerns that may

be beyond the scope of our present discussion.<sup>45</sup> However, it is one of the goals of the theory of logical atomism to reach to a level of philosophical clarity when the process of analysis is completed.

Another challenge to atomism may be extended from our previous discussion regarding the challenge to logical positivism by Russell and Quine. Russell had great concerns regarding the common practice of the positivists towards the criteria of significance and the possibility of a rather unwarranted practice of logical empiricism.<sup>46</sup> For Quine, the challenge is more radical; the positivists' movement, he argued, had become dogmatic regarding their logical reduction. In the light of all these challenges to positivism, it is possible to extend these concerns to the theory of logical atomism; for, the aim of atomism shares the reducibility of a logical language to logical simples.

Let us examine, now, whether or not we can provide a solution to all these concerns regarding the theory of logical atomism. Our analysis has come to the point where we are able to reach a certain degree of agreement regarding atomism in the following order: there are, according to the rules of logical analysis of language and common sense, facts in the world – facts expressed in propositions that include particulars (most commonly a proper name) and a relation to some physical acquaintance or experience; corresponding to each fact in the world, there are two propositions, one of which is such that if it shows that the relation of the statement with the fact is correct, the proposition is true; otherwise, it is false; there are atomic facts – facts that involve only particulars or proper names and a relation (there is a hierarchy of atomic facts with respect to the number of particulars used and the relation between

each of them); there are also molecular facts; there are orders of language; and there are predicates that have extension in reality and are capable of having meaning for a longer period of time than particulars. These are all true of the theory of logical atomism. To try to give a solution to the earlier mentioned concerns regarding logical atomism, we must get hold on the amount of ambiguity these concerns assert and show whether or not these challenges are reasonable.

When we wish to examine whether logical atomism falls for the same kind of trap as positivism, we ought to understand the nature of logical analysis. The ambiguity and vagueness found at the atomic level of any body of knowledge is rather reasonable as opposed to unreasonable. At the atomic level, a proposition is only capable to show that there are particulars and there are predicates involved – these terms of

relations are not only providing grounds for meaning to propositions, but it is also intelligible to understand them in logical analysis. A particular, we may say, is a logical entity that has the ability to stand for something of a physical nature – a name, for example.<sup>47</sup> A particular, by definition, is apt to last for a very short period of time.<sup>48</sup> A predicate is a set of names that designates a quality.<sup>49</sup>

By the above examination, we may safely conclude that at the atomic level, the apparent vagueness and ambiguity in logical analysis requires only an understanding of the principles of language.

In response to Quine's criticism of logical reductionism, I wish to examine as to what it would mean to have a dogma in logical analysis. To say that logical reductionism has dogmatic views in its enquiry is equivalent to having the position that a logical system has an intension that

seeks refuge in its extension. This is a matter that must be dealt with great caution. A logical analysis takes as a starting-point the identification of the 'extension' of its particulars, instead of starting with an 'intentional analysis'. This raises the kind of inconsistency that questions the integrity of logical reduction itself. The misrepresentation in Quine's analysis of logical reduction, as a philosophical matter, is rather radical in itself. It calls to attention the need of a thorough examination of a strong philosophical tradition. For these pertinent reasons, it is philosophically justified to be skeptical regarding Quine's concern.

#### **IV**

In the previous sections, I have discussed how modern empiricism transforms into logical empiricism; it is shown that the necessity of having a logical system that explains coherence of the

physical world in language is grounded in the theory of logical reductionism and the theory of logical atomism. I have discussed the fundamental position taken by Russell in the development of his theory of atomism. It is worthy to mention that the merits of the theory of logical atomism are rooted in logical analysis, which allows philosophers to achieve the clarity and accuracy required for an exceedingly consistent world view.

In addition, I have also discussed some challenges faced by positivism, along with a few possible solutions to these concerns. I examined, in particular, the nature of criticism by Quine in his famous 1951 paper. Furthermore, a substantial solution was provided to suspend Quine's 'radical' critique.

I have also discussed some possible concerns raised in atomism, by Russell himself. Another possible concern was suggested by extending Quine's critique of

positivism. A number of possible solutions were prescribed in the preceding section to address the issues framed by Russell and Quine.

In all of my preceding efforts, I have shown that the goal of logical empiricism of the atomistic kind aims at philosophical clarity. This goal is achieved, partially, by an initial encounter with the fundamental structure of the theory; and, it is achieved, completely, by exercising logical analysis in such a manner that allows physical datum to be reducible to logical constructs. Such a language would be almost wholly free from much ambiguity, unlike the way it is now.

### Notes

1. David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Tom L. Beauchamp (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 108.
2. *Ibid.*, 109-117.
3. *Ibid.*, 99.
4. *Ibid.*, 101.
5. Bertrand Russell, *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism* (Oxfordshire: Routledge Classics, 2010), 3.
6. *Ibid.*, 3.
7. Bertrand Russell, "Logical Positivism," *First National Congress of Philosophy* (1949): 1215.
8. Bertrand Russell, "On Denoting," *Mind* 14, no. 56 (1905): 479.
9. *Ibid.*, 487.
10. A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic* (New York: Dover Publications, 1952), 57.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*, 59.
13. *Ibid.*, 85, 90.
14. *Ibid.*, 90-91.
15. In the beginning of these lectures, Russell mentions that his Atomism is inspired from his former pupil Wittgenstein. Russell's version is somewhat influenced by Wittgenstein's expounded Atomism, which

- was reproduced in his *Tractatus*. However, Russell says that he had not been in contact with Wittgenstein since 1914, and he took full responsibility of the views he expressed in these lectures. (Russell, *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism*, 34).
16. *Ibid.*, 8-9.
  17. *Ibid.*, 9.
  18. *Ibid.*
  19. *Ibid.*, 26-27.
  20. *Ibid.*, 27.
  21. *Ibid.*
  22. *Ibid.*, 27-28.
  23. *Ibid.*, 34.
  24. *Ibid.*
  25. *Ibid.*, 38.
  26. *Ibid.*, 43-45.
  27. Russell, *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism*, 43.
  28. Bertrand Russell, *An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1940), 65.
  29. *Ibid.*, 78.
  30. *Ibid.*, 79.
  31. Russell, "Logical Positivism", 1210-1211.
  32. I have borrowed the exact example as Russell for the convenience of clarity.
  33. *Ibid.*, 1211.
  34. *Ibid.*, 1216-1218.
  35. *Ibid.*, 1219.
  36. W. V. O. Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism," *The Philosophical Review* 60, no. 1 (1951): 23.
  37. *Ibid.*, sections 2-4.
  38. P. F. Strawson and H. P. Grice, "In Defense of a Dogma," *The Philosophical Review* 65, no. 2 (1956): 142, 146.
  39. *Ibid.*, 142-143.
  40. *Ibid.*, 147-148.
  41. *Ibid.*, 148.
  42. Gillian Russell, "Quine on the Analytical/Synthetic Distinction," in *A Companion to Quine*, ed. Gilbert Herman

- and Ernie Lepore (West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 189.
43. *Ibid.*, 192.
44. Russell, "Logical Positivism", 1207-1208.
45. Russell, *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism*, 3.
46. Russell, "Logical Positivism", 1213-1214, 1219.
47. Russell, *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism*, 27-28.
48. *Ibid.*, 32.
49. *Ibid.*, 34.
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## **Problem of Evil**

Qurat ul-Ain

For centuries the philosophers have grappled with the problem of evil and how it plays out in relation to God's omnipotence, Omni benevolence, and omniscience. The main idea of the problem of evil is that an omniscient, omnibenevolent and omnipotent God with full knowledge of the presence of evil and the power to eradicate it would not allow evil to exist. Since evil exists, God must not exist. Most of the philosophical queries are such that they do not affect the personal identity of people, nor do they branch out from the realm of philosophy to a paradigm where they can tangibly affect, and in certain cases, determine what people stand for ideologically. Religion, however, is a matter very close to the heart of those who believe and it guides the day to day dealings and choices of people. The

problem of evil directly affects religion as it is the biggest critique to the existence of God and the most frequently cited reason of disbelief by the atheists.

The thesis of my paper is that the problem of evil is an enigma even after the Free Will Defense proposed by Alvin Plantinga. The paper starts by laying out the nature and primary attributes of God in the Abrahamic religions which is followed by an introduction to the problem of evil, definition of the two types of evils and the logical argument for the problem of evil. Plantinga's Free Will Defense is presented as one of the answers to the problem of evil in this paper and some issues that arise by believing in the Free Will Theory are explained. The concluding section mentions the choice that human beings make that determines whether one is theist or an atheist.

**1. God**

The concept of God in religion is that of a supreme Divine Being who is absolute, transcendental and complete. In all three Abrahamic religions omniscience (all-knowing), omnipresence (present everywhere), omnipotence (all powerful) and omnibenevolence (maximally good) are the primary attributes of God. These attributes of knowledge, power, extension and moral perfection are what make God a perfect Being worthy of worship and reverence. It is also noteworthy that all of these attributes of God are absolute and unique (in magnitude) to God alone; for it is not the case that God is a Being compared to which nothing is more perfect but rather that He is something more perfect than anything else. This notion takes away the idea that there might be beings equal to God in attributes and power who are not God(s).

**2. The Problem Of Evil**

The problem of evil is simply the problem of reconciling the existence and prevalence of evil with the existence of God. The idea is that if the perfect being, as the orthodox theists claim, exists, why is there such great evil in the World? If God were all-knowing, he would know about the extent of misery and misfortune that befalls innocent people. If He were all-powerful, He would have the power to stop and eliminate evil from this World completely. And if God were benevolent, he would want to end the injustice happening to the innocent people where they suffer and endure hardships for no justifiable reason and show compassion to His creation. And if God were morally perfect, he would end all evil in the World. Yet, we find ourselves living in a World full of all sorts of vile, disgusting, wicked things.

It is important to note that this paper focuses on two types of evils: Moral Evils and Natural Evils. Moral evils are the evils resulting from the direct and intentional actions of human beings e.g. Murder, Rape, and Infanticide etc. Natural evils, however, result from natural phenomenon and processes e.g. earthquakes, meteor collisions, floods. There are also instances where some evils are a result of both natural processes and human interference e.g. Earthquakes resulting in destruction of poorly constructed buildings.

### 2.1. The Problem, Logically Restated

The logical problem of evil is as follows:

1. An omniscient being would have the knowledge of the presence of evil
2. An omnipotent being would have the power to eliminate evil

3. A morally perfect being would have the desire to eliminate evil
4. God is an omniscient, omnipotent and morally perfect being
5. Evil exists
6. If evil and God exist, then either is not omniscient, or omnipotent, or morally perfect.
7. Therefore, God does not exist.

This argument proves that God does not exist because to believe otherwise would lead to a contradiction. If we assume the falsity of (7), it follows from (4) that God is omniscient, omnipotent and morally perfect. If (4) is true, then from (1), (2), and (3) it follows that God has the knowledge of evil and the power and desire to eliminate it. Knowing that evil exists, from (5), leads to a contradiction within the argument; hence the conclusion that God does not exist is true as premise (1) through (6) validly imply (7).

Whether this argument is sound or not is definitely under question as one or more of the premises might not be true. But as far as the definition of the attributes of God in Abrahamic religions go, He is considered unlimited and unsurpassable in all of His attributes and those definitions are present in the premises of the abovementioned arguments. Hence, the traditional understanding of God in the main religions leads them to a road block.

## 2.2. Not Can't, But Won't

“Epicurus's old questions are yet unanswered. Is he willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then he is impotent. Is he able, but not willing? Then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Whence then is evil?” (Hume, Part X). One of the ways to overcome the abovementioned “roadblock” is to think that it's not that God can't eliminate evil, but rather that He deliberately

won't/doesn't. In the Abrahamic religions, God's omnipotence is believed as the most unique and absolute attribute. God is believed as benevolent AND wrathful, but never powerful AND weak. Hence, in the definitions that Abrahamic religions give, it makes more sense to rebut the problem evil by taking the stance that God chooses to let evil exist, rather than believing that He cannot eliminate it.

## 3. Plantinga's Free Will Defense

Alvin Plantinga presents his Free Will Defense (FWD) as a morally sufficient reason for the existence of evil in response to the logical problem of evil. Plantinga contends that “God's creation of persons with morally significant free will is something of tremendous value. God could not eliminate much of the evil and suffering in this world without thereby eliminating the greater good of having created persons with

free will with whom he could have relationships and who are able to love one another and do good deeds” (Plantinga, 30).

Thus for Plantinga, the existence of evil is a choice of God, because He prioritized making human beings autonomous agents who possess free will and have the freedom to misuse it to create evil, over creating “robotic” non-sentient beings and removing all the evil from the World. According to him, the suffering in the World comes from human beings failing to make morally significant choices. If God takes away this freedom of choice from people then He would be doing a greater evil to us than to remove all evil from the World. This situation can be imagined like that of a mother who has to let a doctor inject a syringe in her new born baby and allow that innocent soul pain, rather than watch him die of tetanus/polio.

An action done under the definitions of libertarian free will is “an action that is free in... [a] sense [that it] cannot be caused by anything outside of the agent...not even God can cause a person to freely do what is right” (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy) According to this definition, human beings are responsible for all the good there is in the World and the bad. Just as they are to be commended for choosing to do the right thing, they should be condemned for choosing to do wrong and making others suffer.

One question that arises from FWD is that if God is omnipotent and is choosing to let evil be, why did he not create a World with free agents AND no evil? “In response to this charge, Plantinga maintains that there are some worlds God cannot create. In particular, he cannot do the logically impossible. [Plantinga] claims that God cannot get rid of much of the evil and

suffering in the world without also getting rid of morally significant free will” (Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy).

### 3.1. **Some Questions Still Unanswered**

Plantinga’s FWD does a significantly good job at reconciling the existence of evil with that of an unsurpassable being, but only on the surface. If we look more deeply, there are several questions that arise.

Firstly, if giving human beings free will to do anything they wished is part of God’s divine plan then why do most of the theists support and obey man made laws that restrict this freedom? Why do we not kill, murder, and rape and abide by the laws against these vile actions if according to the divine plan, we are free to do these things. What justifications do theists have for upholding man made laws and suspending the God given freedom of human beings to do whatever they want to?

Secondly, FWD fails to cater to the problem posed by the natural evils which, do not happen due to the wrong actions of human beings. The instance of a squirrel dying a painful death in a distant forest due to a natural forest fire has nothing to do with some sinful human being choosing to do wrong. Why is it then that the squirrel burned to death? FWD fails to give an account of these types of evils.

Thirdly, it is not the case that God only had an option to take away the agency of human beings or eliminate evil and He chose the former, as the FWD would have you believe. Instead, If God has made men such that in their free choices they sometimes prefer what is good and sometimes what is evil, why could he not have made men such that they always freely choose the good? If there is no logical impossibility in a man's choosing the good on one, or on several occasions; then there

cannot be a logical impossibility in his freely choosing the good on every occasion. God was not, then, faced with a choice between making innocent automata and making beings who, in acting freely, would sometimes go wrong: there was open to him the obviously better possibility of making beings who would act freely but always go right. Clearly, his failure to avail himself of this possibility is inconsistent with his being both omnipotent and perfectly good. (Mackie 46)

Fourthly, FWD creates a paradigm in which the omniscient God has the knowledge of the actions of 'free' agents. Any such paradigm which incorporates these two elements is inherently contradictory. "Does God know or does He not know that a certain individual will be good or bad? If thou sayest 'He knows', then it necessarily follows that [that] man is compelled to act as God knew beforehand

he would act, otherwise God's knowledge would be imperfect" (Perakhim 99-100)

So the FWD, like the original questions posited by the problem of evil, also brings its own baggage of unresolved issues. The theist proponents of the FWD are, again, made to choose from one of the following:

(i) A God who has incomplete and faulty knowledge of the future but asserts otherwise because he is either mistaken, or lying

(ii) A God who is not omniscient at all.

Any of the above options definitely do not go well with any theist, specially a follower of an Abrahamic religion.

#### 4. **Conclusion**

The problem of evil, has been and remains, a serious and grappling question for the philosophers and believers alike. Every human being is faced with the cross road to

decide whether the sheer naked evil that exists in the World constitutes a justifiable reason for disbelief in God, or not. Religion does, however, provide this cosmic insurance policy to the believers to assure them that the evil that befalls innocents in this world will be balanced out in the next one, but there are still those who believe that "Injustice upon earth renders the justice of heaven impossible" (Ingersol 156).

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## **A Critical Review of Conservatism**

Muzafar Shah

In this essay I shall argue that conservatism is a hierarchical ideology that aims to maintain status quo thus minimizing the chances of equality and change for the good. I will first discuss conservatism's views regarding human nature and social inequality in the light of its founder Edmund Burke. I will then argue, with the help of Rousseau, that the system of inequality which conservatism considers as natural is anything but natural. I will also argue that conservatism emphasizes on preserving the status quo by opposing the attempts to redistribute wealth and hence does not allow the betterment of the members of the society at the wrong end of social stratification. Finally I would argue from the perspective of Modern Liberalism in support of my opposition to the Conservative view that the

state's distribution of the wealth of the rich in favor of the poor is a violation of the rich's liberty.

To begin With, Conservatives embrace a pessimistic and bleak view of human nature which they say is driven not by reason but by instinctive emotions and self-interest (Burke 58). According to them, human behavior can be explained more in terms of their individual human infirmity than in terms of the socio-economic and structural hindrances of poverty and inequality which are given greater emphasis by socialists.

The conservative viewpoint of human nature leads them to be proponents of economic and social inequality and to oppose equality of product on the distribution of wealth. Their viewpoint is based on the argument that human beings are inherently and genetically different, with some being t naturally talented and superior

to others (Burke 42). This disproportionate difference in talents inexorably results in economic inequality. This inequality can only be overturned if the state violates the liberty of more talented individuals to turn it into their own economic advantage. Economic equality of product, therefore, is inconsistent with individual liberty.

I would argue that the conservative view of inequality is flawed with the help of J.J Rousseau's work. In order to ascertain as to what inequality is and how it becomes entrenched in society, Rousseau identifies two sorts of inequalities - physical and moral inequality. Physical inequality is that which ascends from physical differences among humans such as body strength whereas moral/political inequality is based upon unnatural grounds, shaped by conventions rather than unequal endowment by nature, such as dissimilarities in wealth, power and social status (Rousseau 6).

According to Rousseau the establishment of property results in people claiming possession to a particular piece of land and then differences in proprietorship that are not linked to physical and moral differences come into being (Rousseau 97). When the rights of proprietorship are established, the influential people start considering having a right over the poor that result in several disputes. To settle this conflict, the rich proposed the idea of constructing laws and legal systems. Creation of laws according to Rousseau is a contract suggested by the rich to subdue the poor (Rousseau 112). The poor on the other hand are caught in the illusion that they will be able to preserve their freedom by this contract but what they fail to comprehend is that this contract would instead institutionalize and perpetuate their subjugation by the rich. The rich are at the benefiting end of this contract as they have

everything to lose as opposed to the poor who have nothing to lose. Establishment of laws ensures that the status quo is preserved and the poor are not able to claim back what the rich have as they would be punished by law if they try to do so. Laws are meant to be an instrument that institutionalizes property and inequality at the expense of the poor.

Therefore, by using Rousseau's idea about the origin of inequality I argue that the conservative idea of inequality being natural in human beings is flawed. Human beings may not be equal in physical terms by nature but the moral and political inequalities present today are not natural but man made. Conservatives argue that if a state tries to take the wealth of the rich and distribute it to the poor, it will be a violation of the liberty of the rich and unfair to them. I will first illustrate how taking wealth of the rich would and distributing it for the better of the

popular masses would be a violation of the rich's liberty and then move on to criticize their stance from Socialist and Liberal perspectives to prove that their understanding of wealth distribution as threat to individual liberty is anything but to justify the status quo at the expense of socio-economic inequality.

In the contemporary era, rights of ownership and proprietorship are secured in the existing laws of most states. Property rights security is also given in the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948). The essential property rights now include: control over the usage of property, right to any profit from the property and a right to sell the property.

How would redistributing the rich's wealth among the popular masses through state mechanism would violate the rich's liberty? As already mentioned, effectively everything now is owned by entities,

businesses and they are legally entitled to own it. Therefore, the redistribution of any such property would be the violation of the owner's liberty because of the property laws are in place.

Many conservatives of today support their idea of preserving status quo instead of aiming for social and economic equality with the help of American philosopher Robert Nozick's work. Nozick claimed in his book 'Anarchy, State and Utopia' that even if someone creates equality by redistributing wealth, it won't survive for long and the state of inequality will be restored soon.

Nozick explains this by the right of attainment by transference. The central idea in this is that if X has proprietary rights over a car and gives his permission for those rights to be transferred to Y, then those rights are transferred to Y and now Y is the owner of that car. Nozick's notion that even

if equality is found again, it won't sustain itself is explained by this example. He gives an imaginary scenario in which resources are redistributed equally among all the people and a very famous basketball player gets a clause added in his contract with his team that warrants him to have twenty five cents for each ticket public buy to watch him play. As he is a star player, the team owner easily approves his condition and at the culmination of the season he has more resources than anyone else (Nozick 98). The idea given by Nozick with this example is that these kind of open and consensual arrangements are fair if the original position was fair and the subsequent condition is an outcome of fair arrangements. Therefore, even if we were to give an equal share of wealth to everyone, it would not take people long that they back to a state of inequality by using the aforementioned agreements. It will eventually lead to a state where some

are rich and some are poor and if we were to retake wealth of rich to distribute it among the poor, it would be unjust to the rich and a violation of their liberty and property rights as well. On these arguments, Nozick concludes that therefore, any particular configuration of redistribution of wealth can't be instigated unless it encompasses the unjust invasion into people's liberty.

I would approach this conservative position from a socialist ground. Firstly, For Socialists the inequality of wealth cannot be attributed to innate natural differences rather they are the result of broader social and economic structures. For Socialists, Justice demands that individuals must be treated equally by society in terms of material rewards and advantages (Heywood 106). For them the notion of equality of opportunity advocated by conservatives is anything but a legitimating device that validates and perpetuates inequality. Secondly socialists

point to the contradictory approach adopted by Conservatives towards the notion of private property and at the same time extol the virtues of community and social solidarity. According to Socialists it is the notion of private property which lies at the source social conflict and instability because they argue that if people live in equal social circumstances, there is a stronger chance that they would identify themselves with one another and work for the common good that in turn would lead to community feelings and strengthening of social solidarity (Heywood 107). Socialists do not consider social classes based on economic inequality as a permanent and natural feature of society and strive towards a society where class inequalities can be reduced to a substantial level. Socialists trace the origins of inequality, like in Rousseau to the institution of private property and suggest that due to the collectivist character of wealth

production as a result of human labor, it should be owned by community as opposed to its possession by private individuals.

Now I would argue from the perspective of Modern Liberalism in support of my opposition to the Conservative view that the state's distribution of the wealth of the rich in favor of the poor is a violation of the rich's liberty. Modern Liberals opine that the state should intervene in society through income redistribution thus eradicating the broader social inequalities in order to provide a level playing field for the poor and the disadvantaged to ensure their chances for better prospects of life.

Modern Liberalism is grounded in the view that state intervention in order to provide welfare and support in the social sector tend to enhance liberty of the individuals rather than to restrict it. They propound a positive conception of liberty which implies that through state

intervention, the individuals which lie at the lower stratum of social hierarchy are enabled to realize their potential and enhance their skills and knowledge and thus to attain fulfillment (Heywood 57). For these Modern Liberals the prosperity of the few cannot be justified in the name of Individual liberty. Here modern liberals acquire a socialist outlook as it moves away from the libertarian conception of Classical liberalism in favor of broader social equality. These ideas of Modern Liberalism found a strong expression in the Welfare States of twentieth century and the politics of Redistribution. In the face of social and economic inequalities, the conservative argument of opposing the redistribution of wealth in order to ensure social inequality can no longer hold its ground, as liberalism which championed the notion of individual liberty has to modify its character in the face social and economic inequalities, so as

to acknowledge the notion of state intervention aimed at narrowing the ever increasing gap among social classes in terms of economic inequality.

Conservatives argue that if the government places restrictions on the people aiming to bring equality in the society, it would be counterproductive and would mean that the talented are denied the opportunity to excel and that equality of opportunity is possible in an economically unequal society (Burke 88). But as Marx said, if the government has no role in controlling the production and they workers are left at the mercy of the owners of means of production, they would naturally use their labor to maximize their profits at the minimal cost. After all, human nature is motivated by self-interest according to conservatism itself. So, in order to have a society which ensures equality of opportunity, it is important to have a

proactive government with an important role to play.

Conservatives believe that economic inequality of outcome is natural (Burke 43). This inequality will eventually cause the accumulation of private property. They argue that ownership of private property is a significant protection against extreme state power. Their argument is based on the fact that in absence of private property people are compelled to only work for the state and also be dependent on it for healthcare, education and for other basic necessities. On the other hand, if the institution of private ownership in a society is strong, those who are not satisfied or are not adequately compensated by the state for their efforts can work in the private sector. As I mentioned before, according to Rousseau the creation of property itself is the source of inequality and the eventual conflicts and cannot be considered to bring harmony in a

society.

Another conservative idea which aims to strengthen inequality in a society is the system of taxation. Edmund Burke indicates that taxes should be essentially proportional but the benefits should not be distributed equally, but should favor those who pay more (Burke 50). If those who earn more pay more taxes but also reap more benefits from the state then what is the point of taxation. A poor person who cannot afford to pay tax would not be entitled to any tax benefits by this system and thus the status quo would be well-preserved, which is the central idea of conservatism.

In a report published in 2013 by a Swiss multinational company, it was reported that only 0.7% population of the world controls a staggering 41% of the world's wealth and on the other side, almost 69% population owns just a mere 3% of the world's wealth. If we consider the case of

United States, a country supposed to be the benchmark of free market economy and an exemplary model of trickle-down effect, the numbers are highly uneven against the majority. The top 1% of population owns 34% of all private wealth, and the next 20% have 50%, which means that just 21% of the people owned an astonishing 85% and the bottom 79% are left with 16% of the wealth. The report finds out another interesting fact that the ideas such as 'American Dream' or 'Rags to riches' are just an apologue. About 70% of Americans are in the same wealth bracket as their parents were. Even worldwide, while there may be a few instances of people going in between rags and riches, most of them remain in the same wealth bracket for their lifetime in which they were born (Weisenthal, 2013).

The above mentioned statistics show us the amazing unevenness in world wealth distribution and the fact that following the

principles of conservatism would keep this state of inequality in perpetuity or even worsen it. I will conclude that conservatism is an ideology based on hierarchy and aims to benefit those who are already in a state of power and prestige. It denies the opportunity of equality and better necessities for the poor and does it so on claims that inequality is in human society by nature, but it is not nature but rather artificial grounds from which this inequality stems and conservatism does its best to protect this unjust system of status-quo.

<<http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml> >

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