

4. What do you understand by Michael Dummett's idea of an 'anti-realist theory of meaning'? Give an example illustrating how such a theory of meaning would be applied to one particular class of statements.

It is the theory that is the brother school of scepticism. Michael Dummett doesn't want to assume anything. He may be anti-idealism, too, in my private opinion. Instead of trying to find the meaning from reality, he focuses on what the sentence can give us reality. We have to find knowledge by investigating reality but we can use language for this job. To find reality by using language is trying to define the truth of the statement.

Consider the statement, 'Our dog is running on the street'. The realist may only imagine the picture of an animal with four legs, tail and face. He also may picture a long space and smooth surface with a car running on it as well as the action of the animal running in the picture. So we may sit on the sofa in the house and find the meaning of this statement by bringing together all these pictures in the same scene. Suddenly, we can have the meaning of this statement. But the antirealist will say that to find the meaning of this statement, we must work with this sentence directly.

As the theory of 'a is F' says, to be able to find the meaning we have to find 'a', then we can test 'F'. For example, in the statement, 'Our dog is running on the street', the 'street' is 'a' and 'dog running on' is 'F'. So, according to Dummett, to be able to define the truth or falsity of this statement, we must find the street first and then examine it. We may have to open the windows and look out to the street. That can be satisfied for the job of finding 'a'. Now we must do 'test F'. We must look to the street to check on the dog. Is the dog really running on it or not? The statement will be true if our dog really is on that street and happily running on it.

How about if I say 'Our dog is running on the street in its afterlife world'. The meaning of this statement may come up for the realism follower. The picture of the street for the realist is that it lays on the cloud and the dog is happily running on it. Maybe there is a neon ring over its head as we see in a movie representing dead people in heaven. But all this is just the reality that realism believers create by giving meaning to this sentence from their mind. Antirealist intuitionists like Dummett will never accept that reality easily. Maybe in the future, we can build a super ship that can travel between this world and the afterlife. It can travel through the tunnel of light we saw in a sci-fi movie to the afterlife world. But for now, if we can't find the 'a' or find the way to access that afterlife world, we can't test the 'F' (dog running on) in the antirealist intuitionism view.

How about in terms of generalization? If I try to consider the statement, 'My missing ring is in this lake'. Well again from the realist's perspective, the meaning of this sentence could be a picture of a ring on the clay under the water in this lake. Dummett can argue that we can't assume that every lake has clay under the water. Every lake should have no exit spot that the ring can go out from the lake. Can we just assume that this lake will have the property a general lake should have? No, we cannot be one hundred per cent sure of that. Maybe this lake has a big hole in the ground under water. It may have a secret tunnel that connects this special lake with the sea on the other side of the world. That will make it possible for the ring to get out from this lake. The ring may stay at the other side of the world right now. That would make the statement false. So Dummett will never accept any uncertain fact or

assumption from this example as realists do. The antirealist must check the lake, perhaps by having a magic machine to lift all the water from the lake. The lake will look like an empty bath tub and the antirealist could find out if the ring lay on the bottom or not.

Michael Dummett's idea of an anti-realist theory of meaning is the idea that tries to draw the reality of this world. To gain knowledge from this world, we must investigate reality. To investigate reality, we must use language as a tool. And Dummett and other antirealists will work with statements directly to draw the meaning of the statements.