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BEING AND UNIVERSALS IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF QUINE AND ITS RELEVANCE TO AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY

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INTRODUCTION

Schooled or unschooled, man is vested with the responsibility of making intelligible every data of everyday's experience. This responsibility is manifested in the natural desire to know, which has pushed men to ask many questions, about the nature of reality. These questions are at once philosophical and the beginning of the philosophical enterprise. Prominent among the questions philosophers ask, is that of being. The question of being has found diverse formulations in the different periods of philosophy. Associated with the question of the nature of being is that of the ontological status of universals.

Quine is of the opinion that ontological questions suffer confusion within Empiricism because of confusion of meaning with naming. Thus, he feels that the statement of ontological starting point of ontological investigation should be the clearing of this confusion. His clearing of the confusion results in indeterminacy of meaning, of reference, and relativity of ontological reference. It is this relativity of ontological reference that conditions his ontological commitment, and his treatment of the problem of being and universals.

The focus of this paper is to show what Quine says there is and the consequence of such for the problem of universal and the relevance of that ontological system to African philosophy. In doing this, the paper takes into consideration Quine's philosophical background, the problem of ontological confusion, the problems of meaning and reference their solutions and Quine's notion of being and universals and its relevance to African philosophy.

CHAPTER ONE

THE BACKGROUND OF QUINEAN ONTOLOGY

1. **The Intellectual Emergence of Quine**

    Every philosophy has within it the imprints of the age, culture, environment and persons responsible for its existence. This has conspicuously manifested itself in the philosophy of Williard V. O. Quine. This name refers to an American philosopher and logician, who was born in 1908 and happened to live and flourish in the twentieth (20th) century.

    Quine began studies under the tutelage of Alfred North Whitehead, in Harvard University. But following the attractions of Logical positivism, he got converted to it in the 1930s. Consequently, he left Harvard and became a student of Carnap, an important figure in the movement, at about the same time.

    His inclination to pragmatism drew him closer to the naturalism of Dewey. These and many other influences join forces together to mould the Quinean philosophical orientation.

2. **Quine and Dewey**

    In his '*Ontological Relativity and other Essays*' (1969) Quine professes his bond with Dewey over naturalism. In this respect, his views concerning the study of knowledge, mind and meaning are Deweyian. This he states as thus:

    Philosophically I am bound to Dewey by the naturalism that dominated his last three decades. With Dewey I hold that knowledge, mind, and meaning are part of the same world that they have to do with, and that they are to be studied in the same empirical spirit that animates natural science. (Quine, 1969:26).

    The consequences of this belief are exciting to note. Quine like Dewey reduces meaning to being the property of behaviour, language to being its mode of behaviour and meaning to being understood only as what is expressed in behaviour or all dispositions to behaviour known or unknown. Quine also rejects with Dewey, the view of uncritical semantics which is the myth of a museum (The myth holds that meanings are the entities meant while languages are labels).

    The gravest consequence of this affinity with Deweyian naturalism is his denial, with Dewey of the existence of matter of fact in ontological issues. It must be noted that Quine is not here saying that there is no reality. It is rather that what is known is of conceptualization, which is quite torrential in comparison with its meager input. Thus, it becomes absurd to seek a reference, which is founded on a one-to-one correspondence between the scheme and its input when we know that the output is far greater than the input. He, therefore, directs attention to background language as a ground for reference. The ideal which guides the creation of such language is convenience.

    The first position stands in opposition to Carnap's view (Quine's teacher), which holds a contrary view, as proposed by radical reductionism . But the last sentence agrees with Carnap's views on conceptual schemes.

3. **Carnap's Ontology**

    Although Quine acknowledges that no one has influenced this philosophical thoughts more than Carnap (Quine, cited in Feigl, 1972:597), it is also revealing to note that no one has suffered the consequence of Quine's critical philosophical preoccupation more than Carnap.

    Carnap held unto the views of reductionism and allowed it to influence his general philosophical concerns. Using it as the basis for his ontology, he writes as follows:
    If someone wishes to speak in his language about a new kind of entities he has to introduce a system of new ways of speaking, subject to new rules: we shall call this procedure the construction of a linguistic framework for the new entities in question. And now we must distinguish two kind of question of existence: First, questions of the existence of certain entities of the new kinds, within the framework,'

we call them internal questions and second questions concerning the 'existence or reality of the system of entities as a whole, called external questions, Carnap, (cited in Feigl, 1972:586).

The above quotation hits two important points within the context of our discourse. One is the discovery of Carnap's conception of scientific schemes as dependent on language. According to Carnap, one can speak of new entities so long as he devices a new system of language for doing so. Consequently, questions of ontology are to an extent questions of schemes or internal questions.   This gave a good lead to Quine's theory of Ontological Relativity, which uses background as its reference point.

Secondly, it reveals Quine's main disagreement with Carnap as an individual and Logical Positivism as a movement. Quine argues that Carnap's distinction between internal and external questions of existence is founded on the distinction between analytic and synthetic statements, (Quine cited in Feigl, 1972:601). This distinction he rejects, in his ***Two Dogmas of Empiricism*** (1971), as an unempirical dogma of empiricists, a metaphysical article of faith (Quine, cited in Feigl, 1972:89).

For Quine, the only real questions are the internal questions and nothing more. Quine observes that Carnap's adherence to the contrary view promotes illusion, rather than knowledge. The basic illusion is reductionism, which is the belief that there is one-to-one correspondence between statements and the external world.

Thus, to overcome such illusions as expressed by Carnap, Quine offers the following clarifications regarding ontological issues: "Ontological questions, likewise questions of logical and mathematical principles (and every scientific hypothesis) are questions not of fact but of choosing a convenient conceptual scheme or framework for science" (Quine, cited in Feige, 1972:601).

To hold the contrary view, therefore, is to confuse truth with an illusive desire. Quine argues this thesis very extensively in his ***Two Dogmas of Empiricism***. The consequence is the rejection of absolute reference. The rejection gives rise to relative reference which carves an avenue for ontological relativity. It reduces ontological controversy to that about language or schemes (i.e the quest for correspondence with background language). The Quinean belief is based on the argument that the output is greater than the input. The consequence is the untenability of reduction and by implication synthetic-analytic cleavage which presumes the truth of the former (reductionism). Thus, the same linguistic consideration of ontological issue, which influenced Carnap, led Quine to reject the dogma, which Carnap professes with it. The secret is Quine's ability to clear the illusion that beclouds Carnap's thoughts; misconception of meaning and reference, leading to ontological confusions.

CHAPTER TWO

THE PROBLEM OF ONTOLOGICAL   CONFUSION

1.　　　　**Wrong Characterization of Ontological Statements.**
Radical reductionism which is the view that every meaningful statement is that which is translatable into a statement (true or false) about immediate experience is hooked up with the verification theory of meaning. "This theory states that the meaning of a statement is the method of empirically confirming or infirming it (Quine, cited in Feigh, 1972:90). Here, there would have to be a limiting case, which is confirmed come what may. The statement in this case is analytic. What this reveals is a dual characterization of statements, viz analytic or synthetic and a belief that a meaningful statement must be a statement with empirical reference. What is evident in the second part of this confused characterization of statements as Quine would put it, is the confusion of meaning with reference.

Quine believes, that the clarification of these concepts and their correct employment in ontological discourse is a route to having a sound ontological theory.

2.　　　　**Synthetic – Analytic Cleavage**
The synthetic - analytic cleavage as shown above is related to the verification theory of meaning, which in turn is related to reductionism. In this connection, the analysis of one logically leads to the

analysis of the other. Following the example of Quine, which appears to make the matter simple and clear this paper begins with the analysis of synthetic – analytic dogma, because, it allows for careful attention to analyticity. It synthetic aspect is well represented in the treatment of reductionism.

The Quinean point of departure on the investigation of the distinction between analytic and synthetic statements hinges on the investigation of the meaning of analyticity. Reporting the Kantian view on the matter, he states, that an analytic statement is one, the truth of which depends on meaning and independent of facts, whereas a synthetic statement, is one, the truth of which is dependent on facts (Quine, cited in Feigl, 1972:81). Quine, leaves off the analysis of synthetic statement to face its analytic counterpart, because he believes that the former has its place in radical reductionism, which shall be examined afterwards. He begins by asking for the meaning of analyticity. In asking this question, he threatens the foundation of the synthetic-analytic cleavage. According to him "both dogmas .. are ill founded" (Quine, cited in Feigl, 1972:81). Thus, he calls to question the various basis on which the first dogma is founded. They include; meaning, definitions, interchangeability and semantical rule.

In the analysis of meaning to discover how much it can support the notion of analyticity, Quine warns that meaning should not be identified with naming because terms can name the same thing but differ in meaning (Quine, cited in Feigl, 1972:81). Quine urges that the naming view of meaning should be abandoned for its alternative, which holds that "the primary business of the theory of meaning is simply the synonymy of linguistic forms and the analyticity of statements" (Quine, cited in Feigl, 1972:82). But this only resurrects the problem of analyticity.

In want of progress, Quine resorts to the use of popular examples; They are:
No unmarried man is married - (1) No bachelor is married - (2), (Quine, cited in Feigl, 1972:82).
Quine observes that the analytic statement of the first class remains true under all possible reinterpretations of its components other than the logical particles (Quine, cited in Feigl, 1972:82). Yet the analyticity of those of the second class is unclear.

According to him, there has been a belief that statements of the second class can turn to those of the first class by putting synonyms for synonyms. But he argues, that the notion of synonymy is in need of clarification as analyticity itself.

Quine also observes, that some persons have argued, that the analytic statement of the second class can turn to those of the first by definition. But Quine argues, that definition reports selected instance of synonymy and such arises from usage (Quine, cited in Feigl, 1972:82). "So, just what the interconnections may be, which are necessary and sufficient in order that two linguistic forms be properly describable as synonymous, is far from clear" (Quine, cited in Feigl, 1972:83). The notion of interchangeability depends again on cognitive synonymy (recognizable at first sight). But such according to Quine, depends on the knowledge of analyticity of statements. It is only an analytic statement that can offer such cognizance. This argument is back to the notion of analyticity. Quine observes this in the following statements:
Analyticity at first seemed most naturally definable by appeal to a realm of meanings. On refinement, the appeal to meanings gave way to appeal to synonymy or definition. But definition turned out to be best understood only by dint of a prior appeal to analyticity itself (Quine, cited in Feigl, 1972:87).

One may ask, what is analyticity? Some have argued that the question can be answered by recourse to artificial language. But Quine argues, that recursion to semantical rules and artificial language is incapable of solution to the problem. According to him:

The gravity of the problem is not perceptibly less for the artificial languages than for natural ones. The problem of making sense of the idiom 'S is analytic for L', with variable 'S' and 'L' retains its stubbornness even if we limit the range of the variable 'L' to artificial language (Quine, cited in Feigl, 1972:87).

Quine argues, that the problem with such expression is that "we understand what expressions the rule attribute analyticity to, but we do not understand what the rule attributes to those expressions" (Quine, cited in Feigl, 1972:88). In other words we are unaware of what 'analytic' or 'analytic for' means.

Furthermore, it is difficult to say what a semantical rule is except by identification as heading in writing. Consequently semantical rule stands in need of explanation as analyticity, itself.

After the foregoing exposition of the difficulties inherent in any adherence to the synthetic-anlytic cleavage, Quine states an equally faulty but most likely characterization of ontological statements, as follows:

It is obvious that truth in general depends on both language and extra linguistic fact. The statement 'Brutus killed Caesar' would be false if the world had been different in certain ways, but it would also be false if the word 'killed' happened rather to have the sense of 'begat'. Thus, one is tempted to suppose in general that the truth of a statement is somehow analyzable into a linguistic component and a factual component. Given this supposition it next seems reasonable that in some statements the factual component should be null, and these are analytic statements (Quine, cited in Feigl, 1972:89).

Quine does not take side with this supposition. For to do so, would be to encourage an illusion as well as give rise to radical reductionism. This explains why Quine decided to call the supposition a 'temptation'. A clearer version of his interpretation is expounded in Reductionism, below.

3.   **Reductionism**

Quine becomes really strict over the issues of the charaterization of ontological statements by positing that:

It is nonsense and the root of much nonsense to speak of a linguistic component and a factual component in the truth of any individual statement. Taken collectively science has its double dependence upon language and experience; but this duality is not significantly traceable into the statement of science taken by one (Quine, cited in Feigl, 1972:92).

This position was not introduced by Quine. It had already been held by Duhem.

Accordingly, for him, it is the whole science that faces the tribunal of experience, not individually but as a corporate body. Thus, the demand for a one-to-one correspondence between our statement and the external world is absurd. Quine has drawn this conclusion to include the whole of his philosophical system. The act is based on his philosophy that a clear conception of the theory of meaning and reference holds the key to a sound ontology. The reaction was also apt against the dogma of reductionism, which states that "every meaningful statement is held to be translatable into a statement about immediate experience" (Quine, cited Feigh 1972:90). The beliefs of the proponents of this doctrine is that to each statement or each synthetic statement, there is associated a unique range of possible sensory events, such that the occurrence of any of them would add to the likelihood of truth of the statement, and that there is associated also another unique range of possible sensory events whose occurrence would detract from the likelihood (Quine, cited in Feigl, 1972:91). But this view according to Quine, is untrue and can only be held by one who, until now, is unaware of the truth, that our output is more than our input. Thus, one-to-one correspondence of reference, with regards to the external world is not possible. Yet our ontology can be questioned relatively to background schemes.

Thus, the search for absolute reference which is based on the belief that our statements are reports of immediate experience is misleading. Quine makes this point in the following observations:

the totality of our so called knowledge or beliefs, from the most casual matters of geography and history to the profoundest laws of atomic physics or even of pure mathematics and logic, is a man-made fabric which impinges on experience only along the edges (Quine, cited in Feigl, 1972:92).

In this position, Quine destroys any possible basis for either of the dogmas and creates a new conception of our science. Science is a tool in the hands of men for structuring of their experience and the prediction of future possible occurrences. It is absurd, therefore, to query such a scheme for absolute correspondence with experience. Quine observes that the ground for the temptation to such querying is reductionism which is itself based on the confusion of meaning with naming (reference). The consequence of the above for ontology is the inability to deny ontological statements about non being, and it results in

the imputation of being, where we could have been content to acknowledge nothing (Quine, cited in Feigl, 1972:545). Thus, radical reductionism is the basis of ontological confusion.

4.   **The Basis of Ontological Confusion**

The basis of ontological confusion is radical reductionism. Any other confusion is built on it. The belief that every meaningful statement is reducible to statements about immediate experience has serious ontological implications. There is first, the equation of meaning with naming. Thus, for a statement to be meaningful, it has to foot an ontological bill. It will have to name some entities. Though Quine, has repudiated this point, his analysis of the issue has up till now not surfaced in this project. The second implication is the imputation of non being where we would have been content to acknowledge nothing. A typical example of this is what Quine calls the *Plato's Beard* (Quine, cited in Feigl, 1972: 545). According to the Beard, nonbeing must in some sense be, otherwise, what is it that there is not. The notion of "it that there is not", here denotes that the mention of nonbeing refers to some named entity otherwise that statement would have been meaningless. Thus, one consequence has root in the other. The beard Quine opines, has 'for ages dulled the edge of Ockham's razor (Ockham's razor states that entities need not be multiplied beyond necessity). According to the view, it is nonsense to try to deny the existence of nonbeing (nothing) at all. If it is non-existent, it means we cannot be talking about anything when we mention it. Thus any attempt to deny it tantamount to nonsense. Yet when we talk about it, something of it is understood, which means that it has being in some sense, otherwise our statement will not be meaningful. Note that meaning here is used as if it were naming. Just like the denial of a known and a real being tantamounts to self contradiction the denial of nonbeing results in nonsense. Thus, to avoid this quandary and to maintain coherence with the system, nonbeing is imputed with being. Such that nonbeing is said to be.

The difficulty experienced, therefore, in any attempt to deny affirmative statements about nonbeing, is inability to formulates the denial without incoherence and confusions.

Quine observes that any affirmation of the being of nonbeing has no sound basis. The only possible reference is to the fact, that nonbeing exist either as ideas in the minds of men or as some unactualised possibles. But Quine argues, that the denial of nonbeing is not the denial of the idea in mentality, but the view, that there is no such thing within space and time. Even the notion of mentality as a real existence is unacceptable to Quine.

The consequence of the commitment to this type of Ontology is the needles multiplication of entities in the world (the dulling of the edge of Ockham's razor). This confusion is rooted in reductionism which in turn is rooted in the view of meaning in terms of objective reference (naming). Quine views that to move a step further in the formulation of sound ontology, one has to clear the beard and the confusion in the conception of meaning as naming. This feat according to Quine, has been achieved by Russell in his *Theory of description.*

CHAPTER THREE

QUINEAN SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEMS OF MEANING AND REFERENCE

1. **The Theory of Description**

The analysis of the Quinean system of thought reveals that a clear understanding of the theory of meaning and reference holds the key to sound ontological commitment. This explains his effort in employing Russell's theory of Description as an instrument for demonstrating the possibility of speaking without any particular ontological commitment, especially, to universals.

The Russellian theory of description is of the opinion, that there is a sense in which we can speak meaningfully about objects without countenancing an ontology. This we can do through contextual definition. This definition Quine argues was first developed by Bentham, who called it *paraphrases* and has since remained dormant until it flowered lately in Russell's theory of description. Russell's theory affords a rigorous and an important way of how expressions can be made to parade as names and then be explained away as a mere manner of speaking, by explicit paraphrase of the context into an innocent notation.

The main aim of the theory as used here by Quine, is to counter reductionism and thus demonstrate that terms need not name entities to be meaningful. It is also aimed to show how statement about nonbeing can be negated without contradiction or confusion. So the theory uses descriptive names which are themselves complex names. For instance, the king of France, the author of Waverly and the round square copula in Berkeley college. They are actually to be fragments of sentence. Then descriptive phrases are to be followed by bound variables or variables of quantification, which are: every, nothing, something.

Now taking the author of Waverley was a poet as an instance, Russell proceeds thus: Something wrote Waverley and was a poet and nothing else wrote Waverley (the second part is added because of the article "the"). The alternation of this gives; either each thing failed to write Waverley or two or more things wrote Waverley. This Quine believes negates that first assertion without being guilty of contradiction or incoherence, and without naming any particular entity, it is meaningful. The bound variable in this case are free and are not tight down to naming particular entities. But they can represent anything that falls within their range.

"To subsume a one word term under Russell's theory the word has to be translated, first, into description" (Quine, cited in Feigl 1972:548). Thus, the word 'Etorobong is', can be translated into "the youngman that studied at Unical in 2002". After that, the same process as above, can be applied. If the word is obscure, Russell prescribes the "ex-hypothesis" – being Etoroobong. Hence, it could be translated into is – Etorobong or the thing that Etorobongizes. In this way Quine thinks that Russell's theory of description has surmounted the Plato's Beard, which states that nonbeing must in some sense be otherwise what is it, that there is not (Quine, cited in Feigl, 1972:545). Quine also feels that the confusion of meaning with naming has been overcome. A statement can be meaningful without purporting to name entities.

Quine believes that his new disposition makes ontological commitment free and selective. We commit ourselves to the ontology of a particular entity when we affirm its being but we do not when we negate it. So it is all left to us to decide to allow our bound variables range over a certain realm of entities.

Though the above analysis tells us how to avoid the beard and the confusion of meaning with reference, it tells us nothing about meaning and reference themselves. What is meaning? What is reference? How are they to be conceived?

2. **Meaning and Translation**

The Quinean approach to the study of meaning is naturalistic. It is all hooked up with the naturalism of Dewey.

Here, meaning is to be studied empirically. This is informed by the understanding of meaning as a property of behaviour. Quine observes that Dewey was explicit on this point: "meaning… is not a

psychic existence; it is primarily a property of behaviour; (Dewey, cited in Quine, 1969:27). The naturalistic conception of meaning stands in opposition to Wittgenstein's copy theory which is a good version of uncritical semantics. In this light naturalism posits that it is the very fact about meaning and not meant entities that must be construed in term of overt behaviour.

The mode of behaviour of which meaning is a property is language. "Language is a social art which we acquired on the evidence solely of other people's overt bahaviour under publicly recognizable circumstance. Language is specifically a mode of interaction of at least two beings, a speaker and a hearer… It is, therefore, a relationship" (Quine, 1969:27). Therefore, meaning as a property of behaviour, is a property of language. Meanings are first and foremost meanings of language.

Consequently, to know the meaning of an expression is to take into consideration the overt behaviour of the speaker. This involves, hearing the phonetic part, being conscious of the stimulus and being aware that the speaker is responding to that particular stimulus and not another. In this way, the meaning of the expression would be revealed. Thus, Quine advices that, "even in complex and obscure parts of language learning, the learner has no data to work with but the overt behaviour of the other speaker" (Quine 1969:28).

The belief implicit in this demonstration is absolute behaviourism. This view that all of people's mental life is expressible in overt behaviour leaves much to be desire. Yet even if this were to be granted, Quine still observed that there is a problem with his naturalistic conception of meaning. This observation, he opine as follows: "when with Dewey we turn thus toward a naturalistic view of language and a behavioural view of meaning, what we give up is not just the museum figure of speech. We give up an assurance of determinacy. Thus, even though language of which meaning is a property is socially learnt, it is still difficult to say when a particular behaviour had one meaning and not another, (Quine 1969:28).

Using the notion of likeness in meaning to expose the difficulty involved in determining the meaning of an expression, Quine states the following:
When… we recognize with Dewey that "meaning… is primarily a property of behaviour", we recognize that there are no meanings, nor likeness nor distinctions of meaning, beyond what are implicit in people's dispositions to overt behaviour. For naturalism the question whether two expressions are alike or unlike in meaning has no determinate answer, known or unknown, except in so far as the answer is settled in principles by people's speech dispositions, known or unknown, (Quine 1969:29).

In the final analysis, one discovers that this indeterminacy appears to be hopeless. The solution given to it is somewhat arbitrary. The possibility of communication is lost and understanding becomes impossible.

The indeterminacy of translation from one expression to another, with a view to ascertaining likeness in meaning is more difficult in the realm of radical translation. Radical translation is the translation from one language to another of some remote existence. However, its radicality hinges mostly on the fact that even the manual of such translation is put in need of understanding and translation as well.

Radical translation is that made from one remote language to the linguist's language. In this case, the linguist is still to depend on the overt behaviour of the speakers. Quine. Observes that in radical translation it is difficult to decide what the native expresses. No amount of queuing of the native for assent or dissent in the face of the same datum can reveal what meaning the behaviour carries or what aspect of the stimulus, the native is responding to.

In seeking remedy in such matters, Quine suggests the use of what he calls the 'analytical hypotheses. This is the abstraction of native particles and constructions from observed sentences and a speculative (imaginative) association of such with the linguist home language, (Quine 1969:32). The particle and constructions involved are: "pluralizations, pronouns, numerals, identity and related devices", (Quine 1969:32). However, the difficulty here is that there is possibility of varied analytical hypotheses, because they are created out of convenience. Such possibility gives rise to the possibility of varied and incompatible translations of a particular native expression using compensatory adjustments of particles

within the system(s). This only intensifies the indeterminacy of radical translation. Quine expresses this as thus:

The indeterminacy of translation is that rival systems of analytical hypotheses can conform to all speech dispositions within each of the languages concerned and yet dictate in countless cases, utterly disparate translations; not mutual paraphrasing, but translation each of which would be excluded by the other system of translation. Two such translations might even be potently contrary in truth-value, provided there is no stimulation that would encourage assent to either, (Quine 1960:74).

One can then ask, which of the translations can be said to correctly represent the meaning of the native expression? The answer is that it is not determinate except as expressed in overt behaviour. It has just been displayed that the hope for overt behaviour is every unfounded. The solution could be like somewhat personal restriction on the part of the linguist. If he should do that, then what he undecided is his own and never objective. Quine expresses the difficulty in this matter in the following manner:

I would urge that what is most generally involved is indeterminacy of correlations. There is less basis of comparison – less sense in saying what is good translation and what is bad – the further we get away from sentences with visible direct conditioning to non-verbal stimuli and the farther we get off home ground, (Quine 1960:78).

This submission appears to give peace to the sanguine temperaments. It is rather unfortunate that the problem is not as easy as it has just appeared. Even at the periphery, it is difficult to settle the translation of expressions. An example Quine normally uses is "Gavagai". He observes that it is difficult to decide by overt behaviour whether this expression should translate into 'rabbit' or 'undetached rabbit part' or 'rabbit' stage', if the native should say it as a rabbit passes by. According to Quine, ostension cannot solve the problem. It is only the use of apparatus of individuation that spell some hope. However, the firmness of that hope is lost again when one discovers that these apparatus of individuation are the particles and constructions of analytical hypothesis. The corollary is that they are variant and are only capable of yielding variant translations. The same problem is faced even in our home language. It is forever difficult to decide whether the same phoneme in our mouth is what our neighbour is expressing. In case of such difficulties, the recursion had ever been to the principle of charity, (Quine 1969:46).

One point that is clear in the above analysis is that there is no fixed given standard for translation such that indeterminacy could be obviated. All models are hypothetical and sometimes chosen arbitrarily. This makes the standard for overcoming indeterminacy relative. Quines position has simply succeeded in distorting the theory of meaning and the possibility of communication.

The above analysis revealed more than the indeterminacy of meaning and translation. Equally revealed is the indeterminacy of reference. Reference is also inscrutable. For instance, it was difficult to decide whether "gavagai" referred to rabbit', 'undetached rabbit part', or 'rabbit stage'.

3.   **Indeterminacy of Reference and Ontological Relativity**
The indeterminacy of translation now confronting us, however, cuts across extension and intension alike. The terms 'rabbit', 'undetached rabbit part' and 'rabbit stage' differ not only in meaning; they are true of different things. "Reference itself proves behaviourally inscrutable", (Quine 1969:35).

Quine, however, argues that at the level of uncritical assumption of apparatus of individuation (the apparatus of pronouns, pluralization, identity, numerals, and so on) as given and fixed, there is no mystery about extension; terms have the same extension when true of the same things. At the level of radical translation, on the other hand, extension itself goes inscrutable. At the second level, however, the apparatus (manuals) themselves are in need of translation as the expressions. Here what happened to meaning befalls reference.

Indeterminacy of reference apart from being aided by radical translation is promoted by vagueness and ambiguity of singular and general terms. Quine argues that:

Insofar as it is left unsettled how far down the spectrum toward yellow or up toward blue a thing can be and still count as green, "green" is vague. Insofar as it is left unsettled where to withheld muddy water in favour of wet mud, 'water' and 'mud' are vague. Insofar as it is left unsettled how far from the summit of the Mount Rainier one can be and still count as on Mount Rainier, 'Mount Rainier' is vague. Thus vagueness affects not only general terms, but singular terms as well, (Quine 1960:126).

Furthermore, "a singular term naming a physical object can be vague in point of the boundaries of that object in space-time, while a general term can be vague in point of the marginal hanger- on of its extension", (Quine 1960:126). Commonly general terms; true of physical objects, according to Quine, will be vague in two ways as to the inclusion or exclusion of marginal objects. Thus, the general term mountain is vague on how much terrain to reckon into each of the score of indisputable mountains, and it is vague on the score of what lesser eminence to count as mountains at all.

At the level of vagueness the inscrutability appears as if it were surmountable. But the reality of its intensity stands out when considered from other view points. For instance, ambiguity and one to one correspondence. An ambiguous term is one that is true of many things. For instance, the term 'green' is true as a singular abstract term and as a concrete general term. When the reference in behaviour is to one and not to the other cannot be determined, except within a sentence. Yet both cases are learnt by pointing to the same thing. The Implication here is that ostension cannot solve the problem of indeterminacy of reference in the face of ambiguity.

The problem of reference increases when there is demand for a one-to-one correspondence between language and its input (experiences). Quine observes that it is an error in thought to seek such correspondence. This he opines as thus:

The voluminous and intricately structured talk that comes out bears little evident correspondence to the past and present barrage of non-verbal stimulation: Yet it is to such stimulation that we must look to for whatever empirical content there may be, (Quine 1960:26).

Again, experience come in some kind of immediacy and passes away. Hence expression about experience is an expression about what is no more there. They are all our way of talking about experience. This explains why Quine feels that it is futile to seek a real reference at all in experience. Again it explains why Quine is later to say that there is no fact of the matter because the fact expressed is not there for reference. It is all our conceptualization of what is experienced. Input is so meager compared to the torrential output we pour out. So, the reasonableness in a one-to-one enquiry for external reference lacks foundation. Quine argues that inscrutability of reference is not inscrutability of fact. There is no fact of the matter, (1969:47). There could not have been any fact of the matter because the very things which we query against experience are objects of our torrential conceptualization. We are rather querying experience to produce facts for our conceptualization of experience , which are majorly past ones.

The above position does not make nonsense of reference. It rather carves an avenue for resolving the quandary. Quine opines that we can make sense when we are referring to things because of some initial background permutation. The way in which this permutation was initially carried out is expressed in the following way:

Begin by picturing us at home in our language with all its predicates and auxiliary devices. This vocabulary includes "rabbit", "rabbit part", :rabbit stage", "formulae". "number", "ox", "cattle", also two place predicate of identity and difference, and other logical particles. In this terms we can say in so many words that this is a formular and that a number, this a rabbit and that a rabbit part, this and that the same rabbit and this and that different parts. In just those words. This network of terms and predicates and auxiliary devices is, in relativity jargon, our frame of reference or coordinate system, (Quine 1969:48)

On the basis of this Quine states the principle of ontological relativity as follows: "Reference is nonsense except relative to a coordinate system, (Quine 1969:48). Apart from this any asking of absolute

questions about reference is like asking for absolute velocity and positions. We are now to query our conceptualization for reference to their counterpart conceptualization.

What is clear about this theory is that the system created as a coordinate system or frame of reference would need another to refer to. The consequence of this is infinite regress. To avoid this regress Quine suggests that we need a background language. In this regard we would have to acquiesce in our mother tongue and take its word at face value, (Quine 1969:49). Thus, talks about theories and their Ontologies is meaningful, only relatively to the background theory, with its own primitively adopted and ultimately inscrutable ontology.

It makes no sense to say what the object of a theory are, beyond saying how to interpret or reinterpreted that theory in another, (Quine 1969:50). Ontological matters are understandable relatively to the background theory. But what there is, is what a theory says there is or what it allows its bound variables to range over. The querying of reference of a theory is only relative to the background theory. The reference point of one conceptual scheme is another conceptual scheme, mostly a previous one or a background scheme or language or theory.

CHAPTER FOUR

BEING AND UNIVERSALS IN QUINEAN ONTOLOGY

1.   **Ontological Commitment**

        A convenient starting point for the discourse of the ontological commitment of a theory is to ask when a theory could be said to assume entities of a given sort. Quine's answer to this question is as follows: To show that a theory assumes a given object, or object of a given class, we have to show that the theory would be false if that object did not exist, or if that class were empty; hence that the theory requires that object, or members of that class, in order to be true, (Quine 1969:93).

But how are these requirements to be revealed. Quine answers this again as follows.
To show that some given object is required in a theory, what we have to show is no more nor less than that the object is required for the truth of the theory, to be among the values over which the bound variable range, (Quine 1969:94).
Thus, to be assumed as an entity is to be reckoned as the value of a bound variable. This gives rise to the Quinean ontological principle that, "to be is to be the value of a variable". This is, however, mathematical.

        The actual entities named in the theory are represented either in predicate terms or names of individual kinds. Yet they must all fall within the range of a bound variable. To discover whether these entities named in the theory exist only needs some reference to the background theory.

        Quine observes that the formula "to be is to be the value of a variable" is not itself an ontology but some kind of check of conformity of remarks within an already established ontology. The bound variables do not tell us what there is. They are used to know what an ontology says there is. So the question of what actually there is lingers on. What kind of ontology can we commit ourselves to?

        For Quine, the best point to commence the search for what there is, is on the semantic plane. There are two reasons for this, viz:

1.   to be able to find a common ground to argue (ie. common background theory or language or our mother tongue). Quine believes that the argument of ontology translates upward to semantical controversy because every ontology is countenanced in words. Hence, for Quine, there is then no wonder that ontological controversy should end in controversy of language.

2.   All conceptual schemes of ontology are matters of language. The adoption of any scheme is a matter of language as it applies in physics. Ontological questions as noted above translate to questions of schemes. It all depends on what our theory (language) says there is. The interrogation of our system should not be done absolutely but only relatively to our background language. This reechoes a point made in the previous chapter that inscrutability of reference is not inscrutability of fact because there is no matter of fact. Again the questions of ontology are only to be asked of the scheme and relatively to other schemes, within a given linguistic frame.

        Quine argues that there are two conceptual schemes within which our ontology is conceived, namely: the phenomenalistic and the physicalistic schemes. Each of these has its advantage; special simplicity in its own way, deserve to be developed and is indeed fundamental. The one is epistemological and the other physically fundamental, (Quine cited in Feigl, 1972:553).

        The phsysicalistic scheme is simple in its way of ordering the myriad of our scattered experiences into an ordered whole, such that they are understood as physical objects. But the problem is the unlikelihood that physical objects can be translated into phenomenalistic language, which has an epistemological status, compared to the physicalistic scheme. On the whole, physical objects are called entities which round up and simplify our account of the flux of experience.

In his philosophy Quine shares the tasks of discovering and articulating what there is. The physicalistic scheme orders our experience in the mode of fact finding and the phenomenalistic scheme does the articulation. In order to attain its goal, Quine believes, that the phenomenalistic, scheme should adopt the formalistic method of myth making. Quine believes that it is only the phenomenalistic scheme that would cover the ontology of physics and mathematics. Viewed from within the scheme, physical and mathematical objects are myths. Quine, commits himself to the ontology of mathematical objects because of their contribution to the growth of science (especially physics).

Thus, Quine commits himself only to the ontology of the natural sciences; those of physical and mathematical objects. He refuses to recognize the existence of minds, spirits and mental entities in any sense other than as attribute on the part of physical objects mainly persons. The Quinean reason for the restriction is just to preserve the close system of the world as proposed by natural science. So there is no deeper sense of reality other than the sense in which it is the business of science in its self corrective hypothetico-deductive method of conceptualization and experiment to seek the essence of reality. Hence, the elementary particles, sticks, stones, numbers, classes – such are the denotata of terms of science and the values of its variables. In the light of this commitment, Quine, strictly refuses to commit himself to the ontology of entities that are not those of natural science. Thus he refuses to commit himself to the ontology of universals. This liberty is consolidated by his new way of speaking by virtue of the theory of description above, which makes speech possible without countenancing any ontology. This attitude, appears, however, to be exceptionally Quinean, even though he tries to generalize it.

2.   **Problems of Universals**
"This is question whether there are such entities as attributes, relations, classes, numbers, functions", (Quine cited in Feigl, 1972: 549). Quine observes that the common sense will say that there are. This again for him, is the characteristic of the that branch of metaphysics called ontology.

According to Quine, however, we can use singular terms significantly in sentences without presupposing, that there are the entities, which those terms purport to name. He argues further, that we can use general terms for example predicates without conceding them to be names of abstract entities. We can equally view utterances as significant, and as synonymous or heteronymous with one another without countenancing a realm of entities called meanings. In this sense nothing can commit us to the ontology of universals. The idea of some common attributes in things could be expressed without the assumption of universals. For instance, with the use of bound variables, the immunity is sure. There is something which redhouses, and redsunset have in common, makes the statement without reference to universals. The difficulties in this view are apparent, but for our purpose, it is good to continue with the exposition. The bound variables repudiate the use of the alleged names.

It is noteworthy, that Quine is of the opinion, that names are all together immaterial. They could be converted to descriptions and Russell shows, that the description could be eliminated. Thus, Quine opines that, whatever we say with the help of names could be said with a language, that shuns names.

So to be assumed as an entity is purely and simply to be reckoned as the value of a variable. Here names are automatically obviated.

Even when terms include abstract entities, Quines observes that they do not have any universal reference. As such, Quine has refused to commit himself to the ontology of universals. The word 'refused' here is very important and should be understood literally . This personal decision in ontological issues goes against the notion of the objective pull which he professes. A theory is committed to the ontology, the entities of which, its bound variables must be capable of reference in order, that the affirmation made in the theory is true.

Whatever kind of ontology one commits him or herself, has some consequences on mathematics. The foundational problem of mathematics manifested the tendency of a reformulation of the ancient controversy over universals, with emphasis on the range of application of bound variables. Logicism ended up as some form of neo-realism, intuitionism as neo-conceptualism and formalism, neo-nominalism. Thus, for Quine, the idea of universals are confusion in ontology caused by the beard and the confusion of meaning with reference. The rejection of the view or refusal to be committed to its ontology follows from

the clearing of the confusions. In his scheme universals have no niche. In this way Quine feels that the clearing of the confusion associated with the Plato's beard and that of meaning and reference has made ontological commitment free with the use of the bound variables. It really aided his treatment and consequent refusal to make commitment to the ontology of universals. This refusal sounds dogmatic and is not logically founded. The reason is that in cases of definitions in which the variable are made to range, something different from the functional antecedent is understood. It is the function which is called a universal. To accept the function is to accept a universal. To accept the one and not the other is a contradiction.

3.   **Evaluation**
        The importance of Quine in the History of Philosophy does not only lie in the technical argument he advances against the analytic-synthetic distinction, but also in a variety of reactions against the iconoclastic movement of logical positivism. This doctrine that every ontology is found in language, such that to ask for knowledge without conceptualization is like asking for truth without language was a powerful tool for the Quinean philosophical exploit.
        But the overemphasis on language in ontological conception appears to make ontology dependent on language, leaving much to be desired of its clarification. The indeterminacy of translation, where one expression can be translated into incompatible ones with a concomitant lack of change in the observed fact is in want of explanation too. It has at once made nonsense of radical translation and synonymy of expressions. The solution given to the problem of indeterminacy is very unsatisfactory. It is difficult to hold on to an absolute indeterminacy of language except one is ready to accept the possibility of private language. But such acceptance in the Quinean context would contradict his view of language as a social art. Given this view and the possibility of children's language acquisition then how is absolute indeterminacy of translation possible?
        Although, Quine, repudiates the dogmatism of empiricism, his ontological views are dogmatic because they are set to preserve the close system of the natural science, which are themselves dogmatic. Quine's dogmatism surfaces again, when he refuses to believe in Homer's god on the grounds that it is not consistent with his empiricist worldview. The conclusion that could follow from this is, that if Quine did not commit himself to the physicalistic scheme, he would have held the same views with Homer. In this case therefore, the system survives at the expense of truth. Little wonder then, why Quine continually emphasizes on myth making as the duty of mathematics and physics. Thus, in the final analysis, all the objects to which he makes his ontological commitment would be sheer myths and actually, they are.
        Quine's rejection of mentality with the corresponding position of physicalism is extremely materialistic. The consequences of this are enormous. There is therefore in Quine's worldview, determinism, absence of freedom of the will, when he discovers that his purpose is consistency with scientific progress and not conviction of truth. The situation is even more sympathetic, because reference, meaning and translation are indeterminate except with respect to some uncritically chosen basis. The basis is chosen to avoid regress. Here truth has no firm foundation except an arbitrary one.
        Quine's total rejection of the notion of universals with a corresponding invention of a way of avoiding such manner of speaking is not consistent with his adoption of objects of mathematics as part of the range of his bound variables. The History of Philosophy reveals two forms of universals, namely the predicate and the formal universals. The first pertains to singular and general terms and the second to mathematical entities. Thus, the acceptance of one as one with physical objects with a corresponding rejection of the other is inconsistent with traditional worldview. If the one is of a piece with science, the other is of a piece with ordinary language. So if ordinary language communicates reality, it then means that these universals which are of a piece with them have their use in such communications. This then makes their rejection desirous of a more solid basis. But the most astonishing aspect of Quine's rejection of universals is that it is done simply on the basis that he does not want to commit himself to o the ontology of universals. Thus, non of his bound variable should refer to that range of things at all. In short, his is

a close system, as he rightly characterizes it and dogmatic. He has made it so and we desire some more sound basis, consistency and unaffected sincerity.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE RELEVANCE OF QUINE'S PHILOSOPHY TO AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY

1.   **Quine and African Philosophy**

Contemporary works in African Philosophy are characterized by views concerning either the possibility of African Philosophy or the idea of African philosophy. The former serves as an answer to Western doubt of the possibility of African philosophy, whereas the latter is about what philosophy is and what should be the preoccupations of African Philosophy. To this questions diverse answers have been advanced. But such are not within the scope of this task. This view is however brought here because of the assumption, that every discourse in African Philosophy should begin with them. This view is held by people who seek to find a foundation for African Philosophy. For Wiredu, African Philosophy is in the making. Paul Hountondji believes that the goal of philosophy in African is to know what philosophy is and what it can do. Following this view is the emphasis on the relevance of Philosophy to the African solution. Msgr. T. S. Okere, prescribes that this feat could be achieved first by the application of the Western Philosophical theories to the African situation. Second, by studying the African situation and interpreting it philosophically.

To the first we now begin with Quine's philosophy. When viewed from the point of view of its relevance to African Philosophy, Quine's philosophy could be said to have a disagreeing and a contributive effect.

In disagreement to African philosophical worldview the Quinean philosophy posits a purely materialistic worldview. This disagrees with the African worldview as they appear in the works of such authors like Mbiti and other traditional African Philosophers. This materialism, denies the reality of a dualistic existence of man which is at the foundation of African belief systems. For the African, man is a being with body and soul. But for Quine, it is the material and no other. Some African Philosophers have argued extensively in support of the view, that freedom, is the common character of all cultures. But unfortunately , the conclusion of Quine's materialistic philosophy will be deterministic. Quine, however, refuses to accept determinism, which is consistent with his scheme and posits freedom of the will. But the will for him still has a cause to will as it does. (Quine, 1978) So, his scheme is yet deterministic. This determinism has even enjoyed an unfounded personal ontological delimitation. The project of controlled speech developed by Quine above does not permit the principle of scientific openness to be operative in the ontology. This lack of openness does not go contrary to African social-psychological outlook of embrace (Senghor 1975), it equally does not permit its consequent complementary ontology and epistemology (Cf Asouzu 2004). Thus, the African philosophical evaluation of the Quinean hypothesis would be that it represents negatively, a continuation of the propagation of the programme of fragmentation, preference, favouritism, discrimination and unfounded specification in social and ontological concerns. This kind of fragmentation and selfish intensionality is responsible for a great deal of setbacks in cognitive research.

The Quinean system could contribute to one of the arguments in African Philosophy concerning the relativism and the universality of cultures. With Quine, there is relativism. But against is position cultural universals would be some real existent. It will make sense to accept cultural universals because the basis of the acceptance of the objects of mathematics is pragmatism, as Quine opines. Thus, it seems reasonable that cultural universals are at par with mathematical objects. The former are of pragmatic value to the cultural anthropologist and should be accepted as real entities. But I think that Quine would kick against it because of his sheer refusal to commit himself to the ontology of universal entities, even though he has made such commitment already in mathematics.

Quines conviction that an ontological question translates into question regarding the schemes can be of encouragement to the traditionalist project. For the traditionalist, the preoccupation of African

Philosophy should be the study of African belief systems, folklores and idioms, and within them would be found the people's philosophy.

Quine's argument analytic – synthetic distinction can serve to clear the traditionalist's distinction between the European mode of thinking and the African mode of thinking. This confusion was introduced into the African philosophical world in 1976 by Senghor. According to him the Europeans think analytically where as the Africans think intuitively and participate in the objects, Senghor (cited in Oladipo, 1998:84). When closely observed it means that the African thinks synthetically with objects of reference in immediate experience. The problem with this philosophical orientation was an attempt to show the difference between the African and the European. But I think that Quine's argument can help to refute that. No people think so distinctly synthetic or analytic because of some similarities of experiences as well as rational and pragmatic foundations.

2. **Conclusion**

The bulk of Quine's ontological system lies on the belief that a clear understanding of the theories of meaning and reference and their correct application in ontological discourse holds the key to sound ontological formulations. And his system is founded on the confidence that he has captured the correct view of these concepts. To evaluate him is to evacuate his presumption.

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