
- **Chapter - 4**
Metaphysical & Epistemological Issues
of Language

4.0 Metaphysical and epistemological issues involved in the concept of language

Language is a living phenomenon, because all over the world the human beings use language to express their opinions. In order to understand the nature of language one has to take care of concern with metaphysical and epistemological issues involved in the concept of language. What is language? How does the language function? What is the metaphysical and epistemological ground of language? Many such language-related questions have largely occupied the philosophers' attention for the last few decades. Epistemological and metaphysical reflections are found both in the Indian and as well as in Western philosophical theories.

During the first decades of 20th century Western philosophy came to be called linguistic philosophy, because it underwent a sort of sea change by bringing language at the centre of philosophical focus. During that period, philosophy struggled to free itself from metaphysics. Up to the end of nineteenth century it was dominated by metaphysics. Nevertheless, the prolonged dominant tendency witnessed a strong reaction at the very beginning of the 20th century. A

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group of philosophers considered that there was no progress in philosophy, because it was deeply delimited by the domination of speculative metaphysics. In philosophy, the so-called metaphysical concepts were being discussed since hundreds years and there was no new concept besides the existing ones. So, philosophers of the 20th century thought that there was no progress in philosophy because of the domination of metaphysics. Metaphysics or metaphysical statements are neither true nor false. So the question of their meaningfulness as either true or false merely does not arise. The question then is: if metaphysics as a whole is supposed to be meaningless or more specifically, if the so-called metaphysical sentences are held to be meaningless, then where does it come from? The philosopher thought that language was the source of metaphysics. The function of language is a medium of communication. One can, communicate, express, share his feelings and thoughts with other people through language. Thus language as a means communicates everything in the form of life. So, to understand a language we have to understand objects as referred to by words.

Russell, Moore and many other philosophers talked against the speculative metaphysics. The early Wittgenstein, as a committed student of Russell, carried out the anti-metaphysical status. In fact, Wittgenstein was the first analyst to argue the more extreme thesis that metaphysical questions are from their very nature unanswerable. For Wittgenstein philosophy is primarily the activity of clarifying language. Philosophy is not a source of truth about the universe. The task of a philosopher is to show the person, who is puzzled by metaphysical question that it is meaningless and unanswerable. All meaningful

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discourse, says Wittgenstein, is empirical in nature. But, Metaphysics is not empirical. So the question of meaningfulness in the case of metaphysical sentences simply does not arise. In *TLP*, he accepts the view that the propositions relating to mathematics and logic are tautologous and these sentences do not make any reference to the world. According to him, the metaphysical sentences are neither propositions of empirical science nor tautologies of logic and mathematics; consequently they are meaningless.

In case of Indian philosophical developments, we notice that the questioning about "language" as a concept is as old as Indian culture is. Beginning with the Vedic period, which is at least 3,000 years old, the Indian study of language has continued in an unbroken tradition right up to the present day. The Indian Approach to language was neither narrow nor restrictive. It was examined in relation to consciousness. All aspects of the world and human experience were thought of as illuminated by language. Indian philosophy proposed that language has both phenomenal and metaphysical dimensions. It does not reduce language to being merely a human convention, which has only scientific or factual referents, nor does it fall into the error of metaphysical reductionism. Grammarians like Pāṇini, Patañjali and etymologists like Yāska were clearly concerned about human speech in the everyday empirical world; but they also made a space for metaphysical studies. In Bharṭṛhari's philosophy, we come to realise that he accepts *śabda* in a completely new dimension. He begins his *VP* with a metaphysical enquiry into the nature and origin of language in relation to Brahman. He has also taken *śabda* as a *pramāṇa*, but in his philosophy, he identified *śabda* with Brahman, his theory of

śabda acquires a metaphysical or ontological status. Then in chapters two and three of *VP*, he tries to explore the technical grammatical points of everyday language. To point out this thing Matilal says very correctly: "The overall concern with how our language works was not the chief concern of most classical Indian philosophers, except for the grammarian like Bhartṛhari".¹ It is true that Bhartṛhari's objective was not only to define the works of language. He tries to define a comprehensive picture of epistemology, metaphysics and linguistics through his conception of *Śabdatattva*. The theory of *sphoṭa* is part of his monistic and idealistic metaphysical-theory according to which the transcendental speech-essence (*Śabdatattva*) is the first principle of universe. Time (*kāla*) is a power of this absolute principle or *Śabdatattva*. It is true that Bhartṛhari was the first grammarian, who has identified *śabda* with Brahman. But he has not propounded it. He may have drawn the concept from Vedic literature. In Vedic literature, we'll found that both the Vedic *Mantras* as well as the *Brahmakāṇḍa* of *VP* are full of statements on the nature of *Vāk* (*śabda*) and Brahman in different contexts. Some of these references contain the idea that Brahman is the ultimate source of everything, while others convey that *Vāk* is the ultimate source of everything. *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* (4.21.1) identifies Brahman with *Vāk*. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (4.1.20) echoes the same thought, "the speech (*vāk*) truly, is Brahman" (*Vāg vai Brahma*). The *Vākya Vṛtti* quotes some passages from the Veda supporting Bhartṛhari's statement that *Vāk* is the source of everything. It is the experiencer as well as the experienced. For instance, in *Ṛg Veda* (10.125), *Vāk* is identified

¹ Matilal, B.K.(2001) *Word and the World*, Oxford University Press, p. 4

with everything in the universe and it is implied that it is the *Vāk*, which manifests itself as everything. Some of the non-Vedic texts (viz. *Purākalpa*) have also accepted the same thing. Bhartṛhari's linguistic monism is quite similar to Advaita view of Śaṅkara. Śaṅkara accepts an internal relation between *Ātmān* and Brahman that occupies the centre of the stage. Logically, both Śaṅkara and Bhartṛhari search for the attainment of same goal, but their starting points are different.

4.0.1 Pāṇini's view

Pāṇini maintains that language is a unified system, which is organized hierarchically. His analysis of language is a system of meaningful noise and a pragmatic tool of communication in a speech community. He holds that a natural language grows and functions within the confines of social organisation and history time and space. Social and historical forces influence the linguistic system in diverse ways; as a result of which a system always comes to acquire idiosyncratic features. Pāṇini recognises constraints on the part of actual linguistic usages on linguistic system. His sense of realism thus keeps him close to the facts of the language. He is never lured away by logical considerations. With a penetrating insight he is able to distinguish the role of various forces acting on each other in shaping a language. The sentences illustrate this point wonderfully. Though he conceived some sort of logical relations between sentences, these were willingly further modified by granting various other bases just to accommodate the actual world of Sanskrit language.

It is known that Pāṇini's *Ad*, is not metaphysical and epistemological in nature, since it is not totally related with the

subject of philosophy. His work is based on linguistic theories. Though Pāṇini did not write any theoretical treatise on language, his *Ad* uses and presupposes linguistic theories. Pāṇinian *sūtras* reveal a strong and full-fledged system of linguistic concepts. Pāṇini was not a metaphysician as ordinarily understood; he has defined language (Sanskrit) in context of empirical domain. Actually he was a grammarian, so his aim was to define the language (Sanskrit) more scientifically and accurately. It seems to us that he has accepted the differences between Logo/language-essence and empirical/ordinary language. Hence, it seems to us that he had in mind a kind of metaphysical status of language as well. But in *Ad*, his total work was based on a particular language i.e. Sanskrit. Therefore, all the linguistic philosophers and grammarians like Patañjali, Kātyāyana and Bhartṛhari etc. had followed Pāṇinian *sūtras* and quoted them as proof for various kinds of linguistics theories and philosophical concepts. Patañjali, for example, while discussing two-fold nature of the meaning as universal and particular, quotes Pāṇini as an authority for his statement. According to Patañjali, Pāṇini has accepted both, universal and particular, as the import of word. Pāṇini's Sūtra² is based on the assumption that the primary sense of word is universal, but in another instance he has mentioned that the primary sense of the word is particular.³ The purpose of this *sūtra* is to prevent the repetition of the same word to express many objects of similar form. According to him, every individual thing requires an individual

² P. 1.2.58

jātyākhyāmekasminbahuvacanamanyatarasyām

³ P. 1.2.64

sarūpāṇāmeka śeṣa ekavibhaktau

word to express it, since one word, cannot express many things. When there are two or more words of the same form and the same case termination, standing together, one is retained and the rest are dropped. Here, we may also note that as we move onward the number of facts to be explained declines gradually. For instance, most of the morphophonemic changes are resolved in terms of phonological units, some in terms of morphology, a few in terms of syntax, and a very few in terms of meaning and real world. This is true at other levels also. From this point, one might get an impression that Pāṇini is being *ad hoc* and eclectic in offering explanations linguistic facts in such unrelated terms. But as we have observed earlier he considered total environments in which language functions as relevant to explication of linguistic facts. He has no compunction in seeking explanations in terms of one another. One should not be surprised if Pāṇini accounts for the accent and extra-length of the final vowel in a particular sentence in terms of social classes and the facts of the real world cf. *Vākyaśya teḥ pluta udāttaḥ pratyabhivāde aśudre* (*Ad.* VIII. 2.82.83), respectively. The case notions are established on various bases and employed in sentences to explain linguistic facts almost at all levels. Pāṇini wanted to give a grammar for forming the *padas*. Secondly, he wanted to give a grammar stating the environmental restrictions among the *padas*. There is a wide-ranging opinion that his description does not go beyond the *Pada*, but it is true that by going through his *Ad*, we can derive simple as well as complex sentences. In *Ad*, a sentence is a syntactic unit. However, the possibility of deriving a sentence is one thing and to assume it as the basic unit is something different.

4.0.2 Bhartṛhari's view

The first four verses of the *Brahmakāṇḍa* in *VP*, states the main idea of Bhartṛhari regarding the unity of *Śabda* and *Brahman*.⁴ Bhartṛhari investigates the concept of language at two levels- 1) Language recognised as an act, and 2) language recognised as a principle (*tattva*). At the first level, language functions as a communicative tool and at the transcendental level, the concept of 'language' serves as a metaphysical principle, through which he attempts to explain the phenomenal world. In Bhartṛhari's philosophy it is the relation between *Śabdabrahman* with Language or Reality. In *VP*, he describes AUM as the "the source of all scriptures and the common factor, of all original causes."⁵ According to him, the word makes the thing, and *Brahman* immanently constitutes the world, and so it entails that the words are the cause of all things (*śabda-Brahman*). It seems that Bhartṛhari starts with the impermanence of language or word from its empirical point of view and the empirical languages can be purified by the help of the grammar. So, in his philosophy, it has been accepted that through this straight path i.e. grammar, one can realise the *Śabdabrahman*. Bhartṛhari's grammatical theory ultimately rests on a metaphysical thesis that there is a grammatical essence which is the underlying autonomous reality on a transcendental plane. This plane itself is not non-grammatical, since it is the first principle of all evolving languages and grammars. As Matilal

⁴ Bhartṛhari, *VP.*, I.1-4

⁵ *VP*.I.9

Satyā viśuddhītatrottā vidyaivaikapadāgamā/

Yuktā praṇavarūpeṇa sarvavādāvirodhīni//

says, 'Bhartṛhari's philosophy of language is ultimately grounded in a monistic and idealistic metaphysical theory.'⁶ He speaks of a transcendental word-essence (*Śabdatattva*) as the first principle of the universe. It is this metaphysical theory that supports the grammarian's claim that ultimate matter is language (*Śabda*), since it pervades all activities of man. Man's consciousness as well as his experience of the world is thoroughly imbued in language (VP.I.123)

Bhartṛhari holds that the beginningless and endless one is the imperishable Brahman. Its essential nature is Word, which manifests itself into objects and from which the Universe is created.⁷ "There is no cognition in the world in which the word does not figure. All knowledge is, as it were, intertwined with the word."⁸ All phenomena assume the word-form and it manifests itself as the uttered phonemes for the purpose of communication. Bhartṛhari was acquainted with the views of the Vedas, where it has been declared that all the Reality is the transformation (*parināma*) of the word. In Bhartṛhari's VP, the term '*vivartate*' has been used to define the process that has been accepted in Vedas as *parināma*⁹ By this activity, he emphasises on the fact that the multiple universe is manifested

⁶ Matilal, B.K.(2001) *Word and the World*, Oxford University Press

⁷ VP.I.1

Anādinidhanarṁ Brahman Śabdatattvarṁ yadakṣaram

Vivartatearthabhāvena prakṛyā jagato yataḥ

⁸ VP.1.123

Na so'sti pratyayo loke yaḥ śabdānugamādṛe/

Anuviddhamiva jñānarṁ sarvarṁ śabdena bhāsatē//

⁹ D. Carpenter, (1985), "Revelation and Experience in Bhartṛhari, *Vākyapadīya*," Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Sudasiens 29, 190.

out of the one Word-Principle or *Śabdatattva*.¹⁰ The important point in Bhartṛhari's philosophy is to accepting Brahman, as the Word-Principle, is an intrinsically dynamic and expressive reality, and language (and the entire universe) is its manifestation through the process of temporal becoming.¹¹ Bhartṛhari has also used the notion of a beginning less trace, which is inherent in consciousness. He discusses the trace of speech in relation to previous births. This residual trace of speech has no beginning and it exists in every one's mind as a seed. It is not possible to count it as the result of the effort of any person. Movements of the articulatory organs by children are not due to the instructions by others but are known through intuition.¹²

The universe is described as consisting of three things: the experiencer (*bhoktā*), the things experienced (*bhogya*) and the experience itself. It is the same *vāk* which constitutes universe consisting of the individual experiencers including speakers, the object, the phenomena of experience and the experience itself. This relation runs like a thread right through Bhartṛhari's work and gives it a kind of unity. Bhartṛhari was concerned about *jāti*, *dravya*, *sādhanā*, *kriyā*, *dik* or *kāla*, to somehow connect them all with Brahman. This ultimate reality has no beginning and end. Language is the distinguishing feature of human consciousness through which all human knowledge passes. Knowledge can not illuminate unless it is intertwined with the

¹⁰ Bhartṛhari, *Vākyapadīya* 111: 3 :81, and 111 :9: 17 and 26.

¹¹ VP. 1 .120

*Śabdasya pariṇāmo'yamityāmnāyavido viduḥ/
Chandobhya eva prathamametaddhiśarṇavyavartata//*

¹² Ibid., 1 .122, *Vṛtti*.

word. The eternal word is not perceived by the ear becomes perceptible through its own cause.

According to the philosopher of grammar, cognition is entirely language-dependent in the sense that the structure of our cognitive states is determined by grammar. But Bhartṛhari's theory posits knowledge as a matter of specifically linguistic construction. For Bhartṛhari, the concept *vikalpa* implies the following: the structure of language shapes how we categorize the objects of our experience and our descriptions of reality as a whole. Even at the most immediate levels of awareness, we must conceptualise and interpret the contents of sense perception. Thus, at the level of pure sensation, the sensory core is already saturated, as it were, with the "deep structure" of language. Bhartṛhari, as an ontological monist, does not distinguish between a pure perception and a constructed perception such that the former is concept-free and ineffable and the latter is concept-loaded and autonomously constructed. Bhartṛhari thinks that perception is inherently verbal. Not only are sense-data and linguistic units non-different, but they are expressive of the unitary principle of *Brahman*-which is differentiated into the plurality of linguistic objects that make up the world.

Bhartṛhari uses the term *Śabdatattva* or Word-Principle,¹³ which is Brahman, is without beginning or end. Although the Word-Principle stated to be one, it is divided by the function of its inherent powers. In particular, it is through the sequencing power of time that the Word-Principle manifests itself in the expressive activity of language, which becomes the model for all

¹³ See.f.n.7

other activity.¹⁴ This activity is seen as a real manifestation and not as a merely apparent (Śankaras understanding of *vivartate*) activity. Bhartṛhari introduces the concept 'Time', to explain another important dimension of the phenomenal world, i.e. the idea of "change". He conceives Time as the efficient cause (*nimitta kāraṇa*) and it is attributed with the power of production (*abhyanuḥjñā*) and obstruction (*pratibandha*) of particular things of the world. Explaining the idea of multiplicity is not enough for providing a correct analysis of the empirical phenomena. He conceives of Reality as *one* and *unchangeable*. The phenomenal world being characterized by change owes an explanation in terms of the unchangeable Reality. To explain this issue Bhartṛhari introduces the concept Time, in his philosophy.¹⁵

4.0.3 Wittgenstein's view

Wittgenstein holds that the world is represented by thought, which is a proposition with sense, since, they all — world, thought, and proposition — share the same logical form. Hence, the thought and the proposition can be the pictures of the facts. Starting with a seeming metaphysics, Wittgenstein sees the world as consisting of facts, rather than the traditional, atomistic conception of a world made up of objects. Wittgenstein opens the *TLP* with this claim that the world is the totality of facts, not of things (*TLP* 1.1). One might think that the world is

¹⁴ VP. 1.2.

*Ekameva yadāmnātarṁ bhinnarṁ śaktivyapāśrayāt/
apṛthakte'pi śaktibhyaḥ pṛthaktveneva vartate//*

¹⁵ Patnaik, Tandra. *Śabda: A study of Bhartṛhari's philosophy of Language*, published and printed by D.K.printworld(p) Ltd. New Delhi.2007.p.34

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the aggregate of all things, and, moreover, that this is the best view of what the world is. What does Wittgenstein mean by the sentence "the world is the totality of facts"? He accepts that a fact is the existence of states of affairs (*TLP* 2). He says that the totality of facts determines what is the case and what is not the case (*TLP* 1.12). For example, "Tokyo is the capital city of Japan", and "There is no person that is taller than 3 meters" are facts for Wittgenstein - the former he calls a positive fact and the latter he calls a negative fact. Both positive and negative facts constitute the reality (*TLP* 2.06), because, positive and negative facts stand in logically complementary relation (*TLP* 2.05). Facts are existent states of affairs, and states of affairs, in turn, are combinations of objects. Objects can fit together in various determinate ways. They may have various properties and may hold diverse relations to one another. Objects combine with one another according to their logical and internal properties. That is to say, an object's internal properties determine the possibilities of its combination with other objects; this is its logical form. Thus, states of affairs, being comprised of objects in combination, are inherently complex. The states of affairs which do exist could have been otherwise. This means that states of affairs are either actual (existent) or possible. It is the totality of states of affairs — actual and possible — those make up the whole of reality. The world is precisely those states of affairs which do exist.

Wittgenstein's famous dictum that thoughts, and propositions, are pictures — "the picture is a model of reality"

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(*TLP* 2.12)¹⁶. Pictures are made up of elements that together constitute the picture. Each element represents an object, and the combination of objects in the picture represents the combination of objects in a state of affairs. The logical structure of the picture, whether in thought or in language, is isomorphic with the logical structure of the state of affairs which it pictures. More subtle is Wittgenstein's insight that the possibility of this structure being shared by the picture (the thought, the proposition) and the state of affairs is the pictorial form. "That is how a picture is attached to reality; it reaches right out to it" (*TLP* 2.1511)¹⁷. Moreover, logic itself gives us the structure and limits of what can be said at all. Logic is based on the idea that every proposition is either true or false. Having developed this analysis of world-thought-language, and relying on the one general form of the proposition, Wittgenstein can now assert that all meaningful propositions are of equal value. Subsequently, he ends the journey with the admonition concerning what can (or cannot), and what should (or should not) be said, leaving outside the realm of the sayable propositions of ethics, aesthetics, and metaphysics.

Wittgenstein says that language is a part of the human organism (*TLP* 4.002). He thinks that when we talk about the world (especially in philosophy), it is misleading to think that we talk about the world, which is apart from a certain point of view. In other words, Wittgenstein denies the view that there is a world, which is independent of our language and we experience such a world through a causal relation with it. He repudiates that

¹⁶ *TLP* 2.12 = In logic nothing is accidental : if a thing can occur in a state of affairs, the possibility of the state of affairs must be written into the thing itself.

¹⁷ *TLP* 2.1511= That is how a picture is attached to reality; it reaches right out to it.

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there is a transcendental view, a God's eye view, from which we can think about a fact, since, even from such a point of view, we have to use our language. If we see a fact from a different point of view, we would see it differently. Thus, for Wittgenstein, there is no picture that is true *a priori* (§ 2.225).

"To understand a sentence means to understand a "Form of Life" and "to understand a language means to be a master of a technique" (*PI*, 199). Such mastery cannot be projected beyond what is described in the "particular circumstances" of a given activity (*PI*, 154). A sentence cannot be spoken or understood outside of all of languages.

Wittgenstein also takes this view of ontology. That is, ontology does not, for Wittgenstein, precede logic. Only through clarification of logical notions, we can reveal what ontological notions we have. Even when we talk about what exists, we have to use language and the logic of language. We are able to apprehend ontological problems within the language and ontology is the internal character of language. This entails that Wittgenstein does not think that there exists something beyond the world, the totality of facts. In other words, Wittgenstein does not suppose that there is something behind facts. In contrast to Kant, Wittgenstein does not posit *things-in-themselves*, which are not constrained by the limit of our conceptual framework and our capacity of recognition. Wittgenstein simultaneously rejects idealism and empiricism, dogmatism and scepticism. The idealist belief in transcendent truths, the positivist demand for scientific truth, and a sceptic holds that no such truths are attainable. Wittgenstein's basic problem is of language, but at the same time he has emphasised the multiplicity and heterogeneity of both language-games, and the social contexts of which they are

a part. He thereby rejects the linguistic essentialism. Language "is not something fixed, given once and for all; but new types of language, new language-games, as we may say, come into existence, and others become obsolete and get forgotten" (*PI*, 23). Wittgenstein focuses instead on the "forms of life" or social practices within which language is actually being used in various ways. Rather, "to imagine a language means to imagine a form of life" (*PI*, 19); and to look at the way a word is being used "does not mean that I want to talk only about words" (*PI*, 370), but that it is necessary to look first of all at the social contexts of language use. A human "form of life" is among other things inescapably linguistic; however, no grounds exist for privileging the linguistic aspects of a social formation over other dimensions of practice. To insist on ordinary language is to reject sign-centered or language-centered theories. Wittgenstein focuses instead on the "forms of life" or social practices within which language is actually being used in various ways. So, he returns to ordinary language since it is more applicable in the usual philosophical sense.

4.0.4 Chomsky's view

Chomsky's standpoint on the world intellectual scene is unique. He was the leading figure in the "cognitive revolution" of the 1950s and 1960s, and he has dominated the field of linguistics ever since. His foundational work on language has widespread implications not only of linguistics but also for several other disciplines, most notably philosophy and psychology. He brings new solutions to traditional puzzles and new perspectives on issues of general interest, from the mind-

body problem to the unification of science. His theory of generative grammar, in a number of different forms, has been a manual and motivation for many linguists around the world. He claims that knowledge of language is individualistic, internal to the human mind or brain. He maintains that the language faculty contains a "UG", a "mental organ" which provides a grammatical blueprint for the "growth" of the grammars of particular languages in interaction with the linguistic (and general social) surroundings. According to him, grammar of a language includes the sound system (phonology), the system of meanings (semantics), the rules of word-formation (morphology), the rule of sentence formation (syntax), and the vocabulary of words (lexicon). According to Chomsky if this sort of grammar of a particular language aspires to represent our linguistic competence, it has to be associated with U.G. For that reason, Chomsky considers U.G as the base of the grammar for all particular languages.

Chomsky's theoretical syntax is often referred to as "autonomous syntax" (Newmeyer, 1986a; 1991). Syntax is the province of one such organ, word meaning is another, to the surprise, perhaps, of those who think that Chomsky's innatism is restricted to the form of language - as if form and content could so easily be dissociated. Thus, Chomsky believes that the speed and precision with which children pick up new words "leaves no real alternative to the conclusion that the child somehow has the concepts available before experience with language and is basically learning labels for concepts that are already part of his or her conceptual apparatus" (1988: 28). He also believes that "the moral and ethical system acquired by the child owes much to some innate human faculty" (1988: 153). On occasion,

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Chomsky has considered his innatist approach to the sphere of social interaction itself, speculating that we might have "a sort of 'universal grammar' of possible forms of social interaction, and it is this system which helps us to organise intuitively our imperfect perceptions of social reality", while adding that "it does not follow necessarily that we are capable of developing conscious theories in this domain through the exercise of our 'science-forming faculties'" (1988: 69-70).

Chomsky would propose to infer that if knowledge cannot derive from experience then it must belong to the mind itself. What we call "knowledge" is produced in-house, caused by the internal structure and working of the mind - the physical constitution of the brain itself determines what is and what is not thinkable and knowable. Here the influence of the Cartesian and Kantian traditions makes itself felt, although the logic of Chomsky's position forces him to make a distance himself from the Cartesian picture of the mind as a "universal instrument" (1988: 149), able to know anything and everything. According to him, if it is the structure of the brain itself, which determines the content, and possibilities of human knowledge, then there must necessarily be a "sharp limits on attainable knowledge" (1979: 64). Here, he refers to the "I-language", which is the internal property of human mind or brain.

Chomsky has accepted an idea that a language is based on a system of rules of determining the interpretations of its infinitely many sentences is by no means novel. To account for the creative use of language, he originally proposed that in each human language, there were a relatively small set of rules, which govern the construction of grammatically correct sentences. Chomsky observed that from a discrete and relatively

small set of syntactical rules, and an infinite number of well-formed sentences may be generated. With the help of the rules, humans are able to produce a countless variety of sentences that another human, knowing the same language, can readily understand. This is such an obvious human skill, that we don't readily understand how difficult this is.

Chomsky posed the question: 'How does a child acquire language?' The poverty of the stimulus argument implies that parents don't teach children how to speak grammatically correct language, although as Augustine observed children do learn words from stimuli in their environment and there may be an important connection between human gesture (i.e. pointing) and the association of a word with its meaning.¹⁸ If children don't learn the grammatical form of a language, then how do they acquire this knowledge?

Chomsky's answer is that the part of the child's knowledge of language is innate. This is his innateness hypothesis, which might be the most valuable contribution of Chomsky, but it is certainly the most controversial idea. Regarding the native language of a child, Chomsky maintains that a child in any culture rapidly acquires the ability to understand and speak the language. The skill is universal across culture, which gives support to the innateness. Chomsky accepts that a substantial part of our knowledge of language is genetically determined or innate. That something linguistic fact that babies' do acquire- but cats, spiders and rocks do not acquire language.

His concentration on the internalist view of language goes along with his view that a human language is a "biological

¹⁸ Augustine, Saint., 'Confessions', in *Oxford World's Classics*, Chadwick Henry (trans.), Paperback, Page. 1.8-15

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object". One area where Chomsky is pessimistic about the reach of scientific understanding is the characterisation of our use of language as opposed to our knowledge of language. His work over the study of our "competence" (I-language) is in fact a difficult thinking, perhaps a mystery that how we put that competence to use in our performance.

Chomsky directly opposed to the behaviourist position. He argues that language acquisition cannot be accounted for without positing a linguistically specific system of principles and parameters that every healthy (in the relevant sense) child is genetically endowed with a system, he refers to as UG or as the Language Acquisition Device (LAD). This is not to say that under this view, children's environment plays no role at all in acquiring their native language; such an assertion would be unreasonable. Children clearly need to be exposed to linguistic data in order to attain adult competence. However, in Chomskian philosophy, the role of the environment is to be a source of data. He argues that an account of language acquisition constrained by behaviourist principles fall short for many reasons. He claims that the linguistic data available to the child are themselves impoverished and not sufficient for a child to inductively arrive at a grammar capable of producing well-formed expressions. Language development in children occurs spontaneously and does not require conscious instruction or reinforcement on that part of adults. In a very short period of time (a span of four to five years) children are able to develop a very complex linguistic system, moving from one word stage to multiword stages, on the basis of limited and often fragmentary data. Although adults often imagine that they teach the children how to speak. There is no convincing evidence that children need such instruction.

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Indeed, as many a parent has discovered, the attempt to instruct children in language can produce frustrating results.

One of the reasons that Chomsky is regarded as a rationalist might be that he has tried to differentiate himself from the linguistic behaviourism and he has emphasised on some reasonable core of "rationalism" to make a statement that is "sausage-making machine"¹⁹ is not *tabula rasa*, but has complex, dedicated parts and structure. The other reason is the tradition of rationalist philosophy of language and the philosophical grammar.²⁰ He is not satisfied with the explanatory power of the descriptive grammar. Philosophical grammar is "typically concerned with data not for itself but as evidence for deeper, hidden organising principles,..."²¹ However, it is surprising that his term 'rationalism' is equivalent to 'natural science'. He states that the issue of rationalist philosophy of language "is not between descriptive and prescriptive grammar, but between description and explanation, between grammar as 'natural history' and grammar as a kind of 'natural philosophy' or, in modern terms, 'natural science.'"²² He particularly criticises the lack of physical, empirical aspects of Cartesian rationalism.²³

¹⁹Danto, (1969), "Semantical Vehicles, Understanding, and Innate Ideas", *Language and Philosophy*, New York University Press, pp.122-137.

²⁰ Philosophical grammar is "very much like current generative grammar, developed in self-conscious opposition to a descriptive tradition that interpreted the task of the grammarian to be merely that of recording and organizing the data of usage-a kind of natural history." (Chomsky, 1970)

²¹ Chomsky,(1968) *Language and Mind*, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Inc., Enlarged edition 1972.p.15.

²² Ibid. p.15.

²³ "...the far-reaching studies of language that were carried out under the influence of Cartesian rationalism suffered from a failure to appreciate either the

4.1 A Contrast

In the context of human language the power of speech is impossible without the power of thought. There is no doubt that thought and languages are practically two aspects of the same fundamental principle. Without the knowledge of language we can't define the word 'language'. In the development of human language, clearly the spoken word came first and later came the complication of the written word. Words are composed of letters and sentences of words, paragraphs of sentences and so on. In a sense, language always occurs in a social setting, where people communicate their ideas to each other. Hence a question arises that whether language has metaphysical status.

It is true that it has epistemological significance, because without it knowledge is impossible. For expressing or communicating our thoughts we need to use the language. There is a big question that 'Is language is autonomous?' If it is a kind of rule-governed activity (in Wittgenstein and Chomskian sense) and for this reason it is autonomous, then we should have to accept that language is autonomous for its epistemological significance. If language is autonomous for its metaphysical or ontological status then we have to define it, as Bhartṛhari does.

It seems to us that the Indian grammarian Bhartṛhari was in a sense metaphysician, because he has made a distinction between *logos* (language as such) and ordinary language. He

abstractness of those structures that are 'present to the mind' when an utterance is produced or understood, or the length and complexity of the chain of operations that relate the mental structures expressing the semantic content of the utterance to the physical realization." (Chomsky, 1968, p.25)

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has elaborately discussed the grammatical analysis for the practical purposes of empirical use. But the word and language have their transcendental dimensions, which is something over and above the empirical level.

Pāṇini has tried to investigate the word and their manipulation and acquisition. But, Bhartṛhari has tried to find out the higher and higher levels of language until the word absolute was discovered. Bhartṛhari maintains that all knowledge is intertwined with words and it is impossible to have cognition free from word-association.²⁴ He offers the metaphysics of a word, which is conceived by him to be the principle of ultimate unity. It is such a form of unity, which allows the possibility of differentiation and division, but these divisions and differentiations are not logically independent. These divisions have significance only in the empirical and phenomenal level, but this division is not important for those who have achieved the knowledge of the essence of language, which is the Ultimate nature of it. In Bhartṛhari's metaphysical scheme there is no scope for duality. So the world of objects and the world of words cannot be cognized independent of one another. But Bhartṛhari, at the same time, does not deny the existence of empirical world independent of cognition. What he simply means is that the true nature of the existence is beyond the scope of cognition. Cognition being word-potent can frame the picture of the objects as it is presented through words. The real existence (*mukhya stattā*) is unknowable. But it does exist, for all our activities prompted by language deal with external realities. Otherwise our activities would not be possible. "Being asked for food we cannot

²⁴ See.f.n. 8

very well present the speaker's 'mental' food"²⁵ Then why does Bhartṛhari believe that we can only know the objects as represented by words? In this response, Bhartṛhari would propose to say "It is extremely difficult to establish by reasoning the nature of objects, because the properties differ according to difference in circumstances, place and time"²⁶. So the objects are understood as they are caught within the framework of words.

It seems to us that both Pāṇini and Wittgenstein have discussed about the empirical languages. According to them language has no metaphysical status, it is rule-governed activity. On the other hand, Chomsky would propose to say that language is biologically determined and his empirical languages are rule-governed. But in Bhartṛhari's philosophy, language has been treated as empirically and metaphysically existent.

According to the behaviourist theories, the children learn grammar by a process of trait and error, and so should develop language by making characteristic types of errors that would need to be repeatedly corrected by the child's parents. Wittgenstein accepts the behaviourist concept of language and he has accepted the 'form of life', where a group of people decide to use a certain type of language for their particular community. There, the children learn those particular rules from their parents or elders. As Augustine observed, children do learn words from stimuli in their environment and there may be an

²⁵ Matilal, *Word and World*, p. 129

²⁶ VP. 1.32

Avasthādeśākālānām bhedādibhannāsu śaktiṣu/

Bhāvānāmanumānena prasiddhiratidurlabhā//

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important connection between human gesture (i.e. ...pointing) and the association of a word with its meaning. Wittgenstein has just given us two different training exercises that could be used to assist children in learning this primitive language game. In one of these, the adult points to objects and names them and in the other the adult simply says the word (such as "beam") and the child repeats the word mechanically after the adult. These are familiar exercises for teaching children any language. In any instruction in language the following process will occur: the learner names the objects; that is, he utters the word when the teacher points to the stone.--And there will be a still simpler exercise: the pupil repeats the words after the teacher--both of these being processes in teaching of language. And when the child first learns to speak a simple word like "dog" the term does not necessarily fit into its schema of things so that he can use the term as more mature language users do. We can imagine that the child's word "dog" might initially be applied to a range of inappropriate things, not only cows and pigs, but it might be used to mean I want to go outside (where the child encountered the dog.) Here, we realise it because we are so familiar with the concept "dog" that we could well presume that the child was using it within the rules of our language when the child is not doing so. Chomsky would not accept such a type of behavioural approach to language. He asserted that parents do not teach their children how to speak grammatically correct language. Such type of errors in syntax simply does not occur in young children's acquisition of language. He further noted that parents differ significantly in the extent to which they correct errors in their child's speech utterances, and this difference in feedback makes essentially no difference in the ability of a child to acquire

language. Chomsky's answer is that part of the child's knowledge of language is innate, this being his innateness hypothesis. Language development occurs in all children with normal brain function, regardless of race, culture, or general intelligence. In other words, the capacity to acquire language is a capacity of the human species as a whole. One of the most significant consequences of Wittgenstein's analysis is that it demolishes a traditional view that thought is something inside us, and that the world is something outside us. In short, both the world and thought must be captured from the same point of view (i.e., from *my* point of view in *our* language), and must be expressed in language following the logic of language. He rejects a Cartesian model of a "thinking self". Once we presuppose the existence of a thinking self, we have to be committed to positing the existence of a world, which is independent of the self.¹¹ For Wittgenstein, neither the self nor the subject, belongs to the world. Wittgenstein has said in so many words that language is the universal frame of reference in which all human activities take place. Language is not only the form of life but also the form of existence. According to him, life, language, and the world all make one unique whole such that we cannot separate one from the other. This metaphysical unity can be best understood if we keep in mind that Bhartṛhari's idea that the *Śabda* is the ultimate principle of all existence. According to Bhartṛhari, the reality is an unbreakable and unanalysable whole. Our worlds are mental constructs (*kalpanā*) or linguistic constructs (*vikalpa*), because the real world is beyond our limitation. In other words, our language does not and cannot refer to the objects or real referents. But the early Wittgenstein accepted the Referential theory of meaning, while the later

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Wittgenstein asserts that language is not primarily referential in nature, and it made philosophers becoming aware of the multiple dimensions of meaning analysis. In a sense, both Bhartrhari and Chomsky were the linguistic analysts, for that reason they were not interested with the question of existence of empirical facts. So, they do not accept the referential theory of meaning, as the Realists have done.

Bhartrhari also propounds that language is the limit of one's universe. All cognition is illumined only when penetrated by word (*śabda*). This is the common view in Bhartrhari and Wittgenstein's philosophy.

According to Wittgenstein, thought must be expressed in language and it has to follow the rules of language, i.e., the logic of our language. Thought is possible only in accordance with the logic of language. Indeed, for Wittgenstein, the logic of language is also *ipso facto* the laws of thought. Even the so-called "free thinking" occurs in accordance with certain laws, i.e., the logic of language. Only through the analysis of the logic of our language, we can explicate the reality of the world. Since we can understand only what is expressed in language, every philosophical investigation also has to reside in language. We cannot override the limits of the logic of our language. Wittgenstein says, '*The limits of my language mean the limits of my world.*'²⁷

Some different approaches are noticeable in their views. In Bhartrhari's philosophy, the starting point is not the articulate speech, but the underlying will is to re-create or to re-shape a total psycho-socio-physical reality into a supramental reality

²⁷ Wittgenstein, L. (1921): *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. D.F. Pears and B.F. McGuiness (trans.), London; Routledge, 5.6

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(*Śabdabrahman*). For him, Language is essentially a non-natural phenomenon. That is, it essentially belongs to the realm beyond the spatio-temporal speech-phenomena. Language (*śabda*) has a dual existence: it is a plurality of utterances (*nāda* or *dhvani*) and also a unity of meaning (*sphoṭa*).²⁸ For him *śabda* means something more than "language". It is the name of a complex phenomenon implying an activity as well as a principle. As a type of activity, it is something, in which all human beings, in fact, all sentient beings are engaged. To him, *śabdatattva* are the word-principle. On the contrary, in Wittgenstein's philosophy, the main thing is the spoken word or the written word, with all its levels, determined by its usage.



²⁸ Coward, H.G. (1980) *The sphoṭa Theory of Language*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.