

The Empiricist Criteria of Meaning And The Problem of Translation

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Abstract

Generally speaking, the branches of philosophy have traditionally been listed to include Ethics, logic, metaphysics, epistemology and aesthetics. However, it has over the years embraced studies in socio political philosophy, philosophy of law, philosophy of mind, philosophy of language and so on. The study of language in philosophy is not in the same way as those who specialize in linguistics. However, its study creates proper understanding and removes forms of ambiguity that may be found in language in particular and communication in general. Philosophers of language have discussed many issues which includes 'meaning', 'sense', 'reference' and many others. In this paper we shall attempt a critical analysis of the Logical Empiricist's criteria of 'meaning'. The paper begins with the analysis of the concept of 'meaning' and why philosophers of language are so particular about 'meaning' either of words, sentences or expression. The paper also examines logical empiricist criteria of meaning and its relevance to communication and translation of words or statements. The paper argues that the empiricist criteria of meaning entails some absurdities and poses serious problem to communication and translation in human society. Thus, it should not be accepted in absolute term.

Keywords: Logical empiricism, Language, Meaningfulness, Communication and Society.

1. Introduction

Human society consist of people, young, old, male and female, each living together with certain principle of common goal, that is peculiar to each community. Social interaction is equally expected in any human society. This interaction in co-existence, is normally in pursuance of common goal and socializing would only be made possible by the possibility of humans been able to exchange ideas. However, this exchange is also anchored on possible understanding of one another which equally depends solely on the possibility of being able to communicate with one another. Or, how do we describe a society where language communication is a problem, such that no two people can say "I heard what the other person said". In fact, what we should expect, in such society is the uncompleted "Tower of Babel" due to confusion that arouse in the language of the builders (Holly Bible: Genesis, chapter 11 verses 1-9).

The point then is that the continued existence of a society and the sustenance and protection of interaction among people cannot thrive in any human society characterized by confusion in their language. It is also imperative to know that the idea of development in all its ramifications will be out of the reach of such society. Thus, the peaceful coexistence, maintenance of social order, growth and development in any human society largely depend on clear communication. By communication, it is the transference of a thought – content from one person to another person or from group of person to another group of person. This thought content may be an emotion, idea, statement and et.al. Usually, language, either in words or in signs is the medium of this transference. It is very essential that human beings should have a deep understanding of how to communicate in the society which they belong. Hence Wiredu (1980) asserted,

no society or community is possible without human communication, for a community is not just an aggregation of individuals existing as windowless monads but of individuals, interacting persons, and an interaction of persons can only be on the basis of shared meaning.

From Wiredu's point of view, we can simply say that "no communication, no human society". Thus, his view emphasizes communication as exchange of thought, opinion and ideas. But, how are these made possible? They are possible because of the linguistic expression we used and because these expressions are meaningful. In other words, this expressions are objective, that is, they can be substantially shared. If it is subjective, that is, if linguistic expressions are associated with individual peculiarities, then it will be impossible to share one's view with another person. Thus, for communication purposes we use linguistic expressions and these expressions must be meaningful or else everything would be reduce to pseudo proposition. The question then is: what is meaning and how can meaning be shared?

2. What is 'Meaning'?

The concept of meaning constitutes the centre point in philosophy of language. The argument is that if meaning is attained, then the whole problem of language is solved. The underlining assumption is that the problem of

meaning revolves around the absence or distortion of meaning. Words, sentences are used which are said to have no meaning. There are some other words that appear to be meaningful which, in actual fact, are not. This has greatly affected the use of language and has posed serious problem to communication as the meaning of what is being passed across are regarded as opaque, ambiguous, confusing and indeterminate.

There are so many approaches to the question “what is meaning?” The various approaches however, reflect the individual understanding of the subject matter of philosophy of language in particular and English language in general. These approaches also culminate in various theories of meaning. According to Keith Allan (1993), to answer the question ‘What is meaning’ we will have to consider various theories or ideas of meanings that have been developed by scholars.

On one hand, Evans Gareth (1953) attempts to explain meaning by its uses. To him meaning has two uses: firstly, meaning of words, and secondly of sentences. In the latter, meaning is something to which the predicates ‘True’ of ‘False’ is applied. Put differently, the meaning of a statement must either be true or false, this however does not apply to the former. For the former, the single word ‘red’ is neither true nor false. This distinction, however, has nothing to do with the common distinction between semantic or referential meaning, expressive or emotive and other theories of meaning.

Wiredu (1980) on the other hand stated the view of some schools of thought, who saw meaning as “abstract entities which exist in their own right independently of human minds”. In this theory, meaning is conceived on the model of perceiving an object. It should be pointed out here that if their views were valid, they would establish the objectivity of meaning.

To some philosophers of language, meaning is identified with sense and reference, particularly with the latter. A word’s meaning is said to be dependent on its reference. Meaning comes basically from inherent meaning of words or the use of words in sentences in accordance with acceptable rules of grammar. Meaning, though, has an important link with reference and is not solely dependent on the rules of reference but has no independent mechanisms which confer meaning (Ozumba 2004). The point here is that our knowing the meaning of a statement is directly or indirectly linked with our understanding of the reference or what our word or statement refers to. However, it is important to note that meaning does not wholly depend on reference. Meaning is more complex than reference. In fact, the theory of reference is subsumable under the theory of meaning. This also applies to the theory of ‘sense’.

The theory of sense simply states that to understand the meaning of a word or sentence, we have to understand the sense and reference. Thus, the theory of meaning will include sense, reference, the rules, the sound, the situation, the intension, the extension, discrimination between other possible meanings and the conventional or extra conventional usage of the word or sentence. It suffice to say also, that reference is part of meaning but meaning can be known independently of reference. For example, if I say ‘the present American president is a black man’ I understand the meaning of this sentence without necessarily knowing who the referent is. This sentence implies that there is a present American president who is a black man. This means that knowing the meaning of a word or a sentence is knowing what is meant by the component words. Bertrand Russell’s view corroborates the reference theory when he asserts that it is reference that should determine meaning. The meaning of a word or sentence is that to which it refer (Ibid.). Russell’s position therefore suggests that what has no reference has no meaning. A word that has no reference is deceptive, useless and improper.

Examining Frege’s view, Ozumba (2004) explains that we can understand ‘meaning’ from the point of view of understanding the component meaning of words (terms), names (nouns and noun-phrases) and sentences. This idea makes meaning independent of reference. Meaning as we know, is mainly derived from the linguistic rules governing the use and signification of words or sentences. This is because there are so many meaningful sentences that lack reference. For instance, ‘the man that lives inside the lagoon’. This sentence is meaningful but, it is possible for me to doubt whether it has a reference because, I am not aware that there is a man that lives inside the lagoon. This sentence is therefore correct, since the component words and the structure of the sentence agree with the law of English grammar. But then, we should be quick to point out that there are statements and words that may not conform to the law of English grammar but still have meaning. These include passwords, signs, exoteric languages or private languages and many others. All these make meaning restricted either to the individual or the groups using them.

Aside from the theories discussed above, meaning can be seen as speaker’s stimulus and hearer’s response/ behaviouristic. In this regard, Leonard Bloomfield in Allan Keith’s work (1993), asserts that “the meaning of a linguistic form is the situation in which the speaker utters it and the response which it calls for in the hearer”.

There is also, the ideational theory of meaning, which states that a statement is meaningful if what it expresses are associated to certain ideas (Alston 1962). It is also important to say that ‘meaning’ stands for signification. Every word is said to have a signification. However, this can be contested, given the fact that words do not have fixed independent meanings but get their meanings from the sentences in which they feature. The thrust of this argument is that every word is potentially meaningful and this is fully actualized in sentences.

To mean is to be significant and to be worthy of existence as part of the linguistic repertoire (Ozumba, 2004).

It is pertinent to say here that, whatever idea of ‘meaning’ that anyone may have will still in a way come under any of the theories and uses of meaning. Thus, to the question, “what do we mean to say a statement is meaningful?” We shall only try to give an adequate characterization of the user of meaning and its cognition. Aside all the above considered positions, the Logical Empiricists also examined what it is for an expression or statement to be meaningful.

3. The Logical Empiricist on Meaning

The origin of the logic empiricism is dated to 1930’s when Moritz Schlick a founder of the Vienna circle delivered a public lecture at the College of the Pacific. With the characteristic absence of under statements, it was asserted in his lecture that; “Empiricism now has the right and power to claim the whole field of knowledge. We know nothing except by experience, and experience is the only criterion of the truth or falsity of any real proposition” (Blosser 1990).

The above assertion no doubt has nothing to do with phenomenological experience, rather, the underlining assumption here, which philosophers like A.J. Ayer and other empiricists would share is that all substantial knowledge about the real world is available only through sense experience and verifiable only by direct evidence or by inference from such evidence (Ayer 1953, Ozumba 2004). Also, that all rational Knowledge are merely conceptual and can be accounted for entirely in terms of the relations between logic and language. Hence, the position of the logical positivist’s school is that, proposition that would be meaningful would be empirical and no doubt are synthetic. Although, their truth cannot be known a posteriori, they are none the less verifiable and significant. On the other hand rational proposition will not satisfy such criterion. They are analytic. Their truth will be known a priori, but then, the logical empiricist would want to see it as a kind of proposition that do not tell us anything about the real world. To them, such proposition would be trivially and tautological.

The logical empiricist’s conception of language centres on understanding the functions of language and of various types of meaning. Communication and language as we know serves two purposes. The first is the representation of facts of the regularities in nature and society. The second is the conveying of imagery, the expression and arousal of emotion of actions. The types of meaning identified by the empiricists are cognitive factual meaning and expressive and evocative (or emotive) meaning. These two types of meaning were been combined in everyday life.

It should be pointed out that, Jonathan Dancy (1985) conceives empiricism as another strand of foundationalism when he asserts that “foundationalism can be seen as the expression of the logical empiricists”. His view was underscored by the precepts of foundationalism which contends that verification, justification, telling whether something is true and backing up one’s claim about what is true must rely basically upon the evidence of one’s senses. But then, our understanding of the senses shows that they do not only serve us with justification for claims, they are also the basis of our early processes of leaning a language. If we grant this, then, it follows that the sense remains the only starting point and no any other things that can be known other than what is given by our senses, that is, by the evidences of our senses. It is on this ground that the empiricist philosophy then hold seriously, evidence of our senses to be basic in the theory of meaning, a theory which enshrines the dependence of all languages, learning, and thus of all meaningful languages on the evidence of one’s senses. It was on this ground that a theory of meaning called “verification principle” was proposed. This verification principle gave rise to what is called verifiability criterion. This is the criterion for demarcating meaningful from meaningless propositions. The idea of verification connotes the actual verification of propositions, while verifiability suggests possibility of being verified.

The verification principle, holds that the meaning of a statement is the method of its verification (Stumpf 1977). By standard, this method of verification must always rest upon empirical observation. In the word of Jonathan Dancy (1985), “a statement has empirical meaning if its truth would not make a difference to the evidence of our senses”. Thus, a statement is meaningful if and only if it is verifiable by method of empirical observation. By logical formulation we have, ‘A’ knows the meaning of ‘P’ if ‘A’ knows how to verify ‘P’ or to say ‘A’ is meaningful if ‘A’ is verifiable.

From the above analysis, the understand we have about the logical empiricists school of thought is that a sentence has empirical meaning if it is capable at least in principle of complete verification by observational evidence. That is, if observational evidence could be described and which, if actually obtained would conclusively establish the truth of the sentence. In other words, the observational sentence “President Jonathan is a Nigerian” is meaningful if and only if it is possible to indicate a finite set of observation sentences, q^1, q^2, \dots, q^n . such that if these are true, the sentence is necessarily true too. This condition is also satisfied if the sentence is an analytic sentence.

We need to state here that, this view of the empiricists was as a result of their commitment to science and their claim that it is only in the sciences and especially in physics that we can attain authentic knowledge.

Therefore, for us to increase the amount of reliable information available to us, we should extend the use of scientific method to all domains. One important question that can be raised here is, 'why is it that science yields reliable information?' This is because, all assertions made in the sciences are warranted by experiment and controlled observation. Thus, since verification, experiments and observation have to do with things that can be seen, such things can be referred to while intending to carry out our verification for the purpose of meaningfulness. If we grant this position, then, Strawson's (1950) theory of 'reference' may be categorized along with the empiricist position. This is for the fact that by his 'reference' he means an observable entity which is equally empirical.

Also, Quine's idea of radical translation connotes an empirical means of knowing the meaning of words and sentences (Quine 1961). Thus, in *The Indeterminacy hypothesis* attempt was made to show the degree of uncertainty in meaning determination that characterize radical translation. He asserts that in the translation of one language into another, it is possible to have alternative manuals of translation which are incompatible with each other and yet conforming fully to the dispositions to behaviours on the part of the speakers of the two languages. (Quine 1961). He differentiates between 'standing sentences,' which are those sentences that are not dependent on any situation for their truth and falsity; and 'occasional statements', which are, those statements whose meaning are dependent on relevant occasions, situations or observations. It is through occasional observation that an alien language can be understood, just as a child learns from the parent through the process of imitation. For instance, the child watches the parent call water, ball, cup or objects of any kind and the child simply imitates them and also call the object after the parents. Quine's radical translation takes after this order. When we are learning an alien language, we relate and watch them as he speaks in the presence of an observable objects. For instance, whenever in the presence of a rabbit the alien shouts *gavagai*, the person may come to understand it to be rabbit after a period of observation with specific assumptions. The occasional observation is the method of verification given the logical empiricist's position on meaningfulness of a word.

But then, we can refer to Quine's view as an empiricist of a special kind because he disagrees with certain dogma in their thesis. He looks at radical translation from a holistic perspective by drawing a kind of affinity between mind and language for us to know meaningful. However, he was careful not to have taken this relationship to be sufficient enough to claim that meaning is a mental phenomenon, as the mentalist philosophers like John Locke would have us believe. To explain language in mentalistic term would only afford us very little understanding of either the word or the sentence. It is in line with this view that he opposed private language. Suffice to say here that the logical empiricist principle of verification includes Weak Verification and Strong Verification.

3.1 Strong Verification

This is a conclusive verification. A statement is conclusively verifiable if, once we have the best possible evidence for it and there remains no possibility that the statement can be false.

3.2 Weak Verification

This is less than conclusive. A weak verification statement is not self strongly verifiable, but it is confirmable or disconfirm-able by appeal to other statement(s) which are conclusively verifiable. In other word for such statement, strong verifiable statements can count as evidence for or against it.

John Kekes (1977) had equally distinguished between ordinary propositions and those he referred to as incorrigible basic propositions. The later he said carried with them their own justification while the justifications of the former depend on the latter. But then, while all a priori propositions that are analytic are said to be meaningful by virtue of the meaning of composite words independent of experience, all basic proposition that can be regarded as rational and whose truths are known a prior, would be seen by the empiricist as meaningless,. They hold tenaciously to the strong verification. Thus, statements, which simply report the evidence of one's sense, whatever that may be, can be conclusively verified when one's sense, do in fact produce such evidence.

However, the position of logical empiricist, denotes that statements can be divided into two classes. Those that are strongly verifiable in themselves, and those that are confirmable and disconfirm-able by appeal to the strong verifiable ones. This seems to be the position of Kekes discussion of incorrigible basic propositions. Should we be correct here, then, we can affirm a close connection between logical empiricism and foundationalism.

From our understanding of the verification principle of the empiricists, one question that agitates the mind is what statements are conclusively verifiable? Or what statements are 'observational' which regard state of affairs beyond those which can strictly speaking be observed? Logical empiricists' response to this question would of course differ from one person to another. To Ayer (1959), observational statements are those which describe the nature of our present sensory states. To Quine (1961), evidence of one's senses is not what is internal to observer but what is external to him i.e. to say the presence of certain stimuli. Thus, we can say that observational statement is one, made in response to certain stimuli and strongly verifiable by appeal to the

occurrence of such stimuli.

4. Against the Verification Principle

Suffice to say here that some problems have been identified with this verification principle which have led to another principle of testability and falsibility. Some of these shortcomings are:

First, it is argued that the verifiability requirement rules out all sentences of universal form. For example, all statements that attempt to express general laws. This is because such statement cannot be conclusively verified by any finite set of observational data. Since sentences of this type constitute an integral part of scientific theories, the verifiability's requirement must be regarded as overly restrictive in this respect. The principle also disqualifies sentences that contain both universal and existential qualities, since their truth cannot be logically deduce from any finite set of observational sentences. For instance, such statements as: "for any substance there exists some solvent" – it consists of "all" and "some". While "all" is universal "some" is existential. (Davidson 1971)

Second, the requirement of complete verifiability is said to be too inclusive. By this we mean, the alternation of two sentences in which only one of the two is true. For example, "water boils at 100^o or 100 degree centigrade" or "the absolute is perfect" the alternation would be trivially a consequence of some finite class of observational sentence. (Davidson 1971). When fully considered, the verification principle is seen to be destructive of the meaning which it purports to protect. This is because it disregards the fact that language is not only a tool for communicating extra-linguistic facts. More so, the use of language and sentence goes beyond representing reality either rightly or wrongly. They also function as imperative or command, exclamative, operative and so on. It is only when sentences are used in declarative forms that the question of meaningfulness or otherwise arises and not when it is been used in these other forms.

These and many other defects were noticed in the principle of verification as formulated by the empiricists and thereby led to several changes in the formulation of the criterion of meaning. The original version was replaced by a more tolerant version expressed in term of testability or conformability. Obviously, universal propositions, such as "all cats have claws" being only partially supportable by positive instance (since one cannot examine every cat that exist), are not conclusively verifiable. But then, scientists do accept law like statements on the bias of only incomplete, as well as indirect verification which is what confirmation amount to. It was this that made Karl Popper in the critique of positivism, to insist that the criterion of meaning should be abandoned and be replaced by a criterion of demarcation between empirical scientific and trans empirical non-scientific metaphysical question and answers (Edward 1967). The criterion is called "testability" (or in his own word "falsifiability or refutability").

The analysis of the principle of testability involves three ancillary concepts. They are those of observable characteristics, those of observational predicate and those of observational sentence. A property of a relation of physical object that under suitable circumstances, can have its presence or absence in a given instance ascertained through direct observation are referred to as observable characteristics. Thus, term such as "green", "soft", "liquid" designate observable predicates. However, by an observable sentence, we shall understand any sentence, which correctly or incorrectly asserts one or more specifically named objects, that they have, or lack some specified observable characteristics. For example, "The Olumo rock shown on the TV screen is very high". From this statement, the presence or absence of the object which the sentence is applicable to can be ascertained by direct observation.

At this juncture, the important question that begs for answer is, what do the logical empiricists really intend in their concept of observation? A simple response that can be given by them is that the concept of observation of sentences is intended to provide a precise interpretation of the vague idea of any sentence asserting something that is "in principle" ascertainable by direct observation. Though, it may happen to be actually incapable of being observed by the person, perhaps also by his contemporaries and possibly even by any human being who ever lived or will live. It can therefore be affirmed that evidence, that might be given in the test of an empiricist may now be thought of as being expressed in observation sentences of this kind.

Suffice to say that the mode of the empiricist testability is another mode of the principle of verification which has been discussed earlier. Since it shares the same mode with the principle of verification, it is logical that the principle of testability would fall short of the same defects of the verification principle. In fact, it can be argued that taking testability to rest on the principle of verification, whose stand has not been effectively established, is like accepting the conclusion of an argument whose premises are unknown to be true or false, or simply accepting the conclusion of an argument whose premises are unknown to be false.

It is noteworthy, that, similar consideration applies to an alternative criterion, which makes complete falsifiability in principle the defining characteristic of empirical significance. The formulation of the criterion may be that: a sentence has empirical meaning if and only if it is capable, in principle of complete refutation by a finite number of observational data. The requirement of complete falsibility in principle can be put as: A sentence has empirical meaning if and only if its denial is not analytic and follow logically from some finite

logically consistent class of observational sentences; and empirically meaningful if its denial satisfy the requirement of complete verifiability as expected, it is therefore inadequate on similar ground as the latter.

It can be inferred from this analysis that neither testability which has its mode in verifiability or complete falsifiability are adequate criterion of meaning because they are all overly restrictive in one direction and overly inclusive in another, and also, because both of them require incisive changes in the fundamental principle of logic. To avoid this difficulty, some suggested formulations were made. For instance Ayer (1959) made a characteristic comprehensive criterion of confirmability. It states in effect that, a sentence 'S' has empirical import if, from the 'S' in conjunction with suitable subsidiary hypotheses it is possible to derive observation sentences which are not derivable from the subsidiary hypothesis alone.

It should be noted that this is suggested by a closer consideration of the logical structure of scientific testing: but it is much too liberal as it stands. Ayer himself has pointed out that his criterion allows empirical import to any sentence whatsoever. However, Ayer has proposed a modified version of testability as a criterion. The modification restricts in effect, the subsidiary hypothesis to sentence which are either analytic or can independently be shown to be testable in the sense of the modified criterion. But then, this criterion, like the requirement of complete falsifiability, allows empirical importance to any conjunction say "the fan is red and the absolute is perfect". The first statement would satisfy Ayer's criterion but the latter is to be disqualified by the criterion.

In order to further pursue their claim, the empiricist classify some language as empiricist language; -this is language whose vocabulary and grammar were so chosen as to preclude altogether the possibility of forming sentences of any kind which their criterion of meaning intended to rule out. Through this a new approach is set to the problem. Thus, they set out to achieve the "Translatability" criterion of cognitive meaning. Therefore, a sentence will have a cognitive meaning if and only if it is translatable into an empiricist language. To them, that is, the empiricist, for any language to satisfy the empiricist criteria, it has to satisfy the following conditions.

- (a) The vocabulary should contain -
 - (1) The customary locators of logic which are used in the formulation of sentence including such expression as "not", "and", "or", "if.....then" and so on.
 - (2) It should contain certain observation predicates.
 - (3) Such expression should be definable by means of what we have in 1 and 2 above.
- (b) The rules of sentences formation for it must be those laid down in some contemporary logical system such as *principia mathematica*. (Davidson 1971)

Should we construe the empiricist language in the sense above, such that, a sentence can be produced fulfilling all the above stated conditions, translatability criterion will still suffer all the shortcomings pointed out earlier in our discussion of the testability criterion. Secondly, sentences such as "the absolute is perfect" cannot be formulated in an empiricist language; hence there is no danger that conjunction or alternation containing a sentence of that kind as a component might be qualified as cognitively significant. It should be noted as argued above that, the principle of verification testability and falsifiability would fall short of a conjunction with statement as thus, and any other, such as, "the fan is red" which may satisfy the above desired principles.

Thirdly, it has been argued that a language 'L' with syntactical rules conforming to *principia mathematica*, the denial of such sentence is always again a sentence of 'L'. But then, it can be maintained that, this very criterion does not attribute cognitive meaning in all sentences. For instances, the sentence "the absolute is perfect" and "nothingness nothing" cannot be translated into empiricist language, because, their key term are not definable by means of purely logical expression and observational terms (Davidson 1971).

4. The logical Empiricist Criterion of Meaning: Some Comments

Our position in this paper is a critical analysis of the possibility of adequate and meaningful communication as to whether the logical positivist's criterion can be adopted for the purpose of translation. From the philosophical analysis of the logical empiricist's position, it is clear that whatever word or expression that would be regarded communicative must be verifiable, testable or falsifiable. The fundamental question arising from the above analysis is, "to what extent will their position enable a cross-cultural communication?" The simple answer we can give to the above adumbrated question is that, whenever any utterance is made in a foreign language we will have to begin to test or verify such utterances before we can assert its meaningfulness and hence accept the speaker as communicating. But, what will be our instrument for verification, testability or falsifiability? Should it be language? It simply means that we have to first determine the meaningfulness of the language to be employed and this may go on ad-infinitum. Communication will therefore become an unattainable task. Perhaps we choose to adopt W.V.O Quine's method of occasional observation, which he explicated in his 'radical translation.' After all, observability corresponds with observability, a latter variation of the empiricist's means of verification. If Quine's position is adopted, then we shall be faced with the problem of how to determine the meaning of certain observable actions that are expressed in statement form. For instance, when the people of a particular language make an utterance such as *gavagai* whenever a rat runs across a room, how do we determine

(even if the exercise continue for a longer period), if what has been said is not referring to the action of the rat or a part of the rat. Aside this identified problem, employing Quine's 'radical translation' would restrict us in a way to adopting 'the reference theory' as a method of determining the meaning of a word. But then, it is possible for a word to have a "sense" without a "reference"? For instance, a unicorn. As pointed out earlier, it is also possible to have sentences that lack reference and yet be meaningful. For instance, 'the man that lives inside the lagoon.' Though, the statement may not have any reference because we are not aware that there is a man that lives inside the lagoon. However, the component words agrees with the lexicon of English grammar, and it is saying what can be clearly understood, in this regard, it is meaningful. We need to recall also, that there are sentences and words that may not conform to the law of English grammar but still have meaning; passwords, signs, esoteric languages or private languages suffices as examples.

It is instructive to note that the subject matter of philosophy is seen by phenomenologists not to be an empirical matter in the sense supposed by logical empiricists such as Strawson (1967), Austin (1962) and Wittgenstein (1922). This group of philosophers of language shifted their position from what can be called "occult sphere" of "propositions" to the sphere of ordinary language use in order to avoid the mystery of meaning.

It would be observed that the goal of the logical empiricists is to restrict 'meaning' to empirical things such that their entire criterion may eventually be applicable. The logical empiricist's adoption of the verification principle was because they wanted to give philosophy a scientific orientation. They felt philosophy in the past had been largely given over to useless metaphysical and normative problems that were in principle insoluble (Alston 1988). Their belief was that a rigorous application of the verification principle would help to rid philosophy of all linguistically misleading phantoms which are not verifiable even in principle. This position is corroborated by David Hume's (1969) assertion;

when we ran over a library persuaded
of this principle, what havoc must we
made. If we try our hands on any volume
of divinity or school metaphysics, e.g. let
us ask, does it consist of any abstract
reasoning consisting quality or number,
does it contain any empirical reasoning
concerning matter of facts and existent,
commit it to flame for it contains nothing
but sophistry and illusion.

Hume's argument is that, if we take a book on metaphysics, the first question we should ask is whether such proposition contains experimental reasoning or logical truth or matter of fact, if it does not, it should be committed to flame, because such contains nothing but nonsense.

Since the logical empiricists are philosophers with scientific bents of mind, hence their intention to adopt and apply scientific method for explanations in all ramifications of their endeavours. Thus, all the principles put forward as criterion of meaning are methods in physical sciences.

We should however, point it out here that observation cannot be adopted as the only source of human knowledge, since human knowledge transcends the empirical world. This explains why, metaphysics which answers all other 'what is?' questions that cannot be answered by natural science and which does not satisfy the logical empiricist criterion cannot be regarded as meaningless.

Furthermore, there are certain propositions called incorrigible basic propositions, these are proposition that always have their meaning in the very propositions. For instance, a proposition such as "the black board is black" and "a bachelor is an unmarried man" are "Analytic" or "A priori" propositions. Do we need to verify them before we asserts their meaning fullness? But, when we compare them with such proposition as "there are boys and girls in the class room" the logical empiricist criterion to determine the meaning of such a synthetic proposition might be useful. Quine (1961) in his *Two dogmas of empiricism* had made a distinction between two types of analytic statements: "No unmarried man is married" and "no bachelor is married". His argument was that, the first can be recognized as true without knowing the meaning of "man" or "married" simply from the meaning of logical constants and syntactical relations. He called such statement "logical true". In the second however, we must know the meaning of the substantive "bachelor" and "married". To him, he believed that we still lack a proper characterization of this second class of analytic statements and therewith of analyticity.

The verification principle can be shown to be nugatory, simply by asking whether the statement of the principle is itself either a tautology or an empirical statement, the only types of statement which the principle allows to be meaningful. If we answer the former, then it could be alleged that, the principle is useless. If the latter, then we can say that, it is at least inconclusive as all empirical statements must be. But then, the question fails to appreciate the nature of verification's thesis. To use an analogy; consider the two statements, (1): the chair collapsed because I sat on it; and (2): Every event has a cause. If we describe the first as a causal statement,

then, we cannot describe the second in that same way. The principle of causation cannot itself be a causal statement coordinate with statements which exemplify it. Indeed, to call it a principle is to initiate that it is not a statement at all. In a similar way, we should not expect the principle of verification itself to be subjected to the criterion which it lays down governing meaningful statements. We do not expect a 'weighing machine to weigh itself'.

Working on the terms "verifiable" and 'experience' there are vagueness that are inherent in them and have appeared in the formulations of the principle. For instance, it has been said that mystical and religious experiences amongst others have as such right to be called "experience" as seeing a particle or colours, so that statement describing them have every right to be regarded as meaningful. Further expression, such as, 'verifiable in principle', 'strong verification' and weak verification' can be rigid criterion of meaningfulness. Though, the principle had been modified but yet criticism and reformulation can continue indefinitely. Thus, going by the empiricist argument, communication would become impossible either within a particular society or across societies. The inherent problem therefore, is that we might not be able to assert meaningfulness for any expression hence objectivity will equally become impossible. This is against the aim of the logical empiricist. The question that follow from here is, do we really have to ask for the criterion of meaning at least in a sense in which the verification principle is intended as a criterion of meaning? Strictly asking for the meaning of a sentence may be improper, for answers to it may lead to logical synonyms for the verb 'to intend' as seen in such statement as 'I mean Lagos nor Accra'. Also it can be 'emotive', that is, it can also be synonyms with 'is a sign of', as seen in this sentence "white means peace' and so many other one which cannot be exhausted.

5. Conclusion

In sum, if by meaning we are concerned with words, we shall surely run into so many problems especially if we adopt the logical empiricist criterion of meaning. The basic reason is that, words do not exist in isolation hence the impossibility of determining their meaningfulness. Meanings of words are better looked up in the dictionary and a good dictionary will give examples of what such words stands for in the sentences. Thus, we can say of words that they are meaningful only in the context of sentence. In case of some other words they are meaningful in themselves. For instance, 'sweet', 'bachelor', 'father' and so on. Their use may give meaning to some propositions especially when such proposition is analytic such as – 'No bachelor is married'. While statements as this does not need any logical empiricist to determine its meaningfulness, other propositions may be made to conform to the logical empiricist criterion so as to make them objective.

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