Chapter Four

TRUTH, MEANING AND INTERPRETATIVE UNDERSTANDING
1. INTRODUCTION

If meaning is the essence of language, truth is the category that makes linguistic expressions legitimate. Be it the language of science or art or poetry and of day to day activity, there should be scope for truth to appear in it. Of course, the concept is differently accounted for by different thinkers and correspondingly has got different applications in different systems. Yet the fact remains that any system of language will make room for truth in it. If a language without meaning is empty, a language without truth is blind, as it becomes directionless, and hence non-legible.

Truth is thus an indispensable category as far as language is concerned. It assumes a relevant role in all the functions language has and it is an essential prerequisite for the very understanding of language. It is related both to meaning and to reality - the two categories, which we have hitherto seen as occupying prominent places in our discourse on the issue of understanding meaning.

The notion of truth is related to the concept of meaning in pivotal ways. It sometimes acts as the normative guiding principle, which even determines the semantic rules by means of which language as a system functions. Wittgenstein, for example, conceives the notion of truth in a way very similar to this idea. The representationalists in general assert the important connections between truth and meaning. On the one hand, there is a doctrine of understanding meaning, which is much in line with the correspondence theory. They relate the problem of understanding meaning to the notion of truth conditions, and thereby to the validity of
statements. Even for Davidson, who out and out rejects a traditional version of the correspondence theory, truth is related to meaning and linguistic representations.

But once appeal is shifted from the representational model, another concept of truth is required to be introduced. Instead of searching for truth in a language which is essentially world-directional, truth is searched in the day-to-day linguistic practices and other uses of language. Many of the expressions we count as true do not belong to the language of world representation. In other words, the whole of language is not limited to the realm of technical notations of scientific enterprise.

From the context of linguistic understanding what is more important is the relationship between truth and meaning and also the relationship between language and reality. Almost all the classical doctrines on truth subscribe to this conception

The representationalists were more eager to assert the intimacy of the connection between truth and meaning. The theory of understanding they develop uniquely brings together truth, meaning and reality into the logical framework provided by the structure of language. The idea that language inherits a logical structure itself shows how important the concept of truth is in their doctrine of understanding. Following language, reality also is understood to be possessing a logical structure. The linguistic conception of truth, however, limits the question of truth exclusively to the logical structure of language. As Frege says, truth is nothing but the truth of sentences in language. Since truth is the prime category of logic, the normative structure and
rules which logic provides for the understanding of Linguistic expressions make truth also indispensable to language.

Two important features of truth conceived by many analytic philosophers become relevant here. First, the idea of the logical structure of language results in a linguistic conception of truth. Second, truth is more or less indispensably taken by them to assert the representational nature of linguistic understanding. But inspite of the linguistic turn, the representational conception of truth is much in harmony with the traditional conception, which has its original expression in the Platonic system. This concept, in short, takes truth as eternal and unchanging, and therefore, the representationalists, following the Platonic tradition, take truth as the unchanging property of linguistic signs. Representationalism, as we have already seen, guaranteed its availability by the logical structure of language which conclusively asserts the intimate relationship between language and the world.

Naturally, with the denial of representationalism, truth becomes a difficult property to be accounted for. The historicity of language and the context dependence of linguistic meaning will make truth also historical. We have examined how the hermeneutic model has arrived at a notion of meaning where the latter is taken as an exclusive property of language. Hermeneutic model asserts the essential linguisticality of all human endeavours, both cognitive and non-cognitive, and places the being of man well inside the horizon provided by language. We encounter reality in and through language and therefore, truth also is well placed inside the linguistic horizon. And language here, as we have seen, is not confined to the language of the text nor does it exclusively refer to the linguistic system of the interpreter. It rather refers to an
intersubjective domain where the individual cultural horizons of the text and the interpreter can come to an agreement. Nor is truth confined to an ahistorical realm of reality, as reality itself is a historical process which allows no room for eternal and unchanging structures to validly operate.

Before we focus on the conceptual issues that originate out of this standpoint we need to examine the representational concept of truth.

2. TRUTH, MEANING AND WORLD REPRESENTATION

The representationalists largely inherit the ahistorical attitude towards reality. This is the road that takes them back to Plato who propagated the notion of intuitive certainty to accomplish truth. The way many of them appealed to the mathematical model was enough testimonial to their intellectual background. The logico-mathematical model of analysis has been further combined with a scientific conception of reality.

The way they carried out the analysis of language precisely aims at identifying truth and meaning in the logical structure of the former. And as far as the question of understanding language is concerned, they intend to show how truth and meaning are involved in ensuring its possibility in the light of representations. Truth, thus, is not related to language in a passive way. Rather it has been placed at the very core of linguistic activity, determining the latter's legitimacy by defining its logical structure.
From these factors some important features of the representational conception of truth can be identified. These features, though are not shared by all the representationalists thinkers, are but the prominent features of the representational model of understanding in general. On the one hand, the concept of truth they inherit is something which has been handed down by the tradition, the prominent feature of which is the ahistorical conception of truth. Another important feature is that, in this framework, truth is being conceived as the essential feature of items with a linguistic structure. Finally, as a culmination of the representational contemplation on truth, it has been taken as a logical category that determines the semantic rules of language.

The ahistorical conception, as stated above, was something which the representationalists had inherited from the Platonic-Aristotelian contemplation's on the notion, though Plato's doctrine was markedly different from the linguistic conception in many ways. While Plato located truth in the eternal forms, so as to announce its absolute status, representationalism located truth in the eternal truth bearers, which were nevertheless linguistic. While, for the former, truth of statements was a function of the truth of realities (Forms or Ideas), in the latter conception truth was never to be searched outside the structure of language, rather it was interwoven with it in the sense of determining its very possibility.

An important feature that distinguishes the traditional metaphysical conception of truth from the modern representational notion is that, the former emphasises the importance of language. The linguistic conception follows the most fundamental assumption of representationalism, i.e. the assumption that language represents reality. If this is the case, sentences in language could not be without truth - values. They are either the true
representations of the factual reality or the false representations. This, in other words, is to proclaim truth as the imminent feature of language. It is, therefore, an indispensable property of language and not an accidental feature. The idea of representationality of language and this notion of truth as the imminent feature of language act as mutually supplementary concepts which together formulate a doctrine of linguistic understanding based on the idea of representations.

We see in Alfred Tarski’s project of giving a consistent definition of truth these two insights combined in a brilliant way. After applying the notion of truth to sentences in language Tarski states that he wants to do justice to the intuitions which adhere to the classical Aristotelian conception of truth which can be summed up as:

To say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false, while to say of what is that it is, or of what is not that it is not, is true.  

Tarski rephrases this classical conception in the modern philosophical terminology which is given in the formula: "The truth of a sentence consists in its agreement with (or correspondence to) reality." Or, more precisely, as: "A sentence is true if it designates an existing state of affairs." 

This is to announce the representational view of language by means of a semantic conception of truth. This is because, on the one hand we have to employ the semantical notion of satisfaction in order to define truth, and on the other hand, formulations which aim to explain
the meaning of the word true refer both to the sentences and to the objects or state of affairs ascribed to them.

This situation invites us to examine the third feature cited above, where truth is understood as the logical property that determines the semantic rules of language. This would provide an explanation of the logical connection between truth, meaning and reality in the light of linguistic representations. It thus figures out as the most mature form of representational conception of understanding meaning. This is because, it is here that the intimate relation between truth and meaning is conclusively established. Moreover, it doubtlessly reiterates the representationality of language by means of an indispensable notion of truth.

What evolves out of this discussion is a concept of truth which supports the exclusive status of scientific enterprise as a paradigm for the search of ultimate truths about the universe. This concept clearly gives a picture of language which is a mirror of the world. What intervenes between the mirror and the mirrored is truth. As Rorty says:

The world is out there, but descriptions of the world are not. Only descriptions of the world can be true or false. The world on its own - unaided by the describing activities of human beings - cannot.

Truth, therefore, is an essential property of language, a property which it owns owing to its being a faithful representation of the world.
The representational framework, therefore construes language as a medium for representation and consequently favours a dualist notion of medium. Language is conceived here as a medium through which reality is filtered, apprehended and communicated. This aspect is of crucial importance in our discussion, because both the models we have examined take language as important for positing both meaning and truth. The difference lies in the way they conceive the role of language in the process of relating truth, meaning and reality with each other. While the dualist conception attaches more importance to the idea of representationality, the hermeneutic notion explains how truth and reality, along with meaning, evolve out of that discourse. Some representationalists thus conceive language as a totality of propositions, which picture the reality and thereby identify a set of expressions in language as privileged. We shall briefly examine this issue and see how language functions as a medium in the logical framework of representationalism.

3. LANGUAGE, TRUTH AND REPRESENTATIONALISM

The notion of language inherited by the representationalists can be explicated in terms of the idea of basic propositions. This idea will explain how strongly representationalism adheres to a concept of language as a medium of representation. Language, according to this view, is a medium which stands between two poles - the subject and the object - connecting them by means of world representations. There is the world that exists independently of our will and our linguistic categories and there is also the talk about the world which corresponds to that world and has to be comprehended only with reference to the latter. Finally, the question of truth in this context calls for a relation of correspondence.
Language in this framework is being understood, not merely as a representation of the world, but as a system of truth-functions in which a set of expressions assume privileged status in terms of their being immediately related to factual reality. These expressions are further taken as paradigm for both truth and knowledge. The representationalists thus pay exclusive attention to these linguistic expressions and develop their theory of language and linguistic understanding on the basis of their peculiar logical features. And what is central to this concept of language, as we have noted earlier is that, language is conceived here as a medium, primarily of representation of the world.

Another important feature to be noted here is that, a correspondence theory of truth is gaining importance in this context. What is highlighted here is the availability of a set of linguistic expressions whose truth conditions are immediately available to us owing to their immediate contact with the factual reality. Linguistic understanding, in other words, is related here with the understanding of truth conditions of sentences.

The correspondence theory of truth and the concept of language as a medium are propagated mainly on the basis of the idea of basic propositions. These basic propositions are conceived as the primary truth bearers. These basic statements are by their very nature, not context relative, since they are attached to a particular factual situation.

The notion of basic sentences can be conceived in two ways. Firstly, as a set of sentences, which are immediate perceptual judgements, on the basis of which the correspondence theory of truth can be constructed. This standpoint closely follows the presuppositions in an
empiricist epistemology, which conceives all conceptual issues that are relevant in connection with language as related to empirical experience. The empiricists follow this route.

On the other hand, the basic statements can be conceived as linguistic expressions which we come across at the end of our analysis of language that makes the latter the representation of the factual reality, by determining its semantic rules. But despite these differences certain common features are shared by both. These include the importance of simple sentences in the process of understanding meaning and locating truth and also to some extend the notion of reference to make the idea of truth-conditions legitimate.

The empiricists, by positing immediate perceptual judgements as basic sentences that are foundational, propagated an epistemological doctrine. The immediate observational report was taken as the eternal, truth-bearer of language. Truth is then conceived here as consisting in a relationship that exists between these eternal truth bearers and the extra-linguistic facts to which they stand as immediate representations.

This conception is loyal to the linguistic conception of truth as it conceives truth as a predicate of propositions. Truth and falsehood are properties of beliefs and statements, says Russell, who portrays an atomistic ontology, which assumes the metaphysical notion of factual world with objects and facts to support the representational conception.

A belief is something which we hold with regard to something else. In Russell's representational framework it consists in the contention that such and such objects in the world
with such and such qualities are related with each other in such and such ways. When these objects with qualities and their relations with each other are recognised, this leads to the formation of a judgement. This judgement, in turn, is either true or false, depending on the existence and non-existence of facts corresponding to it. Russell conceives truth as consisting in the fact that there is a complex correspondence to the discursive thought which is the judgement. Truth or falsehood of a belief, according to him depends on its relation to a fact other than itself.

The importance attached to correspondence is an offshoot of the underlying empiricist epistemology. Therefore, the concept of truth is here applicable to immediate perceptual judgements which are taken as the foundation for all our justified beliefs about the world. Since knowledge was identified with justified beliefs, the immediate perceptual judgements were conceived as paradigms of both knowledge and truth. Truth is whatever that makes these judgements true. This conception thus relates truth to a relationship between these judgements and the objective facts.

This standpoint is close to the positivist assumption which identifies knowing the meaning of a proposition with knowing its observational truth-conditions. Meaning is, therefore, explained in the light of the notion of truth-conditions, as according to this doctrine, two sentences mean the same (have the same meaning) if they have the same observational truth-conditions.
But in its attempt to bring together and establish the immediate connection between language, beliefs and the factual reality, this outlook seems to have contradicted the traditional concept of truth on the one hand and the linguistic conception on the other. From the very outset, this conception presupposes two things. The traditional conception was undermined by ascribing truth to beliefs as their property and thereby adhering to psychologism. With psychologism, the objective and absolute status of truth can be contested. Again this position assumes the validity of an atomistic epistemology supported by an empiricist outlook. This goes against the basic dictum of the linguistic conception of truth, which seeks no other realm than language to locate both truth and meaning. It thus takes truth as a relational property, as it is intimately associated with the complex relation of correspondence which sentences have with the factual reality. It is also related to beliefs, which are extra-linguistic. Finally, if truth is the property of beliefs, which we hold about the world, it is then related to the ways by which we establish contact with the factual world.

A metaphysical conception of factual reality is being assumed here in advance, as language is a representation of this reality and truth is the property of beliefs which we hold about it. It is this metaphysics which informs us about the structural peculiarities of reality, which is also being shared by the perceptual judgements which directly represent them. Truth thus consists in an agreement between these structural forms. This idea of structure, therefore, assumes the status of a primary concept, which was not arrived at, but was taken for granted.

Again, conceiving truth as a property of beliefs invites further troubles. These beliefs are true if they refer to immediate perceptual judgements, which are results of direct observation.
What makes these judgements distinct is their epistemic priority over other judgements. They are, in Russell's words, the result of immediate and direct knowledge about factual reality through acquaintance.\(^\text{12}\) There is no distinction between knowing them and knowing what makes them true. But belief is a psychological term and the certainty which can be accorded to these judgements is only a psychological certainty, which in the traditional sense is not certainty at all.

Moreover, here the question of truth is raised only in relation to linguistic expressions which are direct and immediate perceptual judgements. Therefore, it is not related to the totality of man's linguistic practices. It rather is an accidental property of language and not an essential category.

Truth has to be conceived as an essential category that has a determining role in formulating and understanding linguistic expressions. In other words, it has to be viewed as the indispensable feature of language, which even determines its use by determining its semantic rules. This is, in effect, to take out the problems of meaning and truth from the framework of the epistemological problematic.

It was Frege who pioneered the anti-epistemological drive in the representational tradition, as he categorically proclaimed the ultimate logical connection between truth and the semantic contents of language. By making sentences and not words as constituting the central semantic units of language, he tried to save the representational conception from going astray. With a focus on sentences, Frege could avoid the situation where linguistic understanding was explained on the basis of direct word-object contact. Consequently, he managed to avoid the
epistemological problematic, i.e., the problem of directly experiencing the objects of the world. Again he announced the supremacy of logic, by positing 'senses', which are basic logical entities at the core of his theory of language and linguistic understanding. These senses have a function very similar to Kant's *a priori* categories of understanding, because, the world of objects themselves are presented by the senses and knowledge about this world is essentially assimilated through them.

But to defend representationality of language, it has to be proved that language is related to the world in some ways. The problem of understanding language has to be connected with the question of validity of linguistic expressions in terms of factual reality. In other words, understanding presupposes the validity conditions of linguistic expressions and these conditions contain knowledge about how the world could logically be. This is because, the linguistic expressions with which we encounter are assertions whose legitimacy depends upon their validity. And to know the validity is to know the truth conditions of expressions.

Truth, in other words, is embedded in the logic of assertions. It is truth that makes the thought-content representational. A true assertion is a true representation. Truth and sense, nevertheless, are related to the world, though they are extra-worldly logical entities which are autonomous and independent. Yet the senses or thoughts are nothing but thoughts about the world. These thoughts are consequently manifested in assertions. In language, both sense and world come together. Understanding meaning requires a coming together of both. To understand linguistic expressions is to grasp their senses, which necessitates an appeal to the
world, since sense appears only in those assertions which are about the world. These assertions, as a matter of fact, are either true or false in terms of their validity.\textsuperscript{13}

Truth, is therefore, taken back from the epistemological framework of experiencing factual reality, and is placed at the very core of linguistic understanding. It lays down the conditions of assertions and thereby prescribes normative rules for the emergence of sense in language through assertions.

Frege's position is, therefore, very close to identifying truth as a logical property of language that determines the semantic rules of the latter, though he ultimately regarded senses as more primitive categories than truth.\textsuperscript{14} Once we manage to locate such normative rules in language, that will in turn inform us about the limits of legible talk. These semantic rules tell us which aspects and features of reality can be legitimately expressed in language. They are the rules of representation, and in that sense, it is the truth-condition of an expression that will decide its meaningfulness and cognitivity. Truth is thus understood as ensuring the representationality of language via meaning. It prescribes rules according to which alone sentences in language can stand for the factual world.

The concept of truth as determining semantic rules is more prominent in Wittgenstein's reflections on truth, where truth is conceived as forming part of the logical structure of language. Language inherits a logical structure, according to which its various constituents are structured into a coherent whole. This structure is formulated by means of the logical structure of language, and this logical structure is further shared by the world also. Hence truth is not just a relational
property which becomes relevant only when linguistic expressions are compared with reality. In other words, the relationship of truth with language is not a matter of epistemological justification, but a matter of logical necessity. The supremacy of logical structure was asserted conclusively, and this logical structure is the essential property of both language and reality. This structure implies the necessary validity of a network of rules, according to which language functions as a picture of reality - the only legitimate function of language. These rules are nothing but the rules of truth which determine the very validity of linguistic expressions. Both syntax and semantics adhere to the principles of this normative rule structure. Wittgenstein reiterates this point by distinguishing the ordinary grammar of language from the logical syntax. It is the logical syntax that ensures the ultimate syntactic-semantic unity of linguistic expressions A proposition in language is such an entity where this unity is being materialised. Here, not only the spatio-temporal arrangement of words are made, but also the individual linguistic elements that make up the propositions are intimately connected to the world, making it a logical picture of the latter. The rules of this logical syntax are the rules of truth, as they call for a possible truth-condition for each proposition

These rules of logical syntax have an absolute command over language. And this factor ensures that truth is related to language in an essential manner. We have seen that the representational conception has adopted the traditional notion of truth which took the latter as a timeless and independent category. Then the question is, can such a category be related to language which is a representation of the contingent world and therefore, is itself contingent? Moreover, we employ language in a variety of concrete life situations. This will also reiterate the fact that the language is contingent.
Here also the notion of logical structure of language comes to the rescue. Language, though stands for factual reality which is contingent, is never itself contingent. This is because it is constituted of well-articulated meaningful utterances, which possess determinate structures. Language is never a representation of factual reality as such, rather having essentially an articulate structure, it stands for the structure of factual reality, which is logical and hence no more contingent. Representationality of language, in other words, is a matter of logical necessity. Language and the factual world are connected by means of a logical form which is not a contingent entity. Truth never arises out of the contingent fact that language pictures reality, rather it is by means of the rules suggested by truth that, language and reality could establish a structural identity.

The notion of proposition is introduced to establish the fundamental representational feature of language and also to assert the pivotal role played by truth in the understanding of linguistic expressions. These propositions, by their very nature, have an 'articulate structure', as they are constituted out of the internal relations names have with each other. They represent the logical features of language which are neutral to the person uttering it and the context of utterance. And by revealing a determinate sense by means of their logical structure, they function as the eternal truth bearers.

The concept of elementary propositions is the right candidate to such neutral representational expressions. They stand as immediate representations of the factual reality, as a matter of logical necessity, and their priority in our language system is established, not as a matter of epistemology, but as that of semantics and logic. The whole of language is said to be
constituted out of them by means of truth functional connectives. This conception thus amounts
to identifying a set of sentences in language as truth-bearers. This, subsequently, is to
distinguish the logical syntax of language from its ordinary grammar. In other worlds, according
to this view, it is the logical syntax of language that makes language a representation of reality.

The traditional metaphysical conception of truth is safeguarded in this framework, and it
apparently appeals to a correspondence theory of truth. This is more evident in the empiricist
framework, since correspondence theory of truth is the one which we are most naturally to arrive
at when we take perceptual judgements as paradigms of truth. This is because, the truth of a
perceptual judgement depends on whether what is observed has the properties attributed to it, a
matter which has to be settled by means of finding an agreement between linguistic expressions
and facts Even the highly formalistic view which opposes the epistemological attitude and
consequently denies any semantic value to reference, attaches the latter intimately to names in
propositions and explains the determinism of sense in terms of the internal relations between
names The question of truth, therefore, brings back reference to our consideration. Moreover,
the language - reality agreement also is pivotal in their framework.

But defining truth in terms of such correspondence - a relation of agreement between two
ontologically diverse realms - may lead to certain difficulties, some of which we have already
seen when we examined the empiricist epistemology earlier. The root of this difficulty lies in
the attempts to analyse the correspondence relationship in terms of an ontology of factual reality.
Here the word - object relationship becomes the most primitive and unanalysed relationship of
correspondence which calls for an epistemological enterprise to explain truth.
Alfred Tarski proposes an alternate version of correspondence theory, devoid of the ontology of factual reality which forces us to take an epistemological route. He puts forward a semantic conception of truth which rests on a semantic theory that deals with the use of language. He wanted to explain when we can call a sentence true and contended that a theory of truth would give an account of the restrictions that must be brought to bear upon our use of any given sentence of a language if we were to call that sentence true. All true sentences would eventually have in common the property of being used in accordance with these restrictions. He thus employs the notion of metalanguage to show how to state the meaning of a sentence in terms of truth-conditions. The truth-conditions of a sentence in the object-language can be stated in a metalanguage says Tarski, since this metalanguage can be employed to talk about the object-language. The truth-conditions of an object-language sentence can be stated in a metalanguage which talks about it.

Tarski thus relativises truth to a language. It is 'true in L' where 'L' is the object-language. The sentence "snow is white" is true if and only if snow is white", says Tarski, where the first occurrence of the expression "snow is white" is the name of that sentence. This project, therefore, locates truth within a language without appealing to any concepts which are not semantic in nature and hence avoids the difficulty in construing a correspondence theory of truth on the basis of an ontology of factual reality.

This has become more evident in Tarski's employment of the notion of satisfaction. The schema T appears to be useful when applied to define "T in L", when only the elementary sentences and their truth-functional connectives are under examination. But it fails to function
when we take language as containing logically complex predicates, because of the fact that parts of a complex sentence need not themselves be sentences. In other words, the truth of complex sentences need not always be accounted for in terms of the truth of their parts. To solve the difficulty, Tarski appeals to the notion of sentential function, which is formed from a sentence by substituting a free variable in place of a name. He then defines a sentence as a sentential function which contains no free variable. The truth of a sentence is thus defined in terms of the notion of satisfaction, which applies to sentential functions. Whatever is true of a sentential function can be said to satisfy it. For e.g., snow satisfies "x is white". Metalanguage statements can specify which objects satisfy the sentential functions.

Tarski's definition of truth in L and his schema T satisfy the requirements of a representational conception of understanding by giving the correspondence theory of truth a new life, avoiding difficulties that may arise when we construe linguistic expressions as representations. But, as Tarski himself states, his attempts are aimed at finding out how truth can be defined for the formal languages which are constructed for the purpose of making scientific semantics possible and hence the version of understanding has an application limited to formalised languages. In other words, the validity of Tarski's schema T in dealing with natural language is doubtful. What is needed is to isolate the sentences from their natural surroundings, i.e., from the historical context of their utterance.

Moreover, the inheritance of a metaphysical view which conceives truth as timeless and unchanging is evident here, since the semantics of science made such a view a prerequisite. Therefore, the role model is indubitably the language of science, which exemplifies a clear
application of first order formal logic. Tarski's attempts were aimed at defining truth within this model of language without falling back on a set of undefined semantical and intentional notions such as meanings and beliefs. A direct appeal was made to extensional concepts and both truth and reference were made disquotational.

But to extend this model to derive a theory of understanding from it is not an advisable route to be taken. This is because, Tarski's model is out and out formalistic. This model therefore, necessitates a reductionist approach which was carried out by many of the representationalists in their programme of purifying language. But what we get with such a logical purification is only the sketch of a particular language game, which belongs to a wider context of multitude of language uses. This model fails to explain the dynamism of linguistic activity actually practised by a community of speakers who are essentially bound to occupy specific space in concrete life and therefore in history.

Hilary Putnam in this connection observes that Tarski's scheme defines truth in language without reference to actual speakers or their use of words. The speakers' use and understanding of language are not vital for him because truth in language depends only on how the strings of the letters are composed and whether or not the fact stated is the case. He contends that Tarski's predicate is unable to replace the intuitive concept of truth. He adds:

A property which by its very meaning has nothing to do with the way speakers use and understand language cannot be seriously offered as having the same intension (i.e. mean the same) as the predicate "is true", even if it is coextensive with the predicate "is T" in the actual world.
Putnam further points out that in natural language truth-conditions cannot fix meaning. This is because, in natural language we cannot avoid the use of indexical expressions like "I," "this," etc., which can be used by different speakers or by the same speaker at a different occasions, to make a different statements.\textsuperscript{21}

In short, the various versions of the representational notion of truth we have hitherto examined confined attention to either word-object contact or sentence-fact isomorphic relationship. As Rorty observed, this was done by confining attention to single sentences as opposed to vocabulanes.\textsuperscript{22} It is this emphasis on single sentences that prompted them to envisage the artificial construction of a formal language as opposed to the day-to-day language of ordinary use. But even when attention was shifted to sentences from words - Fregc and Wittgenstein's TLP did this - the words were conceived to be performing vital roles in making up the semantic significance of sentences and language

Hence, if this notion of truth, which makes reference an important component in deciding the semantic content of language, is challenged, the representational concept of understanding meaning will also get affected. This need not pose a challenge to the view that language is representational. But what it opposes is the positing of the representational conception is a theory of understanding which is foundational to all theories on language. In other words, as Putnam comments, representational conception is useful as a theory of language functioning, but its status as a theory of understanding is extremely doubtful.\textsuperscript{23}
Another attack on the positive role of reference in a semantic theory has been initiated by Quine and Davidson. Even Tarski's view, which though avoids all ontological presuppositions to construe a correspondence theory of truth appeared as objectionable, since it made translatability of object-language sentences a prerequisite. Tarski took it for granted that meaning is presupposed by the semantic definition of truth. But Quine demonstrated later that the question of meaning should be approached only through the situation of radical interpretation. He challenged the whole set of interrelated notions such as synonymy, analyticity, necessity, translatability etc., which philosophers had taken for granted when they discussed the problem of meaning. We shall now see how these changes which took place within the representationalist tradition amounted to questioning the hard core representational conception of truth and the notion of understanding meaning based upon it.

4. THE PERSPECTIVAL FEATURE OF UNDERSTANDING

To turn attention towards the actual use of language by human beings amounts to the recognition of the perspectival features of the understanding of language which is in contradiction with the representational programme which posits a set of primitive sentences as paradigm of truth, meaning and knowledge. The representational model proceeds with the project of isolating the essential information content - information about the objective world - from the contextual and the historical differences that determine articulation. As Quine says, "two verbal accounts can give the information in very different hearing". These differences owe to the difference in the context. Semantic content or meaning itself is identified with this isolated information content by them.
But, as Quine observes, the notion of meaning is deeply rooted in the everyday discourses and not easily dispensed with. And it is in this context that an examination of the notions of meaning, truth and linguistic understanding is more relevant. Here one is not provided with a set of linguistic expressions which are readily amenable to analysis and consequently they cannot be isolated from their natural context. Nor can we pick out the reference of each word used. The mistake is, in Davidson’s words, with the traditional metaphysical picture that is dominated by the dualism of scheme and content where a correspondence relationship between sentences and reality is construed. Davidson opposes the idea that there are a set of entities with which we can compare sentences. He speaks about correspondence without confrontation and categorically does away with the scheme-content dualism. The ideal language of science is an alternative for the representationalism. But we have seen that this would give an account of only one of the ways language functions and never helps in developing a theory of understanding language. Quine observes.

But a trouble with trying to equate sentences of real life, in respect of the information they convey, is that no matrix of alternatives is given; we do not know what to count. There is no evident rule for separating the information from stylistic or other immaterial features of the sentences. The question, when to say that two sentences mean the same proposition is consequently not adequately answered by alluding to sameness of objective information.

The trouble in other words, consists in identifying representational feature of language as its essence. Wittgenstein in his later writings vehemently challenges this very idea of ‘essence of language’. Apart from their contextual employment, no such essence could be isolated from linguistic expressions. Wittgenstein, therefore, further attacks certain concepts on the basis of which an essentialist framework has been construed by the representationalists and others.
Wittgenstein criticises the representationalists for postulating the notion of proposition for professing semantic invariance. This notion, which suggests the availability of a structure, presupposes a clear-cut separation of words from sentences. Mere words can only refer, and for the sense to emerge, so as to make possible linguistic understanding, what is needed is a structural order. But there can be a language which does not bear such a distinction between words and sentences. He cites the language of the builder where certain expressions are uttered in the form of orders upon which certain activities are initiated. This language, Wittgenstein says, is by no means an incomplete language. A language which bears a distinction between words and sentences is in no way more complete than a language which doesn't consist of such a distinction. Only when such a distinction already occurs in a language, we can ask whether a particular expression in it is a word or a sentence. A language, he asserts, can very well do without such a distinction.

Wittgenstein thus asserts that, speaking language is part of an activity or a form of life. Two sentences, having the same sense, says he, consists in their having the same use. Quine also strikes at a similar assumption. He examines the notion of meaning and tries to rehabilitate it into a behaviourist framework. Here he examines how meaning - precisely the meaning of words and the meaning of sentences - is defined, and seeks to answer that it is being done by means of equating it to some more familiar expression.

The fault with the representationalists is their making equivalence relation in terms of propositions or reference, which are accessible to both the speakers and the hearers. Though Quine is prepared to admit this idea of equivalence, he rephrases it behaviouristically and argues
that the relation of synonymy or sameness of meaning thus projected amounts to nothing but professing sameness of use.  

Here what comes under dispute is the traditional metaphysical notion of truth and the associated concepts of language, meaning and linguistic understanding. Primarily, the idea of an external world with a fixed structure, determining our linguistic practices is undermined. This is, in Rorty's words, to de-divinise the world. It is such an idea of world-language relationship that professes the notion of language as a medium - a medium out of which beliefs and desires are constructed and that which stands between the self and the world. But such a view of language immediately leads us to certain conceptual difficulties. Rorty identifies the mistakes with such a conception even if it substitutes language for mind or consciousness. He continues:

But in itself this substitution is ineffective. For if we stick to the picture of language as a medium, something standing between the self and the nonhuman reality with which the self seeks to be in touch, we have made no progress. We are still using a subject-object picture, and we are still stuck with issues about scepticism, idealism and realism. For we are still able to ask questions about language of the same sort we asked about consciousness.

Rorty further says that the assumption that language is a medium, either of expression of the inner self or of representation of the external reality, stems from the representationalists' positing non-linguistic things called meanings which are expressed and facts which are represented by language. In other words, it is the idea of reference and the idea of proposition that have led them to postulate their peculiar view of truth and language.
It is precisely these ideas that are rejected when language is examined in the light of the ways it is being employed, or more precisely, when truth and meaning are analysed by stressing on the actual linguistic practices. As noted above, to get rid of the idea of language as functioning as a medium, what is needed is to show the shortcomings of the representational conception of language which conceives extra-linguistic entities in order to explain meaning and truth. Quine, with his holistic approach and the doctrines of indeterminacy of meaning and inscrutability of reference envisages to accomplish this.

5. REJECTION OF PROPOSITION AND REFERENCE

The heart of Quine's holism is the view that the whole of human knowledge - including mathematical and scientific doctrines and the commonplace beliefs of the day-to-day life - forms a corporate body which is collectively related to experience. The multitude of linguistic expressions we employ form a system which makes an appeal to human experience, not individually but collectively. With this view, Quine avoids the paradox of linguistic hierarchy. The difference between the language of physics and the common language was not absolute, as it was thought by the representationalists. Rather they differ from each other in terms of the degree of vulnerability to experience. The whole of language belongs to the purview of science and Quine wishes to see semantics and even philosophy as part of science. If Frege had taken the sentence as constituting the unit of semantic significance for Quine the unit of empirical significance is the whole of science. Even observation sentences, which are starting points in the leaning of language, are conceived by him as theory laden and are not absolutely immune to revision.
This, at the very outset, argues against the logic of representation, which makes linguistic meanings determinate by positing what Quine may wish to call the mysterious entities like propositions. The root of such an idea, Quine sees, lies in the fact that we often employ different expressions in different languages to express the same meaning. Entities such as propositions are posited in order to semantically surpass these differences in languages.

An argument which does away with this notion of common semantic property of different languages will then immediately make the representational doctrine of understanding questionable. Quine purports to show this by establishing the fact that every form of translation is indeterminate.

Language as understood by Quine is a complex network of dispositions that respond to stimuli and the whole question of empirical knowledge has to be explicated solely in terms of the neural intervening process. The empirical-representational conception of semantic linkage by means of acquaintance of a person to a sense datum has been replaced by the idea of stimulus to sentences established inductively (behaviounstically). Since language is a social art, meaning has to be analysed behaviouristically in terms of man's disposition to respond overtly to socially observable stimulations. Meaning is as Quine says it, "... primarily a property of behaviour. We recognise that there are no meanings, nor likenesses nor distinctions of meaning, beyond what are implicit in people's dispositions to overt behaviour." In other words, meanings are neither psychic entities which reside in our minds nor abstract entities like senses or propositions. Since they are the property of our behaviour and are defined in terms of sensory stimulations and verbal reactions.
From these preliminary assumptions Quine proceeds to explain what goes on in the process of translation. The language users' response to identical stimulus circumstances act as a guide here. It is assumed that, when placed in the same circumstances, both the linguist and the native will have similar stimulations. And since the stimuli are necessarily linked with sentences in language the observation of stimulus response is the basis for translation. The field linguist, therefore, by observing the assents and dissents of the native to sentences fed to him in the presence of the stimuli, can chart out similar expressions of both the languages. This is the starting point of the natives' expressions being associated with various situations (which are of course common to both). For e.g., the linguist by observing repeated stimulus reaction can translate the expression 'gavagai' in the native's language as a rabbit heralding sentence.  

But this process has its inevitable limitations. The practice of translation holds good until the linguist limits himself to translating observational sentences by means of an appeal to empirical evidence (stimuli-response) and truth-functional connectives by observing relations between the native's verdicts to sentences. But when he moves further he will inevitably encounter expressions which do not directly appeal to empirical evidence. The linguist faces such a difficulty when he tries to go beyond the translation of mere observation sentences to translating theoretical sentences.

Indeterminacy of translation stems from this context. Our use of language necessarily surpasses the realm of observation sentences and includes other forms of linguistic expressions also. The theories which we form do not depend exclusively on the truth of that which is presented in the observation sentences but presupposes much more than it
Quine makes this point clearer by showing the inscrutability of reference and the essential role played by analytical hypothesis in translation and linguistic understanding. It is on the basis of the notion of reference that the representationalists attempt to provide the explanation of understanding empirical meaning. But it is obvious that the process of translation on the basis of observing stimuli and response does not provide any definite information about reference of words, though it functions fairly well at the level of sentences. From the repeated observation of the utterance of the expression 'gavagai' in the presence of a rabbit and the concurrent observation of the behaviour of the native when it is uttered, the linguist can conclude that 'gavagai' is a rabbit heralding sentence. But from this observation he can never conclude anything definite about the reference. The expression 'gavagai' only tells him that a rabbit is present at the time of its utterance as its stimuli and does not inform him that so and so is a rabbit. It is quite uncertain whether the expression refers to the rabbit or to the various temporal segments of rabbits or to the integral or undetached parts of rabbit.

This uncertainty necessitates the postulating of analytical hypothesis in the process of translation. Since reference is inscrutable, the linguist is no more provided with empirical evidence to establish synonym relationship, but has to take insights from the ontological point of view he inherits from his own language. He has to hypothetically identify certain idioms in the native's language such as the sign of identity, the copula etc., in order to make a connection with the native's language. In other words, he has to project the ontological and theoretical schema of his own language into the language of the native. The paradigm for deciding the various functions of expressions are adopted from his own language without much contemplation. And this project of the ontological point of view of the linguist into the native's language is not
carried out in terms of any empirical data, but is purely arbitrary. The construction of analytical hypothesis is in itself an arbitrary practice.

This makes the whole process of translation and postulation of meaning uncertain and indeterminate. Moreover, since they project different ontological schemes when they translate, there will be different translations for the same expression. One cannot decide which schema of translation and interpretation is correct, since projection of analytical hypothesis is done arbitrarily and there is no empirical evidence which can function as a guide here.\(^\text{36}\)

What collapses with this indeterminacy doctrine is the idea that there is a metaphysically given world which fixes meaning of linguistic expressions in advance. Gone with it was the idea that truth was the business of the world (the hard-core correspondence theory of truth). If truth is not found outside language, then it has to be conceived as an immanent property of the latter. It must then belong to the semantic structure of language and therefore must be the most primitive category of semantics. This is to go against the familiar representational view, which derives truth by presupposing the givenness of sentential meanings in advance.

But if truth is conceived as the immanent property of language, then a reverse procedure will become more prominent. Truth will then become a primitive category and meaning and the intelligibility of language will be defined in terms of the former. Since meaning is indeterminate, as shown by Quine, truth cannot be derived from it. As Davidson says, language is not a filter or screen through which knowledge of the world must pass.\(^\text{37}\)
Davidson repeatedly emphasises the logical role of truth in the understanding of language. According to him, meaning becomes definable in terms of truth-conditions and truth provides the method for interpreting language and meaning. Following Tarski, he says that a sentence is true if and only if what the sentence says is the case. "S is T iff p" where 'S' is the name of the sentence and p is the sentence or its translation. 'Snow is white' is true if and only if snow is white. It is a logically necessary sentence. Yet he does not attempt to define truth and does not limit it to the language for which it is defined. In other words, we cannot go beyond language to define truth, since truth is immanent to language. But Tarski conceived truth as external to language and for him metalanguage was required to define it.

It is here that Davidson deviates from Tarski's programme. The mistake is with Tarski's conception of language where the external world plays a major role in defining its nature. Tarski's theory, we have noted earlier, is applicable only to formal language where the correspondence relation is granted in advance. But Davidson opposes the idea of reforming natural language, as he says that it is fatal to his project, for the task of a theory of meaning is not to change or improve or reform a language, but to describe and understand it. He thus revises the theory of truth and proposes a wider horizon to locate truth. He says:

We could take truth to be a property, not of sentences but of utterances, or speech acts, or ordered triples of sentences, times and persons; but it is simplest just to view truth as a relation between a sentence, a person and a time.

Sentences are true and held true only relative to a speaker and a time. The theory he proposes will entail sentences like; "I am tired" is true as (potentially) spoken by 'p' at t if and
only if \( p \) is tired at \( t \)

Therefore, for him truth is not a property of sentences in the pure sense.

He continues

Truth (in a given natural language) is not a property of sentences; it is a relation between sentences, speakers and dates. To view it thus is not to turn away from language to speechless eternal entities like propositions, statements and assertions, but to relate language with the occasions of truth in a way that invites the construction of a theory.\(^41\)

Even Michael Dummett, who vehemently opposes the holistic programme of Quine and Davidson, agrees with them in opposing the traditional concept of truth and the associated view of language and linguistic understanding. Dummett stresses the assertability of linguistic expressions and thus focuses on the importance of our assertions in the emergence of meaning and truth.\(^42\) For Dummett also, language is not a fixed structure, controlled by the factual world, and truth and meaning do not depend exclusively on the factual content of propositions.

With his explicitly anti-realist conception of language, Dummett attacks the representational outlook and the idea of language as a medium associated with it. Such an idea, according to him, presents a static view of language and the world and neglects the user of language and the time of utterance which are important if language is viewed as a medium. Language has to be viewed primarily as containing statements made by people. This factor points to the importance of assertion conditions. Since truth is not free from the assertion conditions, it cannot be decided independently of the language user. Nor can we isolate the semantic content from linguistic practices.
This ultimately leads to the dismissal of the idea of the metaphysically given world, which according to the realist view is cognition-independent and which representationalism counted to be determining the uses of language. This becomes apparent in Dummett's theory of meaning, according to which a theory of meaning must primarily tell us how the language-users develop semantic competence correctly.\textsuperscript{44} This is to emphasise the problem as to how to use language under appropriate conditions and not to see how the world defines the latter. In his anti-realist framework the actual practice of language is more important.

Dummett therefore, stresses the finite decidability of truth\textsuperscript{45} It is applicable only to language which is representational, and not to non-assertorial sentences. A sentence to be verified, according to him, requires to be so within a finite strength of time. He thus opposes Davidson's holism, which makes truth immanent to all forms of language, and makes it a primitive category. For Dummett, it is meaning which is immanent to language and the former is not a matter of truth-conditions. Meaning is the basis of truth in language. For him, Davidson's holism is mistaken because it fails to settle the problem of understanding language. Or, precisely, it does not answer the question, what constitutes a speaker's understanding of any one word or sentence.\textsuperscript{46}

But, for our enquiry, this issue does not matter much. Though Dummett conceives meaning as primitive, he nevertheless contends that the latter is associated with the uses of language and highlights the practical aspect and opposes the cognition-transcendent view of the realist. Both meaning and truth, according to him, are subject to the decisions of the people using language.
For our study, this aspect is the most important one. It breaks the metaphysical notion of truth and the associated notion of language, where the latter is a medium of expression and representation. This has ultimately resulted in, in Rorty's words, a de-divinisation of the world. Rorty writes

The world does not speak. Only we do. The world can, once we have programmed ourselves with a language, cause us to hold beliefs. But it cannot propose a language for us to speak. Only other human beings can do that.\textsuperscript{47}

As we noticed earlier, according to Rorty, the root of the idea that made philosophy of language to hold hard-core representational picture, lies in its confining attention to single sentences as opposed to vocabularies. In the case of single sentences, we can posit a segment of the world as making the former either true or false. But once we turn to vocabularies as a whole, says Rorty, it will become difficult to think of the world as making one set of vocabulary better than another. We cannot adjudicate on the basis of the world between vocabulary of Athenian politics vs Jefferson's. Here we have to consider alternative language games. It becomes hard to think that the vocabulary is somehow already out there in the world waiting for us to discover it.\textsuperscript{41}

A different concept of language as well as truth is derived from such a standpoint. Languages are made by us through our interaction, rather than found out there. Truth being a property of linguistic entities or sentences is also made rather than found. He further states that our purposes would be served best by ceasing to see truth as a deep matter, as a topic of philosophical interest, or 'truth' as a term which repays 'analysis'.\textsuperscript{49} The importance of
Davidson, according to Rorty, consists in his breaking the notion that language is a medium either of representation or of expression. Following Wittgenstein, Davidson avoids both reductionism and expansionism. Thus the question "can we reduce the various vocabularies to other vocabulanes or to a unified super vocabulary" is avoided. With his opposition to the scheme - content dualism, Davidson opposes the idea that there are non-linguistic things or metaphysical entities like meanings or facts which determine a priori our uses and various other encounters with language. Once the idea that language has a purpose - of representing or expressing - goes, the idea of language as medium also goes. Language is better explained as a process of evolution, where new forms of life constantly kill off old forms - not to accomplish a higher purpose, but blindly.

This is to recognise the fundamental status of language as a location of meaning and truth and this view stands closer to what we have seen in the previous chapter where language was made related to historical evolution and tradition, and what was important was the interaction between concrete human beings in historico-cultural situations. In other words, it is to place truth and meaning in the discourse which does not refer to any fixed a priori structure which determines its use externally. Whatever structure language has is something which is inbuilt. In this sense, language is something which we live, as it is the essential medium which fashions all our interactions with the rest of the world. It is, in other words, a hermeneutic medium. We have in it our ontological space and we understand everything through it from the peculiar space we are located. Yet it does not presume a dualist separation between subjects and objects, because it encompasses and shapes everything.
This will ultimately proclaim the fundamental linguisticality of understanding. Language is not a tool we employ to express, represent and understand reality. It is rather, as Gadamer says, the ontological medium where reality happens. In this sense it is the encompassing phenomenon to which everything belongs. This is not to deny the representational outlook that argues that the world is represented in language. It rather goes beyond that and claims that the representational model fails to capture the dynamism of this relationship. The representational model operates within a dualist framework which consists in the representations and the represented or more comprehensively, the subjects and the objects. World or reality is not merely represented in language but happens in language, as the latter encompasses the former in a fundamental way. The world is already housed in language. The very existence of objects in the world depends upon the world already having been disclosed to us in the language we use.

Language encompasses not only the world but everything we know including our very being. As Heidegger says, the being of man is always characterised as being-in-the-world, and this is to be in a peculiar ontological space created and sustained by language. Language in this sense, has an ontological significance. It is the ontological medium where we find ourselves as existing - as being engaged in various interactive relationships with others. In this sense, language is the foundation of both meaning and truth. It determines all our encounters with the rest of the world - all our experiences, perceptions, and thoughts, our consciousness, our conceptions about truth and reality, notions of rationality and the like.

The ontological significance of language eventually suggests the historicity of our being and of all our conceptualisations. Language, being an all-encompassing medium, will embody
history and tradition To be within a language means to live within a particular historical tradition and to be guided by its categories. These categories, though exist prior to us, are not constituted of a set of fixed structures that permanently determine our life and existence. They are also subject to change

Another important characteristic feature of the linguistic medium we inherit is its social dimension. This is because language is fundamentally a social phenomenon. It is our ontological medium which we share with other people in our being-in-the-world. In this sense, it transcends our subjective experiences and interpretations.

Truth in this framework can no longer be understood as a matter of experience, since the dualism of representations and the represented (scheme and content) will get ultimately abolished once we recognise the ontological significance of language. The latter concept also suggests that our historical tradition has a pivotal role in determining all our encounters with language. The problem of understanding meaning, therefore, has to take into account this aspect. But here arises another problem. If language has an ontological significance and if all our understanding is rooted in language which embodies historical tradition, then we cannot guarantee certainty and objectivity. Our encounter with language and therefore all our cognitive activities including understanding of meaning will be necessarily guided by the categories of our historical tradition. This makes all our encounters with language and also our very being-in-the-world, an interpretative process.
The problem of understanding meaning in this framework, therefore, presupposes an analysis and proper evaluation of the ontological significance of language in the very constitution of our being and all our endeavours. This will have to explain, not only how truth is located in the interpretative process, but also how meaning evolves out of it — out of the intersubjective discourse. This will also explain the process of understanding meaning and also prove how fundamental this process is as far as the being of man is concerned. It would explain what understanding ultimately consists in of.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


3. *Ibid*.

4. *Ibid*


7. For instance, Wittgenstein's notion of elementary proposition in *TLP*. Again, we have seen in Chapter I, how the logical positivists propagated the concept of 'basic propositions'.


14 Cf Ibid
16 Cf. Ibid 2.18
18 Cf. Ibid p.343.
20 Ibid p 40
21 Cf Ibid
22 Cf Rorty, Richard. Op Cit. p.5.,
24 Cf Quine, W.V PL p.4
27 Quine, W V.: PL p.4.
31 Ibid. pp.10-11.


38. Cf. Ibid p.29.

39. Ibid. p.34.

40. Cf Ibid p.34.

41. Ibid pp 43-44.

42. Cf. Dummett, M.- 1993 'What is a Theory of Meaning? (I)' [hereafter TM(I)] and also 'Truth and Meaning'. In the latter article he says that, in order to say anything illuminating about the concept of truth, then we must link it with that of judgement or of assertions, (p. 157), in *Seas of Language* (hereafter SL), Oxford, Clarendon Press.

43. Cf. Ibid and also see his article, 'The Source of the Concept of Truth', in the same book.

44. Cf. Dummett, M.: TM(I). and also see his article 'Truth and Meaning', in SL.

45. Cf. Dummett, M.: TM(I), What is the Theory of Meaning? (II), and 'Language and Truth', in SL.
Cf. Dummett, M: TM(1). Dummett in this paper argues that a theory of meaning must accord with an atomistic or at least a molecular conception of language, not a holistic one. p 22

Rorty, Richard Op Cit. p.6

Cf. Ibid p 5

Cf. Ibid p 8

Cf Ibid p.11

Cf Ibid p16.

Cf. Ibid p19.

In all his works, Gadamer emphasises the importance of linguisticality and the ontological significance of language. A discussion on this aspect is provided in the next chapter.