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An Exposition on Wittgenstein's Notion of Necessity

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Abstract

In classical logic and mathematics, three laws of thought—the Law of Identity, the Law of Contradiction, and the Law of Excluded Middle are considered as fundamental and necessary. In order to justify the modality of the judgments, some Kantian predecessors and as well as some ancestors, accepted the fundamentality of these laws and explained how the different types of judgments are possible. However, Kant, in his Critique of Pure Reason introduced a new notion of a priori necessity and thereby introduced a new kind of Transcendental logic where he proved the possibility of a new kind of judgment—synthetic-a priori, the mark of scientific judgment; instead of considering the law of contradiction as the sole source of necessity.

Wittgenstein, on the other hand, in his Tractatus Liogico Philosophicus claimed all the problems of philosophy have been solved by him on the basis of 'logical form' and perhaps, adopted the traditional notion of necessity when he penned down 'As there is only a logical necessity, so there is only a logical impossibility (TLP 6.375).' But in Philosophical Investigations, in speaking of acting as lying at the bottom of the language game, he was asserting that an objective, non-psychological foundation exists for ordinary life and its various practices. From this perspective, for him, the idea of necessity is not absolute. A necessary proposition may become contingent, or a contingent proposition may become necessary, in the course of time. The ways we generally think have been challenged by him. It is the attitude that makes a proposition necessary. In fact, Wittgenstein did not provide a theory or an account of necessary propositions in contrast with other accounts. He was persuading us to look at the usage of the word 'necessity' in our language and life and to take a certain view, 'a certain attitude' towards mathematical and logical necessity.

In contrast to the discussion mentioned above, the notion of necessity as adopted by Indian philosophers, especially the Naiyāyikas, seems to be much clearer and consistent. From the Western philosophical perspective, it is neither psychological nor logical in nature, although Indian Logic involves some mental acts such as perception, memory, etc., in order to account for the theory of knowledge.

This paper would be an attempt to show that the notion of necessity from the perspective of Naiyāyikas is more consistent and clear than that of the Western philosophers, especially the approaches taken by Wittgenstein, whether in his early life or in later life.

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The concept of necessity and the concept of certainty are closely related because anything that is necessary must be certain. When the concept of necessity is expressed through the help of a statement, it is observed that the concept of necessity is also interconnected with the concept of inconsistency, because all the necessary statements are the contradiction of an inconsistent statement.[i] While Bertrand Russell, in his popular book, *The Problems of Philosophy*, referred to and appreciated[2] the application of systematic method of doubt applied by Descartes in his, *Meditation of First Philosophy*, one of the epoch making books in the history of philosophy in order to find out the certainty, after 271 years of time to resolve the same problem in a different manner that is to establish a proof of the certainty of the physical objects through the world of sense data, it signified that the problem concerned with the concept of necessity was very much momentous in respect of philosophizing. Historically, the same reference of *Cogito Argo Sum* was also put forward by A. J. Ayer in his *The Problem of Knowledge* when he examined whether there were any statements immune from doubt. From the points mentioned above, it is clear that the concept of necessity or certainty has been playing a pivotal role in the history of philosophy, especially in the theory of knowledge.

In the theory of knowledge, the concept of necessity or certainty is very much crucial as ideal knowledge is marked by either necessity and/or novelty by the epistemologists. Although, the rationalist philosophers think that necessity is the most important and essential component of knowledge, the empiricist philosophers, on the other hand, emphasize on the novelty as the essential constituent of knowledge, the point which is commonly shared by them is: knowledge must be certain either from the point of view of logic or theories of knowledge. Knowledge, being expressed by the statement, epistemologists, in general, believe in two types of statement—analytic a priori, advocated by the rationalists, and synthetic a posteriori, supported by the empiricists. Kant, on the other hand, introduced and proved the possibilities of synthetic a priori judgement in his *Critique of Pure Reason,* through which both the attributes, i.e., necessity and novelty of knowledge, could be retained intact.

[2] By inventing the method of doubt, and by showing that subjective things are the most certain, Descartes performed a great service to philosophy, and one which makes him still useful to all students of the subject. From Bertrand Russell, The Problems of Philosophy.

In classical logic, however, three laws of thought—the Law of Identity, the Law of Contradiction, and the Law of Excluded Middle are considered as fundamental and necessary. Among these three laws, the law of contradiction seems to be elementary, because (i) the opposite of the other two laws leads to a self-contradiction and (ii) logical possibility and impossibility are determined by this law. The rationalist philosophers hold, when a statement is called necessary, it is a priori and it is also a necessary truth. Leibniz, for example, said that all necessary statements are a priori. By necessity statements, he categorized the statements that are also necessary truths.[3] All statements in the forms: p=p or p. q=p or [(p v q). ~p] = p are necessary, because these are identity statements. For him, necessity depends upon identity, and if these types of statements are denied, these statements lead to self-contradiction. That is why a necessary statement is defined as—the opposite of which is self-contradictory. For example— 'All black crows are black,' or 'All bachelors are married,' are necessary statements, because the negation of these statements is self-contradictory. The negation of the first one is 'Some black crows are not black' i.e., 'There is at least one black crow which is not black' and this leads us to self-contradiction—p.~p. Again, the opposite of the second statement—'All bachelors are married.' is 'Some bachelors are not married.' i.e., 'Some bachelors are not bachelors.' which leads to self-contradiction—p.~p.

When the empiricist philosophers stick to the synthetic a posteriori statements, they do not, actually, ignore the possibilities of analytic a priori statements; what they claim is that the essence of ideal knowledge is novelty, and it is expressed only through the synthetic a posteriori statements which are justified through the help of experience. Again, they are of the opinion that some concepts, for example, the concept of causality, substance, etc., which

[3] There are also two kinds of truths, those of reasoning and those of fact. Truths of reasoning are necessary and their opposite is impossible, and those of fact are contingent and their opposite is possible. When a truth is necessary its reason can be found by analysis, resolving it into more simple ideas and truths until we reach those which are primitive...Finally there are simple ideas, definitions of which cannot be given; there are also axioms and postulates, in a word, primary principles, which cannot be proved and indeed need no proof, and these are identical judgments, the opposite of which contains an express contradiction. From George DM. (Tr.) Philosophical Works of Leibnitz, More-house & Taylor Publishers, New Haven, 1890, 223

are taken as necessary by the rationalist philosophers, could be explained through the help of experience, and are not necessary.[4]

Kant, on the other hand, neither totally rejected nor fully accepted the views of empiricism and/or rationalism regarding the nature of knowledge. He, actually, turned the flow of the theory of knowledge towards a new scientific horizon with the help of synthetic a priori judgements, which is the mark of novelty and as well as necessity, and thereby brought the Copernican revolution in philosophy. The crucial point which should be noted here lies in the fact that Kant did not rely on logical necessity because, for him, the necessity of analytic statements depends on the logical notion of necessity. 'All bachelors are unmarried,' for example, is analytic and thereby necessary as the negation of this judgment leads to self-contradiction. Analytic judgment can give the guaranty of necessity, but Kant was interested in both necessity and novelty. That is why he admitted a synthetic a priori statement. All synthetic judgements are liable to provide a new kind of knowledge, and there is no doubt about this matter. But what is very tough is to show the possibilities of synthetic statements as a priori. Kant, in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, discovered a new notion of necessity, instead of logical necessity, through which the synthetic judgments can be proved as necessary. 'No two straight lines can enclose a space.' In this new Kantian sense of necessary, it is necessary, because the opposite of this judgment—'There are at least two straight lines which can enclose a space' cannot be constructed in the space and time, as this is counterintuitive. Some synthetic judgements in Geometry or mathematics, or even in metaphysics, are a priori in this sense and thereby are necessary. So, it is clear that Kant was able to employ a new notion of a priori necessity going beyond logical necessity.

Wittgenstein, on the other hand, in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* claimed all the problems of philosophy have been solved by him on the basis of 'logical form' and adopted the traditional logical as well as modern logical notion of necessity when he penned down

[4] There are no ideas, which occur in metaphysics, more obscure and uncertain, than those of power, force, energy or necessary connexion, of which it is every moment necessary for us to treat in all our disquisitions. We shall, therefore, endeavour, in this section, to fix, if possible, the precise meaning of these terms, and thereby remove some part of that obscurity, which is so much complained of in this species of philosophy. From Enquiry David Hume An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding and Other Writings Edited by Stephen Buckle, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2007, P-58

'As there is only a logical necessity, so there is only a logical impossibility (TLP 6.375).' In fact, Wittgenstein, in his early life agreed with the Russell and Frege, when he considered the source of any philosophical problem what so ever originated from the weakness of its logical construction and that is why, he thought, it could be solved if and only if the logical construction is repaired on the ground of calculus based logical method[ii] as adopted by Russell and Frege. Amazingly, Wittgenstein applied this logical method in such a way[5] that he made the whole language into a deductive system[iii] through which he was able to demand in the one hand that 'What can be said at all can be said clearly; and where of one cannot speak there of one must be silent.' and on the other hand that '...if I am not mistaken in this, then the value of this work secondly consists in the fact that it shows how little has been done when these problems have been solved.'

When he added 'For two colours, e.g., to be at one place in the visual field, is impossible, logically impossible, for it is excluded by the logical structure of colour.' (TLP 6.3751), The impossibility of something being both blue and red at the same time implies a law of physics—a particle cannot have two velocities at the same time, F. P. Ramsey pointed out that Wittgenstein, here, wrongly applied the notion of logical necessity to those properties which belong to space, time, and matter. In physics, it is impossible for anything to be both red and blue at the same time. But, in case of logic, it is not impossible for anything to be both red and not red at the same time, because logic admits only p· ~ p as self-contradictory and this is not possible at the same time, instead of considering 'p · q' is self-contradictory.

In 'Some Remarks on Logical Form', however, Wittgenstein attempted to recover his view by endorsing some atomic propositions as mutually exclusive. But, this attempt was failed to repair all the holes of the theory as developed by Wittgenstein in *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus*, because, in that case, he had to reject the basic premises of his earlier philosophy—Anyone can either be the case or not be the case, and everything else remain the same (TLP 1.21) and What is the case, the fact, is the existence of atomic facts (TLP2).

When Wittgenstein understood that the repairing of holes could never make any progress on the theory of Tractatus, he shifted from his earlier thesis and thereby developed a new

[5] Russell appreciated Wittgenstein as "true philosophical genius" and his work as "vitally important discoveries"

kind of morphological study. He said that the task of the philosophers is not just to give the definition of a word or to give the answer to the question of why. but to give a description of how a word is used in a particular language, following a certain language game, in a stream of life. This amounts to a new kind of attitude towards necessity, and according to Wittgenstein, it is not identical with psychological, functional, Platonist, and sociological accounts of necessity.[6]

In *Philosophical Investigation*, we are provided a different type of linguistic philosophy. Here, philosophy is not just a mere theory, it is rather an activity which can be compared with therapy.[7] It is 'a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language'[8]. The source of this bewitchment, according to Wittgenstein, was (i) depending on some misleading analogy[iv] and (ii) the confusion between surface grammar and depth grammar.[v] In fact, Wittgenstein suggested that we not depend on any kind of pre-established theories, because most of these theories are not free from any kind of wrong analysis, depending on a misleading analogy. Misleading analogy compels us to be captivated by some pictures which are the source of decisiveness or, in a broad sense, necessary. He showed the example of time used by St. Augustine in this context. We all understand what time means. But we are captivated by an analogy in order to make out time as a stream which is flowing from the past to the future. This analogy is totally wrong. Being within the time, none can go beyond time, that's why it is not possible for us to be outside the time and look the time as a flowing stream.

Again, the sentences 'X is red' and 'X is right' cannot be given the same status, although these two are, from the point of view of surface grammar, the same. From the perspective of the depth grammar, these two sentences are different; the first is descriptive, whereas the last one is evaluative. 'X is red' is descriptive because the attribute of X has been described as red, which is visible with the help of normal eyesight. It is a sentence that belongs within the language game and is used to describe physical objects. But in the case of

[6] The above discussions suggest that Wittgenstein opposes the psychological, functional, Platonist and sociological accounts of necessity. From Sarkar, Priyambada: *On the Nature of Necessity: Later Wittgenstein*, Analytica No2, 2008, P-11

[7] In most cases, Wittgenstein does not offer an argument, but rather a kind of therapy. From Ray Monk's '*How to Read Wittgenstein'*, Granta Books, London, 2005, P-78

[8] G.E.M. Anscombe (Trans.) Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigation, Basil Blackwell, 1986, 109

The sentence—'X is right.' The sentence may be as same as the earlier form, but the language game, here, is concerned is different as it is linked with the evaluation.

The crucial point is this: in *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein does not treat language as a vacuum. It is to use, or in other words, what Wittgenstein says, 'woven'.[9]In speaking of acting as lying at the bottom of the language game, Wittgenstein was asserting that an objective, non-psychological foundation exists for ordinary life and its various practices. According to Wittgenstein, the idea of necessity is not absolute. A necessary proposition may become contingent, or a contingent proposition may become necessary in the course of time. The ways as we thought have been challenged by him. It is the attitude that makes a proposition necessary. In fact, Wittgenstein did not provide any theory or an account of necessary propositions in contrast with other accounts. He was persuading us to look at the usage of the word 'necessity' in our language and life and to take a certain view, 'a certain attitude' towards mathematical and logical necessity. Thus, Mrs. *Sarkar* rightly pointed out,

> In fact if we attempt to label Wittgenstein's views as a theory, we'll be doing injustice to him. And while doing philosophy, philosophers interpret everything in terms of theories without paying attention to the ways the words are used in our ordinary life, and they thus get into trouble.[10]

From the discussion mentioned above, it is clear that the concept of necessity, from the Western philosophical perspective, refers to any one of the following: psychological, functional, Platonist, logical, linguistic, and sociological accounts of necessity. Among these types of necessity, although Wittgenstein was influenced by the logical necessity in his earlier life, he did not prefer any one of them out of these types of necessity in his later life, which seems to imply a kind of discrepancy. Because attitude, perhaps, can never be a sufficient criterion to mark something as necessary, as the concept of necessary is loaded with objectivity.

[9] From G.E.M. Anscombe (Trans.) *Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigation*, Basil Blackwell, 1986, P-7

[10] Sarkar, Priyambada: *On the Nature of Necessity: Later Wittgenstein*, Analytica No2, 2008, P-16

In contrast to the discussion mentioned above, the notion of necessity as implemented by Indian philosophers, especially the *Naiyāyikas,* seems to be much clearer and consistent. It is neither psychological nor logical in nature from the Western perspective, although Indian Logic involves some mental acts, such as perception, memory, etc., in order to account for the theory of knowledge. When a person sees smoke on the hill, it is assumed that he/she has the prior knowledge that wherever there is smoke, there is fire, and he/she also remember this universal correlation. Memory with the other conditions, on the one hand, helps him/her to see the smoke which can never exist without fire, and on the other hand, to draw the conclusion that the hill possesses the fire. Let it be noted that an inferential process will be completed if and only if it corresponds to a chain of mental processes, like seeing, remembering, etc, by a particular person in some particular situation under some suitable conditions that are required to be present for the inferential process to take place.

The mental process involved in an inference is discussed under the title *pakṣatā*. In the process of inference, two conditions are important—(a) the presence or the absence of the desire to infer, and (b) the presence or absence of prior certainty about the conclusion of the inference. Amongst the possible combination of these two variables are—the presence of the desire and the presence of the prior certainty, the absence of the desire and the presence of the prior certainty, the presence of the desire and the absence of the prior certainty, the absence of the desire and the absence of the prior certainty, only one i.e. the second one—the absence of the desire and the presence of the prior certainty rules out the possibility of inferential process to take place. The suitable condition for the occurrence of the inferential process is the absence of the desire to infer and the absence of prior certainty.[11] The point which is worth noticing here is that, in all these, the whole inferential process is mentioned in terms of psychological conditions of the person who is actually inferring.

These psychological conditions will be crystal clear if the 'inference for others' has been taken into consideration. The *Naiyāyikas* admit 'inference for one's own self' where three components of inference are necessary, and 'inference for others' where five components are necessary, and it is applicable only when a person wants to convince others after going

[11] In the case of a fire… the causal condition is constituted by the absence of 'certainty (*siddhi*) that is accompanied by the absence of the desire to infer' *(siṣādhayiṣā-viraha-sahakṛta-siddhabhāva) Tarkasaṁgraha-Dīpikā* On *Tarkasaṁgraha* By *Annaṁbhaṭṭa* Translated and Elucidated by *Gopinath Bhattacharryay,* Progressive Publishers, Kolkata, 1976, P-200

through the first. These five components for the 'inference of others' which are also termed by the *Naiyāyikas* as the *'nayāya'* are as follows:

[1] The hill possesses the fire. [*pratijñā*]

[2] Because it possesses the smoke. [*hetu*]

[3] Wherever there is smoke, there is fire, for example, the stove in the kitchen. [*udāharaṇa*]

[4] The hill is like that (possesses smoke that is universally so present with fire. [*upanaya*]

[5] Therefore, the hill is like that (i.e., it possesses fire). [*nigamana*]

Let it be noted that these five components constitute the compound statements as a whole and not for the entities which these statements signify. One may get the conclusion, i.e., *nigamana,* on the basis of *udāharaṇa* and *hetu* by the application of the rule of Modus Ponens from the perspective of Western Logic. But in the case of 'inference for others', each step is essential as the aim of this inference is to convince the interlocutor. Again, Modus Ponens, being a rule of formal logic, does not concern itself with the relevance of a valid argument. When a person infers the presence of fire in the hill through 'inference for one's own self', they use the first component to the interlocutor, because the interlocutor is not sure of the presence of fire in the hill. At this, the interlocutor asks. Why? The answer naturally comes in the form of component two. Again, the interlocutor may not be satisfied with the answer that is given in component two. Then the third component will be applied, where it is said that the smoke can never exist without the fire. In the fourth component, *upanaya* is the statement in the form—'and it is like that' (*tathācha ayam*), i.e., it is an application part where the universal principle is enunciated—the hill possesses smoke not per se, but smoke as that with which fire is universally present. The *nigamana* is of the form 'therefore. Like that it is' (*tasmāt tathā*). Here, the interlocutor is convinced about the possession of fire on the hill on the basis of the smoke.

Two important points should be mentioned here. Firstly, the entire process of inference corresponds with a mental process, occurs in the mind of the interlocutor, which is guided by the norms of cognitive psychology. Secondly, the whole process has been completed in the form of a dialogue between the person who has already inferred the possession of fire in the hill and the person who is to be convinced of the possession of fire in the hill with the help of debates. So, it is clear that the Indian theory of inference is closely associated with the psychological process. From this, one may conclude that the Indian theory of inference could

give us only the psychological necessity. But psychological necessity, devoid of universality, can never be the mark of logical necessity, and for this reason, it is not the task of a logician not just the generalizations of how a proposition is believed to be true, Frege thinks, the task of a logician is to discover the laws of truth. Psychological conditions are concerned with the person's taking a proposition to be true, i.e., believed to be true, whereas logical laws are concerned with a proposition being true.

> When we do logic, we do not study a person's subjective history of acquisition of beliefs in certain propositions—what we do is that we discern the laws governing the relation between those propositions.[12]

For Frege, psychological laws have nothing to do with the logical laws. Logical laws are neither material nor psychological; these laws belong to the third world which is categorized by Frege as the world of thoughts. But in that case, logical necessity being treated as formal, the relevance part will be ignored.

That's why the reconstruction of necessity made by J. N. Mohanty on the Indian theory of inference could be helpful. Following J. N. Mohanty, it can be said that when an inference includes some mental events, that does not mean that the inference is purely psychological. In fact, in this process, a mental event is used to exemplify a universal structure in the sense that more than one mental event can illustrate the same structure. When the mental events or acts are talked about, there is always a reference to a self, where the mental acts or events occur with a temporal reference, and there must be a content of these mental acts. The contents of the mental event may vary, but the structure always remains the same. The structure of *pañcāvayavs-vākya* will be the same as *pratijñā, hetu, udāharaṇa, upanaya,* and *nigamana. The* Indian theory of inference actually deals with the structure of the cognitive acts, which are universal. In this account, two cognitive acts can be said to be identical if they have the same act-nature and exemplify through the same content structure. The inference—The pot is namable, because it is knowable or Earth different from other things, because it is endowed with smell, can be proved with the application of the same structure of *pañcāvayavs-vākya* will be the same as *pratijñā, hetu, udāharaṇa, upanaya,* and *nigamana*.

[12] Chakraborty, Nirmalya Narayan: *Psychologism, Necessity and Indian Logic*, Journal of The Department of Philosophy, University of Calcutta, Volume—VIII, P-85

although the contents are different. That is why the references to the owner of the mental acts are irrelevant here.

So, from the above discussion, it is clear that the concept of necessity from the Indian perspective is much more consistent than that of the Western perspective, especially from the perspective of Wittgenstein.

References & Citation

[i] When we assert the contradictory of an inconsistent statement, we are said to make a logically necessary statement. Variants on 'logically necessary statement' are 'analytic statement ', 'necessary truth ', 'logically true statement '. P.F. Strawson in his Introduction to Logical Theory, Methuen & Co Ltd, London, 1964, P-21

[ii] More specifically, the method of language-games is intended to extend logic beyond the limitations of calculus-based methods, while also avoiding certain other problems with Russell's and Wittgenstein's early approach. From Oskari Kuusela, The Method of Language- Games as a Method of Logic, Philosophical Topics vol. 42, no. 2, 2014, P-130

[iii] In order to understand Mr. Wittgenstein's book, it is necessary to realize what the problem with which he is concerned is. In the part of his theory which deals with Symbolism, he is concerned with the conditions which would have to be fulfilled by a logically perfect language. There are various problems as regards language. From Wittgenstein, Ludwig: *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Side-By-Side-By-Side Edition, Version 0.41 (February 11, 2014)

[iv] Wittgenstein, *The Blue and Brown Books*, Oxford University Press, London, 1960, P-48

[v] In the use of words, one might distinguish 'surface grammar' from 'depth grammar'. What immediately impresses itself upon us about the use of a word is the way it is used in the construction of the sentence, the part of its use—one might say—that can be taken in by the ear.——And now compare the depth grammar, say of the word "to mean", with what its surface grammar would lead us to suspect. No wonder we find it difficult to know our way about.—G.E.M. Anscombe (Trans.) Wittgenstein's Philosophical *Investigations*, Basil Blackwell, 1986, P-664