

MOORE'S PROPOSITION W

JAMES CARGILE

1. G. E. Moore in [3] referred to as 'W' the proposition expressed by the sentence: "The sentence 'At least one person is a King of France' means that at least one person is a King of France." I shall supplement this terminology by the addition of 'EW' to stand for the sentence said above to express the proposition W. Moore held that other sentences could also express W. One such, the French translation of EW, will be called 'FW'. FW is: "*Les mots 'At least one person is a King of France' veulent dire qu'une personne au moins est un roi de France.'*"

Moore holds that W is not a tautology. By this he means not just to deny that W is a substitution instance of a theorem of the propositional calculus, but also to deny that it is necessarily true. That is, unlike the propositions that all bachelors are unmarried or that two plus two is four, there could be a state of affairs in which W was false.

Moore has two arguments for this claim. The first is that EW and FW express the same proposition, and that the proposition expressed by FW being clearly contingent, the proposition expressed by EW, being the same proposition, must be contingent also. The second is rather less of an argument; Moore just says that it is obvious that the sentence "At least one person is a King of France" might have meant something other than what it does.

This would be hard to deny. It is easy to imagine a location where the language is exactly like that of present day America except that the speakers use "persona" for "person," "person" for "parson," "roy" for "king," and "king" for "citizen." Among these people the sentence "At least one person is a King of France" would not mean that at least one person is a King of France; it would mean that at least one parson is a citizen of France. And it isn't hard to imagine that this situation might have been the one that obtained in present day America and England. However, even among speakers in the imaginary location, EW would be a true sentence. In this situation, in which W is false, and saying EW would be saying something true, the right way to assert W would be to say: "The sentence 'At least one person is a King of France' means that at least one persona is a roy of France."

Bar-Hillel in [2] severely criticises Moore's view ("fantastically absurd and confused"), primarily on the grounds that W, though not a tautology (Bar-Hillel insists that this is a *syntactic* term and inappropriate) is "semantically valid." This claim is probably intended with EW, rather than W, in mind. At any rate, he says: "The reference-language... 'correct' English... contains the *semantical* rule: 'If *s* is any sentence which expresses a proposition *p*, then *s* means *p*.'" (Cf. p. 332). Bar-Hillel is raising an interesting point about EW, though the rule he presents won't do. Moore would surely have said that "The sentence 'At least one person is a King of France' means that at least one person is a King of France" is just interchangeable with "The sentence 'At least one person is a King of France' expresses the proposition that at least one person is a King of France." So Bar-Hillel's rule gives us a rather trivial piece of information. What Bar-Hillel has in mind is probably the rule: (R): If S_1 and S_2 are sentences of English which mean the same, express the same proposition, then the sentence obtained by writing "The sentence," then writing a quotation mark, then writing S_1 , then writing a quotation mark, then writing "means that," then writing S_2 , expresses a true proposition.

Assuming that the expression "At least one person is a King of France" is an English sentence expressing a proposition, it can be taken as S_1 and S_2 , so that it follows from (R) that EW is semantically valid. This means that it follows from the assumption that "At least one person is a King of France" is a meaningful English sentence and the semantic rule (R) that EW is true in the sense that it expresses a true proposition. It doesn't follow that what the proposition EW expresses (in our world, W) is necessarily true.

The rule does seem to be true of present-day English. We might question it by producing such an example as "This sentence contains 27 letters" for both S_1 and S_2 . But the difficulty will only be due to the ambiguity of 'this' and shouldn't be counted against the rule itself. At any rate, a slight change in English over the years would be enough to render (R) false. If "means that" came to mean "does not mean that," then (R) would be false (assuming there were no compensating changes of meaning elsewhere in the language).

The sentence EW might come to express W in a way different from that in which it now does. "The" might mean "the sentence," "sentence" might be the standard name for the sentence "At least one person is King of France," "At least one person is a King of France" might mean "means that" and "means that at least one person is a King of France" might be a sentence synonymous with the sentence "At least one person is a King of France," but still, clearly a *different* sentence. In this situation the sentence EW might still express the proposition W (assuming certain facts about syntax), but in the useful, nontrivial way that FW does.

2. Moore referred to as 'Z' the sentence "At least one person is a King of France." Then, in discussing EW, FW, and W, he says: "If one wanted to assert W, it would always be quite useless to use the English sentence in order to do so, since nobody could possibly understand the English unless

he already knew what Z did mean." (Cf. p. 201.) This uselessness of a sentence which is nonetheless supposed to be making a factual statement is rather perplexing, and it may be worth discussing the situation in hopes of clarifying it.

Perhaps it is relevant to note that the context, "It is possible that the proposition expressed by the sentence 'At least one person is a King of France' should be a different proposition from---," is referentially opaque. The two referring expressions: "the proposition expressed by the sentence 'At least one person is a King of France'" and "the proposition that at least one person is a King of France" refer to the same thing, but the substitution of the first in the above context yields a falsehood, while the substitution of the second yields a truth. Perhaps part of the perplexity at the news that W is a factual proposition is due to the fact that the news is put in a context like the one above, and the reader may move back and forth between the two substitutions without noting the referential opacity of the context.

This might help us to resist the temptation to think that the proposition W must be necessarily true. In the same vein, we could point out that someone asserting the sentence EW might very well be taken to mean something like "The sentence 'At least one person is a King of France' means what it does," and this could very well be taken to express a necessary truth. Thus we have to note that when we are told that Z might have meant something other than what it does we don't mean that there might be a situation S such that Z does not mean-in-S what Z means-in-S; we just mean that there might be a situation S in which Z does not mean that at least one person is a King of France.

However, all this, enlightening as it may be, does not directly help those who feel that EW is just too obviously true for them to be comfortable in saying that EW expresses a contingent proposition. They may disagree with Moore's implicit assumption regarding the easy-going relations between sentences and propositions, or distrust propositions altogether. They may be especially suspicious of the translation argument and especially reluctant to agree that two sentences so different in usefulness as EW and FW should "express the same proposition."

These sources of dissatisfaction with Moore's claim that W is contingent can be treated separately. The assumptions that (a) there is a proposition W existing apart from the sentence EW, (b) that a school book translation of a sentence of English into French is a guarantee that they "express the same proposition" and (c) that in some clear sense EW or what it says or one thing it could be taken quite naturally and properly to say is contingent, could consistently be held separately, even if one may contribute force to another. By concentrating primarily on (c), I think we can show it is wrong to reject it, while we can leave open the option to question (a) and (b).

In [6] Alan White says:

A tautology . . . is a statement which tells you nothing you did not know already provided you understood the whole of the statement.

This is White's basis for rejecting Moore's claim that the proposition W is not a tautology. White says he is using 'tautology' only to follow Moore's usage and means by it 'analytic,' as Moore is presumed to have also intended it. Note that his comment is in terms of "statements" which is a way of remaining neutral about the separation of W from what EW is used on particular occasions to say. That is, White does not commit himself to talking about W as if it could be completely peeled off from the sentence EW. This possible suspicion of his against (a) will be ignored for the moment. My comments will also be neutral about the separate existence of propositions.

Now someone might understand the statement "A vixen is a female fox" without having known before hearing it what the meaning of the word 'vixen' is. But "A vixen is a female fox" is still analytic, even though it could tell you something you didn't know even though you understood the whole of it. This seeming counterexample to White's criterion could be eliminated if "understanding the whole of the statement" is taken not only as understanding the statement as a whole but as understanding every term in the statement taken in isolation.

But a further example might serve to show that this qualification is inadequate. "The product of 337 and 456 is 153,672" seems to be a tautology such that you could understand it perfectly as a whole and also term by term while still learning from it something you hadn't known. It might be replied that this statement is not a tautology. But it is necessarily true, and so on Moore's use of 'tautology' it is a tautology. It certainly isn't analytic in the same way "A vixen is a female fox" is, but it is still a counterexample to White's criterion taken as giving necessary conditions for a statement's being a tautology in Moore's sense.

The unqualified version of White's criterion leaves us with sufficient conditions for taking EW to express a tautology provided we agree that to understand EW would require knowing in advance that what it says is true. So we have a problem: either we have to deny that White's criterion does correctly give sufficient conditions for a statement's being a tautology or we have to deny that understanding EW would require having in advance the information which it conveys. I shall begin by exploring the latter possibility.

3. There are plenty of cases in which one person understands a statement better than someone else, and yet both understand the statement. And someone may get some information from a statement without qualifying as understanding it. On hearing: "Luigi has osteomyelitis," I may gather that there is something wrong with Luigi while claiming not to understand the statement. But we might say that I understand the statement, but not so well as someone who knows medicine. If I had learned nothing more than "They're talking about Luigi," we would no doubt deny that I had understood the statement even though I learned something by hearing it. So in asking whether understanding EW would require knowing in advance that it was true, we have to recognize that various degrees of understanding EW might be possible and must ask whether there is a bare minimum of

information such that recognizing that EW is conveying it is necessary to qualify as understanding EW, and whether being able to recognize that EW was conveying this information would only be possible for someone who already had this information.

If quoted expressions were simply names of the expressions within the quotes, then it would be easy to answer that someone could understand EW without already having the information it conveys. He might just know that the expression “‘At least one person is a King of France’” is the name of some sentence without knowing which one. Someone might know English pretty well, without knowing all about the use of quotes. Then just as someone could qualify as understanding the sentence “Peter Smith is a millionaire from Utah” even if he didn’t know what particular person Peter Smith is, he could qualify as understanding EW even if he didn’t know what particular sentence is named by “‘At least one person is a King of France’.” Such a person would certainly be able to get factual information from EW which he didn’t already have, so the only question would be whether he would qualify as understanding EW.

Consider the following three conditions someone might be in with respect to the expression “‘At least one person is a King of France’”:

1. Knowing that it functions as a name of something.
2. Knowing that it functions as the name of a sentence.
3. Knowing that it functions as a name of the sentence “‘At least one person is a King of France.’”

Someone could understand English and understand “is a sentence” and yet be in a worse condition than condition 1. He might be in a condition such that, for all he knows, “‘At least one person is a King of France’” means the same as the phrase “How beautiful” (the meaning of which he knows). Then he wouldn’t even know whether the sentence “‘At least one person is a King of France’ is a sentence” was being used to make a statement or to express a linguist’s momentary feeling of rapture for his subject.

To a person in condition 1, “‘At least one person is a King of France’ is a sentence” would be news, and this sentence could be used to convey this news to him, bringing him into condition 2. On the other hand, this sentence wouldn’t convey any news to someone already in condition 2. To move a person in condition 2 along to condition 3 would require either teaching him some more about quotes or referring to the sentence “‘At least one person is a King of France’” by some means other than quotes, say by pointing to it on a blackboard.

Now one clear requirement for understanding EW is:

4. Knowing the meaning of “‘At least one person is a King of France.’”

Could a person in conditions 2 and 4 be said to understand EW? It certainly seems reasonable to set the requirements for understanding low enough to allow such a person to qualify. But it is also possible to formulate natural requirements for understanding which are high enough to debar such a person from qualifying, that is, to require being in conditions 3 and 4.

Someone who was not in condition 4 could not qualify as understanding

EW. However, someone not in condition 4 could still easily qualify as understanding FW, say if he were in condition 3 and understood French perfectly. In a sense, FW could be used to bring such a person into condition 4. That is, by telling him FW, you could make him able to give the meaning of "At least one person is a King of France," *in French*. We might find it worthwhile to distinguish this sort of understanding of the meaning of "At least one person is a King of France" from the understanding of someone who is able to give the meaning in English. And of course being able to give the meaning isn't the same as understanding the meaning and is just one criterion for understanding. I might be able to give a Russian the meaning of a German sentence by uttering a Russian sentence which I didn't understand.

4. Suppose that we modify White's criterion so that it is easier to defend. The modified rule won't follow from the original nor vice versa, but will clearly retain its principal claim:

If a statement *s* is such that if you *fully* understand the whole of the statement, then you must have already had the information it conveys, then *s* is a tautology.

We have seen that EW could be exempted from this rule if someone in condition 2 could be said to fully understand EW. But we have also seen that it is possible to set the requirements for a full understanding of EW above conditions 2 and 4, to being in conditions 3 and 4. And to be in conditions 3 and 4 is to possess the information conveyed by EW. So if we want to deny that the proposition *W* which is expressed by EW is a tautology, or analytic, or necessarily true, we have to reject White's criterion in this latest version.

One way to justify rejecting White's criterion would be to produce counterexamples that weren't exactly like EW (otherwise we would be begging the question). But this isn't easy to do. Consider the statement "London is the sort of thing which could be referred to by a proper name." We might say that this is a contingent statement on the grounds that it isn't necessarily true that there is any such thing as London. Furthermore, someone who didn't know whether the term 'London' might mean the same as the phrase "how interesting," wouldn't be able to understand this statement; for all he knows it might be a philosopher's exclamation. We might even be tempted to say that no one could understand the statement unless he already possessed the information it conveys. The trouble with this counterexample is that we might not say all these things. The example has enough trouble of its own without having to carry the load of refuting White's criterion.

One trouble in looking for counterexamples is that if the example is sufficiently like EW (e.g., "The sentence 'All men are mortal' means that all men are mortal"), it will beg the question, and if it is unlike EW, we can just set the criteria for fully understanding *it* low enough so that it slips under White's criterion. So it seems that EW (and similar statements) will have to serve as sufficient counterexample to White's criterion. Even if

fully understanding EW requires advance possession of the information it conveys, the information it conveys is still factual. We can describe a situation in which it isn't so, which is something we can't do with the information expressed by, say, "Two plus two equals four." It might be replied that "Two plus two equals four" could be false if the sentence changed its meaning. But even if it changed its meaning, it would still be true that two plus two equals four. Of course EW could also change meaning and W still be true, say, if 'means' came to mean what is now meant by "does not mean." But there are changes in the meaning of EW which would falsify W, and there are no changes in the meaning of "Two plus two equals four" which would falsify the proposition that two plus two equals four.

5. It might be replied that this is sheer dogmatism resting on a naive over-emphasis on the separability of propositions from sentences. For example, how are we to justify the assumption that even if "Two plus two equals four" changes meaning the proposition that it now expresses will remain unchanged and true as ever?

This complaint against the foregoing argument against calling W a tautology would naturally lead to objecting to the translation argument for the contingency of W. How are we to justify the claim that EW and FW express the same proposition? If a French speaker asked to know the French translation of "At least one person is a King of France," FW would do for a reply, and EW obviously wouldn't. If FW can be used to answer a different factual question from EW, isn't it taking a lot for granted to assume that they express the same proposition? How do we know that FW is the translation of EW? We often translate under quotes. And even if it is the translation, why should this prove that they express the same proposition when there is so much evidence that they have very different uses? It seems plausible to say that a German and an Englishman who understand the Pythagorean Theorem understand the same proposition even though they put it in different sentences, and that factual information about words they may get from the sentences themselves is not as important as the common information they get. But this should not license the uncritical application of translation as a criterion for assessing the nature of the proposition expressed by a sentence.

For all this, there do seem to be good reasons for calling W a contingent proposition. With "A vixen is a female fox," we cannot imagine a case in which there was something (viewing the case from our world) we would call a vixen which we wouldn't call a female fox. But we can imagine a case in which there was something we would call the sentence "At least one person is a King of France" functioning as a sentence of English, and which was yet not serving to mean, in the English of that situation, that at least one person is a King of France.

It might be replied that we could easily imagine a situation in which some women were called vixens who wouldn't be called female foxes. But in this case the meaning of the symbol 'vixen' would have changed slightly from that intended in *our* sentence "A vixen is a female fox." It might be replied that in the other imaginary situation, the meaning of "At least one

person is a King of France" has also changed. This is true, but the meaning of "At least one person is a King of France" need not have changed, and that is the term analogous to 'vixen.' We refer to the same thing by this term, but what is now true of it is not true of it in the imaginary case—we do not describe it in the imaginary case as we do now, whatever the people *in* the imaginary case would do.

A criterion of analyticity which fails to distinguish between EW and "A vixen is a female fox" will fail to satisfy what seems to be a very solidly grounded intuition we have to the effect that they should be distinguished. However, saying this does not require us to accept the startling "fact" that EW and FW express the same proposition despite differing radically in usefulness. We can drop that argument and still have enough grounds for our conclusion, leaving the question as to whether EW and FW express the same proposition for separate discussion.

6. The peculiarity of EW owes a great deal to the presence of quotation marks, and their role may be worth discussing. Suppose that we have written on a blackboard the sentence "The sentence written just below this one means that at least one person is a King of France," and below it we write the sentence "At least one person is a King of France." The former sentence is contingent in a way quite different from EW, though in fact we might take it to be saying the same thing, to be conveying the same information. It is a contingent fact that the sentence "At least one person is a King of France" is written on the board and its not being written there would falsify the sentence above it. There is nothing similar which would falsify EW. This doesn't make it obvious that EW expresses a different proposition. The two sentences could sometimes be used in the same way—and the additional possibility of falsity doesn't make the sentence on the board any less uninformative than EW.

A quoted expression is a way of naming the expression in the quotes that differs from other names in that we can read off from the name itself what it is that it names. Moore named by 'Z' the sentence "At least one person is a King of France." He would write: "The sentence Z means that at least one person is a King of France," as an abbreviation for EW. But this could be very misleading because that sentence is contingent on something on which EW isn't, namely, on 'Z' being a name of "At least one person is a King of France." We might give up the use of quotes and just name our sentences one at a time, "Bill," "Roog," and so on, with great increase in effort. But if we allow the possibility of infinitely many sentences, we couldn't name them all this way. So the use of quotes to form names is something more than mere naming. Understanding *fully* how quotes work involves being in condition 3 rather than just condition 2.

Another cautionary point worth mentioning is the distinction between written and spoken English. Someone may be able to read English without being able to speak it, and vice versa. Furthermore, some spoken sentences or sentences of spoken English are not easy to translate into written English. Translating written into spoken English is easier because we have conventions for reading aloud. When reading EW aloud from a text, we

would recite the words "The sentence quote at least one person is a King of France unquote means that at least one person is a King of France." When I discuss assertions of EW in this essay, I mean assertions made in writing or spoken as if reading aloud.

But unless reading from a text, the most natural way to distinguish use from mention in speech is through pauses, inflections, etc. that are not reproducible in our normal set of writing conventions. (Though linguists have conventions for setting down these *sounds*, their devices capture only the sounds and not (directly) the statement.) In speech, if I want to say that "All men are mortal" is a four word sentence, I will usually recite the words "All men are mortal is a four word sentence," doing the job of quotes only by inflection. But it is interesting to note that this way of doing the job of quotes is not exactly the same as the written or reading aloud use of quotes. This may be brought out by considering that someone giving a rendering of EW with inflection doing the job of quotes (call this sentence 'IEW'), will be making a statement that someone who was not in any of the conditions 1 through 3 could still fully understand, if he were in condition 4 (and had, of course, other knowledge of English).

With respect to IEW, White's ascription of tautologousness would get even better support from his criterion than it does with respect to EW (written or read aloud). The qualification of his criterion to "fully understanding" would no longer be necessary. But even with respect to IEW, the argument against saying it is a tautology still stands. We can still tell a perfectly clear story in which what IEW conveys is false.

Even if EW is a counterexample to White's criterion (revised) for analyticity, it would be very interesting if sentences like EW were the *only* sources of counterexamples to the criterion. It might even motivate us to try to reconstrue them so as to get them out of the way, perhaps by focusing on the peculiar nature of quotation. Lennart Åqvist in [1], p. 67, has made an interesting exploration of this possibility. He has asked if any definitions might be possible which would bring EW into line as satisfying Quine's criterion for analyticity—that of either being a logical truth or being synonymous with one.

First, (1) is interpreted as

(1') For every x , if x is a token of the sentence 'At least one person is a King of France,' then x means-in-ordinary-English that at least one person is a King of France.

Then, (1') is claimed to be synonymous with some logically true statement on the basis of a definition like

D1: x is a token of the sentence ' ' =_{def} x means-in-ordinary-English that

or perhaps

D2: x means-in-ordinary-English that =_{def} x is a token of the sentence ' '

The absurdity and arbitrariness of these definitions need not be stressed.

(Acceptance of D1 leads e.g. to a breakdown of the distinction between syntax and semantics.) And I cannot see that there are more plausible ones turning (1), or (1'), into a logically true statement.

These definitions are specifically of 'token' and "means-in-ordinary-English," but it doesn't look as if anything better could be obtained by directly trying to define a "quotation function." In fact, while there may be functions in certain formal systems which could also be said to *serve the function* which quotes serve in English, I think it is just misleading to speak of quotes in English as a function, as opposed to their having a function (where, of course, 'function' is here used in two quite different ways). If there were a quotation function in English, it wouldn't be doing the job, playing the role, of quotation, because this job would already have to be done somehow, in order for arguments to the function to occur in the function. And this job, on which the "quotation function" would depend, could not be done by the function itself. Of course, I can use quotes to talk about quotation marks, to talk about the marks themselves, but these are only one kind of mark among many that are used in doing the job of quotation. The point is that in applying the "quotation function" to an argument x I would get as a result a name of x and I would already have had to have a name for x in order to put it as argument in the function, since only the names of things and not the things themselves *appear* in functions, except, of course, when they appear autonomously—as names for themselves.

Quine himself is critical of the notion of analyticity on the basis of dissatisfaction with the unclarity of the notion of synonymy. Someone might exploit this unclarity as to what a definition of 'analytic' would be to justify saying that Åqvist's examples of failures at finding suitable definitions don't show that there aren't any. But this attempt at exploitation can't get past the clear-cut case we can spell out in which what EW now says would be false, though EW would probably no longer say it.

Moore's claim that the proposition W is not a tautology is thus substantially right. But it isn't necessary to accept all the proposition theory of meaning as Moore operates with it to accept this claim. Someone impressed by the fact that FW could be used to convey the factual information that the French translation of "At least one person is a King of France" is such-and-such, may object to saying that EW and FW express the same proposition. And we may note that EW could be used to convey a tautology (that whatever "At least one person is a King of France" means now, it means now). But we certainly must admit that the meaning of "At least one person is a King of France" could have been different.

7. After pointing out that W is not a tautology, Moore turned his attention to the negation of EW, a sentence which I shall call 'NW,' and which is: "The sentence 'At least one person is a King of France' does not mean that at least one person is a King of France." Presumably, NW conveys the negation of the proposition W, or might naturally be so used, and in this role would be conveying a proposition which is false, but not necessarily false. But this falsehood, though not a necessary one, is still no ordinary one.

Of course NW might be used even at the present time, to say something true. For example, inmates in a prison might use "At least one person is a King of France" to mean that a riot is scheduled. An old timer might then say NW to a newcomer and be saying something true. This isn't the sort of utterance of NW we are interested in at present.

In discussing the sort of utterance we are interested in, Moore continues to use the name 'Z' for the sentence "At least one person is a King of France." It has already been pointed out that this convenience could be misleading, but there will be no harm if we just understand Moore's use of this name as purely a matter of expository convenience. Moore's remarks on the peculiar absurdity of some utterances of NW is also made with reference to a situation in which the proposition W is false, but I think this is irrelevant to what he has to say. He says, essentially of asserting NW and the proposition thus expressed:

There is a special absurdity in expressing it by the words I have just used. The absurdity I mean arises from the fact that when we use expressions to make an assertion, we *imply* by the mere fact of using them, that we are using them in accordance with established usage. Hence if we were to assert "Z does not mean that at least one person is a King of France" we should imply that Z *can* be properly used to mean what, on the second occasion on which we are using it, we are using it to mean. And this which we imply is, of course, the contradictory of what we are asserting. We *imply* it, by using this language to make our assertion, though we do not assert it, nor is it implied (i.e. entailed) by what we do assert.

What Moore seems to be holding here is that some assertions of NW would involve the special absurdity that the very assertion itself provides conclusive evidence that what is asserted is false. He would hold that asserting this sentence provides the evidence that refutes the assertion, because the assertion provides evidence that a sentence can be used in accordance with established usage to express the proposition which the assertion is denying the sentence could be so used to express.

Let us call by 'S' the sentence: "The sentence 'At least one person is a King of France' is not suited, by established English usage, for use in expressing the proposition that at least one person is a King of France." Someone asserting S would not, thereby, provide conclusive evidence of the falsity of his assertion to someone in conditions 3 and 4, because such a person would already know that S was false. Nor would he provide conclusive evidence of the falsity of his assertion to someone only in conditions 2 and 4, because such a person would also need the information that the sentence named "At least one person is a King of France" is the sentence "At least one person is a King of France."

However, a writer asserting S might provide conclusive evidence of the falsity of his assertion to someone who knew that the sentence named "At least one person is a King of France," but who did not know the meaning of this sentence, provided that this person were able to understand that the writer was, in asserting S, asserting that the sentence "At least one person is a King of France" is not suited by established English usage for use in

expressing a certain proposition, and were then able to recognize that the sentence which the writer uses to express the proposition that he denies the sentence "At least one person is a King of France" is suited by established English usage for use in expressing, *is* the sentence "At least one person is a King of France."

Such a person, in possession of this much information, might well go on to reflect that since the writer has used the sentence "At least one person is a King of France" in the course of making an assertion, he is probably using the sentence in accordance with established usage. So the writer, by the very act of asserting what he does, provides evidence that his assertion is false. Of course in some cases, the fact that someone has used an expression to make an assertion would not even be good evidence for the conclusion that he has used the expression in accordance with established usage, and in some cases in which it was good evidence the conclusion which it supported might be false, but usually it is good evidence for a true conclusion, so it does seem that Moore is right in holding that in asserting S the writer would be refuting himself to a suitable reader, at least in many cases. And it would be a peculiar sort of self-refutation, involving a "peculiar absurdity," as Moore says.

Just as it is possible to accept Moore's claim that W is not a tautology without having to accept his claim that EW and FW express the same proposition in spite of their different uses, it is possible to accept Moore's distinction between what is asserted and what is implied in asserting NW (or S) without having to go along with all the uses Moore may make of this distinction. For example, in criticising Stevenson, Moore says that '*x* is good' *couldn't* be correctly analysed as 'I approve of *x*, do so as well.' In saying "*x* is good," you may *imply* that you approve of *x*, but you certainly don't assert this, nor is it entailed by anything you do assert.

This criticism is based on the assumption that there is a proposition to the effect that *x* is good, such that if many different people assert that *x* is good, they will all be asserting the same proposition. The fact that the different statements may have widely differing significance is played down and accounted for in terms of the notion of implication, which here serves to leave assertion free from the task of conveying what is actually conveyed.

Of course, there may be a difference between saying "*x* is good" and saying "I approve of *x*, do so as well." There is a great difference (or will usually be in the actual case) between saying "*x* is good" and "I think well of *x*." The latter is more reserved than the former. But this does not mean that in saying the former, you are not expressing your opinion. And if it is said: "But this isn't *all* that you do," this is true enough; you may also offend, flatter, explain, etc. And if it is suggested that another "something more" is that you are applying the unique predicate of goodness to *x*, then whether this is true or useful or enlightening will be just what is in question.

This is not to settle the question whether Moore or Stevenson is right; that would be outside the present purpose. It is just to note that Moore's application of his distinction between assertion and implication begs the main question at issue—whether there is a unique property of goodness

which is what people predicate of a thing when they call it good, and whether this analysis in terms of applying this unique predicate, if such there be, is the best way to represent what goes on in the use of ethical language.

Moore might also have used his distinction between assertion and implication to support his claim that EW and FW express the same proposition, by saying that the two will express the same proposition as far as assertion goes, though differing in their implications. The distinction might similarly have been applied to support Moore's thesis that philosophical analysis has no essential connection with getting facts about words but only about concepts. The fact that "A brother is a male sibling" or "Responsibility entails freedom of choice" might convey facts about English words could be explained as entirely a matter of implication, with the implication that it is what is asserted that is the proper business of the philosopher.

In reporting "A brother is a male sibling" you might *imply* that the English word 'brother' has the same meaning as the phrase "male sibling," or that the ranges of use of these two expressions overlap to a considerable extent, but this would have nothing to do with what you assert, which is the proper business of the philosopher. Granting this, we will be confronted with the paradox that what you *assert* in asserting "A brother is a male sibling" is the same as what you assert in asserting "A brother is a brother," different as the implications may be.

I don't mean to suggest that these views are wrong, nor to suggest that they are right. I only want to separate them from Moore's remarks about the proposition W so that we can see that accepting that W is not a tautology and that some assertions of the negation of W may be "pragmatically self-refuting," is neutral with respect to Moore's background theory of propositions.

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