CHAPTER-I
CHAPTER: I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

"No man can express more than his own historical situation"

[A. Janik and S. Toulmin, Wittgenstein's Vienna]

The questions raised by the philosophers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the history of western thought are vigorously discussed, even now, by the philosophers. In the present century philosophers have been extremely interested in language. It is because they have come to believe that language holds the key to resolve the great questions of philosophy. But a layman may be curious about, whether various aspect of reality like the nature of the cosmos, the foundations of knowledge, the present plight of mankind, are not more important than questions about words and meaning? This attitude rests on a misconception of the nature of language philosophy.

Philosophers in the past have always been interested in what have been called 'ideas'; idea of matter, idea of causality, idea of goodness, etc. Other philosophers have spoken of 'concepts' instead of ideas and still others have spoken of 'properties'. Today it is often thought that these philosophers of the past were interested in the usage of words and hence in linguistic rules and practice without knowing it.
In this chapter, attempt would be made to examine how various thinkers in history, approached the philosophical problems, from the point of view of language and its functioning. The discussion in this chapter on different philosophers, grammarians and linguists does not intend to be analytical and polemical but will be expository. It contains a very selective representation of the points, which are relevant to the problematic of the enigmatic Austrian-British philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein. The purpose behind this historical exposition is to show that the problems under our concern, were also problems, which stimulated thinkers from various continents and cultures, and from different epochs of history. The immediate purpose is to give a historical backdrop for the discussion on earlier Wittgenstein and place him in the overall historical milieu.

All humans are language-using members of the society. So the importance of language in human life and society is obvious. Language acquisition is one of the few cognitive skills that is, near enough, both common and peculiar to humans. Some theorists have been led by this to see language as the most central characteristic of the human being. The philosophers viewed language as a guide to decipher the riddles of the nature of reality. The grammar of language or the logical structure of the discourses often seems to be providing the thinkers with valuable clues to
the nature of thought. The idea of language, since then, is that language is just a vehicle of communication, ‘thrice away from the reality.’ The mind organises ideas, images and feelings, from raw sensations drawn from outside reality, which is the referent. The referent can be either the material reality, transcendental reality or neither. Thought is basically conceived as an operation with ideas, independent of language. Thomas Hobbes expresses this view of language, which has been dominant since then. He says “The general rule of speech is to transfer our mental discourse into verbal, or the train of thoughts into a train of words”¹

Language, as one of the oldest and deepest social institutions, has been an object of study for almost all the civilisations, existing and vanished. For the ancients, words and language in general, were invested with magical or divine powers. Within that framework a ‘name’ is considered as the soul of the thing named. For the Vedic scholars, word is as powerful as ‘Agni’ and Greeks identified ‘Logos’ with words. Language, for them, was the medium of participation in the spiritual reality. Thus through language, they exercised power over the spiritual. This has produced fantastic effects in the process of meaning production, in the ancient society. For them nothing human or superhuman, are above the power and magnetic field of words. The science of rhetoric and different

theories of linguistics and logic were relatively well developed, although entangled in the metaphysical and religious ideology, among the ancient Greeks and Indians. Though almost all Indian philosophical systems devoted some attention to language, it got topicality only in the systems of Mimamsa, Vedanta and scholastic Buddhism. The central concept of the Sanskrit grammarian, Panini, is that of sutra or the rule. Paniniyas stressed the synchronic mode of analysis because they believed the connection between signifier and signified as eternal, 'nitya'. Later Buddhism developed highly sophisticated theories on the functioning of linguistic elements.

Accepting Vedas as 'apauruseya' (not of human origin), Mimamsakas also considered words as eternal. The various instances of the utterance of the same word prove the sameness because of the eternity of the underlying word. The actual utterance in a community, for them, is not actually creative in the sense of being 'productive', and they are just diachronic appearances of a deep, eternal linguistic entity. Thus the historicity of the language is negated. Institution of meaning is elevated to the level of divine, eternal order. This is more or less an Indian counterpart of the 'Doctrine of Ideas'. But even within these idealistic traditions, one of the functions of Mimamsa followers, led by Prabhakar Guru, raises the later Wittgensteinian theme of contextuality in the generation of meaning. According to this group, meaning of a sentence is the direct result of the
collective meaning from the collection of the words on that sentence; and
the context or situation of utterance, is an important factor in the
constitution of the word or sentence. But, for the rival group, Kumrila
Bhatta's followers, meaning of a sentence is produced indirectly, through
the retention of the individual words that comprise it. This view seems to
be closer to earlier Wittgenstein's position.

The Mimamsakas had a highly developed semantic theory. They
were in general, of the opinion that semantics based on convention is
stronger than analysis and etymological derivations. Later Mimamsakas
and logicians distinguished four classes of words, in accordance with the
way their meaning is determined. These distinctions says J. F. Staal,
"though far from precise are at any rate less vague than the familiar
Wittgensteinian slogan that the meaning of a word lies in its use."² All the
four distinctions, it is interesting to note, are generally based on context or
use. "When the Buddhists came to formulate their doctrines in a clearer
and more consistent way, they evolved the theory that words connote
concepts or mental images (Vikalpa) and never directly refer to a thing-in-
itself."³ says Staal. This observation can be fitted right into the eighteenth
century discussion of language, centred around Locke, Condillac etc. The

² J.F. Staal, 'Sanskrit Philosophy of Language', Thomas A. Sebeok ed. Current Trends in
³ Ibid., p. 516.
customary, conventional (sanketa) and the arbitrary nature of language, which is the accepted paradigm in the modern era, was stressed by one of the schools of Buddhist philosophies, Sautrantika, a millennium ago. Even the Saussurean and Derridean themes of the role of difference or negativity, in the process of meaning generation, is stressed by the Buddhist theory of 'apoha', or exclusion. For example, the word 'cow' excludes everything else, in the process of making sense as the animal 'cow'. Buddhist theory of 'apoha' is an important contribution to the semantic theories. Apparently, due to Dinnaga (fifth century A. D.) this doctrine was expounded in Dharmakirti's Pramanavartika.

Buddhist scholars, who were so convinced about the momentary nature and the eternal dynamic change of reality, could not but notice the different dialects and the fact that language is subject to change. For them, there is nothing divine about 'meaning', but it is only a conceptual construction. Since, there is no general idea of reality, language does not refer to reality and it is merely used for communication (vyavahara), for practical purposes. Dharmakirti links it with the 'apoha' theory, which implies that the meaning of a word is a conceptual construction.

In his metaphysical linguistics, Bhartrhari identifies the essence of speech with the ultimate reality, the Brahman. In his naturalistic version of language faculty, he states that the faculty of speech is as inborn or
intuitive (pratibha) as the cuckoo singing in spring and the spider weaving its web. There is a tremendous similarity between this observation of Bhartrhari and the Chomskean concept of innateness of language.

"...The properties of organism, on a par in this respect with those that enable a bird to build a nest or reproduce a characteristic song; or for that matter comparable to the properties that account for the development of particular organs of the body."\(^4\)

For Bhartrhari, the world is nothing but a transformation of language. The words and meaning are eternally conjoined but not arbitrarily. Bhartrhari’s fame was largely based on the theory of ‘Sphota’- which is in the Vakyapadiya (fifth century A.D.). ‘Sphota’ is a concept denoting a mysterious and mystical entity akin to western Logos.

All these shows the richness of a tradition of linguistic speculation, some of which foreshadow certain prominent trends of the contemporary western language philosophies. Especially, the Mimamsaks and Buddhist insights into the functioning of language have several points, which are parallel and similar to the Wittgensteinian anti-metaphysics and anti-psychologism.

Among the Islamic linguists in Andalusia (8th to 15th century), as Edward W. Said points out, there existed a remarkable sophisticated school of philosophic grammarians, whose polemics anticipated in an uncanny way, the twentieth century debates between structuralists and generative grammarians and between descriptivists and behaviourists. We can observe the striking parallels of romantic philology, the rise of linguistics in the early nineteenth century and the rise of a whole rich phenomenon, which Foucault has called the discovery of language. These Islamic thinkers directed their polemical energy against confusing the quest for meaning with esoteric and allegorical exercises.

The school known as Zahirites, was vehemently opposed to the Batinites' belief that meaning in language is concealed within the worlds, which can be appropriated only by an inward-tending exegesis. As Said says, the Zahirites, as their name derives from the Arabic word for the clear, apparent, and phenomenal, argued for the surface meaning of words, a meaning anchored to a particular circumstance.

This emphasis on particular usage and circumstance, is very much modern and especially later Wittgensteinian, in its approach to the meaning of linguistic entities. Though all their discussions were centred around the approach to the reading of Koran, overladen obviously with religious
preferences, certain vital linguistic issues were raised in turn. For example, Cordovan Zahirites attacked the excesses of Batinites, in spinning out private meanings to the otherwise divinely pronounced text. For, this would become a pretext for giving up the words, in the way of interpretation. As Edward W. Said says, the Zahirite effort was to restore and rationalise a system of reading a text, in which attention was focussed on the words themselves, not on hidden meanings they might contain. He concludes the Zahirite position like this:

"To signify is only to use language, and to use language is to do so according to certain rules, lexical and syntactic, by which language is in and of the world; by that the Zahirites means that language is regulated by real usage and neither by abstract prescription nor by speculative freedom."\(^5\)

Zahirites also rejected the radical disjunction between speech and writing, text and circumstantiality, deep and surface meaning, and argue that meaning is produced by the necessary interplay of these conceptually differentiated layers of language. This is an original insight, which can contribute to the contemporary discussion on the production of meaning in the text.

The pre-modern occidental world identified 'Logos' with words. It was Heraclitus, who first proclaimed that the words embody the nature of things. For him, language is the constant thing in the world of ceaseless change, an expression of collective wisdom in all men. The structure of world is reflected in the structure of human speech. Ogden and Richards argue in the context of the ancient Greek philosophy of language

"Language itself is a duplicate, a shadow of the soul, of the whole structure of reality. Hence the doctrine of 'Logos' variously conceived as the supreme reality, the divine-soul substance, as the 'meaning' or reason of everything, and as the 'meaning' or essence of a man".

Different kinds of pre-platonic ideas about the nature and functioning of the language, are made to converge and the Platonic position is consolidated in the dialogue named *Cratylus*, which is entirely devoted to the discussion of language. Heraclitus' influence on Plato is manifested in the *Cratylus*. For Plato, language basically means vocabulary and the process of naming things. In the whole dialogue, *Cratylus*, Socrates, Hermogenes and Cratylus are the three participants, in which Socrates rejects the extreme positions concerning the nature and meaning of

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language. He establishes an ontological connection between the name and the thing, between the sign and the signified. According to him, a word is meaningful only because it articulates the 'essence' of the thing named. Meaning, for Plato, is predetermined by nature. There is an 'original' meaning for a word that links it to the object. Consistent with his transcendental idealism, this 'original' meaning also resides in the realm of the 'world of ideas'. This leaves the actual utterance as a mere recollection or invocation of the 'original meaning'. That means, for Plato, meaning is not produced by a historical subject. Instead, meaning is eternal and immutable, a reflection of the eternal 'idea'. Thus rejecting the position of Hermogenes, that words are meaningful by convention, Plato, in Cratylus, establishes the supremacy of the position of natural 'rightness' of names, which is one and the same for all. Though different words are used in a variety of languages, the etymologist will not get confused between these 'superficial' differences and the original 'single' meaning, just as a physician is not deceived by the different shades of colours, smell and labels of the same drug. Socrates says in Cratylus: “All the names that we have been explaining were intended to indicate the nature of things.”

The assertion of Protagoras, that ‘man is the measure of all things’, can hardly be correct, according to Plato, because the basis of language is the product of a trans-individual agreement. Hence an individual can not use a word, in the way he feels ‘true’ to him. With this argument, Plato, instead of finding out the ground of this agreement in human society and social practice, lifts language from here and places it in the realm of eternal ideas. He argues that:

"Things are not relative to individuals and that all things do not equally belong to all at the same moment and always, they must be supposed to have their own proper and permanent essence: they are not in relation to us, or influenced by us, fluctuating according to our fancy, but they are independent, and maintain to their own essence, the relation prescribed by nature."^8

Thus the whole discussion while agreeing on various issues differ on the central question of meaning. And this remained as a central topic of discussion in the history if western thought, including in Wittgenstein.

Plato admits, that ‘name is an instrument’, it is like an awl with which we pierce or like a shuttle with which we weave, but insists that

^8 Ibid. p. 176.
there is an original, natural form which all the socially established names participate; as the real horse participates in the universal idea of 'Horseness'. While the former part of the statement, has an apparent similarity with the later Wittgensteinian idea of word as a tool, the latter part is the typical philosophical disease against which later Wittgenstein claims that his analysis works as a theory, because "the sickness of philosophical problems to get cured only through a changed mode of thought."\(^9\)

Cratlus is of opinion that a name is an expression of a thing in letters or syllables, just as a picture is an imitation. This is another extreme opposed to Hermogenes, which is criticised by Socrates. Thus, Socrates upholds a synthesis of both extremes that a name is an expression of the general character of the object, for which it stands, because if the name is exactly identical with the named, nobody can decide which were the names and which were the realities. The position of Socrates on the question of the relationship between words and objects is amply clear, in a piece of dialogue in *Theaetetus*:

“Socrates: And if you have in idea must it not be an idea of something
Theaetetus: Necessarily.
Socrates: And if you have an idea of something, mustn't it be of something real?
Theaetetus: It seems so.”

A. E. Taylor sums up the controversy as follows:

“The issue under consideration is thus only one aspect of the famous Sophistic anti-thesis between “Nature” and “social usage” which we know to have been the great controversial issue of the Periclean age.”

Ogden and Richards say that, “the difficulties raised by this ideal world where the Name-soul dwelt, and its relations with world of mud and blood...” continued as difficulties in the relationship between language and its actual practitioners. Aristotle clearly rejects the position of Plato, concerning the origin and nature of language. For Aristotle, the father of grammar in the occidental world, language is arrived at by convention and agreement. This is very much in tune with the Wittgensteinian position that language, like any other institution, is founded on convention. The difference arises when the essential question of representation comes. In De Interpretatione I Aristotle states that:

10 A.E. Taylor, Plato: The man and his work (Methuen and co. ltd. 1926), p. 64.
11 Ibid., p. 77.
12 Ogden and Richards, n. 6, p. 33.
Words spoken are symbols or signs of affections or impressions of the soul; written words are the signs of words spoken. As writing, so also is speech not the same for all races of men. But the mental affection themselves, of which these words are primarily signs, are the same for the whole of mankind, as are also the objects of which those affections are representations or likenesses, images, copies.¹³

This stance is the organic expression of his rejection of the Doctrine of Ideas of Plato. The process of selection of words, for him is quite arbitrary, which is the view taken by most of linguists in the modern period. Language is basically, for Aristotle, an arbitrary system of agreement among the practitioners of a linguistic community. Christian cosmology also presented religio-mythical theories about the origin and function of language. The Book of Genesis considered Adam as an eternal name-giver to the objects in the world. He conferred names according to the ‘Nature’ of the objects thus named. According to Genesis, Adam was a great etymologist, who had direct acquaintance with the essential nature of objects and to signify that, he gave them names.

“And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air, and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature was the name thereof.

And Adam gave names to call cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field.”

Thus, going by this version, the relation between the object and the name is ‘natural’ or ‘essential’. Although, Wittgenstein in *Tractatus*, accepts a one to one relation between ‘name’ and the ‘object’, but he differs in accepting this relation to be ‘natural’. “A name means an object. The object is its meaning.”  

But to deny the ‘essential’ or ‘natural’ relation between the name and the object he writes,

“We can describe the world completely by means of fully generalized propositions, i.e. without first correlating any name with a particular object.”

In his later philosophy Wittgenstein completely rejects this view and dubbed this picture of language, as ‘primitive’ and as the ‘Augustine’s picture of language’. He begins his *Philosophical Investigations* with a

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14 Ibid.
16 Ibid., 5.526.
lengthy quote from Augustine’s *Confessions* and critically summarises it as follows:

"These words (Augustine's) it seems to me, give us a particular picture of the essence of human language. It is this: The individual words in language name objects—sentences are combination of such names. In this picture of language we find the roots of the following idea: Every word has a meaning. This meaning is correlated with the word. It is the object for which the word stands."\(^{17}\)

The essential thrust of later Wittgensteinian philosophy of language is in demolishing this picture of language, which reduces all other language games into this one game. \(^{THESIS}\)

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In the Adamic doctrine, the relation between the signifier and the signified is not arbitrary, and the sign is not double, but unitary. Language is in a fundamental oneness with nature, or it is a divine creation and not human or conventional. Thus words bear the mystic insight into the whole creation. This was indeed a sort of essentialist of innatist doctrine, different versions of which were prevalent even before Christian era and which emerge in the modern period sharing the insights of scientific

developments. According to *Genesis*, originally there was only 'one' language, spoken by all human beings, which got disintegrated into numerous tongues, due to the curse of God, all of them share something common, reminding of this original oneness.

As all human beings have the same origin in Adam, all languages have a single origin. As all human beings of different culture and time, share some common features, all languages of different historical periods, exhibit common features—thus goes the argument of Old Testament. Though this conception is fanciful and mythical, it has got some pragmatic value, as it stimulates linguistic study, in search of a universal structure behind the particular languages. This search after an enduring and permanent principle, can be identified in the Saussurean linguistics, Vladimir Propp’s folk analysis, Levi-Straussean myth analysis, Chomskean linguistics of competence and performance etc. Even early Wittgensteinian search for a 'logical form', which he believes, is hidden underneath the everyday language, can be compared with this search for a 'universal structure'. This 'logical form', he says mirrors the reality.\(^{18}\) The belief in an original language gave impetus to a lot of comparative studies in the field of linguistics.

\(^{18}\) TLP, 4.121.
The mythico-religious belief in Adamic proto-language, raised heated debates through all the Christian centuries. It must have been the archaic energy behind the belief in the ineptness of language in Cartesian linguistics. This element gets a sophisticated treatment in Chomsky, in his theory of the innate disposition of universal grammar, which gets 'performed' in various languages, in accordance with varying circumstances. The doctrine of natural language, drawn out of the speculations of Adams naming, was dominant during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Until Renaissance, the dominant form of discussion in language studies was between the various forms of basically Adamic position and other radically different view points like which we saw in Hermogenes. All through the Middle Ages, we can see different shades of neo-Platonism and Aristotelianism with these Christian and Jewish beliefs, dominating the philosophy of language in different proportions.

In short, even though there were attempts for radically opposing the Adamic, universalistic (Plato) essentialist and innate (Cartesian) approaches, which are basically static, ahistorical, asocial and synchronic theories, these radically opposite theories (like of Hermogenes’) which stress the sociality, conventionality, and arbitrariness of languages were either marginalised or subsumed by the dominant ‘essentialistic discourse’ on language. By the time of Renaissance, and the emergence of new
science and enlightenment, we find that a different conception of the problem of language is beginning to draw much attention. Language study, in a broad sense, is considered to be the pivotal area to understand human history and civilisation. Nearly 25000 years ago, Herodotus records the story of an Egyptian king, who conducted an experiment of bringing up children, absolutely in isolation, to see which language they would speak. The whole experiment was to ascertain the oldest notion on earth. History records several such experiments, even as late as eighteenth century. The result of these experiments are philosophically uninteresting. But the interesting fact is that from such an early date of history, language is considered as the key to several historical ambiguities related to human beings. This highlights the crucial role that language studies play in human affairs.

From Renaissance onwards, language study and philology begins to be considered as the central disciplines in the understanding of human reality. Especially, the eighteenth century had given language a central role in our understanding. John Locke’s famous Essay, which laid foundation for the modern study of language, being radically different from the earlier approaches, was mainly aimed at the seventeenth century view of the nature of language, which was similar to the Adamic conception of language. Locke’s Essay was one of the central eighteenth century studies
in this field. The origin of this study thus became tightly interwoven with the major intellectual events in later centuries. The study of language has occupied a crucial position in the intellectual history for the last three centuries. Now, the contemporary intellectual field is thoroughly dominated by the linguistic and semiotic approaches. During this period a consensus emerged, that our understanding of this history gains coherence and fruitfulness, only when grounded in the first human and social institution, language. Almost all the philosophers, historians, sociologists and anthropologists of this period are forced to engage themselves in this discussion on language, because that provides an overall paradigm for research in the humanities. In the following pages, we will try to give some highlights of this ongoing discussion, among the thinkers, who made possible the current linguistic turn.

The 'Zeit Geist' (time spirit) of eighteenth century was one of quest for the 'Origins'. Respective thinkers in various disciplines, constructed conjectures around their objects of study. The eighteenth century witnessed a deep and enduring interest in the origin of language, which no other century, probably might have equalled in its zeal and insight. The typical eighteenth century formulation, was the location of the origin of language and speech, at the crux of this enquiry. The basic conviction of this period was that language helped us to trace with greatest definiteness,
the progress of human mind. Locke, Leibinz and Condillac, all emphatically agreed on this conviction.

Lord Monboddo’s ‘Of the Origin and Progress of Language’ (1770) and Adam Smith’s essay ‘Considerations Concerning the First Formations of Language’ contributed to the discussion on the origin and function of the first social institution, i.e. language. Locke shared the view of Boyle’s ‘origin and forms of qualities’, first published in 1666. The implication of Boyle is clear in Locke’s general statement in III II 5.:

"Because men would not be thought to talk barely of their own imagination but of things as really they are; therefore they often suppose their words to stand also for the reality of things."

The debate in the eighteenth century reached a higher stage with the appearance of Condillac’s Essai, which in turn drew inspiration from Locke’s Essay. Both argue that the signification of sounds is not natural, but only imposed and arbitrary. In Condillac, the voluntary and arbitrary nature of the verbal sign is even more prominent than in Locke. The insistence on the creative aspect of language and speech among Romantics—chiefly in Germany—can be traced back to Condillac’s Essai. Condillac associated the progress of knowledge with the possibility of refinement of language. That is why he said that good science is language well made.

His basic contention is that language is the portrait of the character and genius of a people. A radicalisation of this idea is seen later in Wittgenstein.

To Condillac, language is the man's greatest and most decisively artificial creation. In *Essai*, he says that there are three kinds of signs, accidental signs which are beyond our deliberate control, natural sign, like cries involuntarily uttered in certain situations, and thirdly, instituted signs, chosen by ourselves with arbitrary relation to our ideas. For Locke too, language is only a tool and his view is entirely functional. A central motif of Locke's polemics in the field of language is against the Adamicist and Cartesian innatism. For Locke, language is not divine and natural. It is a human creation, which is based on convention. Being created by the 'ignorant and illiterate people' for communication, the relationship between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary. One of the major points of controversy was between Locke and Leibniz. Their basic opposition was on the question whether language is conventional or natural. This was part of the lively seventeenth century debate on words and things, language and mind and language and knowledge. As Hans Aarsleff puts it,

"... Leibniz sought to rescue language- and the consistency of his own philosophy- from Locke's doctrine that words 'signify only men's peculiar ideas and that by a perfectly arbitrary imposition."\(^20\)

\(^{20}\) Ibid., p. 29.
This difference of opinion did not overshadow their basic conviction in the importance of the institution of language. Leibinz says "If there were no signs; we should never think or conclude anything intelligibly."\(^{21}\)

The thrust of Locke's argument was directed against the central polemics of that period i.e. the innateness of ideas. He directed the whole philosophy as a crusade against this argument of innatism of ideas. Hence he was simply being consistent with his theory of ideas when he said that the words bear no intrinsic relationship to things. The meaning of the word, for him, has nothing to do with the sound. He says in III I X 4:

"Now since sounds have no natural connection with our ideas, but have all their signification from the arbitrary imposition of men, the doubtfulness and uncertainly of their signification... has its cause more in the idea they stand for, than in any incapacity there is in one sound, more than in another, to signify any idea: For in that regard they are all equally perfect."\(^{22}\)

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\(^{21}\) Ibid., p. 78.
\(^{22}\) Ibid., p. 67.
As we can see, Locke was insistent in his dismissal of the last remnants of the doctrine of natural language, because this doctrine is the backdoor through which innateness can creep in.

Descartes is the chief exponent of the innateness of linguistic disposition, as against the arbitrariness of linguistic capacity. When John Locke advocated the theory of *Tabula Rasa* and placed the source of all our knowledge in experience, Descartes said that all the essential ideas of human mind are inborn. They were the chief contenders of apparently opposite camps of linguistic theories. While Cartesian linguistics foresee language as an innate disposition of human mind, John Locke argued that language is a completely voluntary and arbitrary institution. Descartes says,

"Language is neither adventitious nor factitious but innate in the sense that in some families generosity or certain diseases are innate and babes of these families born with a certain disposition or propensity for contracting them." 23

The rediscovery of Lockean vs. innateness polemics in the twentieth century and especially a general appraisal of Cartesian linguistics, by linguists like Chomsky, makes it interesting to note their political reasons; behind the vehement attack of Locke on innatism in philosophy. Hans Aarsleff puts it clearly:

23 Ibid., 117.
"It is worth recalling the profound sense and aim of Locke's argument against innateness, a sense he makes emphatically clear at the end of Book I of the Essay. Locke wished to make certain that all claims to truth must be argued on public, not on private and esoteric grounds— with good reason. Locke was painfully aware of the potential tyranny of any doctrine of innateness, a doctrine that would therefore subvert the grand passion that illuminates all Locke's work, his desire for toleration."  

Locke feared the possible misuse of the study of an innate truth by one man over others, by that man transforming himself as the dictator of principles, and teacher of unquestionable truth. Since Locke is a democrat in epistemology and politics, he can not allow a truth, which can not be attained by public means. 

Thus for Locke, innateness of anything was fundamentally and primarily a political question. In the eighteenth century, which is the period of naked conquest of colonies by the European masters and the brutal suppression of the colonised, innateness was not as abstract or as scholastic an issue as it was for seventeenth century Descartes. If the inhabitants or South America, Africa and Asia did not share the moral rules of the Spanish and English conquerors, they were dubbed as animals rather than men. Aarsleff says:

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24 Ibid., p. 116.
"The new science demanded the reflection of the Adamic language doctrine in favour of the view that language is man made, its aim communications, its being social, and that words are arbitrary signs. The epistemology of new science could not get along with the essentialism of the Adamic language doctrine- this is what Locke’s argument against innate ideas is about".\textsuperscript{25}

The classical empiricism and the psychological atomism of Locke naturally led to the solipsism of George Berkeley on the one hand and the radical scepticism of David Hume on the other hand. These two thinkers, in different ways proved the essential limitations of classical empiricism and rationalism and the psychologistic theories of meaning of words. The essential unity of both these classical methodologies is evident in the words of Berkeley. He says,

"So long as I confine my thoughts to my own ideas divested of words, I do not see how I can be easily mistaken. The objects I consider, I clearly and adequately know. I can not be deceived in thinking I have an idea which I have not."\textsuperscript{26}

The fact that no one was able to clearly point out Berkeleyean mistakes, until the twentieth century, adequately shows that intrinsic difficulty raised by Berkeley. It was only with the rise of a different

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., p. 316.
\textsuperscript{26} G.P. Baker and P.M.S. Hacker, quoted in n.1, p. 19.
'theory of meaning' with an alternative idea about the problem of what it is
to have a concept of something, that one could locate the mistake.

The reaction and the new orientation in the 1980's was not
something abrupt, without any precursors. J.N. Mad Vig, between 1832
and 1887, published a number of essays in Danish, devoted to general
linguistics. In these articles he emphasised that the meaning of sign is the
result the acknowledgement and sanction of those who participate in the
language. Among the representative works of 1890's is also Jesperson's
*Progress in language*. All these show that during 1890's it was evident
that the study of language was being transformed. Saussure, Jesperson,
Meillet Breal, etc. were in the leading role of this transformation, which
gave an irreversible turn to the twentieth century philosophy of language
and other disciplines. Taine, Saussure, Wilhelm von Humboldt, all
dismissed the belief that language is just nomenclature and agreed within
the broad framework put forth by John Locke, that words stand not for
things themselves but for the ideas we, form of these things. This
psychological element which was retained by the above mentioned thinkers
in their study of language will be the main point of attack by Wittgenstein,
in his radically different concept of language.
The last two decades of the nineteenth century witnessed new approaches towards that characteristically human sign system, i.e. language. Linguistics emerged as a highly specialised and self organised branch of study in the twentieth century. As Charles Taylor puts it appropriately,

“Our century has seen the birth and explosive growth of the science of linguistics. And in a sense ‘explosive’ is the right world, because like the other sciences of man, linguistics is pursued in a number of mutual irreducible ways, according to mutually contradictory approaches, defended by warring schools. There are structurlists in the Bloomfieldian sense, there are proponents of transformational theories, there are formalists.”27

The belief in an eternal and necessary relation between a word and its object had become somewhat mythical. A whole set of new tools and methods of analysis helped linguists to go into the depths of language system. Name like Jakobson and Chomsky are known far outside the bounds of their discipline. What is more striking is the partial hegemony of linguistics. To put it in other way, that linguistics has won over other disciplines. Roman Jakobson expresses the importance of study of language to ensure a proper understanding of the other disciplines. According to him, language is obviously a component of culture but it

functions as the substratum of the cultural totality. The most influential tool in the early decades of this century among linguists was Course in General Linguistics by Ferdinand de Saussure. This trend making study of language created possibilities for framing human sciences and philosophy on the model of language. Through his tool, Saussure tried to refute the idea that language reflects reality and instead of that he established the signifying role of language.

His central thesis was that language signifies reality by a linguistically structured form of conceptual organisation upon it. The signifiers of language signify, Saussure argued, not real objects but concepts of objects and concepts of relationships; each signifier deriving its meaning, from its relationship with other signifiers, within the system of relationship mapped out by language itself. The word ‘ox’, according to Saussure, signifies not a real ox but the concept of an ‘ox’. There is no intrinsic connection between the real ox and the word ‘ox’. That means the relationship between the signifier and signified is arbitrary. It is a matter of convention. Accordingly, he divided language into two. He says:

"Synchronic linguistics will be concerned with the logical and psychological relations that bind together coexisting terms and form a system in the collective mind of speakers. Diachronic linguistics, on the contrary, will study relations that bind together successive terms not perceived by the
collective mind but substituted for each other without forming a system."^{28}

This is the basis of his distinction between the abstract system of norms, ‘la langue’ and the actual speech act ‘la parole’. But as Roman Jakobson, from the very beginning, insisted, the principle closing this chasm between ‘langue’ and ‘parole’ should be elaborated. He rejected this division of static synchrony and evolutionary diachrony. But it was Volosinov who correctly accepted the challenge from a dialectical point of view and proved this as the revival of Cartesian spirit in the area of linguistic investigation. The rejection of Saussure’s dualism became an important task for Volosinov’s philosophy of language.

Parallel to this line of development, in the beginning of our century, started the research and findings of pioneers of structural linguistics who stresses, as Jakobson says, “an ever deepening insight into its (verbal system) intrinsic coherence and into the strictly relational and hierarchical nature of all its constituents, instead of their mechanical itemisation condemned by the pioneer of structural approach to language.”^{29} This was the dominant theme of another movement to be noticed during the interwar period, in the name of structural linguistics, coined in Prague in 1928-
29. This linguistic approach influenced all the other branches of human studies like anthropology. In the beginning of our century, the thought of Husserl strengthened these initial steps of structural linguistics by advocating ideas of ‘universal grammar’, as it was conceived by the rationalism of seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Language became a methodological model, thus occupying the privileged position. Pierce, already at the threshold of our century, assigned to the cast and splendidly developed science of linguistics. Our century witnesses the development of general theory of signs (semiotic / semiology) and communication theory.

And then we have to add that some of the most influential philosophical movements of the century have given language a central place. They have not only been concerned with language as one of the problems of philosophy, but have also been linguistic, in that philosophical understanding is essentially bound up with the understanding of the medium of language. Philosophers realised the importance of analysing language, analysing the way we practise language. They identified thinking with talking, and so enforced the primacy of a clarification of the ‘way we speak philosophy’. A faulty understanding and practice of language can pollute and corrupt our thinking. Hence the modern philosophers of twentieth century considered linguistic clarification and analysis as the important task for clarifying philosophical thoughts. The whole set of logical positivists and ‘ordinary’ language philosophers of twentieth century to which group generally Wittgenstein also belongs, took linguistic analysis as the main weapon in their crusade against
metaphysical and idealist thinking of the earlier philosophers. The importance of Wittgenstein in this philosophical movement is aptly put by Suman Gupta as follows,

"Wittgenstein is the one of the few philosophers who brought the question of the relation of language to philosophy to the focus of philosophical discourse... the important philosophical question, in this context, is how do words in our language come to have meaning."\(^{30}\)

The concern for language as a medium links up with the twentieth-century concern with meaning. What is it that makes speech meaningful, or indeed that makes meaningful any of the things that have meaning? For this question has been raised not just in connection with language, which is what, philosophical theories of meaning have been concerned with. It has also been raised acutely for the arts, for instance music and painting. The range of the meaningful has been further extended dramatically by Freudian psychoanalysis. Now not just speech and art objects, but also slips of the tongue, symptoms, affinities can be ‘analysed’, that is interpreted. And consequently ‘interpretation’ or ‘analysis’ became a key term. ‘Hermeneutical’ approaches got a wide audience in a number of fields.

What emerged from this, is the twentieth-century concern for language became a concern about meaning. As Tony Bennet says in the context of Saussure, "all that matters is the relationship of one sign to another within the closed system of la langue; the question of their reference outside language is entirely bracketed."\(^{31}\) This was the general state of affairs, applicable to the various kinds of developments of the philosophy of language, in the early decades of the present century. A linguistic sign is culturally, socially and ideologically loaded with meaning, in which individual speakers of a system of language participate. The actually existing material reality is the converging point of a continuous discourse. It is in this encompassing totality that linguistic sign gets activated in the process of meaning production. Hence every word is like a pebble, losing its original shape and attaining an everlasting in the reality. It is this highly sensitive umbilical cord that sustains language in a perpetual relation with the reality, which in turn helps the linguistic entities to record and preserve minute vibrations and intonations in the river bed of reality, which was missing in these linguistic philosophers.

It is in this overall historical milieu that the relevance of the Wittgensteinian philosophy of language is to be discussed. In his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* he advocated a theory of logical simples, through a process of atomistic analysis of the proposition, influenced in

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\(^{31}\) Tony Bennet, Formalism and Marxism, London & New York, Methuen, 1979, p. 79.
this method by the logical atomism of Bertrand Russell and Frege. In the early phase of his intellectual development, Wittgenstein believed that language can be made perfect by analysis. The atomistic propositions picture an atomistic state of affairs. In this period his claim was to discover the underlying logical structure of language form beneath its superficial grammatical appearance. And this can be achieved by a penetrating analysis, which will give an unambiguous picture of the existing state of affairs. He thought that the language, we use in ordinary discourse is apparently, faulty and imperfect but a perfect logical order is underlying it. He was convinced of the possibility of universal and logical constants of a perfect language, lying in the 'depth' of the phenomenal language. As Norman Malcom says,

"Wittgenstein's Tractatus may be called a synthesis of the theory of truth functions and the idea that language is a picture of reality. Out of this synthesis arises a third main ingredient of the book, its doctrine that which can not be said only shown."32

This radical shift in emphasis, in the orientation of philosophical inquiries in the early decades of the twentieth century was the result of equally radical ways of thinking in the turn of the last century. Baker and Hacker summarise this intellectual atmosphere which facilitated the emergence of Wittgensteinian philosophy of language. They say:

"The shift in philosopher's conception of their subject matter was produced to a larger extent through the examination of the apparent philosophical implications of the discovery, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, of rich and sophisticated logical calculi. These formal inventions were the fruits of the labours of philosopher-mathematicians such as Boole, Frege, Russell and Whitehead. The actual transformation in the conception of philosophy can be dated, with fair accuracy, to Wittgenstein's Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus. He argued that the sole task of philosophy is the clarification, by logical analysis, of sentences of natural language and the eradication of pseudo propositions (in particular metaphysical ones) which violate the logical syntax of language."33

It is in this spirit that Wittgenstein declared that "All philosophy is a 'critique of language'."34 These ideas fired the imagination of the Vienna circle philosophers. They considered that Tractatus will provide them the much needed analytical tools to solve the haunting problems in philosophy. The group considered Wittgenstein's book as a turning point. The leader of this group of logical positivists, Moritz Schlick's statement is a testimony in this regard. He says,

34 Wittgenstein, n. 15, p. 19.
"Leibniz dimly saw the beginning. Bertrand Russell and Gottlob Frege have opened up important stretches in the last decades, but Ludwig Wittgenstein (in his Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus) is the first to have pushed forward to the decisive turning point."  

Rightly recapturing the early Wittgensteinian approach to the philosophical problems, Rudolf Carnap announced, "All philosophical problems are questions or the syntax of the language of science". Even though early Wittgenstein inspired the whole lot of philosophers, to come under the term 'logical positivists', but later, he himself disagreed with his views of language propounded in Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus. Many interpreters here, conclude that he completely rejected his early philosophy as essentially produced by a mistaken concept of language. It is an exaggeration to claim that, there is in Wittgenstein some deadly ruthlessness, with which he is to have destroyed his 'entire earlier philosophy' and, thereby, to have attained an unparalleled uniqueness in the history of philosophy. Such a claim doesn't seem to be completely true. Certainly, Wittgenstein was ruthlessly honest, also with himself. Where others might have attempted to gloss over the inconsistencies in their systems, he tried to bring them to light, to express and to describe them. But one cannot neglect the important continuity in Wittgenstein's

conception of the nature and tasks of philosophy. The views arrived at in the *Tractatus*—that philosophical problems arise from our misunderstanding of the logic of our language, that philosophy is no science but an activity of elucidation and clarification, that moral and aesthetic values cannot be ‘said’, but can only be ‘shown’—continued to serve as the leading thread in Wittgenstein’s later works. This continuation of his thought and the differences in his later philosophy, is rightly summarised by K.T Fann:

> “Wittgenstein’s later conception of the nature of the task of philosophy can best be seen as a ‘development’ of his earlier views, while his later method should be regarded as the ‘negation’ of his earlier method. This I think is the key to a clear understanding of Wittgenstein’s philosophy as a whole.”  

The criticism of Frank Ramsey and Piero Sarraffa made Wittgenstein to shift from the *Tractatus* to the *Philosophical Investigations*, which he acknowledges in the preface of the *Investigations*. The later Wittgenstein came to regard the method and doctrines of the *Tractatus* as a paradigm of traditional philosophy. Throughout his later writings the presuppositions and views of the *Tractatus* served as the main targets of his attack.

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The widely accepted assumption in the modern era about the mental concept as the signified was not seriously questioned from the time of Locke. Until roughly in the first decades of twentieth century. This was more or less considered during the previous centuries as the actual referent of the linguistic utterance. Linguistic utterance gives rise to the mental image of an object or a moment of reality. As Hillary Putnam observes, "no large scale and comprehensive demolition job was done against this particularly wide spread philosophical misconception until Wittgenstein produced his *Philosophical Investigation*."38

Later Wittgenstein disagreed with the correspondence theory of language and reality in *Tractatus* and disowned his own earlier ambitious search for an logical structure, which he thought, hidden beneath the everyday language. His rejection of the view of language stated in *Tractatus* is clear in the following words, "...is the pictorial character an agreement? in the *Tractatus* I had said something like: it is an agreement of form. But this is misleading."39 In the later period, Wittgenstein disowned this 'misleading' premise about language. The picture-theory is replaced by the 'game theory' and the 'use theory' of meaning. According to this theory, innumerable modes of utterances, modes of discourses are

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considered as games, each having its own conventionally agreed set of rules. All these discourses can be described in reference to a set of rules specific to each of them. And the question of truth or falsity, validity or invalidity of a particular game, or a moment in a game, is decided according to the loyalty to the respective set of grammatical rules.

The different language games, or different instances or a word will have nothing as a common ‘essence’ except a family resemblance. There is no general philosophical theory over and above all these language games. All of them are autonomous and self-contained. The concept of language-game is used in a broader sense, so as to include in it, the concept of a culture or in the Wittgensteinian term, a ‘form of life’. According to the semantic theory of later Wittgenstein, a word or proposition is meaningful only in the general context of a particular language, or a culture. The attack and a consequent denial of a ‘general theory’ and abstract meaning, are the theoretical foundations for his consideration of ordinary language as perfect.

The aim of analysis, in the thesis, will be to work out the possibilities and shortcomings of earlier Wittgenstein’ philosophy of language. In the following chapters, efforts are made to critically examine the various aspects of these philosophical formulations. Though our thesis
is limited to the earlier Wittgenstein’s philosophy, but it can not be understood without referring it to the later period. So, in all the following chapters, we are compelled to trace this connection and discuss in the overall perspective of both periods of his philosophical development. But the main focus will be on the question of how language and reality is related specifically from the point of view of the Tractatus.