

• **CHAPTER ONE**

The Atomic Interpretation of the relationship between Language and Reality after early Wittgenstein

There is no question of doubt that early Wittgenstein holds an important position in the history of linguistic philosophy. No other philosopher retains consistency as far as the development of linguistic philosophy as a method of philosophy. Even though Wittgenstein in some sense or other was influenced by Russell and others, but his philosophical ingenuity was unparalleled in compare to others linguistic philosophers. It is indeed true to say that within the domain of linguistic philosophy; there we observe several methods through which the relationship between language and reality can be established. Semantic approach is one of them. One should be kept in mind that the term *semantic* is a broad concept. Therefore, before delving into this approach, it is prerequisite for us first to explain what we actually mean by the term *semantics*? So long the term semantics remains unspecified; there is no point of talking about the relationship between language and reality from this perspective. Semantics is a very far-reaching and diverse field. It does not to promote any single current approach, but to give the reader access to some of the central ideas in the field of linguistic philosophy. Generally speaking, *semantics is the study of meaning communicated through language*. One of the insights of modern linguistics is that speakers of a language have different types of linguistic knowledge, including how to pronounce words, how to construct sentences, and about the meaning of individual words and sentences. Thus, linguistic description has different *levels of analysis*. There are three available and well known levels of analysis, such as, *Phonology, Syntax and Semantics*. *Phonology* is the study of what sounds a

Chapter One

language has and how these sounds are combined to form words; *syntax* is the study of how words can be combined into sentences; and *semantics* is the study of the meanings of words and sentences. One can study of the meanings of words and sentences in different ways. Accordingly, there we find different methods and approaches within semantics. Therefore, it has to be specified in what sense we interpret the semantic approach of the relationship between language and reality.

Our main concern is to show the relationship between language and reality. Therefore, when we deal with semantics, we certainly look at the basic question how it is that we can use language to describe the world. In semantics the action of picking out or identifying with words is often called *referring or denoting*. Thus, one can use the word Paris to refer to or denote the city. The entity referred to, in this case the city, is usually called the *referent* or *denotatum*. Some linguistic philosophers, like John Lyons, separate the terms refer and denote. For them, the term *denote* is used for the relationship between *linguistic expression and the world*, while the term *refer* is used for the action of a speaker in picking out entities in the world. Simplistically, it can be said that referring is what speakers do, while denoting is the property of words. Secondly, unlike reference, denotation is a stable relationship in a language which is not dependent on any one use of a word. Reference, on the contrary, is a moment by moment relationship. Semantic as a school of linguistic philosophy in general prefers proper names as the nominees of language which fundamental function is to denote or to refer. In this sense, there develops referential theory of meaning. Referential theory determines the meaning of linguistic expression. It states that a name or a linguistic expression would be meaningful if it refers something other than the expression under consideration. More succinctly, it can be said that a sentence is to be meaningful if it refers something other than the sentence itself. This clearly reflects that when we deal with

Chapter One

semantics, the meaning of the sentence is determined on the basis of the relationship of two independent entities, one belongs to language and the other belongs to world. In language, it would generally be a proper name or the sentence constructed on the basis of proper name and in the world or reality so to speak, it would be an object. Thus, in a sense, semantic theory of language is external. It is external in the sense that here language normally refers to some non-linguistic entity having its independent or separate existence.

The pertinent question is: how semantic approach ensures the relationship between language and reality? Of course, referential theory has been developed in this regard and within the analytic tradition it has been treated as the leading theory as far as the relationship between language and reality is concerned. Even considering the loopholes of referential theory, there develops two versions of referential theory, such as, naive version and sophisticated version. Naive version is the general version of referential theory. Sophisticated version offers stringent relationship between language and reality. We think if we confine ourselves within the form of naive version, we cannot overcome the problem of metaphysics. Let us explicate this point. There is no question of doubt that language does refer. Language, according to Frege, is associated with thought. Even though Frege conceives that thought is independent from human, but at the same time he claims that every sentence expresses thought. In a sense, language is the bearers. We sense that language refers indisputably, but whether the reference of language footholds on reality is a matter of serious philosophical questions. Many would say that language refers but the reference of language does not foothold on reality in the real sense of the term. Accordingly, if we say that a sentence is meaningful if it refers something other than the sentence itself, then whether its reference does foothold on reality or not would be a serious philosophical question. Owing to overcome this philosophical jolt, sophisticated version of referential theory has been proposed. It states that a sentence is to be meaningful if

Chapter One

it refers something other than the sentence itself and there must be a *referential connection* between the sentence and what it refers to. That means, the *referential connection constitutes the meaning of the sentence under consideration*. Thus, the sophisticated version of referential theory ensures an extreme form of realism because the attribute ‘referential connection’ eventually nullifies any sort of speculative referential entities that may be treated as the entities of the world or reality.

Of course, there are different views of how semantic even though each of them approaches the ability to talk about the world. Two of these are particularly important in current semantic theories. One approach is known as *referential approach* and the other approach is known as *representational approach*. We have already outlined the practice of referential semantic. Thus, to provide a semantic description for a language, one has to show how the expression of the language can ‘hook onto’ the world. More specifically, it can be said that here we can give the meaning of words and sentences by showing how they relate to situations. Nouns, for example, are meaningful because they denote entities in the world. Names or proper names stand for nouns. Even though linguistic philosophers are involved into a tug of war regarding the very nature of proper names, but one thing is clear to all of them that every name is a name of something. To be a name is to be a name of something. A name denotes an object, but whether the object as denoted by a name footholds on reality or not is a matter of sustained serious philosophical debate.

According to the proponents of representational approach, our ability to talk about the world depends on our *mental models* of it. In this regard, language represents a theory about reality, i.e. about the types of things and situations in the world. Thus, theories of meaning can be called representational. Even though both referential and representational approaches are semantics in nature, they actually focus on different aspects of the same process. Both

Chapter One

approaches talk about the world, but their way of talking is different. According to the referential theorists meaning derives from language are eventually grounded in reality. On the other hand, according to representational theorists, meaning derives from language being a reflection of our *conceptual structures*. Thus, even though both the approaches are dealing with semantics, the present chapter *will address exclusively on the referential approach of semantics*.

Referential approach of Semantics:

When we say that language communicates, what does language communicate? Language actually communicates our thoughts. How does language communicate our thoughts? Language communicates our thoughts in terms of reference or denotation. Even though there are other means through which language communicates thoughts, but the referential aspect is one of the important aspects of semantics. However, there are different types of reference. Even though language communicates in terms of reference, but not all linguistic items are referential in nature. There are both *referential as well as non-referential expressions*. There are some linguistic expressions which can never be used to refer. For example, the words, *so, very, maybe, if, not, all etc.* Such words do, of course, contribute meaning to the sentences they occur in and thus help sentences to denote, but they do not themselves identify entities in the world. We consider these words as *intrinsically non-referring items*. By contrast, when someone says that the noun *cat* in a sentence like *That cat looks vicious*; the noun is a referring expression since it is being used to identify an entity. Thus, we can say that *nouns* are potentially referring expressions. The second use of the distinction between *referring and non-referring* is that there are some instances when the speakers use them to refer and there are some other instances when the speakers use them not to refer. When the word *cholecystectomy* is used in the sentence: He performed a cholecystectomy this morning; the

Chapter One

speaker is referring to an individual operation. However, instead of this sentence, if the speaker utters the sentence: A cholecystectomy is a serious procedure; the speaker is not referring to an individual operation. Here the nominal has a generic interpretation.

There are some referring expressions which are constant and fixed. Some expressions will have the same referent across the range of utterances, e.g. *the Eiffel Tower* or *the Pacific Ocean*. Others have their reference totally dependent on context. For example, I wrote to you. In this sentence to identify the referents of *I* and *You*, we need to know who is speaking to whom. Expressions like the *Pacific Ocean* are sometimes described as having *constant reference*, while expressions like *I*, *you*, *she*, etc. are said to have variable reference. Variable reference is also named as *dexis*, a term from Greek meaning roughly ‘pointing’ as a label for words whose denotational capability requires contextual support.

Here we shall exclude non-referential terms completely and confine ourselves within the nominals, i. e. names. Names after all are labels for people, places, etc. and often seem to have little other meaning. As names sometimes require context for identifying its referent what may be called the descriptive content, we exclude such nominals or names while investigating the relationship between language and reality from the semantic aspect. Here we admit the Russellian distinction between logically proper name and ordinary proper name. As ordinary proper names are descriptive or in most cases contextual, we exclude ordinary proper names from our investigation. Here we particularly confine ourselves with logically proper names and in this context we select Wittgensteinian model of *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*.

Wittgenstein while developing his atomic or logical interpretation of the relationship between language and reality in his celebrated book *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* took insights from Russellian concept of logical proper name. Thus, in one sense, it can be said

Chapter One

that Wittgenstein's atomistic interpretation of the relationship between language and reality is pro-Russellian atomistic interpretation of the relationship between language and reality. We think that the relationship between language and reality as comprehended by Wittgenstein actually hinges on three key concepts, such as, language, reality and the relationship between language and reality. As an original thinker, Wittgenstein gives insightful explanation of each of these concepts. In this Chapter, we propose to develop the atomic interpretation of the relationship between language and reality after early Wittgenstein. This *Chapter* would be classified into three different sections. In the first section we propose to analyze after Wittgenstein, *the nature of language*. In the second section, we propose to analyze *the nature of reality* and in the third section; we propose to analyze *the relationship between language and reality* after Wittgenstein.

Section – One

The Nature of Language:

It should be kept in mind that language is a fascinating tool that can be used as a medium of communication. However, to declare language as a mere medium of communication is not the main concern of linguistic philosophers in particular and philosophers of language in general. At the very outset of linguistic revolution, it was resolved that all philosophical problems are linguistic in nature and they were created out of misinterpretation or misapprehension of language. Philosophy is all about of clarification of language, to know about the underlying meaning or logic of language. On the basis of this perception, metaphysics had generally been nullified as meaningless because of its mystical philosophical outlook. The logical positivist interpretation of the criterion of meaning appeared through the Principle of Verification is a case in point. Thus, with the appearance of

Chapter One

linguistic turn, philosophy and language tangled together. In this regard, resolution had been made on the ground that language is philosophy and philosophy is language. However, a debate among linguistic philosophers was cropped up immediately regarding the nature of language. Philosophy is all about of clarification of language. But what should be the nature of language? There are numerous types of language as there are numerous types of linguistic community. Each and every linguistic community has definite and unique language. Therefore, it would be very pertinent to know about the nature of language for investigating or knowing the *true nature of reality*. We have already stated that linguistic philosophers have involved in *a tug of war* for determining the true nature of reality. In this regard, linguistic philosophers have been divided into two broad groups; philosophically known as *ideal language philosophers* and *ordinary language philosophers*. Ordinary language philosophers are in favour of natural language. They proclaim that natural or ordinary language is adequate for doing philosophy and one may employ ordinary language as a philosophical method. On the contrary, those who adhered in favour of ideal or logical language would like to say that ordinary language by its very nature is ambiguous, vague. As a result of that ordinary language cannot be comprehended as an authentic method of linguistic philosophy. They therefore have called for *linguistic revision* on the basis of which an artificial or constructed or logical form of language may be formulated by selecting minimum non-ambiguous vocabularies from ordinary language. The semantic school represents ideal or ordinary language and therefore, the proponents of semantics are called linguistic revisionists.

Early Wittgenstein has been regarded as a leading campaigner of ideal language philosopher. Like many other proponents of ideal language, in fact, Wittgenstein was in favour of accurate symbolism because the language he anticipated is logical in nature. The distinctive feature of

Chapter One

symbolism is that it always without exception portrays something 'definite'. While narrating Wittgenstein's position about logical perfect language, Russell says, "A logically perfect language has rules of syntax which prevents non-sense, and has single symbols which always have a definite and unique meaning."⁶ Wittgenstein seems to have conceived that ordinary language fails to address the meaning of language. He claims that proper or ideal language would be one that will adequately address on meaning. In this regard, he claims that the essential aspect of language is to assert or deny facts. Thus, when Wittgenstein talks of language, he puts emphasize more on the authentic aspect of language. Language refers. We have already stated it. But the reference or picturing or mapping or representing or hooking must be authentic. Natural language has been rejected by early Wittgenstein because like others philosophers belonging to semantic tradition he conceives that ordinary language because of its ambiguity can never be authentic to give us meaning. Thus, early Wittgenstein has expressed serious reservation regarding the authenticity of ordinary language. In this regard, early Wittgenstein has been influenced by Russell's concept of logical proper name. Thus, when we propose to consider the nature of language after early Wittgenstein, we have to analyze the nature of language within the perspective of ideal language or logical language. The language Wittgenstein anticipated in his *Tractatus* is known as propositional language.

The Nature of Proposition:

What then is the nature of proposition? Why does Wittgenstein prefer propositional language instead of other form of language? The term proposition again is a very dubious concept as many philosophers in the past have engaged to equate proposition with thought or judgment or the meaning of sentence. However, Wittgenstein understands or so to speak was desired to

⁶Russell., Bertrand, *Introduction: Wittgenstein Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, translated by D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness, London and New York, p. x.

Chapter One

interpret proposition in the logical sense. We know that logic deals with proposition. In this regard, one may start with propositional or truth-functional logic. Even though, Frege has been treated as the founder of modern elementary logic, such as, propositional and Predicate logic, but Wittgenstein in his celebrated book *Tractatus* has offered us the schema of truth-functional logic. In philosophers, the term proposition has been interpreted at least in three different contexts. Ordinary laymen in the most general sense find no serious gulf between sentence and proposition. So they use these two terms inter-changeably. However, in the real philosophical sense, proposition is being comprehended as the *meaning of sentence*. If proposition is said to be the meaning of sentence, then in a sense, sentence would differ from proposition. Sentence would be physical because they can be written on the black-board, but the meaning of sentence, i.e., proposition cannot be written on the black-board because proposition is non-physical. Proposition is mental. One may compare proposition with thought as comprehended by Frege or with judgment as eliminated long back by Immanuel Kant. However, Wittgenstein's interpretation of proposition is logical. A logical proposition must be either true or false. According to Wittgenstein, every proposition has two senses, the positive or negative, i.e., true or false. Thus, by language, Wittgenstein means the totality of propositions. That is why, Wittgenstein explicates the language of *Tractatus* in terms of propositions. In this regard, Wittgenstein says the whole *Tractatus* is constituted by only *seven propositions*, such as:

P1: The world is all that is the case.

P2: What is the case – a fact – is the existence of states of affairs.

P3: A logical picture of facts is a thought.

P4: A thought is a proposition with a sense.

P5: A proposition is a truth-function of elementary propositions.

Chapter One

P6: The general form of a truth -function is $[\bar{P}, \bar{\epsilon}, N(\bar{\epsilon})]$. This is the general form of a proposition.

P7: What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence.

We think that every proposition bears a lot of philosophical insight. To explicate the meaning of proposition is really a difficult task. More importantly, if we carefully try to understand the sense of these propositions (P1 – P7), it seems clear to us that the seventh proposition (P7) is a warning or a strict guideline to the readers of the *Tractatus*. It states that if anybody is not in a position to speak authentically or in terms of proposition, it is better for him to pass over in silence. The theme of this proposition clearly suggests the severity of the relationship between language and reality of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Thus the language of *Tractatus* would not certainly be the language of sentences, because Wittgenstein says that not all sentences would be propositions, but all propositions must be sentences. According to Wittgenstein, all propositions are sentences; but not all sentences are propositions. In fact, this is the general interpretation of the logical sense of the term proposition. As not all sentences are propositions and the sum total of sentences is language, language, in general, according to early Wittgenstein, can be expressed in terms of proposition. *Language in general cannot be regarded as propositional language*. Therefore, when Wittgenstein tries to understand his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* in terms of propositions, cited above, he actually wants to address propositional language. A proposition always expresses something either in the form of ‘to be the case’ or ‘not to be the case’. Sentences falling sort of expressing anything in this way would not be regarded as proposition. Thus, propositional language has a distinctive feature or identification on the basis of which one can identify whether a sentence is to be a proposition or not. What is your name?- is a sentence, but certainly is not a proposition because it is not associated with ‘to be the case’ or ‘not to be the

case'. The question then arises, how do we have propositional language? This is where the relevance of revisionism comes into being.

Linguistic revisionism

Like Russell and many other revisionists, Wittgenstein equally favours linguistic revisionism in a rigorous manner. According to Wittgenstein, revisionism is a must for constructing artificial language or logical language or in precise, the language of *Tractatus*. Thus, one can formulate *Tractatarian* form of language, i.e., propositional language by way of revising natural or ordinary language. This is made possible by eradicating the non-referential expression as well as expression relating to descriptive content. In this regard, Wittgenstein was hugely influenced by Russell. According to Wittgenstein, real or authentic language must be symbolic in nature. Symbols do not have a determine 'genus' in natural language. Ordinary or natural language is erroneous and in order to overcome the errors, one must employ symbolic language. The genesis of symbolic language, according to Wittgenstein, is that it always obeys the rules of logical grammar – of logical syntax. In this regard, Wittgenstein says that the ideography of Frege and Russell is such a language, which, however, still does not exclude all errors. Thus, it seems to us that Wittgenstein introduces the idea of a logical syntax as a kind of syntax which a 'perfect language' should possess in opposition to ordinary language, the syntax which is not logical. Russell says that in order to understand Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, it is necessary to realize his theory which deals with symbolism which would have to be fulfilled by a logically perfect language.

When revisionist in general were satisfied with the vocabulary of proper name as the suitable candidates of ideal language, Russell revealed that there was a problem in considering proper names as such as the minimum vocabulary of ideal language. In this regard, Russell classified

proper names into *logically proper name known by acquaintance* and *ordinary proper name known by description*⁷.

Wittgenstein takes the clue from Russell. He was indebted to Russell in this regard. Thus, when he was talking about propositional language, he actually wanted to accumulate only logically proper name from the domain of ordinary or natural language. Propositional language is a sort of logically perfect language. The constituents of propositions are proper names and relations.

Thus, Wittgenstein's propositional language is truth functional in nature.

The Constituents of Proposition:

What then are the constituents of proposition? It is a matter of fact that the atomists, the reductionists have developed the system on the basis of some basic constituents. Or in other words, it can be said that on the basis of some primitive constituents, the language is being formulated. We notice the same in Wittgenstein as well. Even though Wittgenstein says that the language is the totality of propositions, but the propositions he anticipated are constructed out of names and relational terms. Thus, in this sense his understanding of proposition is *atomic in nature*. It is atomic in the sense that there are some unique and basic elements of proposition which can be identified by anatomizing the proposition under consideration in a logical manner. That means, every proposition can be farther analyzed into atomic proposition and an atomic proposition can again be farther analyzed into basic elements, i.e., names. That is why; his interpretation of proposition is called *atomic interpretation*. According to Wittgenstein, a complex proposition can be further anatomized into simple proposition what Wittgenstein termed as *elementary proposition*. Elementary proposition can again be analyzed into names. Names cannot be farther analyzed. Names are the atomic,

⁷ See Russell, B., "Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description", in *The Problems of Philosophy*, London: Home University Library, 1912, chapt. V, pp. 31-41.

Chapter One

unanalyzable forms of proposition, i.e., language. Even though in one sense names can farther be broken into alphabets; but Wittgenstein does not think so. Because the alphabets of a name cannot, in isolation, refer anything. The alphabet of a name lacks referential credibility. As every name denotes an object, name, according to Wittgenstein, is the atomic form of proposition or language. Here Wittgenstein understands names as logically proper names having no descriptive content.

Let us explain this point by citing an example. However, it should be kept in mind that the example we propose to discuss here is not Wittgensteinian. Wittgenstein does not offer us any example to understand his theory. His interpretation of the relationship between language and reality is purely based on logical analysis where there is no room for descriptive content. Wittgenstein tries to develop his theory in logical space or simplistically in truth-functional space. Having said this, though Wittgenstein has never ever cited any example in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, but for the sake of making his theory clear to the readers, commentators elsewhere have often taken examples in order to understand Wittgenstein. The proposition: “The cat is on the mat” – is constituted by two proper names, namely, ‘the cat’, ‘the mat’ along with the relational term ‘one is on the other.’ The proposition is analyzed in two parts, such as, ‘the cat’ and ‘the mat’. ‘The cat’ and ‘the mat’ are two names. They are the basic elements or the atomic elements of the proposition under consideration. ‘The cat’ and ‘the mat’, in fact, cannot formulate the original proposition without the help of relational term ‘one is on the other.’ Even through *relation* or relational term plays significant role in formulating atomic proposition, but Wittgenstein does not consider relational term as a proper name. The question then naturally arises: why does Wittgenstein not consider *relational term* such as, ‘one is on the other’ as a name? According to Wittgenstein, although the relational term immensely helps to formulate *Tractatarian* form of proposition, but

Chapter One

relation, in general, cannot be regarded as a name because like name, relational term does not *refer* anything. As relational term like name does not refer anything, therefore, relational term cannot be regarded as name. Thus, reference counts the most while considering the semantic model of the relationship between language and reality. Of course, different linguistic philosopher belonging to semantics has introduced various names to address the relationship between language and reality. Wittgenstein while developing this relationship also introduced the picture theory of proposition (meaning) instead referential theory of meaning. The same is being observed in the case of other philosopher as well. It thus seems to us after Wittgenstein that names only with the help of relational term can constitute logical proposition. In the above case the names, such as, ‘the cat’, ‘the mat’ along with the help of the relational term ‘one is on the other’ one can formulate the proposition “The cat is on the mat.” Names, for Wittgenstein, are the vocabularies of propositional language and names along with relational terms constitute elementary proposition, complex general proposition and thus language. Thus, the nature of language of Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus* is propositional. Propositional language is atomic as it can be analyzed into names which are unanalyzable. Moreover, the very nature of propositional language is that it is truth-functional and can be analyzed, without exception, in terms of truth and falsity in logical space.

Section – Two

The Nature of Reality (World):

So far we have discussed about proposition as the nominee of language, the basic constituents of proposition and the mechanism of formulating or constructing proposition as well. We think that Wittgenstein’s atomic approach of proposition is stringent in nature unlike others philosophers belonging to the camp of semantic tradition where meaning count the most. Let

Chapter One

us examine after Wittgenstein the nature of reality (world). As far as the nature of reality is concerned Wittgenstein's position is unique and radical in nature. Even though different linguistic philosophers, over the course of the history of the literature, have given us different perceptions of the term reality but Wittgenstein's position is philosophically revolutionary in nature. While explaining the nature of reality, Wittgenstein, at the very outset of his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, says: "The world is all that is the case"⁸ (P1). This remark of Wittgenstein eventually makes him a distinctive thinker. We think the underlying significance of this remark actually sets the tone of his atomic interpretation of language. It reflects that Wittgenstein understands reality in terms of the phrase 'that is the case'. But the question is: What is the case? Immediately in replying to this question Wittgenstein in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* 1.1 says, "The world is the totality of facts, not of things."⁹ We think these remarks of Wittgenstein bear a lot of philosophical significance which is exclusively Wittgensteinian in nature. These two remarks of Wittgenstein actually draw the limits of the world or the limits of the reality. Here he intends to say that anything other than fact cannot be the part of reality. Anything can be a part of reality if it would be expressed either in the form of 'to be the case' or 'not to be the case'. We have already stated that every proposition has two senses, either the proposition is true (to be the case) or the proposition is false (not to be the case). Thus, the concept of fact and the two senses of propositions are the hallmark of reality to be understood.

The question then is: Why does Wittgenstein claim that the world is the totality of facts? Why does he not think that the world is the totality of things? Does it make sense to assume that Wittgenstein was not concerned about things? There is no question of doubt that by adopting the view that the world is the totality of facts, but not things, Wittgenstein actually has

⁸ Wittgenstein, L., *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, translated by D.F.Pears and B.F. McGuinness, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., London, 1961, p.5.

⁹Ibid., p.5.

Chapter One

deviated himself from the general perception regarding the concept of the world (reality). Our common sense view is that the world is the totality of things. Even Locke claimed that the world is the totality of experience. We equally sense a familiar view in Strawson. Strawson in his *Individuals* claims that the world is the totality of particulars and he, in fact, understands particulars in terms of objects. Thus, Wittgenstein by claiming the world (reality) as the totality of facts takes a different standpoint which does not go along with other linguistic philosophers as well as with the common sense view. Why does then, Wittgenstein claim that the world is totality of facts? We think that Wittgenstein does not fail to realize the commonsensical position that the world (reality) is the totality of things. Having said this Wittgenstein prefers to know the world (reality) as the totality of facts simply for the sake of clarity of the world (reality). Wittgenstein actually, as a firm believer of atomism, tries to interpret reality (world) meaningfully. He conceives the term meaningful with the background of truth-functional logic. Accordingly, the term meaningfulness is conceived by Wittgenstein truth-functionally, i.e., in terms of, truth and falsity. According to Wittgenstein, what is a fact *is a fact* and a fact is something which makes a proposition as either true or false. That means language, i.e., proposition pictures a fact (an item of reality) and a fact, in turn, makes the proposition as either true or false. As Wittgenstein understands language in terms of proposition and reality for Wittgenstein is something known by proposition, the representative of proposition, i.e., reality must be a fact. Precisely, we can say that in order to conceive reality i.e., the world truth-functionally, Wittgenstein prefers to say that the world is the totality of facts; but not things.

Let us make this point clear by citing an example. For example, the classroom of M.A. part 1 of the department of Philosophy of the University of North Bengal may be described *in terms of things* as well as *in terms of facts*. If we describe the classroom in terms of *the totality of*

Chapter One

things then the description of the classroom does not create a *mental picture* to the hearers of the description. On the contrary, if we describe the classroom not in terms of *the totality of things*, but in terms of the *totality of facts*, as Wittgenstein does, then it would create a clear *mental picture* to the hearers. By hearing the description the hearer in the first case cannot draw the *mental picture of the classroom* because he does not have a *mental picture* of the classroom. On the other hand, by hearing the description in the second case the hearer can draw the picture of the room because in such a case the hearer does have a *mental picture*. To describe the room as *the totality of things*, the speaker just describes the room by uttering abruptly the catalogue of thing available in the room. Whereas, to describe the room as *the totality of facts*, the speakers describe the room in terms of elementary propositions where each and every thing of this room has been described *in terms of relation* to other things.

Suppose, I being the student of M.A. part 1 of the department of Philosophy, describe the classroom to my mother who did not know anything about this classroom beforehand. I may describe this classroom from common sense perspective, i.e., in terms of *the totality of things* or may describe the classroom to my mother as *the totality of facts* as Wittgenstein does in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. If I describe the classroom to my mother in terms of *totality of things* then I can describe it just by mere cataloguing or abruptly uttering the objects available in the room. In such a description, my mother would no longer be in a position to draw the *mental picture*. She just hears the description of my classroom knowing the fact that my classroom contains such and such objects. Instead of this, if I take Wittgensteinian approach then I may describe the classroom to my mother just by uttering it in terms of elementary propositions where one name is related to another name and it, in turn, pictures a fact where one object is related to another object. After hearing the description in this sense, my mother would be in a position to have a *mental picture* of the room and on the basis of

Chapter One

this *mental picture* she enables to draw the *picture of the room* which would reflect the actual room, i.e., the classroom of M.A. in which I used to take part.

The above example, at least, gives us a sense why does Wittgenstein prefer to say that the world is the totality of facts. He conceives the world as the totality of facts from a particular philosophical interest. However, this does not lead us to say or assume that Wittgenstein has not realized that the world is the totality of objects. There is no point of denying the fact that the world is the totality of objects from descriptive point of view as we noticed in the common sense view. But the only problem is that if we assume that the world as the totality of objects then we can only *describe the world*, but we cannot *picture the world*. Wittgenstein's intention was not to give a mere description of the world or rather to say about the world. His philosophical intention is *to show* or *to picture* the world in a logical space. Wittgenstein actually wants to picture the world in terms of *showing*, in terms of mapping; but not in terms of *saying*, nor in terms of description. The description of the world or *the saying of the world* may not be in the form of *to be the case* or *not to be the case*. Therefore, describing or saying the world requires a kind of language which would not be propositional language or truth-functional language. But Wittgenstein, we have claimed, desires propositional or truth-functional language. According to Wittgenstein, every proposition has two senses, either the proposition would be true or the proposition would be false or either the proposition is conceived in terms of *to be the case* or the proposition is to be conceived in terms of *not to be the case*. A proposition, for Wittgenstein, pictures a fact (reality) and a fact in turn makes the proposition expressible either in terms of *to be the case* or *not to be the case*. A proposition is true if it pictures something in terms of *to be the case* and the same proposition is false if it pictures something as *not to be the case*. That is why, Wittgenstein in

Chapter One

2.13 of *TLP* says, “The facts in logical space are the world.”¹⁰ He then says, “The world (reality in our sense) divides into facts”¹¹ (*TLP* 1.2).

Thus, the very nature of reality, according to Wittgenstein, is that it must be expressed or pictured in terms of proposition and reality is to be conceived in terms of *to be the case* or *not to be the case*. In the second proposition of the *Tractatus*, while explicating the nature of reality, Wittgenstein says, “What is the case – a fact – is the existence of states of affairs”¹² (*TLP* 2). We have already outlined the concept of fact (reality). Here we can say that a fact can farther be anatomized in terms of *states-of-affairs*. A *state-of-affairs*, according to Wittgenstein, is a combination of objects or things. A thing or an object cannot farther be analyzed. Thus, from the reality side, we have objects as the ultimate constituents of the world which has been expressed in common sense view as the *totality of objects*. Wittgenstein then claims that when things are combined to form a *state-of-affairs*, this would ensure that the possibility of forming a particular *state-of-affairs* must be there in them. In Wittgensteinian *Tractatus* nothing is accidental. Everything is logical and everything should be conceived in terms of *logical space*. Every object or thing is independent, but this form of independence is a form of dependence when one thing is connected with other to form a *state-of-affairs*. As everything is conceived in logical space and logical space, in turn, incorporates all possibilities, then no new possibility will discover later. That is why, Wittgenstein has rightly pointed out that objects contain the possibility of all situations and the possibility of its occurring in *state-of-affairs* is *the form of an object*. While illuminating the nature of reality, Wittgenstein in his *Tractatus* says, “Objects are simple”¹³ (*TLP* 2.02). We have already stated that in reality side objects are the ultimate constituents or furniture of

¹⁰ Ibid., p.5.

¹¹ Ibid, p.5

¹² Ibid, p.5.

¹³ Ibid., p.7.

Chapter One

the reality (world). Here Wittgenstein makes it clear why he conceives object as simple. He says that objects make up the *substance of the world* and as a constituent of substance, *object cannot be composite*.

What then is the philosophical perseverance of admitting substance? In this regard, Wittgenstein says that if the world has no substance, then the sense of a proposition would depend on the sense of another true proposition and in a situation like this one cannot sketch or draw any picture of the world. This position of Wittgenstein is ontological in nature. One can make a contrast Wittgenstein with Frege in this regard. Frege while illuminating the distinction between sense and reference brings the concept of thought. He then says that thought is independent of human. However, thought is being expressed by means of language. A sentence being an integral part of language expresses thought. If thought is not admitted, then one mode of presentation depends of another mode of presentation very similar to the case of Wittgenstein. According to Wittgenstein, any world, whatever it may be, must have a form common with the real world. The real form is unalterable and objects which are simple, constitutes this unalterable form, i.e., substance. The substance of the world can only determine a form. The other important feature of *Tractarian* objects is that they are *colourless*. An object is colourless in the sense that it cannot, in isolation, bear a sense in the form of *to be the case* or *not to be the case*. For example, mere utterance of a table as table does not bear any sense. If one utters in successive occasion table, table...table, it does not bear any sense and hence it is colourless. As objects are colourless, i.e., as objects do not bear any sense, that is why, Wittgenstein instead of saying that the world is *the totality of objects*, prefers to say that the world is *the totality of facts*.

An object is represented through space, time and colour. These are the forms of object. The unalterable form ensures that there must be objects in the world. Object, being simple and

Chapter One

colourless, is unalterable and subsistent. Only the configuration of objects produces states-of-affairs in logical space. In a state-of-affairs (i.e., a form of reality) objects are linked into one another just like the links of a chain in a determinate relation and such determinate relation, in turn, actually portrays the structure of the *state-of-affairs*. According to Wittgenstein, the structure of the *state-of-affairs* is made possible because of the unalterable form. That is why, Wittgenstein elsewhere in the *Tractatus* remarks that *form* is the possibility of the structure. Every *state-of-affairs* (i.e., an icon of reality) existence or non-existence, finds specific structure because of its unalterable form. The totality of existing *states-of-affairs* is the world (reality). The totality of existing *states-of-affairs* equally determines which *states-of-affairs* do not exist. That's why, Wittgenstein has rightly pointed out that the existence and non-existence *states-of-affairs* are reality and the sum total of reality i.e., the sum total of facts is the world.

Thus, in the second proposition of the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein has outlined the concept of object as the constituents of world or reality. He equally has emphasized on the concept of substance, i.e., the unalterable form of the world. It seems to us that the idea of states of affairs is more fundamental. A state of affairs or a state of things is a combination of objects or things. Wittgenstein's elucidation of the role of objects in states of affairs is *atomic* in the traditional sense of this world. Wittgenstein shows a remarkable grasp of the inner structure of an atomic theory. Even Wittgenstein very often defenses of his atomic ontology. The main concern of Wittgenstein's atomic ontology is to set up the underlying relationship between the structures of language to the structure of the world. While explaining how objects constitute states of affairs, Wittgenstein elsewhere in his *Tractatus* has grasped the fundamental consequences of an atomic ontology. In this regard, in TLP:2.011, Wittgenstein says, "It is essential to things that they should be possible constituents of states of

Chapter One

affairs.”¹⁴ If we think that it is not essential feature of objects that they are possible constituents of states of affairs, then it would actually mean that it is possible for an object A to be a constituent in states of affairs and in such a case some further combination of objects, would have to obtain. Then in such a situation, A would not count as an object in the sense demanded by atomic theory. Wittgenstein says, “ It would seem to be a sort of accident, if it turned out that a situation would fit a thing that could already exist entirely on its own” (TLP:2.0121.). We think this position certainly goes against a natural way of viewing an atomic theory. In a situation like this, we tend to think of atoms moving about freely, combining and separating again. Wittgenstein, of course, denies such possibility of an object having a potential for both a combined and uncombined status. To make it clear, Fogelin remarks, “There are no eligible bachelors in the *Tractarian* world.”¹⁵

We think in order to understand Wittgenstein; one has to understand his concept of logical space. We have already stated that Wittgenstein actually tries to establish the relationship between language and reality in logical space. In this regard, Wittgenstein might have developed a *purely combinatory theory* of meaning that all objects are alike in being fit to enter into combination with any other objects. The logical space of the world would be all the possible ways in which its objects can combine. Logical space is truth-functional space where the possibility of every combination of objects in different possible situations is given. In this regard, Wittgenstein in his TLP 2.0123 says, “If I know an object I also know all its possible occurrences in states of affairs.”¹⁶ In this sense, it is generally assumed that every possibility of combination of an object in logical or truth-functional space must be part of the nature of the object. Since the possibility of combination of object is based on the very nature of the

¹⁴ Wittgenstein, L., *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, op.cit., p.5.

¹⁵ Fogelin, R. J. *Wittgenstein*, Routledge and Kehan Paul, 1976, P.6.

¹⁶ Wittgenstein, L., *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, op.cit., p.6.

Chapter One

object under consideration, one may not ignore the ontological aspect or what Wittgenstein calls the substance. On the basis of this ontological foundation, one may come to know the internal properties of an object. Wittgenstein in various occasions in *Tractatus* says that if something is a possible constituent in states of affairs, then it is necessarily a possible constituent in states of affairs or some states of affairs. Or if something is a possible constituent of a certain kind of states of affairs, then it is necessarily a possible constituent of that kind of state of affairs. Even Wittgenstein does not deny the possibility of combination of object with regard to *dependence and independence*. Wittgenstein in his TLP: 2.0122 says, “ Things are independent insofar as they can occur in all possible situations, but this form of independence is a form of connexion with states of affairs, a form of dependence.”¹⁷ Objects, in virtue of their form, determine the structure of the logical space of possible states of affairs. Since logical space is a space where all possible states of affairs are given, the dependence relationship between objects and states of affairs is in equilibrium. Even though Wittgenstein tries to understand the possible combinations of objects with regard to logical space, but this does not make sense to say that logical space cannot be imagined without the combination of objects. According to Wittgenstein, one can imagine empty logical space, but one cannot a thing or an object without logical space.

It thus seems to us that the basic entities of the world are atoms (objects in our case). An atom is an object that is neither the result of combining constituent entities nor the potential victim of dissolution through the separation of constituent entities. In this sense, objects are simple. An object, being an atom, is unalterable. What is unalterable is subsistent. Thus, it can be said after Wittgenstein that objects are what unalterable and subsistent, only their configuration is changing and unstable. Objects are the constituents of reality or world. An object is correlated

¹⁷ Ibid., p.6.

Chapter One

with language, i.e., proper name. According to Wittgenstein, a name means an object. The object is its meaning. (TLP: 3.203). Names along with relational terms constitute proposition. In this sense, we can say after Wittgenstein that through proposition a name is the representative of an object. Objects can only be named; signs or names are their representatives. In this regard, Wittgenstein says, “Objects can only be *named*. Signs are their representatives. I can only speak *about* them: I cannot *put them into words*. Propositions can only say *how* things are, not *what* they are.”¹⁸ (TLP:3.221). Since a name according to Wittgenstein is a primitive or fundamental sign, a name cannot be dissected any further by means of a definition. Names, Wittgenstein opines, cannot further be anatomized by means of definitions.

Section Three

The relationship between Language and Reality:

So far we have explained after early Wittgenstein the nature of language as well as the nature of reality. Wittgenstein clearly specified the limits of language as well as the limits of reality or world. Beyond the limits of language, nothing can be shown and it is advisable to pass over in silence. His understanding of the nature of language as well as the nature of reality is atomic in nature. We have seen that Wittgenstein understands language in terms of proposition which can be further anatomized down to names. Names are the supposed minimum vocabularies of language. Thus, his understanding of language in terms of name is atomic in nature. Likewise, he understands reality in terms of facts and facts can farther be analyzed down to objects which are the atomic elements of fact. Thus, from language side names are the unalterable form of language and from reality side objects are the unalterable

¹⁸ Ibid., p.13.

Chapter One

form of facts. Thus, his interpretation of language as well as reality i.e., facts are atomic in nature.

The pertinent question is: how is the relationship between language and reality made possible? Let us examine, after early Wittgenstein, the relationship between language and reality. Wittgenstein draws the relationship between language and reality through his celebrated picture theory of meaning or proposition. According to Wittgenstein, a proposition pictures a fact. Proposition stands as a representative of language and fact stands as a representative of reality. Wittgenstein uses the idea of picturing in a broad sense. For him a picture is a model of reality, because a proposition pictures a fact and a fact in turn makes the proposition as either true or false. For something to be a model of reality, it must be of reality first and secondly, it should be a model of it. A picture relates to reality because objects in the world have the elements of the picture corresponding to them'. In this regard Wittgenstein says, "What constitutes a picture is that its elements are related to one another in a determinate way."¹⁹ (TLP:2.14) It is because of the determinate structure that a picture appears as a model of reality. The elements of a picture, i.e., the constituents of proposition are related to one another in a determinate way represents that the things are related to one another in the same way. In this regard, Wittgenstein speaks of *pictorial relationship*.

But how does a proposition picture a fact? What are the conditions of making successful picturing? When a proposition pictures, where does it picture? These are the important questions that need to be taken care of. A proposition pictures a fact in *logical space*. But what does Wittgenstein mean by logical space? In what sense does a logical space differ from empirical space? According to Wittgenstein, logical space is a kind of space where truth-functional logic can be applied. The domain of truth-functional logic is the domain of logical

¹⁹ Ibid., p.9.

Chapter One

space. Logical space covers empirical space and at the same time goes beyond the empirical space. That is why, it is said that *what is empirically impossible is logically possible*. Moreover, logical space is a space beyond which nothing can be conceived. In this sense, logical space is the conceivable space where one can be in a position to draw the mental picture.

According to Wittgenstein, a proposition pictures a fact under certain specific conditions. There must be similarity between the structure of the proposition and the structure of the fact. A proposition is constituted by names along with the help of relational term. Relational term identifies the order of the elements of the proposition. Thus, there must be a systematic order of the elements of the proposition and in this regard, the relational term plays the all-important role. Similarly, a fact is constituted by objects and there is also a systematic order of the objects of the fact. Now, a proposition can picture a fact only if there is a one-to-one correspondence between each element of the proposition with each element of the fact. That means, there must be a *pictorial relationship* between the elements of the proposition and the elements of the fact. In such a situation we can say, after Wittgenstein, that a proposition pictures a fact. In this regard, Wittgenstein in his *Tractatus* says, “In a picture objects have the elements of the picture corresponding to them. In a picture the elements of the picture are the representatives of objects.”²⁰ (*TLP* 2.13, *TLP* 2.131)

It seems clear that every element of the proposition represents an object of the fact. An element of a proposition is known as a name and an element of fact is known as an object. A name denotes an object. Thus, it seems clear that an element of a proposition, i.e., name denotes an element of fact, i.e., an object in logical space. A picture is made possible because its elements are arranged to one another in a determinate way. That is why, Wittgenstein has

²⁰Ibid., p. 8.

Chapter One

rightly claimed, “A picture is a fact”²¹ (*TLP* 2.141). As a defense, Wittgenstein immediately in his *Tractatus* 2.15 says, “The fact that the elements of a picture are related to one another in a determinate way represents that things are related to one another in the same way.”²² In this regard, Wittgenstein brings the concept of *pictorial form*. Pictorial form is the possibility that things are related to one another in the same way as the elements of the picture. That is how, opines Wittgenstein, *a picture is attached to reality*. A picture reaches right up to reality. Thus, it can be said, after Wittgenstein, that in order to make the relationship between language and reality through picture theory of proposition, one has to give over emphasis on the *pictorial relationship* consists of the co-relations of the picture’s element with things. These co-relations are, according to Wittgenstein, the feelers of the picture’s element, with which the picture touches reality. Thus, with the help of pictorial relationship, we can say that there must be something identical in a picture and what it depicts. In a picture there must have in common with reality what Wittgenstein terms as *pictorial form*. However, Wittgenstein claims in *TLP* 2.172 that a picture cannot depict its pictorial form rather it displays it. Thus, every picture, according to Wittgenstein, must have its representational form without which a picture cannot be placed. This representational form of picture is called the logical form of the picture, i.e., the form of reality. A picture whose pictorial form is logical form is called a logical picture. In fact, Wittgenstein, as we have repeatedly mentioned, understands the relationship between language and reality in logical space with the background of logical picture. Thus, for Wittgenstein by making a relationship between language and reality one can have a sense that a logical picture can depict the world. A picture having logico-pictorial form is common with what it depicts.

²¹Ibid., P.9.

²²Ibid., P.9.

Chapter One

Thus, according to Wittgenstein, a picture agrees with reality or fails to agree with reality. In this sense, a picture can be designated as correct or incorrect, true or false. What does a picture represent? It represents independently of its truth or falsity, by means of its pictorial form. Accordingly, the agreement or disagreement of its sense with reality constitutes its truth or falsity. Thus, to know whether a picture is true or false we have to compare it with reality. In this sense, there are no pictures that are true a-priori.

While developing the internal and atomic relationship between language and reality, early Wittgenstein in his *Tractatus* equally gives us the sense of the ontological picture based on internal structure between language and reality. Thus, there may be both internal as well as external structure of the relationship between language and reality. Wittgenstein advocates not only a *descriptive* but also an ontological picture theory in the *Tractatus*. In fact, both are interrelated. Let us examine in what sense descriptive as well as ontological picture theory are interrelated with each other.

According to Stenius²³ the difference between the descriptive and ontological picture theory is closely connected with the distinction made in the *Tractatus* between what can be ‘shown’ and what can be ‘said’. According to Wittgenstein, what can be *shown* in language cannot be *said*²⁴ (TLP 4.1212). However, Stenius observes that this statement of Wittgenstein apparently seems to be contradictory with respect to the statement of *Tractatus* 4.002, according to which a sentence *shows* how things stand, if it is true, and says that they do so stand. Perhaps, Wittgenstein uses the word ‘show’ in two different senses. In one sense of ‘show’ sentences say what they show, in another sense they *cannot* say what they ‘show’. Stenius observes that in the second sense the word ‘show’ is synonymous with ‘exhibit’. What a sentence *exhibits* but cannot say is the ‘logical form of reality’. According to

²³ Stenius, Erik, *Wittgenstein's Tractatus*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1960, p. 178.

²⁴ See Wittgenstein, L., *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, op.cit., p. 26.

Chapter One

Tractatus 4.12, this is something that a sentence must have in common with reality to be capable of representing it.

According to Wittgenstein, every picture must be what we called a logically ‘adequate picture’. In order to be capable of representing a prototype either truly or falsely, a picture must already have something in common with the prototype. This is the ‘logical form of representation’, which consists in the identity in *internal structure* between the systems of elements in the picture and the prototype.

On this background, Stenius then goes on to distinguish between two different kinds of ‘showing’ with regard to picture. On the one hand, a picture ‘shows’ by the external structure of the picture field and on the other hand, it ‘shows’, according to Wittgenstein, by the internal structure of its element of the prototype. What it ‘shows’ in latter sense it cannot ‘show’ in the former sense, because the possibility of ‘showing’ in the former sense *presupposes* that the element of the prototype have the internal structure ‘shown’ in the latter sense. If we take the word ‘show’ in the latter sense we may therefore state what Wittgenstein has claimed in his *Tractatus* 2.172: “A picture can only ‘show’ or exhibit the internal structure of reality but not depict it.”²⁵

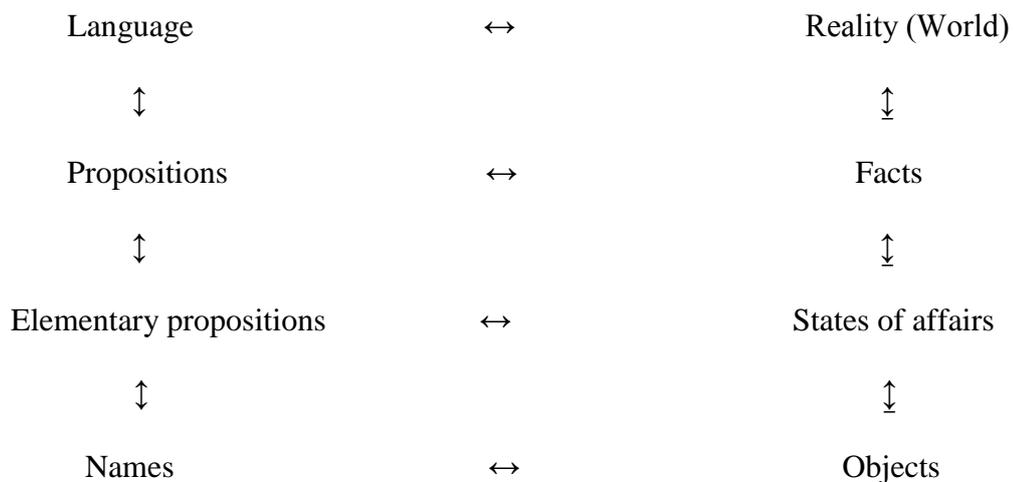
It seems clear that the internal structure of the system of element consists of the ‘logical form’ of the different elements. A sentence *shows* by its external structure how things stand ‘if it is true’ and *says* that they do so stand. It *describes* reality as having the same external structure as the sentence itself. But what a sentence shows by its external structure must be distinguished from what it ‘shows’ by the external structure of its elements. We thus arrive at the following thesis:

²⁵ Stenius, Erik, *Wittgenstein’s Tractatus*, op.cit. p. 179.

Chapter One

- (i) The internal structure of reality can only be shown or exhibited by language, not described in sentences.
- (ii) The internal structure of language exhibits the internal structure of reality.

On the basis of the above consideration, we can summarize it by saying that the whole atomic interpretation of the relationship between language and reality is all about structural isomorphism (both internal as well as external) between the elements of the proposition and the elements of the fact. In this regard, we by following the book *Philosophical Relevance of Language: A Methodological Reflection*²⁶ by K.L. Das, has drawn the structural aspect of the relationship between language and reality. The structure is as follows:



The above picture clearly suggests in what sense language pictures reality after early Wittgenstein.

The above structure draws the limits of language as well as the limits of the world. Wittgenstein conceives the relationship between language and reality within the limits of

²⁶ Das, Kantilal, *Philosophical Relevance of Language: A Methodological Reflection*, Northern Book Centre, New Delhi, 2006, p. 95.

Chapter One

language and also within the limits of the world. Outside the limits of language, nothing can be shown. Of course, within the limits, he emphasizes on the internal structure of language and reality. The internal structure of reality cannot be described in sentences. All meaningful sentences are descriptive actually means to say that all statements on the internal structure of reality are in effect non-sensical. In this regard, Wittgenstein intends to say that ‘ontological’ statements are always nonsensical because what they state can only be shown but not said. This clearly reflects after Wittgenstein that ontological statements about reality are not disguised ordinary statements about language. More importantly, it can be said that if one of two corresponding statements about language and reality is ontological the other is also ontological. Wittgenstein’s ontological statements about reality may in part be founded on the analysis of language. However, this does not make sense to say that they are in any sense translations of the corresponding statements about language. Corresponding ontological statements about language and reality have mutually independent import. This leads us to assume after Wittgenstein that if an ontological statement is valid for reality the corresponding statement is valid for language as well. This is how one may conceive the relationship between language and reality after Wittgenstein.

