

• **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

The relationship between language and reality is one of the prime concerns of linguistic philosophy that has been witnessed in the twentieth century. In fact, the question that why does language matter to philosophy, actually hinges on in finding out the answer that language matters to philosophy because language helps us to know reality. There is no question of doubt that whatever the nature of language may be, whether it would be ordinary or artificial language, sign or tribal language, one thing must remain the same that language does refer. That means the referential function of language is the chief function. Again what does language refer? Language refers reality which is there in the world. Therefore, the relationship between language and reality appears as one of the important tasks of the so-called linguistic turn appeared in the twentieth century.

An immediate question then arises: How is language related to reality? Is language a suitable medium for knowing reality? So long we do not spell out the very nature of language as well as reality; it would be very difficult to answer these questions.

Nature of Language:

As far as language is concerned there we find divergence of opinions. In fact, linguistic philosophers of twentieth century were involved into a tug of war regarding the very nature of language. A section of leading linguistic thinkers at that time expressed serious doubt about the nature of ordinary or everyday language. According to them ordinary language by its very nature is ambiguous, vague. Therefore, ordinary language cannot be regarded as the genuine method of knowing reality. Instead of this, an artificial or ideal language must be constructed in such a way so that the structure of language can map or represent or picture the

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structure of reality. This is what we call the semantic interpretation of language. According to this view reality is independent of language. Language hooks or maps reality and in this process language in some sense or other gets its philosophical meaning.

Contrary to this view, the proponents of ordinary language philosophers hold that ordinary or natural language is all right or sufficient for knowing reality. For them, ordinary language is not responsible for generating philosophical ambiguity. If there would be any ambiguity arising out of ordinary language, ordinary language itself is not responsible for this; rather the users of ordinary language who actually fail to understand the very meaning or logic of ordinary language would be responsible for the ambiguity of ordinary language. Therefore, there is no need for constructing an artificial language. According to these philosophers there is no need for revisionism in favour of artificial language. Ordinary language is sufficient for knowing reality. Our important observation is that whatever the language may be, it would be true to say that language helps one to know reality. Therefore, reflection upon language is pivotal for doing philosophy. In fact, reflection upon language is not something new appeared only in the twentieth century. If we look back to the history of philosophy, we notice that philosophers in the past were very much concerned about the functional aspect of language. Hegel once says that *our culture is actualized through language*. Even in the *Upanishads* we are told to mediate on speech. This is justified by saying that if there were no speech; neither right nor wrong would be known, neither true nor false, neither the pleasant nor the unpleasant. Speech makes us understand all this. Therefore mediate on speech. What has been said in *Upanishads* was reflected in the remark of Locke. According to Locke, meditation upon language must be the constant accompaniment of philosophical reflection. Locke confesses, “When I first began this discourse of the understanding and a good while after, I had not the least thought that my consideration of words was necessary to it. But

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when, having passed over the original and composition of our ideas, I began to examine the extent and certainty of our knowledge, I found it had so near a connection with words that unless their force and manner of signification were well understood, *there could be very little said pertinently and clearly concerning knowledge*; which being conversant about had constantly to do with propositions: and though it terminated in things, yet it was, for the most part, so much by the invention of words, that they seemed scarce separable from our general knowledge.”¹ It seems clear from Lockean interpretation that words are inseparable from knowledge. Like Locke, von Humboldt also makes the same remark. According to Humboldt, language and cognition are inseparable. He further contends that language is not merely the means by which truth is more or less adequately expressed, but is rather the means by means of which the not yet known is discovered. Humboldt’s remarks are particularly relevant here. He not only conceives that reflection upon language is important for doing philosophy, but also stresses on the view how does language help us to know reality.

The empirical philosophy of language subsequently becomes the basis for a theory of knowledge which eliminates the universal. Berkeley seeks to show the impossibility of abstract ideas and he traces them to the source from which they flow, namely, language. In the mind of the empiricist this principle of the inseparability of knowledge and its expression in language becomes the final argument against innate principles and the extension of knowledge beyond the empirically observable. In fact, the philosophy of language of empiricism precipitated a crisis in culture as its theory of knowledge precipitated a similar crisis in the sphere of technical philosophy. As Hume woke Kant from the so-called dogmatic slumber, so the critique of language indirectly is connected with what is called *Romantic Movement*.

¹ Locke, John: *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, W. Swan Sonnenschein & Co., London, 1882, Book 111, Chapter 1X, p.189.

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What has been observed above is that preoccupation with language or reflection upon language was not the philosophical event appeared only in the twentieth century. Even philosophers before the twentieth century were deeply involved with language and found difficulties in language. For the Sophist, no less than for Plato and Aristotle, for Locke no less than for Descartes and Leibniz, even for the idealism of von Humboldt and Hegel, we notice a considerable reflection upon language and it is at this point that the problems of the philosophy of language arise. Therefore, there is nothing hidden to say that the revival interest in philosophical problems of language is one of the outstanding feature of the present cultural situation. Meditation on language at any point actually helps one to develop his own thought and culture. The only notable aspect is that language did not appear as the philosophical method before the linguistic revolution. The insight was there but they did not think that analysis of language or so to speak clarification of language was all about of doing philosophy.

The appearance of *linguistic turn or revolution* in the twentieth century established language as the house of doing philosophy. It has been said that language is philosophy and philosophy is language where the term *is* is conceived in terms of identity. That means what is language is philosophy and what is philosophy is language. Language has, so to speak, become the *Brennpunkt* of present day philosophical discussion. This is justified by saying that philosophy of language or linguistic philosophy has become a special and relatively distinct department of philosophical activity which helps one to actualize his or her own culture.

Nature of Reality:

Like language, reflection upon reality is an age old phenomenon. In fact, the genesis of philosophy is to know reality in any form. If we forego the empirical tradition as well as the semantic interpretation of language, then we can say that the concept of reality as understood

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by philosophers is metaphysical or transcendental in nature. In the past, metaphysicians first explored or investigated the nature of reality and they usually conceived reality, though unreflectively, as 'real'. Austin says, "Many philosophers, failing to detect any ordinary quality common to real ducks, real cream, and real progress, have decided that Reality must be an a-priori concept apprehended by reason."² Bradley again was a leading campaigner of metaphysical reality and he made a contrast 'reality' with 'appearance'. In his book *Appearance and Reality*, Bradley goes on to say that what is real is Absolute; it is the whole. Accordingly, anything which is mere appearance would be unreal. He says, "...to know reality as against mere appearance ...or...the effort to comprehend the universe, not simply piecemeal or by fragments, but somehow as a whole."³ Bradley does not equate reality with existence for although it is true to say that what is real exists, but at the same time what is not real, namely appearance, also exists. Therefore, existence cannot be the mark of reality. If we compare Bradley's view in terms of modern context, we find a considerable philosophical debate regarding this issue. Linguistic philosophers, particularly, belonging to semantic completely rule out the possibility of metaphysical reality as expounded by Bradley. However, Meinong's view of reality goes in favour of Bradley.

Contrary to Bradley, we can point out Quine's observation regarding reality. Quine in his paper "On Mental Entities" says, "I suggest that it is a mistake to seek an immediately evident reality, somehow more immediately evident than the realm of external objects. Unbemused by philosophy, we would all go along with Dr Johnson, whose toe was his touchstone of reality. Sheep are real, unicorns are not. Clouds are real, the sky (as a solid canopy) not. Odd numbers are perhaps real, but prime even numbers other than 2 not. Everything, of course is real; but there are sheep and there are no unicorns, there are clouds

² Austin, J.L. *Sense and Sensibilia*, Oxford University Press, 1962, p.64.

³ Bradley, F.H., *Appearance and Reality: A Metaphysical Essay*, Clarendon, 1946, p.198.

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and there is (in the special sense of the term) no sky, there are odd numbers and there are no even primes other than 2. Such is the ordinary use of the word ‘real’, a separation of the sheep from the unicorns. Failing some aberrant definition which is certainly not before us, this is the only usage we have to go on.”⁴ If we carefully look after the remarks of Quine from the above passage, it seems clear to us that Quine just holds a contrary position of Bradley. Thus, an apparent conflict is visible. Quine equates ‘real’ with ‘existing’, while for Bradley what is not real, namely, appearance, also exists. Secondly, unlike Bradley, Quine gives much importance on the ordinary or everyday usage while cognizing reality. For him ordinary usage ‘is the only usage we have to go on.’

One use of reality is to explain what happens in the mental model by reference to what lies outside it. For example, discussions of how the nervous system processes its incoming information regularly refer to the external source of information as ‘reality’. In this sense, reality is what exists independently of how it is perceived or conceived. Another use is to adjust the model, at the level either of perception or of understanding, by constructing the world as we have taken it to be with ‘reality’. The second use is far more fundamental than the first one as metaphysicians aim to fiddle with the model so that our overall understanding conforms to how things are. In this sense, reality is conceived as ‘reality is how things are’. Although reality as such is broadly classified as either empirical or metaphysical, but within this broad classification, there we conceive various sub-classifications or sub-divisions. For example, a Kantian nominalist, a New-Berkeleyan phenomenalist, a perceptual realist and a scientific reductionist may have very different views of the nature of reality. Even in modern times many philosophers belonging to different philosophical branches have conceived the nature of reality differently. For example, early Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* says that the

⁴ Quine, W.V. “On Mental Entities”, in *The Ways of Paradox*, Random House, 1966, p.208.

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world is the totality of facts (reality). Some other would say that reality is the totality of experience. Kant's interpretation in this regard is very relevant. According to Kant, both empirical and metaphysical realities are interchangeable even though they are distinguished in nature. Kant calls our ordinary way of conceiving the world 'empirical reality'. He also contrasts empirical reality with the absolute reality of noumena. Besides these, he had a notion of 'objective reality' which means 'real in the sense of being properly thought of as an object independent of us'. For Kant we have objective reality at the empirical level and also at the noumenal level. However, considering all these, Kant's final observation is that ultimate reality will be the final viewpoint presented by our metaphysics.

The relationship between Language and Reality:

So far we have outlined the historical background of language and reality. Now let us examine the relationship between language and reality from the viewpoint of linguistic philosophy. We have already seen that the term 'reality' is broadly conceived as either empirical or metaphysical. J.N. Mohanty one says, "By 'reality' is sometimes meant the real things, events, facts and persons which go to constitute what we in common parlance call the real world. But 'reality' is also sometimes, especially in metaphysical discourse, taken to mean ultimate or metaphysical reality in which case it denotes something that stands behind and beyond the world of things and persons which is but its appearance." Accordingly, the relationship between language and reality can be examined by finding a suitable answer to the questions, such as: (1) How is language related to the real; things and persons constitute the real world? And (2) how is language related to the ultimate metaphysical reality, to the Absolute or Brahman? These questions can alternatively be framed as: Is language a suitable medium for knowing the nature of the empirical world of things and persons? And again is language a suitable medium for knowing or conceiving the nature of the ultimate

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metaphysical reality? We think that the question whether language is a suitable medium for knowing reality is not difficult to answer. In fact empiricists and realists both in East and West have viewed that language is a suitable medium for knowing reality. Even philosophers belonging to semantic as well as pragmatic are of the opinions that language does of course refer empirical reality. However, as far as metaphysical reality is concerned, a considerable, debate both from East as well as from West, has been witnessed.

As far as metaphysical reality is concerned, two philosophical difficulties may come into consideration. In the first place, it can be said that reality would be a matter of linguistic decision if it can be assumed that language refers to metaphysical reality. A question then immediately crops up our mind: How can we discuss the relation between language and reality, if giving a meaning to 'reality' is a matter of linguistic decision? Professor J.N. Mohanty himself once raised this question. The second problem is that while investigating the relationship between language and reality, we have to go beyond the limits of language. As a matter of fact, in order to gain a vantage point, we have to go beyond language to some non-linguistic experience in order to correlate the relationship between language and reality. As metaphysical reality is *unspeakable* or something lies beyond words, language could have no meaningful relation to it. In Indian tradition we also notice the same view. For example, an extreme form of *Madhyamikas* has said that reality is wholly unspeakable. Therefore, the attitude concerning reality for the wise man is to adopt the path of silence. Similar view is being witnessed in *Advaita Vedantists*. Commenting on Sankara's statement that the *Brahman* can never become an object of speaking, Vacaspati Misra observes, "No proposition whatever can point out the characteristics of objects directly as 'this and this'. Thus, the differences in the tasted sweetness of sugarcane, milk and guda cannot be spoken

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of. Similar situation prevails everywhere.”⁵ Therefore, it can be said that metaphysical reality cannot be drawn from a formal study of language. Metaphysical answers are wrong answers to ill-formulated questions at the hand of the metaphysically inclined philosopher of language. Accordingly, it can be assumed that there is no ultimate reality in the metaphysical sense and hence it is unrewarding for the philosophers to enter into an investigation for the relation of language to any such reality.

We do not, however, think that this is true without begging question. The view that reality is something that exists independent of language should not be the final verdict as far as reality is concerned. Meinong one says that it is the philosophers’ prejudice or chauvinism that to talk of an object is to talk of in terms of existence. Distinguishing *existence* from *subsistence*, Meinong enables us to show that there are some objects such as ideal objects or even pure objects which are real in the metaphysical sense. According to Meinong, an object is not determined only in terms of its existence, but in terms of logical *being*. An object may exist (real object) or may subsist (ideal object). However, irrespective of its existence or subsistence, what remains common is its logical being, i.e. *the concept of that object*. In this sense, it can be said that reality is nothing but the logical being of an object what is philosophically known as the concept of an object. In this regard, metaphysical reality may be intuited by means of language. Besides Meinong, we can also mention the phenomenological point. Heidegger in his book *Being and Time* once says that “Language is the house of Being”. According to Heidegger language is the locus and vehicle of the arrival, i.e. the self-revelation of Being itself. Language is the house or temple of Being. Language is enabled to be aware of Being. It is the word that gives its being to everything. Heidegger further contends that the relationship between word and thing is not an external relation between two

⁵ Bhamati on Brahmasutrabhayas, 1.1.4.

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independent entities; rather the word itself is the relationship which sustains the thing in its being. This reflects that Heidegger's account of the relationship between language and reality has metaphysical relevance. In this project, we shall, explore Heideggerian account of the relationship between language and reality.

As far as empirical reality is concerned, there we find two philosophical dimensions of which one is purely logical and the other is descriptive. When Wittgenstein says that a proposition pictures a fact (reality) in the sense that they possess the same structure, his interpretation is far more logical than descriptive. According to Wittgenstein, the world is the totality of facts and a fact is something which makes a proposition as either true or false. Language is constituted by propositions and a proposition is constituted by logically proper names. For Wittgenstein proper names are the minimum vocabulary of ideal language by means of which the so-called language is formulated. A name, Wittgenstein says, denotes an object and the meaning of the object is the meaning of the name under consideration. His own interpretation of language as well as reality is logical and that is why Wittgenstein in his *Tractatus* never cites any example. Thus, Wittgenstein's model of language is a well-known philosophical method through which the relationship between language and reality can be established in the logical sense.

There is another important view, namely the descriptive view, through which the relationship between language and reality can be established. If we say that the world is not the totality of facts, but events, things and persons, then instead of saying that language pictures facts, we rather contend that language can describe them. In this sense, reality is to be understood in terms of *our experience of the real*. If reality is conceived in terms of our experience of the real, then the true problem is the relation of language not to reality, but to our experience of the real. Believers of this proposal are of the opinions that there is no experience of the real

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that falls beyond the purview of linguistic framework. According to this view, there is no non-linguistic apprehension of the real. This view clearly goes against the view that language and reality are independent with each other and language pictures reality.

It is important to point out here that the very essential function of language is to refer and the function of referring is different from the other function of meanings. The meaning function of language, unlike the referential function of language, derives from the rules of formation and transformation of a language, whereas the referring function of language relates language to extra-linguistic reality. While talking about the referential function of language, one thing should be kept in mind that the so-called *reference* is intrinsic to language what may be called, rather contingently, the dispositional power of language. Accordingly, it can be said that this intrinsic property of language constitutes an essential function of language- qua language known as merely intended reference. Having said this, the problem still remains whether the intended reference of language does foothold on reality or not. Again linguistic philosophers were disagreed regarding this point. Some would like to say that language has intended reference and the reference of language does foothold on to reality. Russell's theory of *knowledge by acquaintance* is a case in point. However, this theory fails to cope up with the massive participation as it has a limited application. Even many would like to say that Russell was wrong in thinking that the sense or meaning of a name is its designation. Language qua language refers, but whether the intended reference does foothold on reality is another question.

The thesis will address four important dimensions as far as the relationship between language and reality is concerned. In the *First Chapter* of this thesis, we propose to analyze and examine the semantic interpretation of the relationship between language and reality from early Wittgensteinian point of view and it would be entitled as: *The Atomic Interpretation*

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of the relationship between language and reality after early Wittgenstein. It should be kept in mind that the term semantics is a brought concept and many linguistic philosophers in one sense or other can be regarded as semanticists. Therefore, for the sake of brevity, we particularly confine ourselves on the atomic interpretation of the relationship between language and reality as has been developed in the semantic tradition. I think that with the influence of Bertrand Russell's 'Logical Atomism', Wittgenstein has developed the atomic interpretation of the relationship between language and reality through his celebrated Picture theory of Meaning.

It is important to point out here that semantists, in general, have proposed *Linguistic Revisionism*. They, in general, have favoured artificial or logical language due to the shortcomings of ordinary or natural language. According to them, even though ordinary language is alright for descriptive sciences, but in order to handle formal sciences ordinary language is inadequate. Moreover, ordinary language does not reflect all without exception the true nature of language. Therefore, semantists in general and Wittgenstein in particular, of course, with the influence of Russell had introduced logical proper name while developing his atomic interpretation of the relationship between language and reality in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. We think the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* is a semblance of the atomic interpretation of the relationship between language and reality.

Then, we pass on to the pragmatic interpretation of the relationship between language and reality. Again like the semantics, the pragmatic is a broad linguistic school. Many linguistic philosophers have been regarded as pragmatists. In this regard, we can particularly call upon the name of later Wittgenstein, J.L. Austin, P.F. Strawson, Gilbert Ryle and many others. Therefore, it would not be possible to explain and incorporate the views of all these philosophers. In this regard, we particularly explain the view of P.F. Strawson, which we

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think, is central in understanding the relationship between language and reality from pragmatic standpoint. Therefore, in the *Second Chapter* of this thesis we propose to choose Strawson's view and it would be entitled as: *The Conceptualistic Interpretation of the relationship between language and reality after P.F. Strawson.*

We think that both the semantists as well as pragmatists have tried to understand the relationship between language and reality from external point of view. According to them, both language and reality are separated entity and independent from each other. Language is a tool that can be used *secondarily* for knowing reality. According to them, language is relevant or language matters to philosophy because language reveals reality or ontology for us as a separate tool. Thus, in summing up, they have given an external use of the relationship between language and reality. The only notable difference between the semantists and the pragmatists is that they have approached different nature of language as well as different nature of reality. Semantists, in general, have proposed logical language; whereas pragmatists, in general, have proposed natural or ordinary language. But we think the *external interpretation of the relationship between language and reality does not reveal the whole aspect of reality.* In fact, their interpretations may reveal the external aspect of reality. But it is wrong to suggest that the external aspect of reality is *all about of reality.* Therefore, in the *Third Chapter* of this thesis, we propose to analyse and examine the internal aspect of the relationship between language and reality from Noam Chomsky's mentalistic standpoint and it would be entitled as: *The Psycho-linguistic Interpretation of the relationship between language and reality after Noam Chomsky.*

There is no question of doubt that Noam Chomsky as a living philosopher of U.S.A has introduced a new dimension in linguistic philosophy what may be called the *Second Linguistic Revolution in philosophy.* It has been claimed by many that if the first linguistic

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revolution has been centered within the semantics as well as the pragmatics traditions, then Chomsky's mentalistic interpretation is supposed to the second linguistic revolution in philosophy. The question then is: Why is Chomsky so important in developing linguistic philosophy? The most possible answer is that Chomsky alone brings back the relevance of the internal use of language and the internal aspect of reality. According to Chomsky, language is the mirror of human mind. Therefore, the study of language is a part of human biology. As language is the reflection of human mind, understanding language actually helps one to understand human mind. Language, for Chomsky, is supposed to the eternally repeated labour of the spirit to make articulated sound capable of thoughts. It has been farther held that language is not merely a means of exchanging thought, rather a true world (reality) which the spirit has it force. In this sense, language is conceived not as an instrument or a mere tool, but as a product of the *spirit of human subjectivity*. Therefore, to know language is to know the problem of other mind. One can know the mental states of other mind and knowing other's mind is a form of reality. Reality lies within. Thus, in this Chapter we propose to analyse with special reference to Noam Chomsky the psycho-linguistic interpretation of the relationship between language and reality, which, we think, would reflect a new aspect of reality.

Historically the relevance of metaphysical reality has been rejected or intentionally forfeited, of course, on some basic grounds by the logical positivists in particular and the whole host of semanticists in general. According to a dominant linguistic wave, the relevance of metaphysical reality is nil because language by no means can reach up to metaphysical reality. In precise, it has been claimed by many that language is ineffable to reach up to metaphysical reality. Therefore, metaphysical reality has not been examined in the domain of linguistic philosophy. But, we think that one should not ignore the relevance of metaphysical reality when we examine the relationship between language and reality. In this regard, Martin

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Heidegger from the West and Bhartrhari from the East had done a commendable job in reviving the relationship between language and reality from metaphysical perspective. Therefore, in the *Fourth Chapter* of this thesis we propose to analyse and examine Heidegger's point of view in this regard and it would be entitled as: *The Metaphysical Interpretation of the relationship between language and reality after Martin Heidegger*.

According to Heidegger, language is the house of Being. Language is the locus and vehicle of the arrival that is the self-revelation of being itself. Language is the temple of Being. Being is the guardian of Language. As the guardian of language, Being must take care of language because it is language through which Being has been manifested or revealed. Therefore, according to Heidegger, language and Being (reality) are inseparable. Language is reality and reality is language. Here the verb 'is' is used in the sense of identity. This interpretation of Heidegger actually opens up a new dimension as far as the investigation of the relationship between language and reality is concerned. We have already noted that when the semantists as well as the pragmatists have engaged themselves in exploring the relationship between language and reality they have considered both language and reality as separated entities. Whereas, here we come to know after Heidegger that both language and reality is the same thing. Thus, we have a different interpretation of language as well as a different interpretation of reality. By language, Heidegger means poetic language and the essence of poetic language is that it is creative unlike other languages. By Being, Heidegger means metaphysical reality and Being as a metaphysical reality is not independent from language. It lies within language; it dwells within language; it is the guardian of language. Thus, we think that the metaphysical interpretation of the relationship between language and reality as has been addressed by Heidegger actually occupies an important position in order to know the *other* aspect of reality. Thus, in the *Fourth Chapter* I propose to incorporate this important aspect of the

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relationship between language and reality after Martin Heidegger. In the same *Chapter* we also propose to make an East-West comparative study between two original thinkers one from the East and other from the West i.e., from the East Bharṭṛ hari and from the West Heidegger, as far as their understanding of the relationship between language and reality.

The main thrust of this thesis is to explicate the relationship between language and reality. Accordingly, we propose to analyse and examine four different aspects of such relationship what I have termed as *Four Pillars of the relationship* between language and reality. Therefore, in the *Fifth Chapter* which is entitled as *Concluding Remarks*, we propose to outline the rational and philosophical implication of the outcome of the thesis.

