

Chapter - 4

A Plea for Ordinary Language

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Section I: Introductory

Analysis of language as a philosophical method did not originate with the *construction* of ordinary language, although it is true that the problems of philosophy which the construction of ideal language intended to solve originated in ordinary language. Nevertheless, philosophers who dealt with ideal language ultimately discovered that constructionism must come to grief for many reasons, and they shifted their attention to ordinary language. It has been felt that the problems of philosophy did not only arise in ordinary language ; they could also be solved in ordinary language. This shift in the emphasis is due to the shift that we find from **Tractatus** to **Philosophical Investigations**, which is in fact a shift from the logic of language to its natural history, as Max Black has put it in one of his articles. The shift was required since the later Wittgenstein found that the *craving for generality* which characterised the spirit of the **Tractatus** was misguided. Language is a many faced device for communication. The diversity of use which our words in language are put to cannot be accommodated within the straight jacket of formalism.

The analysis or examination of ordinary language thus had come to be used as a philosophical method. But in order to appreciate the need and significance of the new methodology we should first of all see how ideal language had failed to prove its mettle.

Section II: The inadequacy of Ideal Language

It has been generally claimed by the proponents of ideal language philosophy that the logical structure of the proposed language mirrors or reflects the ontological structure. Or in other words, there is a structural affinity or isomorphism between language and reality. But a serious charge has been raised against this claim. It is claimed that unless one makes a definite ontological commitment, i.e., unless one already constructs a theory about the structure of reality one can never guarantee whether a language really mirrors that reality or not. In other words, the proposal for having perfection in language can only be carried out only if we have already known the structure of the world quite apart from language. Ideal language philosophy, therefore, is not ontologically neutral. This neutrality is expected only because the so-called proposed perfect language has been supposed to have perfection in providing a means for reaching upto reality. But the question of reaching upto reality becomes empty in view of a definite ontological commitment.

Irving M. Copi has expressed a serious doubt about the programme of ideal language. He holds that the thesis that ideal language is a syntactical schema free from any sort of ambiguity is not tenable. Because it can be shown that the indexical symbols, such as, 'in', 'at', 'of', etc., the principle of syntactic schematism is hardly applicable. The indexical symbols of Price that are claimed to be ideal, are essentially ambiguous in a systematic way. And it is, however, difficult to get rid of these indexical symbols from any sort of language that is to be devised for expressing singular propositions (atomic or elementary propositions advocated by Russell and Wittgenstein).

Copi then goes on to say that one of the important drawbacks of ideal language lies in the fact that it asserts an isomorphism between the logical structure of language on the one hand and the ontological structure of the world on the other. He believes that the so-called ideal language, as proposed by Russell and Wittgenstein, involves an unavoidable circularity. Russell and Wittgenstein have attempted to construct an ideal language with a prior conception of the metaphysical structure of the world, and then, the metaphysical structure of the world has been redescribed in terms of ideal language. Let us explain in detail how this programme involves into a circularity.

The constructionist believes that the function of philosophy is to remove misunderstandings that are generated by linguistic confusions. They hold that a statement is misleading if it does not reflect facts accurately. If all the claims made in favour of ideal language is maintained, then a fact must be defined as that which makes a proposition either true or false. It is obvious that here we are to take facts as our starting point and the ideal language as our end.

It is equally true that for the philosophers of this school the function of philosophy lies in discovering the true form of facts. Accordingly ideal language is considered to be the departure point and the discovery of facts the end. But how do we know that something is the proper form of language? If we refer to facts and say that the proper form of language is dictated by the form of reality, do we not run into circularity? Dudley Shapere remarks that ideal language philosophers have fumbled through various definitions of *fact* and ultimately had to fall back upon other criteria. And to say this is to define ideal language in terms of fact or reality. Again, to define *fact* or *reality* in terms of the meaning of an ideal language, there is a circularity

inherent in the programme proposed. Copi says, "I can conclude, then, that Russell's program to investigating the metaphysical structure of the world by means of examining the logical structure of an 'ideal' language must be rejected, because of the circularity inherent in the program proposed. It must be concluded that the general program of inferring the structure of the world from the structure of language must be rejected, because if the meaning of 'ideal' there is a vicious circle involved..."¹

Moreover, Copi further regrets in saying that under this investigation no ideal language can possibly be known to be ideal until the completion of philosophical inquiry. He says, "... no device can seriously be proposed as a *means* to an end if the end must already have been obtained before the device can be acquired and recognised to be what is required. No proposal would be more circular, in the most vicious sense."²

What should be more disquieting for the ideal language philosophers is that there could be a possibility of constructing alternative systems of ideal language. We have already cited a few lines from Carnap in the previous chapter to the effect that 'everyone is at liberty to build up his own logic, i.e., his own form of language, as he wishes'. Now, if we concede the possibility of constructing an alternative syntactical system then there is no reason why any particular system should enjoy a special privilege. Any choice would be arbitrary since it would be wholly a matter of individual choice. Katz says, "For this freedom introduces an arbitrariness at the foundations of the theory of logical syntax that deprives us of a motivated way of condemning

¹Copi, Irving M. : "Language Analysis and Metaphysical Inquiry" in **The linguistic Turn**, edited by Richard Rorty (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London), 1967, p. 131.

²Ibid. , p. 131.

anything as devoid of cognitive meaning."³ So one can say without exaggeration that the constructionist in making a special proposal is guilty of conventionalism. The choice of syntax has surely been a matter of convention.

We have noticed that reconstruction is a process of systematization of extirpating all non-referential expressions in a language and only referential expressions are allowed to occur. But the exercise of philosophy associated with the replacement of ordinary language by an ideal one has been looked upon by many as futile. Russell, one of the advocates of the replacement in question, has been criticised by Max Black. Black has argued that Russell's view is based on two presuppositions - an incorrect characterisation of the relationship between a word and its meaning ; and a new conception of meaning by reference to which the theory of acquaintance is true by definition. If it be held that the meaning which we attach to our words must be something with which we are directly acquainted, then it leads to a tautology. Because it would then mean that 'the meaning of our words must be the meaning of our words'. Black observes that in understanding the word, e.g., 'Attila' we have to know either the meaning of the word 'Attila' or to be acquainted with 'Attila'. But neither of these alternatives, Black observes, is possible. Because in order to satisfy either of these alternatives, the word 'Attila' has to be either a sense-datum or a universal concept capable of characterising sense -data. But the word 'Attila' is neither a sense-data, nor a universal concept capable of characterizing sense-data. So if we accept the principle of acquaintance in Russellian sense, we have to interpret its meaning. Black further observes: "It seems scarcely possible to believe that

³Katz, J. J. *The Philosophy of Language*, Harper & Row Publishers, New York and London, 1966, p. 43.

we can make a judgement without knowing by *acquaintance*. What it is that we are judging about" and "It is impossible that our words should have meaning unless they refer to entities *with which we are acquainted*."⁴ But in both the cases the argument gets involved into a *petitio principii*. Black interprets Russell in saying that "either Russell is using the term 'meaning' in one of its customary senses, in that case the argument advanced in favour of the principle is refuted quite simply by pointing out that 'Attila' means a certain person with whom we are *not* acquainted in Russell's's sense. Or, alternatively, a new sense of meaning is implicitly *introduced* in which only objects with which we are acquainted can be meant by words, in that case the argument is a *petitio-principii*."⁵ In criticising Russellian principle of acquaintance, Prof. J. W. Reeves has commented that Russell in this theory totally confuses the meaning of a proposition with the "facts about my experience that convince me of its truth."⁶ And this is the all important mistake he commits.

Again it has also been held that ideal language is a method in which a minimum number of vocabulary is envisaged. In this method all non-referential expressions or words have been extirpated and only referential expressions or words have been retained. These words (e. g., demonstrative pronouns and logically proper names, says Russell) are called the basic *stuff of the world*. In this sense, ideal language is supposed to be non-autonomous, since it is completely private to the speaker. Russell admits

⁴Black, Max : **Language and Philosophy**, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1949, p. 132.

⁵Ibid., p. 132.

⁶Reeves, J. W. : "Origin and Consequences of the Theory of Descriptions", Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Vol. 34, 1933-34, p. 223.

that a logically private language would be largely private to the speaker . But Hacking criticises Russell saying that "it would be completely fatal if people meant the same things by their words."⁷ In envisaging Russellian form of ideal language , Black remarks, "The proposition understood by the hearer would not...be the proposition intended by the speaker.... Communication would be possible only by grace of some kind of pre-established speaker-hearer ambiguity in virtue of which what was a logically proper name for one functioned as a description for the other ".⁸ The ideal language which Russell presupposes is far from anything we are accustomed to think of as a language. Consequently, this language could not be used for communicative purposes. It is not designed to be an instrument for communicating and hence bears no significance in ordinary life.

The presentation of language as ideal has been assailed from another direction. The constructionists claim that a language is ideal if it displays an isomorphism between itself and reality ;there should be an affinity between the structure of language and the structure of fact. But the reasonableness of this claim cannot be ascertained. The ideal language philosophers believe that the logical form of a proposition has to be distinguished from the visible form of its expression in order to see that there is a correspondence between the structure of language and that of fact. But even if the distinction between the logical and the visible grammatical form is granted, there is no understandable relation between language and fact which can be characterised as picturing or mirroring . In fact the relation of language to fact

⁷Hacking, Ian : **Why does Language matter to Philosophy?** Cambridge University Press,Cambridge, 1975, p. 173.

⁸Black, Max : "Russell's Philosophy of Language", in **The Philosophy of Bertrand Russell**, edited by Schilpp, P. A. (Lasalle: Open Court, 1963), p. 253.

is not a simple relation like that of a picture to its subject. The grammatical form of any spoken language can only be explained by reference to its history and the accidents of its developments. Ideal language philosophers were keenly aware of the difficulties besetting ordinary language. Nevertheless, they were unwilling to abandon the notion that language must correspond to facts.

In constructing ideal language Russell posits the logical form of language, and then goes on to say that the doctrine of logical form states that propositions and facts have, in some sense, a common structure. Two major arguments have been advanced against the notion of logical form. The first argument is that the relationship between language and reality is conventional, and therefore there is no reason to expect propositions to have any kind of structural affinity with the facts they assert. Secondly, the logical form of a proposition plays the role or function of a sentence, but not some inherent structure the sentences may possess. Black says, "...he (Russell) is unwilling to abandon the notion that language must 'correspond' to the 'facts', through one-one correlation of elements and identity of logical structure. But there is no good reason why we should expect language to correspond to, or 'resemble', the 'world' any more closely than a telescope does the planet which it brings to the astronomer's attention."⁹

Like Russell's, Wittgenstein's doctrine of ideal language has also been criticised from various aspects. In the **Tractatus** Wittgenstein admits a monolithic conception of language in saying that every name denotes an object or every proposition pictures a fact. But the later he protested vehemently against the monolithic conception of language. The later

⁹Ibid., p.254.

Wittgenstein offers a doctrine of 'polymorphism'. It is an emphasis on complexity and variety. If variety is the life-blood of language then generality must be treated with reserve. Ernest Gellner characteristically remarks : "The idea is not so much that generalisations must be checked against instance, but that generalisations as such are suspect, or even ex-officio demand. A general model of language or of a kind of discourse is alleged to be mistaken, not because it happens to be a bad model, but because it is a general model. Generality per se is treated, either as an index of falsehood or at least as harmful in philosophy".¹⁰

The idea that language must somehow picture or mirror ontology amounts to a superstition. Language is not related to reality in the way a picture is related to the objects it represents. Elizabeth Daitz has summarized the difference. She says, "The order of words in a sentence is a conventional order of presentation; the spatial ordering of the elements in a reflection, picture, or map is an iconic order of representation"¹¹ In comparing a picture with an icon, Daitz intends that the picture taken as a whole directly represents the object it pictures. Secondly, the various elements of the picture represent elements of the pictured, and thirdly, the arrangement of elements of the picture directly shows the arrangement of the elements of the pictured. This means that there must be one and only one element of the picture for each element of the object pictured and all the elements must be related in similar ways in both the picture and the object pictured. But a sentence, however, does not function in a similar manner. Unlike a picture, a sentence is not an icon. The essence of an icon is to show

¹⁰Gellner, Ernest : **Words and Things**, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979, p.67.

¹¹Daitz, E. : "The Picture Theory of Meaning", in **Essays in Conceptual Analysis**, edited by Antony Flew, London, 1956, pp. 53-74.

something; but the essence of a sentence is to state something. In Daitz's words, "It is clear that sentences do not show, but state, that arrangement, which is an essential factor in iconic signification, need not occur in conventional significance, that the elements of a sentence do not stand for objects but (may be used to) refer to or describe objects. And since the words in a sentence do not stand for objects, they cannot be in correspondence, let alone one to one correspondence, with objects."¹²

So it is conceivable that language does jobs that are completely different from the job of mirroring reality. It has been claimed that ideal language is necessary for revealing the true picture of the world. But this view has been vehemently impugned by other philosophers. Austin, for example, says, "There is no need whatsoever for the words used in making a true statement to 'mirror' in any way, however indirect, any feature whatsoever of the situation or event; a statement no more needs, in order to be true, to reproduce the 'multiplicity', say, or the 'structure' or 'form' of the reality, than a word needs to be echoic or writing photographic."¹³ Stuart Hampshire also makes the same point as Austin does. He says, "The ...confusion of the logical form of a proposition with the visible form of its expression in a sentence has led to endless confusions. Logicians have sometimes even tried to show that the arrangement of words in a sentence somehow 'pictures', or corresponds to, the arrangement of 'objects' in the fact to which the sentence refers. They fail. The relation of language to fact is not a simple relation of picture to subject. The grammatical form of any spoken language can only be spoken by reference to its history and the

¹²Ibid., p.67.

¹³Austin, J. L. : "Truth", Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Sup. Vol. XXIV, 1950, p. 119.

accidents of its development."¹⁴

Ryle too doubts the picturing relation between a proposition and a fact. He could not see how a fact could be deemed like or even unlike the structure of a sentence. A fact, says Ryle, is not a collection of bits in the way in which a sentence is an arranged collection of noises. Ayer also believes that sentences cannot resemble facts. A state of anger need not have any similarity with the sentence 'Ram is angry' in order to express the fact linguistically.

Traditional logical positivists have claimed that in ordinary language the word 'ideal' is found to be absurd mainly for the fact that ordinary language is unperceptive, imprecise, vague and ambiguous. But the ordinary language philosopher does not regard these features of language as undesirable. Rather, he thinks of them as performing an essential role in the use of language, namely, maintaining its expressive power and preserving communication by holding meaning relatively constant while our knowledge of the world changes. Waismann has argued that "open texturedness" of terms allows us to assimilate new information into our current nomenclature, which this possibility would be precluded if we were to fix exact extensional boundaries.¹⁵

Ordinary language philosophers have argued that an accurate description of the usage, meaning, or extension of an expression cannot suggest a sharp, formalizable distinction. It may be desirable that in certain circumstances we may be required to be especially precise, but the

¹⁴Hampshire, Stuart : "Logical Form", Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Vol. XLVII, 1947-48, pp.38-39.

¹⁵Waismann, F. : "Verifiability", in *Logic and Language*, first Series, ed. A. Flew (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1955).

requirement as the ideal language philosophers have sought that we never be imprecise invites the questions: When do we stop? When have we been precise enough? To stop at some point is to stop at a natural point. But a definition of exactness requires us to go further must provide a general method for deciding when enough distinctions have been drawn. By hypothesis, such a definition can not tell us either to stop at the natural point or to make any possible distinction. Wittgenstein says, "And if you want to say 'But still, before that it wasn't an exact measure', then I reply 'very well, it was an inexact one - though you still owe me a definition of exactness'".¹⁶

So ordinary language philosophers felt that philosophical problems arise not because ordinary language is unobscure, but because philosophers have not used ordinary language properly. Ordinary language *qua* language is neither vague, ambiguous, nor imprecise. If ordinary language is condemned as vague, then successful communication would not have been possible. Ordinary language as a medium of successful communication is the right language. The opposite of ordinary use, says Ryle, is to be taken as misuse; the opposite of ordinary language is non-stock use. This has been further explicated by Stanley Cavell. In his article, "Must We Mean What We Say", Cavell remarks that ordinary language is the common medium which all speakers of linguistic community share. If there lies any discrepancy in ordinary language, it is due to the philosophers who use it in an imprecise way. It is true that philosophers, very often, have failed to grasp the function of language; they have failed to understand the logic of language which lie submerged under the grammar of language. They misapprehend the true nature of language and hence the true picture of

¹⁶Wittgenstein, L. : **Philosophical Investigations**, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1953), Para 69.

reality. That is why Wittgenstein says, "Philosophical puzzles arise when language is like an engine idling, not when it is doing work".¹⁷

The great blunder of reconstructionism is that it has committed itself to an underlying presupposition that ordinary language by its very nature is mistaken. But this commitment is altogether arbitrary as well as dogmatic, because language is not an entity that has the built-in property to deceive its users. Rather it is its users who use it as a medium of communication and to reflect the structure of fact. Metaphorically, it can be said that if the driver of a vehicle fails to control the vehicle which he drives, it may cause an unavoidable accident. Similarly, if the user of a language fails to apprehend the function or the logic of language; i.e., if he is duped by the grammar of language, an unavoidable confusion would likely be created. But it is important to note that in both cases, neither the vehicle nor the language is responsible for bringing out the accident or in creating any linguistic confusion. If there be any unhappy consequence, either the driver of the vehicle or the user of language would be blamed. In his article "Ordinary language", Ryle says, "I can say stupid things, but words can neither stupid nor not stupid".¹⁸

The view that meaning is coherent with reference has been strongly repudiated by the Oxford philosophers who propose to define meaning in terms of linguistic use. In his paper "On Referring", Strawson strongly criticises Russell. He says that Russell's 'Theory of Descriptions' made an expression *the* notorious in philosophy. For example, when Russell says, "The present Queen of England is Young", we are using the expression 'The

¹⁷Ibid., # 38, #132.

¹⁸Weitz, Morris: "Oxford Philosophy", The Philosophical Review, April, 1953, p. 205.

present Queen of England' to make a unique reference. Strawson calls this sort of expression 'a uniquely referring expression'. Russell considers the above statement not a subject-predicate statement; but an *existential proposition*. He holds that this proposition makes at least three assertions, viz.,

- (1) there exists at least one present Queen of England ;
- (ii) there exists at most one present Queen of England; and
- (iii) there is nothing which is a present Queen of England and not young.

It seems to us that this reconstruction enables us to talk about non-existent entities. For example, if we say, 'The present king of France is wise', we mean a significant but false assertion. Because at present there is no king in France. Russell's analysis draws a sharp contrast between the sort of existential propositions and genuine subject-predicate propositions. In conventional English the grammatical subject corresponds to the referring use and the grammatical predicate corresponds to the descriptive use. In such types of sentences a verbal expression functions as a logically proper name, i.e. , a symbol whose meaning is the object it stands for. But Strawson remarks that it is more than a historical curiosity that Russell has never been able to offer an acceptable instance of such a proposition.

Strawson remarks, suppose, we say now in July 1952, 'The Present Queen of England is young'. Now by uttering the sentence we are using the expression 'The Present Queen of England' to refer to a particular person. Again, let us suppose, Elizabeth II is still Queen in July 1997, and we say (falsely this time) 'The Present Queen of England is young'. Here we are making the same use of the same sentence to make different utterances. That what we are in 1952 using the sentence 'The present Queen of England is

young' to say something about a particular person and in 1997 we are using the very same sentence to say the very same thing about the very same person. But the difference between the two sentences timed as 1952 and 1997 is that what we say in 1952 is true; and what we say in 1997 is false. And again if we presuppose that there is a new queen in 1997 and we say 'The present queen of England is young', we are making a different use of the same sentence. It is different because it is being used to refer to a person other than the person referred to by the previous one.

Russell's mistake, as Strawson observes, lies in the fact that he (Russell) fails to apprehend the distinction between a use of a sentence and an utterance of a sentence. But Strawson finds a considerable difference between the use of a sentence and the utterance of a sentence. We think that the sentence 'The present Queen of England is young' and the expression 'The present Queen of England' are meaningful and significant. For Strawson, to say that they are meaningful is to say that there are "... rules, habits, conventions governing (their) correct use, on all occasions to refer or to assert."¹⁹ Telling the meaning of an expression does not tantamount to telling to whom it refers. Warnock has stated this position of Strawson in the following way: " To know the meaning of a sentence is to know how to use it, to know in what circumstances its use is correct or incorrect... A sentence is meaningful, if it has a use; we know its meaning if we know its use."²⁰ Ryle also rejects the relational theory between meaning and reference, what he calls 'Fido-Fido- theory'. Like many other Oxford philosophers, he remarks that to say that a sentence has meaning is not to say that it stands for,

¹⁹ Strawson, P. F. : "On Referring", *Mind*, July 1950, p.32.

²⁰Warnock, G. J. : "Verification and the Use of Language", *Revue internationale de Philosophie*, 1951, p. 327.

designates, denotes, is a sign of anything. It is simply to say that it has a use, a set of regulations or conventions governing its use. This spirit is expressed in the remark of Wittgenstein made in **Philosophical Investigations** where he says not to ask for the meaning, but to ask for the use. He justifies himself in saying that: "For a *large* class of cases - though not for all - in which we imply the word "meaning" it can be defined: the meaning of a word is its use in the language."²¹

Strawson says that Russell fails to understand that a meaningful expression may fail to refer to anything. There is no isomorphic tie between meaning and reference. Giving the meaning of an expression does not give the guarantee that it refers to anything, although a meaningful expression can be used, on different occasions, to refer to innumerable things. To say that an expression is meaningful is not to say that it refers to a certain person; and to say that a sentence is meaningful is not to say that it is true or false. As Strawson says, "... the phrase 'is true' is not *applied* to sentences; for it is not applied to anything. Truth is not a property of symbols; for it is not a property."²² A sentence can be true or false, Strawson observes, only if the use of a sentence is a genuine one. Russell fails to grasp that a meaningful sentence can be spurious one. Strawson says that the sentence " will be used to make a true or false assertions only if the person using it is talking about something. If, when he utters it, he is not talking about anything then his use is not a genuine one, but a spurious or pseudo use; he is not making either a

²¹Wittgenstein, Ludwig : "Philosophical Investigations, German text and English translation by G. E. M. Anscombe, Basil, Blackwell, 1953, p. 20e, (1943).

²²Charlesworth, Max : Philosophy and Linguistic Analysis (Pittsburg: Dugues ne University Press, 1959), p. 172.

true or false assertion, though he may think he is."²³ Strawson maintains that sentences are said to be true only if they have a genuine use. A sentence is spurious when it is not fictional, is neither true, nor false (modern orthodoxy, however, classifies the fictional as false), neither meaningful, nor meaningless, but simply pointless. H. L. A. Hart expands upon the relation between truth-falsity and fiction in Strawsonian line. He holds that the actual case with the fictional use of language is that the notion of truth or falsity does not arise. He remarks, " To make serious factually true or false statements is no doubt the most important use of intelligible descriptive sentences, but it is not the only use. For we can and do often say when a sentence has been used in our presence that the question of its truth or falsity does not arise on that occasion."²⁴ Thus, Nowell-Smith says that instead of the question "what does the word 'X' mean ? ", we should always ask two questions, "For what job is the word 'X' used?" and "Under what conditions is it proper to use the word for that job?"²⁵ Thus it seems that there are no fixed categories of linguistic functions ,yet sometimes words do fall into loose accidental classes because, as Nowell - Smith says , "... there are some words that almost always used for a selected range of purposes."²⁶

The upshot of the above consideration is that the programme of ideal language has serious drawback. It has failed to satisfy the requirements which it was supposed to fulfill . This brings about a shift from the method of ideal language to the method of ordinary language.

²³Strawson, P.F : "On Referring", op. cit., P. 327.

²⁴Hart, H. L. A. : "A Logician Fairy Tale", Philosophical Review, April, 1951, P. 204.

²⁵Nowell-Smith, P. H. : "Ethics", p. 61.

²⁶Ibid., p. 61.

Section III : Historical background of the development of Ordinary Language

Historically the movement towards ordinary language originated from Oxford school . But the clue to the philosophical importance of ordinary language first came from Cambridge. It was the later Wittgenstein who first realised the importance and philosophical relevance of ordinary language. His later book **Philosophical Investigations** was warmly welcomed by the Oxford philosophers of the **Vienna Circle** as an encouraging note on ordinary language philosophy. It provided for them the methodological motivation behind their philosophical enterprise .It would not be too much to say that Wittgenstein was the single greatest influential figure in the area of ordinary language. To quote Morris Weitz: "All of these Oxford philosophers agree that Wittgenstein was the single greatest influence although not more than half a dozen actually studied with him."²⁷

It should, however , be borne in mind that although the general conception of analysis of ordinary language is derived from the later thoughts of Wittgenstein, yet the so-called philosophers of the **Vienna Circle** maintained their independent attitude and sometimes became critical of Wittgenstein. It is also important to note that although the philosophers of the **Vienna Circle** are known as 'the philosophers of ordinary language' , yet they differ largely on the status of ordinary language. These philosophers have all been characterised as *ordinary language philosophers* because in spite of their occasional divergence from the task of the later Wittgenstein, they were all inclined to believe that philosophy would not benefit from the

²⁷Weitz, Morris : "Oxford Philosophy", op. cit., p. 207.

construction of an ideal language. In fact, they agree in committing themselves to the negative thesis that constructionism is not methodologically fruitful. Ordinary language philosophers differed, however, regarding the extent to which ordinary language could be trusted. Nevertheless, they all reject the claim of formalism. Apart from Wittgenstein, the other renowned figures of ordinary language philosophers were Moore, Ryle, Austin, Strawson, Hampshire, Toulmin, Hare, Nowell-Smith, Hart and Isaiah Berlin. However, we shall not accommodate all of their views but only confine ourselves to explaining the views of Strawson, Austin and Wittgenstein. Let us now turn to their views in turn.

Section IV: Strawson on the ordinary language

P. F. Strawson is one of the most important proponents of ordinary language philosophy. Like many other ordinary language philosophers, he believes that the problems of philosophy originate from the misinterpretation or mishandling of language. He says, "I can quite well say that there are real philosophical problems, and still add that they result, usually if not always, from a misunderstanding, from a mishandling of ordinary language".²⁸ Strawson is of the opinion that revisionism cannot succeed in eradicating linguistic errors simply by replacing artificial language in place of ordinary language. He goes on to say that since philosophical muddles emerge from ordinary language, they should be solved in ordinary language. He differs from Wittgenstein in saying that philosophical problems can correctly be

²⁸Strawson, P. F. :Discussion of Strawson's "Analysis, Science, and Metaphysics"(Chaired by Jean Wahl) in *The Linguistic Turn*, op. cit., p. 328.

solved by appealing to a more rigorous analysis of usage. But Wittgenstein says that since philosophical problems are pseudo-problems, the question of their solving does not arise. Philosophical problems can never be solved but they can only be dissolved.

According to Strawson ordinary language by its very nature is rich and complex than artificial language. Ordinary language has multifarious uses. Consequently ideal or artificial language fails to accommodate all the variety and richness involved in ordinary language. Strawson raises the question as to how does the importance or relevance of constructed concepts in an ideal language can shed light on the problems found to be related to unconstructed concepts in which such problems originate?

- The answer to the question may be found when Strawson undertakes a critical survey of ideal language philosophy. In his article on "Carnap's View's on Constructed Systems vs Natural Language in Analytic Philosophy", Strawson observes that the conception of ideal language seems to be empty if it is claimed that ideal language is an interpreted schema completely different from ordinary language. Because, Strawson realises, that whatever the nature of ideal language may actually be, the source of its development or improvement actually lies in ordinary language. Caton in his book **Ordinary Language** has thrown much light on the issue and opines that ideal language has its background in ordinary language. It is not therefore justifiable, nor even reasonable to make a clear bifurcation between the two languages. Defending his conviction, Strawson considers that the root of philosophical problems and difficulties, which the ideal language philosophers claimed to have solved lies in ordinary language. Strawson has once even remarked:

the (constructionalists) claim to clarify will seem empty, unless

the results achieved have some bearing on the typical philosophical problems and difficulties which arise concerning the concepts to be clarified. Now these problems and difficulties(it will be admitted) have their roots in ordinary, unconstructed concepts, in the elusive, deceptive mode of functioning of unformalized linguistic expressions. It is precisely the purpose of construction (we are now supposing) to solve or dispel problems and difficulties so rooted ...if the clear mode of functioning of the constructed concepts is to cast light on problems and difficulties rooted in the unclear mode of functioning of the unconstructed concepts, then precisely the ways in which the constructed concepts are connected with and depart from the unconstructed concepts must be precisely shown. And how can *this* result be achieved without accurately describing the modes of functioning of the unconstructed concepts? But this task is precisely the task of describing the logical behaviour of the linguistic expressions of natural languages; and may be *itself* achieve the sought for resolution of the problems and difficulties rooted in the elusive, deceptive mode of functioning of unconstructed concepts. I should not want to deny in the discharge of this task, the construction of a model object of linguistic comparison may sometimes be of great help. But I do not want to deny that the construction and contemplation of such a model object can *take the place* of the discharge of this task...²⁹

²⁹Strawson, P. F. : "Analysis, Science and Metaphysics", in *The Linguistic Turn*, *Ibid*, P. 315.

Those who presuppose ideal language as a mere replacement of ordinary language compare it with the replacement of healthy tissue in place of a cancerous one. But Strawson thinks that this comparison does not bring out the real purpose behind constructionism. He believes that the nature of philosophical problems is more like a neurosis than a cancer. A neurotic person is not cured unless and until he has been pursued why he has been suffering from neurosis. But this is not the same kind of situation that actually happens in case of a cancerous patient. He might have been cured even if he knew nothing about the disease he was suffering from. Similarly, a philosopher who is puzzled by philosophical problems is just like a neurotic person rather than one suffering from cancer, since like a neurotic he seeks to know the root causes of philosophical muddles and desires to find out the way to their solution. He requires a therapeutic solution. He works simultaneously like as a patient and also as a therapist. He is a patient in suffering from philosophical disease and he acts at the same time as a physician in diagnosing the cause of the disease and then prescribes a cure. In explicating the nature of ordinary language, Strawson then goes on to say that "in the effort to describe our experiences we are constantly putting words to new uses, connected with, but not identical with, their familiar uses; applying them to states of affairs which are both like and unlike those to which the words are most familiarly applied."³⁰

Strawson believes that the sole aim of philosophy is not the reformation of concepts, but to make clear the actual behaviour of our concepts. Like the later Wittgenstein he conceives that the problems of

³⁰Carnap's view on Constructed System Vs Natural Languages" by P. F. Strawson in *Analytic Philosophy*, quoted by Maxwell and Feigl in *The Linguistic Turn*, *Ibid.*, p. 194.

philosophy arise in language and therein too lies the key to their solution. He says, "For the confusions we are troubled by arise not when language is doing its work, but when it is idling on holiday;... we are to "assemble reminders" of obvious facts about their uses; not at random, nor yet systematically, but on each occasion with some particular purpose in view, the purpose of dispelling some particular confusion".³¹ Strawson argues that it is the task of an analyst to describe the clumsy and complex character of language. It is necessary also to explain the difficulties rooted in the mode of functioning of unconstructed concepts, and only then the fundamental difference between constructed concepts and unconstructed concepts may be precisely shown.

Strawson is of the opinion that metaphysics in the past has frequently been speculative. Speculative metaphysicians have tried to present a scheme of things as they 'really' are, but their practice can be actualised with a corresponding revision of our actual conceptual scheme. But, Strawson finds, that the speculative metaphysicians did not present such revised conceptual scheme "by means of which we might see things differently; it is presented as a picture of things as they *really* are, instead of as they delusively seem. And this presentation, with its contrast between esoteric reality and daily delusion, involves and is the consequence of the unconscious distortion of ordinary concepts...³² Thus it is useless to speculate what the structure of reality should be, for that is never given through our actual conceptual framework.

Strawson believes also that it is impossible for the proposed ideal

³¹Strawson, P. F.: "Critical notice on Philosophical Investigations", *Mind*, Vol. LXIII, 1954, p. 78.

³²*Ibid.*, p. 78.

language to accommodate all that is embedded in ordinary language. Constructionists have failed to explain the variety of use by their simplified notations and symbols. The relation between '.' (dot) and 'and' is not one of parallelism. The use of 'and' is wider in scope than that of '.'. 'And' in ordinary language can perform many jobs which '.' cannot do. As for example, 'Tom and William arrived', whereas ; '.' can be used only to couple expressions which could appear as separate sentences. In our ordinary discourse when we say that 'x' and 'y' played yesterday, by the expression 'played yesterday' we mean that played not in succession but that played together. Thus formalised concepts, fail to accommodate all the various uses made by conjunction and other logical connectives. For Strawson the aims of ideal language and ordinary language philosophy are not just complementary. The act of ordinary language philosophy is to show the modes of functioning of unconstructed concepts. But Strawson does not say that the construction of an ideal language has no value. It is helpful in dissolving conceptual muddles but that cannot take the place of what we achieve in the analysis of ordinary language.

Unlike Wittgenstein Strawson suggests that the therapeutic purpose is not the sole function or in other words rather not the ultimate goal of philosophy. As he argues, "...there can be an investigation of the logic of sets of concepts, which starts with no purpose other than that of unrevealing and ordinary complexities for the sake of doing so. The desire to present the facts systematically here become important in proposition as therapeutic arms become secondary."³³

³³Ibid., p. 78.

Thus, Strawson is inspired by the possibility of a kind of metaphysics which will lay down the conceptual framework of ordinary people. It is not, therefore, the elimination of metaphysics which motivates Strawson as it did Wittgenstein. Though Strawson does not seek to justify the merit of the problems of the traditional metaphysics, nevertheless he urges that "we might make room for a purged kind of metaphysics."³⁴ The study of language for Strawson is not an end in itself. Such a study will render intelligible the conceptual apparatus which lie embedded in our language "in the way in which an architect's blue print can clarify an impressionistic sketch".³⁵

The point is that, it will be unreasonable to think that Strawson is trying to make good the incompleteness of formalism by supplementing it by ordinary language analysis. He uses ordinary language for developing descriptive metaphysics. For him descriptive analysis of ordinary language is the attempt to bring out the natural foundations of our logical conceptual apparatus. As he says, "...it is a part of our nature that things other than ourselves being as they are, it is natural for us to have the conceptual apparatus that we do have."³⁶

It may have been clear from the above that Strawson largely relies upon a scrupulous examination of the actual use of words. But he does not mean to say that it is the only path. Rather he would say that only that kind of description is relevant which succeeds in unveiling the structure of human thinking. He claims that the actual use of linguistic expressions is our sole

³⁴Ibid., p. 78.

³⁵Urmson, J. O. : "The History of Analysis", in *The Linguistic Turn*, op. cit., p. 297.

³⁶Strawson, P. F. : "Analysis Science and Metaphysics", Ibid., p. 317.

and essential point of contact with the reality which we wish to understand, conceptual reality. Thus he says, ". For this is the only point for which the actual mode of operation of concepts can be observed . If he (i. e., a philosopher) serves this vital connection, all his ingenuity and imagination will not save him from lapses into the arid or the absurd".³⁷

Section V: Austin on the Ordinary Language

J .L . Austin was an earlier protagonist of ordinary language philosophy. As President of the Aristotelian society Austin has remarked that just because things are the way, they are words, are used in the way they are. One must not , therefore, tinker with it. It is really a platitude to say that Wittgenstein of the *Investigations* paved the way for the analysis of ordinary language as a method of philosophical investigation. But the reason for his shift to ordinary language should be distinguished from the reasons which led other philosophers of the camp to take to ordinary language analysis . Austin, e. g. , did not find fault with ideal language, but rather discovered in ordinary language certain features that established its merit as an object of philosophical analysis . Austin, however, was inclined to ordinary language analysis because he found no reason to discard it as an object of philosophical analysis ; rather in view of its history of long period of survival one feels assured of its richness. In his famous article "A Plea for Excuses",

³⁷Ibid., p. 320.

Austin, however, outlines of his conception of language. We quote:

"When we examine what we should say when , what words we should use in what situations, we are looking again not *merely* at words. but also at the realities we use the words to talk about".³⁸ The same view was also expressed by Wittgenstein. In his **Philosophical Investigations**, Wittgenstein holds that language is not what it is if it is not internally associated with concrete and lived situations in the world. In answering to the question why we should study ordinary language, Austin proposes that ordinary language should be studied by careful investigation so that we may avoid distorting it or be misled by it; and secondly that an understanding of ordinary language will give us a sharper awareness of distinctions in the phenomena we use the words to talk about . Thus in outlining the legitimacy of the study of ordinary language , Austin adds emphasis on two important aspects. Since ordinary language is arbitrary, Austin cautions, maximum care should be taken in admitting it. He believes that in order to understand what we mean, we must examine the words we use. Language sets traps, especially for philosophers, and it is only by rigorously examining what we all ordinarily do with language that we can forearm ourselves against such traps. Austin is of the opinion that the philosophers very often forget the ordinary usage of some expression in order to come to grip some theory. As a matter of fact he can easily slide into a misuse of it and hence led astray in a hopeless manner. Thus our ordinary words, avers Austin, are themselves inadequate and arbitrary. So careful examination of ordinary words would help us to realise how they work and to 're-look at the world without blinkers'.

³⁸Austin, J. L. : "A Plea for Excuses"; in **Ordinary Language**, edited by V. C. Chappell, Prentice-Hall, 1964, p. 47.

Austin, however, does not forget to remind us about the positive aspects of ordinary language. Defending his second point, mentioned above, Austin has to say that the study of ordinary language has a positive value also. He holds that "our common stock of words embodies all the distinctions men have found worth drawing, and the connections they have found worth making, in the lifetimes of many generations"³⁹. We should understand these at least before we proceed further. Noticing and understanding these distinctions is not merely looking at words. In examining how we use the words we do, we also examine the realities we use the words for. Thus by examining the ordinary usage of the words with which we describe actions, we shall both get rid ourselves of possible misconceptions and bring to light distinctions in the kinds of things and situations we use the words to talk about. Austin justifies this method of proceeding from ordinary language in the following way:

"First, words are our tools, and, as a minimum, we should use clean tools: we should know what we mean and what we do not, and we must forearm ourselves against the traps that language sets us. Secondly, words are not (except in their own little corner) facts or things; we need therefore to prise them off the world, to hold them apart from and against it, so that we can realise their inadequacies and arbitrariness, and can relook at the world without blinkers. Thirdly, and more hopefully, our common stock of words embodies all the distinctions men have found worth drawing, and the connections they have bound worth making, in the lifetimes of many generations: these surely are likely to be more numerous, more sound, since they have stood up to the long test of the survival of the fittest, and more

³⁹Ibid., p. 47.

subtle, at least in all ordinary and reasonably practical matters, than any that you or I are likely to think up in our armchairs of an afternoon - the most favoured alternative method."⁴⁰

It is obvious, then that Austin seeks to explain both the negative as well as the positive aspects of ordinary language. He holds, since ordinary language is arbitrary and inadequate, it sets traps for philosophers. So he suggests a careful examination of ordinary language. He then goes on to say that if ordinary language is studied carefully then the realities we use the words to talk about would be revealed. But he points out that these two aims of ordinary language analysis appear complementary in the sense that they are two sides of the same coin.

But how then ordinary language is to be investigated? To define the scope of the inquiry, Austin says that the field(domain) of ordinary language which the philosophers investigate must be relevant to some philosophical problems. For him some linguistic expressions do not create philosophical interest while some others do generate philosophical interest. For example, the expressions like 'gain', 'smile', 'laugh', etc., do not give rise to any philosophical interest; but the expressions like 'deliberate', 'intentional', 'accidental', etc., do generate philosophical interest. Austin claims that these ordinary marks of distinctions in the doing of actions may be significant in the philosophical discussion of freedom and responsibility.

After having thus circumscribed our domain, we then go through the lexicon, listing all the words that may be relevant. When the list is complete, we can set to work discriminating the uses of these expressions and the distinctions that they mark in the phenomena. This is to be done by imagining

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 46.

appropriate situations and asking ourselves how they should be described; i.e., by asking ourselves what precise discriminations these expressions ordinarily mark. Our imagination can be supplemented by the examination of actual legal reports, in so far, that is, as we are investigating the topic of excuses and the doing of action. For legal reports obviously have a great deal to do with pleas and excuses. Here, however, we have to guard against the possibility that an ordinary expression would be used in an extraordinary way, under the pressure of the need to reach a decision and to work from precedents.

As Wittgenstein, Austin too believes that most of the philosophical problems and arguments arise from a systematic misconstruction of the crucial terms used in ordinary language. Austin's appeal to ordinary language may be described as the application of the 'Principle of Sufficient linguistic reason'. For all linguistic distinctions sufficient reason exists. It may appear that ordinary language, for Austin, embodies things that are equally significant from a philosophical point of view. Austin was not a believer in such a strong thesis. All distinctions embodied in ordinary language are not equally important, because the reasons behind ordinary words and idioms are not all good and sufficient. One may have to improve or modify linguistic resources by systematically investigating human behaviour. In fact Austin himself has introduced many philosophical distinctions into ordinary language.

Hampshire has expressed doubt about the philosophical importance of the kind of investigation which Austin wants to make. There are words which may, from a lexicographer's point of view appear synonymous. But people may prefer to use one word instead of another. The 'richness' which Austin has discovered in ordinary language is nothing but disagreement in the

matter of use. Hampshire, therefore, prefers to view the linguistic statistics as unrevealing.

Austin, however, is not unaware of this feature of ordinary language. He believes that if the usage is loose, we can understand the temptation that leads to it, and the distinction that it blurs. If, he says, there are alternative descriptions, then the situation can be structured in two ways. When the two alternatives are found to come down to the same, the situation is structured in one uniform way. Austin says, "A disagreement : as to what we should say is not to be shed off, but to be pounced upon : for the explanation of it can hardly fail to be illuminating. If we light on an electron that rotates the wrong way, that is a discovery, a portent to be followed up, not a reason for chucking physics : and by the same token, a genuinely loose or eccentric talker is a rare specimen to be prized."⁴¹

Although Austin is described as a philosopher of ordinary language, still he does not believe as others do that an examination of the ordinary linguistic behaviour is a sure guide to philosophy. But he does believe that it is always profitable to start with ordinary language. He says, "Certainly ordinary language has no claim to be the last word,It embodies, indeed, something better than the metaphysics of the Stone Age, namely,the inherited experience and acumen of many generations of men".⁴² The linguistic distinctions are there in ordinary language because they have been found to answer to our practical purposes in ordinary life. They may prove adequate for all our more sophisticated requirements. Austin adds: "...superstition and error and fantasy of all kinds do become incorporated in

⁴¹Ibid., p. 48.

⁴²Ibid., p. 49.

ordinary language and sometimes stand up to the survival test. Certainly, then, ordinary language is *not* the last word"⁴³. We find that Austin is not unaware of the shortcomings of ordinary language. He concedes in principle that ordinary language can everywhere be 'supplemented and improved upon and superseded'. An analysis and examination of ordinary language is needed because, if not the end-all, it is certainly the begin - all of philosophy. "Only remember" says Austin drawing our attention, that "it is the first word".⁴⁴

The above considerations should have made clear that as an ordinary language philosopher Austin himself has been a believer in revisionism in respect of ordinary language. The term 'superseded' indicates setting aside ordinary language in favour of another. But he does not specify which would it be. Further, he says that ordinary language is a *begin - all*, but not the *end - all*. He does not of course specify what should be the end-all. Like Austin, Strawson makes the same remark. He holds that upto a certain extent ordinary language is reliable and useful. But it remains undecided what would be the 'end -all' in philosophising. We are inclined to think the answer would remain unsettled both in the philosophies of Austin and Strawson. Do Austin and Strawson require a revision after reaching ^{upto} a certain point? No clear-cut answer is found in their method. In this sense their method is not philosophically neutral. This answer is given forthwith in the later Wittgenstein. He says that ordinary language is both begin -all and end- all. He maps the range of the world by saying that 'the limits of our language are the limits of our world'. And what is more admirable for him, as we think, is that he tries his level best to maintain the gravity of his commitment

⁴³Ibid., p. 49.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 49.

consistently to the end of his **Philosophical Investigations**.

Section VI: Wittgenstein on the Ordinary Language

Although it is true that the philosophical foundations of ordinary language philosophy were laid by a number of Oxford philosophers, but there has been one philosopher who was not a member of Oxford school, and yet whose contribution was particularly significant. He was the later Wittgenstein. It should be noted that Wittgenstein starts his philosophical career as a logical empiricist and he believed that the ideal language of **Tractatus** gives the key to the final solution of the problems of philosophy. But subsequently, he comes to the discovery that the principles of ideal language presupposed in the **Tractatus** are based on erroneous theory of language. Having grown dissatisfied with the concept of an ideal language, he eventually arrives at issues quite different from those he had proposed in the **Tractatus**. Instead of an ideal (artificial) language, he now puts forward an alternative conception of philosophical therapy and analysis. In lieu of inquiring the structure and limits of language, he tries to discover the nature of philosophical problems through an empirical investigation. In **Philosophical Investigations** he goes on to argue that since language is a part of human life, it should be examined in that setting with all its complexities of form and function. Consequently, his later philosophical method turns to a new direction. In **Philosophical Investigations** Wittgenstein outlines the programme of going along with ordinary language with a sharp criticism of ideal language presupposed in the **Tractatus**. We come across a dramatic shift in mode, style and purpose between his early and later works. Black remarks: "Turning from the earlier book to the later

is like leaving the ruins of a Greek temple for a Buroque Church".⁴⁵Two fundamental differences between his early and later works are worth noticing . In the **Tractatus**, Wittgenstein had said that the structure of reality determines the structure of language ; but in the **Investigations** he comes to say that our language determines our view of reality. Secondly , in the **Tractatus**, Wittgenstein admitted an uniform structure of language which can be disclosed only by logical clarification , but in the **Philosophical Investigations**, he comes to believe that language has no common essence.

Wittgenstein is of the opinion that most of the traditional philosophical problems are engendered due to the misinterpretation of language . Conceptual confusions and metaphysical speculations are the symptoms of such misuse. Frequently, philosophers have been misled by language. Language, says Wittgenstein, is imperfect. It has its own defects and ambiguities. Owing to the ambiguous nature of language philosophers have fallen into traps. According to Wittgenstein the so-called philosophical problems are not really problems but language puzzles. He believes that language puzzles are inevitable in philosophical practice and that is why he aptly remarks that **Philosophical Investigations** starts with the riddle. Wittgenstein says, "Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our understanding by means of language ".⁴⁶ He considers traditional philosophy as non-sensical, and he finds that the key to this non-sensical character lies in the misuse of language . Wittgenstein says, "The results of philosophy are the uncovering of one of another piece of plain non-sense and of bumps that the understanding has got by running its head against the limits of language

⁴⁵Black, Max : "Wittgenstein's View About Language", Indian Review of Philosophy, Vol. I, January 1972, p. 8.

⁴⁶Wittgenstein, Ludwig: Philosophical Investigations, Section 109.

"⁴⁷ Traditional philosophy is adjudged as non-sensical as it outranges the limits of language fixed by the conventional rules of usage. Wittgenstein remarks : "When we do philosophy we are like savages , primitive people who hear the expressions of civilized men , put a false interpretation on them and then draw the queerest conclusions from it."⁴⁸

So the function of philosophy, Wittgenstein suggests, is to clarify the confusions in language . Or in other words, the function of philosophy should be to teach 'the correct usage of the language' . Wittgenstein conceives philosophy as a form of therapy which, by correcting misuses of language , removes the conceptual confusions . The philosophers' treatment of a question is like the treatment of an illness . Philosophical analysis is a description of the ordinary uses of words and expressions which aims at dissolving the philosophical problems caused by their misuse . Wittgenstein considers such 'cures' to be worse than the original disease . But whatever the malady , it is the job of philosophy to clear up the puzzle, to cure the ills of the understanding.⁴⁹ Wittgenstein remarks that in philosophy , " What we do is to bring words *back* from their metaphysical to their everyday usage ...when philosophers use a word - 'knowledge' , ' being' , 'object', 'I', 'proposition' , 'name', - and try to grasp the essence of the word , we must always ask: is the word ever *actually* used in this way in the language which is its original home. For philosophical problems arise when language *goes on holiday*. "⁵⁰

⁴⁷Ibid., Section 191.

⁴⁸Ibid., Section 194.

⁴⁹Pitcher, G. : **The Philosophy of Wittgenstein**, Prentice-Hall of India Pvt. Ltd., 1972, p. 196

⁵⁰Op. Cit. , Section 39,40, 41.

In explicating the nature of philosophical problems, Wittgenstein says that "a philosophical problem has the form : 'I don't know my way about' ".⁵¹ He justifies it by saying that since our philosophical problems have their source in our misuse of language and in our being misled by form of expressions , it becomes evident that it is language which is a " labyrinth of paths " in which you "no longer know your way about". Wittgenstein adds , "Language is a labyrinth of paths. You approach from *one* side and know your way about ; you approach the same place from another side and no longer know your way about ."⁵² It is important to observe that sometimes Wittgenstein speaks of philosophical problems as 'grammatical ' in character. Perhaps he intends to suggest that philosophical problems have to do with misuse of language and are to be distinguished from empirical problems . The philosophers and grammarians will therefore have a common interest in linguistic usage.

Wittgenstein is of the opinion that philosophical problems are engendered due to the misinterpretation or misuse of language, hence their solutions are to be obtained by the examination of our ordinary use of language. He remarks: "Philosophy may in no way interfere with the actual use of language ; it can in the end only describe it ."⁵³ A philosophy should act not by reforming ordinary language but by describing it. Philosophers should not go beyond description. He criticises the philosophers who seek to improve upon actual language by appealing to an ideal language . Against such attempts, Wittgenstein argues that 'there the word 'ideal' is liable to

⁵¹**Philosophical Investigations** -translated by Anscombe, G.E.M., Basil, Blackwell, Oxford, 1976; p. 49e ('PI' 123).

⁵²Ibid., p. 82e('PI' 203).

⁵³Ibid., p. 49e ('PI', 124).

mislead, for it sounds as if these language were better , more perfect , than our everyday language'. He says , "The ideal , as we think of it, is unshakable. You can never get outside it; you must always turn back . There is no outside ; outside you cannot breath - where does this idea come from? It is like a pair of glasses on our nose through which we see whatever we look at. It never occurs to us to take them off ." ⁵⁴ Contrarily, he says, "Ordinary language is all right " ⁵⁵. He suggests that we should leave the 'slippery ice' of ideal language for the friction provided by the 'rough ground' of actual language. He comments metaphorically : "We have got on to slippery ice where there is no fiction and so in a certain sense the conditions are ideal, but also , just because of that, we are unable to walk. We want to walk : so we need *friction*. Back to the rough ground !" ⁵⁶

According to Wittgenstein , a sentence represents a tool used to accomplish a particular purpose and its sense is governed by various grammatical connections. He says that ordinary language has multiple uses. There is no longer any reality that is merely pictured by ordinary language whose structures thus have to accommodate themselves to the ontological structures. It is not , however, his intention to say that ordinary language is free from failure and misuse. Rather he would say that pseudo-philosophical problems arise due to the misapplication of the rules of ordinary language. To him ordinary language is not to be examined by means of a depth grammar. Language is languages and it is to be explained in all its great variety and complexity . It has to be described and understood as it is found, not reduced

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 45e ('PI' 107).

⁵⁵The Blue and Brown Book., Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1972, p. 28.

⁵⁶op. cit. P. 46e ('PI' 107).

to some basic structure. In his later philosophy he comments that if picturing were the sole function of language then any language should be so modelled as would enable it to perform this function. But metaphysical sentences were not able to picture any facts. The term 'metaphysics' is generally used by Wittgenstein in a pejorative sense. On one occasion he maintains that the characteristic of a metaphysical question is "that we express an unclarity about the grammar of words in the *form* of a scientific question."⁵⁷ Often he uses the term 'metaphysical' more broadly to connote those misleading uses of language by philosophers which prompt his question: "what we do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use."⁵⁸ In both cases we make a wrong syntactical structure with words. So the later Wittgenstein goes against the task of revising language or its syntax in view of the picture theory of language.

Wittgenstein believes that the majority of traditional philosophical problems had arisen from philosophers having failed to grasp the variety of functions which concepts serve, and having therefore drawn erroneous conclusions. So the best way to solve the philosophical problems is to correct an erroneous notion about the function of language rather than acquiring a deeper understanding of language. Instead of holding that a sentence has meaning or sense because it is a picture, the later Wittgenstein says that the meaning of a linguistic expression is not to be determined by correlation with some antecedently and independently existing structure of reality. It should be determined by the rules of use that people devise and adopt. Since language is always a part of a form of life, its function, says Wittgenstein,

⁵⁷The Blue and Brown Book, op. cit., p. 35.

⁵⁸Philosophical Investigations, op. cit., p. 48e ('PI', 116).

must be defined anew for each form of life . There are different situations, many contexts of action , and different ways of using language in our life . And so , there are different language games as well . We invent new uses of words and that we set up language games "as *objects of comparison* which are meant to throw light on the facts of our language by way not only of similarities , but also of dissimilarities ." ⁵⁹ We thus attain a clear view of the use of words. Language is used for different purposes, for example , asking questions, praying , describing objects, making up stories, solving riddles , guessing , telling jokes and what not. For him the right method in philosophy is to collect facts about language because they point back in the direction from which critical philosophy has travelled in the last two centuries. So it is needless to construct some scientific theory about them.

According to the later Wittgenstein the meaning of a sentence is not determined on the basis of its reference; but on considering the basis of how it is used . As Wisdom has put it : "Don't ask for the meaning , ask for the use " . ⁶⁰ This is actually what Wittgenstein does in practice . He investigates the use of words, and is not so much concerned with their meaning . One cannot guess how a word functions. One has to look at the use and learn from that. The meaning of a sentence, says Wittgenstein, is determined by the rules of its conventional usage. Conventional usage paves the way in which common people use words in their day to day conventions. It is , therefore, not the task of philosophy to discover the logic of language ; but to shift from logic to the natural history of language . Ordinary language, says Wittgenstein, is an activity which is performed in concrete situations of life with concrete ends

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 50e ('PI', 130).

⁶⁰Wisdom, John : "Ludwig Wittgenstein, 1934-37", *Mind*, Vol. LXI, 1952, p. 258.

in mind. Language being a conceptual device originates in the human mind. The meaning of linguistic expression is determined by rules of use which people devise and adopt. There need not be any rule which can determine language irrespective of human needs and purposes. For Wittgenstein, language is a part of the natural history of man and as such our speech behaviour may be compared to any other human behaviour. These are the needs and purposes of linguistic community which determine the rules of linguistic usage. The "logomorphism" (symbolic dialogue) of *Tractatus* had banished the concrete means for the sake of attaining purism in language. The *Philosophical Investigations* rehabilitates men in the centre. The shift may be described as a return from Platonism. The *craving for generality*, for a universal logic was essentially Platonic. It betrayed an attitude of indifference towards the particular and the concrete. The ordinary language of *Philosophical Investigations* does just the opposite. It is now held that language is not defined for us as an arrangement fulfilling a definite purpose. It is a phenomena, called 'linguistic phenomena' and not a means to a particular end.

According to Wittgenstein, before we answer any philosophical question we should try to find out the meaning of the question if it has any. To him the problem of meaning is a verbal problem; i. e., we should try to find out what we do mean by 'meaning' in the ordinary language. We learn the meaning of a word or sentence by learning the use of it. By the term 'use', he does not mean pragmatic usefulness, but the role it plays in a language game. An expression has a meaning when it has a use in a language system. Wittgenstein does not deny mental experiences and behavioural gestures accompanying the use of symbols. But he believes that they are unnecessary and irrelevant. If anyone is able to use the word 'book' correctly

as others do, then it is unnecessary to bother about what happens in his mind. For Wittgenstein language is a social function which depends upon the possibility of conviction for another person, so ,it is impossible that it should be employed in a private use.

The fact that language has meaning in a certain context has been expressed by Wittgenstein through the concept of language game . It is analogous to what Austin calls *speech acts*. The term 'language game' says Wittgenstein "is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the speaking of language is part of an activity , or of a form of life ".⁶¹ Here the term 'activity' means a mode of acting. Max. Black in his paper "With Views About Language" has argued that ordinarily the term activity means "the systematic character of speech and the dependence of the linguistic act upon the invisible context of the enveloping speech community ."⁶²

And this is the reason why Wittgenstein says, " To understand a sentence means to understand a language."⁶³ That is to say , to understand a language is to be a master of technique. When someone does not play the same language games then he cannot speak to others. And that is the reason why human beings on the whole agree in the language they use. But that is not agreement in opinions but in a form of life . So, the language game must simply be taken as 'given', it can only be recorded or noted. It is a mistake to look for any further explanation.

Wittgenstein believes that philosophical problems can be understood by examining the natural and inevitable consequences of thinking. A

⁶¹Philosophical Investigations, op. cit., Section 23, p. 11.

⁶²Max, Black : op. cit., p. 13.

⁶³op. cit., Section 199, p. 81.

language game guides us how to attain an appropriate use of language. Wittgenstein calls this perspective of language a 'synoptic presentation' of language. The concept of language game is suggested in a number of ways. Language is not a single activity, but multifarious, comprising of many different sorts of 'language games'. The purpose of philosophy, he says, is to show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle, but it should be kept in mind that in philosophy every fly-bottle is different, every language game is different. In natural languages, most expressions are used in many different kinds of circumstances in many different senses. Similarly, in Wittgenstein's conception of language game, a given expression might conceivably belong to any of several language game.⁵ Such overlapping uses of natural language are bound together by an underlying layer of non-linguistic behaviour. This substratum of innate, instinctive behaviour is akin to what Wittgenstein calls *a form of life*. The analogy between language and game is extended to the idea that the different uses of language form *a family resemblance*. *Family resemblance* means the likeness that the members of a family share. Both in **The Blue and Brown Book** and in the **Philosophical Investigations**, Wittgenstein says that language forms a family, the members of it share family resemblances. We know that some brothers and sisters of a family have the same nose, others have the same eyebrow, still others have the same gait. Likewise in a game likenesses criss-cross and overlap, similarities crop-up and disappear. Language itself is not a game. It is a family-likeness term. Language games, like games, need have no external goal. Like games, language is autonomous. "The analogy between language and game", Kenny says, "was not meant to suggest that language was a pastime, or something trivial: on the contrary, it was meant to bring out the connection between the speaking of language and non-linguistic activities ... the speaking of

language is a part of communal activity, a way of living in society which Wittgenstein calls 'a form of life'.⁶⁴ The expression *a form of life* suggests some typical behaviour of a species, a tribe, a clan, a society, a people, a culture. Describing a form of life of a species is tantamount to describe its natural history. One species of animals dwells in trees another in cave. One human tribe may obtain food by hunting, another by tending crops. These are the differences in a form of life. By making an analogy of a language with a form of life, Wittgenstein is suggesting that a language is embedded in different activities performed by a large number of people, not in the behaviour of a single individual. The daily exchange of greeting can be called a practice, a custom, an institution. It is also a form of life, a feature of natural history of human beings. Hacker and Backer remark that when Wittgenstein says that following a rule is a practice, he cannot mean to differentiate something essentially social from something individual which may be done in privacy. Thus Malcolm aptly says, "It seems clear to me, however, that Wittgenstein in saying that the concept of following a rule is 'essentially social' in the sense that it can have its roots only in setting where there is a people, with common life and common language."⁶⁵

Here Wittgenstein makes a comparison. He says that in the transition carried on by the players what is operative is not exhausted by the immediate movements made by the players. There are factors that go beyond the scene. Similarly, if we are to understand everything that is operative in our speech transactions, we should look beyond what is immediately performed by the speakers. We must look to the speech community which inherits and

⁶⁴ Kenney, Anthony : **Wittgenstein**, Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 1973, p. 163.

⁶⁵Malcolm, N. : "Wittgenstein : On Language and Rules ", Journal of Philosophy, January, 1989, Vol. 64, p. 23.

embodies the guiding principles of language. As Black observes, from a myopic perspective one would see a game of chess as a movement of a wooden black from one point to another by the two players. But if one is in a position to see the moves as a game he would see players 'checking the king'. It is a practice having meaning which in its turn exemplifies a system of rules of use having its root deep in the form of our life. Thus it is claimed that the notion of language game through a form of life is connected with the notion of use as a major key to the analysis of the concept of meaning. We may have Pitcher's remark: "The way to escape from philosophical puzzlement, he (Wittgenstein) told us, is to abandon our a priori, over simplified picture of the use of words, but look at the actual use of words to see what goes on."⁶⁶

Every sentence in our language, therefore, is in order. Philosophy may in no way interfere with the actual use of language. Problems of philosophy arise, when we are not faithful in using words according to rules. Such problems can be dispensed with if we stop building up a theory of language, and only adopt a descriptive method. Philosophical problems, says Wittgenstein, are not empirical. They can be solved by looking at the working of our language. The function of philosophy would be in teaching the correct use of language. Philosophy, then, for Wittgenstein, is a pure method, a pure *therapy*, its aim being intellectual health. Barnett in his recent article, "The Rhetoric of Grammar" says, "It is well known that Wittgenstein conceived of a philosophical problem as a symptom of a "disease of thought"

⁶⁶Pitcher, G. : **The Philosophy of Wittgenstein**, (Prentice Hall, INC, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.), 1964, p. 236.

and of its treatment as "therapy."⁶⁷ A person worried by a philosophical problem is like one who is suffering from a psychopathic disorder. So the task of an analyst is like that of a psycho-analyst. The patient in each case is cured by way of detecting the cause of the disorder. The nature of therapy is determined by the nature of the illness to which it is applied. He is his own physician. The cure of the symptom of the disease is based on an unique diagnosis of the roots of the philosophical puzzlements. Thus the philosopher's treatment of a question is like the treatment of an illness. An answering to the question: What is your aim in philosophy? Wittgenstein says : "Two show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle."⁶⁸

Thus we can conclude with Wittgenstein that language bewitches our intellect. The proper method of philosophy is analysis and the proper business of a philosopher is not to advance any metaphysical theory but to show the fly a way out of the fly bottle. Wittgenstein invites us to look at the actual functioning of language. There is no longer the urge to see the world rightly by seeing through the underlying formal simplicity of ordinary language because ordinary language is no longer treated as mirrors of things but pieces used in various language games.

⁶⁷Barnett, Williame : "the Rhetoric of Grammer : Understanding Wittgenstein's Method", *Meta-Philosophy*, Vol. 21, Nos. 1 & 2, 1990, p. 57.

⁶⁸Wittgenstein, Ludwing, **Philosophical Investigations**, translated by G.E.M. Auscombe, op. cit., p. 103e('PI' 309).