CHAPTER-III
CHAPTER: III

ALL PHILOSOPHY IS A CRITIQUE OF LANGUAGE

"Philosophy is a Battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language."

: Philosophical Investigation (109)

In this Chapter we would like to discuss earlier Wittgenstein’s conception of philosophy and his views about the language required for philosophising. We shall also analyse how he makes the difference between philosophy and other empirical sciences. This chapter in many ways is closely linked with the last, both in methodology and the problems discussed. His peculiar style has generated a lot of controversy in the interpretation of his thoughts. Some of the interpreters argue that there is a ‘lack’ of systematic theory, in the form of a philosophical treatise, in him. But some other Wittgensteinian scholars are of the opinion that, though Wittgenstein claims so, however on the contrary, there is a well argued theory in his writings.
Instead of just taking one of these sides, we would like to bring out the
elements of truth in this controversy. Both the early and later writings of
Wittgenstein contain a well-structured theory behind the conclusions drawn.
Since the style of presentation, as we discussed in the last chapter, is so
unconventional, some interpreters consider that as an evidence, for the
absence of any kind of theory.

There is no point of dispute apparently between philosophy and
language taken as it is a vehicle of expression of reasoning -philosophical or
otherwise. But it is too naïve a description of the situation to be of any
interest, much less to be a topic of intellectual investigation. So long as
language is used as a vehicle for philosophical discourses and conclusions,
there is no point of concern, but as soon as analysis of language takes the
central place in philosophical enterprises, it warrants concern and worry in
many corners. The relevance of linguistic analysis to philosophy has been
hotly disputed, and arguments for and against it have been advanced.

Thinkers in many fields have made complaints about the deficiencies of
language, but philosophers have been more particularly concerned about it. In
fact as Alston puts it, "verbal discussion is the philosopher's laboratory, in
which he puts his ideas to the test." It is, thus, natural that a philosopher should be especially sensitive to the flaws in his major instrument, Language. But the main point regarding which a number of controversies have started raising their heads is whether it is desirable to restrict philosophy to the sphere of linguistic activities. In other words it has to be settled, if philosophy means 'philosophy of language' and nothing else. Here we will try to discuss what is Wittgenstein's answer to this question, in *Tractatus*. And than we shall analyse critically how satisfactory his answer is in the overall philosophical milieu.

Various aspects of language have been discussed in philosophy ever since the origin of philosophy but, certainly, their role has been a subsidiary one, and they have been used to make clear the ambiguity of philosophical thought. As we discussed in the first chapter, that 'philosophy of language' has been attracting contemporary philosophers to a great extent Discussions about language, its structure, meaning etc. have gained important position in philosophical discourses. It was only towards the close of the nineteenth century and in the beginning of the twentieth century that linguistic speculations came as a substitute and became the prime concern of the philosophers. Few questions have been raised and discussed during this

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period, that whether a systematic replacement of ordinary language is needed by a better one for philosophy? Whether a method, which confines itself to remarks about language, can deal with the realities behind language? And can empirical science be set aside in the treatment of philosophical problems, especially in the modern world? In the backdrop of these questions, we will trace out Wittgenstein’s conception of philosophy and the method he adopts in his book *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*.

**Logically Perfect Language**

The question about the ordinary language is of immense importance in understanding Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*. Wittgenstein was not the only philosopher who tried to answer the question—whether a systematic replacement of ordinary language is needed for the betterment of philosophy. Many philosophers in the history of philosophy have raised the question regarding the ordinariness of ordinary language. Rene Descartes, in a letter in 1629, expressed an ancient aspiration of Rationalism that all human thought might be reduced to a mathematical form, so that it would all ‘be arranged in a order like the natural order of the numbers’ If the secret of such a system could be discovered, the benefits, according to Descarets, would be immense. Learning it would be as easy as naming ‘every one of the infinite numbers’ and this would make it suitable to be ‘understood by the whole human race’. The ‘greatest advantage of such a language’, as Descartes puts, would be –
"The assistance it would give to men's judgement, representing matters so clearly that it would be almost impossible to go wrong ... it would made peasants better judge of the truth about the world than philosophers are now."\(^2\)

Though he thought it 'possible to invent such a language', but he did not hope ever to see it in use. For that to happen, he thought, the order of nature would have to change.

Here it is to be noted, as we discussed in the first chapter, that unlike analytic philosophers, Descartes objective was to project through language an ontological position i.e. for him and other philosopher of non-analytic trend, language is meant to project or to communicate the reality. On the other hand for analytic philosopher like Russell, Wittgenstein and other, the reality is to be deduced or deciphered from the structure of the language itself.

Three centuries later, this point which was mentioned by Descartes, finds its elaboration in Russell when he complained about those who 'are persuaded that common speech is good enough, not only for daily life, but also for philosophy'; whereas he believed that ordinary language is 'full of

vagueness and inaccuracy'\textsuperscript{3}. It might be thought, that what is needed is a better language- one that would avoid the deficiencies of common speech. Russell envisaged a 'logically perfect language', which would be based on 'simple objects' and their relations, thereby avoid the vagueness of ordinary language. In the logically perfect language, he says, there would be:

"one word and no more for every simple object, and everything that is not simple will be expressed by a combination of words.... A language of that sort will be completely analytic, and will show at a glance the logical structure of the facts asserted or denied."\textsuperscript{4}

This kind of language, in Russell's view, has to be invented by scientifically trained observers for purpose of philosophy and logic. Ordinary languages, by contrast, 'are not logically perfect in this sense, and they cannot possibly be, if they are to serve the purposes of daily life'. On the other hand, a logically perfect language, if it could be constructed, would not be intolerably prolong and boring, but, as regards its vocabulary, would be very largely private to one speaker.

Here we can see a difficulty regarding the practical possibilities of the assumptions underlying Russell’s and Descartes’ proposals. Descartes assumed that human thoughts, and perhaps the corresponding reality, were such as to lend themselves to numerical ordering; while Russell took for granted (a) that the world contains ‘simple objects’ in the required sense, and (b) that the idea of a private language makes sense. But all of these assumptions and claims are questionable. Here Russell claimed that we are in danger of making fallacious ‘inferences from the nature of language to the nature of the world’ – ‘fallacious, because they depend upon the logical defects of language’; whereas a logically perfect language would prevent such errors, he claims. This claim is made in the existing language, and it is hard to see how it could be otherwise.

Russell’s views about the defects of ordinary language were inspired by the work of Frege (1848-1925). Frege has the most important contribution in this area. According to him the logician’s task is ‘to break the power of the word over the human mind, uncovering illusions’ due to the nature of existing languages. What is needed, according to him is not ‘to investigate language’, because languages are not made to match logic’s ruler’. He says further that logic should be the judge of languages. He invented a new system, of

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'conceptual notation', which was meant to conform better to this criterion than existing languages. Frege's system has been widely adopted, with modifications, as a standard way of displaying logical relations. Frege compared the relation between 'conceptual notation' and ordinary language with that between the microscope and the eye. In the circumstances of ordinary life, he acknowledged, 'the eye has a great superiority over the microscope', but as soon as scientific purposes place great demands on sharpness of resolution, the eye turns out to be inadequate. 'The microscope, on the other hand, is perfectly suited for just such purposes' The way microscope introduces us to a New World, which would otherwise be hidden from us. In the same way a logically perfect language will give a new and clear knowledge about the world. This distinction enables one to discriminate between things, which in ordinary language appear blurred and confused.

Frege believes that ordinary language, has a certain softness and instability. It is having both advantages and disadvantages. He compared the usefulness of ordinary language with that of the hands, but he point outs that there is a place for 'artificial hands' also in the form of tools for particular purpose. These tools enable us to work with more accuracy than the hand can.

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provide’. Ordinary language is inadequate in a similar way. He says, “We need a system of symbols from which every ambiguity is banned, which has a strict logical form…”

By using the analogy of the hand and the tool, Frege tries to show that, a new notation can indeed be described as a useful tool for working out logical puzzles, and ordinary language may be deficient in this respect. However Frege’s aim was not merely to provide a useful tool in this sense. If this had been his aim, it would not have posed a challenge to ordinary language philosophy. A tool can be described as an extension of the hand, but what Frege proposed was to correct, and not merely to extend the existing language. According to him, “a great part of the work of a philosopher consists – or at least ought to consist – in a struggle against language.”

The influence of Frege and Russell on the view of the Tractatus is visible all over his book. Wittgenstein himself, in the Tractatus, explicitly identifies two sources of his philosophising – I am indebted to Frege’s great works and to the writings of my friend Bertrand Russell for much of the stimulation of my thoughts.” But, regarding the language required for philosophising, early Wittgenstein differs from them. He conceived of

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7 Ibid. p.86.
ordinary language as to be in order as it is. He believed that the real structure of language is in good logical order, although philosophical analysis is necessary to reveal it. He did not think ordinary language lacked defects, on the contrary, he held that surface grammar conceals logical form. Apparently vagueness and ambiguity are rampant. This complexity and vagueness of ordinary language, however, is not a defect in itself. Therefore, Wittgenstein does not disparage ordinary language when he talks about its vagueness. For he believes that what misleads us is not ordinary language itself, but our inability to see the logic of language. Our ordinary language is otherwise in perfect logical order. To put it in his words,

“In fact, all the propositions of our everyday language, just as they stand, are in perfect logical order.”

Although ordinary language permits the formation of nonsensical strings of words, which appear well formed. But this defect, according to him, merely highlights the gap between the appearance and reality of language. Anything in ordinary language, which genuinely expresses a sense, is, just as it stands, in good logical order. So, Wittgenstein in *Tractatus* conceived of language as a logically rigid essence that lies beneath the contingent surface of ordinary discourse, a structure which is to be discovered by a penetrating analysis. He tried to bring to light the hidden logic of thought and speech and

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10 TLP, 5.5563
he therefore constructed, by means of symbolic logic, a network that was held up as norm or requirement for the language of philosophy.

According to the *Tractatus* there must be something which any proposition in language, of whatever kind, must have in common with what it depicts, if it is to be able to depict it even incorrectly. This irreducible shared minimum is called by Wittgenstein 'logical form'. 'What any picture, of whatever form, must have in common with reality, in order to be able to depict it--correctly or incorrectly--in any way at all, is logical form, i.e. the form of reality'.

Propositions in general do not have spatial form in common with the situation they depict; but any proposition must have logical form in common with what it depicts. He writes: 'A picture whose pictorial form is logical form is called a logical picture'. This includes the possibility of a picture being false picture of reality given that logical form is merely the shared minimum.

Wittgenstein was interested in discovering the 'logical forms' which constitutes the foundations of logic and language. His main interest lay in discovering the essence of logic; and this led him to discover the essence of language. According to him, logic and language have the same essential

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11 *TLP*. 2.18
12 *TLP*. 2.181
structure, i.e., the same foundations. Philosophy, for Wittgenstein, was an exploration of these essential foundations of logic and language, i.e., the forms. He says,

"Philosophy, is the doctrine of logical forms of scientific propositions (not primitive propositions only)."\textsuperscript{13}

This means that philosophy deals with the logical forms, i.e., the logical structures of the propositions of our language and logic. However, for Wittgenstein, philosophy only describes those logical forms without trying to add anything to them. It is in this sense that he says, "In philosophy there are no deductions: it is purely descriptive."\textsuperscript{14} By this he seems to suggest that philosophy has to describe what is already given; it has to put everything as it is. The logical forms as constituting the essence of all symbolism lie at the foundation of our language and representation; philosophy has only to show what these forms are and how they work. That’s why he says, “Logic takes care of itself; all we have to do is to look and see how it does it.”\textsuperscript{15}

Therefore, for Wittgenstein, what is in question is not the rejection of ordinary language in favour of a perfect logical language of a Fregean or

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{15} NB, p. 11
Russellian type, but the discovery of the underlying logical structure of language from beneath its superficial grammatical appearance. Wittgenstein did not try to construct a perfect language, in the manner of Frege and Russell. Of course he wanted to prescribe a "sign-language that is governed by logical grammar- by logical syntax". Therefore, his conceptual notation or sign language is merely an 'instrument' in discovering the logical essence of language. Max Black puts it:

"the ideography is for him merely an instrument in the search for the essence of representation that is present in all language and in all symbolism".

Thus it is a mistake to say that Wittgenstein, like Russell was constructing a perfect language. Many interpreters of Tractatus like Prof. Suman Gupta, have identified Wittgenstein’s views on language with that of Russell’s. She writes,

"Both Russell and Wittgenstein held that that language by which the men in the street describes his daily experience is not fit to mirror the ultimate reality. Our ordinary day-to-day concepts and propositions need to be analysed into simpler ones."

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16 TLP. 3.325
Even Russell, who was also helpful friend of him, seems to have misunderstood Wittgenstein in saying that the latter was concerned with the construction of a logically perfect language. Russell, in his Introduction to the *Tractatus*, interprets the book as:

"Mr. Wittgenstein is concerned with the conditions of a logically perfect language- not that any language is logically perfect, or that we believe ourselves capable, here and now, of constructing a logically perfect language, but that the whole function of language is to have meaning, and it only fulfils this function in proportion as it approaches to the ideal language which we postulate."\(^{19}\)

Russell and the other interpreters, thus believe that Wittgenstein is postulating an ideal language to which our language must approximate. But this is not a correct generalisation, since, though Wittgenstein talks of a perfect logical syntax, he says that it applies to ordinary language. Russell's suggestion, therefore, seems to be quite contrary to Wittgenstein's expressed view that ordinary language is already perfect as it is, and need not be refined to approximate to the postulated ideal language. P. M. S. Hacker points out:

"Wittgenstein's investigation is not, as Russell supposed, aimed at separating what is adequate in...

\(^{19}\) TLP, Russell's Introduction, p. 91
language from what is not, and then improving and refining it. It is aimed at revealing the structure of what already is and must be, in perfect order."^{20}

For Wittgenstein, the perfect logical order is already underlying ordinary language because the possibility of any language depends upon its fulfilling the conditions of a perfect language. According to him, language must have a perfect logical order in order to be able to express every sense, i.e., to picture reality; it, therefore, does not wait for any analysis to give a perfect order to it. He writes,

"But this is surely clear: the propositions which are the only ones that humanity uses will have a sense just as they are and do not wait upon a future analysis in order to acquire a sense."^{21}

Therefore, the function of philosophy is not to bring perfection to language, but to reveal the perfect order that is already given in language. Wittgenstein’s enquiry was not concerned with any ideal language, but with the language we have and with the logical conditions, which underlie this language. He however believed that language is misleading when its logical forms are not kept in view. So he believed that “distrust of grammar is the first requisite of philosophising."^{22} That is to say, we must not be misled by the apparent grammatical features of language, and must try to know the real logical forms, since “the apparent logical forms of a proposition need not its

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^{21} NB, p. 61.
^{22} NB, p. 93.
real one.”23 This led Wittgenstein to believe that ordinary language conceals the real logical forms and also the forms of thought under its apparent grammatical forms. He writes,

“Language disguises thought. So much so that from the outward form of the clothing it is impossible to infer the logical form of thought beneath it, because the outward form of the clothing is not designed to reveal the form of the body, but for entirely different purposes. The tacit convention on which the understanding of every day language depends are enormously complicated.”24

Thus from the outward form of language we cannot know its real forms and the forms of thought it expresses. Hence it becomes necessary for philosophy to discover the real logical forms of language and thought and thereby to exhibit and make manifest what is apparently concealed. The apparent grammatical forms do not exhibit the enormously complicated features of language. Ordinary language, as Wittgenstein says, is “a part of human organism and is no less complicated than it”25 i.e., it has a very complex structure like our organism. This complexity, however, is in the very nature of ordinary language because it grows continuously and adds new forms to it. He writes,

“Man possesses the ability to construct language capable of expressing every sense, without having

23 TLP, 4.0031
24 TLP, 4.002
25 TLP, 4.002
any idea how each word has meaning or what meaning is.”26

That is, man continuously adds new forms to the structure of language and hence arises its complex structure. Because of this complexity and consequent vagueness, it is not easy to know the logic of language, i.e. the logical forms. These logical forms can only be manifest when we see through the complex structure of language. Therefore, philosophy has to make us aware of the correct forms of language by removing its apparent forms. As Max Black puts it,

“... it is a chief philosophical task to render this hidden complexity manifest ... to transform logical innocence to logical awareness.”27

The key document for grasping, what was Wittgenstein notion of language in his early and later philosophy is the Philosophical Remarks, his first book-length endeavour after his return to philosophy in 1929, and the first work in which he clearly begins to move away from the Tractatus. He writes,

“I do not now have phenomenological language, or ‘primary language’ as I used to call it, in mind as my goal. I no longer hold it to be necessary. All that is possible and necessary is to separate what is

26 Ibid.
27 Max Black. No. 17, p. 159.
essential from what is inessential in our language.”

There is a certain ambiguity in the phrase ‘phenomenological language’ as he uses it. Its basic meaning is ‘language concerned with phenomena’, and the main endeavour of the Tractatus was to show how ordinary factual language might be analysed in a way that would perfectly reflect the nature of phenomena. The language in which this analysis was expressed would not be an ideal alternative to everyday factual language, but an ideal actually realised by it. Here, his point is that he now thinks that he can separate what is essential from what is inessential in ordinary language without extracting from ordinary language the perfect mirror, which he formerly took to be hidden deep within it.

Now it is very clear, even through Wittgenstein’s own views about Tractatus in his later writings, that in Tractatus he was not concerned with constructing a ‘logically perfect language’ but he always believed that ordinary language is in perfect logical order. The logical form, which can perfectly mirror the reality, is hidden deep within it or in Anthony Kenny’s

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words “logically articulate language cloaked in ordinary language.” 29 In fact he states in his Notebook, ‘I only want to justify the vagueness of ordinary propositions; for it can be justified’. 30 In the Tractatus he tried to show that vague propositions are really not vague at all once their logical structures are revealed by analysis.

Our conclusion is that, although the view that Wittgenstein’s investigation in Tractatus is concerned with the conditions which would be fulfilled by a logically perfect language, goes against the main trend of the book, but Wittgenstein himself seems to be not very clear on this point. On the one hand he justifies the logical order of the ordinary language, as we have discussed above, which can pose serious problems in the explanation and justification of his most fundamental theory in Tractatus. As Mrs. Daitz puts it, “this view brings with it the consequence that all ordinary sentences have, for fact-stating purposes, one word too many!” 31 On the other hand he is willing to say, ‘we must employ a symbolism’ i.e. a new symbolism 32 which excludes the confusion between symbols arising from the physical resemblance of their perceptible signs. This symbolism as F. P. Ramsey points out: “which obeys the rules of logical grammar, of logical syntax, would be an ‘ideal’ language or a step towards an ideal language.” Such contradictions in Wittgenstein’s own formulations of the character of his method are symptomatic of an attempt to satisfy incompatible demands.

30 NB. p. 70.
32 TLP. 5.452
Considering both, Russell’s interpretation and incompatibility in *Tractatus*, Ramsey rightly explains,

“*This (Russell’s interpretation) seems to be a very doubtful generalisation; there are, indeed, passages in which Mr. Wittgenstein is explicitly concerned with a logically perfect, and not with any language, e.g., the discussion of “logical syntax” in 3.325; but in general he seems to maintain that his doctrines apply to ordinary languages in spite of the appearance of the contrary (especially 4.002). This is obviously an important point, for this wider application greatly increases the interest and diminishes the plausibility of any thesis such as that which Mr. Russell declares to be perhaps the most fundamental in Mr. Wittgenstein’s theory; that ‘In order that a certain sentence should assert a certain fact must, however the language may be constructed, be something in common between the structure of the sentence and the structure of the fact’*”

**Critique of Language: Wittgenstein and Mauthner**

Wittgenstein saw that the place to begin a viable philosophy is with logic of language. The central thesis of *Tractatus*, in this way, can be

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summarised in the statement that "all philosophy is 'critique of language'". Over the years, this passage, like others in the *Tractatus*, has frequently been subject to discussion. Wittgenstein placed the expression 'critique of language' in quotation marks, as though this expression was assumed to be well known. In this chapter we shall try to analyse, what is to be understood by 'critique of language' and what role it plays in philosophy and as philosophy?

In *Tractatus*, Proposition number 4.0031 states:

"All philosophy is a 'critique of language' [though not in Mauthner's sense]"

Here Mauthner's manner of doing philosophy is chosen to represent what it is not. As a result, Wittgenstein's interpreters have been compelled at least to acknowledge Mauthner's existence. Wittgenstein sharply distinguished what he was doing from what Fritz Mauthner had done in the latter's book, *Beitrage zu einer Kritik der Sprache*, which was published towards the end of nineteenth century. To inquire into the idea's origin it is needed to place Wittgenstein's view in a wider context. Before discussing Wittgenstein's announcement, we shall proceed from Mauthner's point of view with an assumption that Wittgenstein was aware of Mauthner's view.

[^34]: TLP, 4.0031
Fritz Mauthner was aware of a long 'family history' of the critique of language. A family history which takes back on one side through John Lock and Thomas Hobbes to the late -scholastic nominalists, and on the other, through Otto Friedrich, Gruppe and Friedrich Jacobi to J.G.Herder, J. G. Hamann and G. Vico. There is an almost unbroken tradition of the critique of language, only hidden from time to time by changing public and academic interests, a tradition that Mauthner revived.

The tradition of using the critique of language as an instrument of philosophical analysis has an opponent in common with nominalistic criticism and with the later logical empiricism: metaphysical speculation. The tendency of speculative philosophy to become systematic philosophy led many critics of language to also criticise philosophical systems, or, as in Mauthner's case, to advocate scepticism, the exemplary form of which is found in the work of Hume. The call 'back to Kant' was rejoined by Mauthner's 'back to Hume'. Mauthner saw that, the traditional empiricist stereotype has survived to this day. He says:

"The German school of philosophy has become used to regarding English common sense, which has made English philosophy so fruitful, as inferior; but where that common sense is paired with the utmost dauntlessness, as it is in Hume. It seems to me that its restriction to the psychological, its abstention
from German metaphysics, is to the advantage of the English mind.”

In the last hundred years of tradition, the Austrian philosophy was mostly influenced by Mill and Hume, not by Kant and Hegel. The principal figures in Austrian Philosophy have remained ‘mainly empiricist, and oriented towards science and the critique of language’. *[Ibid, Ch. VI, p. 79] Mauthner also belongs to this tradition. Among the figures discussed in the first volume of Mauthner’s Towards a critique of language (1901-2), we find Locke and Vico Hamann and Jacobi. From them Mauthner cites the catchphrase, that we lack no more than ‘a critique of language, which could be a meta-critique of reason’. Following them he says:

“The critique of language should be, in a broad sense, a critique of knowledge and knowledge acquisition; not a critique of ‘pure reason’, but rather of language-dependent, and thus ‘impure’ reason.”

Here, Mauthner points out that language must be subjected to critique, because, he believes, apart from his language, human being has no reason and because language is ‘unfit for knowledge of the world’,

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37 Ibid. p.498.
Influence of empiricist-positivist line of thought can be seen in Mauthner's arguments for this thesis. The theory that knowledge rests upon sensory elements, that there can be nothing in the understanding which did not first appear to the senses. Ernst Mach is the direct predecessor of this sort of sense-data theory, and Bertrand Russell adopted a similar, if less phenomenological point of view, which he also ascribed to early Wittgenstein through his interpretation of the Tractatus. Mauthner draws the decisive premises from the critique of language itself: First, 'language' is 'along with all of its most general formulations in logic and grammar, its expressions and hypotheses, ... a contingent phenomenon'. 38 He further says,

"The words of the language are ... unsuited to penetrating the nature of reality, because words are mere memory-tags for the sensations given by our senses, and because our senses are contingent, and in fact never experience more than the spider does of the palace in whose turret windows she has spun her web." 39

Regarding thoughts, he says, one judges wrongly when one assumes that language is the instrument of thought, because 'Thought is speech' or 'Thought is speech reduced to its retail value.' As a result, truth is likewise not to be found in a relationship of agreement between a statement and a state of affairs or reality, but is merely 'to be sought in language'. 40 He adds that

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38 Ibid, 543.
39 Ibid. 548.
40 Ibid 432.
reality is, in itself, nothing more than language. The reason he gives is that, the variety of languages and uses of language express only the interests of the people who create and use them: ‘Man has ordered the world in his language’.

And because language submits to change with much more difficulty than does man, this order is often not nearly so useful as it could be. He says:

“The categories of the history of language, and which the child learns in the form of a mother tongue within a few years, are really just an index of a world-catalogue which language strives to achieve. In a sense, the alphabet upon which the ultimate catalogue of the world will be ordered. It would be very unphilosophical to believe in the objectivity of this alphabet.”

In Mauthner’s eyes any attempt to invent a ‘world-cataloguing language’ is, then, a utopian one; This would implicate the programme of the Tractatus as well, in so far as it proposes the use of a symbolic language to eliminate the ‘elementary confusion’ that arise so easily from ordinary usage. Anticipating Wittgenstein, Mauthner characterises logic as empty of content, as a system of tautologies. Though while Wittgenstein was of the persuasion, as we discussed above, that the sentences of the ordinary language ‘first as they stand, are in perfect logical order.’ On the other hand, Mauthner’s critical inquiries into language had sceptical results. For him, the instrument—

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41 Fritz Mauthner, Beitrag III, n., 36, p. 578
42 Fritz Mauthner, n., 36, p. 60.
43 TLP. 5.5563.
the language of our culture— is not only 'chewed away down to the bone', but also remains, itself, a contingent artefact. A knowledge of the external world, of one's own and of another's mind is impossible, because only fleeting and transitory sensory experiences serve as the basis of our judgements, and we support ourselves and our 'verbal superstitions' upon mere trivial things and self-deceptions when we project our human conceptions and categories upon nature. As a consequence, not only theological but also metaphysical and ontological expressions are subject to critical assessment. He says "we must return to Hume, in order to enter from there into fertile scepticism." Here Rudolf Haller rightly puts it,

"When Mauthner speaks of the three worlds of language, the adjectivist world of common language, the substantivist world of metaphysics and the verbal world of science, it is primarily the substantivist and verbal worlds which fall victim to critical demystification."  

Usage of language is the most important aspect for Mauthner. He believes that there is nothing over and above mere idiolects. Language is however not an object to be employed, it is not an object at all, it is nothing but its use. He says, 'Language is the usage of language'. And secondly it is, also as it presently exists, not a means to knowledge, and for this reason not a

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means for bridging the epistemological distance between thought and reality. But since a person possesses no reason other than this language, a critique of reason— which is to determine the conditions and boundaries of knowing— is only possible as critique of language. Philosophy itself can desire nothing more than critical attention to language. Philosophy can do no more, with regard to the organism of language or of the human mind, than a doctor can for the psychological organism, it can observe attentively and give names to events. For Mauthner, Philosophy cannot be a set of doctrines; it can only be the ill-fated attempt, doomed to failure, to say the unsayable.

Wittgenstein’s work may be seen as one long attempt to recognise the legitimacy of Mauthner’s work while drawing a line beyond which Mauthner’s conclusions are not valid. One of the basic difference between their philosophical views is: In no time in his life did Wittgenstein choose the irrational empiricism so characteristic of Mauthner’s work. Mauthner’s position was that of an extreme relativism, which saw an infinite pattern of individual languages, forming themselves, according to similarities of words and structures. No man speaks as an identical language with any other man or even with himself from one moment to the next. Mauthner denied the possibility of any philosophy or logic, he believed that, there could be only
philosophies and logics reflecting the varying grammars of the individual languages.

In *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein tried to find answer to Mauthner's relativism. In the very same proposition in *Tractatus* where Mauthner is mentioned, Wittgenstein suggests that, "...Russell's merit is to have shown that the apparent logical form of the proposition need not be its real form."48 Mauthner has said that logic was only "a house of cards"49 and denied that language was an 'organism'50 Wittgenstein's answer is not only the logical analysis which Russell had provided but also he says:

"Man possesses the ability to construct language capable of expressing every sense, without having any idea how each word has meaning or what its meaning is... Every day language is a part of the human organism and is no less complicated than it. It is not humanly possible to gather immediately from it what the logic of language is"51

It can be said further that, Wittgenstein was continually searching for answers to Mauthner's scepticism and his radical Humeanism, not only in the *Tractatus* but even in his later works. Wittgenstein never became a deep

48 TLP. 4.0031.  
50 Ibid., p.28  
51 TLP. 4.002
sceptic that Mauthner was. For him scepticism is palpable nonsense because one must be able to affirm before one can doubt. He says:

"Scepticism is not irrefutable, but obviously nonsensical, when it tries to raise doubts where no questions can be asked. For doubt can exist only where a question exists, a question only where an answer exists, and an answer only where something can be said."52

Although it is important to recognise that the Tractatus owes part of its content to Wittgenstein’s determination to find a way out of Mauthner’s relativism, it is equally important to recognise that the Tractatus and Wittgenstein’s later works are unique responses to some of the important questions of our time. Influence of Mauthner or that of others can be discerned, but Wittgenstein’s responses are his own. Wittgenstein’s importance lies not only in the nature of his responses, but in that he grasped the problems of our time far earlier than most. Our discussion here tries to focus, mostly on it.

52 TLP: 6.51
Analysis of Language

Ludwig Wittgenstein, after the publication of his book *Tractatus*, altered the direction of analytic philosophy in the twentieth century. By his own philosophical work and through his influence on several generations of other thinkers, he transformed the nature of philosophical activity in the English-speaking world.

Following are the important points because of which Wittgenstein is considered to be one of the pioneers of linguistic philosophy.

1. In setting limits to thought by setting limits to language it put language at the centre of philosophical investigations
2. By its commitment to logico-linguistic analysis of synthetic propositions
3. By advocating the exposure of ‘expression of metaphysics as nonsense’
4. By his clarification of the essential nature of the propositional sign
5. Investigation of phenomena is to be by logical analysis of linguistic descriptions of the phenomena
6. The 'peculiar mark of logical propositions that one can recognise that they are true from the symbol alone, and this fact contains in itself the whole philosophy of logic.

Now, we will elaborate and discuss these points except the third one, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Regarding the great philosophy of the past, Wittgenstein discovered that there is something wrong with philosophers; that is, that they have been misled by language. To be sure, language suffers from number of grammatical defects it has its own defects and ambiguities. There are many metaphors which cannot explain things properly, many similies, which do not make ideas clear. He maintains that, due to this ambiguous nature of language philosophers have fallen into pitfalls which they think are heavenly springs. But he holds that these are 'surface' problems, remediable by logical analysis. So the function of philosophy should be to clarify the confusions in language, to analyse various sub-languages involved in the language.

Wittgenstein sought to show that traditional philosophical problems could be avoided entirely by application of an appropriate methodology, one that focuses on analysis of language. He says propositions are truth functional
combinations of atomic propositions. In natural languages, it may not be clear as a result of confusing features of surface grammar what is the logical structure of the proposition expressed. The purpose of philosophy is not to propound new knowledge in the form of true propositions, but to analyse apparently problematic sentences uncovering their true logical structure and thereby dispelling any confusion, which may have arisen. The "early" Wittgenstein worked closely with Russell and shared his conviction that the use of mathematical logic held great promise for an understanding of the world. In the tightly structured declarations of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, he tried to spell out precisely what a logically constructed language can (and cannot) be used to say. In Carnap's word

"It was Wittgenstein who first exhibited the close connection between the logic of science (or 'philosophy' as he calls it) and syntax. Further he has shown that the so-called sentences of metaphysics and of ethics are pseudo-sentences. According to him philosophy is a 'Critique of language'; its business is 'the logical clarification of ideas', of the sentences and concepts of sciences (natural science) that is, in our terminology, the logic of science" 53

This delineates the activity of philosophy to clarify those propositions that are assumed to be true without proof. In 1912, in a supplementary meeting of the 'Moral Science Club' in Cambridge, Wittgenstein read a paper entitled 'what is philosophy'. He defined philosophy 'as all those primitive

propositions which are assumed as true without proof by the various sciences. Here the term 'philosophy', for Wittgenstein, stands for the older philosophical writings. This definition can be interpreted in different ways. One is that Wittgenstein, here identifies philosophy with logic. He seems to have been drawing his first conclusion from the insight, that all the problems of logic could be traced back to the nature of the atomic proposition. Logic was thus not the science of any special set of objects- not a science that came into operation with introduction of generality or implication, but was the science of what was presupposed by saying anything whatsoever. As such it would be equal part of every science. Other interpretation of this definition is - philosophy might be supposed to consist of or to include the different principles assumed a priori by the sciences.

The idea that the principles of logic are included in those of every science is quite a traditional one. Only the reasons for it and the view that nothing outside logic is assumed without proof in the sciences will be new. In this attempt to give such an account, Wittgenstein soon came to see that the propositions of logic differed from all others. In the preliminary remarks to some 'Notes on Logic' of 1913, he sketched an account of the nature of philosophy. It is not a deductive discipline; it cannot be placed side by side with the natural sciences. 'Philosophy gives no pictures of reality and can neither confirm nor confute scientific investigations. Philosophy teaches us

the logical form of propositions: that is its fundamental task.\textsuperscript{55} This conception of philosophy, he deepens and modifies in the \textit{Tractatus}. Having said that 'the totality of those propositions that correctly represent the existence and non-existence of states of affairs constitutes natural science',\textsuperscript{56} he goes on to distinguish philosophy from science:

"Philosophy is not one of the natural sciences.
(The word 'philosophy' must mean something whose place is above or below the natural sciences, not beside them.)"\textsuperscript{57}

The thought that philosophy is above the natural sciences (as the queen of the natural sciences) or below them (as an under labourer to clear the ground for them) is a thought familiar from other philosophers; but in the \textit{Tractatus} it takes on a new twist. For Wittgenstein says, as mentioned above, that the totality of true propositions is the whole of natural science; so that if philosophy is not one of the natural sciences, there are no true philosophical propositions. This contrasts with the traditional conception of philosophy according to which the propositions of philosophy were necessary truths, the most fundamental, perhaps the truest, truth on which all other truths depended and from which they in some way borrowed their truth. Further, Philosophy was considered in \textit{Tractatus}, not only not a special science but also not a part

\textsuperscript{55} NB. 93
\textsuperscript{56} TLP 4.1 & 4.11.
\textsuperscript{57} TLP 4.111.
or the common part of the other sciences. It follows that philosophers should not concern themselves so much with what is actual, keeping up with the latest popularisations of science, which Wittgenstein despised.

The cognitive or intellectual value of science, the question of the status of science that had aspired Russell to a scientific method in philosophy, didn’t impress Wittgenstein. Regarding this the *Tractatus* position is twofold: On the one hand, science (in the sense of natural science) alone has cognitive value, since it is the totality of true propositions. On the other hand, it provides us with the explanation of nothing. According to him Darwinism gives the essence of the world as little as phenomenalism. Like Newtonian physics, or Hertz’s, it is simply a choice, which might be made a priori, of the form in which we are going to express our general descriptions of the world. Various considerations, of convenience, of convention, and of tolerance of error or of complication in description, may decide us for one such possibility in preference to others, but the possibilities themselves are all clearly constructions implicit in language.

After the World War I the eighteenth century synthesis, which sustained nineteenth century progress was beginning to break apart in two
radically different directions. On the one hand, the determinism, which had
provided the basis for the vast increase in scientific knowledge, began,
increasingly, to be applied to men themselves. Darwin's thesis (1859)
suggested that men are no different from any other objects in the physical
world and that societies and cultures changed in determinable ways.
Darwinism strongly affected the literature of the period, in the form of
naturalism, as can be seen in the novels of Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) and
Zola (1840-1902) and many others. On the other hand extreme relativism
began to emerge in the same period which can be seen in Mauthner's
philosophical views which we have already discussed. Wittgenstein was able
to dismiss Darwinism as one more scientific hypothesis, he says, 'Darwin's
theory has no more to do with philosophy than any other hypothesis in natural
science.'\footnote{TLP, 4.1122} Wittgenstein saw the challenge of his time not so much in
determinism as in the extreme relativism of the period.

Here, perhaps, Wittgenstein fails to do justice to the scope of science
and competence of the scientist in the formation of new concepts. He denies
the essential role of science in such formation of a collection of experience
and understanding of nature, agreed by generations of scientists without which
the conditions for the formation of such concepts would not exist. Anthony
Kenny rightly points out,
"Wittgenstein says, rather surprisingly, that the totality of true propositions is identical with the corps of natural sciences. (What has happened, one wonders, to such disciplines as history?) But science contains, or might be thought to contain, in addition to particular laws of physics, which speak, however indirectly, about the world, general laws of an a priori kind - e.g. the law of causality, the law of least effort, the axioms of Newtonian mechanics. These, Wittgenstein says, are not really propositions, but a priori insights into the forms in which the genuine propositions of science can be cast."

To this Wittgenstein will answer by saying, such objections do not affect the main point: the rejection of any claim by science to explain phenomena, if that explanation is taken to be anything other than presenting the phenomena in some clear and easily grasped form. Wittgenstein's position is of special interest in that it proceeds from purely logical considerations not from an empiricist prejudice. This is why Schlick and some others regarded Wittgenstein as one of the founders of logical positivism.

Wittgenstein's view of what philosophy is, or should be, further continues in the *Tractatus* as:

"Philosophy aims at the logical clarification of thoughts. Philosophy is not a body of doctrine but an activity. A philosophical work consists essentially of elucidations. Philosophy does not result in 'philosophical propositions', but rather in the clarification of propositions. Without philosophy thoughts are, as it were, cloudy and indistinct: its task is to make them clear and to give them sharp boundaries."\(^{60}\)

He says, philosophy, rightly understood is not a set of theories, but an activity, the activity of analysis, the activity of making thoughts clear, the activity of clarification of propositions. The propositions which philosophy clarifies are not themselves propositions of philosophy but non-philosophical propositions about the world. It means that, for him Philosophy is not descriptive but elucidatory. Its aim is to clear up muddle and confusion. The philosopher's proper concern is with what is possible, or rather with what is conceivable. This depends on our concepts and the ways they fit together as seen in language. What is conceivable and what is not, what makes sense and what does not, depends on the rules of language and grammar.

Wittgenstein's thesis completely abandons the time-honoured conception of philosophy as the pursuit of knowledge of reality and values.

\(^{60}\) TLP. 4.112.
The traditional efforts of metaphysicians to find meaning in their statements on the basis of non empirical methods and criteria, e.g. by combining the intuition of self-evident truths with deductive methods or by postulating the ground-work of metaphysical system as necessary presuppositions of experience, are rejected. These views in *Tractatus* formed an important source of inspiration for Logical - Positivists. Their philosophy centres around 'verification criterion of meaning', which is based on these views of Wittgenstein.

There is perhaps no confusion in philosophical quarters that emphasise on verification meaning and the like are one thing, and restricting philosophy to the domain of language and its various functions is something else. While logical positivists emphasised the former, Wittgenstein’s main concern was the latter. Elaborating this point by giving the correct method in philosophy, Wittgenstein says,

"The correct method in philosophy would really be the following: to say nothing except what can be said, i.e. propositions of natural science--i.e. something that has nothing to do with philosophy -- and then, whenever someone else wanted to say something metaphysical, to demonstrate to him that he had failed to give a meaning to certain signs in his propositions. Although it would not be satisfying to the other person--he would not have the
feeling that we were teaching him philosophy—this method would be the only strictly correct one.  

*Tractatus* is not the only philosophical work with such an aim. Many sceptics believed that scepticism is not a set of dogmas but a way of life. Plato also devotes the last part of the *Phaedrus* to a demonstration that written works, and hence the very dialogue which teaches this, are not the way to convey the lessons of true philosophy, which is found only in the living speech and written in the soul of the participant. In the same line goes Wittgenstein’s view.

The point, Wittgenstein makes here, is that there is no intermediate position between pseudo and genuine propositions. Propositions are either meaningful i.e. contingently true or false expressions, or else meaningless compound propositions which have no factual content and are true or false in all conceivable situations. All other expressions are senseless or nonsense. Thus, when an expression does have sense, that sense is perfectly determinate. There are no truth-value gaps amongst the propositions of ordinary language.

\[61\] TLP. 6.53.
With this clarity of the role of philosophy, Wittgenstein declared in *Tractatus* 'All philosophy is a critique of language'. It could be doubted to be a complete answer of the question, what philosophy is. But in so far as philosophy is critique of language it is an investigation, which must be carried out step by step like investigations in science. This does not mean that philosophical investigations are 'empirical' — their result is indeed 'clarity' rather than 'knowledge' in a scientific sense. 'The word "philosophy" must mean something which stands above or below, but not beside the natural sciences.' But we cannot content ourselves with considering the results of philosophical analysis as inexpressible. We have to find means of expressing them, and expressing them with increasing clarity, unless the philosophical activity is to remain an eternal vicious circle.

Based on the view that the human intellect is a limited instrument and philosophy's task is to turn it back on itself and to make it discover its own limitations and then mark them in a self-assessing way. Philosophy's old, ill-defined partnership with science was broken up long ago, but its attempt to set itself up in the rival business of dogmatic metaphysics still has to be blocked. Since there is no higher discipline set above philosophy, this can only be achieved by self-criticism. Philosophy must draw the line that limits the

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62 TLP.4.0031.
legitimate use of the intellect, including its thought. Wittgenstein, in
*Tractatus* tries to show that boundary, the limit to expression of thought,
which he says, is the aim of his book.

Going along with the aim, his attention in the *Tractatus* was to draw a
boundary for thought, and given the language –critical attention, this could
only mean that such a boundary could only be drawn in the language and what
lies beyond the boundary has no sense, but is rather, nonsense. The thinking
subject is, then, neither part of nor constitutive of the world, but is a
borderline. “The world is my world; this is manifest in the fact that the limit
of language [of that language which alone I understand] means the limits of
my world.”63

It leads Wittgenstein to place the greatest value upon the clarification of
the categorical difference between what can be said in the sentences of a
language and what can only be shown. The sentence does not, however assert
a sense, but rather shows it, in that if one understands the sentence one also
knows what its truth conditions are or must be. On this basis, Wittgenstein
arrived at his influential explication of logical propositions as meaningless
propositions. Meaningless because they have no relation of representation to

63 TLP. 5.6
reality, but rather leave open the entire infinite logical space—all possible states of affairs. The possibility that truth conditions might be exhibited, or that one could let them show themselves, also brings with it, for Wittgenstein, the possibility of letting the limits of language and the limits of the world fall together.

The 'nonsensicality' of all philosophical statements according to the *Tractatus* did not imply that philosophy, as an activity is aimless. But it can be added to this that an essential aim of the philosophical activity in the *Tractatus* actually was to make philosophy aimless. The 'definitiveness' of the truth of the thoughts expressed in the book thus meant that Wittgenstein considered this aim to be reached—at least for his own part.

He further says, when these propositions have been clarified the logical form of the world will mirror itself in them and thus philosophy will exhibit, in non-philosophical propositions that which cannot be said by philosophical propositions. He writes in *Tractatus*,

"Propositions cannot represent logical form: it is mirrored in them. What finds its reflection in language, language cannot represent. What expresses itself in language, we cannot express by
Wittgenstein's philosophy therefore began as and remained as a critique of language. The important conclusions, that philosophy as a critique of language has to offer us, remains unchanged in the course of his work. That philosophy is not a set of doctrines but an activity; that philosophical results are not found in making propositions clear; that philosophy is not a natural science and does not proceed hypothetically. These principles or result, already conceived in the *Tractatus*, not only remain exempt from self-criticism, but are also repeated in the later phase in different variations.

Despite these qualifications concerning just how explicitly Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus*, grasped the fundamental concepts which underlie his account of the significance of the philosophical propositions, it is clear that he regarded their significance as bound up with the activities of life, not with representations. This is why in the closing pages of the *Tractatus*, in the discussion of various philosophical, religious and ethical matters, the notion of life suddenly becomes prominent. He says:

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*TLP*, 4.121.
We feel that even when all possible scientific questions have been answered, the problems of life remain completely untouched. Of course there are then no questions left, and this itself is the answer.\footnote{TLPP6.52.}

The solution of the problem of life is seen in the vanishing of the problem.\footnote{TLPP6.521.}

This sudden concern in *Tractatus*, with the problems of life, and the point that such problems cannot be solved by natural science, is not a mere personal statement of the author which is unconnected with the detailed conception of language developed in the book. The fact is that Wittgenstein regards himself as having separated those propositions whose meaning involves representations, from those whose significance is constituted only in the activities of life. The odd twist in Wittgenstein's view is that whereas the meaning of genuine propositions involves true or false representations of the world, the significance and "truth" of philosophy is not embodied in true representations, but in a "true" life, a
life which is in harmony with the logic of the world. To conclude Wittgenstein’s conception of “philosophy”, in the words of Rudolf Haller:

“The direction that a reconstruction of Wittgenstein’s philosophy of language would have to take is indicated here. That is to say, we must bring in not only the linguistic context but also the non-linguistic context of the situation: the action, in the analysis of language and the understanding of language. Without the frame of reference of common human practices and behaviour, there is no possibility of interpreting any language at all. It appears to me that this composes the anthropological foundation of the critique of language: that in the beginning was not the word, but the deed.”

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