

Chapter - 8

Concluding Remarks

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The main aim of the present thesis has been to find out the relevance of language in philosophy. We have tried to understand the relevance from a number of points of view. From our discussion thus far a conception regarding the task of philosophy will have certainly emerged. The conception may be stated as that philosophy intends to grasp what there is, and also to know what is not. It seeks to decipher the cognitive mechanism with which men operate in knowing the world. The world in fact divides into two halves - the world without, and the world inside. The investigation into ontology is as old as philosophy itself. If we look at modern western philosophy right from the very beginning, we find that it consisted largely of attempts to arrive at a knowledge of the universe.

It may be conceded that the problem language is deeply inquired into by philosophers of the present century. Implicit references to the importance of the study of language might have been noticed here and there in the history of western philosophy. Apart from that no serious attempt was made with regard to the problem of language in philosophy prior to the present century.

It is to the credit of the logical positivists to have discovered that the entire discipline called metaphysics was the outcome of a tremendous linguistic confusion. Philosophers who fell victim to the bewitchment of language endorsed the view that the reality of a plethora of entities in their ontology are bewildering to the ordinary man. A host of incomprehensible notions crowded the philosophers' ontology. Once it was at one point discovered that the philosophers' ontology was dictated by the examination of linguistic structure.

This is true of the study of language so far as ontological deception is concerned . But we have seen that philosophers have studied language not only to get a clear idea of the structure of reality , but also to have an idea of man's cognitive apparatus. Man is placed in the world as a cognitive being. Thus a basic polarisation is wedged between man and the world . This, in fact , has been a legacy of Cartesian outlook . Once we endorse the two phenomena of creation and also subscribe to the view that there is a cognitive relationship between the two , the philosophers' sole enterprise and investigation comes to centre around the two phenomena -the world without and the world within, the cognitive mechanism which man employs in his knowledge of the world.

The investigation into the structure of reality is not unique to the philosophers of the present century . If we go as far back as the beginnings of modern philosophy , we shall notice that the interest of the philosopher was focused on the 'basic' nature of reality . The basic nature or structure of reality did not nor does display itself immediately to the philosophers. But the method of getting at the essential structure of reality varied from one age to another. The modern rationalists preferred the speculative method for delving deep into the structure of reality. Descartes' ontology was a mixed bag, comprising the substance, matter and the mind. Spinoza's scheme of ontology displays a tripartite scheme consisting of the substance, the attributes and the modes.

It should be noticed here that the speculative philosophers did not take the structure of reality at its face value; rather they ignored the deliverance of ordinary experience as presenting a superficial picture of reality. It does not by any means follow that the picture of reality as portrayed by the speculative philosophers had been the right one. What we would like to

assert is that the philosophers of the past have also addressed themselves in the task of deciphering the structure of reality. The methodology varies, but the end of the philosophical investigation has remained the same - getting a right idea about the structure of reality.

The act of speculation had not been looked at favourably by all concerned. The ontology that corresponded to philosophical speculation appeared artificial. It made room for all sorts of entities that were trans-empirical or super-sensible. Philosophical speculation was branded as unscientific. The logical positivists disapproved acknowledging any entity which was not certified by sense-experience. There must of course be a procedure for restraining the philosophers' adventure into the super-sensible under check. Philosophy now came to have a linguistic orientation. It came to be believed that the chief source of unfounded metaphysics was linguistic confusion. Once we map up such confusions we shall find that the structure of ontology gets changed to accommodate the empirical only. In fact it was contended by the logical positivists that the metaphysical sentences were meaningless. This was the concluding outcome of their central thesis that a sentence in order to be meaningful has got to be empirically verifiable. The positivists employed the verification principle in the hope that it would segregate the meaningful from the meaningless, the ontological varieties or, the real from the fantastic.

Speculation thus had to give way to a rather scientific approach towards the discovery of ontological structure. One can well notice here a trace of Cartesianism - its dualism of subject and object. It has been a lingering conviction for a group of philosophers that the human reality is bipolar comprising a cognising agent and the cognisable world. Reality for them is at once subjective and objective. They rejected all sorts of

metaphysical transcendentalism. There is nothing besides or behind the empirical.

Thus we find in the first thesis that the linguistic philosophers in their attempt of comprehending the structure of reality have been under the influence of ontological dualism initiated by Descartes. Yet the kind of metaphysical structure which Descartes had elicited was not acceptable to them. They were rather prone to empiricism in endorsing the sensible, and strictly restricting reality to the sensible.

The second thesis of the linguistic philosophers is that man bears a *cognitive relationship* to the world. This again is a Cartesian heritage. Descartes not only divided the universe into subjective and objective poles; he believed also that the relationship between the two is a cognitive one. This is worth mentioning because for some philosophers of existence the worlds and the human reality are not alienated from each other; the world in fact enters into the structure of man's being. On a certain level an epistemic relationship may be construed; but on a philosophical plane the human reality is 'Dasein'. Besides Heidegger, we find Sartre displaying an anti-Cartesian outlook. It is not the case, he would say, that man just encounters the world. The relation between human consciousness and the world is far more intimate than Descartes could conceive of. Not only that Sartre would hold that man encounters the world by way of casting himself into it, he has not only a cognitive mechanism, but also a system of self-created values and projects which he wants to see as realised in the world, though only to be dejected and frustrated in the end. Man thus transcends the world of actualityⁱⁿ bringing about the world of his norm.

What we would wish to suggest is that the 'linguistic philosophers' study of man is one of the ways in which man may be studied. It is a study

which is based on the presupposition that man has a cognitive relationship with the world. Consequently, these philosophers have only attempted to expose the structure of man's cognitive mechanism, claiming thereby an exposure of the structure of man. The structure of man is many-faced. The philosophy of existence in making an excursion into the structure of man or consciousness does not believe that an anatomy of cognitive apparatus exhausts the structure. It may be said therefore that the linguistic analysts have worked on a particular aspect of the relation between man and the world. The apparent narrowness of the outlook may be attributed to their implicit allegiance to positivism.

The third thesis of the analysts is that man is essentially a creature with linguistic competence. The phenomenon of linguistic capacity is a great eye-opener to many philosophers. The structure of human language seems to have been believed to be philosophically conditioned. Further, language is found to be so structured in such a way as to fit the structure or reality which we happen to know. Perhaps it would be more correct to say that language is structured after the pattern of reality. This may appear trivial. But it is of great importance that the linguistic structure should correspond to the structure of the non-linguistic.

We have been discussing the concept of language analysis as a philosophical method. The use of a method is necessarily connected with a programmatic aspect of the endeavour undertaken by the philosopher. The method is programmed to dispel our false knowledge of reality, and to get a true account of the same. Analysis of language is a method of philosophy. This dissertation does not undertake a philosophical elucidation of every aspect of language, i.e., does not study language from an internal point of view. This is the reason why, e.g., theories of meaning do not appear in our

discussion. We have only studied the methodological significance of language from a philosophical point of view.

We have delineated the ideas which prevail in the background of language analysis as a philosophical method. Let us now proceed to offer our remarks on the discussions made in the preceding chapters.

I. We have noted that the method of linguistic analysis has been adopted on the assumption that language is somehow hooked on to reality - and that too in such a way that the structure of language reveals the structure of reality. Now, the supposed relation between language and reality is questionable on several grounds. The central assumption that language can reach upto reality and depict its structure may appear to be without a foundation. One may construe reality in such a way as to be beyond language. In fact reality has been conceived as ineffable, as amenable to non-linguistic comprehension. The concept of **Brahman** in Indian philosophy stands out as an example. Consequently, the restriction of the concept of reality to the empirical or the sensible is either a linguistic decision or suggestive of the philosophers' inclination to positivism. Both of these, could be either arbitrary or irrational.

To put the matter briefly, the philosopher first defines reality and then declares that there is a correlation between language and reality. This remark may be easily substantiated by referring to Wittgenstein's conception of language as a model of reality. Wittgenstein offers this conception of language in the background of his basic idea that the world must be describable in language, and any description of the world would be proved to be true by facts and not by things. Unless the world is described as the totality of facts the picture theory of language cannot stand. In other words, no correspondence between language and the world could be established if

the world were not the totality of facts.

II. Nevertheless, one may still concede that there is nothing wrong in embracing commonsense empiricism and an empiricist picture of reality. But why should one go by the linguistic way in order to know the structure of reality? Is not the correspondence pre-established?

It has been alleged against the ideal language philosophers that their procedure is circular when they reject ordinary language and claim that the structure of ideal language alone can give us an idea about the structure of reality. It has been objected that unless one is already acquainted with the structure of reality one cannot identify a language as ideal. Reality, again, is identified as that which is represented by an ideal language. One cannot describe a language as ideal unless one already commits oneself to an ontology. This commitment, again, being linguistically determined one may reasonably speak of its circularity.

But the criticism loses its bite once we get to the intention of the ideal language philosophers properly. Let us remember that these philosophers want to use a language which will have such a syntax as would not mislead us into a non-empirical ontology. There is nothing wrong if they begin with the notion of an ontology, and then recommend the rectification of the appropriate structure of language. The lesson is: never to violate the syntactical rules or else we would be ontologically misled. It is not the case that the ideal language philosophers seek to know the structure of reality through a language they devise independently as syntactically valid. Rather they seem to have discovered the proper or right way of talking about reality. One may recall Morris's conception of 'correct language' as explained by Norman Malcolm. We learn from the ideal language philosophers the correct way of the use of language so far as it is intended to refer to reality.

These philosophers, with the sort of idea they have about the structure of reality, actually seeks to institute a linguistic discipline.

It is no less a fact that the conception of an ideal syntax is dictated by the conception of the structure of reality. But there is nothing wrong if the philosophers in question prefer to endorse an empirico-realist ontology. One may recall the construction of artificial language by Carl Hempel. Hempel has given an outline of the artificial language by specifying its vocabulary, logical locutions and syntax. The terms which the proposed language would accommodate are observation terms. This restriction is a clear indication of Hempel's prior commitment to a positivist ontology; and so such sentences as 'the absolute is perfect' would have no place in the so-called empiricist language. There is no point in accusing a philosopher of circularity since he simply intends to specify the language in which one would be expected to speak once a certain ontology is acknowledged. The construction of an ideal language, therefore, has not been a futile exercise.

III. Why then the advocacy of ordinary language? We have seen that philosophers became aware of the significance of ordinary language having been influenced by the thesis presented by the later Wittgenstein. Language has a multiplicity of functions which depends on its use such that the sense of ordinary language cannot be accommodated within the straight-jacketed ideal language. This in fact is the opinion expressed by Strawson in his **Introduction to Logical Theory**. But while conceding the suggestion that language in ordinary use has diverse meanings and nuances one may still hold fast to the need of straightening up the syntax. The only demand might be that people would not be permitted to use language in any way that would offend the ordinary man's positivist ontology. The suggested linguistic revision may be a long process of devising an appropriate syntax so that all

the intended meanings, if not deviant in the eye of the reformists, can be preserved.

But if solving philosophical puzzlements is the point at issue, then, it has been claimed by some, examination of ordinary language would be quite adequate. This thesis has been demonstrated by several of Oxford philosophers. We have referred to the attempts made by Austin and Strawson to show the appropriateness of ordinary language in describing things. But it is equally true that these two philosophers, who are acclaimed as proponents of ordinary language, have also expressed their scepticism regarding the all round efficacy of ordinary language as a philosophical method.

The 'Snag of the Last Word' mentioned by Austin is a clear indication of his lack of reliance on ordinary language analysis as an effective philosophical method. He frankly admits that examination of ordinary language may be undertaken as the methodological starting point; but it may not be the last word. The same hesitancy may be noticed in Strawson who is prepared to give up his adherence to ordinary language if it is unable to bear him the desired goals.

Sceptical attitude towards the methodological importance of ordinary language shows that it may not be an effective instrument for taking philosophical problems. It is true that Austin does not patiently go the whole way for ideal language and yet he admits that the examination of ordinary language is not the last word for him. Strawson, on the contrary, appears to evince a rather open inclination towards ideal language. Ordinary language is to him the ground in which the problems of philosophy are rooted. Hence the significance of a constructed concept cannot be grasped until and unless we know how they are connected with unconstructed concepts. It may be

reasonably doubted if Strawson really held ordinary language analysis as a philosophical method.

A remark on the relevance of the construction of ideal language may not be out of place . Why do philosophers think that the language of the ordinary people is misleading ? Let us take an example from Ryle (vide 'Systematically Misleading Expressions '): 'Unpunctuality is reprehensible ' Are we really misled by whatever is delivered by this sentence? The ordinary man is highly inclined to believe that the expression 'unpunctuality ' refers to a certain kind of entity which is judged to be reprehensible. The philosophers who are Plato-intoxicated and who submit themselves to the dictates of grammar are prone to the kind of analysis which Ryle has indicated . That is why we find Meinong believing in subsistent entities and thus making an extra-ordinary interpretation of sentences of this kind . Ordinary people do use expressions like 'God exists', but is not inclined to believe in God on account of grammar and syntax . Philosophers themselves have gone astray because of their anatomisation of language is a way that is hardly ordinary. Constructionism is an antidote to a disease philosophers themselves have contacted.

I do not intend to belittle the importance of constructionism. At least it may be the right way of using language. It is an exercise which is valuable within a world which is typically the philosopher's world.

IV. Analysis and examination of language have been intended not only to elicit the structure of ontology . Strawson has taken to linguistic analysis in order to unveil the structure of the subject for whom the world is an object. The world for man is the totality of particulars which he knows and which he expresses in language . This expression, ^{for Strawson,} is an act of reference where by the speaker makes his hearer ^{to} identify the particular entity referred to by him .

Strawson has demonstrated how this process of identification by linguistic reference reveals the structure of our conceptual apparatus.

Strawson's attempt is patently analogous to that of Kant who in first **Critique** brings out the forms of sensibility and understanding. Kant has been the first philosopher to have shown that the cognitive passivity believed in by the empiricists is not a correct hypothesis. Strawson follows him ^{also} in showing how we are active in operating with a conceptual apparatus while knowing the particulars. The conceptual mechanism is surfaced in man's capacity in arranging the data of his experience.

Thus language, on analysis, reveals to us the world without as well as the world inside. Man has numberless dimensions. But the most important of them is his relation to the world. There may be other ways in which various dimensions of man can be studied. But philosophy is not anthropology. Anthropology studies man externally from a study of his culture, his religion, his beliefs and superstitions which are expressed and become objects of investigation. It may study man so far as he speaks or uses language. But it does not enter into man's inner universe. Philosophy may be said to be a kind of study of the anthropos, but it is a study of the internal cognitive structure which is found to be reflected in the way he uses language. It is true that the conceptual scheme does not come to the surface of language, and that is why it behoves of a philosopher to delve deeper into language and find out the scheme.

V. There is no denying the fact that the use of language is the prerogative of man. In fact the capacity to use language may be described as the basic structure of human reality.

We do not know at which stage of man's history language came into existence. The case appears to be ~~that~~ language is generated spontaneously

out of the universal urge of people when they refer to things known by them and to communicate their knowledge to fellow creatures. A period of human history must theoretically at least have witnessed the genesis of language, and thus is succeeded by another unique phenomenon - man's ability to learn language. Anthropologists, of course, do not think or know of any period of human history without language. However the gradual development of language is an wonderful phenomenon of human history. But what is more striking is that a man can easily learn the enormously complicated language which took generations to get the shape it now has.

We have taken into account Chomsky's mentalism. The phenomenon of acquisition of mastery over language is, for Chomsky, the most striking intellectual performance of man. Why does language have the particular kind of syntax that it has? The ideal language philosophers believe that it corresponds to the empirical state of affairs. Chomsky believes, on the contrary, that man is a syntactical animal. The structure of syntax is determined by the structure of his brain. The properties of human language is thus dictated by biological necessity. So he claims that the study of syntax is one of the most important keys to the study of human mind. Chomsky holds, let us reiterate, that the properties of grammar must be those that are given to it by the innate mental processes of the human organism that has invented it, and that invents it progressively with each succeeding generation.

VI. We may now conclude that language must be relevant to philosophy. Philosophy is a discipline with wider intentions. But it can scarcely be denied that the primary task of philosophy is the study of man. Philosophy cannot afford to neglect the study of reality, but this again, is the ontology for man. One may choose to describe it as anthropocentricity. But it may be a fact that things in - themselves are philosophically uninteresting -

a world which for ever remains beyond our cognising capacity . What we do want to suggest is that the structure of ontology which philosophy seeks to know is the structure of a world knowable to man . In other words, the world is an object of human knowledge. Philosophy is a study of man and his ontology. The philosophers of language have devoted themselves to study man and his ontology .

The analysis of language reveals a new vista. It reveals a universe which is divided into the subject and the object -man staring at the world and intending to know it and express it in language. Man cannot be a subject unless there is a world for him . Man is not just an object in the universe . He is distinguished from the rest of things by virtue of his cognitive agency. The linguistic philosophers have succeeded further in discovering an epistemic fallibility in man . He frequently fails to describe or represent his experience faithfully. It is not cognitive failure. The failure is linguistic or more precisely syntactic. Consequently, the philosopher sets himself the task of correcting the language in which ordinary man speaks.

But what is the nature of the world which man intends to know and describe? It is not the case that the linguistic philosopher believes in a world given to man only to be cognised passively. Analysis of language reveals man not merely as a passive spectator but as one who makes his world in a real sense. The philosopher dealing with language has argued that the world must have been given to us through the pattern of our conceptual scheme. We do not know what the world objectively is . We are left with a sort of Kantian agnosticism, the world of things- in - themselves being screened off from our vision. But epistemically we are not interested in a 'real' or 'objective world'. Examination of language has shown that the world must be as it is cognised through the subjective apparatus of man .

Language analysis has drawn our attention to another aspect of the structure of human reality. Man is a user of language. But language or grammar is not manufactured outside only to be used by man. The properties of human language are dictated by a biological necessity. The structure of syntax is determined by the structure of his brain. This is a wonderful discovery of contemporary philosophy.

Man, therefore, occupies a central position in the universe. The centrality of his position lies in the fact that he is the maker of the world he knows. There is only one way in which he gets himself related to his world, and that is a cognitive engagement. Consequently, we have to construe man as the central focus in the universe. The world which he acknowledges as his ontology is made after his cognitive orientation.

Language seems relevant to philosophy since philosophy sets itself the task of understanding man. The ontology which language reveals cannot be meaningful independently of him. It would not be far too wrong if we describe man as a creature distinguished from the rest of the creation by his having a subjective apparatus that is relevant to his ontology as also by his incomparable capacity to dictate the syntax of language by which he describes his experience.