DISCUSSION

I

NEELMANI'S GRAMMAR OF LIAR PARADOX

The April, 1997 issue of this Journal carries an article which proposes to solve the liar paradox, and thereby to put an end to all such paradoxes[1]. In what follows, I argue that Neelaman's Wittgensteinean resolution of the above paradox is neither Wittgensteinean nor is capable of resolving the liar paradox, as its only credential is that it does not want to accept the following identity sentence, namely

$$a = \sim Ta$$

as part of the effort to understand the 'grammar' of self-referential sentences. His aim to show that the paradox is no paradox boomerangs.

Consider the simpler version of the paradox

<p style="text-align:center">What I say is false.</p>

The liar sentence is true, if false and false, if true. Neelamani's efforts for an 'operation rescue' lie in finding fault with the identity sentence such as

<p style="text-align:center">C is identical with 'C' is false'</p>

which forms the major premise of a tightly-knit argument which proves the paradox (156). 'C' is different from 'C' is false'. The first reason is that the two occurrences of C can never be equivocated. Such an identity is, therefore, quite 'unwarranted' according to Neelamani (159). Granting that it is point against the self-referentiality of sentence such as

<p style="text-align:center">This sentence is false</p>

for the simple reason that the grammar of 'this' is not auto-referential. From the point of view of later Wittgenstein's theory of language-use, this is grammatically innocent, not because it is auto-referential. It is auto-referential. The paradox is due to the fact that you are abstracting it from its use. Supposing I use this

sentence as identical with the sentence. Thus 'I (as a pronoun) am ten centimeters long' is self-referential for the simple reason that I ('paradigmatically') use it in that way, and it serves as a measuring ruler, in the language-game of the tribe (f.n.4). Check truth-values, then you encounter a paradox. The true or false are part of the language-game (PI, 136)[2]. My point is that there is no evidence to show that Neelamani's efforts are Wittgensteinean in any respect. His 'sticker example' does not convey anything, for whether it is there or not, the material inside will certainly explode, if ignited. Does it mean that if the sticker is lost, the grammar is lost, or it will fail to explode ? The analogy is beside the point, because it is self-referential and contingent (Infra). Likewise, his Wittgensteinean type of distinction between a sentence and a sentence about a sentence goes counter to the above solution.

In arguing thus, Neelamani begs the main question because he accepts the Tarskian schema. Now, by denying that the a on both sides of the above identity statement, cannot be demonstrated to be the same, as Ta cannot be reduced to a. It is a strange argument to say that since such a reduction is not possible, they are not identical.

For what he argues is that since the RHS contains two elements T and a, we tend to fuse one into another to make us think of it as a complete sentence, and we think of a as an incomplete sentence, whereas a is a complete (matter-of-fact) sentence, to which it should be reduced. The sense of matter-of-fact sentence is counterintuitive, which he never succeeds to explain (f.n.3). Adding truth values (T or F) can hardlly make it a more complete sentence (for it opens up the paradox), for the simple reason that it confuses a sentence and a sentence about a sentence. A rough-and-ready way to distinguish them is to introduce p and p is true or false. The latter are value sentences about matter of fact sentences; so, no doubt, they could be reduced to p. Neelamani wants to deny this. What is his explanation of truth values? He accepts that they are just properties of propositions, but says that they are not parts of propositions, or they can be distinguished as such. Just as we see there is a fit for p, we must also ask whether there is the similar fit for p is true or p is false. On finding that there is no difference between p, p is true and p is false, they all say the same thing. Because they are all reducible to (what) p says (something).

$$p \text{ says} = p \text{ is true} = p \text{ is false}$$

For Neelamani,

$$\text{This is a sentence } (p)$$

means

$$p \text{ says (what)}$$

That is,

$$p \text{ says } p$$

p says p is self-referential as well as contingent (as before). Can we succeed to make sense of the distinction

$$\text{'P says P' is true}$$

and

$$p \text{ says 'p is true'}$$

My point is that the above sentence is as much a liar case as the latter. This looks silly as the latter. This looks silly as this will undoubtedly make

$$TP = FP$$

what about iteration? While

$$TTP = P$$

the same does not hold true for

$$FFp$$

because it changes the truth value. So on Neelamani's

$$TTTp = p$$

but,

$$FFFp = Fp$$

After all, we can accept Tarski's schema, then the paradox disappears. Then why try another awkward solution? Neelamani's distinction between matter of fact sen-

tence and value sentence cannot rescue us from the grip of paradox, as it is either a distinction which is already there (old wine in new bottles), or it is of no consequence whatever. His distinction, in other words, is not made to serve a rough-and-ready distinction as evidenced in

<p style="text-align:center">p is a sentence (true or false)</p>

and

<p style="text-align:center">p is false (a sentence about a sentence).</p>

The moment he does not accept the former, then he cannot determine whether

<p style="text-align:center">Pegasus files</p>

is a sentence or not. For Neelamani, this is a matter-of fact sentence. What does he mean by the fact of the matter of the matter of fact sentence ?

Now, depending on Neelamani's distinction between the logical and the empirical, we can put forward the following hypothesis: the paradox can be prevented by making the distinction between:

The statement (is) printed within the rectangle on this page (logical) and the the empirical, given within the rectangle

> The statement printed within the rectangle in this page is false.

Consider the former sentence as p says $\bar{p}$ and the latter as the second occurence of p. If so, the p says p is true by virtue of this matter-of-fact. No confusion ever arises between the logical and the empirical. Surprisingly, the paradox does not disappear, because we are under some constraints to identify both of the above sentences. Can we think that this is an identity with a difference ? Neelamani wants us to think so. Let us proceed to investigate:

Accept Tarski's schema: $TP=P$

<p style="text-align:center">Then, $T(c)=c$</p>

<p style="text-align:center">$(T)Fc=Fc$</p>

is possible only when F is lost sight of, so it yields

$$T(c(ii)) = F(c(i))$$