The main concern of this chapter is the consideration of the problem of relativity and its claims about the nature or reality, particularly that of social reality, where from the given fact, that there arise different institutions, and along with this, different attitudes and values; it is often claimed that there must exist separate realities, corresponding to the same 'raw material' of experience; and this might be supposed to be corroborated by the way experiences of the world are expressed or described; and the modulation of the particular structuring segmentations. The articulation of the experiences into concepts and propositions is, so it must be thought, a function of the language one speaks.

Benjamin Lee Whorf claims "all observers are not led by the same physical evidence to the same picture of the universe, unless their linguistic backgrounds are similar or can, in some way, be articulated". This perhaps, clearly supports the claim that there can exist totally separate realities; these 'realities' being what they are because of the influence which the structure of the language we use exerts our understanding of the environment. "The picture of the universe shifts from tongue to tongue."

2. Ibid., p. 212-3.
This position appears to be, the most extreme version of the relativistic thesis, and one that may not have ready acceptance in certain quarters even though there may be agreement in the contention that language, in some way, influences our perception of the world. This reveals one crucial point: there is a basic commitment to one dominant idea, viz., that the organization of new experiences into the form in which one sees the world, is, in some way, revealed in the implicit metaphysics of our language.

Perhaps the problem which is best suited to demonstrate the relativistic standpoint, is the problem of translation. For the possibility of translating one language into another pre-supposes the possibility of conveying all the concepts and cognitive experiences from one language to another. If one includes in the concept of a language translated into another, the requirement that poetic connotations, nuances, emotive values, and so on, in the habitual and contextual relations of the original expressions, the thesis of relativism becomes quite unassailable.

Now one fundamental reason why this may be so, is that the meanings which words and statements carry, it is claimed, are, in most cases, dependent on - and influenced by - the social interaction between human beings. This
seems to explain why analogous concepts may differ in the
language of different societies, and in many cases, the
total absence of certain concepts in one language may indi-
cate the main interests which are characteristic of the
'form of life', of the particular society. Thus for instance,
Naga society does not have the concept of class stratifi-
cation. It shows, hence that a form of classless democracy
is practised. Similarly, some societies may not have the
concept of 'war'. Such a lack of terminology might give us
some idea of the character of life carried on in such a
society. However, from the examples offered, it does not
follow that there cannot be an understanding of what "class-
stratification" or "the notion of war" is all about; nor
is it inconceivable that, through time these concepts, and
similarly, other hitherto unknown concepts, will feature
in the language of societies in question.

It is undeniable of course, that some of the state-
ments of "remote" cultures can be translated into English
only to some extent with the help of lengthy and tedious
descriptions of the beliefs and practices of that society.
The crux of the matter appears to be really this: there
must be a background of agreement between these languages,
otherwise it would be impossible for one to recognize it
as a language at all, on the other hand, the attempts to
underestimate the differences between one language and another, will lead one to deny the subjective aspect of language; it is important also to realize that these differences which exist between languages, are not merely arbitrary differences; that is, these differences are not accidental, but must, in some way, reflect the different ways in which we see the world, or if you wish a different "form of life".

The idea that in the process of translating one sentence into another, factual references, or denotation is the core of meaning, and the rest, i.e. emotive overtones etc. are mere verbal coverings or accessories to meaning is derived from one theory of meaning which holds that language is the communicative system par excellence, and that anything that deviates from its communicative function is peculiar and redundant. Communication is the essence of language, and our understanding will therefore be possible when we understand the essential nature of the relation between language and communication; let us consider then what would be the case with our conception of language if we accept the view mentioned above, namely, that the essential nature of language, which consists of rules and conventions can be understood with reference to the primary function of language communication.
In the past a number of approaches to the problem of accounting for the nature of the rules and conventions of language and its relation to meaning has been developed within the view that communication is the primary function of language. Thus when I translate an expression $E_1$ of a language $L_1$ into another expression $E_2$ of another language $L_2$, $E_1$ which is a function of $L_1$ i.e., $E_1(L_1)$ is considered equivalent to $E_2(L_2)$ via $E_2(L_2)$ relation to what is communicated, say, $R$ and $E_2(L_2)$ relation to $R$.

Thus we have a scheme of the following kind:

$$E_1(L_1) - R - E_2(L_2) - (1).$$

Clearly there are more sophisticated schemes, but all in all the basic distinction between meanings which are related to the utterances of a particular language, or if you wish, the function of a particular language and the meaning which is a function of another language, in the process of translation, both refer to the same thing - whatever we may label this mediatory relation, a thing, an idea or a reference.

Hence, the main problem in the type of scheme presented above is in the accounting for the relation between two distinct entities: one which is clearly linguistic, and the other which is extra-linguistic. Thus, W. Haas presents the problem in the following way:
"If there are such entities as are postulated in a dualist theory of sign and a triadic theory of translation - if there are pure meanings or pure external facts, these are certainly nothing we can say about them. We cannot rescue the former from their occult state by tying them to, or replacing them by the latter. The facts or the reference so called, if supposed to be grasped independently of any and every language, are themselves shadowy and nebulous as the naked ideas they are meant to reinforce or replace."

Now any situation which makes communication possible involves basically, information, be it state of affairs about the things in the world, or ideas, or state of being. A statement, a symbol, or a sign, is taken to be the carrier of information and meaning. The relation between meaning and utterances involves serious problems - and I will have occasion to consider some of them later on - but no one would doubt, seriously, about the fact that communication involves an act of some kind - call it linguistic, symbolic or verbal. It may be interesting to note that even telepathic communication, if such communication is at all possible, pre-supposes an act of some kind, and it is to these acts or symbols that meanings are attached. In any ideal communication, there must, of course, be the speaker say 'S', who produces the necessary symbol say, 'R', which

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'stands for' whatever is 'meant' to be communicated and a hearer 'H' who acts as the receiver.

There are certain objections to the idea that what occurs in a speech situation is just an exchange of information. For in saying this, I am not only involved in severely reducing the nature of language, to one thing only, namely, the exchange of information. I am also implying that, it is because of the possibility of information exchange that language is possible.

Perhaps it may be ascribed to Wittgenstein that words like 'intending', 'meaning', 'understanding', do not denote anything at all in the sense that names denote objects, and do not function as description of the states of mind; (Ryle, for example, illustrates that it is quite senseless to ask 'how long did you mean last night'? Where it makes sense to ask 'how long did you discuss last night?') and similarly they do not function as descriptions of states of feelings or some other mental processes has not only ridiculed the idea, that communication must be the essential function of language, but also that it can serve to explicate the nature of language in general. This seems to follow from the fact that it refuses any scheme which would postulate the existence of any extra-lingual fact in a linguistic
situation. Thus, in so far as we involve the notion of communication we are committed to drawing a distinction between that 'something' which is communicated, and also the means by which it is communicated. This, however, is not to say that, in saying things, I do not communicate anything - that would indeed be quite absurd. Indeed, in the process of various utterances I communicate my feelings, ideas, intentions, beliefs, attitudes, and so on.

The fact is that when I make a statement, for example, 'The dam is breaking!' or, 'There is an electrical short-circuit in your kitchen', I am not only communicating a certain state of affairs. I am also doing something. In such cases as the example above, I am issuing a warning. Hence, in the words of Austin, Searle and others, I am performing a 'speech act'. Similarly, when two adults of different sexes utter the phrase 'I love you', it does not merely convey the message of a particular mental state, but a whole range of meanings, such as, the willingness to marry and abide by its obligations, or at least, the expression conveys, as it were, a predilection for a certain 'form of life' - that is, it conveys a commitment to a 'rule'. Hence, the act of uttering 'I love you' also invokes the notion of a pledge not entirely different in essence
from the utterance 'I promise' to do (or not to do) something. Therefore, a 'speech act' evokes the idea that language is a kind of activity.

It may be noted however that we have not done away with the facts of communication in a speech situation, though it has been relegated somewhat to a secondary status. For instance, when we consider the theory that "to say that a speaker 'S' meant something by 'X', is to say that 'S' intended the utterance of 'X' to produce some effects in a hearer by means of the recognition of his intention." Here one can still say that there is involved in this an act of communication, namely, the communication by speaker 'S' of his intention, via the utterance 'X'; but since 'intention' however does not describe any sort of entity, physical or mental, nor even a process, we have purged our concept of meaning communication of its occult commitment. (It is as though one has discovered that the heart not only pumps blood, but that in doing so, it also performs many essential functions, which one would not necessarily observe in the bare fact: that it pumps blood).

The question however remains, whether meaning can be reduced to or explained exhaustively in terms of intention. It seems there are times when we ask questions about meanings where the actual intention of the speaker is not
known, for example, poets, writers, and so on. Yet, it is perfectly appropriate to ask questions about meaning. It may indeed even be important to distinguish between what a sentence or a set of sentences meant, apart from what someone meant by it. Again however, it may be unimportant to know what a poet intended to be appreciated in his works. This is perhaps because what the author intended may have nothing to do with the nature of the poem. Furthermore, I may not have the intention of getting the hearer to know anything at all, and yet, this does not mean that, what I say has no meaning whatsoever. It remains at least meaningful.

This account seems to beg the question of the distinction between what a sentence means literally and what a sentence means when it is used, that is, when we include the subject, or the one who makes the utterance, in a certain situation.

Chomsky, for one, appears to be critical of the view that meaning can be exhaustively explained in terms of the speaker's intention in communication. He asserts that the theory of speech acts "may help to analyse successful communication and it led to interesting discoveries about the semantic property of utterances, but it gives us no way to
escape the orbit of conceptual space that includes such notions as 'linguistic meaning', without such intrusion the theory simple expresses false statements about meaning'. His belief seems to be that we fail "to distinguish between the literal meaning of a linguistic expression produced by 'S' and what 'S' meant by producing this expression. The first notion is the one to be explained in the theory of language - the second has nothing particular to do with language: I can just as well ask, in the same sense of 'meaning' what 'S' meant by slamming the door. Within the theory of successful communication, we can draw a connection between these notions. The Theory of meaning however seems quite unilluminated by this effort."

In this regard, Chomsky seems to be quite right in his objection that every field of linguistic activity must involve communication. In fact one can point to a great variety of activities which we perform with language where we use expressions meaningfully, without any reference to the intentions of an utterer with regard to an audience - if only because the nature of activity does not involve an audience (even a hypothetical one). It is not the case however, that Grice, Searle and the others quite do not
acknowledge this difference. There is an obvious distinction between the sentence: 'This thesis was written by me', and what I mean by actually saying so. In other words, the connection between one's meaning something by what one says, and what that which, one says actually means in the language. The latter case is quite clearly determined by rules, while the former is determined by the intention of the speaker, to get the hearer to know that certain states of affairs specified by the rules obtain. Hence, in a successful communication situation, there is the production of an utterance 'S' with a certain intention, say 'X' - where 'X' may stand for the intention to warn, describe, inform, surprise, etc. - and where the meaning of 'S' is intended by certain syntactical, lexical and phonetic rules, and the illoquionary act 'X' performs (A) is a function of 'S'. Thus: A-X (S)

The speech act 'A' therefore contains an intentional aspect 'X' and a conventional aspect 'S'. It may be necessary here to speak of rules, rules of syntax, semantic rules and so on, and most such rules which bind 'X' and 'S' to make 'A' possible. However, it is not really my intention in this chapter to dwell at length on the 'meaning-rules' of language. So I will conclude this issue by briefly explaining the following: From the scheme A-X (S) above,
Searle has emphasised that a clear distinction must be drawn between the cases where the state of affairs or the effect that I produce via the recognition of my intention 'X', in stating 'S' occurs, where 'S' is only contingently related to 'X', e.g., in cases where my object is to deceive. This is the sense of meaning Chomsky seems to object to, a sense which has nothing to do with language. But an illocutionary act, Searle says, is one which does not admit of a mere contingent relationship between what 'A' means and what 'S' means. What we can mean is a function of what we are saying, that is, the recognition is achieved in virtue of the fact that the rules for using the expression he utters associates the expressions with the production of that effect.

It would seem that, we cannot really separate the literal meaning of an expression 'S' from its meaning in use, in at least a great number of cases, for reasons already shown. This is not to say, however, that we cannot, as it were, consider an utterance in isolation. What is at issue here is whether the distinction between 'literal' meaning and meaning in use is really possible at all by way of distinguishing between two logically separate entities. On the face of it, there seems to be a sense in drawing this distinction, in so far as we assume that one is here
employing different notions of the term 'meaning'. But is
the distinction valid? When we find out the meaning of a
word in the dictionary, say the word 'bachelor' which would
read something like 'an adult unmarried male' we might say,
"Now I know what it means". This way of learning a word
is not via an instance of its use. Another way of teaching
someone the meaning of 'bachelor' would be to show him the
many instances of its use, in different connections, differ­
ent situations. This way of teaching him would be very
much like teaching someone a rule in a game, e.g. how a
Knight moves in a game of chess. Now when we reach the point
at which we can see that he can make the correct moves in
a game, we can say that "Now he understand the rules" or,
as Wittgenstein says, "he knows how to go on". Similarly,
in the case of words and expressions, we know the meaning
of a word when we know how it is used in various contexts:
Waissman, for example, says, "How should we, for example,
explain to anyone what the word 'naive' means? We should
perhaps first circumscribe the meaning with words which
come fairly near to meaning the same as 'naive'. We should
say 'naive' means something like inexperienced, uncritical,
unsuspicious, rational, not blasé, not worried with doubts,
and so on. But then, we should say that, that does not
exactly hit off what the word means and should give an
example of its use. We might tell an anecdote for it? No, but in the words of my question I have provided an instance of its use".*

It would seem, on a closer scrutiny, that in accounting for a meaning of a word in the form 'X' means 'Y', we are not really talking about meaning in the sense that is really separable from our earlier assumption, even more so, this kind of 'dictionary meanings' seems to presuppose meaning in use. In our example where 'bachelor' means 'unmarried adult male', what we have done is simply equated an expression 'bachelor' with another expression whose use is already known i.e., 'an unmarried adult male'. It is just another way of saying 'bachelor' has the same use as 'unmarried adult male', and we merely establish this equivalence on the basis of the fact that they denote the same 'linguistic act potential'.

2. Now as the title of this chapter, namely, 'Language and the Understanding of other Cultures' suggests, perhaps in an indirect way, the question of the notion of translatability, let us examine in this light, the issues involved in such a venture. On the face of it, the possibility of translating one expression into another seems to depend

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on the possibility of there being at least some objective criteria to determine whether an expression in one language is the same as an expression in another language. And it appears that only when this was possible could we observe that the rule which determines the use of a word in one language was similar to the rules which determines the use of a word in the other.

How, it would be naturally asked, can one, if concepts are peculiar to a particular society, even talk of one expression being the same as some other, if one is not even in a position to know whether the word 'same' is used in a similar way? Yet, if this was the case, then what we are left with is a kind of "relativistic dilemma". It is, of course, true that there are substantial differences between languages spoken in different cultures, (This is particularly clear when one considers the case of languages perception. There is a point here in invoking the notion of non-linguistic criteria) and so, when a translator undertakes the task of establishing correspondences between expressions of the different languages, he may, sometimes find, as is often the case, with say, English to Angami–Naga, that it is impossible to find a normal sentence in one of the languages to match the other. This is quite evident in the attempt to translate the scriptures, or say,
the Bible, or even songs, into the native dialect. This does not mean, however, that the translator is unable to go on; he sees the difficulty as really a technical one. Thus, he operates on the assumption that even though there cannot be a one-to-one correspondence between the utterances or expressions in the two languages, there is, at least the possibility of there existing some unit which permits a fair degree of workable correspondence. And in cases where these, if I may use the word, "esoteric" units or concepts are not available, he may introduce a new expression. A brief explanation as to how a workable translation is at all possible: Kant declares that there are, in all languages, the concepts of 'space', 'time', 'substance', 'causality' and so on. His emphasis was that, as already mentioned in Chapter I, without these notions, no thinking—not merely about particular objects or particular areas of experiences, but no thinking at all would be possible, as propounded in the 'Transcendental Deduction' of the categories in the Critique Of Pure Reason. In modern times, Strawson, who, having endorsed this view, expressed the similar idea that there is a 'basic core' in all human conceptual framework. And thus, it is this common factor which makes translation at all possible. I have, so far used the word 'workable' as regards the possibility of
translation deliberately. It is thus possible, logically, to translate certain aspects of one language to another as commonly instantiated in religious and literary works but this, however, can never convey the entire idea as the words involved in the original are specific, that is, organic, to that 'form of life'. And it is really those notions which gets lost in translation that gives the original tongue its 'feeling' or 'flavour' or its 'spirit'. Think for instance, the possible absurdity involved in translating an Angami or Zeliang Naga folk song to Hindi or vice-versa. As mentioned already, a particular language embodies a particular form of life, and hence, the incongruity of the type mentioned arises; and it is precisely this that makes every language unique. To merely say that a language is different from another without taking into account the 'forms of life' associated with it, is stating a trivial truth and yet, the assertion does not remain 'trivial' any longer as soon as branding another language as 'inadequate', 'poor' or 'bad' is considered. We will come back to this topic a little later on.

We have seen how our ability to consider expressions independently of its meaning, often leads us to think that the significance of each expression depends on its concomitances with other things, natural facts and such like: this
is more so in the case of translation. We do tend to think of a bi-linguist, as someone who is capable of establishing the equivalence of an expression in one language into another via their respective equivalences to something extralingual and objective.

What would be the case, if supposing, we were to find that a particular society uses the concept 'P' in a way different from ours. That, for example, they do not consider as cases of 'P' most of what we consider as indubitable instances of it? Is that any justification in saying that their concept was inadequate? A common expected answer may be that, their concept less accurately portrays the nature of 'P': as if it were the case that both societies observed the nature of P and then drew different conclusions. What one fails to see is that the concepts of reason, justification, adequacy and so, are relative to various language-games.

If supposing one were to change the rules that determine the use of 'P', in an imaginary society, then we would be changing its meaning, and as Wittgenstein says, "in that case we may just as well change the word too" the reason why rules differ between languages is that there are
different language-games corresponding to different 'world pictures'. It might seem, this follows the view that, reality does not give language its sense, the justification for the correct use of a term, and standards which relate to the meaning of concepts not derived from an objective basis, as Bernard Williams remarks: "... whether something is empirically explicable or not is itself relative to language; for such explanation, and *a fortiori* particular forms of scientific explanation, are just language-game among others."

Peter Winch also holds a similar view when he says, "... we could not, in fact distinguish the real from the unreal without understanding the way this distinction operates in the language. If then we wish to understand the significance of these concepts, we must examine the use they actually do have in the language."

A corollary of this which bears on our problem of translatability is that we cannot discover what a people's concepts are except through the language. Thus, it is possible for us to say that the concept 'X' is different in two societies because the way they use the term 'X' differs between the two societies. We come to this conclusion not by correlating language with something else but
by correlating some aspects of language, with whole ranges and ways of talking about something.

The corresponding concept of 'X' in different languages, is intelligible to us when we are capable of describing their language-game, with the concept 'A'. To say that their concept is wrong would be to use our language-game "as a base from which to combat theirs".*

How does our ability to describe their language-game with 'X', imply that we understand their concept 'X'? This problem is more intense in the cases where in a particular society certain cases which fall under the concept of 'X' in our societies are not regarded as instances or part of the concept of 'X'. Wittgenstein often found it useful to imagine fictional societies in which people spoke a language and lived a life radically different from ours. In one instance he imagines a society of people who used the word 'pain' to include only those cases where the damage is visible; the other cases, that is, those instances that we call pain such as headaches, stomachaches, rheumatism and so on are "tied up with mockery of the complaining one".

Here the most natural tendency on our part is to think that these people are mistaken, and that their lack of a concept of an invisible cause of pain stems from an inability to perceive the similarity between the two types of behaviour. About Wittgenstein's examples some points are worth mentioning here:

It is not the case in our fictional society that there is a radical difference in the physiological make-up of the people. If we were to imagine a story where the beings of a distant planet were physiologically built to feel pain, when a visible damage occurred to their body, then it would not be absurd for us to imagine someone having a different concept of pain. In this case one sees that the practice of regarding someone's expression of pain as mere pretence and malingering is reasonable to us.

Apparently, this is not a problem which can be solved by an appeal to empirical data, or even to behavioural criteria. The difficulty with the appeal to behavioural criteria for testing the similarity of concepts, is that it involves circularity. As David E. Cooper says: "... the difficulty with this suggestion is that if we mean by 'behaviour' actions as opposed to mere bodily movements, then it is impossible to know what the behaviour is without
interpreting it properly. But to interpret it properly we must know how the agents conceive of it. Hence, behaviourally, there does not seem to be any difference between the manifest pain behaviour between the people of our society and the hypothetical one. If we were to refer solely to behaviour, as generating differences in concepts, we would find that concepts do not vary radically at all between societies.

On the other hand, it is utterly trivial to say that concepts vary with language, if we say that differences in the language of pain by themselves constitute differences in the concept of pain. What is difficult to reconcile at this point is not that there are differences in the use of the word 'pain' but that this is simply not the way we react to pain-behaviour, and our reaction at this level is, as it were, pre-rational. What we have established is a basic difference in the level of practice. We are unable to react to pain behaviour in the way that our hypothetical society does. Any attempt to re-educate such a 'misguided' society from the commitment of a fundamental error would not only require us to use criteria of evidence, proof, and so on, different from theirs. It would also require us to teach the new concept in a way different from the way we have learnt ours, namely, by giving reasons for justifying the use of a concept.
In On Certainty Wittgenstein emphasises that the language-game is something unpredictable, that it is not based on grounds, not reasonable or unreasonable, but, is there, as it were, given - "like our life".

There is, therefore, no guarantee that our attempt to revise the concept of pain in our hypothetical society will pull off—we may give all sorts of reasons, arguments, and use examples, or even attempt at persuasion, but the success or failure of our attempt will not be decided by the acceptance of what is ultimately true or false. It is not the adequacy or inadequacy of our teaching which is at fault here. In 206 of the Philosophical Investigations, Wittgenstein says: "following a rule is analogous to obeying an order. We are trained to do so. We react to an order in a particular way. But what if one person reacts in one way and another in another to the order in training? Which one is right...?"

What ultimately decides the issue is at the level of instinctual reaction, and this agreement is not a matter of opinion but in the 'form of life'.

At this point, we are dangerously close to accepting the idea that cross-cultural comparisons, in so far as they represent differences at the level of instinctual reaction as differences in the form of life — is impossible.
Thus, this analysis seems to have led us to restrict our judgements to our own form of life, that, what is intelligible and makes sense to us, what is true or false, is determined by our language.

There is a sense here in which the concepts of our hypothetical society is inaccessible to us. And there is another sense in which it is a contradiction in terms to say that these concepts are unintelligible to us. The latter sense is derived from the idea that, if the concepts of another society are really unintelligible to us, this is something we would never know — since to know this we would have to understand these concepts.

The concept of 'pain' is not unintelligible to us in the hypothetical society, in so far as we know the role this word plays in the life of the society. In The Blue and Brown Books, Wittgenstein says: "whether a word of the language of our tribe is rightly translated into a word of the English language depends upon the role this word plays in the whole life of the tribe, the occasions on which it is used, the experiences of emotion by which it is accompanied, the ideas which it generally awakens which prompt its saying" etc.
What is meant so far, is that, we cannot imagine a language so radically different from ours, that we are totally unable to determine what role the concepts of that language plays in the life of the society. We might imagine a situation, where such a society existed, where people behaved in the same way as we do, but there is no regular connexion between what they say, the sounds they make, and their actions. And these sounds they make are not mere accompaniments to their actions, in that, "their actions fall into confusion" without them. How are we to say then that these people have a language? There is, as Wittgenstein says "not enough regularity to call it language"?

It would be impossible for us to imagine, thus, whether the people in our imaginary society had a concept of 'pain' at all, if, in observing their behaviour, we were to find that there were no regularity between their uses of the word 'pain' and the pain behaviour. In fact, we would not be in a position to even say that they were using or that they even possess, the concept of 'pain' at all. This follows from the fact that they did not follow a rule. Now in games, there are to be found certain conceptual disparities, but this does not put into doubt our recognition of a game as a game. We know that this is typical of the way games differ from each other. In this
regard one must note that, what is typical between games is not, in the same sense as what is typical between different languages. The rules which determine certain aspects of a game, may be peculiar to that particular game. We would not be able to find any counterpart, or points of similarity between two different games, say, a game of chess and cricket. What determines their being games is external to the nature of games.

However, when someone like Wittgenstein invents or postulates a language different from ours, his freedom is restricted by certain limitations. For instance, he cannot, invent new games as concepts and rules as freely as one can invent new games. Hence, in this sense, the rules of language are not arbitrary like the rules of games.

When Wittgenstein postulates a concept — in this sense 'pain' — which is different from our concept of pain, he cannot, without being absurd, invent a notion so remote, that he would not be able to explain to us how this concept worked — because then, we would not, in fact, even consider it part of the language at all.

As mentioned earlier on in this chapter that, translatability of a language to another is quite possible, with,
of course, the persistent and unavoidable danger that the 'spirit' of the original is never fully captured in the translation. But it is a commonly-held belief that sometimes, when one comes across societies with institutions such as ethical, religious and so on, far removed from those one is familiar with, or identified with, that translation is not possible. Such an attitude may spring from an antipathy to a way of life different from one's.

Of course, translation involves quite obvious difficulties, such as finding an appropriate word or unit to match with another, and it may so happen that where a one-word would suffice to explain a concept in a particular language, the translation of the same word into another might involve in dealing with a much larger field. Perhaps it may even be required to deal with a lengthy description of the practices and beliefs in that society. In many cases, a borrowed word would have to be incorporated to provide the required correspondence to the appropriate contexts.

What is important, it seems, in this issue of translatability is, what it is which makes it possible, accepting that there is diversity in language — and forms of life — that there can be inter-culture/awareness across the wide and diverse spectrum.
We have seen how the possibility has been marred by certain myths about the nature of meaning, and certain principles of objectivity which distorted the nature and uniqueness of language. Taking the latter, we have seen, that the relative incompatibility of concepts between languages (in particular, our example of the fictional society where at the basic level of human response, namely, pain behaviour) leads to a tendency on our part, to believe in some objective principles, which our peculiar concept of pain has fallen short of — but as we have seen, whether a concept is adequate or inadequate is not determined by something external, or independent of the "form of life" within which it plays a role ... that is, seeing that a concept, say 'pain' plays a particular role, does not necessitate the postulation of an independent check. It may be thought that this may lead to a form of relativism, in that, what is, and is not the case, is merely a matter of human agreement. For instance, it seems that, it is enough that the people of a particular society accept and agree that a particular concept means such and such — that in so far as these differences exist, we shall never be able to understand each other's concepts. However, we have seen that this is not the case, how it is not merely a matter of an arbitrary agreement of opinion, but that of an
agreement in the particular language, in the 'form of life'. And the possibility of understanding what a particular concept means in one language in another even when a direct substitution of one concept in terms of another is not possible, is that there is a common background of agreement, between languages which is not merely an agreement in, what we know to be the case, but in what lies beyond reasoning, deduction and attitudes in what we may call with Wittgenstein, "the common behaviour of mankind."

Thus any study of human societies, which we may hope to undertake must take into account the plurality of manifestations and expressions of this "common behaviour of mankind "which finds expression in the many societies and cultures. The discussion have, so far been the subject of meaning at the linguistic phenomena, specifically in terms of the concept of meaning rules, and these meaning rules were, as we have seen, in a way, different from other types of rules, in that, they were not accountable in the same manner that the rules of a game, or an institution were unaccountable. This made our account of the concept of rules rather vague and indeterminate. However, this was only because the general feature of a language-game was such that we could not go beyond the nature of the so-called language-game to, as it were, something objective
or extra lingual to justify a particular aspect of the language-game. Our point of reference was not "the world of nature", but rather human life and the common activities which he is normally engaged in. For example, when we were dealing with the problem of translation, that to imagine a concept correctly in a particular language is to be able to use it according to a rule, and to know that we have used a word or a sentence correctly is not to see that it corresponds to 'what is the case' in the objective world, but rather to see that it fits into a certain order which corresponds to the range of human activities, or what Wittgenstein call 'forms of life'.

This, however, is not to say of course that what we call "the case with the world" has really nothing to do with these forms. The natural world clearly conditions the 'form of life'. It is because certain natural states of affairs prevail in the world we live in, that we are capable of pursuing all the multifarious activities which basically characterise our life form, be it eating, playing, building and ceremonies involving marriage, death, harvest and so on.

Wittgenstein remarks in *On Certainty*; "Certain events would put me in a position in which I could not go on with
the old language-game anymore. In which I was torn away from the sureness of the game. Indeed can't it be obvious that the possibility of a language-game is conditioned by certain facts."

One significant point to remember is that the relationship between the intelligibility, truth and falsity, sense and coherence of what we say, and the state of the natural world is not, however, like the relationship between natural facts, say, for example, the functionality of electronic circuits found in television, radios and computers etc. and the fundamental laws of electricity. For example, suppose the fundamental laws of electro-chemical behaviour of semi-conductors suddenly become devoid of its natural properties, our circuits would cease to function. We could then follow a series of causally connected sequences of relations which would finally lead to an explanation of why all of a sudden, our transistors, receivers and amplifiers had ceased to function. We would be able to, on the basis of our theory, predict what would happen. In this case our understanding of electronic circuits, would be dependent on our capacity of predicting what would be the case if such and such happened.

Now our language-game is not, in this way, conditioned by natural facts. It is, of course, certainly true, that
particular forms of human activities such as, for instance, agriculture would depend on certain natural conditions of life such as, good climate, favourable soil conditions and so on, it is also true that our concepts would not work if the natural laws were to break down completely. It is quite easy to see, how, on this account, we can so easily make the mistake of thinking that the reality given to a form of life can be seen or observed from the outside. The form and method of human activity is not determined by what is experienced, but, rather, the form and activity by which we characterise the world determines what we discover and find desirable. Thus, when we say the meaning of language is grounded in human life, we are saying that what one describes and discovers in the world is determined by how he acts. As Bernard Williams says; "Any empirical discovery we could make about our views of the world, as that it was conditioned by our use of correct words or whatever, would itself be a fact which we were able to understand in terms of, and only in terms of, our view of the world."*

Thus it would seem quite clear from the sustained argument so far, about language being a "form of life", which, as we have seen 'couches', as it were, all activities

peculiar to any specific linguistic stock, it may now be only too appropriate, to delve a little on the matter of what might be termed as, the idea of 'linguistic-chauvinism'. This notion, as is evident, usually gives rise to serious social and political issues in several countries besides ours. The most obvious manner in which, this problem might be viewed with sympathy would, of course be to adopt an attitude of what is normally termed as 'objectivity'. The question thus: "What ought to be my attitude towards another language?" has to take into account the following mentioned points on grounds on which a language is normally criticised:

1. It is a distorted version of another language, e.g. Assamese is a distorted version of Bengali, or Nagamese is a distorted form of Assamese and Hindi and Bengali.
2. It does not have a script e.g. "no tribal language in the North-East of India has its own script."
3. It does not have a literature e.g. the Zeliang language does not have a literature and, therefore, it is only a dialect.
4. It is incomplete and inadequate e.g. the Bengali or English says much better what the Angami Naga language can say only inadequately.
I. To take these in order: Firstly, two languages may be very closely similar to each other, and can then be shown even to have a common origin, but this does not make either of them an inferior version of the other or of the 'original' language. A language, or a form of life, is what it is and not another one in a different guise. The individuation of a language is undoubtedly a difficult task, and often, in the actual act of individuation, considerations other than 'linguistic' - in the broad sense of which a language encompasses a distinct form of life - may be involved. Such considerations may be political, economic, historical, social and so on. But the claim by a group that their native language is autonomous and therefore, distinct, although motivated partly by any or all of these considerations - (is there ever a 'pure unmixed' motive of any human action?) - is almost always associated with the perception, by the group, of significant differences in their form of life. That is, differences in language must reflect differences in conceptual frames and not differences in the degree of clarity of the same concepts. To think that this language is a distorted version of one's own, may exhibit an arrogance and insensitiveness which in a way, is the same as the arrogance and insensitiveness of thinking that there is no way of looking at a thing other than one's own.
II. To criticise another language on the ground that it lacks a script is peculiarly misplaced. The script of a language is not an integral part of it. It stands as it were, outside the language, in a way in which the activities we have talked about cannot stand outside, and it gets whatever 'life' it has from the language and not the other way around. A script without a language is "dead", but a language without a script is very much a language, not less of a one. The presence of a script may undoubtedly help in the growth of a language in so far as it facilitates the exploration of the possibilities of the language but such exploration can take place, and have taken place without a script. The absence of a script is not a criterion of the poverty of a language.

III. The third kind of criticism, mentioned above is serious. The possibility of literature is inherent in any language, and it is in literature that the bounds of meaning of a language are continuously explored and extended. A language which has not developed a literature has not, as it were, realised itself. But is there, in fact, a language which does not have a literature? If the emergence of literature is not thought to be dependent on the existence of a written tradition, then there is really no language without this aspect - since literature will include
stories, songs, legends, myths, parables, incantations and so on. Hence, it is quite safe to say that there isn't a language which does not have a good measure of all these. In fact the primary source of creativity even in a written tradition of literature is to be found in the symbols employed in these stories, songs, etc.

IV. Fourthly, in a sense, no language is complete, because it must be always, possible for new things to be said in it. But when a language is criticized as being incomplete, what is meant is that somethings are, and even can be, said in the language but vaguely, confusedly and inadequately, while the same things, can be said with more clarity, and adequately, in another language. And this is not true. An attempt to improve a language by inducting elements into it from a different language, so that the same things may be said more completely in the former cannot succeed, because the result of such an attempt is not that the same things are said less confusedly in the language, but that something different is also said in it now. When Wittgenstein says that any language is "complete", he means that you fall into a confusion if you try to provide a more perfect system for what may be said in it. Whatever may be said in the new system, it will not be what was said in the original language.
Thus, if what had been said about the relationship between a language-game and a form of life, is correct, then it is quite clear that a language must afford a specially intimate access to the culture of the people whose native language it is. A culture, of course, includes things like, as mentioned sometime earlier, activities such as, the way they cultivate the land, bury the dead, celebrate marriages, build their houses, and so on. Hence, a study of the culture must include all these various activities and more. But these people's language, which of course, must include its literature, is not to be taken as another of those cultural things they have. The literature embodies the special 'life' and 'tone' of the entire culture. So it is important to take note of the fact that mastering another language is just not a matter of mastering its grammatical rules, vocabulary and accent. But, much more importantly, it is a matter of understanding nuances, of gestures, pauses, voice and subtle differences of action and reactions. In the absence of such an understanding, speaking another's language with a mastery over its grammar, etc., is speaking it without grasping the 'life' of the language. Therefore, it is quite easy to understand that one's access to another culture, based on what might be called a 'mechanical' understanding of its language, its grammar and pronunciation, is,
bound to be a very superficial one. Hence, any assessment of a culture based on such an understanding of its language, must be fraught with danger, both intellectual and moral. There is always the susceptibility of assimilating it with one's own culture and applying to it, (that is, judging it by) one's own criteria of evaluation. If the assimilation is wrong, then it is easy to see, the evaluation is bound to be wrong. Thus someone who thinks 'polyandry', as practised in some societies like Tibet or 'polygamy', which is a prevalent practice in some Islamic countries, as indicating extraordinary moral depravity in such societies, makes this type of mistake of assimilation and evaluation.

It is an extremely interesting point which some social scientists, missionaries or any foreigner, desirous of learning an alien culture through obviously, the medium of language of the culture in question, would do well to note - indeed, cannot afford to overlook, is the idea of 'silence' which admittedly, one normally does not take into account at all, out of ignorance, as a significant notion. In the article 'The Eloquence Of Silence', Ivan Illich gives a most lucid classificatory account of the different nuances of silence which, he rightly seems to claim, has a role in language of no lesser significance than the actual vocative expression. One indeed gets the idea in his remark
"An objective study of the ways in which meanings are transmitted has shown that much more is relayed from one man to another through and in silence than in words. Words and sentences are composed of silences more meaningful than the sounds. The pregnant pauses between sounds and utterances become luminous points in an incredible void; as electrons in the atom, as planets in the solar system. Language is a cord of silence with sounds the knots - as nodes in a Peruvian quipu in which the empty spaces speak. With Confucious we can see language as a wheel. The spokes centralize, but the empty spaces make the wheel".*

Thus it is seen that to understand another people one has to learn when to maintain silence, this of course, has profound truth when we examine our own lives. It is customary for most people (by this I mean in most cultures) to remain silent or quiet in the presence of superiors or elders, as a sign of respect. Against such cultural background are derived social norms such as: 'do not speak unless spoken to', 'remain silent when the other is speaking', 'it is in bad form to speak to strangers of the opposite sex', 'it is arrogant to collar a conversation', 'it is bad manners not to respond to a greeting', and so on. Hence, the process of learning a language must include the 'spirit' of the spoken word, the 'tone', the 'clothing' which gives the language its 'life': namely, the language of silence. Quoting Illich again in this context:

"To learn a language in a human and mature way, therefore, is to accept the responsibility for its silences and for its sounds. The gift a people gives us in teaching us their language is more a gift of the rhythm, the mode and subtleties of its system of silences than of its system of sounds. It is an intimate gift for which we are accountable to the people who have entrusted us with their tongue. A language of which I know only the words and not the pauses is a continuous offence. It is as the caricature of a photographic negative."

"It takes more time and effort and delicacy to learn the silence of a people than to learn its sounds. Some people have a special gift for this. Perhaps this explains why some missionaries, notwithstanding their efforts, never come to speak properly, to communicate delicately through silences. Although they speak with the 'accent of natives', they remain forever thousands of miles away. The learning of the grammar of silence is an art much more difficult to learn than the grammar of sounds."

"As words must be learnt by listening and by painful attempts at imitation of a native speaker, so silence must be acquired through delicate openness to them. Silence has its pauses and hesitations, its rhythms and expressions and inflections; its durations and pitches, and times to be and not to be. Just as with our words there is an analogy between our silence with man and with government. To learn the full meaning of one, we must practice and deepen the other."*

Having laboured so far about the nature of language with all its multifarious connotations and possible connotations that reflect its 'dynamism', and also having dealt

with what attitude one 'ought' to have towards another language, it might be of some interest to gloss over briefly, this 'form of life' from quite another perspective, and appreciate its application to present cultural life. What I have in mind here is the idea of a 'dead' language.

What, therefore, is a 'dead' language, and how is it different from a contemporary language which is considered 'live'? The obvious answer that comes to mind is that a contemporary language is one that is actually spoken, where the meanings of words 'evolve' as it were, either by coining new ones, or in some cases, by drafting in foreign words to embody certain human activities which are hitherto unknown. Perhaps the word 'CYBERNETICS' is a good example to illustrate a recent human scientific pursuit and which (the word cybernetics) had been, it appears, got included in many non-English languages. A typical characteristic of language is that words get more complex in their meanings, corresponding to the activities they embody becoming more complicated and intricate. On the other hand, in the absence of such activities, the meanings may vanish altogether. Thus, such traits of language which accordingly adapt themselves to the idiosyncracies of life may be labelled as "live" in character for bearing testimony to the dynamism of life itself.
It has been of course, argued that language is itself an activity, that is, an activity which is much more than the act of "speaking" or "writing" the language. Indeed Wittgenstein has agreed, as we had the occasion to note earlier that what gives "life" or meaning to a word at all is the network of activities surrounding its use. Take almost any word, say, a word in the English language of greeting. The phrase "good morning" for instance, and imagine its connections with other areas of the language and the entire life of the activity of greeting. Contrast this with greeting with perhaps, what might be considered to be, an equivalent phrase in a language unfamiliar both to the speaker and the hearer. Here, even if the hearer and the speaker were aware of the equivalence, the artificiality of using such a phrase is apparent enough. The artificiality arises of course from the lack of the background - which is frequently dense - of connections between the phrase and other linguistic, and non-linguistic activities. In the case of language which is merely unfamiliar, or as we say "foreign" but "live" in character in the sense of being the spoken language of a group of native speakers, this artificiality is overcome by learning, or that is, acquiring the language — thereby entering into the life of this language. Now in the case of a 'dead' language this possibility is ruled out, as there are no native speakers of this language.
No doubt connections can be established between such a language and activities of life, but this must be done via a language which is not 'dead'. Hence, the density and the dynamic character of the relationship between a language and the activities of life are absent in the case of a 'dead' language. Now a 'dead' language if it has a life at all has only borrowed life; borrowed from one that is live'. Undoubtedly, it may be possible to revive a 'dead' language but such revival can take place only by the language acquiring an autonomy and independence of connections with the ordinary activities of life.

An aspect of the dynamism of the relationship between a word and the activities of life is that it is always possible for us to discover new and some might say profound meanings of many words in common use. Thus, take words such as 'love', 'courage', 'happiness', 'good', and so on. Contrast our understanding of these words at different stages of our lives. The word 'love' for instance, may undergo quite radical changes and extension of meaning as our awareness of the dynamism of the 'life of love' changes, and the discovery of new meanings and connections with a whole range of other words. This constitutes, one might assume, the genuine "open endedness" of words in a 'live' language, which necessarily is lacking in a language which
is 'dead'. Of course a word occasionally acquires a profounder meaning by being related to some words in the 'dead' language. But here again, this is so only because of the possibility of pointing out connections between the word in the 'dead' language and other words in the language under consideration, and through them, with areas of life which one might so far have been unaware of. This however, does not give a 'dead' language a capacity for growth and novelty which necessarily characterizes a 'live' language.

Now in a 'dead' language where the meanings become, as it were, 'petrified' such a language loses its dynamism and are hence, labelled 'dead'. The network of activities surrounding a word in such a language becomes understandably, limited. Take the word, for instance, "non-sequiter". Its use is confined to mean only an illogical inference, a conclusion arrived at, which does not follow from a given premise. As mentioned in the preceding paragraph, the usage is manifestly artificial to one not possessing the knowledge of the background of that language of which the word is a part. A foreign word, such as "Shalom" for instance, which is the Jewish form of greeting is yet another form of illustration of artificiality in its use for most cultures, though Hebrew may not be a 'dead' language. For, this word literally means "peace", and so, to one who is social
background is noted especially for its tranquility such as, in Hawaii for instance, before it was acceded to the United States, this form of greeting might not bear any significance at all. Yet, to the Jews, whose history is noted for violence, and continues even now, this term may not only reflect the hopes, but also suggest the aspirations of the people for peaceful co-existence with its neighbours. Thus to one who is ignorant of the history of this word and its significance to the people with which it is associated, its use will evidently be artificial. This arises out of the lack of density of connections between the word used and a whole range of activities, both linguistic and non-linguistic behaviour. Now, any attempt at linking a 'dead' language say Latin, to ordinary activities of life would quickly acquire, and so be understood, in terms of the world-view of the language through which it is interpreted. However slight such a deviation may be, it would still be a misleading venture, and any endeavour at clarifying a puzzling notion might lead to the paradox of mystifying it further. This after all, is a problem involving translation in general (which has been mentioned earlier, however briefly, so, I will not dwell on this particular issue again.
The main reason for a word to lose its dynamism is, it appears, the rigidity of relationship between the word and the activity of life it embodies. Thus, this lack of "open-endedness" precludes the discovery of new and profounder meanings of words in everyday use, and hence, makes it necessarily 'dead' in character. Accepting the premise therefore, that the meanings of words in a 'dead' language are 'petrified' it follows that there exists no alternative avenues which may engender multifarious connotations depending on the varying degrees of understanding of a word. It might safely be conceded therefore, that in a 'dead' language, the words involved are, to a great extent irretrievably organic, merged, as it were, with the culture at a particular period of time — that they run the risk of being considered redundant, and so liable to rejection with the occurrence of a change in the social scheme, which, however imperceptible, is yet, an inevitable process of history. The use of Sanskrit and Latin might highlight some of the glaring anachronism in their employment in the present day context. This is compellingly revealed when Sanskrit had to be abandoned shortly after its introduction in the 'All India Radio' broadcasting services when it was discovered that the language was far too prim and exaggeratedly formal to the point of disconnection with the mundane
prevalent social reality. This 'unnaturalness' must imply an artificiality which is the principle reason for its abandonment.

We have had the occasion to mention earlier of the possibility of reviving a 'dead' language. Now such resuscitation can occur only by the language acquiring, as we learnt, an autonomy and independence of connections with the ordinary activities of life. An interesting case, however, is the employment of, what we have called 'dead' languages for purposes of religious rituals. Most Roman Catholic Church services are still conducted in Latin, and Sanskrit is widely employed in Hindu rites. These languages, 'dead' as they may be when referring to the ordinary activities of life, are to be understood no longer in those circumstances, but in a context independent of them. In this particular sense, a special one surely for the religious, they are no longer 'dead' and so, no longer useless, but indeed indispensable and therefore, very much 'live'. The use of these languages in religious incantations seem to fulfil two requirements — whether these requirements are humanly contrived, or, out of a sense of necessity in fulfilling, what is believed to be Divine directives.
Firstly, religion adds a fresh dimension to our ordinary, what has been called 'secular' life — a dimension which has a necessary element of mystery and ineffability in it. This is the dimension of the Transcendent. A 'dead' language is therefore peculiarly suited to express this dimension of our life — it is suitably remote from our ordinary mundane activities and besides, there is also the right kind of mystery surrounding it.

Secondly, man's relationship with the transcendent is such that it is normally represented in activities which are frequently exaggeratedly stylised in order to stress their primary symbolic character, and also to express the degree of solemnity which is inherent in the relationship. A language like Sanskrit or Latin is ideally suited for use in connection with activities such as these. Through such formal languages, the God-head is best projected as the most exalted figure, which, for its sublime characteristics, demands reverence. Thus the Hindu notion of 'Brahman' and the Christian 'Trinity' is effectively attributed to have the rightful claim to be worshipped by mankind. Hence, through the manipulation of such formal languages, the 'Highest Being' is best understood. 'Dead' languages may therefore, have no place though in ordinary life, are found to have a unique employment in the religious 'form of life'.
From the argument so far pursued, I would like to conclude this part of the discussion by making a mention of the fact that, language, as we have had the occasion to explore, thus acts as a kind of 'receptacle' of all the activities of the 'form of life' of the people who wield it. Hence, the most honest attempt at understanding the culture under study must necessarily include as the primary concern, the study of the language of which it is a part, and then examine if it corresponds to the account given by the native speakers themselves. This is a crucial, and also the most authentic, form of enquiry, since, (as we know) man, being a language-wielding creature is also a 'self-enquiring' and 'self-expressing' creature as well.

However, it will be unmistakably an anachronism to study however earnestly, a language spoken by a people say, for example, a Naga tribe a hundred years ago, and preserved in book-form by some linguists, since as mentioned, a language which is organic to the 'form of life' of a people undergoes change as the social activities of the people goes through a transformation. This aspect of the matter, if ignored, or overlooked, will ultimately only turn out to be, in the final analysis, a study on a 'dead' language for all practical purposes.