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Intrinsic Value

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Caj Strandberg argues in defense of a modified version of Moore’s open question argument. Strandberg asserts that the theory of “analytic reductionism” against which Moore sets his argument (namely that if two terms M & G have the same meaning, one WRT moral value and one WRT non-moral properties, then it follows that M==G based on the concept that @xGx↔Mx) is false. In order to support this assertion, Strandberg modifies the scope of Moore’s argument to “thin” moral property terms in order to do away with the problem of determining if something can have an ‘alignment’ independent of some kind of basis for having a given property term. The author also changes Moore’s argument from turning upon whether or not a question is intelligible to have it turn upon whether there is doubt in regards to the correct answer, that is to say whether or not there exists a natural inclination in the mind of a competent language user to state that the right side of the question is not equal to the left side after subjecting the question to thoughtful reflection. If such doubt exists, Strandberg seems to believe that that fact suggests that the analysis predicative to the question is incorrect.

Strandberg goes on to suggest that terms function as “fixed points in language” that exist outside of context which allow people to discuss things and their properties in different contexts (i.e. x is a brother iffi x is a male sibling can and does exist outside of context, but can be used in context, such as in the sentence “My brother is named Paul,” while still retaining their meaning). This clarification relates to the OQA because it establishes a concrete link between competent language users and the ability to evaluate questions, derive analyses, and v.v.

Strandberg concludes the paper with a defense of his modified version of Moore’s OQA against the three most common primary objections to the first part of the OQA and a broad defense of the second part of the OQA. In these sections, Strandberg clarifies the point that lack of doubt WRT a question does not of necessity imply the existence of an identical analysans and analysandum, rather it merely establishes *one* of the necessary conditions for such sameness. The author also backs up the modified argument against the objection that correct analysis cannot derive from informative questions with the claim that it whereas it is not possible to fail to find a sentence intelligible if it conveys new information that is integral to its analysis, it *is* possible to *doubt* a sentence even if it contains such information. Strandberg brings up two kinds of knowledge in defense of this claim, the concept of “knowledge how” and the concept of “knowledge that.” According to Strandberg, “An analysis may be informative for a person who has knowledge how, but not knowledge that, in regard to a term’s meaning. Even if she can apply the term correctly, she will not have knowledge that regarding its meaning,” (188). This seems to suggest that arguments that attack the validity of the procedure of inquiry that the OQA suggests are invalid because they do not hold true in all cases, especially those cases not dealing specifically with morality in virtue of the fact that information can be derived without knowledge being gained.

Source: Caj Strandberg, *In Defence of the Open Question Argument,* The Journal of Ethics, Volume 8, 2004. http://www.colorado.edu/philosophy/heathwood/pdf/strandberg\_idoqa.pdf