

MEANING, UNDERSTANDING AND INTERPRETATION: A STUDY IN PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE

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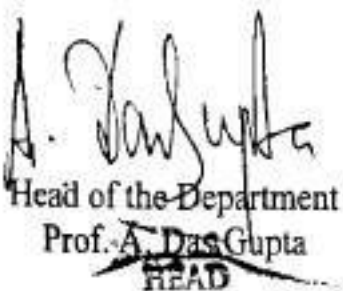
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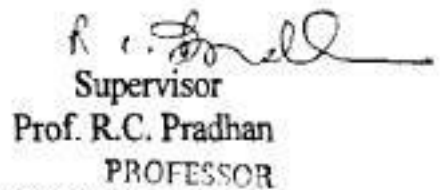


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dedicated to the memory of my grandfather,

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INTRODUCTION

The more narrowly we examine actual language, the sharper becomes the conflict between it and our requirement (a pure and ideal language. . . We have got on to slippery ice where there is no friction and so in a certain sense the conditions are ideal, but also, just because of that, we are unable to walk. We want to walk: so we need *friction* Back to the rough ground¹ (Wittgenstein. *Philosophical Investigations*. 107 bracket added).

This rough ground is the sphere of the multitude of language-games we are engaged in, in our various concrete life situations. The domain of language where meaning is located, therefore, is immensely vast, due to the variety and diversity of these life situations and associated language-games. The search for a way out, therefore, appears as a pressing philosophical issue. This essay is concerned with the analysis of certain conceptual problems associated with such an issue. And basically two models of understanding meaning have been examined, namely, the representational model and the hermeneutic model.

The representational model is considered, because it offers an immediate solution to the problem of understanding meaning by narrowing down the horizon of language into the framework of language-world representation. The hermeneutic model, on the other hand, admits the vastness of the horizon of language with all its diversities and seeks to derive a comprehensive framework to explain the problem.

The categorisation is based on a broad criteria. Approaches to language that conceive it as a representation of reality, or more precisely, that conceives a structural identity between the two realms of language and factual reality were categorised into the first group. Again, approaches that conceive historicity as a vital element in our various cognitive encounters in relation to language and reality were put under the hermeneutic model

But both the models share a common assumption, as they emphasise the linguisticity of understanding. Both the models take language as perennial. While the representational model conceives language as the necessary 'medium' of expression and representation, the hermeneutic model goes even further, and associates the very being of man with language. Hans-Georg Gadamer interprets the Aristotelian definition of the nature of man, the "living being who has *logos*", by arguing that the primary meaning of the word *logos* is language. This factor places the "problem of understanding meaning" at the forefront of philosophical inquiries.

Understanding meaning is a necessary prerogative for linguistic practices. And with the acknowledgement of man's fundamental linguisticity - language is the part of man's natural history, says Wittgenstein - it naturally follows that understanding meaning is a necessary mode of the being of man (Heidegger).

The analysis of the nature of man's relationship with language, therefore, is a major topic of discussion in this study. The question which acquires prominence is: how understanding meaning takes place in and through language?

Along with the examination of the representational model and the hermeneutic model, some anti-representational doctrines which do not ascribe any relevance to the hermeneutic problematic are also being examined. But ultimately, this study has come to the conclusion that, it is only with the recognition of the hermeneutic problem, many problems connected with language and linguistic understanding can be consistently explained

The first chapter of the thesis entitled **Understanding Meaning : Representationalism vs. Anti-Representationalism**, gives an overview of the problem of understanding meaning, as it has been dealt by different philosophers and different traditions of philosophy. Here both representational and anti-representational standpoints are being examined. The representationalists, by making language a representation of the factual reality, consequently proclaims a conception of language, which very well confirms to the parameters of natural science. But such a unidimensional view of language puts the representationalists in trouble. This Chapter examines how, led with the ideals of the scientific conception, the representationalists envisaged to construct a universal language, and, how with such a language and its inherent logic they tried to evaluate the various language-games we are engaged in. The different logics of enquiry, they argue, have the same logical pattern

To substantiate such a unitary conception of language, the representational tradition identifies a set of linguistic expressions which can be considered as basic. These statements are directly related to the world and they are the faithful pictures of the facts in the world. Wittgenstein's concept of elementary propositions are examples for such linguistic expressions. With such a conception of language, and the associated concept of objective knowledge, the

representational tradition tries to explain all phenomena, adopting the causal-explanation framework.

The first chapter again discusses the inadequacy in explaining the cultural and social phenomena with the causal-explanation pattern. Attempts are made in the representational tradition to accommodate the human and social sciences into the sphere of 'science', by explaining these phenomena also with the imposition of causal-explanation model. But all such attempts prove inadequate, because, in human sciences we encounter a different dimension of reality which does not fit the ideals of the ontology of natural sciences. As Karl Otto Apel points out, in the human sciences, attempts are made to understand the human actions from their motives and hence there we encounter an altogether different kind of knowledge and not a residue of metaphysics. These departments of human enquiry like social and human sciences, art, religion, etc., have different conception of reality and different modes of coping with reality. With the causal-explanation model of the representationalists the *noetic* aspect of human behaviour cannot be justifiably accounted.

Further, an examination is conducted on, how a different concept of language is emerging. Wittgenstein's language-game theory is briefly considered, where the 'use' of language in different life situations acquires prominence. Meaning in this context is related to a system of practices and habits and is not conceived as the abstract essence of linguistic signs. Again, both reality and human self are conceived as evolving out of the various ways language is being employed in the multitude of concrete life situations

An important concept mentioned in this chapter is the notion of historicity. The evolution of reality and human self through various linguistic practices suggests that reality is a "historical-cultural opening up in language". A brief analysis of this concept of reality has been carried out in the light of Edmund Husserl's notion of life-world. The concept of life-world provided the hermeneutic tradition a very strong justification to accommodate historicity. Husserl stresses on the idea of a world which is "given to us in the subjective modes of givenness". This idea will take care of the notion of historicity. Our relationship with reality in this context has also changed. Heidegger explains this relationship with the concept of the being-in-the world. This, in turn, will give a picture of how the being of man is related to both history and language. The first chapter concludes with an evaluation of the role of language in the two traditions.

The second chapter entitled **Representational semantics and Linguistic Understanding**, examines the important conceptual peculiarities of the concept of language propounded by the idea of world-language direct relationship. The idea of 'meaning' as the representational content of language has been introduced in order to explain this relationship more consistently. Meaning has been conceived as the mediating entity that connects the three realms of language, thought and reality. A brief analysis is made on Frege's concept of sense to explain this more clearly. The prepositional character of linguistic understanding, which is an extremely important concept, has been derived from the Fregean idea of 'thoughts mediating the uses of language'.

In this chapter, it has been argued that, the most important notion of the representational model is the idea of the 'structure of language'. Representational character of language has been asserted on the basis of this idea. The notion of proposition itself suggests that what is important in language is its structure - not the syntactic structure, but the logico-semantic structure. Russell's theory of description has been briefly discussed here to make the idea of semantic structure clear. Again, Wittgenstein's doctrine of sense determinism also has been examined.

Regarding the relationship of language with meaning, and understanding, the representational model upholds two different views. While the Frege-Wittgenstein conception takes meaning as a logical property and the representational function of language as a matter of logic, the empiricist tradition emphasises empirical expedience and subscribes to different forms of psychologism. These two viewpoints also have been discussed in this chapter.

But inspite of these differences, the representationalists in general agree upon certain common ideas. All of them subscribe to the view that language is a picture of factual reality and the concept of meaning invariance is a central ideal for all of them. For the representational model, in general, the language-game of science is the ideal.

Understanding **Meaning : The Hermeneutic Problematic**, is the title of the third chapter. The hermeneutic model focuses on the problem of understanding meaning that acquires prominence in the social and human sciences. And here, unlike the object of understanding in the natural sciences, the historical and cultural phenomena exist cut off from us in terms of time and place. This makes their objective comprehension a difficult task.

As a central notion of this chapter the recognition of historicity has been examined in detail. The reality we encounter in the human sciences is widely centered by intentional and emotional categories of concrete human beings. Hence, they cannot be relegated into a non-self category. But the object of study in natural sciences - nature - can be viewed as non-self, and as constituted of impersonal objects (personally uncentered). This factor makes these phenomena ahistorical.

With the recognition of historicity, the concept of meaning, understanding and their relationship with language demands a total reconstruction. Hence, an examination of the concept of meaning is undertaken in this chapter. The metaphysical concept of meaning is examined, where the latter is conceived as unchanging and objective. But with the recognition of historicity, these assumptions get challenged.

This problem is examined with an analysis of how the notion of meaning was dealt differently. To maintain objectivity, some philosophers in the hermeneutic tradition like Schleiermacher, Dilthey and Hirsch place meanings in the author's intentional perspective. While Schleiermacher propagates a doctrine of unconscious production. Dilthey endeavours to construe a distinct epistemology for the human sciences. These attempts are briefly discussed in the third chapter.

But many of these concepts will get challenged, once the ultimate relationship between language and meaning is asserted. The representationalists and also Schleiermacher and Dilthey,

conceive an extra-linguistic realm for meanings. But once meaning is recognised as the immanent and essential property of language, a larger role to language has to be recognised. Meanings, therefore, cannot go out of language. This chapter ends with a conclusion that human linguisticity is universal

The fourth chapter entitled, Truth, Meaning and Interpretative Understanding, focuses more on the concept of truth and examines the notion of understanding meaning in relation to that concept. At first the concept of truth in the representational tradition is examined. Here the a historcal and metaphysical conception of truth becomes relevant. Here, like meaning, truth also is accounted for in two different ways. The empiricist-representationalists connect the notion of truth with experience. But in Frege and also in Wittgenstein, we could see a highly logical notion of truth, where truth is conceived as embedded in the logic of assertions. A Brief examination of Alfred Tarski's semantic conception of truth also has been attempted

The criticisms raised against such a conception of truth by different thinkers are further examined. Quine's indeterminacy thesis is discussed to show some problems in the representational conception of the relationship of truth to meaning and language. Here also with a larger role assigned to language, the concept of truth undergoes radical changes.

All these discussions ultimately contribute to assert the fundamental linguisticity of the process of understanding meaning. Language is, therefore, not a mere medium of representation, but something which we live in. With these assumptions, the fifth chapter entitled, Language, Meaning and Interpretative Understanding, discusses the fundamental nature of

linguisticity and the relationship of language with meaning. Here the discussion starts with the perspectival standpoint of language, which forcefully asserts the linguisticity and interpretative nature of understanding

The justification for the idea of language defining a perspective for us is provided by showing how language functions as ontologically significant. Not only our cognitive encounters are influenced by language but all our actions, or to be precise, our very being itself are determined by it. To make this clearer, the concept of linguistic horizon is introduced. We find ourselves situated in a tradition as a result of our being rooted in a language or linguistic tradition.

The notion of horizon shows how fundamental is linguisticity for our being and at the same time, how, owing to our situatedness in a linguistic horizon, we surpass our finiteness and narrowness as a subjective entity. The notion of linguistic horizon is further analysed in the light of Wittgenstein's language-game theory and the concept of rule-following. It has been argued that Wittgenstein, with his concept of participation in language-games, does not emphasise the hermeneutic problematic that is pivotal as far as the problem of understanding of meaning is concerned. Such drawbacks are overcome with the introduction of the concept of linguistic horizon. Linguistic horizons, it is argued, do not stand for any fixed structures of thought or action, rather they have the capacity to interact with each other. This is because, language is not a static institution, but a process which emerges and grows with the interaction of individuals in linguistic conversations.

It then appears that meanings to be understood are located, neither in the horizon of the text, nor in the horizon of the interpreter, but are to be discovered from a common language which evolves as a result of an interaction between the different linguistic horizons. Here it is argued that the interpreter has to perform two important roles. He has the participating role in the process of understanding, since he is not a passive observer, but is already placed within a background of meanings as a result of inheriting a linguistic horizon. Then he has to perform a second role, which consists in his maintaining an openness towards the text's claim to truth and its ability to apply the textual meanings to his concrete life situation.

This chapter, therefore, basically defends the idea that the fundamental phenomena of language consist in dialogue. The common language where meanings evolve emerges from a dialogic interaction between the different horizons that interact. This newly evolving language is the intersubjective sphere for interaction between the text and the interpreter. It brings the interpreter and the text together and forms as a common platform for them to interact.

Since meanings are located in such a common language which evolves out of dialogic interaction, it is argued that to understand meaning is to participate in a dialogue. Dialogue, in other words, constitutes the very life of language. The common language that forms out of such a dialogic encounter will eventually be a wider horizon than the respective horizons of the text and the interpreter.

Since this study limits itself to the examination of the two models, namely, representationalism and hermeneutics, many doctrines and philosophical standpoints which

conceive the problem of understanding meaning as perennial (e.g., Habermass's critical theory, Derrida's deconstruction) do not figure in this study. To explain the evolution of the hermeneutic model as a standpoint which makes dialogic interaction pivotal, this study takes insights largely from the theories of Hans-Georg Gadamer. The study could also be viewed as an attempt which tries to see the parallels between the two traditions of philosophy; the analytical philosophy of language and the philosophy of *Geisteswissenschaften*.

Chapter One

UNDERSTANDING MEANING:
REPRESENTATIONALISM Vs.
ANTI-REPRESENTATIONALISM

1. INTRODUCTION

The philosophical problem of understanding meaning had been traditionally viewed as an epistemological issue. It was thus associated with the problems of truth and knowledge in important ways and often called for a comprehensive doctrine that connected those concepts together in a coherent way. In the framework of the philosophy of language also, many of these traditional worries were retained. But here the primary question is; how meanings are presented, transmitted and understood through the various structural patterns acquired by the linguistic signs. Traditional theories of meaning propose solutions to this problem and a shift of emphasis from a theory of knowledge to a theory of language and linguistic meaning can be viewed as an attempt to tackle this issue more accurately by analysing the underlying conceptual issues in new lights.

The notion of understanding meaning is thus closely linked up with the concept of human knowledge, though the phenomenon of understanding meaning is not identical with knowledge acquisition. Some thinkers, especially those who model their semantic theories after the process of knowledge acquisition in the natural sciences highlighted the intimate affinity between the two and proclaimed a model of understanding meaning, which by its very nature claimed universal validity. But we encounter the issue of understanding meaning in a vast variety of cases other than in natural sciences. In our encounter with a literary text or a historical document, for instance, we do not raise the question whether the linguistic system we encounter provides us an objective understanding of any factual situation which is spacio-temporal. We

rather look for other forms of agreement, which are sometimes emotional or imaginative in nature, rather than factual

Here a pivotal aspect of language calls for immediate attention, the concept of communication. It is in the accomplishment of the latter that the very purposefulness of linguistic activity is contained. Whether it is the factual language of science, or the imaginative language games of poetry or literature, understanding meaning consists in the communicative interaction with textual meanings. The sharability and communicability of linguistic meanings are therefore, the most pivotal prerequisites as far as linguistic understanding is concerned. And all traditional theories of meaning conceived these prerequisites as the most fundamental ideals. If meanings are not shareable, then the very activity of linguistic communication will become impossible and linguistic activity will become a futile exercise.

But we receive strong support from all quarters to the fact that linguistic activity is not a futile exercise, and communication of meaning actually takes place in the multitude of life contexts where we employ language. We employ language in a variety of ways and contexts in our lives and it is also a fact that in many such occasions we encounter the problem of communication; lack of clarity, failure to grasp meaning etc. Our language seems to betray us in such occasions and lead us to perplexities and paradoxes.

This has led philosophers to investigate the principal operations of language, or more precisely, the essential nature of language, as they thought, such a knowledge would help them avoid certain conceptual errors we commit as a result of getting betrayed by language. This

investigation was further encouraged by the fact that there is at least one realm of human activity and language use which is free from such shortcomings of language. It is the language game of science.

Making shareability and objective communicability as ideal, Immanuel Kant conducted an examination into the nature of human knowledge which exerted tremendous influence upon all future investigations on conceptual enterprises. Knowledge acquisition in the purview of natural sciences, as seen by Kant, happened with a mental process of synthesising the scattered data of sensations in order to comprehend it as a unity. The structure of this unity was determined by the *a priori* structures of understanding, which were uniformly present in all due to their transcendental nature. The two processes of sensation and synthesising were to be necessarily present to make scientific knowledge possible.

But this Kantian thesis did not limit itself to the evaluation of knowledge that was relevant in the natural sciences alone, but made a claim of universality. It asserted that rational and objective knowledge, be it in the purview of natural sciences or elsewhere, had to conform to certain parameters which were revealed in the analysis of the *a priori* structure of understanding. Kant's doctrine therefore, suggested a unified version of understanding that had inter-cultural and interdisciplinary validity. He enquired into the fundamental conditions for the occurrence of knowledge and assigned the experience of knowing in the natural sciences a normative role to the rest of human cognitive endeavours. This model demanded apodictic certainty and absolute objectivity, and Kant provided them with the concept of transcendental subjectivity.

This apparently reductionist position hardly exhibits any sympathy towards other forms of enquiry. As Roy J Howard observes, Kant could satisfy the demands of a long lasting ideal, only by making the knowledge occurring in the non-scientific realms, theoretically untenable and only emotionally, psychologically - in short, irrationally - tolerable.¹ Consequently, reason is equated with scientific rationality

Subscribing to a similar or same ideal led some philosophers of language to search for absolute sharability and objective communicability in our language use. Like Kant who propagated a unitary version of knowledge which was supported by transcendental presuppositions, these thinkers searched for a unitary version of language use where meanings got fixed to objective entities in advance, so that they would be available for objective cognition, irrespective of people, time and place. The model of understanding they longed to arrive at implied two things:

- 1) Meanings of linguistic expressions were fixed and were determined by extra-linguistic entities. Since the ideals of objective understanding and knowledge were found in the natural sciences, the model of language they idealised posited the latter as a representation of the factual reality. This was because, science stood for the body of objective knowledge about the factual reality and nothing beyond the factual world could find room in the ontology of natural sciences.
- 2) It implied the rejection of the facticity or historicity of the individuals who employed these linguistic signs in their various communicative interactions.

2. MEANING AND LANGUAGE

This view presupposes Kant's unitary version of knowledge, i.e. outside the purview of natural sciences, no claim of rational knowledge can be legitimately raised, since there language was not a system of representations. As rational knowledge is limited to the framework of natural science, meanings which are sharable and communicable, are confined to the structure of representational language. No question of meaning and consequently no question of linguistic understanding can be raised outside the language game where the rules are strictly representational.

Representationalists, in general, inherit such a conception of linguistic understanding and knowledge. They heavily relied upon the classical empiricist writings and attempted to derive their fundamental tenets from the teachings of John Locke and other traditional empiricist philosophers. Modern representationalists are therefore, largely empiricists. But the focus on language and logical structure of language prompted them to overcome the psychologicist conclusions arrived at by the traditional thinkers. Therefore, these basic doctrines were supplemented with the logico-linguistic discoveries made by Wittgenstein in his *Tractatus*. They thus developed a theory of meaning, which propagated the fundamental status of natural observation language for all semantic enquiries.

The implicit reductionism of this model attracted wide criticism from many sectors and it has evolved as a common anti-thesis for an entire range of anti-foundational doctrines. Even some philosophers of the analytical tradition like W.V. Quine, have registered their protest

against this hard-core reductionism. Quine³ and more explicitly Thomas Khun⁴ have shown how basic observation depends upon theory which essentially formed the background of any enquiry. They thus brought into light the conventional character of the validity criterion widely employed by the natural scientists.

This attack on the positivist reductionism of language is essentially an attack on the positivist theories of meaning and in a sense on the representational doctrine of understanding meaning. The semantic reductionism of the representationalists eternally fixes language to the factual reality in determinate ways which can be decided *a prioristically*. This is because, logic, that rules over language as well as reality, is transcendental. This conception of the status of logic is in conformity with the Kantian Unitary theory of knowledge which asserts that apparently different logics of enquiry must in reality have the same essential pattern.

But the language-world isomorphic contact that lies behind the logico-semantic doctrines of representationalism is challenged with the contention that observation depends upon theory. This suggests the impossibility of constructing a theory of meaning on the basis of a determinate language-world relationship. Moreover, the appeal to extra-linguistic entities also puts the representationalists in trouble. They pointed towards the extra-linguistic world in order to explain meaning, owing mainly to their reducing all uses of language to the framework of language-world relationship. Meaning, in that framework is the information content of linguistic propositions. But this position ultimately led them to make meaning independent of language. Some philosophers like Frege, explicitly propagated semantic autonomy by creating a separate logical or Platonic universe to locate the semantic content of language. Later the neo-empiricists

identified in the objects of the factual world the final reference points of language, The ideal of sharability and communicability were achieved by separating the semantic content of language from language itself and fixing them in some extra-linguistic entities. This was the reason for their skepticism about ordinary language, which was obviously rich with arbitrariness, especially regarding the relationship between word and object.

What is aimed to be achieved with by the fixation of linguistic expressions on extra-linguistic meanings is a logical purification of language, which will ensure absolute sharability and objective communicability of semantic contents. But we hardly find such a logically pure language in our day-to-day lives. The language we use does not exhibit the formal unity propagated by the hardcore representationalists. There, what we see is, as Wittgenstein says, only a family of structures more or less related to one another. A word in language, when approached semantically, should not be seen as an eternal representative of an object in the world. What has to be understood is, rather, its use in the language game which is its original home. Wittgenstein puts it

The more narrowly we examine actual language, the sharper becomes the conflict between it and our requirement. (For the crystalline purity of logic was, of course, not a *result of investigation*: it was a requirement). The conflict becomes intolerable; the requirement is now in danger of becoming empty. - We have got on to slippery ice where there is no friction and so in a certain sense the conditions are ideal, but also, just because of that, we are unable to walk. We want to walk: so we need *friction*. Back to the rough ground!⁶

In other words, we have to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use⁷. This is to bring meaning back to language and thereby to relate it back to the life contexts

where it finds uses. Since we engage ourselves in a multitude of language games in our life, understanding meaning poses a separate problem in each occasion and cannot be settled with an ideal approach which presupposes a general theory and calls for a sophisticated method.

3. DIFFERENT LOGICS

At this point, the representational conception of language and the underlying assumption of a unitary vision of knowledge that implied that the different logics of enquiry had the same essential pattern were challenged. Before we focus on the problem of understanding meaning, we shall have a brief look upon this issue. We now have two opposing standpoints. The representationalists who assert the universal validity of a particular form of language and its opposing view which insists on the difference between language-games. We shall see how the representationalists tackled the issue of different logics. If the representational language of natural science was the essential pattern of rational linguistic activity, how could we justify the possibility of social and human sciences? Since language-games like, poetry, literature, art, religion etc., do not find room in the language-game of natural science where the rules are representational, what should be our approach towards them?

The representationalists discussed this issue in detail with the strong uncompromising presupposition that other logics of enquiry, to have any validity, must confine to the logic of representations. They thus explicitly profess the unity of sciences and agree with Earnst Mach who considered the borders of different sciences as artificial, since, according to him, all of them were ultimately based upon a set of observation statements.⁸ Implicit in Mach's theory is the

concept of unique relationship between knowledge and sensations, as the former can be reduced to the latter. This is justified by the fact that science depends on observation reports which are the immediate derivatives of sensations

The idea of making a set of basic statements as *terra firma* for theories of language and understanding acquired a different dimension with Wittgenstein's introduction of elementary propositions. These propositions qualify as the most suitable candidates for the basic statements of language which establish representationalism. This Wittgensteinian notion explains how a set of sentences in language is intimately connected with the factual reality without falling back on epistemological presuppositions. Elementary propositions are formed out of names that are in immediate combination, where those names are understood as standing for objects. Any proposition in language can be analysed into these elementary forms and due to their intimate contact with the factual world, they constitute the foundation for all "sensible talk".

With such a unitary vision of language the representationalists propagated a unitary and reductionist vision of knowledge and understanding meaning. This was possible, they thought, because the language - world relationship was isomorphic. Since such a language was the perfect medium for intersubjective communication, it has to be adopted by all sciences, including the social and the human sciences. With this assumption they thought that they could satisfy the primary objective of their manifesto; to have a scientific conception of the world by developing epistemology as a logic of science.¹⁰

The methodological reflections that followed such primary assumptions further clarified the dependence of the model of language the representationalists developed upon the practice of science with all its theoretical and practical implications. The very idea of the "unity of sciences" presupposes a highly methodologically defined reductionism, which again is semantically rooted in the practical possibility of having a "thing language". The ideal of methodological monism which was necessary to give an account of the possibility of scientific knowledge, could be satisfactorily achieved only by emphasizing the unidimensional character of language and the consequent model of linguistic understanding. This, in fact, categorically rejects the possibility of different logics applicable for different disciplines, and idealises the logic of representation and the methodology of physics.

Once physics was granted to provide the methodological ideal for all rational endeavours, the immediate task would be; how to justify the admission of social and human sciences into the chambers of rational knowledge, as they seem to be appealing to totally different logics and consequently to different methods. J.S. Mill had earlier attempted something similar and finally concluded by asserting the universal validity of inductive method, which applies to the domain of human sciences as well. With its emphasis on consistently observed regularities, inductive method achieves an apparently demystified appearance. This, Mill found, makes the latter an ideal method for scientific enterprise. The logical positivists, later, with greater logical rigour, advocated a similar reductionism by focussing on the logical possibility of reducing the language of social sciences to the object-language model of physics and other natural sciences. And since explanation of the observed phenomena on the basis of universal principles constitutes the core function of natural scientific practice, human and social sciences are also expected to follow the

same procedure and are come to be viewed as devoted to the pursuit of explanations, Universal generalisation becomes an ideal in such disciplines also and consequently, the neo-empiricists concluded that, even for the sciences dealing with man and his culture, the only legitimate goal is providing explanations in terms of the laws of nature.

But as it is evident, the human sciences to a large extent directly deal with intentional sentences, and so language of the human sciences cannot be understood extensionally. Hence, the Tractarian semantics with its thesis of extensionality and implicit criterion of meaningfulness fails to deal with such sentences adequately. The model of explanation based on scientific norms also fails to apply to the domain of human actions.

Wittgenstein encounters this problem when he deals with the belief sentences. As Karl Otto Apel points out, Wittgenstein's difficulty with belief sentences introduced for the first time the problem which arises if we attempt to incorporate the *Geisteswissenschaften* into an objectivist unified science in its modern linguistic form.¹¹ The problem was, how to secure the idea of a unified structure of all meaningful utterances, while social sciences inevitably call for an understanding of human intended meanings. The logical framework of language, according to Wittgenstein, strictly prevents the entry of such expressions, since for him, there is perfect structural isomorphism between language and reality. Wittgenstein therefore, distinguishes the syntactical superstructure of linguistic units from the logical grammar by means of logically analysing the linguistic signs. He contends that the propositions of the form, 'A believes that p', 'A thinks p', 'A says p' - where a judgement is contained in another judgement, but not as a condition for the truth of the complex proposition - are of the same form 'P says P', where what

is involved is not a correlation of a fact with an object, but correlation of facts by means of the correlation of their objects.¹² Here the problem of intentional consciousness is considered as a psychological issue and, is therefore, replaced by the semantic problem of the truth functional language. The psychological analysis is replaced by language analysis based on the idea of truth function. This reductionism is further supplemented by a strong anti-psychologism and a subsequent transcendentalism¹³

Wittgenstein's logico-linguistic theory, accompanied by this transcendentalism, attempted to prove the availability of a universal conceptual scheme on the basis of the notion of the "common form of proposition". This common form of proposition subscribes to a logic - the transcendental logic - which in turn guarantees the possibility of a universal conceptual scheme.

But the neo-empiricists were not prepared to admit the entry of transcendentalism. Hence they proceeded with the notion of universal conceptual scheme - which was inter-subjectively valid and which successfully dealt with the logical interconnections among objective facts - without subscribing to transcendentalism. The human sciences, according to them, were not genuine sciences so long as they paradigmatically affirm the scope and importance of human intention. Some of them, therefore, along with Russell, proceeded with another reductionism where the so-called intentional sentences were reduced into sentences about behaviour. A behaviouristic interpretation of the human subject was also presupposed here. The human subject's assertion of a propositional meaning was interpreted as a relation between two simple objects. The belief sentences were thus taken to be standing for the elementary depiction of facts.

Wittgenstein, on the other hand, reduced those intentional sentences into semantical sentences, i.e., sentences about sentences. This analysis necessarily reveals a paradox, as Wittgenstein's logical theory conclusively establishes the impossibility of such semantical sentences. Since what they try to express shows itself in the use of language, but cannot be said. As Apel puts it.

On the one hand, this behaviourist reduction is the only possibility left by the semantical theory of the *Tractatus* to make a science of the *Geisteswissenschaften*, on the other hand, this reduction is not in accordance with Wittgenstein's reduction of intentional sentences to semantical sentences.¹⁴

Thus, followed to its logical extremes, the logico-linguistic analysis provided in the *Tractatus* does not permit to locate the intentional sentences inside the milieu of meaningful discourse. Hence, Wittgenstein does away with the possibility of social sciences. But the neo-empiricists attempt to incorporate the latter by externally imposing on them the parameters of the physical sciences with a law-explanation model. Thus Carl Hempel explicitly employs the methodological apparatus of the physical sciences to deal with the historical phenomena without diluting the ideal of the experimental sciences. By employing the logic of casual explanation to the domain of social disciplines, he seeks to discover the fundamental laws and principles for the behaviour of individuals and group. To achieve scientific explanation in history and social sciences, Hempel argues, we need suitable general hypothesis or theories which are bodies of systematically related hypotheses. Hempel's endeavour is both conceptually and historically pivotal, as it can be seen as the first attempt of logical positivism to make explicit contact with the hermeneutic question earlier raised by Dilthey.¹⁵

Hempel, by employing the logic of causal explanation to the domain of social disciplines, seeks to discover the fundamental laws and principles for the behaviour of individuals and societies. This proposal of causal explanation, in accordance with the logical deduction from general hypothetical laws and from sentences describing antecedent conditions for the occurrence of the individual fact to be explained, is substituted for the teleological explanations, which heavily depend upon and emphatically call for intentions and purposes. Hempel proceeds with an elucidation of causal explanations that materialise in historical sciences. There the actions are objectified into events, so that they could conveniently be reshaped to be utilised as objective materials for causal statistical explanations. Scientific knowledge demands the possibility of explaining these objective events by means of general laws. Further, the motives which are understood as the desires to reach a certain goal, and which exist chronologically prior to the action, are classified as the antecedent conditions which make such explanations possible. By subsuming these antecedent conditions under a general law, practically all the necessary preconditions are prepared for a methodologically consistent causal explanation of the event in question. This is precisely what Hempel proposed when he asserted the relevance of causal analysis in the realm of purposive behaviour. Hempel was however, aware of the inherent difficulties of such a behaviouristic reductionism. With all such methodological purifications, the motivational explanations in social sciences fall short of the ideals of scientific knowledge, because, the maximum that could be expected from this explanation was a high degree of probability. He finds fault, of course, not with the methodology but with the practical unavailability of the necessary covering laws in the social sciences.¹⁶

We see in Carnap a more radical form of this behaviourism, which is brilliantly supplemented with the formulation of constructive semantics. The latter provided the foundation for reformulating experience in a behaviourist thing-language. Underlying such reformulations are the assumption that behaviour is itself a part of language¹⁷

What we derive from all these reasserts the unidimensional view of rational knowledge and the model of understanding, which are the necessary ingredients of the representational model. The logical positivists as a whole conceive the problem of understanding as a matter of explaining rationally, by means of the logical deduction of observation statements from general laws. And to explain rationally some phenomena is to see that a set of circumstances grow to become the instantiation of a known law-like relationship. On the basis of this, one can to a certain extent predict the occurrence of the event in question.

This form of causal explanation is conceived here as the 'only' model that can be rationally adopted for understanding meaning. Any attempt to approach reality in the social sciences with an aim to empathetically understand the intentions is undermined as irrational. Hempel openly criticizes the latter notion of understanding and argues that it is neither necessary nor sufficient. Above all, it does not satisfy the condition of empirical testability which, according to him, makes expressions meaningful.

But in social sciences we encounter a different dimension of reality, which does not fit the ideals of the ontology of natural sciences. As Apel points out, in the human sciences which try to understand human actions from their motives, we encounter an altogether different kind of

knowledge and not a residue of metaphysics. All other departments of human enquiry like social and human sciences, art, religion etc., have different modes of coping up with reality. In the language of Wittgenstein, the different language games cannot be reduced to one single system, rather they are associated with different systems or forms of life, which operate with different paradigms of reasonability, knowledge and truth.¹⁸

Again with the radical objectification of actions into events that can be subjected to empirical verification, the logical positivists ignore the organic nature of human actions and apparently neglect their communicative possibilities. In other words, with their emphasis on detached observation they neglect the scope and possibilities of communicative understanding based on intersubjective linguistic exchanges. With the methodological purification of subjective and objective categories they fail to notice the progressive merging of the two in a multidimensional plane provided by language. The basic error in the neo-empiricist assessment of the logical nature of human sciences consists in their assertion of an *a priori* semantics as foundational for all rational understanding. This conception has set eternal standard of analysis, which again calls for a reduction of all explanation and understanding to causal patterns. Consequently, they prefer to view the phenomenon of 'intentionality' and the 'purposive nature of human actions' and their- representative in linguistic utterances as obstacles that prevent rational explanation of them.

This is to ignore the *noetic* aspect of human behaviour in *toto*, which is responsible for all that humankind has achieved in terms of culture and civilization. They thus fail to grasp the very organic process which supplied man his cultural history and conceptual categories. Neo-

empiricism views this noetic phenomenon in terms of psychological categories, and aspires to reduce them to behaviouristic parameters. This consequently helped them make these *noetic* phenomena subjected to causal explanations. Hans George Gadamer analysed such a reductionism in detail and found it basically mistaken. He criticises representational outlook which approaches these disciplines from the methodological perspective of natural sciences. This eventually makes them fail to notice the differences that are of fundamental nature. What is important is, Gadamer contends, not simply defining a specific method, but rather recognising an entirely different notion of knowledge and truth.¹⁹ Against J.S. Mill, who aims to show that inductive method is valid for the domain of moral sciences also, Gadamer argues that the adoption of this Humean model does not allow us to circumscribe the experience of the socio-historical world. Gadamer then categorically affirms that the true goal of historical knowledge, that is characteristic of all human sciences, is to understand a historical phenomenon in its singularity and uniqueness. He says:

Historical consciousness is interested in knowing, not how men, people, or states develop *in general*, but, quite on the contrary, how *this* man, *this* people, or *this* state became what it is, how each of these *particulars* could come to pass and end up specifically *there*²⁰

This shows how the casual-explanation model with its semantic foundations and object-language doctrine falls short in dealing with the historical and social phenomena legitimately. Even the logical positivists were aware of the shortcomings of their mono-methodologism. Carl Hempel thus called most historical writings explanation sketches rather than explanations proper.²¹ Yet, the failure, they contended, consisted not in the reductionism, but in the practical difficulty in obtaining data in sufficient quantity on which the similarities were to be established.

This prompted them to postulate a hierarchy of disciplines in their programme of the unity of sciences. This has been done on the basis of a criterion which adjudicated the degree of success with which each discipline conformed to the methodological parameters of causal explanation model

With an emphasis on the above mentioned '*noetic*' aspect and with a presupposition of what Gadamer has suggested as the entirely different notion of knowledge and truth, we shall proceed to examine an altogether different model of understanding. The fact that the character and goal of the human sciences are different from natural sciences does not by any means make the former inexact. It only suggests the necessity of an alternative outlook. This is because, the *noetic* aspect itself is a product of human activity, which is understood as the objectification of the 'Geist'

Gadamer further proclaims that the human sciences with their conception of a peculiar mode of knowledge that distinguishes them from the natural sciences are the true heirs of the humanistic tradition. He finds in J.B. Vico, the humanistic tradition's major proponent of the wisdom of the ancients, an insight which is relevant for the hermeneutic enquiry he intends to pursue. With his appeal to *sensus communis* (common sense) Vico intends to reveal the limitations of modern science. This *sensus communis*, for him, is not the general faculty in all men, says Gadamer, but rather is the sense that founds community. Gadamer puts it.

According to Vico, what gives the human will its direction is not the abstract generality of reason, but the concrete generality that represents the community of a group, a people,

a nation or the whole of human race. Hence the development of this sense of the community is of prime importance for living

This *sensus communis*, understood as the general sense of the true and the right, is not a knowledge based on argumentation. Rather, it entails the rejection of such a conception of knowledge. It further amounts to the recognition of a framework in which questions pertaining to the cognitive interrelations between man and his world are legitimately addressed.

These changes in the traditional conception of rational knowledge has vital implications in a theory of understanding meaning. To recognise the possibility of different logics of enquiry is, therefore, to recognise a different notion of knowledge and truth. Such a recognition necessitates changes in our conception of the language-reality relationship and in the notion of meaning and its understanding. It also calls for a change in our very conception of reality, and the role of language, not only in our cognitive enterprises, but also in our very life.

4. LANGUAGE, REALITY AND UNDERSTANDING

The representational framework, in its radical form construes a picture of reality, which is perfectly in conformity with the ontology of natural sciences. We have seen how the representationalists developed a picture of language which would fit this ontology with the help of the notion of elementary propositions.

Instead of a language which reflects the general rational faculty of man, the emphasis was later shifted to concrete human communities, where language is employed for a number of

different purposes. Each of these purposes represent a unique use of language determined by practice and custom. These customs are not something eternally fixed, so that they could be classified under a general law. Yet they will have their own ways of arranging concepts and categories which guide and control our actions and deeds.

This picture has very important consequences as far as a theory of meaning is concerned. It makes meaning essentially related to a system of practices and habits, rather than making it the abstract essence of linguistic signs. Moreover, the whole question of the validity of knowledge and truth, and that of meaning seemed to have application only within the framework of the system, and therefore, is limited to the collective rationale of a particular community which actually practices the different language games.

This is to realise, along with Richard Rorty that, there is nothing called the "intrinsic nature of language" and consequently the "intrinsic nature of reality" and of human self.²³ Once we admit the possibility of alternative language games - and for Rorty this admission follows our shift of emphasis from single sentences to vocabularies and from our ceasing to think that the world speaks rather than us - we should not make appeals to any criteria that will decide once for all the reasonability and correctness of any one form of language game over others. Each language game will address a unique dimension of reality and will conceive a unique language-reality relationship.

But this relationship nevertheless suggests no fixed structure in terms of an essence, rather it is absolutely a matter of customs and convention. This factor reiterates the fact that

different language games have different logics. They have their own unique categories of conceptualisation and rules for understanding.

The pivotal role played by customs and conventions in deciding the language - reality relationship has important consequences. Since our customs and conventions were contingent - as they could not be explained on the basis of law-explanation paradigm - one could argue with Rorty that there was also an element of contingency in the language we use. Rorty argues for developing a willingness to face up to this contingency and prefers to see how a recognition of the contingency of conscience and how both recognitions lead to a picture of intellectual and moral progress as a history of increasingly useful metaphors rather than of increasing understanding of how things really are.²⁴

But what is implicit in these recognitions is the ultimate significance of language to design and determine everything we can know and experience and a concept of meaning which never calls for any relationship between language and an extra-linguistic realm of objective entities. Rorty writes:

For it is essential to my view that we have no pre-linguistic consciousness to which language needs to be adequate, no deep sense of how things are which it is the duty of philosophers to spell out in language.²⁵

An examination of this point would explain how reality and the human self itself are evolving out of the various ways language is being employed in the multitude of social situations and contexts. Reality in this sense constitutes the system of entities with which we are

interrelated in significant ways in the various forms of life we are engaged in. The rules of the language games reflect the very significance of these interactions and our own self is nothing but a product that has evolved out of such interactions. We make ourselves through the various ways we participate in the various language games, as Wittgenstein says, Language is part of our natural history²⁶

In other words, our participation in a language game is itself a self making process, which simultaneously happens with the evolution of reality in the corresponding form of life and the revealing and understanding of meaning within the language game. The hermeneutic tradition works on this aspect and examines how understanding meaning constitutes a central position as far as the human self-making process is concerned.

Heidegger thus says that, the human being is always a being-in-the-world, who relates himself with the world in essential ways²⁷. In one sense, he himself has created the world, since the latter is not a pre-given collection of objects but a set of instruments which form part of his projects that design his existence. Again his being itself is nothing but something that has revealed out of such projects by means of which he understands the world and himself. All his projects and their realisation necessarily happen in the horizon of time and language. Hence the greater significance of language is realised in the hermeneutic tradition as the result of recognising the factor of historicity.

Along with the recognition of our possibility of encountering with different paradigmatic horizons, hermeneutics overcomes the monopoly of the ontology of science with the introduction

of the notion of historicity. It is this factor which makes hermeneutics the immediate antithesis of the representational tradition, which in many ways calls for an evaluation on the basis of correspondence. Representational semantics depends to a greater extent on the ahistorical and unchanging rule-structure of the ontology of natural science. In order to explain the universality of such a rule-structure, Wittgenstein introduces his transcendental logic and makes it the fundamental scaffolding of both reality and language. It is on the background of this pre-supposition, Wittgenstein builds the idea of a universal "picture language" and the idea of the common form of proposition which forms the basis of all linguistic interactions of humanity in general.

But with the recognition of historicity, the very question of legitimacy of our language uses gets associated with a limited community, instead of satisfying the demands of humanity in general. The innumerable paradigms of our various language games cannot be reduced to the causal paradigm of representational language and semantics. The various paradigms with which we operate and which design our actions and aspirations are necessarily cultural products given to us historically. They are, in other words, not given to us externally, rather we find ourselves in them, and also recreate it with our various encounters with the reality that is opened to us through them.

5. UNDERSTANDING AND INTERPRETATION

With this picture of reality, it would become impossible to explain our relationship with it in terms of correspondence. Language here ceases to be a mere medium of representation, and

acquires a more prominent role, as reality itself appears as a matter of historical-cultural open up in it. In all our encounters with language, this opening up of reality is constituted in cultural and historical contexts. In other words, reality is given to us in and through language our concrete lived experiences. Our very existence is constituted out of such lived experiences language. And since language itself is an interactive encounter that materialises in defin cultural and historical situations, the legitimacy of linguistic understanding cannot be determined by imposing a system of rules externally. This is because any such external evaluation necessitates deductions, and the continuity of history which constitutes the very core of opening process, resists such reductionism.

If the nature of reality is different, the way it is related to us also is different. The model based on regularity observations and abstract generalisations is of no use here. Our language games derive their momentum from the associated forms of life and its conventions. As Dilthey says, all starting point of our thought and action is the 'life' to which both the object and subject of enquiry belongs, and which therefore constitutes the essential and necessary framework of experience.²⁸ The experience of this life involves the whole wealth and variety of the latter. The parameters of the positivist model which limits itself to sensations and impressions fail to capture this wealth and variety. Thus, instead of a detached objective account, the experience of life refers to a 'subjective' response to the world, which again is no more a value-free endeavor but an active emotional involvement.

Edmund Husserl's notion of 'primary experiences' which are immediately given to consciousness as "things in themselves" in the "subjective modes of givenness", here presents

alternative concept for the representational outlook. What are prominent here are the experiences, which are directly given to the consciousness with an intuitive immediacy. As Husserl puts it

To put it more precisely: what is actually experienced is the world as simply existing, prior to all philosophy and theory - existing things, stones, animals, men. In natural, direct life, this is experienced as simply, perceptually "there" (as simply existing, critically certain presence) or, just as simply, in terms of memory as "having been there", etc²⁹

Dilthey made such experiences the distinctive mark of human sciences over and against the experiences directed towards the objective world

With these assumptions, Dilthey opposed the monomethodologism of the representationalists and tried to prove the legitimacy of other language games and other models of understanding meaning. He was not prepared to admit that the social and human sciences were inexact and therefore inferior to the physical sciences, as the positivists maintained.

Husserl's deliberations on the topic were more radical. He claimed that natural sciences themselves had their basis on the life-world, which was primary and where all that was important was the way things were formed as per the way they were directly given to the consciousness in the subjective modes of givenness.

Representationalism idolised scientific rationality such that, as seen by Husserl, it had led science itself to a crisis, since the more science autonomised itself with its peculiar methodology,

the more it got alienated from the life-world which was the ultimate foundation of meaning. In other words. Husserl asserts that, the positivistic reduction of the idea of science to mere factual science resulted in a crisis, where science loses its meaning for life.³⁰ It was the immediate flow of unreflective life that constituted the ground of all human endeavours. This unproblematic, pre-given world was the source of all self-evidence and verification. It was the world as we actually lived it, which was always already there, existing in advance for us, and was the ground of all praxis. From it our theoretical and logical reasoning drew their validity. The objective world of science was only an interpretation of this world of immediate experience. According to Husserl, this life-world transcends or precedes all objectivistic and subjectivistic categories. As David Carr observes,³¹ while science operates with abstractions, the life-world is the concreteness from which these abstractions are derived; science constructs, and the life-world provides the materials for this construction. It is the realm of original self-evidence to which the scientist returns in order to verify his theories. Science interprets and explains what is given while the life-world is the locus of all givenness.

The concept of life-world provided hermeneutics a very strong justification to accommodate historicity. In the very idea of "world that is given to us in the subjective modes of givenness" the notion of historicity is taken care of, since, the mention is no more about the objective world of natural science, but about the cultural reality that is given to us historically through the various conventions and customs of our language uses.

Gadamer derives from these Husserlian reflections the fundamental insight, which recognises the historically and culturally situated character of all human cognitive efforts. Even

the notion of objectivity, patented by modern science is itself historical, as it is merely a standard suited to certain kinds of knowledge with certain purposes and goals. What is more important is the realisation that all human endeavours are grounded on pre-scientific experiences. This invites us to redefine many of our traditional notions like, truth, meaning, knowledge etc. As G B Madison puts it:

If all scientific theorising is but a matter of idealising and interpreting a pre-scientific experience which does not contain within itself, and thereby neither dictates nor conclusively legitimates, any theories about it, what becomes of the philosophical scientific attempt to express the "objective" truth of things.³²

The focus on life-worlds therefore, may suggest that, there are no fixed truths for all. Instead of the world of representing subjects and represented objects, the world is something about which I am conscious of and which spreads out in space endlessly becoming and having endlessly become. I find it with intuitive immediacy, a mode of presentation which determines mine being conscious of it. This world is there, for me, "on hand" with all its wide range of objects. It is therefore, not merely a world of factual objects, but a world of objects with values.

All these suggest that we cannot approach the world in a detached way. If reality appears as a set of objects with values, then for us, it already suggests some meaning, and is no more a set of objects as the epistemologists conceived it. Even prior to our reflection about them, the objects in the world are related to us in definite ways. Heidegger in this context talks about the foresights of understanding, and says that such foresights necessarily guide all our cognitive endeavours. Before a subject-object relationship could be established, there exist a context of tradition which connects us with the world of objects in definite ways. Such a tradition -

something which we necessarily inherit - will dictate the routes which determine any comprehension of the world by us.³³

With this recognition of pre-understood meanings, the concepts of experience, knowledge, understanding etc, have changed radically, and it were these changed concepts that became relevant, when we consider human sciences, Gadamer makes this point more clear, as he says that, every encounter with the phenomena in human sciences is an individual case and is a unique experience which contributes in a unique way to the whole of a person's life. Or more precisely, every object of understanding differs from scientific object in its relationship to self-understanding³⁴. This is to reassert the concreteness and historicity of each life-world, and the boundedness of all activities to those life worlds.

Heidegger explicates this situation by interpreting being in terms of temporality. He identifies time as the ultimate horizon for the most primordial ways of interpreting man's being-in-the-world (*Dasein*). He goes on interpreting all structures of *Dasein* as modes of temporality. The structure of temporality has been understood by him as the ontologically determining factor of subjectivity. The hermeneutic of *Dasein* is primarily an enquiry into the modes of the being of *Dasein* who always finds himself in concrete life situations which determine him in certain ways and simultaneously provide him opportunities to realise his projects and possibilities. It is such an enquiry that reveals some hitherto unknown dimensions of the problem of understanding meaning. He conceives of understanding as a fundamental existentiality - mode of being - of *Dasein*. Understanding is, therefore, no more a matter of 'empathetic reliving' achieved with the aid of any methodology.

As a necessity, we find ourselves in a state of "thrownness" in the world, says Heidegger, as the being of *Dasein* is always a being-in-the-world. And as noted earlier, this state of thrownness necessarily suggests for us a background of meaning in terms of foresights. It is from such inherited background, all our encounters with reality and language stem. The temporal dimension of existence is taken care of within this framework. Understanding is locked inside the dynamic movement of this framework where the past and the future come to a fusion. On the basis of the foresights and the anticipation of future the *Dasein* is said to be designing his projects which are nothing but projections of meaning. This emphasis on temporality forcefully asserts the historicity of the phenomenon of understanding, which is in a peculiar sense, a sort of self-understanding. As Gadamer says, in the end, all understandings are reducible to a common level of an "I know how to go about it", that is, a self-understanding in relation to something other.³⁶ It is to form a project from one's own possibilities. This project is earned out in a structural web of relationships where man necessarily relates himself "interpretatively" with his life situations. These interpretations are actualised in a temporal continuum where the past, present and future experiences are intimately interconnected and derive their individual meaningfulness from the structure of such a complex interconnection. This discovery radically reassesses and calls for a total revision of the notion of the representational model of understanding meaning. Gadamer makes these insights more apparent with his notion of "rehabilitation of prejudices": He writes:

What before appeared as prejudicial to the concept of science and method, as only a 'subjective' approach to historical knowledge, today is placed in the foreground of fundamental enquiry.³⁷

By making this idea central, Gadamer, proceeds to reveal the fundamental linguisticity of understanding. The essential historicity of existence as well as all our cognitive endeavours were also examined in the light of this aspect. Understanding, as Gadamer conceives it, is no more a subjective act, but is necessarily an aspect of effective history. The interpreter essentially remains subject to the hold of this effective history. This, in other words, is to say that he cannot simply escape the ways in which the objects are already been understood in the tradition which he inherits through his language. Effective history and the linguistic tradition are operative in all human understanding as all understandings are already in the horizon of particular questions, prejudices, interests and viewpoints which are deterministically prevailing in our tradition. This rootedness in tradition is a fundamental concept extended universally, and is effectively utilised in order to counter the long-standing ideals of rationality, without falling back on relativistic categories.

With these preliminary observations, we shall conclude our discussion of the problem of understanding in this chapter. But before we sum up, we shall have a brief analysis of the way language is related to the problem of understanding meaning.

6. LANGUAGE, MEANING AND UNDERSTANDING

A close examination of the above discussion will reveal that gradually language is acquiring a more important role in the whole problem of understanding meaning. Philosophy of language always placed language at the core of conceptual inquiry - representationalists, thus made meaning the information content of language and understanding meaning was taken to be

closely linked with a knowledge about the empirical situation described in the linguistic expressions

But language becomes more vital with the introduction of the notion of language game, as it then acquired an ontological significance, both to constitute and understand meaning. The hermeneutic tradition recognised this with the introduction of life-philosophy and this in turn reasserts the linguisticity and historicity of all understanding

In the representational tradition, there was a natural tendency to isolate meaning from various contexts of language use, and sometimes from language altogether. Frege, as we observed earlier, thus placed the semantic content of language in a totally independent realm - in the Platonic third world. But contrary to this, Gadamer places meaning at the very heart of our language use. The prejudices of our linguistic tradition, and therefore, of our language are conceived by him as constituting the very precondition for the understanding of meaning. According to him, they provided the very possibility to project oneself. This would also explain the creative role of interpretation. The rootedness in history and language makes the interpreter cognitively independent and eventually provides him the possibility to engage in a dialogical endeavour.

What acquires prominence here is neither the cognition of any extra-linguistic reality, nor the subjective content of any individual consciousness, but language itself in the form of dialogue. It is the dynamism of this dialogic process that reveals the meaning which itself originates from such a process.

In the following Chapters, we discuss the different ways meaning is related to language and trace the conceptual route through which a notion of understanding meaning was developed, which not only resists the legitimacy of positing any extra-linguistic world, but also recognises the fundamental ontological significance of language in its entirety, both for construing reality and our very selves, and also for understanding meaning.

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- 2) For example, A.J. Ayer conducts such an explicit study. He prefers to see John Locke, not just as a philosopher who enquired about the origin of ideas, but as a philosopher of analysis. Cf. Ayer's introduction to, 1968, *British Empirical Philosophers*, in Ayer A.J. and Winch, Raymond (Eds.); New York, Clarion Book, Simon and Schuster, p. 12.
- 3) Cf Quine, W.V.. 1981, *Theories and Things*, Cambridge The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, p 25
- 4) Cf Kuhn, Thomas : 1970, *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Chicago, Chicago University Press
- 5) Cf Wittgenstein, L : 1976, *Philosophical Investigations*, (hereafter *PI*), tr. G. E. M. Anscombe, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 108
- 6) *Ibid.* 107
- 7) *Ibid* 116
- 8) Cf. Mach, Earnst: 1914, *Analysis of Sensations* tr C M Williams, La Salle, Open Court Publishing Company, p.30.
- 9) Wittgenstein, L.: 1961, *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus*, (hereafter *TIP*) tr. D.F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 4.221.
- 10) A detailed analysis of this, and the problem of the unity of language are discussed by Rudolf Carnap in "Logical Foundations of the Unity of Science" in Hanfling, Oswald,

(Ed) : 1981, *Essential Readings in Logical Positivism*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, pp.112-129

- 11) Cf Apel, Karl Otto 1980, *Towards a Transformation of Philosophy*, tr. Glyn Adey and David Frisby, London, Routledge & Regan Paul, p 8.
- 12) Cf. *TIP*. 5.541 and 5,542.
- 13) Cf. Apel, Karl Otto : *Op Cit* pp.9-10.
- 14) Apel, Karl Otto. 1967, *Analytical Philosophy of Language and the Geisteswissenschaften* (hereafter *APG*), tr. Harald Holstelihe, Dordrecht, D. Reidel Publishing Company, p 7
- 15) Cf, Howard, Roy J *Op Cit* p.25.
- 16) See also Apel, Karl Otto : *APG*, pp.18-25.
- 17) Cf. Carnap, Rudolf. *Op Cit*, pp.123-127
- 18) Cf. Wittgenstein, L : *PI*. 23 & 24. Wittgenstein asserts that speaking of language is part of an activity or of a form of life
- 19) Cf. Gadamer, H. G.: 1979, "The problem of Historical Consciousness" (hereafter *PHC*), in Paul Rabinov and William M. Sullivan (Eds): *Interpretative Social Sicences*, Berkeley, University of California Press, p 113
- 20) *Ibid*,p.116.
- 21) Cf. Hempel, Carl G : 1959, "The Function of General Laws in History" in P. Gardiner (Ed): *Theories of History*, New York, The Free Press, p.351.
- 22) Gadamer, H. G.: 1975, *Truth and Method* (hereafter *TM*), New York, The Seabury Press, p.21.
- 23) Cf. Rorty, Richard : 1989, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, (hereafter *CIS*), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p.8.

- 24) Cf *ibid* p 16
- 25) *Ibid* p 16
- 26) Cf Wittgenstein, L *Pl.* p.25
- 27) Cf. Heidegger, Martin : 1962, *Being and Time* (hereafter 57), tr. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, New York, Marper & Row, p.67.
- 28) Cf Diltthey, Wilhelm 1989, *Introduction to the Human Sciences: Selected Works, Vol 1*, (hereafter *IHS*), Rudolf A. Makkreel and Fnthjof Rodi (Eds.); Princeton, Princeton University Press, pp.66-69.
- 29) Husserl, Edmund 1970 *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, (hereafter *CES*), tr. David Carr, Evanston, Northwestern University Press p.219.
- 30) Cf. *Ibid*, p.5.
- 31) Cf. Carr, David : 1974, *Phenomenology and the problem of History*, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, p 13.
- 32) Madison, G.B: 1990, *The Hermeneutics ofPostmodernity*,Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, pp 44-45
- 33) Cf. Gadamer, H. G.: *TM*, pp.261-63.
- 34) Cf. Gadamer, H. G.: *PHC*, p.106, Gadamer asserts that human sciences contribute to human self-understanding because they in turn are based in human self-understanding.
- 35) Cf. Heidegger, Martin : *Op. Cit.* p.38.
- 36) Cf. Gadamer, H. G.: *PHC*, p.132.
- 37) *Ibid*, p.132.

Chapter Two

REPRESENTATIONAL SEMANTICS AND LINGUISTIC UNDERSTANDING

1. MEANING AND REPRESENTATION

Representational conception of understanding language, to be developed as a theory, largely presupposes the availability of a factual world which is sensitive to the semantic demands of the former. It assumes a more or less realistic conception of reality with all the metaphysical presuppositions peculiar to such a conception, and to a certain extent propagates some version of semantic realism, so that the basic scientific conception of knowledge is safeguarded. The very first proposition of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* testifies to this assumption as it asserts the existence of the external physical world as an ultimate presupposition for any further legitimate contemplation regarding language and thought. Wittgenstein's methodology substitutes the question of knowledge with a question of linguistic understanding and takes language as a coherent functional entity, which, as a matter of logical necessity, enables us to know the world in a direct way.

This presupposes an ultimate affinity between language and reality. The whole issue of the nature of understanding is reduced to the problem of language analysis, which is made possible on the basis of and by means of a semantic analysis. Such an analysis is inevitable since the nature of the representational relation is not clear from the syntactic arrangement of linguistic signs. In other words, how language represents the world has to be clarified. World and language are independent of each other and are therefore, in need of a mediating entity to which both of them are necessarily related for their being interconnected in an intimate manner. This mediating entity by its very nature constitutes the representational content of language, without being represented in it, and also reveals a world which has a peculiar structure. This

representational content is what is termed as the semantic content or meaning in the representational framework

The idea of the representational character of language, from its outset, is not merely a theoretical assumption arrived at on the basis of semantic analysis. It is on the other hand, tantamount to the commonsensical view regarding the nature of language and knowledge. It also justifies the scientific conception of reality which is nothing but a confirmed extension of the commonsensical standpoint. The major attraction in relating language isomorphically to the world lies in the motive of overcoming "anthropomorphism", where knowledge is confused due to the unproportional mixing of our own intuition of meaning, relevance and importance with objective reality.¹ Natural science assumes the availability of an objective factual reality, and its method envisages to gain objective knowledge about such a reality. To achieve this goal, the factual world is approached in a detached way. The scientist is expected to keep away his interests and prejudices, so that he could arrive at accurate objective descriptions of the factual reality. Similarly, as per the method of language analysis, parallel to the analysis of the world into objects and facts, language can be analysed into words and sentences which stand for the former group. The words out of which sentences are constructed are thus shown to be attached to the things they represent. Words achieve meaning only by means of such an attachment with things. Linguistic understanding, then, consists in grasping the meanings of the words, which again, as a presupposition, assumes the word-object isomorphism.

This theory reduces the function of language into representation. Charles Taylor, while analysing theories of meaning, observes that a naturalistic conception of language emerges quite

easily from such a highly designative view of meaning. This is due to the bare identification of meaning with representation. Such a conception of language is much in harmony with the basic parameters of the modern conception of science. Taylor continues

Then we can conceive the idea of understanding a phenomenon like language as we would any other in extra-human nature, that is without invoking any underlying ideas or thoughts. For this extreme naturalism the basic phenomena of language are the sounds we emit, the marks we make, understanding then is seeing how they are evoked by what surrounds us, and in turn trigger off behaviour.²

Initially it is this possibility of explaining language without falling back on internal ideas and images that made representationalism attractive. In this framework, understanding language is the grasping of the meanings of linguistic signs, which again is a matter of knowing to what the words stand for in the world. The order in which the words are arranged informs us about the order of the objects expressed through language. Thus the thought expressed in language becomes directly cognisable without the intervention of mental images and ideas.

But such a designativism remains silent regarding how words in language are related to things in the world. Designativism merely assumes a direct and unconditional correlation between words and things. It also takes the activity of naming as primitive, both epistemologically and logically. But a mere combination of words does not explain linguistic activity satisfactorily. A logical arrangement of linguistic signs is more important here. In other words, what are central are the peculiar roles different words play in the sentence. Even the word-object correlation is determined by the way words are arranged and the subsequent role each word has in the arrangement. Hence, something more than correlation and arbitrary

labeling is necessary to explain the adequacy of linguistic activity. For this the availability of a representational line between language, thought and the world has to be indubitably established.

Again, representationalism requires to explain the notion of truth in language. Any theory of understanding has to explain how truth is transmitted through the use of language. In the framework of representationalism a correspondence theory of truth appears to be most natural. Moreover, a correspondence theory is taken for granted by the concept of language which suits scientific purposes. Here the concept of truth itself has to be explained in terms of language-reality correspondence. This also suggests the necessity of finding out the representational line that binds language with thought and reality.

Mere representationalism does not endeavour to find out this representational line. Assuming the activity of naming as primitive and unquestionable on the basis of the testimony of experience, it gets entangled in the visibly direct ways the words in our language are connected with the objects. It makes our cognitive relations with things central and finally gets involved in psychologism. The testimony of experience is necessarily private and remains unshared. It thus fails to explain the legitimate use of language, as the implied psychologism amounts to confusion and uncertainty, which again may undermine the very purpose behind propagating designativism. Neither the function nor the structure of language can be consistently accounted for merely by emphasising the word - object correlation.

The syntactical arrangement of words does not necessarily point to a representational line that makes language - reality connection necessary and certain. This prompts us to analyse

language with an emphasis on the semantic aspects. For, as it is noted earlier, it is the notion of representational content of language or meaning that explains how the representational line can be drawn. What justifies the direct word - object correlation is thus, not our experience but the fact that meaning here functions as a mediating entity between the two realms connecting them. Meaning mediates language and world and projects the former as the representation of the latter. This peculiar conception of meaning is extremely crucial for a model of understanding based on empirical representations.

Frege's senses are such mediating entities. They not only guide the uses of language but also determine the basic word - object correlation by presenting the reference with absolute certainty. And by presenting reference, they mediate language and reality. As far as the representational conception is concerned, the notion of sense plays a vital role. Senses ensure that the language - reality correspondence is not just a contingent fact. The required logical necessity was supplied by the senses which are logical entities. It was therefore, to Frege the representationalists owe the possibility of semantic realism which proclaims the availability of a representational line between language, thought and the world, without falling back on psychologism. Being logical entities, the senses enable us to achieve a syntactic - semantic unity in the framework of representationalism. Here language is granted with a more wider role in determining the nature of linguistic understanding. The notion of meaning which justifies the idea of representational line itself is a derivative idea from the notion that language represents an arrangement of more simple linguistic expressions.

An analysis of the representational model of understanding thus makes the notion of meaning its focal point of concern. And meaning, in turn, is understood as the semantic content of linguistic expressions. It is also necessary that meaning should contain faithful information about the world of objects which language is said to be representing. To evaluate the nature of linguistic understanding, therefore, presupposes an explanation of how meaning is evolved out of language. In other words, the location of meaning has to be identified.

The whole issue is being discussed from the background of an important presupposition which became one of the cardinal notions of the entire representational framework: The idea of the propositional character of linguistic understanding. This conception not only explains the nature of knowledge and cognitive enterprise but also makes clear the way meaning is evolved deterministically from the structure of linguistic expressions.

2. THE PROPOSITIONAL CHARACTER OF LINGUISTIC UNDERSTANDING

Representational model, from its very outset, universally equated the notion of linguistic understanding with the knowledge of truth conditions. Frege, for example, related the notion of sense, the very core of his semantic theory, with the concept of truth and Wittgenstein proclaimed that, to understand a proposition, i.e., an expression in language, means to know what is the case if it is true.³ This notion of truth is again connected with the notion of sentence or proposition and further with the notion of sense. Frege writes:

So what is improperly called the truth of pictures and ideas is reduced to the truth of sentences. What is it that we call a sentence? A series of sounds, but only if it has a

sense (this is not meant to convey that *any* series of sounds that has a sense is a sentence). And when we call a sentence true we really mean that its sense is true. And hence the only thing that raises the question of truth at all is the sense of sentences.⁴

The questions of truth and meaning are, therefore, intimately associated with this idea of sentence, or, more clearly, proposition. This insight provides a clear way out from the riddles faced by designativism. What is accounted is a more consistent and detailed view regarding the nature of linguistic understanding. To be precise, the prepositional character of knowledge has to be recognised in connection with the various functions of language. To understand language is, therefore, not a mechanical process in which the referents of each word is picked up and grasped independently. Making proposition the locus of meaning and relating it with the notion of truth envisages an altogether different vision regarding knowledge and understanding and also about the nature of language.

The notion of structure is derived from this conception. A proposition, says Frege, is constituted by a series of sounds or words which have senses. This suggests that a proposition is formed out of sounds or words arranged in determinate ways. This arrangement reveals a structure and when it comes to the question of representation, the latter is explained in terms of this conception. Representational model takes the sole function of language to be consisting in its representing the world based on a structural isomorphism. This concept of structural isomorphism helps in avoiding the riddles the representational model encountered when it asserted language - reality correspondence by means of designativism.

Frege's context principle is a clear and consistent step towards this development. This principle, apart from granting a semantic and logical priority to sentences over words also provides basic insights regarding the nature of knowledge.⁵ Unlike designativism which takes for granted the word-object contact, Frege tries to analyse the nature of this relationship. The use of language does not exhaust with, or merely consists in the ability of making words related to objects. In other words, he tries to prove that the words in language are not arbitrarily connected to things on the basis of convention or consensus. Each word acquires its peculiar role in the system of signs as a result of the ways it is related to other words. The context principle thus represents the whole of Frege's conception of linguistic understanding and meaning in a nutshell. By focusing on sentences, rather than on words, Frege reasserts his anti-psychological position, as far as the question of knowledge is concerned. Since the meaning of words are not explored in isolation, the epistemological issue of directly cognising the world of objects has been avoided. In other words, the question of direct knowledge of objects is not raised. With the introduction of context principle, the thought conveyed by the sentence becomes more important and therefore, knowledge about an object in the world is always knowledge of some thought conveying that thing. The sentential senses or thoughts are said to be mediating all our cognitive interactions with the factual reality.

This conception of the "thought that mediates our uses of language", thus occupies a central role in the whole representational contemplations regarding the nature of linguistic understanding. On the one hand it provided an insight which enabled them to avoid the old epistemological perplexities connected with the question of knowledge. With the notion of proposition attention was shifted to language in a more radical way. For example, the question

'how do I know that the leaf is green?', is a question about the meaning of the linguistic expression 'the leaf is green' and has nothing to do with the psychological problem of knowing the properties of a material object. In other words, the whole problem of understanding is condensed to this point of understanding meaning. This insight has been further developed to accommodate a series of other theories accounting for the nature of language and linguistic understanding.

The most significant aspect of this conception is that it brings together the notions of meaning and truth to develop a doctrine of linguistic understanding. By explicating the way expressions describe the state of affairs, this conception provides an explanation of the evolution of meaning out of language. This further explains how expressibility of language is related to representationality. Meaning, in other words, is conceived in this framework as a property of linguistic expressions, which possesses an inbuilt and innate structure.

On the other hand, this conception concurrently develops a notion of truth and makes it fit into the semantic framework of representationalism. Ultimately, it is with this notion of truth that the representationalists intend to establish the legitimate and meaningful uses of language. The question of truth forcefully brings in the question of reference into the framework of language theory. The concept of structure has to accommodate this factor, as the idea of representationality has to take into account the references of words. In other words, the representational feature and function of language are related to the notion of reference of words in important ways. This conception is definitely different from mere designativism, where the original empiricist-representationalist outlook is maintained to a certain extent with an emphasis

on the *a priori* nature of word-object contact. Here meaning and truth are made intimately related with linguistic expressions which have a structure. In other words, the questions of meaning and truth can be raised only if there is such a thing as a proposition. A proposition is differentiated from a sentence and other linguistic expressions, as it is said to be an abstract entity which is not subjected to change. A sentence in language, on the other hand, is a perceptible entity and always occurs in some language or other. The sentences uttered by different people in different occasions remain true or false across all variety of sentence case and occasions of utterance

What is of immediate concern is the nature of proposition and how the notion of meaning has originated in it. A proposition by its very nature is a complex entity, as it is constituted out of simple linguistic expressions or words in proper arrangement. It is from the structure of this arrangement that meaning of a proposition evolves. The idea of a representational line that connects world and language together itself is bound to these concepts of meaning and structure.

Again, shifting focal attention from words and granting them their semantic legitimacy only in the context of a sentence is to provide a satisfactory account of the workings and meaningful uses of language. It justifiably articulates how language mediates all our cognitive enterprises by explicating how words are related to things. In other words, it re-articulates the representationality of language with additional rigour and consistency with an emphasis on the notion of structure. Never ask for the meaning of a word in isolation, says Frege.⁶ No word is an isolated entity as words make legitimate appearance in language always in connection with other words. Language in no way is a series of words connected improperly or arbitrarily.

Understanding the roles of words in meaningful linguistic expressions is thus a primary concern for the representationalists. And this, in turn, is nothing but an understanding of the structure of language

3. THE STRUCTURE OF LANGUAGE

Words are conceived as the essential structural elements of language. It is with them that language is immediately connected with reality. They are the feelers by means of which language touches reality. And it is through them in proper arrangement linguistic communication is carried out in the framework of representationalists. As Wittgenstein pointed out, what constitutes a picture, i.e., a proposition in language is that, its elements, i.e., words, are related to one another in a determinate way.⁸

The notion of structure evolves out of this picture. As Wittgenstein argues, the connection between words constitutes the structure of the proposition and also that this structure is the representation of a similar structure which the world bears. The context principle of Frege is thus extended to assert a concept of structural isomorphism. Words as the basic representing data are used for the purpose of expressing something in linguistic representation and the peculiar role of each word is determined by the syntactic and semantic structures of sentences in which they figure as constituents. What is suggested by this argument is the insight that, the semantic content of language is not directly grasped by means of words. It is rather revealed in the propositions which syntactically and semantically arrange words, so as to disclose their

logical contents. In other words, the references depend on the semantic contents of sentences in order to get introduced and thereby cognised through language

This also gives an outline of the notion of meaning that is conceived by the representational model. It is in this notion that they discover the representational line that connects language with the world. The possibility of understanding language objectively also finds justification in it. What is important to be noted in this context is the fact that this semantic content is necessarily a property of language, or, more precisely, that of propositions. The concept of meaning which constitutes the heart of the theory of language is thus directly derived out of the notion of proposition, which again, in turn, is derived out of the idea that language has a definite structure.

The idea of structure is very much built into the notion of proposition. It is said to be made out of names which are connected with each other in determinate ways. This arrangement of words subsequently exhibits an order. This order is a logical order and hence suggests the availability of structure which is also logical. This is to argue for representationalism on the basis of structural identity between propositions and facts, rather than on the basis of mere word-object relationship. This goes beyond mere designativism - the theory of reference.

Some representationalists, like Russell, even construct metaphysical theories to substantiate the language - reality correspondence, and have developed semantic doctrines **in** the light of such theories.¹⁰ But the idea of structure gets fully developed only in Wittgenstein's picture theory . Following Frege, Wittgenstein asserts that it is sentences and not words that

constitute the key to understand language, and, consequently, attention is shifted to propositions which are formed out of an arrangement of words

An examination of this arrangement, or, more precisely, the structure of propositions is carried out by means of a logical analysis of language. It is eventually an analysis of the grammar of language, and here Wittgenstein borrows insights from both Frege and Russell.

Russell's method of analysis, as demonstrated in the theory of descriptions, shows how the surface grammar of sentences makes linguistic expressions ambiguous and deceptive. Russell proceeds with the analysis of the nature of the denoting phrases like "the author of *Waverley*", and "The present King of France". His basic assumption consists in a representational outlook, which takes the meaning of a name as identical with the object denoted by the name. By analysing the expression "The present King of France", Russell categorically states that, this expression does not function as a subject of a proposition. Russell argues that, a denoting phrase is essentially part of a sentence.¹¹ The sentence "the author of *Waverley* was a man" is not a statement of the form "x was a man", and does not have 'the author of *Waverley*' for its subject, though the peripheral grammar suggests so. Russell explains the denotation as:

Every proposition in which 'the author of *Waverley*' occurs being explained as above, the proposition 'Scott was the author of *Waverley*' (i.e. 'Scott was identical with the author of *Waverley*') becomes 'one and only one entity wrote *Waverley*', and Scott was identical with that one'; or, reverting to the wholly explicit form: 'It is not always false of x that x wrote *Waverley*, that it **is** always true of y that if y wrote *Waverley* y is identical with x, and that Scott is identical with x'.¹²

Such an analysis will prove whether a denoting phrase is meaningful or not. The denoting phrase does not really contain the thing it introduces as a constituent but contains instead the constituents expressed by the several words of the denoting phrase. We can, therefore, apprehend that all the constituents in a proposition are really entities with which we have immediate acquaintance. This fact will be revealed by analysis.¹³

But what is more important about the theory of description is that, apart from asserting representationality, it instructs us about the nature of the structure of language. The sentence; "The Present King of France is bald", of course, possesses a structure. Words are arranged properly following the rules prescribed by grammar. This shows, however, that the syntactic structure can be deceptive and misinformative about the functions of language. The sentence appears to be a subject - predicate sentence, while logically it is not. Russell thus emphasises the logical form of language which takes care of both the grammatical and semantic aspects.

From this, Wittgenstein concludes that the real structure of language is and must be essentially logical in nature. Syntax, he contends, does not take us beyond the linguistic order which is itself contingent, being the accidental feature of language. What an analysis of language is expected to reveal is the logic of language which eventually carries with it the knowledge of the necessary ways in which language is related to the world. The latter relates to the semantic structure of language.

Language is taken to be a complex system with a structure. For Wittgenstein, it is a totality of propositions of natural sciences and thus presents itself as a faithful picture of the

factual world. Each proposition, again in turn, is a complex entity, as it can be analysed into more simple propositions, to a point where further analysis becomes impossible. This end-point of analysis leads to the discovery of elementary propositions.

The easiest way to understand the structure of language and examine the way meaning evolves out of it is to analyse the structure of elementary propositions. They represent the atomic stuff of linguistic expressions, as they are the simplest forms of expressions which are capable of conveying and communicating sense. Logically they stand as prototypes for linguistic representations and thereby set standards for legitimate linguistic activity. These unanalysable atomic stuff of linguistic activity is thus focussed more in order to derive information about the nature of language use, meaning and understanding.

The most apparent feature of an elementary proposition is expressed in its definition itself. It is said to be constituted out of words which are names in immediate combination.¹⁴ And these names, it is argued, are immediately connected to objects which are also in immediate combination with each other. An examination of such elementary propositions will ultimately reveal the way sense is evolved out of the propositions. It also instructs us how representationality is retained in the framework of semantic realism.

The concept of object occupies a central position in the attempts to develop the notion of logical structure. The ultimacy of logic and the syntax-semantic unity are established on the basis of this important concept. One can even say that the whole representational ontology is grounded on such a concept. Wittgenstein conceived the objects as making up the substance of

the world and also as occurring always in a combination with each other.¹⁵ It is the internal property of the objects to exist in combination with each other.¹⁶ This internal property guarantees the availability of a similar connection among words in language,. These objects are not only related to each other, but are related in determinate ways. It is said that an object's all occurrences in connection with other objects are already written into the object itself in determinate ways. As Wittgenstein puts it: "If I know an object I also know all its possible occurrences in a state of affair"¹⁷ and again, "If all objects are given, then at the same time all possible states of affairs are also given"¹⁸ The different possible configurations of objects result in the different states of affairs out of which the actual and possible worlds are constructed. These states of affairs will have definite structure, as they are generated out of combinations of objects, which, as a logical necessity, are connected with each other in determinate ways. Since the possibilities of connection among words are representing the various possible combinations between objects, the isomorphic connections between language and the world are established on the basis of structural identity. The structure that evolves out of the possibilities of connection between words is identical with the structure that is revealed by the world which is made up of facts.

The concept of structure which is actually an outcome of the context principle thus concludes with an argument that establishes the representational character of language. Since the world is a totality of actual and possible facts, and since language is a totality of elementary propositions depicting these facts, concludes Wittgenstein, language, in a peculiar sense, is the picture of the world.¹⁹ It represents the world, as the structure of the world is mirrored in the

structure of language, It is this emphasis on structure that makes this standpoint different from mere designativism

This position probably is the most radical assertion of the representational outlook. It conceives the representational character of language as a matter of logical necessity, as the structure which both language and reality share commonly is the logical structure. This makes representation a matter of logic and hence, certain and absolute. In other words, language is a picture of reality and pictorial relation is necessarily a logical relation Wittgenstein says

The fact that the elements of picture are related to one another in a determinate way represents that things are related to one another in the same way

Let us call this connection of its elements the structure of the picture, and let us call the possibility of this structure the pictorial form of the picture.²⁰

The pictorial form is a representative of the form of reality which is the possibility of a structure.

The nature of pictorial relationship is further analysed by Wittgenstein The picture, he says, reaches right out to reality,²¹ and it is laid against reality like a measure.²² The elements of the picture are immediately and directly related to the things in the world.

The availability of such a pictorial relationship is justified further by introducing the notion of logical form. Logical form is the common element which language and reality share. Language may depict reality correctly or incorrectly, but the very possibility of such a depiction

necessarily presupposes the availability of such a common property as the logical form.

Wittgenstein adds:

What a picture, of whatever form, must have in common with reality, in order to be able to depict it - correctly or incorrectly - in any way at all, is logical form, i.e., the form of reality.²³

It is on the basis of this logical form that the structural isomorphism between language and reality and subsequently the fundamental representational status of language is established.

This will become more clear if we examine the way Wittgenstein develops the notion of semantic content or sense and propagates the representational doctrine of linguistic understanding. This semantic content or meaning, according to Wittgenstein, evolves out of the structure of language. Or more precisely, he identifies sense as the exclusive property of propositions. This outlook is characteristically different from the standpoint adopted by Frege in developing a semantic realism. Frege conceives every appropriate linguistic unit as possessing both sense and reference. He takes sense as the mode of presentation of the object referred by the expression. Any sensible linguistic expression will, on the one hand, refer to or stand for an object and on the other hand will present that object in a particular way. For example, the expression 'morning star', refers both to the object 'Venus' which is a star and presents it as a celestial body which appears in the morning. The expression 'Evening star' also refers to the same object 'Venus' but presents that object in a totally different way, i.e., as a celestial body which appears in the sky in the evening.

The difference between the two expressions 'morning star' and 'evening star', owes to the different ways they present the same object. In other words, this constitutes a difference in sense. The semantic content, therefore, is the way the references in the factual world is introduced into the conversation situation through language.

Sense, which is the essence of language for Frege, therefore, is the essential property of all linguistic expressions. Sentences as well as words have both senses and references. In the case of sentences the sense is said to be constituted out of the senses of simple expressions and reference is understood to be the truth-value of sentences.

This approach seems to be contradicting another significant insight of Frege, viz., the context principle. The latter rules out any possibility of fixing the meaning of a simple expression or name in isolation. But Frege's compositionality principle, employed in order to explain the generation of sense contends that the sense of a complex expression or sentence (proposition) is the sum total of the senses of the simple expressions out of which it is constituted. He conceives even a sentence as a complex name.

What leads Frege to such an assumption is his conception of sense as the mode of presentation of the object. Conceived in this way words also should have sense as they also present the objects they refer to in peculiar ways. This is shown with the example of 'morning star' and 'evening star'. Frege thus ignores the important ways in which simple expressions in language are different from complex expressions, i.e., the difference between names and sentences. The difference, to be precise, consists in the fact that, while the latter possesses a

definite structure, the former by its very nature inherits only the possibility of constantly being in combination with other simple expressions to form such structures. Since there are infinite number of objects in the world, their possibility to be combined with each other also is infinite. Similarly, every name in language, being representative of object in the world, is capable of entering into infinite number of combinations with other names to form complex propositions which have definite structures, and every such proposition will have different senses owing to the difference in the structural arrangement of words.

Ascribing sense to names thus may lead to semantic indeterminism, since every name was capable of generating infinite number of different senses by entering into infinite number of combinations with other names. Wittgenstein tackles this riddle by identifying sense with the pictorial content of propositions, which by means of a definite arrangement of words stand as faithful pictures of reality. Instead of the mode of presentation, what Wittgenstein stresses is the articulate nature of propositions. A proposition articulates a fact by showing a possible arrangement of words. The sense is said to be generated out of the structure evolved from the determinate internal relationships that hold between words. By emphasising on structure he could propagate a doctrine of sense determinism which is suitable for establishing a representational conception of meaning and understanding.

To assert the determination of sense, Wittgenstein mainly relies on two assumptions:

- a) The representationality of language.
- b) The simplicity doctrine.

The representationality of language, as we have seen, has been established by means of a picture theory, which ultimately asserts a structural identity between world and language with an appeal to the logical form inherited commonly by both the realms. Regarding the second assumption, the logical simplicity of objects and words has been a perennial insight in the whole framework of representationalism.

The logically simple words or names have, as their meaning, the objects in the factual world, and they stand for these objects. In other words, their references are fixed in advance. To know the reference is a prerequisite for linguistic understanding. And since the meanings of words are fixed, the possible combination between them is bound to generate a determinate and definite sense, irrespective of the time and place where it finds articulation. What Wittgenstein says about objects is relevant here. As it is stated above, the internal property of an object is conceived as its ability to be in combination with other objects, and to know an object is to know its possible combinations. It is, in other words, to know the logical space occupied by the object in relation with other objects. Similarly, what is necessarily needed to know the meaning of a word is to know the logical space it occupies in the multitude of language uses. And to know this logical space is to know the structure of language.

The logical space further points to the fundamental logical framework inherited by both language and reality. The structure of language represents this logical framework as it reveals the possible combination and interrelationships between objects in the factual world. The sense that is generated out of this interrelations between words is also fixed.

The notion of sense determinism becomes further explicit when the notion of the general form of proposition is propagated. This conception explains how the semantic content of a proposition is read off from its form. The general form of proposition informs us about the logical nature of interrelations that are possible between names in language for the articulation of sense. It says how things stand in relation to one another and therefore refers to the factual world structurally.

A further insight - the idea of logical grammar - asserts the relation between the logical space and sense determinism conclusively. The idea of logical grammar points to a normative rule system that dictates the manifold of language uses. The structure of language, thus, on the one hand prescribes a spatio-temporal arrangement of individual expressions. It goes without saying that the syntactic rules govern the uses of linguistic signs even for ordinary conversations. Language, in other words, is essentially rule bounded - be it the language of a scientist or of a lay man. Expressions are systematically arranged, so that the structure of this complex expression mirrors the possibilities of combination among words.

On the other hand, this system also appeals to a system of logical rules, the rules of meaning fixation. This is because the syntactical rules are not adequate to articulate the representational features of language. For this it must be shown how the grammatical rules function in union with the semantic rules - the rules of meaning fixation - to form a legitimate system for expressibility and communicability. In other words, the system of normative rules has to be adapted which contains in them the explanation of how the arrangement of words in the

linguistic system reflects a similar arrangement that exists in the world. Language has to be connected to the world and syntax with semantics.

This further reasserts the fact that the structure of language is a logical structure. Logic for Wittgenstein, as we have seen, is the fundamental framework of language and it also forms the basic scaffolding of the world. He affirms the ultimacy of logic as:

It is used to be said that God could create anything except what would be contrary to the laws of logic - The truth is that we could not say what an 'illogical' world would look like²⁴

This suggests that, it is in a sense impossible to commit mistakes in logic. Since language inherits the basic logical framework, it is impossible to express in language anything that contradicts logic by means of language, like in geometry it is not possible to represent a figure which contradicts the laws of space.²⁵ The representational feature of language becomes once more evident here and it is further affirmed that, logic is interested only in reality and in sentences only in so far as they are pictures of reality.²⁶ This insight, which makes language depend on logic, indubitably establishes representationalism. In other words, it makes language a picture of reality, for otherwise it is to go outside logic in language which is evidently impossible. The logical framework is so fundamental to language, as the laws of logic are the laws of language use extensionally as well as intensionally. Since these logical laws from their very outset prescribe the representational feature of language, representationality is ensured from the very fact that language has a logical form. A picture or a proposition, says Wittgenstein,

cannot place itself outside the representational form. In short, logic is the fundamental framework of language which makes language representational.

The much discussed notion of ideal language is a natural derivative of the notion of structure developed out of this framework. We have seen earlier how different philosophers dealt with this concept. Though different philosophers conceive the notion of structure in different ways, the fact that language and reality share a common logical structure has the status of a fundamental presupposition in the representational theories of meaning and understanding. Though Frege never makes this point explicit, his principal doctrines not only appeal to a similar standpoint but also can be legitimately substantiated by the idea of structure. Frege's notion of sense, as the logical entity which necessarily mediates any legitimate linguistic activity, looks more consistent and acceptable when understood in the light of this presupposition.

Regarding the question, how the problem of understanding is related to the structure of language, different thinkers hold different and sometimes even contradicting views. Yet it is widely accepted that this structure is a logical structure. Moritz Schlick, for example, identifies structure as the essential feature of an expression. He adds.

It is not spatial order that is required, nor temporal order, nor any other particular order, but just Order in general. It is the kind of thing with which Logic is concerned, and we may, therefore, call it Logical Order, or simply Structure.²⁷

But making this structure purely of logical nature avoids the problem of the cognitive relationship with the structure of language. Wittgenstein assigns no role for epistemology in

explaining the problem of linguistic understanding, as the generation of sense does not call for a process of empirical experience for its comprehension. It evolves out of the structure of language as a matter of logical necessity and is grasped by the cognitive intellect from the structure of language itself. Neither its generation nor its cognition calls for a mental entity which is evoked as the result of an actual contact of the subjective psyche with the world of objects.

This conclusion forced certain representationalists to turn away from such a highly logical conception of linguistic understanding. Their contemplation regarding the issue surrounded the question of the knowledge about the empirical world.

4. STRUCTURE OF LANGUAGE AND UNDERSTANDING MEANING

As stated already, one of the major aspects which makes the representational model significant is its ability to provide an alternative to anthropomorphism, which *de facto* prevents the possibility of objective understanding due to the improper mixing of our own ideas and preconceptions with knowledge. By making language a representation of reality, an immediate contact seems to have emerged between the linguistic expressions we encounter in the process of understanding and reality. In other words, it conforms perfectly to the parameters laid and demands posed by the language employed by science. It is imperative to science to develop a system of true and valid statements. It seeks to derive knowledge about the material world by means of contact with objects through experience, which again is expressed in the language of

representation. The whole process of linguistic practice from this viewpoint consists in a 'talk about the world'.

It is this association of the scientific ideal that has situated the representational conception of linguistic understanding at the core of 20th century philosophical enterprise. The spirit of the age is represented in Wittgenstein's assessment that, philosophy is a 'critique of language'.²⁸ Language in turn, is constituted of the totality of propositions of natural science. Here the whole problem of understanding language is associated with the scientific understanding of reality, and thus the problem of meaning is intimately connected with the factual world.

It is from this conceptual framework that the neo-empiricist conception which identifies meaning with the method of verification has been derived. A concurrently developed notion of truth also makes a clear appeal to the actual or possible states of affair. As Wittgenstein puts it: "To understand a proposition means to know what is the case if it is true".²⁹ The question of understanding thus is related to the existence of actual or possible facts.

This point has been focussed more extensively by the neo-empiricists who ultimately turned away from certain basic postulates framed both by Frege and Wittgenstein. An extreme concern for the empirical reality and an overemphasis on the relation between understanding and empirical experience make them engage with epistemological concerns. Since the nature of the empirical world crucially determines the understanding of linguistic expressions, the possible ways by which the empirical world is contacted becomes important. And experience is the only

immediate means by which this contact is established. The phenomenon of experience is thus brought to the very core of understanding and meaning theories thereafter.

But this is to come back to deal with the problem of cognitive relationship with the references of words in linguistic expressions. The problem has been marginalised both by Frege and Wittgenstein when they dealt with the discussion of linguistic understanding. Frege envisages to construe a logically consistent and perfect theory of understanding by positing the abstract senses as the semantic counterpart of linguistic understanding. This conception categorically rules out the possibility of reference being an ingredient of meaning. The semantic contents of expressions are identified exclusively with the senses of those expressions. References, Frege contends, are altogether different entities, both logically as well as ontologically. Dummett observes:

If meaning is taken as the mechanism or rule determining the use of an expression then Frege's sense is (the main) part of an expression's meaning whereas his *Bedeutung* is not part of it at all, but is what is meant by the expression in an altogether different use of the word mean.³⁰

As far as linguistic understanding is concerned, it is only the sense that is to be focussed. To raise the problem of cognitive relation with objects referred to is to allow the intrusion of psychologism, as to make reference a part of meaning necessarily leads to an ideation theory of meaning. Ideas are mental images which require a host to whom they belong. And since they are epistemically private, they are in essence incommunicable and unsharable.

Wittgenstein, on the other hand, as we have seen, appeals to the structure of language and there is nothing in the structure which forces the reference of words in language to appear as essential counterparts in linguistic understanding. But, as we have seen, the very idea of representation makes it a necessary imperative that the empirical world is properly accounted for in the framework of the theories of language and understanding. Frege also allows its entry, as he envisages an ideal language where the sense and reference of expressions are necessarily united. Yet Frege hesitates to posit reference as a central factor when he addresses the problem of linguistic understanding. An absolute priority has been granted to the sense of expressions, and in his framework it is even possible to imagine a proper name which does not have any reference. The question of reference becomes relevant only when the truth-value of the sentence is under discussion. But sense is poor even to the truth-value of sentences as the latter itself is determined by the senses.

Moreover, as Dummett says, if reference is an ingredient of meaning, then the reference of a word would determine the sense, since nothing more would need to be known about its meaning in order to fix the truth-value of the sentence in which it occurs. Thus Frege's Platonist semantics, though originally favours representationalism, sacrifices it for the sake of logicism. A representational theory cannot heavily rely on such Platonic abstract entities. Because, what is being represented in language is the concrete factual reality, which is given to us in experience. Hence, a process of understanding meaning should also take into account the phenomenon of experience seriously. In other words, such experiences also has to be granted a justifiable role. An observation of Russell runs:

I think that the notion of meaning is always more or less psychological, and that it is not possible to get a pure logical theory of meaning, nor therefore of symbolism.³¹

Russell consequently conceives physical objects as the actual prepositional constituents and contends that knowledge about them is important in the determination and assimilation of meaning. The structure of language, according to Russell, is thus a structure derived from the empirical world. The theory of language Russell construes in the framework of representationalism is thus eager to make room for empirical experience. For him, meaning is connected to the way we experience the empirical world and hence the latter is important, not only to decide the truth conditions of sentences but also to make us understand the very sense of sentences. What is presupposed is an empiricism wedded with psychologism. This alone, Russell observes, can accommodate the idea of empirical experience into a theory of understanding meaning.

5. PSYCHOLOGISM AND REPRESENTATIONALISM

This juncture seems to be posing for the representational model a dilemma: on the one hand, a theory of language which is developed to positively respond to the scientific notion of rationality and objectivity calls for a representational conception, and on the other hand, when it is attempted to explain language and linguistic understanding in the light of empirical experience, psychologism becomes inevitable. Russell was well aware of the dilemma and envisages to avert the problem by making reference as the actual prepositional constituent.

Russell's theory of proposition, therefore, on the one hand, construes an ontology which primarily proclaims that propositions have senses. On the other hand, he develops a psychologists epistemology and tries to explain how this senses are cognised. His ontology is a natural offshoot of this line of development. The theory of language developed by Russell widely presupposes this ontology of logical atomism. The sentences in language are said to be representing the facts in the objective world, as the names out of which they are constituted immediately stand for objects in the phenomenal world.³²

Any assertion made in language through sentences consists of two aspects. There is the objective side where the facts are indicated. Here the truth conditions of the sentences are under focus. The significance of the sentence, on the other hand, is attached to the subjective side where the mental state of the speaker is expressed. The significance of sentences thus has to be understood in terms of the psychological factors such as images and other psychic states of the person. Russell says "... in the case of a sentence of atomic form the significance is a state of the believer, or rather a set of such states having certain similarities".³³ The notion of proposition is derived, in this context, as it is this significance of a sentence that is to be called according to Russell, a "proposition" which is either true or false.

This notion of proposition constitutes the nucleus of Russell's theory of meaning and language. The very idea of meaning itself brings the notion of proposition into the limelight and thus also the notion of significance. The semantic analysis of the proposition is further extended to the examination of how propositions acquire their meaning. Here Russell categorically asserts the representational character of language and linguistic understanding.

In short, it is with this notion of proposition that Russell proclaims his commitment towards empiricism. Originally this concept was conceived by relating it with the notion of truth conditions, a stand which Frege took earlier. Yet his conception differs from that of Frege's in significant ways. Following Frege he also defined a proposition as "what we believe when we believe truly or falsely."³⁴ He begins with the most obvious fact that a proposition is a form of words and moves away from Frege by emphasising the crucial role of objects to which words refer in determining the semantic features of linguistic expressions. Meaning of a proposition, he argues, depends on the meaning of the separate words out of which the sentence is constituted.³⁵ Here he echoes Frege's compositionality principle which considers the status of a complex expression as the function of its constituent parts. But Frege deliberately avoids focussing on words when they are in isolation, since he thought, it would amount to psychologism. Moreover, the aim of Frege's compositionality doctrine was to explain how the semantic contents of individual expressions contributed to determine the logical nature of linguistic expressions that had truth value as their reference. Thus, by highlighting the logical aspects, the problem of direct correlation between words and empirical objects are never raised.

But Russell's hard core empiricism could not avoid this problem. Meaning of sentence is taken by him as depending on the meaning of the separate words out of which the sentence asserted are formed. This in turn is rooted in the world. Propositions are thus made up of words both syntactically as well as semantically. This atomistic conception of language with its inherent empiricism necessitates the fundamentality of the word-object correlation

The logical analysis of language also led Russell to this fundamental problem. The representational character of language is revealed through the significant sentences which immediately and necessarily stand for the facts out of which the world is made up. Most of the sentences in our language have the function of expressing these facts, though the former also have other important functions. Such sentences when employed to assert something, i.e., when they are true or false in relation to objective empirical facts, are propositions for Russell. And this determination of truth value forcefully brings the notion of empirical confirmation into the forefront.

Russell thus intends to complete the representational line with a happy mixing of empiricism and psychologism. To further clarify this notion he introduces the notion of acquaintance. Meaning of a proposition, since it is constituted out of the meaning of words is understood only by acquaintance with the objects signified by the words. Thus to understand the proposition 'aRb' what is required is an acquaintance with the three things, a, R and b. In other words, it is the bare contact with the objects or the set of objects that is required. In such a form of relationship, there is immediate contact between the mind and the object. Yet, the contact is not a persisting one and therefore, will not result in any knowledge about the object. Russell himself calls it, "... a dual relation between a subject and an object which need not have any community of nature".³⁶ In short, what Russell wants to argue is that, all our cognitive relations with objects are cardinal for the explanation of meaning, and all such relations - attention, sensation, memory, imagination, believing, disbelieving etc., presupposes acquaintance. It is this factor that made Russell to argue that physical objects are the actual prepositional constituents.

What Russell does here is precisely to reintroduce the operation of the subject - object category to explain meaning. This again is just in opposition with the Frege-Wittgenstein standpoint which rejects any such operation as irrelevant. To explain meaning in terms of acquaintance makes psychologism inevitable. The relation called meaning, as he puts it, is not a direct relation between the word and the object, but definitely passes through a mental intermediary. Against the behaviouristic conception of language which takes no account of the mental images, Russell categorically affirms that words obtain their meaning through images. "To think of the meaning of a word is to call up an image of what it means."³⁷

Russell was aware of the possible solipsistic conclusions such a standpoint may lead to and hence argues that the focal concern of our thoughts and sentences are not merely our private ideas, but the objective world of entities. The direct cognitive relation of acquaintance, he thought, would obviously constitute presentation. The object with which one is acquainted need not necessarily be present before one's mind. The object's past presence before the mind and the possible future presence are sufficient. Again, the notion of acquaintance guarantees the relational character of the fact with which we are concerned. This conception takes for granted the existence of the subjective as well as the objective poles and thereby rejects both materialistic as well as idealistic standpoints.

For Russell sense data are the obvious kind of data with which we are acquainted.³¹ He believes that with all these he can retain psychologism and hence an empiricist theory of knowledge and meaning without being a solipsist. Though words obtain their meanings through mental images the very capacity to form images is connected with perceptibility. Psychology is

thus, related to physics in unique manner. Perceptibility itself is a relative notion, as it presupposes the availability of an empirical world of objects. The importance of this world is paramount as even beliefs and images which are psychological are formed out of it. The conception of objects as the prepositional counterparts also assumes that the focal concern of our thoughts and sentences are not merely our private ideas. All these assert the inevitable and necessary existence of the objective world of entities and proclaims that all sensible talk is directed towards this world.

But this position fails to offer a satisfactory explanation to the problem of understanding in the framework of representationalism. The idea of mental categories mediating language and world, and completing the conceptual line between them is not consistent with the representational idea of scientific objectivity. This is because, the mental categories cannot be objective. The apparent paradox can be stated in the following terms. On the one hand, there is the demand of the intersubjective language of science which is a talk about the world that is expressed, communicated and assimilated completely and perfectly. This language is, in this respect, different from the commonsensical talk and yet distinguishes itself from the logical and mathematical statements which are not related to experience and are therefore not representational. The latter contain no information about the world. They are what Wittgenstein calls tautologies. The statements of science are not constituted out of linguistic structures with an empty content. They have both form and content.

The neo-empiricists carry with them this worry and discuss the issue by focussing on the idea of basic statements, since it is the latter which stand as direct representations of reality. To

make certain statements basic on the ground of direct and immediate reference to experience is to assert epistemological certainty of those statements in our cognitive system. Canap thus construes the possibility of a set of primitive protocols which find their justification for primitiveness and primacy in terms of epistemological priority. He claims a peculiar neutrality for these basic experiences that occasion these statements and echoes the classical empiricist conception of epistemology which envisages to picture an external world by means of the immediately given sense impressions or *qualm*. But an inherent solipsism forces this conception to give way to a physicalist picture which focuses more on the objective physical world of objects than on the subjective and private references to those objects. The Phenomenalist position, therefore, fails to give a satisfactory account for the very act of communication through language As Quine observes

It leaves each of us, indeed, nothing but his own sense data, for the assumption of there being other persons has no better support than has the assumption of there being any other sorts of external objects. It leaves each of us in the position of solipsism, according to which there is nobody else in the world, nor indeed any world but the pageant of one's own sense data.

Quine adds that the physicalist pictures the observer as projecting his theory of the external world, not from an internal domain of *qualm*, but from objects of the world itself. He adds:

For one thing, terms for physical objects belong to a more basic stage in our acquisition of language than abstract terms do. . . . For another thing, terms of intersubjectively observable physical things are at the focus of the most successful of unprepared communication, as between strangers in the market place.⁴⁰

Carnap himself moves to this direction and construes a set of basic statements which directly refer to extra-linguistic facts. Statements of this sort are the fundamental presuppositions for any scientific enterprise. But Carnap conferred epistemological certainty to these statements in order to retain verifiability. This again brings back the threat of psychologism.

It is therefore necessary to make an immediate return of reference to the intersubjectively communicable aspects of language, at the same time maintain the primary role of experience which inevitably refers to subjective elements. Moritz Schlick thus attempts to establish the possibility of an intersubjective language, which is in essence representational, at the same time retaining the subjective and psychological element that is inevitably present in any process of understanding, once an empiricist framework is professed. He thus recognises the two basic elements that are necessarily present in any empirical statement - the subjective and the objective elements, or in his words, the structure and content. Schlick writes.

It seems impossible to speak of Form and of Structure without implying the existence of something that *has* the structure or form. It seems natural to ask: What is the material that possesses a certain structure? What is the Content which corresponds to the Form.⁴¹

Schlick thus tries to establish a representational conception of understanding which properly specifies the roles of the form and content of expressions used in scientific discourse. Due to its subjective nature the content cannot be a crucial ingredient in the process of understanding. Content is necessarily private and cannot be made public, so as to be employed for communication. The intersubjective aspect of language is intimately related to its communicable nature and hence Schlick concludes that communicability can be regarded as a criterion for

expressibility. Therefore it has a close and direct reference to the structure of language. He writes.

. . . the possibility of expressions seems to depend on the possibility of arranging signs in different ways, in other words, that the essential feature of expression is Order.⁴²

This order for him is not the temporal order nor the spatial order but the logical order or structure. Expressibility and communicability of language can be exhaustively paraphrased with a focus on the structure. Even the qualities of sensation which gives the phenomenalist a good point towards arguing for a mentalist semantics, according to Schlick, can be consistently translated and expressed into a language which conveys the logical structure of facts. This is possible because even qualities of sensation belong to a system of qualities and therefore exhibits a structure which can be properly expressed and objectively communicated.

This standpoint seems to be making the role of empirical experience irrelevant in the process of cognition, as the notion of structure implies the availability of only an empty framework which has hardly anything to do with any particular empirical information. Schlick insists that it is practically and logically impossible to express and communicate content. Or, in other words, the inexpressibility of content is a truism, and to speak of expressing content is a contradiction in itself, like making music without sounds or painting without dyes.⁴³ As far as the questions of communication and understanding are concerned one cannot escape the structural framework of language.

Yet Schlick wanted to preserve empiricism and hence argued for the need of filling the structure with content. He says.

What you call the 'understanding of the true meaning' is an act of interpretation which might be described as the filling in of an empty frame: the communicated structure is filled with content by the understanding individual. The material is furnished by the individual himself, derived from his own experience.⁴⁴

The fact that any material can make any structure leads to the possibility of having different interpretations. But Schlick categorically asserts that, though these interpretations are carried out on the basis of the content which is obviously private, linguistic understanding is not uncertain, since what is communicated is not the content but the structure. Schlick continues:

Thus we see that there may be complete understanding between individuals even if there is no similarity between the contents of their minds, and we conclude that understanding and meaning are quite independent of content and have nothing whatever to do with it.⁴⁵

Schlick thus asserts the absolute inescapability from language. Even when communication is initiated by means of transposition, that is, by taking the fact or thing and presenting it before the hearer, one is not going out of language, rather this very move of presentation of the object is very well a part of language. The object is introduced into the language and it functions as a sample only if it is being used as a symbol. And to be used as a symbol is to form part of the structure of language. Schlick here announces the impossibility of avoiding language and bringing someone into immediate contact with the factual world. He seems to be presupposing the Wittgensteinian insight that the logical structure is a common property shared by both language and the world of facts.

But the separation between form and content persists. Content is there in the epistemic acts of the individual and fulfils its function when the latter interprets the structure he receives on the basis of his content. Uncertainty also persists so far as the content delivers its function. This situation is bound to occur so far as the expressibility, communicability and understanding of language is explained in terms of empirical representations.

6. MEANING, LANGUAGE AND REPRESENTATION

While empiricism relates meaning with experience, representational conception in general assumes the possibility of explaining language and linguistic understanding on the basis of language - world relationship. By making the elements of language, eternally fixed on the objects of factual world, they could propagate a doctrine of semantic invariance. The references of words are always to be found in the external world which is commonly available. The doctrine of semantic invariance has been explicated in the framework of representational model mainly in two ways

1. The Frege-Wittgenstein conception which makes the concept of proposition central to their vocabulary and which, with an insistence on the notion of logical structure, propagates a peculiar form of semantic invariance.
2. The empiricist route, which focuses more on the external world of objects and thus projects the concept of reference in their idea of semantic invariance, concurrently with a correspondence theory of truth by univocally asserting the word-object relationship.

Despite differences in certain fundamental points, these two streams and therefore, the representational conception in general, identify a location where the uses of language find certain common reference points which make expressions objectively communicable. These common reference points are related to the factual reality.

Wittgenstein thus makes the idea of proposition and its essential representational structure the principal doctrine of his semantic theory. The sense of the proposition, as we have seen, is taken by him as determined *a priori*, a fact which makes its comprehension non-contingent. Sense is evolved out of the structure of language which is logical. It thus does not presuppose a contingent world of objects and a cognition of that world which itself will be contingent. The determinate sense which is present in the structure of language, is directly given to the cognitive intellect, even prior to the assertion of truth and falsity of propositions. Frege also held a similar view, though he made his semantics populated with Platonic abstract entities.

The empiricists, on the other hand, made a more direct and radical approach to the factual world and by focussing on the notions of reference, attempted to project linguistic understanding as a process where one succeeds in associating words with objects. The objects, being the constituents of the external world which has a mind-independent reality of its own are subjected to cognition by means of words in language.

In short, the representational conception postulates a direct and immediate relation of correspondence between the realms of language and the world, either in terms of the notion of proposition or by means of direct world-object contact. The semantic invariance doctrine is

postulated on the basis of this. The idea of proposition has been projected as a common essential property of language that is being expressed, communicated and assimilated in the multitude of ways language is being used in the various situations of life. It makes the assertions either true or false and provides a domain to which all creatures who can use language can come into an agreement. As Quine suggests, by means of such a conception the propositionalist bypasses differences between languages and differences of formulation within a language.⁴⁶ The notion of direct word-object contact also ensures the permanent fixation of language and meaning to the world, so that meaning will not change.

The notions of truth and reference are crucial in this context, not only to explain the representational relation but also to give an account of meaning and understanding, as the concept of understanding is largely equated with the knowledge of truth-conditions. What is central to the representational conception is that, it develops a theory of meaning and truth on the basis of a peculiar notion of language. We shall conclude our discussion on the representational conception of meaning with a brief analysis of the way meaning is related to language which suggests a unique notion of language where the latter is taken as a medium. Since language is the medium of representation, truth is a property of the latter. This in turn demands the propagating of a conception of truth much in line with the traditional metaphysical notion.

Language is conceived essentially as a medium of representation. This picture is supported either by the notion of proposition, which are fixed as logico-linguistic entities that permanently mediate its uses or with the notion of reference which fundamentally fixes basic linguistic units to the factual world. This view represents language into simple expressions or

sentences which represent the factual reality Two immediate features of the model of language propagated here are:

1. Language as a medium of representation. This calls for the epistemological picture of subject-object dualism.
2. Language as something which possesses an a priori structure. It is understood here as a representation of the world. In the words of Rorty, the world is out there and language is representing this world.⁴⁷

These features together suggest that the language which we analyse to discuss meaning and truth is a representational language It is a language which depends upon the factual reality for its very factual legitimacy The whole representational picture rests on such a conception of language, where the latter is conceived as a medium and this eventually is the result of assuming the paradigmatic status of simple sentences (basic propositions or elementary propositions). As Rorty observes, this is possible only when we decide to deal with single sentences, and when we turn to vocabularies as a whole this approach towards language ceases to make any sense.⁴⁸ We then have to consider alternative language games, which form part of our everyday linguistic practices. As Quine puts it, the notion of meaning is deeply rooted in our everyday linguistic practices and discourse and is not easily dispensed with.⁴⁹ It is in this context of everyday discourse, the notions of meaning and linguistic understanding are more relevant. Here one is not provided with a set of linguistic expressions where a clear separation can be made between form and content. Nor can we pick out the reference of each word used. The representationalists idealise the language of science. But this evidently gives an account of only one of the ways

language functions and never helps in developing a theory of understanding language. As Quine observes

But a trouble with trying to equate sentences in real life, in respect of the information they convey, is that no matrix of alternatives is given, we do not know what to count. There is no evident rule for separating the information from stylistic or other immaterial features of the sentences. The question when to say that two sentences mean the same proposition is consequently not adequately answered by alluding to sameness of objective information⁵⁰

The trouble, in other words, is in the representational functions of language with the concept of semantic invariance. This function of language, as Wittgenstein says in his *Philosophical Investigations*, is only one of the innumerable functions language has. Wittgenstein further points out that the activities of meaning and naming - the processes which are central to the representational conception - are possible only when language reaches a point of maturity in the process of learning

The whole representational conception of meaning and truth has undergone a sea change with this shifting of focus from single sentences to vocabularies, which again suggests change in the concept of understanding meaning also. We shall have a detailed examination of this later. Now we shall conclude our discussion on the representational concept of meaning by summing up its important features and implications

1. Meaning is the information content of linguistic expressions which are the representations of facts or states of affair in the factual world.

2. Meaning of linguistic expressions is determined in an *a priori* fashion either by the logical structure of language by means of propositions or by objects in the factual world
3. Language, which is the representation of the factual world, is a medium of both expression and representation. The representational function is considered as the central insight.
4. The model of language and theory of meaning propagated by the representationalists is an ideal model for scientific practice. It ensures that the traditional metaphysical notion of truth is safeguarded and the classical ideals of objectivity and certainty are secured

The hermeneutic model, which we briefly examined in the first chapter, presents an altogether different version of meaning, language and truth. The traditional ideals of objectivity and the metaphysical view of truth were discussed by the thinkers in the hermeneutic tradition also. Initially they also stuck to the traditional-classical models and ideas. But the recognition of historicity resulted in a fundamental change in approach and perspective. Along with this recognition of historicity, the larger role of language in determining meaning, truth and understanding also has been recognised. In other words, the hermeneutic model examines the fundamental ways language is related to our very being. The historicity of our language, therefore, points to the historicity of all our conceptual parameters and our thinking. In the next chapter, we shall discuss the notion of meaning in the hermeneutic tradition.

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- 2 Ibid, p250
- 3 Cf Wittgenstein, L *TIP*. 4 024
- 4 Frege, Gottlob 1984, *Collected Papers on Mathematics, Logic and Philosophy* (hereafter *CP*), Ed Brian McGuinness, Oxford, Basil Blackwell. p.353.
- 5 The idea of context principle has been introduced by Frege as an important concept to substantiate his logico-linguistic doctrines. Cf Frege, Gottlob: 1959, *The Foundations of Arithmetic, A Logico-Mathematical Enquiry into the Concept of Number*, tr J.L. Austin, Oxford, Blackwell.
- 6 Cf. *Ibid.* §60.
- 7 Cf Wittgenstein, L" *Op Cit.*. 2.1515
- 8 Cf. *Ibid.*, 2.15
- 9 Cf. *Ibid.*, 2 034
10. Cf. Russell, Bertrand: 1992, 'The Philosophy of Logical Atomism' (hereafter PLA), in *Logic and Knowledge* (hereafter LK), London, Routledge
- 11 Cf. Russell, Bertrand: 1992, 'On Denoting', in *LK*. p,5 1 .
- 12 *Ibid.*,p.5l.
- 13 Cf *Ibid*, pp.55-56
- 14 Cf. Wittgenstein, L: *Op, Cit.* 4221
15. Cf. *Ibid.*, 2.021 and 2.0121

- 16 Cf *Ibid*,2.0123
- 17 *Ibid*
- 18 *Ibid*, 2.0124
19. Cf *Ibid.*, 401
- 20 *Ibid*, 2.15
- 21 Cf. *Ibid*, 2.1511
- 22 Cf. *Ibid*, 2 1512
- 23 *Ibid*, 2 1 8
- 24 *Ibid.*, 3031
- 25 Cf. *Ibid.*, 3 032
- 26 This is because, both language and world share the common logical form.
27. Schlick, Moritz- 1981, 'Structure and Content', in Oswald Hanfling (Ed.). *Essential Readings in Logical Positivism*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, p.131.
- 28 Cf Wittgenstein, L: *Op Cit* 4 0031
- 29 Cf. *Ibid*, 4024
- 30 Dummett, Michael. 1973, *Frege Philosophy of Language*, London, Duckworth, p. 105.
- 31 Russell, Bertrand PLA, in *LK* p.186.
- 32 Cf. *Ibid*.
- 33 Russell, Bertrand: 1992, *An Enquiry into Meaning and Truth* (hereafter IMT), London, Routledge, pp. 182-83.
34. Cf Russell, Bertrand: 1992, 'On Propositions: What They Are and How They Mean'(hereafter OP), in *LK*, p.285.
35. Cf. *Ibid*.

- 36 Russell, Bertrand 1992, 'On the Nature of Acquaintance', in *LK*, p. 127.
- 37 Russell, Bertrand OP., p 300
- 38 Cf Russell, Bertrand 1968, *The Problems of Philosophy*, London, Oxford Paperbacks, p28
- 39 Quine, W.V 1976, 'Posits And Reality', in *The Ways of Paradox and Other Essays*, London, Harvard University Press, p.250.
- 40 Quine, W.V.: 1965, *Word and Object* (hereafter WO), Cambridge, The M.I.T. Press, p234
- 41 Schlick, Moritz. *Op Cit.*, p. 132.
- 42 *Ibid*, p.131
- 43 *Cf Ibid*, p 142
44. *Ibid*, p 137
45. *Ibid*, p.140.
- 46 Cf Quine, W.V : 1978, *Philosophy of Logic* (hereafter PL), New Delhi, Prentice-Hall of India Private Limited, p 3.
47. Cf Rorty, Richard' *CIS*, p 5.
- 48 Cf *Ibid.*, p.5.
- 49 Cf Quine, W.V.- 1976, 'Use and Its Place in Meaning' (hereafter UPM), in Avishal Margalit, (Ed.): *Meaning and Use*, Dordrecht, D. Reidel Publishing Company, p.1.
- 50 Quine, W.V.: PL, p4.

Chapter Three

UNDERSTANDING MEANING: THE HERMENEUTIC PROBLEMATIC

1. INTRODUCTION

The representationalists¹ search for meaning was guided by the idea of a common element that makes linguistic understanding a possibility. Meaning, for them, as we have seen, provides a domain in terms of which they can dissolve the differences and disparities that make the uses of language problematic. But hermeneutic tradition, on the other hand, focuses on these differences and disparities and attempts to solve the problem of understanding by analysing the latter. The whole of hermeneutic tradition has consistently patented the term understanding in the process of its development.

From the viewpoint of a philosophy of language the problem of understanding is intimately associated with the problem of meaning. And it is in its approach towards the question of meaning that the hermeneutic tradition differs significantly from that of the representationalists. Representationalism, with the presupposition of an objective semantic element that makes language a picture of the world, looks for the former in a language where the world of facts is perfectly pictured. The representationalists thus idealised the language of science where the representational functions of language are more prominent. The rest of human language, they conceived as imperfect and therefore, not suitable for objective communication. We have seen how thinkers like Wittgenstein, Quine and the like have undermined this conception. What acquires prominence is the crucial role the various uses of language have in determining meaning and its comprehension. While meaning is connected with the situations of use, understanding is associated with the perspectival horizon of each language user, a

conception that raises serious doubts about the very idea of identifying objective scientific understanding with the understanding of language in general.

The hermeneutic problem of understanding meaning has originated from the problem of understanding the "understanding of historical text". Here the cognitive intellect is not exposed to a set of objective complex phenomena, the simple constituents of which can be successfully cognised by decoding them with the logic of representationalism. Moreover, here language hardly derives its significance by means of its competence in representing an objective state of affair. The intentional and imaginative categories have valuable roles to play here. And an active presence of these categories prevents the possibility of an immediate objective comprehension of what is being expressed. The problem of understanding in this context has to be evaluated keeping this factor in view.

The representationalists with their prototype of scientific language, naturally directed their enquiry towards the factor which ensures objective communication and comprehension. This is essential, they thought, since the very practice of science derived its justification from such a conception. The notion of semantic content or meaning provided them this justification. But such a hard core notion of objectivity is a practical ideal for scientific practice and has an application within that sphere of activity alone. In other words, it is never a central idea as far as the day to day practice of language use is concerned. And hence a theory of understanding, which has to provide an account of the whole of linguistic practice cannot limit itself to the conceptual parameters laid down by the representational model.

This recognition led the philosophers of the hermeneutic tradition to turn away from the language of science to other forms of language-games where the representational model has the least possible application. Schleiermacher specifically deals with the issues that are relevant in our attempting to understand the literal documents of antiquity and Wilhelm Dilthey seeks to analyse the very activity of understanding the historical and cultural phenomena. Here the object of reference radically differs from that of natural science, both in terms of nature and in kind. Unlike the object of study of science, which claims to have a transcendental significance, the historical and cultural phenomena exist cut off from us, making their objective comprehension impossible. There exist an obvious temporal and socio-cultural gap that makes these language games different from what we are familiar with. Dilthey thus makes a distinction between pre-hermeneutic understanding and hermeneutic understanding, as in the latter the encounter is with a cultural tradition which is foreign or alien to us. This is to recognise, as we have seen in the first chapter, an altogether different kind of knowledge which takes into account the organic nature of human actions and not merely sticking to the observation model and the causal explanation paradigm. All these ultimately point towards the limitations of the representational model as far as the problem of understanding is concerned. As Dilthey says, "... the uniformities which can be established about society fall far short of the laws which can be established about nature based on the certainty of spatial relations and the properties of motion".¹

This chapter is dedicated to examine the evolution of the hermeneutic model of understanding meaning. It therefore, explicitly analyses the notion of historicity, which lies at the core of the model. Subsequently, the different concept of knowledge that becomes relevant in this situation also will be examined,

2. RECOGNITION OF HISTORICITY

The factor of historicity has to be accounted for properly in order to explain the nature of understanding and man's possible encounters with language and reality. The recognition of historicity as a necessary factor that intervenes in all our interactive encounters, naturally calls for a different conception of knowledge as well as a different notion of understanding. All human endeavours, be it scientific, religious or aesthetic, necessarily have their ultimate foundation in the day to day lives of individuals. This pre-theoretical context of life is the basis of all actions, experiences and judgements. It is the concrete life that makes human acts and projects legitimate. As Husserl puts it:

... . the life-world, for us who wakingly live in it, is always already there, existing in advance for us, the "ground" of all praxis whether theoretical or extratheoretical. The world is pregiven to us, the waking, always somehow practically interested subjects, not occasionally but always and necessarily as the universal field of all actual and possible praxis, as horizon.²

This factor places the entire wealth of human praxis historically and culturally situated. Even scientific practices which consists of objective categorisations are grounded in this fundamental life-world and therefore, represent the various projects that arise from within it as forms of knowledge that reflect the concerns of specific communities and serve their needs.

Dilthey develops a peculiar concept of knowledge from these Husserlian insights by focusing on the dialectical relationship between human praxis and the historically situated life-world. He adopts this model to explain the nature of historical reality as a process of evolution

out of the human intentional acts and also to explicate the phenomenon of knowledge acquisition in relation with historical reality. It is a process which involves mutual interaction and constitution. This factor makes the historical reality essentially different from the natural phenomenon, which is approached by a scientist objectively from outside.³

According to Dilthey, what make the historical phenomenon distinct are the intentional and imaginative categories that are at work for its constitution. As Richard Campbell points out, history consists of intentional human actions and natural events are events which might happen to people but are of historical significance only by virtue of their relation to the former.⁴

An examination of historicity thus has to start with an analysis of the essential nature of intentional acts. One can say that the historical reality lacks the precision and completeness of the factual world which is the subject matter of natural sciences. As we have seen in the first chapter, historical reality necessarily escapes the abstract conceptual grip of scientific enquiry. It is constituted out of the above mentioned intentional human acts and therefore it goes on making and remaking its own import. The experiences that result in historical knowledge form part of a whole, establishing an organic relationship between the past, present and the future. All experiences of the historical reality are influenced by the past experiences one had, as well as by the anticipation of future possibilities. New experiences suggest revision in the ways in which the past is understood and the future is anticipated. The anticipation of the future, in turn, stems from the past experiences. The experiences of the historical reality and the very possibility of historical knowledge in short, are constituted within such a circle of experience, interpretation and revision.⁵

To be precise, the historical phenomenon cannot be approached in a detached manner. The being of man is organically related to it. All these imply a different kind of experience and knowledge for the historical phenomenon. It is because historical reality is a process which is under constant motion through interpretation and revision, and has to be understood by the human being who is also a party contributing in its making. This form of knowledge radically differs from that which relies on the subject - object relational pattern. Dilthey has derived insight from Husserl's phenomenology where a distinction is made between two forms of experience, *erlebnis* and *erfahrung*. Unlike *erfahrung*, which are the forms of experience that are characteristic of natural sciences (gained by imposing mathematical categories and physical laws on the natural world), *erlebnis* refers to the lived experiences, which are characterised by the "subjective" response to the world. The latter form of experiences are given immediately to the consciousness as things themselves in their subjective modes of givenness.⁶ According to Husserl, *erlebnis* present themselves as an already structured meaningful unity. This notion of *erlebnis* is relevant in the study of the historical phenomenon since it offers an anti-thesis to the atomistic epistemology which is directed exclusively towards the natural phenomena. This insight raises objections against the epistemological conception of an absolute split of the subject from the object and also against the notion of detached value-free observation. These two concepts are extremely pivotal as far as the question of understanding historical phenomenon is concerned. Such experiences constitute the very heart of the historical phenomena. This is to adopt an entirely different approach towards the natural scientific endeavour. An observation of A. T. Nuyen makes this point clear:

natural science is not concerned with the *meaning* that an object has for the person who is investigating it nor indeed with the *meaning of that* investigation for the investigator, not just as a matter of value but as a matter of fact.

To be precise, since the intentional categories of man constitute the very nature of the historical phenomena, it cannot be approached in a detached manner. As an entity which constitutes the historical phenomena, the being of man finds itself as a product of the same historical phenomena. Needless to say, the casual explanation model which is being successfully employed in dealing with the natural phenomena falls short in dealing with the phenomena that are historical. Natural sciences could conveniently proceed with such a model assisted by mathematical and ahistorical principles. Dilthey thus points out that the world of natural sciences, as Kant and the representationalists say, presents a wide range of objects for our understanding which are necessarily ahistorical. Because of this ahistorical nature those objects could be easily categorised by the cognitive intellect and could be made available for objective explanations. But, as Dilthey points out, the reality, which we encounter in the human sciences, is widely centered by intentional and emotional categories of concrete human beings. Hence we cannot relegate them into a non-self category. The fact that nature could be viewed as non-self and as constituted of impersonal objects (personally uncentered) makes the natural phenomena ahistorical and thus they could be categorised by means of mathematical abstractions.⁸

3. TIME AND HISTORICITY

The notion of intentional human action further points to another cardinal insight which reasserts historicity. It is the apparent independent nature of such acts. They are not originating

out of something which can be designated as a fixed human nature, which ultimately determines all the motives and actions of human beings. On the other hand, they derive their momentum from the very historical phenomena which are constituted by them. Heidegger thus develops this idea further by explaining the essential "way of being" of man. The being of man is thus conceived as evolving out of a constant self-making process. In other words, instead of *a priori* determined by a metaphysical essence, the being of man is constituted out of a constant self-making process, which is actually a process of becoming. It is a process which never achieves completion and hence proceeds endlessly in the domain of time. Heidegger thus interprets being in terms of temporality. The horizon of being, according to him, is time.⁹ It brings together in a peculiar way the three dimensions of time, the past, the present and the future. The present is formed out of the past and also projects the future to integrate the whole of its being. The past as well as the projection of the future constitute the present which reveals through a process of self-making

But this process of integration that happens in the self-making activity is never a completely independent activity performed by the individual. This process, on the other hand, necessarily happens in a particular situation; natural as well as historical. The natural situations do not suggest any significant change in the structural movement of the self-making process which reveals itself in the domain of time. But the historical situations, being themselves constituted out of human intentional acts, which involve the self-making and integrating acts, penetrate this temporality to determine the momentum of such acts. In other words, there exists a dialectical relationship between the being of man and the historical situations where he finds himself. The being of man as well as the historical situation where he finds himself is the

products of his self-making and integrating acts. This process which continues endlessly involves all activities of understanding meaning and constituting meaning.

In short, man's being and his situations are intimately interconnected. Human existence, as Heidegger contends, is irretrievably being-in-the-world. The possibility of detaching it from the world, as it is done in the Cartesian method (and also in the method of science), is not final and real. Reiterating this fundamental temporality of man's being and situatedness of all his endeavours, Gadamer makes this aspect more clear by introducing the idea of tradition. He says that man's being is essentially situated in a tradition. This concept is employed to describe, not only the essential finitude and historicity of human existence but also to make clear how all human endeavours presuppose interpretative encounter. We share fundamental prejudices with tradition, says Gadamer.¹⁰

This situation invites certain riddles which are in need of immediate attention. If meaning and understanding are associated with the dialectical relation between the human self-making process and the historical situation, then there cannot be an understanding of the text in the sense of objectively comprehending its meaning. This is because, meaning of the text in this context, depends on the nature of the dialectical relationship which will be different in different historical situations. The textual meaning, in other words, escapes the structure of this relationship. But then the text cannot have any meaning that is not revealed in the dialectical process.

This situation, therefore, demands a total reconstruction of the concepts of meaning and understanding. The representationalists did not encounter this issue, as they could envisage the availability of a common objective sphere of semantic entities, which in turn, necessarily points back to the logical structure shared by both language and world. Meanings are objective entities in their framework and hence their comprehension happens immediately and directly. But once historicity is recognised, this model of direct and immediate comprehension of meanings stands challenged. Any discourse on understanding meaning has to provide satisfactory accounts of human historicity. What is needed is an interpretative approach. Comprehension of meanings, thus, can no more be accomplished in a detached way, as it requires the interpretative interaction between the text and the one who tries to comprehend its meaning. The text, itself is a historical product. The interpreter also occupies a peculiar situation in history.

Interpretation, by its very nature, eventually calls for a creative approach on the part of the interpreter. This factor forms the central thesis of the hermeneutic model of understanding meaning. Now the question is, how does interpretation take us to the understanding of textual meaning? The answer to this problem presupposes a clarification of the notion of meaning that is being propounded. Regarding the way this notion is conceived and the way it was linked with interpretation, there appeared to be at least two diverse approaches, and correspondingly two different conceptions of understanding meaning. If we take the text as having a definite meaning, then it is very much apparent that historicity as an unavoidable factor prevents us *from* comprehending it. In this context it can be legitimately argued that an understanding of the textual meaning requires an overcoming of this historicity, so that the real meaning of the text can be viewed in its own light. But if we emphasise the self-making process and the dialectical

relationship between it and the historical situations, the very notion of textual meaning will appear in a new light. Meaning here does not rely on the language of the text, or on the subjective contentions of the one who is trying to understand it. It rather appears as the property of the discourse which is the result of the dialectical and dialogical relationship between the two poles

A discussion of these two approaches is vital in our examination of the hermeneutical model of understanding meaning, as both give different accounts of how meaning is related to historicity. The first approach, more or less inherits a notion of meaning which is much in line with the traditional conception. Here there is agreement with the representationalists and the fundamental beliefs of the latter regarding the status of meaning are hardly challenged. But a total paradigm shift is being envisaged when meaning, its comprehension and truth are made historical.

4. HISTORICITY AND THE METAPHYSICS OF MEANING

We have seen how the representationalists conceived the notion of meaning in tune with the Platonic assumptions of fixed and unchanging essences. The notion of proposition provided them the conceptual foundation to posit a common entity as the meaning of linguistic expressions. Frege went even further, and by locating senses in the third realm, proclaimed the most radical form of the semantic invariance doctrine. The common assumption shared by all of them is the idea of fixed and unchanging meaning.

This conception evidently is the core idea that led to the formulation of a metaphysical theory of meaning. As far as our investigation is concerned, this conception presupposes two things

- 1) Meanings are fixed and unchanging
- 2) Meanings can be objectively comprehended.

The idea of fixed and determinate meaning ensures the possibility of methodologically isolating them from the multitude of contexts where language finds use.

Meanings are, according to the realists, independent of human actions and human cognition. The psychological counterpart of the cognitive process has no relevance as far as the understanding of meaning is concerned. Frege, for example, propagates his semantic realism by making meaning even independent of language. Located in the Platonic realm they make themselves known to the cognitive intellect which is sensitive to capture the abstract logical entities. Wittgenstein who made meaning the representational content of language, though did not isolate it from language, proclaimed its independence from the subjective acts of human beings by making language subservient to the structure of logic. The neo-empiricists, though made experience and psychological activity of cognition central to their theoretical framework, were also eager to make the net result of understanding meaning subjectively neutral and thus proclaimed the thesis of meaning invariance and objective understanding. It is possible to propagate such a semantic realism in the representational framework because, the phenomena with which they have associated meaning and understanding are the natural phenomena. Language, for them, is thus a talk about the world, a world from which they can methodologically isolate themselves in order to make the latter subject to impartial observation,

This methodological detachment ultimately enabled them to isolate the independent representational content of language and comprehend it objectively.

But in the purview of the human sciences, the notion of historicity poses an immediate threat to such an idea of methodological isolation and consequently to the idea of understanding meaning objectively. We have seen, to what extent the dialectical relationship between the human self-making process and the historical situation are relevant in the context of understanding human phenomena. In short, the factor of historicity necessarily intervenes in all our cognitive enterprises, and this in turn, results in a 'distancing' of the object of understanding from us. This situation led many to suspect whether genuine knowledge about the historical and cultural phenomena was possible at all. The hermeneutic model tries to prove that this is possible. Dilthey thus starts with the assumption that there is knowledge and truth in the historical phenomena and the meaning of historical texts can be objectively comprehended by adopting a methodological procedure by means of which the historicity of both the text as well as the one who is trying to understand it can be dissolved.

But for this, meanings have to be conceived as determinate and unchanging. Here the text's historical belongingness poses a threat. Meanings, therefore, have to be shown as existing independently of the text's historicity. An ahistorical location has to be identified for them outside the syntactical arrangement and the conventional usage pattern of the linguistic signs. In short, meanings have to be placed well outside the linguistic system, which is necessarily a historical product.

The representationalists, as we have seen, could pursue with their project of semantic realism, because a doctrine of semantic invariance forms the core idea of their theory. But it is evident from the very outset that the semantic invariance doctrine cannot be consistently pursued when the problem of understanding the historical texts is encountered. Yet an objective location has to be identified for them. Or in other words, it is required that meaning is always identical with itself. As E D Hirsch puts it.

If a meaning can change its identity and in fact does, then we have no norm for judging whether we are encountering the real meaning in a changed form or some spurious meaning that is pretending to be the one we seek. ... To the interpreter this lack of a stable normative principle is equivalent to the indeterminacy of meaning.

This view subscribes to the traditional metaphysical conception of meaning. Understanding presupposes such an idea of meaning, since only then can we suppose the possibility of reproduction.

This requirement further demands an explanation of the relationship between meaning and the language through which it is reproduced. Language of the text, being a historical product, makes the problem further complicated. The fact that textual language is indebted to the human intentional and imaginative categories and to the human self-making process that constitute the historical phenomena, points to the important ways in which meaning **is** related to the intentional life of the author. Dilthey thus identifies the human subjectivity as the location of textual meaning, following Schleiermacher who placed it in the total intentional life of the author. Hirsch reasserts these insights and proclaims that meaning is an affair of consciousness

and not of words.¹² Meaning, according to him is whatever someone has willed to convey by means of language.¹³

This process of locating meaning in the author's intentional life is, in effect, a process of taking meaning outside the language of the text and therefore, outside the historical and self-making process. Meaning is thus made ahistorical

But this idea does not imply that meaning is an exclusive product of the author's subjective will. That would eventually have made meanings non-comprehensible, owing to the unshareable nature of human subjectivity. Meanings, though located in the intentional life of the author, have to be somehow made objectively comprehensible. To materialise this, Schleiermacher attempts to show that there is an intimate relationship between the subjective and objective meaning (individuality and totality), by means of establishing such a relationship, both in the linguistic and in the psychological realms. Schleiermacher writes:

.. every person has a susceptibility to intuiting others, in addition to his sharing many human characteristics. This itself appears to depend on the fact that everyone shares certain universal traits.¹⁴

He found that all those factors that made up and determined the life of the author were pivotal to construct such a bridge. This included the author's total historical situation as well as the linguistic categories that fashioned his conceptual and intentional lives.

Meaning should not be searched for independently in a particular unit of language, as linguistic signs do not have any life in isolation. A word in isolation thus lacks any independent meaning, and it has to be viewed in relation with other words in the passage in which it makes its appearance. This passage again has to be further related to the total work, which derives its significance only from the context of a literary tradition of its time. Linguistically, textual meaning has to be searched for in the total literary tradition, where the work is essentially related with other works with which it shares certain common features in terms of historical contexts and situations.¹⁵

This emphasis on totality makes Schleiermacher's doctrine distinct from the various versions of intentional semantics, which also relates meaning to the author's intentional life. He no longer conceives life as a mere vehicle or instrument. In the framework of intentionalism meanings are the exclusive products of the subjective intentions of the purposive users of language. This is to deny both language and meaning their autonomous status.

Yet, the text is not understood in terms of its objective contents. It has the nature of an artistic thought which is always individualistic. Though Schleiermacher grants language its structural independence by means of viewing it as essentially related to literary tradition, the meanings expressed through it are not completely independent of the author who makes those utterances. Meaning, in other words, is not exhausted with the linguistic signs employed to convey them.¹⁶ These signs require primarily a unifying subject to give them life by performing the necessary act of intending which is necessary to make the textual unity a possibility. This reference to individuality is the mark of an artistic thought. The linguistic system and the wide

range of vocabulary it provides are peculiarly organised by the author in terms of his unifying insight. As Gadamer puts it.

What has to be understood here is not a common thought about an object, but individual thought by its very nature is a free construction and the free expression of an individual being¹⁷

Thus the author is the ultimate locus of meaning, as his total intentional life is behind all his acts of intending by means of language. This intentional life, yet, is not an isolated island. All individuality is conceived as a manifestation of universal life and hence everyone carries a tiny bit of everyone else within himself.¹⁸ Meaning, thus is ultimately located in the total intentional life of the author, which in turn, is determined by the totality of his inner and outer lives.

Understanding the meaning of the text in this context consists in reaching out the author's total intentional life. The possibility of such an act is assured from the very outset, as Schleiermacher conceives the individual as the manifestation of the universal. But practically this process has to begin with an understanding of the discourse to which both the author and the interpreter are intimately related during the process of textual interaction. In Schleiermacher's words.

As every discourse has a two-point reference, to the whole of language and to the entire thought of its creator, so all understanding of speech consists of two elements [*Momenten*] - understanding the speech as it derives from the language and as it derives from the mind of the thinker.¹⁹

We have seen how Schleiermacher located meaning in the inner and outer lives of the author, which themselves refer back to the two-point reference of language and thought.

Since meaning is located in the total intentional life of the author, understanding consists in equating oneself with the author. This identification with the author can be materialised only by understanding the discourse, which being a manifested thought, has the two-point reference. This process thus consists in a search for meaning, both in the linguistic and in the psychic realms. This search is to be carried out by means of subjective and objective reconstructions. The objective reconstruction chiefly consists in a linguistic talent which demands a comprehensive knowledge of the language as the author and his original audience used it. In short, it requires knowledge of the literary tradition to which the text belongs. The subjective reconstruction calls for a divinatory method where the interpreter imaginatively transforms himself to the author's inner life²⁰. Since both the realms together contain the textual meaning comprehensively, it can be successfully comprehended by employing the comparative and divinatory methods. Schleiermacher thus asserts that, by means of these methods the interpreter can understand the discourse, just as well and even better than its creator.²¹

Meanings are thus made independent of the subjective will of the author who intended them. Schleiermacher here propounds a doctrine of objectivity of meanings. Understanding is the interaction of the linguistic and the psychic elements. The interpreter by employing the two methods can then locate meanings in the total intentional life of the author. He is in a better position than the author to understand the discourse which has a two-point reference. This is because, the latter's act of creation happens more or less unconsciously, as the linguistic

categories he inherits and his peculiar psychic constitution influence him in the most natural ways, about which he himself is unaware. These factors may add more meanings into his acts, which an interpreter can decipher by means of the application of a comprehensive methodology. With the comparative and divinatory methods he can conclusively establish the required relationship between individuality and totality.

What is central to this explanation is the transcendental presupposition that individuality is only a manifestation of the universal life. It is the individuality that makes the text peculiar and distinct and also poses problems to the interpreter in grasping the textual meanings. The author's act of intending is vital for the creation of the text and intending is nothing but an act of individuality. But this problem can be overcome since the individuality of the author could **be** reduced to the universal life to which both the author and the interpreter equally belong. The problem for Schleiermacher is, as Gadamer observes, not that of historical obscurity, but the obscurity of the "Thou".²² In other words, historicity and its overcoming are never raised as genuine problems by him.

But resolving the problem of understanding meaning of historical texts leaves out many things unexplained. Therefore it fails to make a correct evaluation of the ways in which meanings are interwoven with the historical process, and the ways in which the intentional acts of the author are related to the latter. Dilthey thus conducts a detail examination of the act of intending of the author, which ultimately leads to the creation of textual meaning.

Dilthey redefines the connection between individuality and totality, taking Schleiermacher's insights to their logical conclusions. Schleiermacher, while discussing the

problem of relating discourse with understanding, speculated about the availability of a circular movement. The comparative method he suggested called for an understanding of the linguistic meaning of the text in the light of the whole linguistic tradition. And the psychological method he propounded asserted that the significance of the discourse was located in the totality of the author's life. The individuality thus related to the totality, itself had contributed to the creation of the latter. Understanding textual meaning, therefore, necessarily, involves such a circular movement. This is the culminating point of viewing the problem of understanding as a question of apprehending the individual creativity in the light of totality.

But Schleiermacher, as we have seen, further moved towards transcendentalism and ultimately concluded the possibility of universal life which was ahistorical. Dilthey, on the other hand, was not prepared to dissolve historicity with such a transcendentalism. He made the circular movement of the whole and the part relevant, not only for the understanding of textual meaning, but also for the very creation of the latter. This circular movement constitutes the very core of the historical process,

The historical reality, as we noted earlier, itself is a creation of the human intentional acts. Dilthey proceeds by highlighting the disparities between the spiritual and the natural worlds²³. In the former, unlike the latter, the one who is studying history is himself the one who has created it. This is to present the notion of the given in a new light. The historical reality is not something which is 'given' to the human intellect for immediate objective comprehension by means of conceptualisation and psychic categorisations. What is given here to the human mind is something which it has created itself. Historical reality, in other words, is necessarily a

process which is constantly under the making and remaking of its own import. It thus lacks the precision and completeness of the factual world. This incompleteness is due to the constant circular movement out of which it is constituted. The historical reality, therefore, is related to the human mind in the most intimate manner. On the one hand, it is the context and source of all the acts of intending. These acts would become insignificant and directionless in the absence of such a sphere of activity. But the historical world itself is nothing but a world which has originated out of the individual intentional acts. In other words, it is the world which is constituted and formed by the human mind. This idea is the foundational assumption in the entire thought of Dilthey.

The circular movement which relates the human intentional acts with historical reality thus conclusively locates the textual meanings in the mind of the author. The author's act of intending thus consists of two activities.

- 1) The act of experiencing the historical reality.
- 2) The act of recognising its own role in the constitution of the historical reality.

The activity of intending, which is the source of textual meaning is the result of the human mind's experiencing the historical reality. It is this act of experience that forms the basis of historical knowledge. Historical knowledge, therefore, is limited to experience. This idea constitutes a significant moment in Dilthey's thought. It coincides with his rejection of Hegel's philosophy of history which envisages a purely rational construction of world history.²⁴

The whole programme thus makes an appeal to Husserl's intentionality doctrine and the implied notion of experience. The act of experience that precedes historical knowledge should

not be identified with the notion of experience that was relevant in scientific investigations. When Dilthey speaks of experience, he refers to consciousness in its indivisible form. Experience here does not exhaust with the objective categories of detached observation. It, therefore, is not separated into an act and a content. All consciousness is consciousness of something, says Husserl, and the thing and the act of consciousness forms a fundamental unity which makes experience possible.

In his search for a theory of experience in the framework of the intentionality doctrine, Husserl came to recognise this vital feature of human consciousness. He wanted to undermine the sensualism attached to the notion of experience. Experience, according to him, was not confined purely to sensations which are necessarily private, and were directed outwards. Experience, therefore, would appear as intentional and was related to things other than sensations. For the hermeneutic model which tries to give a satisfactory account for the notion of objective knowledge in human sciences, this concept of intentionality and experience thus offered a breakthrough in its attempt to undermine the universal validity claim of the model of atomistic epistemology.

The most vital feature of this intentionality thesis is the view that, within this framework of experience there is a structural indivisibility between the subject and the object of experience. This feature makes it an ideal model in explaining the notion of experience that makes historical knowledge possible. The historical consciousness, as Dilthey points out, does not entertain the epistemological subject-object bipolarity. It does not allow the sustenance of a subjective entity

with objective universal categories. Husserl asks to take the conscious life completely without prejudices, just as what it quite immediately gives itself, as itself, to be. He continues:

Here, in immediate givenness, one finds anything but color data, tone data, other "sense" data or data of feeling, will, etc.; that is, one finds none of those things which appear in traditional psychology, taken for granted to be immediately given from the start. Instead, one finds, as even Descartes did (naturally we ignore his other purposes), the *cogito*, *intentionality*, in these those familiar forms which, like everything actual in the surrounding world find their expression in language. . . . Here we find nothing other than "consciousness of" - Consciousness in the broadest sense, which is still to be investigated in its whole scope and its modes.²⁵

The internal relationship between the acts and objects of consciousness is conclusively asserted. Neither the acts can be separated from the objects, nor the objects can be detached from the acts. This idea of an intimate relationship between the subject and object, therefore, is an anti-thesis to the notion of experience that is idealised by the atomistic epistemology of representationalism. Dilthey employed this concept of experience to explain the process of individual historical being experiencing and assimilating the significance of the historical process. This process of experience is, at the same time, a process of creation. This amounts to a circular movement that explains, on the one hand, the individual acts of intending in relation with the phenomenological relationship with the historical reality, and, on the other hand, the very evolution of historical reality out of such intentional acts. Since the acts of intending is the creative endeavour in this circular process and since these acts are performed by the human mind, Dilthey asserts that the historical world is a world constituted by the human mind.²⁴ In this process of assimilation and creation the historical reality exhibits a continuity of its own. Owing to the human mind for its very origination this continuity exhibited by the historical reality is necessarily a psychological continuity.

The individual acts of intending are thus located in this continuity and they occupy a definite place in it. In this sense, meanings, to be understood are, situated in the particular historicity of the author. It is removed from us in terms of both time and history. The act of intending, therefore, is not an absolutely independent act of the individual. Rather, it is an act which conforms to a historical situation which is unique and peculiar.

The intimate relationship between the author's intentional acts and his historical situation helps Dilthey to escape the extreme subjectivistic conclusions even after maintaining the author's mind as the real and sole locus of textual meaning. The way the author's historicity forms part of the continuity of the historical process ensures that the former is not an isolated moment in the eternal flux of history, but is rather a part of the chain which is related to the whole by means of vital inner connections. This situation consequently justifies the availability of determinate meanings which can be objectively comprehended. To understand meaning is, then, to locate a particular part of the chain - the historicity of the author - which contributes to the continuity. Each part of the chain has its own individuality, though it forms part of the whole. Similarly, each period in history is unique and exists of its own. This will explain the uniqueness of the author's creativity

In short, meaning is located in the author's individual creative act, which is subsequently related to his historical situation and to the continuous process of the existence of historical reality. Here, understanding meaning calls for a process of reliving the author's intentional life. It is a reproduction of the author's meaning by imaginatively transforming to his historical situation.²¹ Schleiermacher contended that such a reliving was possible, as both the author as

well as the interpreter partake in the common universal life. Due to this participation, the individuality could be consistently dissolved in the universality. But, for Dilthey, the problem of interpretation is how to overcome historicity that separates the author from us. To relive the original experiences of the author is to make a direct access to the author's historicity which incidentally lies removed from the interpreter.

5. UNDERSTANDING MEANING

Since meanings are determinate and fixed, to understand it is to understand it in itself, that is, to comprehend it objectively. Some representationalists, for instance, took the factual reality as the represented data, and subsequently ascribed sense experience a vital role in the comprehension of meaning. Deriving insights from the model of natural sciences, they asserted that, the problem of meaning was linked up with the problem of empirical knowledge and this was demonstrated in the light of a continuity that was the result of the necessary causal relationship persisting in the natural world.

Dilthey faithfully inherited the notion of objectivity handed down by the epistemological tradition and attempted to develop an alternate version of epistemology with a different notion of experience and knowledge.²⁹ What was central to this conception was the necessary homogeneity of the subject and object of the epistemological poles

Moreover, the causal relations appear irrelevant here. But objective knowledge, be it about natural facts or about historical facts, presupposes a peculiar structural continuity in the light of which certain necessary conceptual connections are established. The empiricist

epistemology appeals to this apparently visible structural continuity of the factual reality and articulates it in terms of casual connections. But the hermeneutic model deals with the language which is no more representational and therefore, points to the historical continuity, which does not conform to the cause-effect pattern, but is by its very nature, a psychological continuity. The structural patterns of this continuity, as we have seen, are not determined by the temporal succession, but are the products of certain internal and spiritual connections.

But an epistemological project aiming at objective knowledge, cannot do away with certain assumptions. It has to primarily make a bifurcation between the subjective and the objective poles. This will have to be followed by an explanation of the way the two poles are brought together. Dilthey thus places the author's historicity at one pole and the interpreter at the other pole. Representational epistemology connects the two poles by referring back to the possible experience of a common factual world. Dilthey's counterpart for this assumption is the notion of historical continuity and the continuity exhibited by life. The historicity of the interpreter can be overcome because of this continuity.

Dilthey speaks about taking a reflective posture towards the tradition that lies separated from the interpreter, owing to his historical situatedness. It is the ability to reflect on the voice that reaches from the past by successfully locating it in its original context. The real task is to practically carry out this procedure, since the phenomena we try to interpretatively comprehend are, as it were not earlier, the data which address us in our concrete life situations. It is the reflective posture adopted by the interpreter that enables him to reproduce the original import of the text as it is intended by the author.³⁰ In other words, interpretation aims at comprehending

every historical moment in itself, and not by simply submitting it to the measure of the historical situation that conditions the interpreter. The interpreter, therefore, has to disengage himself from his own situation in history. As Gadamer observes:

For Dilthey, the real task of historical consciousness is a victory gained over its own relativity, thus justifying objective knowledge in this domain.³¹

This victory is achievable because historical consciousness is not a mere unreflective relation with itself and with the tradition to which it belongs. Historical consciousness has the ability to free itself from the conceptual parameters prescribed by understanding; it has of its own life. Moreover, the essential nature of historical reality also assures the objective comprehension of any period in history by means of re-living. It is the historical reality, which is the foundational background where the individual expresses and discovers himself. And what constitute the historical reality are precisely the objectifications of life. The category of life comprises of all kinds of way or style of life, as well as the family, civil society and law. Everything which the interpreter encounters in his concrete historical situations is understood as the expressive forms of life. It is from this primary category of life that concepts that make historical knowledge an intelligible possibility are derived. Life is said to be unfolding itself and forming itself in intelligible unities. It is the ultimate stuff of historical reality that is formed out of individual human intentional acts.

A more detailed analysis of the hermeneutic model is not our immediate concern. What is central to this standpoint has already been discussed. On the one hand, it imposes the traditional approach towards meanings and its arguments target to legitimise a different concept

of knowledge and understanding which conceptually appears as an anti-thesis to the representational outlook. It, therefore, introduces the notion of interpretation as a necessary requirement to understand textual meanings which are peculiarly rooted in the author's intentions and also in an alien historical horizon.

Yet, in harmony with the representational conception, this model conceives textual meanings as fixed and determinate, in order to assure its objective comprehension. The recognition of historicity posed a threat before them, as it would undermine the possibility of objective comprehension of meanings. Overcoming historicity, therefore, becomes a necessary requirement. To ensure the objective comprehension of meanings, a location for them has to be identified, which is independent of any historical belongingness - neither of the author nor of the interpreter. The representational model thus makes meaning extra-linguistic. But such a situation may make the relationship between language, meaning and understanding accidental.

We have, therefore, come to a point where we can more clearly analyse the different concept of meaning that acquires prominence, when we move away from the logic of representationalism. It directly deals with the role of language in determining meaning and in comprehending the latter.

6. LANGUAGE AND MEANING:

We have seen that the hermeneutic problem of understanding meaning conceives the alienness of the text as a central issue. It was the enquiry directed towards the nature of this

alienness that led to the recognition of historicity, and this consequently pointed towards the necessity of an interpretative approach.

The aim of interpretation is to achieve an access to the meanings by means of establishing a relationship between the text and the interpreter, and the essential medium of this relationship is nothing other than language. Here we come across a dual issue. First since language formed the medium of interpretation, we had to be clear how meanings to be understood were related to the former. Secondly, what would be the role of language in the process of understanding meaning? The answer to the second question follows from the answer to the first question

The relationship between meaning and language can be explained in two ways:

- 1) Meaning is outside language as it is extra-linguistic
- 2) Meaning is an essential property of language.

If we take meaning as extra-linguistic, then the relationship between meaning and language will become accidental. Traditional theories of meaning and most of the representationalists conceived meanings as extra-linguistic - fixed somewhere outside language. The purpose was to free meanings from getting entangled with the arbitrary conventional uses of language. In short, if we could find an objective sphere and fix meanings in it, then we could overcome the problem of meanings getting determined by the historically arbitrary ways in which language was used.

The representational tradition, thus, postulates the notion of proposition which guarantees the determinism of linguistic meanings in the midst of the multitude of ways and contexts they

find expression in language. We have seen how Frege located the senses or thoughts in a Platonic realm in order to proclaim their unchanging nature. The fact that ordinary language hesitates to accommodate such semantic determinism prompts them to envisage the availability of a logically perfect language which can represent the semantic contents deterministically. Similarly Dilthey, following Schleiermacher, conceived a fixed domain to locate meanings - the author's intentional life or his historicity - to propagate semantic determinism. Here also meaning is made ahistorical and, therefore, independent of language which is a historical product.

But this objectivist position cannot deny the fundamental fact that language is the only common medium which brings together the text and the interpreter who are situated in two different historical and cultural horizons. What is reflected in all these objectivist doctrines is a dualist conception of language where the latter is being conceived as a medium. Accordingly, language is conceived here as a medium by means of which meaning is communicated from one pole to another. A well-known analogy is with air which functions as a medium for sound waves to travel from one pole to another. The medium cannot be part of the message communicated as it is only a vehicle. Dilthey and other objectivists in the hermeneutic tradition thus came to conceive language of the text as a vehicle, through which the author's intentional meanings are transmitted. Schleiermacher even argued for the learning of the literary tradition to which the text belonged.

But there is at the same time this language of the interpreter which has got its own historical roots. Representationalism dissolved this problem, as for them the essential logical

structure of language was common to both the speaker and the hearer. Dilthey who emphasises historicity could not adhere to a similar assumption. He, therefore, had to assume the possibility of the interpreter temporally switching over by means of imagination to a different historical epoch. by freeing himself from the conceptual grip of his language, in order to assimilate the author's meaning in itself. This was possible, because, the fundamental order of things in the historical reality conformed to a psychological order, determined by the human mind, and all linguistic expressions could be conceived in principle as objectifications of life. Meanings, therefore, are not essentially related to language, though the latter is essential for their transmission

But if we ascribe a more vital role to language in the determination of meaning - meaning as an essential property of language - we immediately encounter certain other problems. This is especially because, if meaning is the essential property of language, then the linguistic categories we inherit will have an essential bearing upon all our thoughts and actions. They will necessarily intervene in all our interactions with the text. These inherited linguistic categories are not something from which we can detach ourselves according to our will. They are rather related to the very way of our being, or in the words of Heidegger, language is the home of being

This leads to the recognition of a more appropriate dimension of human historicity. Neither the author of the text, nor the interpreter can come out of their respective historical horizons and free themselves from the linguistic categories that determine their very existence. And if this is correct, then we cannot raise the issue of objectively comprehending the author's intended meanings. There cannot be a meaning for the author in the subjective sense, as it will

be a product of the latter's historicity - his way of being in the world, as Heidegger puts it. Similarly, the interpreter finds himself in a peculiar historical situation and cannot go out of it to make an access to the author's intentional life and historicity. His interaction with the text, in this context, necessarily involves presuppositions which are derived from his historicity and linguistic categories. This will simultaneously explain the very nature of his way of being in the world.

The nature of this way of being - *Dasein*, in the language of Heidegger - necessarily involves interaction and will ultimately explain how meaning is located in the linguistic interaction, and not in the language of the text or the interpreter. Textual interpretation is a continuous process, which not only happens in the historical context where the text finds its original expression. The language of the text contains the possibility of being a subject of interpretative encounter, a process according to Gadamer, presupposes a dialogic process. In the context of such an interaction, meaning cannot be conceived as being attached, either to the language of the text or to that of the interpreter exclusively. It rather has to be understood as evolving out of the dialogic interaction between the text and the interpreter. This process can no more be a matter of reproduction, as it was conceived by the objectivism nor can it be a matter of submission to the interpreter's subjectivistic and relativistic concerns. This is because the way of man's being, from which the transmission as well as reception of meaning takes place, is always characterised by a thrownness - facticity, situatedness, historicity etc. Man is always related to the world in an intimate manner and the nature of this relationship will explain the depth of his historicity.

7. HISTORICITY AND INTERPRETATION

Man's situatedness in the world speaks about a peculiar relationship that exists between man and world. Representational outlook also gives an account of this relationship and often posits a subject, who is in a representational relationship with the entities of the world. This picture contradicts the notion which emphasises human facticity which eventually presupposes a primitive or natural viewpoint of the world. The epistemological division of the subject-object scheme conceals this natural viewpoint.

The intimate way man is related to his situations is not revealed in the scheme, as it assumed a methodological isolation of the subject from its most natural surroundings. Language, we have seen earlier, is an independent medium in this framework. But the being of man, when conceived as characterised by its facticity, suggests a fundamental practical relationship with things in the world. This relationship is characterised by a 'concern' where the use of entities we encounter in our life situations acquires prominence.³³ This pre-theoretical natural attitude, resists the possibility of viewing something which we encounter in our life situations as a mere 'thing' which can have an existence of its own, in terms of its independent properties, casual and spatio-temporal relationship. Rather, it has to be approached like a tool or equipment which will serve some of our practical purposes. An equipment is not a thing which has certain properties, but is something which has a use and which we can employ in a project. To make this point clear, Heidegger distinguishes between two kinds of knowledge (1) where a thing is viewed as an equipment which we use. Our relationship with an equipment or tool consists in our knowing how to use the thing in different contexts. Here we are *concerned* with it practically and

consequently cannot detach it from our practical concerns and life. (2) where the thing is viewed as an object and here it is context independent.³⁴ He emphasises the first kind of knowledge to explain man's being in the world.

The world is related to us in an intimate manner and we are in a 'knowing how' practical relationship with the latter. * Here we cannot avoid the intervention of value in our interactions and, therefore, our engaging in an interpretative relationship with the world. In other words, we always understand the world in relation to ourselves and our language. But evidently this process of continuous interpretation is characterised, not only by an understanding of the world in terms of one's concerns and practical purposes, but also an understanding of oneself in terms of one's possibilities. *Dasein* is constituted by its being-ahead-of-itself, towards its possibilities, says Heidegger³⁶ The way of being is constituted here by its possibilities for being and not by being a thing of some sort. Human life, in short, is a continuous process and product of interpretation. And understanding through interpretation in this manner is an essential mode of man's being in the world. Understanding, in other words, is a matter of projecting one's own being on one's possibilities.³⁷ This involves a hermeneutic circle, where one's being is said to be constituted out of one's understanding of oneself and this understanding of oneself, in turn, is derived from one's understanding of the world in terms of one's purposes and projects. This circular nature of understanding becomes more prominent with Heidegger's analysis of the temporality of *Dasein*'s being.

This feature of *Dasein*'s mode of existence reveals the impossibility of imaginatively transmitting oneself in time and historical contexts to grasp textual meanings objectively. Here,

the past is not an objectively pre-given unit which can be directly cognised. Rather, it acquires its meaning in the light of present experiences and anticipations about the future. At the same time, the meaning of the present and the way future is meaningfully anticipated is conditioned by the way in which the past is already understood. In Heidegger's terminology, it is the projection of a future for oneself. This projection of one's future is the projection of one's own possibilities. To project oneself into future in terms of possibilities is to understand one's own possibilities, which is nothing but self-understanding. As Gadamer observes, "... in the end all understandings are reducible to a common level of an "I know how to go about it", that is, a self-understanding in relation to something other".³⁸

All understanding presuppose and involve such a projection of possibilities. These possibilities are constituted out of Dasein's fore-having, fore-sights and fore-conceptions. A person in his interpretative encounter with the text necessarily projects a meaning for the text, and such a projection is essential for his proceeding to understand the textual meaning. Gadamer observes in this context that, we must understand a text as an answer to a question and to do this we must acquire the horizon of the question which includes other possible answers³⁹. All questions raised by us are rooted in our peculiar situatedness and hence reflect our purposes and possibilities.

In the context of textual interpretation, this hermeneutic circle, which is constituted out of the web of interpretative interactions, apparently involves a dialogic process, where the context and the interpreter comes to an agreement in terms of a common language. Language here is an

ontological medium, and reality happens precisely within language. Language, here, is something which encompasses the linguistic categories of both the text and the interpreter.

The more language is a living operation, the less we are aware of it. Thus it follows from the self-forgetfulness of language that its real being consists in what is said in it. What is said in it constitutes the common world in which we live and to which belongs also the whole great chain of tradition reaching us from the literature of foreign languages, living as well as dead. The real being of language is that into which we are taken up when we hear it - what is said.⁴⁰

It is within this encompassing language that the dialogue between the text and the interpreter takes place. This dialogue will inevitably involve what Gadamer calls prejudices and will ultimately leads to an 'understanding' of meaning in a "fusion of horizon".

8. CONCLUSION

The hermeneutic conception of meaning thus asserts the prominent role of language in the constitution and understanding of meanings. It thus takes meanings from the extra-linguistic world to the very heart of language. In its evolution towards such a conception, the hermeneutic model highlighted certain conceptual themes.

1) Historicity of meaning and understanding:

It is the recognition of this factor that ultimately led to the postulation of a different conception of knowledge and understanding. But understood in its real sense, this recognition demands a total reconstruction of the notions of meaning and truth.

We have examined how the notion of meaning had been conceived by the hermeneutic model in its various formulations. Ultimately an intimate relationship between meaning and language is asserted and this makes the former historical. Historicity of meaning naturally leads to the conception that truth also is historical. We shall examine this aspect in the next chapter before we come to deal with the problem of understanding.

2) Reconstruction of the notion of objectivity:

Once historicity was kept in limelight, the traditional notion of objectivity would come under threat. This may immediately lead to relativism which is self-refuting. Hence the dialogic structure of understanding acquires prominence.

3) Location of meaning in language.

Language emerges as the common platform where the text and the interpreter can dialogically interact. Meanings to be understood are, therefore, located in this language. This language is neither the language of the author, nor the language of the interpreter, but the language that evolves as the result of a dialogic interaction between them. It is, therefore, not the language of the text, nor that of the interpreter, but a common language that acquires prominence here.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 Diltthey, Wilhelm. *IHS*. p.88.
- 2 Husserl, Edmund. *CES*. p. 142.
- 3 Cf Diltthey, Wilhelm: *Op Cit*. pp.56-77. Diltthey here conducts a detailed examination on the nature of human sciences and its relationship with natural sciences.
- 4 Cf. Campbell, Richard 1992, *Truth and Historicity*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, p.399.
- 5 This aspect becomes more clear with Heidegger's analysis of the being of man in relation with the concept of time Cf. Heidegger, Martin: *BT*.
- 6 Cf. Wanrnke, Georgia. 1987, *Gadamer. Hermeneutics, Tradition and Reason*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, pp.26-28.
- 7 Nuyen, A. T.: 1990, 'Truth, Method and Objectivity: Husserl and Gadamer on Scientific Method, *Philosophy of the Social Science*, Vol.20, p 439
- 8 Cf Diltthey, Wilhelm- *Op Cit*, pp.56-77 and 192-206.
- 9 Cf Heidegger, Martin *BT*. p.38
- 10 Cf. Gadamer, H. G.. *TM*. p.262.
- 11 Hirsch, E. D.: 1967, *Validity of Interpretation*, New Haven, Yale University Press, p 46.
- 12 *Cf. Ibid.p4*.
- 13 *Cf.Ibid.p.3l*.
- 14 Schleiermacher, F. D. E.: 1990, 'The Hermeneutics: Outline of the 1819 Lectures', in Gayle L. Orniston and Alav D. Schrift (Eds.) *The Hermeneutics Tradition, From Ast to Ricoeur* (hereafter *HT*), Albany. State University of New York Press, p.98.
15. *Cf.Ibid.p.94*.

16. Cf. *Ibid*, pp 93-94 Also see Gadamer, H. G.: *TM*. p.164. Gadamer argues that, though Schleiermacher views both grammatical and psychological interpretation as important, the latter's particular contribution is psychological interpretations. This stresses the importance Schleiermacher ascribes to the individual act.
17. Gadamer, H. G.: *Op Cit* p.165.
18. Cf. *Ibid* p.166.
19. Schleiermacher, F D. E.. *Op Cit*. p 86.
20. Cf. *Ibid*, p.93
21. Cf. *Ibid*. p.93. Dilthey, while discussing the hermeneutics of Schleiermacher brings out this aspect more clearly and argues that this idea is the necessary consequence of the doctrine of unconscious creation Cf. Dilthey, Wilhelm: 1990, 'The Rise of Hermeneutics', in *HT*. p 113 Also see Gadamer, H G.:*Op Cit*. p. 169.
22. Cf. Gadamer, H. G.: *Op Cit* p.168.
23. Cf Dilthey, Wilhelm: *IHS*. p 56-76. Also see Makkreel, Rudolf. A : *Dilthey Philosopher ofthe Human Studies*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, pp.247-262.
24. In this context, Gadamer observes that the conflict in Dilthey lies in the intermediate position of the historical school between philosophy and experience. He opines that, this conflict led Dilthey to explore, in opposition to the Hegelian method, the categories of the historical world that would be able to support its construction within the human sciences. Dilthey thus tries to answer the question, how historical experience can become a science. Cf. Gadamer, H. G.: *TM*. p.193 & 194.
25. Husserl, Edmund: *Op. Cit*. p.233.

- 26 Cf. Dilthey, Wilhelm 1985 'The Understanding of Other Persons and Their Life-Expressions', in Kurt Mueller-Vollmer: *The Hermeneutics Reader*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell. pp 152-64.
- 27 Cf *Ibid* p.159.
- 28 Cf. Dilthey, Wilhelm: *IHS*. pp 438-39.
29. Gadamer discusses this issue in detail and observes that for Dilthey historical consciousness is not an unreflective expression of real life Life carries in it reflection, says he. Cf. Gadamer, H. G.: *PHC*. pp 121-22
- 30 Cf. *Ibid* p 121
- 31 *Ibid* p.121.
- 32 Cf, Gadamer, H. G.. *TM*. p.341
- 33 Cf. Heidegger, Martin- *BT*. The chapter VI of *BT* introduces this concept to characterise the being-in-the-world of *Dasein*
- 34 Cf *Ibid* and also Heidegger, Martin 1985, *History of the Concept of Time*, tr. Theodore Kisiel, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, pp.209-11. Heidegger here explains how the being-in-the-world, as concerned and understanding discloses the world as meaningfulness.
- 35 Cf. *Ibid*. Gadamer observes in this context that Heidegger's concept of understanding carries an ontological weight. It signifies a "knowing how", an "ability", a "capacity" to carry out a task at the practical level. Cf. Gadamer, H. G.: *PHC*. p. 130.
36. Cf. Heidegger, Martin: *BT*. section 31 of this book explains that *Dasein* is not something present-at-hand, but is primarily Being-possible. Possibility as an *existential* is,

according to him, the most primordial and ultimate positive way in which *Dasein* is characterised ontologically.

37 Cf *Ibid*

38 Gadamer, H. G.: PHC. p.130.

39. Cf. Gadamer, H. G.: *TM*. pp.338-39.

40 Gadamer, H. G.- 1976, *Philosophical Hermeneutics* (hereafter *PH*), tr. & Ed. David E. Linge, Berkeley, University of California Press, p.65.

Chapter Four

TRUTH, MEANING AND INTERPRETATIVE UNDERSTANDING

1. INTRODUCTION

If meaning is the essence of language, truth is the category that makes linguistic expressions legitimate. Be it the language of science or art or poetry and of day to day activity, there should be scope for truth to appear in it. Of course, the concept is differently accounted for by different thinkers and correspondingly has got different applications in different systems. Yet the fact remains that any system of language will make room for truth in it. If a language without meaning is empty, a language without truth is blind, as it becomes directionless, and hence non-legible.

Truth is thus an indispensable category as far as language is concerned. It assumes a relevant role in all the functions language has and it is an essential prerequisite for the very understanding of language. It is related both to meaning and to reality - the two categories, which we have hitherto seen as occupying prominent places in our discourse on the issue of understanding meaning.

The notion of truth is related to the concept of meaning in pivotal ways. It sometimes acts as the normative guiding principle, which even determines the semantic rules by means of which language as a system functions. Wittgenstein, for example, conceives the notion of truth in a way very similar to this idea. The representationalists in general assert the important connections between truth and meaning. On the one hand, there is a doctrine of understanding meaning, which is much in line with the correspondence theory. They relate the problem of understanding meaning to the notion of truth conditions, and thereby to the validity of

statements. Even for Davidson, who out and out rejects a traditional version of the correspondence theory, truth is related to meaning and linguistic representations.

But once appeal is shifted from the representational model, another concept of truth is required to be introduced. Instead of searching for truth in a language which is essentially world-directional, truth is searched in the day-to-day linguistic practices and other uses of language. Many of the expressions we count as true do not belong to the language of world representation. In other words, the whole of language is not limited to the realm of technical notations of scientific enterprise.

From the context of linguistic understanding what is more important is the relationship between truth and meaning and also the relationship between language and reality. Almost all the classical doctrines on truth subscribe to this conception

The representationalists were more eager to assert the intimacy of the connection between truth and meaning. The theory of understanding they develop uniquely brings together truth, meaning and reality into the logical framework provided by the structure of language. The idea that language inherits a logical structure itself shows how important the concept of truth is in their doctrine of understanding. Following language, reality also is understood to be possessing a logical structure. The linguistic conception of truth, however, limits the question of truth exclusively to the logical structure of language. As Frege says, truth is nothing but the truth of sentences in language.¹ Since truth is the prime category of logic, the normative structure and

rules which logic provides for the understanding of Linguistic expressions make truth also indispensable to language.

Two important features of truth conceived by many analytic philosophers become relevant here. First, the idea of the logical structure of language results in a linguistic conception of truth. Second, truth is more or less indispensably taken by them to assert the representational nature of linguistic understanding. But inspite of the linguistic turn, the representational conception of truth is much in harmony with the traditional conception, which has its original expression in the Platonic system. This concept, in short, takes truth as eternal and unchanging, and therefore, the representationalists, following the Platonic tradition, take truth as the unchanging property of linguistic signs. Representationalism, as we have already seen, guaranteed its availability by the logical structure of language which conclusively asserts the intimate relationship between language and the world.

Naturally, with the denial of representationalism, truth becomes a difficult property to be accounted for. The historicity of language and the context dependence of linguistic meaning will make truth also historical. We have examined how the hermeneutic model has arrived at a notion of meaning where the latter is taken as an exclusive property of language. Hermeneutic model asserts the essential linguisticity of all human endeavours, both cognitive and non-cognitive, and places the being of man well inside the horizon provided by language. We encounter reality in and through language and therefore, truth also is well placed inside the linguistic horizon. And language here, as we have seen, is not confined to the language of the text nor does it exclusively refer to the linguistic system of the interpreter. It rather refers to an

intersubjective domain where the individual cultural horizons of the text and the interpreter can come to an agreement. Nor is truth confined to an ahistorical realm of reality, as reality itself is a historical process which allows no room for eternal and unchanging structures to validly operate.

Before we focus on the conceptual issues that originate out of this standpoint we need to examine the representational concept of truth.

2. TRUTH, MEANING AND WORLD REPRESENTATION

The representationalists largely inherit the ahistorical attitude towards reality. This is the road that takes them back to Plato who propagated the notion of intuitive certainty to accomplish truth. The way many of them appealed to the mathematical model was enough testimonial to their intellectual background. The logico-mathematical model of analysis has been further combined with a scientific conception of reality.

The way they carried out the analysis of language precisely aims at identifying truth and meaning in the logical structure of the former. And as far as the question of understanding language is concerned, they intend to show how truth and meaning are involved in ensuring its possibility in the light of representations. Truth, thus, is not related to language in a passive way. Rather it has been placed at the very core of linguistic activity, determining the latter's legitimacy by defining its logical structure.

From these factors some important features of the representational conception of truth can be identified. These features, though are not shared by all the representationalists thinkers, are but the prominent features of the representational model of understanding in general. On the one hand, the concept of truth they inherit is something which has been handed down by the tradition, the prominent feature of which is the ahistorical conception of truth. Another important feature is that, in this framework, truth is being conceived as the essential feature of items with a linguistic structure. Finally, as a culmination of the representational contemplation on truth, it has been taken as a logical category that determines the semantic rules of language

The ahistorical conception, as stated above, was something which the representationalists had inherited from the Platonic-Aristotelian contemplation's on the notion, though Plato's doctrine was markedly different from the linguistic conception in many ways. While Plato located truth in the eternal forms, so as to announce its absolute status, representationalism located truth in the eternal truth bearers, which were nevertheless linguistic. While, for the former, truth of statements was a function of the truth of realities (Forms or Ideas), in the latter conception truth was never to be searched outside the structure of language, rather it was interwoven with it in the sense of determining its very possibility.

An important feature that distinguishes the traditional metaphysical conception of truth from the modern representational notion is that, the former emphasises the importance of language. The linguistic conception follows the most fundamental assumption of representationalism, i.e. the assumption that language represents reality. If this is the case, sentences in language could not be without truth - values. They are either the true

representations of the factual reality or the false representations. This, in other words, is to proclaim truth as the imminent feature of language. It is, therefore, an indispensable property of language and not an accidental feature. The idea of representationality of language and this notion of truth as the imminent feature of language act as mutually supplementary concepts which together formulate a doctrine of linguistic understanding based on the idea of representations.

We see in Alfred Tarski's project of giving a consistent definition of truth these two insights combined in a brilliant way. After applying the notion of truth to sentences in language Tarski states that he wants to do justice to the intuitions which adhere to the classical Aristotelian conception of truth which can be summed up as:

To say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false, while to say of what is that it is, or of what is not that it is not, is true.²

Tarski rephrases this classical conception in the modern philosophical terminology which is given in the formula: "The truth of a sentence consists in its agreement with (or correspondence to) reality."³ Or, more precisely, as: "A sentence is true if it designates an existing state of affairs."⁴

This is to announce the representational view of language by means of a semantic conception of truth. This is because, on the one hand we have to employ the semantical notion of satisfaction in order to define truth, and on the other hand, formulations which aim to explain

the meaning of the word true refer both to the sentences and to the objects or state of affairs ascribed to them.

This situation invites us to examine the third feature cited above, where truth is understood as the logical property that determines the semantic rules of language. This would provide an explanation of the logical connection between truth, meaning and reality in the light of linguistic representations. It thus figures out as the most mature form of representational conception of understanding meaning. This is because, it is here that the intimate relation between truth and meaning is conclusively established. Moreover, it doubtlessly reiterates the representationality of language by means of an indispensable notion of truth.

What evolves out of this discussion is a concept of truth which supports the exclusive status of scientific enterprise as a paradigm for the search of ultimate truths about the universe. This concept clearly gives a picture of language which is a mirror of the world. What intervenes between the mirror and the mirrored is truth. As Rorty says

The world is out there, but descriptions of the world are not. Only descriptions of the world can be true or false. The world on its own - unaided by the describing activities of human beings - cannot⁵

Truth, therefore, is an essential property of language, a property which it owns owing to its being a faithful representation of the world.

The representational framework, therefore construes language as a medium for representation and consequently favours a dualist notion of medium. Language is conceived here as a medium through which reality is filtered, apprehended and communicated.⁶ This aspect is of crucial importance in our discussion, because both the models we have examined take language as important for positing both meaning and truth. The difference lies in the way they conceive the role of language in the process of relating truth, meaning and reality with each other. While the dualist conception attaches more importance to the idea of representationality, the hermeneutic notion explains how truth and reality, along with meaning, evolve out of that discourse. Some representationalists thus conceive language as a totality of propositions, which picture the reality and thereby identify a set of expressions in language as privileged.⁷ We shall briefly examine this issue and see how language functions as a medium in the logical framework of representationalism.

3. LANGUAGE, TRUTH AND REPRESENTATIONALISM

The notion of language inherited by the representationalists can be explicated in terms of the idea of basic propositions. This idea will explain how strongly representationalism adheres to a concept of language as a medium of representation. Language, according to this view, is a medium which stands between two poles - the subject and the object - connecting them by means of world representations. There is the world that exists independently of our will and our linguistic categories and there is also the talk about the world which corresponds **to** that world and has to be comprehended only with reference to the latter. Finally, the question of truth in this context calls for a relation of correspondence.

Language in this framework is being understood, not merely as a representation of the world, but as a system of truth-functions in which a set of expressions assume privileged status in terms of their being immediately related to factual reality. These expressions are further taken as paradigm for both truth and knowledge. The representationalists thus pay exclusive attention to these linguistic expressions and develop their theory of language and linguistic understanding on the basis of their peculiar logical features. And what is central to this concept of language, as we have noted earlier is that, language is conceived here as a medium, primarily of representation of the world.

Another important feature to be noted here is that, a correspondence theory of truth is gaining importance in this context. What is highlighted here is the availability of a set of linguistic expressions whose truth conditions are immediately available to us owing to their immediate contact with the factual reality. Linguistic understanding, in other words, is related here with the understanding of truth conditions of sentences.

The correspondence theory of truth and the concept of language as a medium are propagated mainly on the basis of the idea of basic propositions. These basic propositions are conceived as the primary truth bearers. These basic statements are by their very nature, not context relative, since they are attached to a particular factual situation

The notion of basic sentences can be conceived in two ways. Firstly, as a set of sentences, which are immediate perceptual judgements, on the basis of which the correspondence theory of truth can be constructed. This standpoint closely follows the presuppositions in an

empiricist epistemology, which conceives all conceptual issues that are relevant in connection with language as related to empirical experience. The empiricists follow this route.

On the other hand, the basic statements can be conceived as linguistic expressions which we come across at the end of our analysis of language that makes the latter the representation of the factual reality, by determining its semantic rules. But despite these differences certain common features are shared by both. These include the importance of simple sentences in the process of understanding meaning and locating truth and also to some extent the notion of reference to make the idea of truth-conditions legitimate.

The empiricists, by positing immediate perceptual judgements as basic sentences that are foundational, propagated an epistemological doctrine. The immediate observational report was taken as the eternal, truth-bearer of language. Truth is then conceived here as consisting in a relationship that exists between these eternal truth bearers and the extra-linguistic facts to which they stand as immediate representations.

This conception is loyal to the linguistic conception of truth as it conceives truth as a predicate of propositions. Truth and falsehood are properties of beliefs and statements, says Russell,⁹ who portrays an atomistic ontology, which assumes the metaphysical notion of factual world with objects and facts to support the representational conception.

A belief is something which we hold with regard to something else. In Russell's representational framework it consists in the contention that such and such objects in the world

with such and such qualities are related with each other in such and such ways. When these objects with qualities and their relations with each other are recognised, this leads to the formation of a judgement. This judgement, in turn, is either true or false, depending on the existence and non-existence of facts corresponding to it. Russell conceives truth as consisting in the fact that there is a complex correspondence to the discursive thought which is the judgement. Truth or falsehood of a belief, according to him depends on its relation to a fact other than itself¹⁰

The importance attached to correspondence is an offshoot of the underlying empiricist epistemology. Therefore, the concept of truth is here applicable to immediate perceptual judgements which are taken as the foundation for all our justified beliefs about the world. Since knowledge was identified with justified beliefs, the immediate perceptual judgements were conceived as paradigms of both knowledge and truth. Truth is whatever that makes these judgements true. This conception thus relates truth to a relationship between these judgements and the objective facts.

This standpoint is close to the positivist assumption which identifies knowing the meaning of a proposition with knowing its observational truth-conditions. Meaning is, therefore, explained in the light of the notion of truth-conditions, as according to this doctrine, two sentences mean the same (have the same meaning) if they have the same observational truth-conditions.

But in its attempt to bring together and establish the immediate connection between language, beliefs and the factual reality, this outlook seems to have contradicted the traditional concept of truth on the one hand and the linguistic conception on the other. From the very outset, this conception presupposes two things. The traditional conception was undermined by ascribing truth to beliefs as their property and thereby adhering to psychologism. With psychologism, the objective and absolute status of truth can be contested. Again this position assumes the validity of an atomistic epistemology supported by an empiricist outlook. This goes against the basic dictum of the linguistic conception of truth, which seeks no other realm than language to locate both truth and meaning. It thus takes truth as a relational property, as it is intimately associated with the complex relation of correspondence which sentences have with the factual reality. It is also related to beliefs, which are extra-linguistic. Finally, if truth is the property of beliefs, which we hold about the world, it is then related to the ways by which we establish contact with the factual world.

A metaphysical conception of factual reality is being assumed here in advance, as language is a representation of this reality and truth is the property of beliefs which we hold about it.¹¹ It is this metaphysics which informs us about the structural peculiarities of reality, which is also being shared by the perceptual judgements which directly represent them. Truth thus consists in an agreement between these structural forms. This idea of structure, therefore, assumes the status of a primary concept, which was not arrived at, but was taken for granted.

Again, conceiving truth as a property of beliefs invites further troubles. These beliefs are true if they refer to immediate perceptual judgements, which are results of direct observation.

What makes these judgements distinct is their epistemic priority over other judgements. They are, in Russell's words, the result of immediate and direct knowledge about factual reality through acquaintance.¹² There is no distinction between knowing them and knowing what makes them true. But belief is a psychological term and the certainty which can be accorded to these judgements is only a psychological certainty, which in the traditional sense is not certainty at all.

Moreover, here the question of truth is raised only in relation to linguistic expressions which are direct and immediate perceptual judgements. Therefore, it is not related to the totality of man's linguistic practices. It rather is an accidental property of language and not an essential category.

Truth has to be conceived as an essential category that has a determining role in formulating and understanding linguistic expressions. In other words, it has to be viewed as the indispensable feature of language, which even determines its use by determining its semantic rules. This is, in effect, to take out the problems of meaning and truth from the framework of the epistemological problematic.

It was Frege who pioneered the anti-epistemological drive in the representational tradition, as he categorically proclaimed the ultimate logical connection between truth and the semantic contents of language. By making sentences and not words as constituting the central semantic units of language, he tried to save the representational conception from going astray. With a focus on sentences, Frege could avoid the situation where linguistic understanding was explained on the basis of direct word-object contact. Consequently, he managed to avoid the

epistemological problematic, i.e., the problem of directly experiencing the objects of the world. Again he announced the supremacy of logic, by positing 'senses', which are basic logical entities at the core of his theory of language and linguistic understanding. These senses have a function very similar to Kant's *a priori* categories of understanding, because, the world of objects themselves are presented by the senses and knowledge about this world is essentially assimilated through them

But to defend representationality of language, it has to be proved that language is related to the world in some ways. The problem of understanding language has to be connected with the question of validity of linguistic expressions in terms of factual reality. In other words, understanding presupposes the validity conditions of linguistic expressions and these conditions contain knowledge about how the world could logically be. This is because, the linguistic expressions with which we encounter are assertions whose legitimacy depends upon their validity. And to know the validity is to know the truth conditions of expressions.

Truth, in other words, is embedded in the logic of assertions. It is truth that makes the thought-content representational. A true assertion is a true representation. Truth and sense, nevertheless, are related to the world, though they are extra-worldly logical entities which are autonomous and independent. Yet the senses or thoughts are nothing but thoughts about the world. These thoughts are consequently manifested in assertions. In language, both sense and world come together. Understanding meaning requires a coming together of both. To understand linguistic expressions is to grasp their senses, which necessitates an appeal to the

world, since sense appears only in those assertions which are about the world. These assertions, as a matter of fact, are either true or false in terms of their validity.¹³

Truth, is therefore, taken back from the epistemological framework of experiencing factual reality. and is placed at the very core of linguistic understanding. It lays down the conditions of assertions and thereby prescribes normative rules for the emergence of sense in language through assertions.

Frege's position is, therefore, very close to identifying truth as a logical property of language that determines the semantic rules of the latter, though he ultimately regarded senses as more primitive categories than truth.¹⁴ Once we manage to locate such normative rules in language, that will in turn inform us about the limits of legible talk. These semantic rules tell us which aspects and features of reality can be legitimately expressed in language. They are the rules of representation, and in that sense, it is the truth-condition of an expression that will decide its meaningfulness and cognitivity. Truth is thus understood as ensuring the representationality of language via meaning. It prescribes rules according to which alone sentences in language can stand for the factual world.

The concept of truth as determining semantic rules is more prominent in Wittgenstein's reflections on truth, where truth is conceived as forming part of the logical structure of language. Language inherits a logical structure, according to which its various constituents are structured into a coherent whole. This structure is formulated by means of the logical structure of language, and this logical structure is further shared by the world also. Hence truth is not just a relational

property which becomes relevant only when linguistic expressions are compared with reality. In other words, the relationship of truth with language is not a matter of epistemological justification, but a matter of logical necessity. The supremacy of logical structure was asserted conclusively, and this logical structure is the essential property of both language and reality. This structure implies the necessary validity of a network of rules, according to which language functions as a picture of reality - the only legitimate function of language. These rules are nothing but the rules of truth which determine the very validity of linguistic expressions. Both syntax and semantics adhere to the principles of this normative rule structure. Wittgenstein reiterates this point by distinguishing the ordinary grammar of language from the logical syntax.¹⁵ It is the logical syntax that ensures the ultimate syntactic-semantic unity of linguistic expressions. A proposition in language is such an entity where this unity is being materialised. Here, not only the spatio-temporal arrangement of words are made, but also the individual linguistic elements that make up the propositions are intimately connected to the world, making it a logical picture of the latter. The rules of this logical syntax are the rules of truth, as they call for a possible truth-condition for each proposition

These rules of logical syntax have an absolute command over language. And this factor ensures that truth is related to language in an essential manner. We have seen that the representational conception has adopted the traditional notion of truth which took the latter as a timeless and independent category. Then the question is, can such a category be related to language which is a representation of the contingent world and therefore, is itself contingent? Moreover, we employ language in a variety of concrete life situations. This will also reiterate the fact that the language is contingent

Here also the notion of logical structure of language comes to the rescue. Language, though stands for factual reality which is contingent, is never itself contingent. This is because it is constituted of well-articulated meaningful utterances, which possess determinate structures. Language is never a representation of factual reality as such, rather having essentially an articulate structure, it stands for the structure of factual reality, which is logical and hence no more contingent. Representationality of language, in other words, is a matter of logical necessity. Language and the factual world are connected by means of a logical form which is not a contingent entity.¹⁶ Truth never arises out of the contingent fact that language pictures reality, rather it is by means of the rules suggested by truth that, language and reality could establish a structural identity.

The notion of proposition is introduced to establish the fundamental representational feature of language and also to assert the pivotal role played by truth in the understanding of linguistic expressions. These propositions, by their very nature, have an 'articulate structure', as they are constituted out of the internal relations names have with each other. They represent the logical features of language which are neutral to the person uttering it and the context of utterance. And by revealing a determinate sense by means of their logical structure, they function as the eternal truth bearers.

The concept of elementary propositions is the right candidate to such neutral representational expressions. They stand as immediate representations of the factual reality, as a matter of logical necessity, and their priority in our language system is established, not as a matter of epistemology, but as that of semantics and logic. The whole of language is said to be

constituted out of them by means of truth functional connectives. This conception thus amounts to identifying a set of sentences in language as truth-bearers. This, subsequently, is to distinguish the logical syntax of language from its ordinary grammar. In other words, according to this view, it is the logical syntax of language that makes language a representation of reality.

The traditional metaphysical conception of truth is safeguarded in this framework, and it apparently appeals to a correspondence theory of truth. This is more evident in the empiricist framework, since correspondence theory of truth is the one which we are most naturally to arrive at when we take perceptual judgements as paradigms of truth. This is because, the truth of a perceptual judgement depends on whether what is observed has the properties attributed to it, a matter which has to be settled by means of finding an agreement between linguistic expressions and facts. Even the highly formalistic view which opposes the epistemological attitude and consequently denies any semantic value to reference, attaches the latter intimately to names in propositions and explains the determinism of sense in terms of the internal relations between names. The question of truth, therefore, brings back reference to our consideration. Moreover, the language - reality agreement also is pivotal in their framework.

But defining truth in terms of such correspondence - a relation of agreement between two ontologically diverse realms - may lead to certain difficulties, some of which we have already seen when we examined the empiricist epistemology earlier. The root of this difficulty lies in the attempts to analyse the correspondence relationship in terms of an ontology of factual reality. Here the word - object relationship becomes the most primitive and unanalysed relationship of correspondence which calls for an epistemological enterprise to explain truth.

Alfred Tarski proposes an alternate version of correspondence theory, devoid of the ontology of factual reality which forces us to take an epistemological route. He puts forward a semantic conception of truth which rests on a semantic theory that deals with the use of language. He wanted to explain when we can call a sentence true and contended that a theory of truth would give an account of the restrictions that must be brought to bear upon our use of any given sentence of a language if we were to call that sentence true. All true sentences would eventually have in common the property of being used in accordance with these restrictions. He thus employs the notion of metalanguage to show how to state the meaning of a sentence in terms of truth-conditions. The truth-conditions of a sentence in the object-language can be stated in a metalanguage says Tarski, since this metalanguage can be employed to talk about the object-language. The truth-conditions of an object-language sentence can be stated in a metalanguage which talks about it.¹⁷

Tarski thus relativises truth to a language. It is 'true in L' where 'L' is the object-language. The sentence "snow is white" is true if and only if snow is white", says Tarski, where the first occurrence of the expression "snow is white" is the name of that sentence".¹¹ This project, therefore, locates truth within a language without appealing to any concepts which are not semantic in nature and hence avoids the difficulty in construing a correspondence theory of truth on the basis of an ontology of factual reality.

This has become more evident in Tarski's employment of the notion of satisfaction. The schema T appears to be useful when applied to define "T in L", when only the elementary sentences and their truth-functional connectives are under examination. But it fails to function

when we take language as containing logically complex predicates, because of the fact that parts of a complex sentence need not themselves be sentences. In other words, the truth of complex sentences need not always be accounted for in terms of the truth of their parts. To solve the difficulty, Tarski appeals to the notion of sentential function, which is formed from a sentence by substituting a free variable in place of a name. He then defines a sentence as a sentential function which contains no free variable. The truth of a sentence is thus defined in terms of the notion of satisfaction, which applies to sentential functions. Whatever is true of a sentential function can be said to satisfy it. For e g., snow satisfies "x is white". Metalanguage statements can specify which objects satisfy the sentential functions.

Tarski's definition of truth in L and his schema T satisfy the requirements of a representational conception of understanding by giving the correspondence theory of truth a new life, avoiding difficulties that may arise when we construe linguistic expressions as representations. But, as Tarski himself states, his attempts are aimed at finding out how truth can be defined for the formal languages which are constructed for the purpose of making scientific semantics possible and hence the version of understanding has an application limited to formalised languages. In other words, the validity of Tarski's schema T in dealing with natural language is doubtful. What is needed is to isolate the sentences from their natural surroundings, i.e., from the historical context of their utterance.

Moreover, the inheritance of a metaphysical view which conceives truth as timeless and unchanging is evident here, since the semantics of science made such a view a prerequisite. Therefore, the role model is indubitably the language of science, which exemplifies a clear

application of first order formal logic. Tarski's attempts were aimed at defining truth within this model of language without falling back on a set of undefined semantical and intentional notions such as meanings and beliefs, A direct appeal was made to extensional concepts and both truth and reference were made disquotational.

But to extend this model to derive a theory of understanding from it is not an advisable route to be taken. This is because, Tarski's model is out and out formalistic. This model therefore, necessitates a reductionist approach which was carried out by many of the representationalists in their programme of purifying language. But what we get with such a logical purification is only the sketch of a particular language game, which belongs to a wider context of multitude of language uses. This model fails to explain the dynamism of linguistic activity actually practised by a community of speakers who are essentially bound to occupy specific space in concrete life and therefore in history.

Hilary Putnam in this connection observes that Tarski's scheme defines truth in language without reference to actual speakers or their use of words.¹⁹ The speakers' use and understanding of language are not vital for him because truth in language depends only on how the strings of the letters are composed and whether or not the fact stated is the case. He contends that Tarski's predicate is unable to replace the intuitive concept of truth. He adds:

A property which by its very meaning has nothing to do with the way speakers use and understand language cannot be seriously offered as having the same intension (i.e. mean the same) as the predicate "is true", even if it is coextensive with the predicate "is T" in the actual world.²⁰

Putnam further points out that in natural language truth-conditions cannot fix meaning. This is because, in natural language we cannot avoid the use of indexical expressions like "I" "this" etc., which can be used by different speakers or by the same speaker at a different occasions, to make a different statements.²¹

In short, the various versions of the representational notion of truth we have hitherto examined confined attention to either word-object contact or sentence-fact isomorphic relationship. As Rorty observed, this was done by confining attention to single sentences as opposed to vocabularies.²² It is this emphasis on single sentences that prompted them to envisage the artificial construction of a formal language as opposed to the day-to-day language of ordinary use. But even when attention was shifted to sentences from words - Frege and Wittgenstein's TLP did this - the words were conceived to be performing vital roles in making up the semantic significance of sentences and language

Hence, if this notion of truth, which makes reference an important component in deciding the semantic content of language, is challenged, the representational concept of understanding meaning will also get affected. This need not pose a challenge to the view that language is representational. But what it opposes is the positing of the representational conception is a theory of understanding which is foundational to all theories on language. In other words, as Putnam comments, representational conception is useful as a theory of language functioning, but its status as a theory of understanding is extremely doubtful.²³

Another attack on the positive role of reference in a semantic theory has been initiated by Quine and Davidson. Even Tarski's view, which though avoids all ontological presuppositions to construe a correspondence theory of truth appeared as objectionable, since it made translatability of object-language sentences a prerequisite. Tarski took it for granted that meaning is presupposed by the semantic definition of truth. But Quine demonstrated later that the question of meaning should be approached only through the situation of radical interpretation. He challenged the whole set of interrelated notions such as synonymy, analyticity, necessity, translatability etc., which philosophers had taken for granted when they discussed the problem of meaning. We shall now see how these changes which took place within the representationalist tradition amounted to questioning the hard core representational conception of truth and the notion of understanding meaning based upon it.

4. THE PERSPECTIVAL FEATURE OF UNDERSTANDING

To turn attention towards the actual use of language by human beings amounts to the recognition of the perspectival features of the understanding of language which is in contradiction with the representational programme which posits a set of primitive sentences as paradigm of truth, meaning and knowledge. The representational model proceeds with the project of isolating the essential information content - information about the objective world - from the contextual and the historical differences that determine articulation. As Quine says, "two verbal accounts can give the information in very different hearing"²⁴ These differences owe to the difference in the context. Semantic content or meaning itself is identified with this isolated information content by them.

But, as Quine observes, the notion of meaning is deeply rooted in the everyday discourses and not easily dispensed with.²⁵ And it is in this context that an examination of the notions of meaning, truth and linguistic understanding is more relevant. Here one is not provided with a set of linguistic expressions which are readily amenable to analysis and consequently they cannot be isolated from their natural context. Nor can we pick out the reference of each word used. The mistake is, in Davidson's words with the traditional metaphysical picture that is dominated by the dualism of scheme and content where a correspondence relationship between sentences and reality is construed. Davidson opposes the idea that there are a set of entities with which we can compare sentences. He speaks about correspondence without confrontation and categorically does away with the scheme-content dualism.²⁶ The ideal language of science is an alternative for the representationalism. But we have seen that this would give an account of only one of the ways language functions and never helps in developing a theory of understanding language. Quine observes.

But a trouble with trying to equate sentences of real life, in respect of the information they convey, is that no matrix of alternatives is given; we do not know what to count. There is no evident rule for separating the information from stylistic or other immaterial features of the sentences. The question, when to say that two sentences mean the same proposition is consequently not adequately answered by alluding to sameness of objective information.²⁷

The trouble in other words, consists in identifying representational feature of language as its essence. Wittgenstein in his later writings vehemently challenges this very idea of 'essence of language'. Apart from their contextual employment, no such essence could be isolated from linguistic expressions. Wittgenstein, therefore, further attacks certain concepts on the basis of which an essentialist framework has been construed by the representationalists and others.

Wittgenstein criticises the representationalists for postulating the notion of proposition for professing semantic invariance. This notion, which suggests the availability of a structure, presupposes a clear-cut separation of words from sentences. Mere words can only refer, and for the sense to emerge, so as to make possible linguistic understanding, what is needed is a structural order. But there can be a language which does not bear such a distinction between words and sentences. He cites the language of the builder where certain expressions are uttered in the form of orders upon which certain activities are initiated. This language, Wittgenstein says, is by no means an incomplete language. A language which bears a distinction between words and sentences is in no way more complete than a language which doesn't consist of such a distinction. Only when such a distinction already occurs in a language, we can ask whether a particular expression in it is a word or a sentence. A language, he asserts, can very well do without such a distinction.²¹

Wittgenstein thus asserts that, speaking language is part of an activity or a form of life. Two sentences, having the same sense, says he, consists in their having the same use. Quine also strikes at a similar assumption. He examines the notion of meaning and tries to rehabilitate it into a behaviourist framework. Here he examines how meaning - precisely the meaning of words and the meaning of sentences - is defined, and seeks to answer that it is being done by means of equating it to some more familiar expression.

The fault with the representationalists is their making equivalence relation in terms of propositions or reference, which are accessible to both the speakers and the hearers. Though Quine is prepared to admit this idea of equivalence, he rephrases it behaviouristically and argues

that the relation of synonymy or sameness of meaning thus projected amounts to nothing but professing sameness of use.²⁹

Here what comes under dispute is the traditional metaphysical notion of truth and the associated concepts of language, meaning and linguistic understanding. Primarily, the idea of an external world with a fixed structure, determining our linguistic practices is undermined. This is, in Rorty's words, to de-divinise the world. It is such an idea of world-language relationship that professes the notion of language as a medium - a medium out of which beliefs and desires are constructed and that which stands between the self and the world. But such a view of language immediately leads us to certain conceptual difficulties. Rorty identifies the mistakes with such a conception even if it substitutes language for mind or consciousness. He continues:

But in itself this substitution is ineffective. For if we stick to the picture of language as a medium, something standing between the self and the nonhuman reality with which the self seeks to be in touch, we have made no progress. We are still using a subject-object picture, and we are still stuck with issues about scepticism, idealism and realism. For we are still able to ask questions about language of the same sort we asked about consciousness³¹

Rorty further says that the assumption that language is a medium, either of expression of the inner self or of representation of the external reality, stems from the representationalists' positing non-linguistic things called meanings which are expressed and facts which are represented by language.³² In other words, it is the idea of reference and the idea of proposition that have led them to postulate their peculiar view of truth and language

It is precisely these ideas that are rejected when language is examined in the light of the ways it is being employed, or more precisely, when truth and meaning are analysed by stressing on the actual linguistic practices. As noted above, to get rid of the idea of language as functioning as a medium, what is needed is to show the shortcomings of the representational conception of language which conceives extra-linguistic entities in order to explain meaning and truth. Quine, with his holistic approach and the doctrines of indeterminacy of meaning and inscrutability of reference envisages to accomplish this.

5. REJECTION OF PROPOSITION AND REFERENCE

The heart of Quine's holism is the view that the whole of human knowledge - including mathematical and scientific doctrines and the commonplace beliefs of the day-to-day life - forms a corporate body which is collectively related to experience. The multitude of linguistic expressions we employ form a system which makes an appeal to human experience, not individually but collectively.³³ With this view, Quine avoids the paradox of linguistic hierarchy. The difference between the language of physics and the common language was not absolute, as it was thought by the representationalists. Rather they differ from each other in terms of the degree of vulnerability to experience. The whole of language belongs to the purview of science and Quine wishes to see semantics and even philosophy as part of science. If Frege had taken the sentence as constituting the unit of semantic significance for Quine the unit of empirical significance is the whole of science. Even observation sentences, which are starting points in the learning of language, are conceived by him as theory laden and are not absolutely immune to revision.

This, at the very outset, argues against the logic of representation, which makes linguistic meanings determinate by positing what Quine may wish to call the mysterious entities like propositions. The root of such an idea, Quine sees, lies in the fact that we often employ different expressions in different languages to express the same meaning. Entities such as propositions are posited in order to semantically surpass these differences in languages.

An argument which does away with this notion of common semantic property of different languages will then immediately make the representational doctrine of understanding questionable. Quine purports to show this by establishing the fact that every form of translation is indeterminate.

Language as understood by Quine is a complex network of dispositions that respond to stimuli and the whole question of empirical knowledge has to be explicated solely in terms of the neural intervening process. The empirical-representational conception of semantic linkage by means of acquaintance of a person to a sense datum has been replaced by the idea of stimulus to sentences established inductively (behaviouristically). Since language is a social art, meaning has to be analysed behaviouristically in terms of man's disposition to respond overtly to socially observable stimulations. Meaning is as Quine says it, "... primarily a property of behaviour. We recognise that there are no meanings, nor likenesses nor distinctions of meaning, beyond what are implicit in people's dispositions to overt behaviour".³⁴ In other words, meanings are neither psychic entities which reside in our minds nor abstract entities like senses or propositions. Since they are the property of our behaviour and are defined in terms of sensory stimulations and verbal reactions.

From these preliminary assumptions Quine proceeds to explain what goes on in the process of translation. The language users¹ response to identical stimulus circumstances act as a guide here. It is assumed that, when placed in the same circumstances, both the linguist and the native will have similar stimulations. And since the stimuli are necessarily linked with sentences in language the observation of stimulus response is the basis for translation. The field linguist, therefore, by observing the assents and dissents of the native to sentences fed to him in the presence of the stimuli, can chart out similar expressions of both the languages. This is the starting point of the natives expressions being associated with various situations (which are of course common to both). For e.g, the linguist by observing repeated stimulus reaction can translate the expression 'gavagai' in the native's language as a rabbit heralding sentence.³⁵

But this process has its inevitable limitations. The practice of translation holds good until the linguist limits himself to translating observational sentences by means of an appeal to empirical evidence (stimuli-response) and truth-functional connectives by observing relations between the native's verdicts to sentences. But when he moves further he will inevitably encounter expressions which do not directly appeal to empirical evidence. The linguist faces such a difficulty when he tries to go beyond the translation of mere observation sentences to translating theoretical sentences.

Indeterminacy of translation stems from this context. Our use of language necessarily surpasses the realm of observation sentences and includes other forms of linguistic expressions also. The theories which we form do not depend exclusively on the truth of that which is presented in the observation sentences but presupposes much more than it

Quine makes this point clearer by showing the inscrutability of reference and the essential role played by analytical hypothesis in translation and linguistic understanding. It is on the basis of the notion of reference that the representationalists attempt to provide the explanation of understanding empirical meaning. But it is obvious that the process of translation on the basis of observing stimuli and response does not provide any definite information about reference of words, though it functions fairly well at the level of sentences. From the repeated observation of the utterance of the expression 'gavagai' in the presence of a rabbit and the concurrent observation of the behaviour of the native when it is uttered, the linguist can conclude that 'gavagai' is a rabbit heralding sentence. But from this observation he can never conclude anything definite about the reference. The expression 'gavagai' only tells him that a rabbit is present at the time of its utterance as its stimuli and does not inform him that so and so is a rabbit. It is quite uncertain whether the expression refers to the rabbit or to the various temporal segments of rabbits or to the integral or undetached parts of rabbit.

This uncertainty necessitates the postulating of analytical hypothesis in the process of translation. Since reference is inscrutable, the linguist is no more provided with empirical evidence to establish synonym relationship, but has to take insights from the ontological point of view he inherits from his own language. He has to hypothetically identify certain idioms in the native's language such as the sign of identity, the copula etc., in order to make a connection with the native's language. In other words, he has to project the ontological and theoretical schema of his own language into the language of the native. The paradigm for deciding the various functions of expressions are adopted from his own language without much contemplation. And this project of the ontological point of view of the linguist into the native's language is not

carried out in terms of any empirical data, but is purely arbitrary. The construction of analytical hypothesis is in itself an arbitrary practice.

This makes the whole process of translation and postulation of meaning uncertain and indeterminate. Moreover, since they project different ontological schemes when they translate, there will be different translations for the same expression. One cannot decide which schema of translation and interpretation is correct, since projection of analytical hypothesis is done arbitrarily and there is no empirical evidence which can function as a guide here.³⁶

What collapses with this indeterminacy doctrine is the idea that there is a metaphysically given world which fixes meaning of linguistic expressions in advance. Gone with it was the idea that truth was the business of the world (the hard-core correspondence theory of truth). If truth is not found outside language, then it has to be conceived as an immanent property of the latter. It must then belong to the semantic structure of language and therefore must be the most primitive category of semantics. This is to go against the familiar representational view, which derives truth by presupposing the givenness of sentential meanings in advance.

But if truth is conceived as the immanent property of language, then a reverse procedure will become more prominent. Truth will then become a primitive category and meaning and the intelligibility of language will be defined in terms of the former. Since meaning is indeterminate, as shown by Quine, truth cannot be derived from it. As Davidson says, language is not a filter or screen through which knowledge of the world must pass.³⁷

Davidson repeatedly emphasises the logical role of truth in the understanding of language. According to him, meaning becomes definable in terms of truth-conditions and truth provides the method for interpreting language and meaning. Following Tarski, he says that a sentence is true if and only if what the sentence says is the case. "S is T iff p" where 'S' is the name of the sentence and p is the sentence or its translation. 'Snow is white' is true if and only if snow is white. It is a logically necessary sentence. Yet he does not attempt to define truth and does not limit it to the language for which it is defined. In other words, we cannot go beyond language to define truth, since truth is immanent to language. But Tarski conceived truth as external to language and for him metalanguage was required to define it.

It is here that Davidson deviates from Tarski's programme. The mistake is with Tarski's conception of language where the external world plays a major role in defining its nature. Tarski's theory, we have noted earlier, is applicable only to formal language where the correspondence relation is granted in advance. But Davidson opposes the idea of reforming natural language, as he says that it is fatal to his project, for the task of a theory of meaning is not to change or improve or reform a language, but to describe and understand it.³¹ He thus revises the theory of truth and proposes a wider horizon to locate truth. He says:

We could take truth to be a property, not of sentences but of utterances, or speech acts, or ordered triples of sentences, times and persons; but it is simplest just to view truth as a relation between a sentence, a person and a time.³⁹

Sentences are true and held true only relative to a speaker and a time. The theory he proposes will entail sentences like; "I am tired" is true as (potentially) spoken by 'p' at t if and

only if p is tired at t⁴⁰ Therefore, for him truth is not a property of sentences in the pure sense.

He continues

Truth (in a given natural language) is not a property of sentences; it is a relation between sentences, speakers and dates. To view it thus is not to turn away from language to speechless eternal entities like propositions, statements and assertions, but to relate language with the occasions of truth in a way that invites the construction of a theory.⁴¹

Even Michael Dummett, who vehemently opposes the holistic programme of Quine and Davidson, agrees with them in opposing the traditional concept of truth and the associated view of language and linguistic understanding. Dummett stresses the assertability of linguistic expressions and thus focuses on the importance of our assertions in the emergence of meaning and truth.⁴² For Dummett also, language is not a fixed structure, controlled by the factual world, and truth and meaning do not depend exclusively on the factual content of propositions.

With his explicitly anti-realist conception of language, Dummett attacks the representational outlook and the idea of language as a medium associated with it. Such an idea, according to him, presents a static view of language and the world and neglects the user of language and the time of utterance which are important if language is viewed as a medium. Language has to be viewed primarily as containing statements made by people. This factor points to the importance of assertion conditions. Since truth is not free from the assertion conditions, it cannot be decided independently of the language user. Nor can we isolate the semantic content from linguistic practices.

This ultimately leads to the dismissal of the idea of the metaphysically given world, which according to the realist view is cognition-independent and which representationalism counted to be determining the uses of language. This becomes apparent in Dummett's theory of meaning, according to which a theory of meaning must primarily tell us how the language-users develop semantic competence correctly.⁴⁴ This is to emphasise the problem as to how to use language under appropriate conditions and not to see how the world defines the latter. In his anti-realist framework the actual practice of language is more important.

Dummett therefore, stresses the finite decidability of truth⁴⁵. It is applicable only to language which is representational, and not to non-assertorial sentences. A sentence to be verified, according to him, requires to be so within a finite strength of time. He thus opposes Davidson's holism, which makes truth immanent to all forms of language, and makes it a primitive category. For Dummett, it is meaning which is immanent to language and the former is not a matter of truth-conditions. Meaning is the basis of truth in language. For him, Davidson's holism is mistaken because it fails to settle the problem of understanding language. Or, precisely, it does not answer the question, what constitutes a speaker's understanding of any one word or sentence.⁴⁶

But, for our enquiry, this issue does not matter much. Though Dummett conceives meaning as primitive, he nevertheless contends that the latter is associated with the uses of language and highlights the practical aspect and opposes the cognition- transcendent view of the realist. Both meaning and truth, according to him, are subject to the decisions of the people using language.

For our study, this aspect is the most important one. It breaks the metaphysical notion of truth and the associated notion of language, where the latter is a medium of expression and representation. This has ultimately resulted in, in Rorty's words, a de-divinisation of the world.

Rorty writes

The world does not speak. Only we do. The world can, once we have programmed ourselves with a language, cause us to hold beliefs. But it cannot propose a language for us to speak. Only other human beings can do that.⁴⁷

As we noticed earlier, according to Rorty, the root of the idea that made philosophy of language to hold hard-core representational picture, lies in its confining attention to single sentences as opposed to vocabularies. In the case of single sentences, we can posit a segment of the world as making the former either true or false. But once we turn to vocabularies as a whole, says Rorty, it will become difficult to think of the world as making one set of vocabulary better than another. We cannot adjudicate on the basis of the world between vocabulary of Athenian politics vs Jefferson's. Here we have to consider alternative language games. It becomes hard to think that the vocabulary is somehow already out there in the world waiting for us to discover it.⁴¹

A different concept of language as well as truth is derived from such a standpoint. Languages are made by us through our interaction, rather than found out there. Truth being a property of linguistic entities or sentences is also made rather than found. He further states that our purposes would be served best by ceasing to see truth as a deep matter, as a topic of philosophical interest, or 'truth' as a term which repays 'analysis'.⁴⁹ The importance of

Davidson, according to Rorty, consists in his breaking the notion that language is a medium either of representation or of expression. Following Wittgenstein, Davidson avoids both reductionism and expansionism. Thus the question "can we reduce the various vocabularies to other vocabularies or to a unified super vocabulary" is avoided.⁵⁰ With his opposition to the scheme - content dualism, Davidson opposes the idea that there are non-linguistic things or metaphysical entities like meanings or facts which determine *a priori* our uses and various other encounters with language. Once the idea that language has a purpose - of representing or expressing - goes, the idea of language as medium also goes.⁵¹ Language is better explained as a process of evolution, where new forms of life constantly kill off old forms - not to accomplish a higher purpose, but blindly.⁵²

This is to recognise the fundamental status of language as a location of meaning and truth and this view stands closer to what we have seen in the previous chapter where language was made related to historical evolution and tradition, and what was important was the interaction between concrete human beings in historico-cultural situations. In other words, it is to place truth and meaning in the discourse which does not refer to any fixed *a priori* structure which determines its use externally. Whatever structure language has is something which is inbuilt. In this sense, language is something which we live, as it is the essential medium which fashions all our interactions with the rest of the world. It is, in other words, a hermeneutic medium. We have in it our ontological space and we understand everything through it from the peculiar space we are located. Yet it does not presume a dualist separation between subjects and objects, because it encompasses and shapes everything.

This will ultimately proclaim the fundamental linguisticity of understanding. Language is not a tool we employ to express, represent and understand reality. It is rather, as Gadamer says, the ontological medium where reality happens.⁵³ In this sense it is the encompassing phenomenon to which everything belongs. This is not to deny the representational outlook that argues that the world is represented in language. It rather goes beyond that and claims that the representational model fails to capture the dynamism of this relationship. The representational model operates within a dualist framework which consists in the representations and the represented or more comprehensively, the subjects and the objects. World or reality is not merely represented in language but happens in language, as the latter encompasses the former in a fundamental way. The world is already housed in language. The very existence of objects in the world depends upon the world already having been disclosed to us in the language we use.

Language encompasses not only the world but everything we know including our very being. As Heidegger says, the being of man is always characterised as being-in-the-world, and this is to be in a peculiar ontological space created and sustained by language. Language in this sense, has an ontological significance. It is the ontological medium where we find ourselves as existing - as being engaged in various interactive relationships with others. In this sense, language is the foundation of both meaning and truth. It determines all our encounters with the rest of the world - all our experiences, perceptions, and thoughts, our consciousness, our conceptions about truth and reality, notions of rationality and the like.

The ontological significance of language eventually suggests the historicity of our being and of all our conceptualisations. Language, being an all-encompassing medium, will embody

history and tradition To be within a language means to live within a particular historical tradition and to be guided by its categories. These categories, though exist prior to us, are not constituted of a set of fixed structures that permanently determine our life and existence. They are also subject to change

Another important characteristic feature of the linguistic medium we inherit is its social dimension This is because language is fundamentally a social phenomenon. It is our ontological medium which we share with other people in our being-in-the-world. In this sense, it transcends our subjective experiences and interpretations

Truth in this framework can no longer be understood as a matter of experience, since the dualism of representations and the represented (scheme and content) will get ultimately abolished once we recognise the ontological significance of language. The latter concept also suggests that our historical tradition has a pivotal role in determining all our encounters with language. The problem of understanding meaning, therefore, has to take into account this aspect. But here arises another problem. If language has an ontological significance and if all our understanding is rooted in language which embodies historical tradition, then we cannot guarantee certainty and objectivity. Our encounter with language and therefore all our cognitive activities including understanding of meaning will be necessarily guided by the categories of our historical tradition. This makes all our encounters with language and also our very being-in-the-world, an interpretative process.

The problem of understanding meaning in this framework, therefore, presupposes an analysis and proper evaluation of the ontological significance of language in the very constitution of our being and all our endeavours. This will have to explain, not only how truth is located in the interpretative process, but also how meaning evolves out of it — out of the intersubjective discourse. This will also explain the process of understanding meaning and also prove how fundamental this process is as far as the being of man is concerned. It would explain what understanding ultimately consists in of.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 Cf. Frege, Gottlob: *CP*. p.353.
- 2 Tarski, Alfred 1944, 'The Semantic Conception of Truth', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol.4, p 343.
- 3 *Ibid*.
4. *Ibid*
5. Rorty, Richard- *CIS* p.5.
- 6 Cf Binehan, Jeffery L.: 1995, 'The Hermeneutic Medium', *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, Vol.28, p.2.
- 7 For instance, Wittgenstein's notion of elementary proposition in *TLP*. Again, we have seen in Chapter I, how the logical positivists propagated the concept of 'basic propositions'.
- 8 Cf. Ayer, A. J.: 1965, 'Basic Propositions', in *Philosophical Essays*, London, Macmillan & Co. Ltd pp.105-24 For Ayer the basic propositions are those propositions which can be verified conclusively. See also Russell, Bertrand: *IMT*. p.137.
- 9 Cf. Russell, Bertrand: *Ibid*, p.227.
- 10 Cf. Russell, Bertrand: *OP*. p.314.
- 11 Russell's Logical Atomism is an ideal example for such a metaphysical theory. Cf. Russell's PLA in *LK*. pp 175-281.
12. Cf. Russell, Bertrand: *IMT*. p. 137.
13. Cf. Frege, Gottlob: 1984, 'On Sense and Meaning' and 'Thoughts', in *CP*. pp.157-81 & pp. 351-72

- 14 Cf *Ibid*
- 15 Cf Wittgenstein. L.: *TLP* 3.325.
- 16 Cf. *Ibid* 2.18
17. Cf Tarski, Alfred. *Op Cit.* p.350.
- 18 Cf. *Ibid* p.343.
- 19 Cf Putnam, Hilary'- 1983, 'On Truth', in Cauman, L. S. & Levi, C. D. (Eds.): *How Many Questions?, Essays in Honour of Sidney Morgenbesser*, Indianapolis, Hackett, p.40.
- 20 *Ibid* p 40
- 21 Cf *Ibid*
- 22 Cf Rorty, Richard. *Op Cit.* p.5.,
- 23 Cf. Putnam, Hilary 1978, *Meaning and the Moral Sciences* (hereafter *MMS*), London, Henley and Boston, Routledge and Kegan Paul p. 100.
- 24 Cf Quine, W.V *PL* p.4
- 25 Cf Quine, WV *UPM* p.1.
- 26 Cf. Davidson, Donald' 1986, 'A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge', in E. LePore (Ed)., *Truth and Interpretation Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson*, Oxford, Blackwell, p 307.
- 27 Quine, W V.: *PL* p.4.
- 28 Cf. Wittgenstein, L:PI. 19.
29. Cf. Quine, W. V.: *UPM.* p.2.
30. Cf. Rorty, Richard: *Op. Cit.* p.21. In Rorty's view such a de-divinising will amount to dropping the idea of language as representations.
31. *Ibid.* pp.10-11.

32. *Cf Ibid*, p. 13.
- 33 Cf. Quine, W.V.: 1980, 'To Dogmas of Empiricism', in *From a Logical Point of View*, New York, Harper Torchbooks. Harper & Row. p.42 & 43. Quine says that the unit of empirical significance is the whole of science
- 34 Quine, W. V.: 1969, *Oniological Relativity and Other Essays*, New York, Columbia University Press p.29.
35. Cf. Quine, W V : *WO*. p.26.
- 36 *Cf. Ibid* pp.68-72.
37. Cf. Davidson, Donald 1984, *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (hereafter ITI), Oxford, Clarindon Press p XVII.
- 38 *Cf. Ibid* p.29.
- 39 *Ibid*. p.34.
- 40 Cf *Ibid* p.34.
41. *Ibid pp* 43-44.
- 42 Cf. Dummett, M.- 1993 'What is a Theory of Meaning? (I)' [hereafter TM(I)] and also 'Truth and Meaning'. In the latter article he says that, in order to say anything illuminating about the concept of truth, then we must link it with that of judgement or of assertions, (p. 157), in *Seas of Language* (hereafter *SL*), Oxford, Clarendon Press
- 43 Cf. *Ibid* and also see his article, 'The Source of the Concept of Truth', in the same book.
- 44 Cf. Dummett, M.: TM(I). and also see his article 'Truth and Meaning', in *SL*.
45. Cf. Dummett, M.: TM(I), What is the Theory of Meaning? (II), and 'Language and Truth', in *SL*.

- 46 Cf Dummett, M : TM(1). Dummett in this paper argues that a theory of meaning must accord with an atomistic or at least a molecular conception of language, not a holistic one p 22
- 47 Rorty. Richard *Op Cit.* p.6
- 48 Cf. *Ibid* p 5
49. Cf. *Ibid* p 8
- 50 *Cf Ibid* p.11
51. *Cf Ibid* p16.
- 52 *Cf. Ibid* p19.
- 53 In all his works, Gadamer emphasises the importance of linguisticity and the ontological significance of language. A discussion on this aspect is provided in the next chapter

Chapter Five

LANGUAGE, MEANING AND INTERPRETATIVE UNDERSTANDING

1. THE PERSPECTIVAL STANDPOINT OF LANGUAGE

This chapter aims to develop a more comprehensive model of understanding meaning by making dialogic interaction at the centre of linguistic activity. It analyses how the fundamental historicity has ultimately come to determine our cognitive endeavours, by placing us inside a linguistic horizon

The linguisticity of understanding, as we could see, is imposing certain limits on our cognitive endeavours. The textual meaning is not directly accessible to us, as we cannot easily do away with the influence of our linguistic categories, which determine the process of understanding meaning. In other words, we are already under the influence of the perspectival grip of our language. We have seen that, it is this inevitable perspectival grip that makes understanding meaning an interpretative endeavour.

Quine's doctrine of translation describes a situation where the linguist makes guesses about the meanings of the native's utterances. These guesses are made on the basis of two things. On the one hand, they presuppose the background of a world of objects, which is available as a common sphere of experience for both the linguist and the native. On the other hand, they depend upon the interpretations performed by the linguist in the light of the linguistic categories he inherits.

Therefore, a direct access to the world of objects would become impossible. This situation makes the theory of pure perceptions challengeable and also points to the necessity of

interpretation. A mere presence of the world of objects in the background does not tell us anything definite about the meaning of the native's utterances. This is because; there is no *a priori* relationship between words and objects or facts and sentences. The stimulus-response principle lies in the background of interpretation. Based on the observation of the response of the native in the presence of the stimuli, the linguist could arrive at the theory, following a trial and error method.

In the framework of the hard-core representational semantics, the problem implied in the native and the linguist possessing different linguistic categories does not appear as important. The logico-semantic doctrine of representationalism takes care of the language-world connection, which enables the subject to make direct access to the object. Every use of language presupposes a determinate relationship between language and the world. But once this direct contact is blocked, as shown by Quine in his indeterminacy thesis, what remains is 'use' alone and consequently understanding meaning is to be viewed as consisting in an ability to use language. It is not always the case that use and meaning are interrelated in a predetermined way. Nor is it that every change in use is understood as a change in meaning. As Putnam says, meaning is a coarse grid laid over use.¹ He further adds that, our criteria for change of meaning are as various and sloppy as they are explained by the different kinds of interest we have in connection with different topics and objectives. He, therefore, calls language motley, even if one can bring the motley under a uniform representation at some level of abstraction.²

Therefore, according to Quine, the stimulus-response procedure sets only the background of understanding meaning, and does not bridge the gap between the respective ontological realms

of the linguist and the native. This rootedness in different ontological realms is a vital aspect to be taken into account of. For both the linguist and the native, their respective languages shape all that they can experience, know and understand. The Linguist cannot step out of his ontological domain by freeing his intellect from his linguistic horizon and make a direct access to the ontological domain of the native. In other words, the difference in the ontological realms blocks a direct and immediate understanding of the language of the native.

The way language defining and determining an ontological realm for us has been a widely discussed topic. The pivotal role of language in the comprehension of meaning has been recognised by many philosophers. Davidson makes this idea more apparent by explicating the intimate association of our conceptual schemes with language. Unless we make such an association, Davidson contends, we will be forced to subscribe to the scheme - content dualism, and subsequently posit a mind with its categories operating with a language with its specific structure. This would make language practically alien to us, at least occasionally, and therefore it would imply a possibility where we can be and do without language. But speaking a language, asserts Davidson, is not a trait a man can lose while retaining the power of thought⁴

With language claiming such a pivotal position, we increasingly tend to reject the claim that reality exists independently of us as well as the language we speak. The representational idea of a world of independent objects and facts becomes challengeable. We can then, as Putnam says, no more hold the view that something extra-linguistic like the 'sense' of the sentence is determining the conditions under which any particular sentence will be uttered and the behaviour that will result if that sentence is uttered.⁵ Even if there is an extra-linguistic

world, it is of no interest to us, unless it could enter the framework of our language and thus make us aware of it. But this notion of entering into a language again is a distorting image, as it suggests, what Davidson calls, the scheme - content dualism and consequently presupposes a representational model. But, as we noted earlier, language never suggests anything beyond its use. An expression means something because, we have used it accordingly. Putnam's language - reality picture makes clear some of the implications to which this conception may lead. He takes a radical stand about language and attempts to show how reality itself is internal to one's perspective, which eventually is a derivative of one's own language. This is because, all our experiences, perceptions and sensations are determined by our conceptual choices. Putnam writes

Even our description of our own sensations, so dear as a starting point for knowledge to generations of epistemologists, is heavily affected (as are the sensations themselves, for that matter) by a host of conceptual choices.⁶

Language, therefore, penetrates reality. Putnam strongly opposes the metaphysical realist position, which upholds the availability of an in-itself reality, independent of our language and existence and which can be explained in terms of a correspondence relationship between our language and things in the world. Without challenging the representational conception of the functioning of language in its entirety, Putnam emphasises the perspectival aspect that is extremely crucial as far as the questions of meaning, truth and understanding of language are concerned. He agrees with the representationalists that the truth of a sentence depends on, and derives from, what the sentence refers to. But this relationship of the sentence with its reference is a casual relationship and not an obscure form of association, which the representationalists

assumed as having between words and objects or propositions and facts. This relationship of causation, definitely operates within a perspective provided by our language and consequently meaning and truth also are perspectival. From these primary propositions Putnam concludes that, reality itself is internal to our perspective.⁷

The emphasis on perspective forcefully asserts the interpretative nature of understanding. As Putnam puts it, there is no bird's eye view available for us to grasp reality or meaning from a no-man's perspective. Our perspectives are determined by our language and all our understanding is interpretative. In other words, the ontological significance of language makes interpretation pivotal

Quine's doctrine of radical interpretation works out the implications of this situation. The role of analytical hypothesis in radical interpretation forcefully suggests this. The linguist who attempts to understand the language of the alien name will have to project his own ontology and its categories to the native's utterances in order to make successful guesses about the latter's meanings. For Quine, every understanding of meaning involves such projections, which are nothing but an interpretation on the basis of the interpreter's ontological categories. As a result, there will be as many interpretations and translations as the number of interpreters. As far as the question of understanding meaning is concerned, interpretation is inevitable. This factor reiterates the importance of examining the ontological significance of language.

The notion of the ontological significance of language therefore, requires a more important attention. This will lead us to examine how language shapes, not only our cognitive

enterprises, but also our very being. The vital role played by interpretation and understanding in our lives will ultimately get revealed in this examination. The dualist picture, where language is conceived as a medium, has been primarily undermined here. Explaining the evolution of man's being in and through language, it also shows how the world and being come together in language and consequently form a unique space for the latter's movement and existence.

2. THE ONTOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF LANGUAGE

The way language is ontologically significant suggests the following mutually connected concepts

- 1) Language is devoid of an essence, which is independent of the various contexts of use.
- 2) The very being of man itself evolves out of the various uses of language in the numerous life contexts.
- 3) Language and meaning are historical in character.

Representationalism, though seldom stated explicitly in the modern times, developed a peculiar notion of being - subject of representation - around its doctrines of language and the language - world relationship. The Cartesian cogito is an ideal being in this framework. Kant elaborates the concept of 'epistemological subject', which is the subject of the representational framework. The idea of the *a priori* categories of understanding, and the notion of the transcendental schema of apperception also suggest that there is something fundamental which all human beings possess. This view, therefore, subscribes to the Greek idea of fixed human nature. This representational picture, in general, thus creates a unique space for the human subject, where it

exists independently of the rest of the world. It, therefore, distinguishes the self from the world with its own individuality and conceives language as a medium by means of which a contact is established between them.

But with a shift of emphasis to 'use', from representation, the idea of language as a medium comes under suspicion and consequently the idea of independence of self from the world also becomes contestable. The dualistic picture of language and the world disappears. Language, in a unique way, brings together the self and the world, and this coming together, nevertheless, is revealed in language itself. It is understood, no more as representing a transcendental and *a priori* logical structure, which defines and determines all our cognitive encounters with reality and communicative interactions with fellow beings, but is evaluated as a normative field that shapes not only the reality around us but also our very being. It is not just a medium, which has a fixed task to perform

Wittgenstein's concept of language games envisages a unique coming together of the self and the world in language. It implicitly suggests how the various forms of life determine, not only our knowledge about reality, but also frame our very self-hood. Each language-game which we are engaged in playing reveals to us a unique individual dimension of reality, which may not sound legitimate outside the purview of that language game. Consequently, a unidimensional concept of reality is thoroughly undermined.

Again, a language game is not an independently existing phenomenon, but is intimately associated with a form of life which is formed out of various practices. A move in the language-

game cannot be understood without familiarising and practising the rule system followed by that game. In other words, what is required is participation and not just detached observation. Consequently, we cannot construe the picture of self-hood or of human nature, independently of the ways the being of man is practically engaged in the various language games and the latter's participation in the corresponding forms of life.

The idea of fixed human nature is no more at issue. Human beings rather derive their essence out of the various ways they are involved in the language-games and forms of life. Since there is no fixed essence for a language game and hence for language, the idea of a fixed human nature also gets invalidated.⁸ Following this insight into language, Wittgenstein explicitly attacks a view he held in the *Tractates* about the notion of the general form of propositions. He rather says: "Instead of producing something common to all that we call language, I am saying that these phenomena have no one thing in common - but that they are related to one another in different ways".⁹ As language is something that is constituted of such relationships, the human nature itself is something which evolves from them. It is only through the project and process of various language games that the human self derives its essence and this makes it flexible and historical. It is flexible because a rule in the language game does not stand for any *a priori* essence or structure that transcends the concrete existence of human beings. And it is historical because, no language game can exist in a vacuum. As Wittgenstein puts it, "the term '*language-game*' is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the speaking of language is part of an activity or of a form of life".¹⁰ Every human action and life form constituted of such actions and behaviour patterns presupposes a background in history.

In chapter three, we have seen how the recognition of historicity presented an alternate version of the notion of human nature. What has been emphasised is the fundamental situatedness of man's being. The examination of historicity, therefore, ultimately reveals, not only the nature of man's being, but also the nature of human knowledge and understanding. But the real nature of man's being gets revealed only with the realisation of the importance of language in his life and all his cognitive endeavours. With the realisation of the ontological significance of language, man's complete and essential relationship with language acquires prominence. As Wittgenstein puts it, language forms part of man's natural history.

A more radical and consistent relationship between language and man's being is revealed in the hermeneutic model. Gadamer, following Heidegger, takes such a relationship as the most primitive and primary aspect that fashions our being. Language, he says, is the element in which we live and which we can never objectify to the extent that it ceases to surround us.¹¹ Language is;

.. nothing like an enclosure from which we could ever strive to escape. *The* element of language is not a mere empty medium in which one thing or another may be encountered. It is the quintessence of everything that can encounter us at all.¹²

Hence, in a very preliminary sense, language is ontologically significant in two ways, which together define the linguisticity of man's very being. They are:

- 1) Language functions as the essential hermeneutic medium which we cannot dispense with at all. Every act of interpretation happens well inside language, and

hence is never pure and objective. Therefore, our access to the world and reality presupposes language.

- 2) Language conditions man's situatedness in the world. In Heidegger's words, the being-in-the-world is a form of existence which gains momentum from the guiding or defining categories of language in which we dwell. We inherit our foresights from it, says Heidegger. Gadamer makes this idea clearer with the help of the concept of tradition and its prejudices.

Heidegger combines both these aspects of language in order to derive his peculiar notion of human existence. The essence of man lies in his existence, which, being historical, is a temporal process that manifests in and through language. This manifestation takes place in the act of self-disclosure that happens in the context of concrete life-world and hence is also a disclosure of this world. These two processes merge in the realisation of the understanding of meaning. Such a merger, and therefore, the disclosures and understanding meaning presuppose a background, which points to the historicity of the interpreter. This merger is actually contained in *Dasein's* realisation of its possibilities, as the foresights represent its projects which constitute the guiding principles of its acts.

In other words, all our experiences presuppose that we have already oriented ourselves towards the world in particular ways by means of language. We can, therefore, no more experience anything as it is. We always experience something 'as' something since we are already oriented by our prejudices to experience an object in certain ways. The 'as' structure is built into the very core of our relationship with the rest of the world, exerting a normative power.

This is the normative power of our language and our tradition. This position, therefore, amounts to the rejection of the traditional idea of "pure perceptions" in a categorical way and subsequently proclaims that perception necessarily includes meaning. Every encounter with meanings and their understanding therefore, does not just involve the intervention of language, but happens in it. According to Gadamer:

The phenomenon of understanding, then, shows the universality of human linguisticity as a limitless medium that carries *everything* within it - not only the "culture" that has been handed down to us through language, but absolutely everything - because everything (in the world and out of it) is included in the realm of "understandings" and understandability in which we move.¹³

To make prominent the historical and social dimensions of man's ontological status in the light of the essential linguisticity of understanding and existence, Gadamer explains how in the linguistic character of our access to the world we are implanted in a tradition.¹⁴ He thus connects the realm of pre-understood meanings as well as the self and world-disclosures (interpretations) based on them with the historical and the linguistic tradition. Understanding is the interplay of the movement of tradition and the movement of the interpreter, says Gadamer. The foresights or anticipation of meanings that govern our understanding proceed from the communality that binds us to the tradition. He writes:

Tradition is not simply a precondition into which we come, but we produce it ourselves, inasmuch as we understand, participate in the evolution of tradition and hence further determine it ourselves.

Tradition, in the wider sense, will take care of the socio-cultural dimensions of language. Gadamer examines Aristotle's definition of man as a 'being who has logos', where the term logos is understood as reason or thought. He rearticulates this statement and says that, in truth, the primary meaning of the word logos is language. We are enclosed in the linguistic world and are always at home in language, just as much as we are in the world.¹⁷ And tradition, in its turn, exists in the medium of language.

The rootedness of understanding meaning in historically existing linguistic tradition has been categorically affirmed by Gadamer. It is something, which is handed down to us. It is, therefore, not something that remains aliens to us, as we view it as a remnant of the past. On the other hand, it is something which is immediately given to us, as we find ourselves in it and cannot detach it from our very being. The immediacy of its givenness has been repeatedly asserted by Gadamer. as he says that, it is given to us in various forms like myths, legends, customs, etc.¹⁸

This aspect of the ontological significance of language poses a problem for understanding meaning. To put it in simple terms, the rootedness in tradition generates some obstacles in understanding the textual meaning which lies at a distance from us due to its peculiar historicity. Our language and our rootedness in a tradition subsequently determine our horizon which makes up the range of vision from which only we can perceive and experience everything. This fact apparently suggests a relativistic conclusion, though it makes strong arguments against subjectivism. We shall now see how a possible threat of subjectivism as well as the self-

defeating relativistic position is avoided. These have been achieved by proclaiming the absolute autonomy of language

3. LINGUISTIC HORIZON

The idea of linguistic horizon will, at the same time explicate clearly the real meaning of the ontological significance of language and also the nature of understanding meaning. One of the immediate consequences of our being ontologically determined by a linguistic tradition is that it makes us prejudiced by determining a peculiar world-view for us, and thereby designing, not only our range of vision and cognition, but also aspirations and needs. The linguistic horizon we inherit is the sum total of all these

But though our linguistic horizon apparently makes our range of vision limited, it positively provides us a broad and comprehensive background which is essential for all understanding of meaning. We inherit this horizon as a result of our being rooted in a language or linguistic tradition, and this rootedness, in turn, helps us surpass our finiteness and narrowness as a subjective entity. The prejudices we possess are not our subjective prejudices, but are the intersubjective conditions in which the tradition has been handed down to us. In other words, the linguistic horizon is a common possession of the community to which we necessarily belong. The language that makes up the categories of our thought and guides our thinking is something which we share with others. The interpreter's subjectivity as well as the subjectivity of the author of the text does not pose any problem here because of this communality. The focus on the subject is therefore, successfully averted with stress on language and its horizon. What is experienced in

tradition cannot be taken as the meaning of another person, who is a 'Thou'. As Gadamer writes:

Understanding of tradition does not take the text as an expression of a 'Thou' but as a meaningful content detached from all bounds of the meaning individual of an 'I' or a "Thou".¹⁹

To bring out the communality aspect of language, Wittgenstein registers a series of arguments against the idea of 'private language', which argues that languages can be privately devised and learned. Sounds made in a regular fashion would not qualify to be called language, unless they were shown to have consequences or they were used as signals to others in the community. One of the strongest arguments put forward in support of the idea of private language by its proponents is that, languages are learned by means of personal sensations and various mental states through a process of introspection. In the case of sensations, it has been argued that, learning proceeds by associating words with inner experiences through a kind of private baptism. If this is correct, then it could be comfortably argued that a private language was possible, apart from the normal public language.

Opposing this, Wittgenstein categorically asserts that, learning to name an inner experience is essentially connected with public behaviour and necessarily presupposes a background in society. This is because, naming demands that a word should be consistently used, i.e. it is used according to rules.²⁰ And the use of a word necessarily presupposes the context of a language-game, which has its own peculiar inner dynamics. The rules reflect this dynamics and subsequently provide a criterion for correct use. In the case of a private language,

the only criterion that can be pointed out is the correct use of memory. But since memory can be defective, it cannot guarantee correctness and consistency in use.

Again, naming is not just associating a word with an object in an arbitrary fashion. It demands a regular association of word with object, or in other words, it has to find a place in a language-game. In the words of Wittgenstein: "Naming is so far not a move in the language-game - any more than putting a piece in its place on the board is a move in chess *nothing* has so far been done, when a thing has been made. It has not even *got* a name except in the language-game".²¹ In various language games the name finds its uses. And to use in this way, a definite amount of socialisation, knowledge about conventions and practices which make up the functioning of the society are essential. Any concept to be displayed requires the existence of the other.

Tradition and the forms of life related to it, therefore, stands for an intersubjective sphere for action and communication. The positing of such a concept, though averts the possibility of subjectivism, does not rule out relativism. The conventions, customs and rules of the tradition or form of life will exert a normative power over us, which makes our ontological schema prominent in all our interactions. As we have seen in Quine's theory of translation, interpretative understanding necessarily involves projecting the interpreter's ontological schema. Whatever essence our language has, has to be discovered, not in any metaphysical plane - the third realm of Frege or the objective world of the representationalists - but in the linguistic horizon that is given to us. And what constitutes this linguistic horizon is nothing but the various uses of language. The spirit of the tradition gets reflected in such uses.

4. LINGUISTIC HORIZONS AND UNDERSTANDING OF MEANING:

The insights we have so far suggest that certain parameters have to be observed before the problem of understanding meaning is evaluated. It has to be primarily conceived that, both the text and the interpreter are the products of two different horizons. Then the problem of understanding meaning can be reformulated in terms of the relationship between the two horizons. Or, more precisely, the interpreter's access to the text's horizon has to be explained.

Schleiermacher and Dilthey, we have seen, are envisaging the possibility of making a direct access to the horizon of the text, by placing the interpreter in the former. The demand, according to them, was to understand the textual meaning without tampering it (by mixing it with the interpreter's intentional life). For them the textual horizon is the product of the individual author's intentional life, and hence they proposed to imaginatively transpose the interpreter to the author's intentional world or subjective horizon.

We have seen that such attempts are problematic. On the one hand, with the greater role assigned to language, the focus on subjectivity appears as a defective and distorting image. The horizons to which the text or the interpreters belong are not the products of any individual subject as Schleiermacher and Dilthey contended. The concept of horizon presupposes the availability of an intersubjective plane for action, movement and communication. The horizon is therefore, not a privately owned world but a common property of a group or community. The question of subjective expressions does not legitimately arise in this context. The text is, therefore, not an independent entity, but is a property of an intersubjective horizon. Again,

language, though it has a determining role in the formation of horizons, does not suggest any easy means to overcome the problems raised by the multitude of such horizons. The horizon of the text may distance itself from the horizon of the interpreter in fundamental ways.

Since the problem here is created by language and linguistic horizons, the solution also has to be discovered in language. This consists in understanding the wider roles of language in making possible the understanding of meaning, which are implied by the fact that language is ontologically significant. Instead of conceiving the different horizons that encounter with each other as fixed, we have to see how they evolve, change and fashion themselves, along with languages, in a variety of ways in the process of historical evolution. This will show how understanding meaning is essentially a linguistic process

Wittgenstein tries to make such a picture explicit and argues that understanding a sentence means understanding a language, and asserts that, this in turn presupposes a knowledge about the rules on the basis of which the sentences in that language are formed and used. These arguments bring out certain vital insights implied by the idea that language is ontologically significant. The rules of language are not externally imposed, but constitute the very idea of language. And since they determine the various uses of language, they are the basic rules to be observed in order to understand meaning

Wittgenstein categorically emphasises the fundamentality of rules as far as language is concerned. It is a final element beyond which we cannot go. It is not possible to penetrate behind the rules, because, there is no behind. Rules are so fundamental and immanent to

language, that we do not first learn them and then apply. Instead, the rule is given to us in the actual applying. Obeying a rule is, therefore, a practice.²² It does not leave us any alternative and when I obey a rule, says Wittgenstein, I do not choose but obey it blindly.²³

The notion of rule, in one sense provides the key for understanding meaning. It is rules that make linguistic activity an intersubjective exercise and, therefore, a legitimate process. It is the fundamentality of rules that enables language to surpass the inner experiences - subjective experiences - of any individual speaker. The very use of language, the practice of language-game, involves the process of rule-following. And Wittgenstein says that to obey a rule is a matter of custom.²⁴ It presupposes a community of speakers, together with whom we participate in language games. And this, in turn, brings into prominence that the speaking of language is part of an activity or a form of life. In short, the very notion of rule and, therefore, the speaking of language and participating in a language game, imply the necessary presence of an intersubjective realm - a set of shared beliefs, conventional expressions, etc.

Without raising the problem of historical understanding, Wittgenstein then examines the problem of understanding languages or language games. Each language game is unique, as they have different rule structures and are attached to different forms of life. They possess different paradigms for beliefs and actions. Wittgenstein puts it:

All testing, all confirmation and disconfirmation of a hypothesis takes place already within a system. And this system is not a more or less arbitrary and doubtful point of departure for all our arguments.²⁵

While arguing that there can be different language games and correspondingly different forms of life, Wittgenstein envisages the possibility of understanding these different language games in terms of their respective rule structures. He makes this idea clear by differentiating the language game of science from that of religion. Scientific doctrines are, according to Wittgenstein, absolutely different from religious beliefs. He attacks Frazer, who conceived religious belief as a relic of the pre-scientific thought.²⁶ Science is founded on evidence that we receive from empirical experience and hence every scientific doctrine is a testable hypothesis. But Wittgenstein held that religious beliefs were unshakeable convictions,²⁷ and testing them on the basis of empirical evidence did not constitute a norm in the rule structure of this language game. They rather project new ways and attitudes towards life which call for a new language which can be learned and used inter-subjectively. It is this language that provides them the necessary framework to legitimise their belief. This language contains neither the truth-false dichotomy, nor the reasonable - unreasonable dichotomy, which constitute a central part in the language game of science. The question of understanding here therefore, poses a different problem. What acquires prominence in this model is the idea of rule-following.

Understanding meaning necessarily involves rule-following or obeying the rule. This in other words, is to participate in the particular form of life to which the rule is related. This is because, 'obeying a rule' is essentially a practice. Interpretation is based upon this. Meaning is essentially related to use, or in other words, it reveals itself in a language game which is a rule-governed activity. We understand the meaning of an expression by learning its function in the practical context - in the linguistic and situational context, where it finds use. Grammar tells us

what kind of object anything is, says Wittgenstein.²¹ Therefore, understanding presupposes not a detached description of the language game as a whole, but rather a participation in it

With this notion of participation in mind, we shall come back to the problem of historical understanding. Wittgenstein never explicitly analyses language games as historically situated and, therefore, never recognises the way language comes to define a horizon for us. Nor does he recognise the importance of prejudices. He rather focuses on linguistic practices that sustain through customs and conventions. The inter-subjective rules of the language games themselves are formed out of these customs and conventions, and one follows these rules when one participates in them and obey them blindly. He assumes that these rules are given in language, and since language is part of man's natural history, it is possible to learn languages and participate in language games

Participation in a language game never calls for any external criteria of evaluation. Every criterion is rather provided from within, or the very notion of criterion is a distorting idea. From the outset, the notion of participation reminds us the hermeneutic task which Dilthey and others have attempted to set before us. But by assigning a larger role to language, Wittgenstein dissolves the problem of different historical horizons. He makes language all-pervading and hence the temporal dimension of history never poses a problem for him.

The ontological significance of language has never come to full realisation in the framework of language game theory. For Wittgenstein, the whole process of understanding meaning can be explained in terms of the concept of rule-following. Learning rules amounts to

participation in language games. But with the recognition of historicity and the power of linguistic horizons to determine our ontological status, this notion of participation appears to be a difficult task to accomplish. We cannot detach ourselves from our linguistic horizon in order to participate in different language-games by obeying their rules blindly. Rule-following is a natural process which happens blindly. But an interpreter who is already conditioned by the ontological schema of a language cannot approach the rule structure of a different language game without interpreting those rules in the light of the prejudices he inherits as a result of being so conditioned. Wittgenstein asserts that the rules of language are inter-subjective. But this inter-subjectivity does not suggest that they are ahistorical and consequently hermeneutically neutral. The historicity of language, in turn, suggests the historicity of our very being, which again makes our situatedness an issue.

Wittgenstein's concept of rule-following with its stress on inter-subjectivity fails to notice the significance of the different horizons. These horizons, since being rooted in different traditions, will necessarily project their own ontological schemata and attribute their own meanings to whatever they come to encounter. The interpreter, therefore, has a creative role to perform when he learns and participates in different language-games. It is this creative role of the interpreter that has been ignored by Wittgenstein when he made rules of language inter-subjective and hermeneutically neutral. More than determining our cognitive enterprise, in the sense of limiting them, our horizon provides us a possibility to realise the real nature of our getting determined by it. As Gadamer notes, "to have an horizon means not to be limited to what is nearest, but be able to see beyond it. A person who has an horizon knows the relative significance of everything within this horizon as near or far, greater or small".²⁹

Wittgenstein's purpose for introducing the idea of 'rule-governed language use' was to explain understanding of meaning without subjectivistic consequences. A similar objective could be achieved by placing ourselves in an horizon and making it so fundamental in all our cognitive enterprises. Our horizon is a creative counterpart in all our attempts to understand meaning and whatever significance things have is always relative to our horizon. As noted above, this horizon of ours is a creation of the linguistic tradition which has been handed down to us. Hence, it is not a closed individual universe. No horizon is closed. In Gadamer's words:

The horizon is rather something into which we move and that moves with us. Horizons change for a person who is moving. Thus the horizon of the past, out of which all human life lives and which exists in the form of tradition, is always in motion.³⁰

This will reinstate the ontological significance of language more radically than in the language game theory of Wittgenstein. By creating a horizon for us, our linguistic tradition and its prejudices determine our thoughts and actions in the most concrete ways and this suggests that there is a strong hermeneutic element in all our relationship with the rules of language games. These rules do not exist independently in an inter-subjective plane, enabling us to follow them directly. It is rather impossible to detach them from their historical rootedness and therefore, from their peculiar horizons.

What becomes relevant here is an encounter between horizons. As far as the question of understanding meaning is concerned, Gadamer says that it consists in a fusion of horizons.³¹ Such a fusion actually happens within language - not in the language of the text nor in the interpreter's language, but in a language which is common. The respective horizons of the text

and the interpreter are neither confirmed nor denied but were affirmed and asserted in this common language.

5. LANGUAGE : THE LOCATION OF MEANING

We have come to the conclusion that meanings to be understood are to be searched neither in the extra-linguistic empirical world (representationalism) nor in the author's subjective mind (psychologism), which again is an extra-linguistic realm, but exclusively in language. It is in this context we encounter the problem of different horizons, as a horizon itself forms part of a tradition and is essentially linguistic in nature. This situation immediately presents us with two possibilities, as far as the location of meaning is concerned.

- 1) Meanings are located in the horizon of the text. With the idea of 'rule-following' the process of understanding meaning can be explained in this framework. This standpoint represents the objectivist idea of 'understanding the textual meaning in its own terms'. But this ultimately neglects the creative role of the interpreter in the process. On the one hand, it is practically impossible for the interpreter to detach himself from his horizon and its prejudices. It is from them that he derives the principles and categories that guide, determine and even make possible his enquiries. Our horizon thus makes us capable to address the text, to place it not just as an object to be approached in a detached way. It thus enables us to see the absolute significance the text has to us, and to establish a productive relationship with the latter, so that, we make use of it to form a better understanding, not only about it but also about ourselves.

- 2) We find our horizon as guiding us and we understand the text from its peculiar angle. The textual meaning, therefore, is located in the interpreter's linguistic horizon. Whatever significance the text has is related to the interpreter's horizon. But nevertheless, this horizon of the interpreter is not a subjective space exclusively occupied by him, but is a shared, inter-subjective space in which he exists as a historical being inheriting a tradition.

This position amounts to the view of cultural relativism, which stresses the difference in the ways things and events are perceived, conceived and understood. Textual meaning will be understood differently by different groups of people, depending on their perspectives, views, vision and way of life. The force exerted by the text has least relevance here, since its significance is ultimately judged from the interpreter's perspective.

Both (1) and (2) fail to see the creative process involved in the understanding of meaning. The historicity of both the text and the interpreter has to be taken into account and this would not be possible if we take resort to either of these two alternatives. Meanings are neither outside language nor are they confined to any one of the horizons. Language has the ability to 'contain' the different horizons that may encounter with each other, since each horizon is fundamentally linguistic in nature. Understanding is said to be materialising in the creation of a common language.³²

The creation of such a common language and the evolution of meaning **in** it happen through a process of understanding. This common language evolves out of the interactive

relationship between the text and the interpreter. This interactive relationship is a vital process, which derives its dynamism, not from any external source but from the two interacting horizons. Here the nature of this relationship becomes worth examining, which can be carried out by analysing the role of the interpreter in any genuine act of interpretation,

6. INTERPRETATION AND UNDERSTANDING

In every interpretative enterprise, with the aim of understanding meaning, the interpreter will have certain crucial roles to perform. He has the participating role in the process, as he is not a mere impartial spectator in the encounter. He positively contributes to the dynamism of the process with his prejudices. We have examined this aspect earlier when we discussed the role of tradition and prejudices. What makes this participating role important is the fundamental historicity of our language and, therefore, our very existence.

But interpretation is not just blind participation. It also performs a creative role, which consists in the interpreter adopting two positive steps in the interactive enterprise with the text. The first step consists in the ability and willingness of the interpreter to check the unconditional and arbitrary application of his prejudices. The very realisation of the fact that our being is situated in a historically conditioned horizon entails such an ability. "To exist historically means that knowledge of oneself can never be complete",³³ says Gadamer. And again, "...to have an horizon means, not to be limited to what is nearest, but to be able to see beyond it. A person who has an horizon knows the relative significance of everything within this horizon as near or far, great or small".³⁴ This realisation is, in fact, the acceptance of one's finitude and the

incompleteness of one's understanding. This in turn enables the interpreter to be open towards the perspective represented by the text, or, in the words of Gadamer, to the text's claim to truth. The Interpreter has to adopt a creative posture and allow the text to address him and let it say something to him; be sensitive to the otherness of the text, and place the other meaning in a relation with the whole of the interpreters' own meanings in a relation to it.³⁵ The creativity from the interpreter's part consists more in this latter task. As Gadamer sums it:

Rather, a person trying to understand a text is prepared for it to tell him something. That is why a hermeneutically trained mind must be, from the start, sensitive to the text's quality of newness. But this kind of sensitivity involves neither 'neutrality' in the matter of the object nor the extinction of one's self, but the conscious assimilation of one's own fore-meanings and prejudices. The important thing is to be aware of one's own bias, so that the text may present itself in all its newness and thus be able to assert its own truth against one's own fore-meanings.³⁶

The second step to be adopted, that makes interpretation creative, consists in such an assimilation of prejudices in the light of the text's otherness. The question is: how is this otherness to be constructively approached, so that it would result in the evolution of a common language? It, therefore, concentrates on yet another aspect of the relationship between the text and the interpreter. An openness to the text's claim to truth will eventually give the interpreter an access (though indirect) to the perspective of the text. This is, in fact, the perspective of the horizon of the text and it stands for a different way of experiencing and assimilating reality. It suggests a different form of life and designs its categories in harmony with the former. The openness to the textual horizon, therefore, amounts to allowing oneself and one's own views and perspectives getting challenged by that horizon. Understanding by means of the citation of a

common language in this context amounts to a situation where the truth of the text is assimilated to the peculiar concrete situations of the interpreter by means of a process of application.

Gadamer, while explaining the problem, how the textual meaning as understood by different interpreters amounts to different interpretations and hence different understanding appeals to the Aristotelian insight of *phronesis*, which was used by the later to explicate the difference between the practical ethical knowledge and theoretical knowledge about goodness.³⁷ In ethical knowledge, what is important is to know the concrete situation in the light of what is demanded of him in general. It consists in understanding the particular situation in the light of the general norm that is relevant to the former. Gadaraer sees a similar problematic in the case of interpretative understanding. Here, the text and its horizon which were approached by different interpreters (who belong to different horizons) stand for the universal. It is something, which is common to all interpreters. But like an ethical norm, the textual meaning also cannot be understood in an abstract way. Each circumstance is unique, and the universal norm has different applications in each of them. This situation is similar to the instance of playing a game, where the general rules of the games find application in different circumstances. Both in games and ethical situations, players and agents act in the light of universal norms and rules, but act differently in different situations. Similarly, the interpreter must relate the text to his situation, which is a creation of his horizon. Understanding meaning is therefore, not a matter of submission to the text's claim to truth. It is rather a matter of applying this truth to the interpreter's situation and hence amounts to a modification in line with his circumstances. As is evident, the norms to which ethical matters appeal cannot be applied in the same way in all

instances, but must be modified in accordance with the demands of the situation. Hermeneutic interpretation also achieves a similar concretisation of the universal.³⁸

The participating and creative roles of the interpreter will be positively fulfilled only with the creation of a common language, as the meaning and its understanding evolves out of such a common language in the continuous process of its creation. But such a process of creation of a common language, nevertheless, is not an easy task to be achieved. The interpreter's participating role will always be in friction with the text's unique claim to truth- Therefore, understanding meaning will progressively evolve, only if it can creatively progress to a dialogic encounter. In other words, the encounter between the text and the interpreter should be a dialogic interaction, and understanding meaning involves such a creative interaction where there is a continuous interface between the different points of view represented by the respective horizons of the text and the interpreter.

7. UNDERSTANDING MEANING AND DIALOGUE

Interpretative understanding now appears to be consisting in the evolution of a common language. The ultimate goal of interpretation - the application of the textual meaning to the interpreter's situation - which is materialised in the interpreter adopting a creative role is realised only when the interpreter and the text come into a dialogic interaction. This is because, what is important is to take account of the uniqueness of both the text and the interpreter.

This situation requires the derivation of a common meaning for both the text and the interpreter. And since any meaning to be understood is located in language, interpretative understanding, requires the possibility of a common language. The aim of understanding, therefore, consists in the achievement of such a common language, which will evolve out of the dialogic interaction between the text and the interpreter. This will satisfy the logically necessary condition of a dialogic encounter, of a common platform to materialise communication and conveyance of meaning. The primary prerogative of a dialogic encounter consists in the collective exploration of meaning by the different participants. At the level of conversation (in the case of textual interaction also), it starts with, as Gadamer points out, ensuring that the other person is with us. Gadamer continues:

To conduct a conversation means to allow oneself to be conducted by the object to which the partners in the conversation are directed.³⁹

This is true even in the case of day-to-day language use. It is a primary requirement that the other should be taken as a partner. In other words, understanding meaning is the result of dialogue. Language is a complex process that involves a good amount of socialisation which in turn materialises through its use in various contexts. The life of language lies in dialogue, where the other is not just a hearer, but a partner. The participating and creative roles of the interpreter have their full realisation only in a dialogic encounter. We have seen that the participating role of the interpreter - where his prejudices and presuppositions are under active operation - is in friction with the process of understanding meaning. There is thus a possibility of these prejudices getting imposed upon the textual meanings. This situation calls for a creative role from the interpreter where he has to approach the text with openness and apply it to his concrete

situation, in order to grasp it. The dialogic process concludes precisely in such an application and consequently in the formation of a common language.

To make clear the nature of dialogic interaction, Gadamer analyses the interpretative encounter by imposing upon it the logic of question and answer. He asserts that the structure of question is implicit in all our experiences. Every new experience adds something more to our existing views. Every process of understanding, therefore, enriches our perspective. In the absence of such an enrichment, understanding meaning will ultimately fail to serve its purpose. This suggests that, experience, and also understanding meaning, is not a matter of making the object fit and confine to one's own framework. The openness to the textual meaning, therefore, suggests that, the interpreter should not only allow the text to say something to him, but also put his views and opinions under check. In other words, since language is a social phenomena, it requires the interactive encounter of people. It is in this sense, Gadamer identifies the original phenomenon of language in dialogue. Though the rootedness and situatedness in particular linguistic horizons are perennial, this very fact itself contains the possibility of seeing beyond. In other words, the horizon itself does not represent any fixed and solid state of affairs. It is rather, something which evolves and expands. At the very outset, it enables the interpreter to go beyond the boundaries of its subjective life. As Gadamer puts it, the I-lessness is in essential feature of the being of languages. He continues:

.... speaking does not belong in the sphere of the 'I' but in the sphere of the "we"....the spiritual reality of language is that of the *pneuma*, the spirit, which unifies I and Thou. ... the actuality of speaking consists in the dialogue. But in every dialogue a spirit rules, a bad one or a good one, a spirit of obduracy and hesitancy or a spirit of communication and of easy exchange between I and Thou.⁴⁰

This explains how the structure of question is implicit in all our experiences. The interpreter's creative role which makes him open to the text's claim to truth brings the structure of question into the forefront. The openness toward the text's novelty consists in admitting that one is not the authority about the subject matter and many things are left out for one to know. This is to admit one's ignorance. The Platonic dialogue presents the nature of the tension between knowledge and opinion. The very possibility of dialogic encounter presupposes the admission of ignorance, which is not an easy task, because, in Gadamer's words.

It is the power of opinion against which it is so hard to obtain admission of ignorance. It is opinion that suppresses questions. Opinion has a curious tendency to propagate itself.⁴¹

But with the admission of ignorance, by making oneself open to the text, the question emerges. Then the question presses itself on us and we can no longer avoid it and persist in our accustomed opinion. In the words of Gadamer, to ask question is to bring the object into openness. It is to proclaim one's own ignorance and make one's answer to the question unsettled and, therefore, indeterminate. Gadamer adds:

The object has to be brought into this state of indeterminacy, so that there is an equilibrium between pro and contra. The sense of every question is realised in passing through this state of indeterminacy, in which it becomes an open question.⁴²

This indeterminacy constitutes the inevitable aspect of openness. Owing to this indeterminacy, there is a chance for the various horizons that interact to present themselves as alternatives.

The reaching of this indeterminacy is only the beginning of the process of opening up, and therefore, of the dialogic encounter. Again, this indeterminacy does not in any way make the dialogic process directionless. The openness is actually to the text's claim to truth, and hence the questions that can be raised should be essentially related to the text. Gadamer here proposes to view the text as an answer to a question. The logic of question and answer that lies implicit in any dialogic endeavour implies that, the text necessarily presents itself to the interpreter as an answer to a question. The understanding of the text, therefore, consists in understanding the question to which it is an answer. But then, no question can arise in isolation and will be necessarily presupposing a horizon. Hence, understanding the question to which the text is an answer means acquiring the horizon of the question to which the text stands as a possible answer.

This endeavour evidently makes an important move by means of which the meaning to be understood is taken out of the respective horizons of the interpreter and the text. The openness exhibited by the interpreter and his admission of ignorance enable him to see beyond his horizon. The acquisition of the horizon of the question takes him out of the former. At the same time, the text also is made indeterminate by relating it to the horizon of the question to which it is only a possible reply. This factor makes the solidity of the textual meaning dissolve. In other words, viewed in this sense, we cannot say that the text has a meaning of its own in the objective sense. Its meaning is always related to the horizon of the question to which it can be a reply and therefore, necessarily goes beyond what is said in it

But this process of going beyond the horizon of the question cannot be earned out with the application of any specific method. Here, the text itself presents the interpreter with a

question which eventually places his meaning in openness. In order to answer this question, the interpreter has to reconstruct it, which is ultimately going beyond the historical horizon the text presents with. In the words of Gadamer:

The reconstruction of the question to which the text is presumed to be the answer takes place itself within a process of questioning through which we seek the answer to the question that the text asks us. A reconstructed question can never stand within its original horizon: for the historical horizon that is outlined in the reconstruction is not a truly comprehensive one. It is, rather, included within the horizon that embraces us as the questioners who have responded to the word that has been handed down.⁴³

The interpreter's relationship with the text becomes more creative only when he approaches the text as posing a question to him. In this process of getting questioned, the interpreter's meaning is placid in openness, just as the textual meaning was placed in the openness by the horizon of the question to which it is related as a possible answer. This process of creative interaction, the mutual questioning and reconstruction of the question, happens in a newly evolving common language. Such a common language will necessarily present a unique horizon as the process of questioning and getting questioned will essentially go beyond the respective horizons that come into play. Gadamer observes:

Every conversation presupposes a common language, or, it creates a common language. Something is placed in the centre, as the Greeks said, which the partners to the dialogue both share, and concerning which they can exchange ideas with one another. Hence agreement concerning the object, which it is the purpose of the conversation to bring about, necessarily means that a common language must first be worked out in the conversation.⁴⁴

Understanding meaning, therefore, in no way consists in going beyond and grasp meanings from a non-contingent realm. It is well placed within language, though the latter is inevitably contingent and owes its existence to the social interaction of individuals. But the right

attitude would be, what Rorty says, to accept this contingency and incompleteness.⁴⁵ It is such an incompleteness that allows room for expansion and enrichment. As Gadamer puts it:

.... in the successful conversation they both (the text and the interpreter) come under the influence of the truth of the object and are thus bound to one another in a new community. To reach an understanding with one's partner in a dialogue is not merely a matter of total self-expression and the successful assertion of one's own point of view, but a transformation into a communion, in which we do not remain what we were, (bracket added).⁴⁶

The horizon which evolves from this new communion will definitely be a more comprehensive one, as it will contain the perspectives of both the text and the interpreter in a unique way. Understanding, which consists in the application of the textual meaning in the interpreter's horizon, therefore, amounts to such an expansion and enrichment of his horizon.

With these discussions, what is getting re-asserted is the fact that, understanding meaning is an essential mode of the being of man. And since the process of understanding meaning is essentially linguistic, human existence is entangled with language and its functioning in essential ways. Since the life of language consists in dialogue, the meaningfulness of human existence consists in the acquisition of more enriched horizons as a result of dialogic interaction.

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1. Cf Putnam, Hillary: *MMS*, p.99
2. Cf. *Ibid.*
3. Cf. Davidson, Donald: 1984, 'The Idea of a Conceptual Scheme', in *ITI*. p. 184.
4. Cf. *Ibid*, p.185
5. Cf. Putnam, Hilary *Op Cit.*, p.98
6. Putnam, Hilary: 1982, *Reason Truth and History*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p.54.
7. Cf. Putnam, Hilary 1987, *The Many Faces of Realism*, La Salle, Illinois, Open Court, p.17.
8. Cf. Wittgenstein, L. *PI*.65.
9. *Ibid.* 23.
10. *Ibid.* 25.
11. Cf. Gadamer, H. G: 1981, *Reason in the Age of Science* (hereafter *RAS*), Cambridge, The MIT Press, p.50.
12. *Ibid.* p50.
13. Gadamer, H. G.: *PH*. p.25
14. Cf. Gadamer, H. G.: *RAS*. p.50
15. Gadamer, H. G.: *TM*. p.261.
16. Cf. Gadamer, H. G.: *PH*. p.59.
17. Cf. *Ibid.* p.63.
18. Cf. Gadamer, H. G.: *TM*. p. 351.

19. Ibid. p. 321.
20. Cf. Wittgenstein, L.: *PI*.199
21. Cf. *Ibid*. 49.
22. Cf. *Ibid*. 202.
23. Cf.*Ibid*..219
24. *Cf. Ibid*. 199
25. Wittgenstein, L.: 1977, *On Certainty* (hereafter OC), Oxford, Basil Blackwell, p.16.
26. Cf. Wittgenstein, L.: 1979, *Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough*, in Rush Rhees (Ed.) tr. A. C. Miles, Retford, Notts, Brynmill Press.
27. Cf. Wittgenstein, L.: OC, p.16.
28. Cf. Wittgenstein, L.: *PI*. 373.
29. Gadamer, H. G.: *TM*. p.269
30. Ibid. p.271.
31. Cf. *Ibid*, p.273.
32. Cf. *Ibid*.
33. Ibid. p.269.
34. *Ibid*.
35. Cf. Ibid.p.238.
36. Ibid. p.238.
37. Cf. *Ibid*. pp. 274-89
38. Cf. Gadamer, H. G.: *RAS*. p.50.
39. Gadamer, H G.:*TM*.p.330.
40. Gadamer, H. G.: *PH*. pp.65-66

41. Gadamer, H. G.: TM. p.329_
42. Ibid. pp.326-27
- 43 Ibid. p.337.
44. Ibid. p.341.
- 45 Cf. Rorty, Richard: CIS.
46. Ibid, p.341.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Our examination into the problem of understanding meaning proposes two basic ideas. They are: (1) The Linguisticity of understanding meaning, and (2) The historicity of language and linguistic understanding. This study can be conceived as an attempt to analyse these basic ideas to their logical conclusions

The first idea is a common notion shared by both the representational and anti-representational frameworks of thought we have examined. But the element of historicity has come into proper recognition only in the hermeneutic tradition. The hermeneutic problematic emerges as a result of this recognition.

Our study has attempted to show how the very concept of 'linguisticity' raises the hermeneutic problem by exploring the deeper meaning of that notion. It has been examined, how far linguisticity is responsible for historicity, not only for our understanding of meaning through language but also for our very being. These aspects, though perennial, had never been recognised and examined in the representational tradition, owing to its allegiance to the model of reality and knowledge propagated by the natural sciences. This has led the representational tradition to ignore the multitude of life contexts where language is being used and consequently the very life and dynamism of language.

The relationship between linguisticity and historicity, therefore, is an important aspect examined in this study. This examination has ultimately led us to see how man's very being is

formed out of his linguistic interactions in various historical contexts. This examination, in turn, leads us to note two important implications of man's peculiar relationship with language:

- 1) The ontological significance of language.
- 2) The existence of a 'linguistic horizon' that determines the norms of our actions and cognitive endeavours.

The second one actually follows from the first. To recognise the ontological significance of language is to recognise the fact that man's being is designed and determined by a particular linguistic horizon. He inherits certain prejudices from this horizon, which determine all his endeavours and experiences. The representational model, with its focus on the language-world isomorphic relationship, fails to notice the evolution of such an horizon and its determining influence upon us. With this recognition, language comes to be understood as an intersubjective plane, which provides us the space for our movement.

This factor, therefore, asserts the inevitability of interpretation in all our encounters to understand meaning, as our linguistic horizon will be defining our perspectives. This makes the interpreter an active partner in the process of understanding meaning, where he has two roles to perform.

1. The participating role:

He is not a mere observer, but approaches the text always with a set of preconceptions or prejudices. These preconceptions and prejudices will create a background of meaning for him which will make its influential presence in all his experiences.

2. The creative role:

To prevent any arbitrary imposition of his own meaning upon the text, the interpreter has to make himself open to the text's claim to truth. He must also try to assimilate the textual meaning by applying it to his situation. Hence, openness and application together constitute the creative role of the interpreter.

An analysis of this creative role leads us to recognise the fact that the original phenomenon of language is in dialogue. Such a conclusion can be arrived at from two ways:

1. From the very outset, language is a social phenomena. The very legitimacy of language requires the 'other' to be taken as a partner. Even in the most primitive forms of language use, and in the sphere of day-to-day life situations of linguistic practices the other is presupposed. The real purpose of language, therefore, lies in the formation of a "We", surpassing the individuality of the partners. This is possible only in a dialogue.
- 2 In his creative encounter with the text, the interpreter should exhibit openness towards it. Such an openness consists in the interpreter admitting his ignorance and allowing the text to say something to him. This *is* to approach the text as an answer to a question. Here the text's legitimacy as an answer is already presupposed. At the same time, the text is not viewed as 'the answer' but as a possible answer to the question. This will ultimately do away with the solidity of the text. And again, to know the question to which the text is an answer is to achieve the horizon of the question. But simultaneously with this, the interpreter has to view the text as posing him a question and thereby challenging his

opinions. The openness of the interpreter consists in conceiving the text posing him a question. This is to prepare oneself to get challenged by the text. Such a process of questioning and getting questioned constitutes the structure of any dialogic encounter.

Any discussion bears fruit only when a common language is formed. Meaning to be understood is located in this language, which is the intersubjective plane of experience, Gadamer calls this process of forming a new inter-subjective common language, "fusion of horizons". The respective horizons of the text and the interpreter in this context appear not as fixed solid structures but as fluid structures which bear within them the possibility of constant expansion and enrichment. New dimensions of meaning always emerge as possibilities. As Gadamer says, it is progress of events that brings out new aspects of meaning in historical material. (*Truth and Method*)

The traditional epistemological schema of subject-object dichotomy appears as inadequate here. With the recognition of historicity the concept of reality that is relevant in the epistemological framework gets deconstructed. The picture of an objective reality, which the epistemological tradition assumes as remaining in the background of all enquiry, no more appears as legible here. The concept of life-world proclaims the primary importance of concrete human life and the 'givenness' in that life. Even the abstractions of natural science should have their roots in such a concrete life, asserts Husserl. An alienation from this concrete life-world puts the sciences in a crisis, he adds. Such a life-world constitutes the ultimate reality here, and it is this life-world that lies in the background of all our endeavours.

The subject of experience also undergoes tremendous reformulation. Instead of a detached observer, here there is the concrete human being, interacting with reality with his inherited prejudices. His relationship with reality cannot but be an interactive participation, because he himself is a party contributing to the very creation of that reality..

The concept of interaction, which has its culmination in the dialogic encounter, completely deconstructs the concept of understanding meaning propounded by the representationalists. Language is no more a medium which conveys objective meanings, but is an intersubjective plane where different dimensions of meanings engage in dialogic interaction and get asserted and assimilated in particular ways. Along with the picture of language and the mode of linguistic understanding, the concept of objectivity also has undergone change. With the interpreter becoming a participant in the process of meaning cognition - as he himself is a partner in the dialogue from where meaning evolves - the representational ideal of objective understanding will no more hold good.

Yet, the dialogic model does not suggest a subjectivist or relativist result. The focus on linguistic horizon definitely saves the interpreter from getting locked in his subjective world. Linguistic horizon is a common property which the interpreter owns with a group or community. Again, each horizon has the capacity to be in interaction with other horizons and to form common linguistic horizons. This process is explained in the formation of a common language in the process of dialogic interaction. This newly evolving language is the new inter-subjective plane for interaction between the different participants. Identifying the real phenomenon of language in dialogue, therefore, amounts to what Richard Bernstein calls in his book, *Beyond*

Objectivism and Relativism, Science, Hermeneutics and Praxis, going beyond objectivism and relativism, a dichotomy which prevails in philosophy since the Greek age.

The limits imposed by linguistic horizons do not make us stand helpless in achieving our cognitive goals. They are, rather, not limits in the actual sense, but are conditions that define our very being, not in the light of impossible tasks, but in view of positive possibilities. These possibilities find their realisation in dialogue.

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