CHAPTER - V

PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEMS : THEIR GENESIS AND SOLUTION
Philosophers disagree. This has been a characteristic feature of the practice of philosophy. They differ not only in their conclusions or views but also about the very method and goal of their pursuit. In the history of European philosophy the ancient Greeks are found to be the first among those who were disturbed by the ultimate questions about nature and reality. Thales, Anaxamander, Parmenides, Heraclitus, Pythagoras, address themselves to questions relating to the ultimate source of creation. On the other hand, the Upanisadic thinkers of the east were trying to articulate their views about the nature of the ultimate as the world ground. Then two distinct traditions developed drawing sustenance from their backgrounds, and traditions and culture. Philosophy began with man's sense of wonder at the vast reality surrounding him and man's persistant effort to understand it. Though philosophy began with speculation about reality in course of its growth and development it has outgrown its basic function.

Philosophy has been defined differently at different times. Philosophy as an explanation of the reality in its whole is equated with metaphysics. The metaphysician seeks to provide an explanation of reality in terms of concepts and categories. The scientists engage themselves in explain-
ing the things and processes in nature. While explaining an
event the scientist refers to the cause or the sum total of
antecedent conditions to the extent he undertakes the inves-
tigation of nature coming under his scope of study. It is
seen to be particular in scope and factual in nature. Unlike
a scientific explanation the philosophical explanation does
not limit itself to any specific thing or event in space and
time, rather attempts to explain reality in its totality.
Philosophers like Locke, Berkeley and Hume make a departure
from the traditional mode of metaphysical thinking by in-
sisting on an investigation into the source, nature and
limit of knowledge of the reality. Locke writes in the intro-
duction of his Essay —

"Since it is the understanding that sets man above
the rest of sensible beings, and given him all the
advantage and dominion which he has over them, it
is certainly a subject, even for its nobleness,
worth our labour to inquire into. The understanding,
like the eye, whilst it makes in see and perceive
all other things, takes no notice of itself; and it
requires art and pains to set it at a distance and
make it its own object. But whatever be the diffi-
culties that lie in the way of this inquiry, whatever
it be that keeps in so much in the dark to ourselves,
sure I am that all the light we can let in upon our
own minds, all the acquaintance we can make with
our own understanding, will not only be very plea-
sant, but brings in great advantage, in directing
our thoughts in the search of other things. This,
therefore, being my purpose to inquire into the
original, certainty, and extent of human knowledge."1

1. Locke, John, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding,
p. 69.
The differences among philosophers about the source of human knowledge are responsible for the appearance of rationalism and empiricism, the former claiming that reason is the ultimate source and the latter claiming sense experience as basic to all human knowledge. Depending on this initial thesis the rationalists pleaded for the a priori character of human cognition and the empiricists insisted that all knowledge is a posteriori. Hume took the empiricistic thesis to its logical extreme and ended in scepticism doubting the very existence of self, substance and causal necessity. This epistemological controversy led Kant to rethink the basic premises of the rival schools. He made profound contribution in his critical philosophy, by showing that knowledge in order to be knowledge proper must involve reference to the functions both of "sensibility" and "understanding." Certain, what he called "transcendental" consideration led Kent to speak about the a priori forms of intuition and understanding. He sought to account for the possibility of knowledge by referring to the functions of mind in the form of the faculties of sensibility and understanding. Kant discovers a uniformity in the functioning of the faculties. Anything to be an object of knowledge has to conform to the a priori form or categories of sensibility.
and understanding. Space and time being the a priori forms of sensibility, an object in order to be an item in our knowledge must have already been ordered in space and time. In other words if there could be non-spatial and non-temporal that cannot probably enter into domain of knowledge. Though "knowledge begins with experience, it doesn't arise out of it." The percepts in order to constitute knowledge stand in need of ordering and synthesis brought upon them by understanding through categories (a priori way of synthesis). Thus one of the central concerns of western philosophy has been a cluster of issues pertaining to the concept of knowledge and what might be called the phenomenon of knowing.

Philosophers also have been interested in the basic principles of meaning and intelligibility. In fact some would regard this concern as the defining character of philosophy. In this sense philosophy is as it were, "the science" of concepts. Other disciplines which are concerned with what are called "matters of fact," while giving their theories about reality inevitably employ certain concepts whose clarity is, from the nature of the case, taken for granted. Philosophers take up some of these concepts like cause, effect, body, mind, self, God, truth and subject them to logical analysis. A philosopher as a logician may be interested in
abstract operations of words and expressions, sentences and propositions irrespective of their truth values. The logician rightly takes up the job and brings out the basic rules of consistency and coherence. The laws of logic are nothing but the basic laws which the user of a language must satisfy in order to be intelligible. Whitehead and Russell seek to deduce all the mathematical propositions from certain primitive logical concepts. Philosophy being a conceptual enquiry must base itself in logic. Thus metaphysics, epistemology and logic constitute the different aspects of the enterprise called philosophy.

The age of "renaissance" in the west and the period subsequent to it are marked by inventions and discoveries in the various fields of science. The views of Galileo, Newton, Darwin, Einstein revolutionized man's thinking about himself and the world. This led to a fundamental change in our way of looking at things. This change was spearheaded by the new concept of rationality inherent in the "scientific" revolution. Faith, which figured prominently in philosophical thinking in medieval ages gave way to "reason." Nature was no more to be feared and worshipped. Man became victim of the possibility of conquering the forces of nature
and putting them to his own use. Man became more sceptical about the traditional beliefs and theories. It is but natural that it had certain tangible repercussions in philosophy.

Idealism was the major note of the philosophical thinking of the nineteenth century. Idealism in the hands of Green, Bosanquet and Bradley reached its zenith. The conclusions in the idealistic metaphysics were obviously contrary to the commonsensical and scientific way of thinking. Expressions like "time is unreal," "matter is unreal" made idealism susceptible to the criticisms by scientists and philosophers at large. Pragmatism, Logical positivism, ordinary language philosophy were but different reactions against idealism in particular and metaphysical thinking in general. Logical positivism was pioneered by Ernst Mach in Vienna. A group of scientists, philosophers having been inspired by the idea of unification of sciences considered it to be their primary duty to eliminate metaphysics. Metaphysics according to them contains nothing but a bundle of paradoxes and contradictions as they do not conform to the very conditions of meaningfulness. A proposition which is not analytic, in order to be meaningful must be verifiable. Metaphysical propositions being neither analytic nor synthe-
tic in the above sense contain nothing but senseless collections of words. Logical positivists then obviously drew their incentive from David Hume.

Moore sought to refute idealism in the interest of common sense. His argument against idealism rested on the contention that the truths, believed in common parlance are self evidently true. Metaphysical conclusions like "matter is unreal," "motion is impossible," "space is unreal" do obviously contradict common sense beliefs. Moore argued that common sense truths cannot be denied without self-contradiction and absurdity. When metaphysical truths are in conflict with the common sense notions one should doubt the validity of the former rather than the latter.

Russell "refuted" idealism in the interest of science. He is of the opinion that metaphysical confusions arise out of the confusion of grammatical form with logical form. In the theory of definite descriptions Russell exhibits the way philosophers posit a realm of entities having been deceived by the form of language. For him the language of science serves as an ideal language to dissolve metaphysical disputes.
Ryle on the other hand while exposing the absurdities of the cartesian myth "ghost inside the machine" traces the confusions in philosophy to what he terms as category mistake. In spite of the similarity of two expressions from the point of view of grammar they may belong to two different logical categories. To assimilate expressions belonging to two distinct categories into one category is to commit the category mistake. "Body" and "mind" though they are both nouns, do not stand for substances spatial and non-spatial respectively. The concepts associated with body and mental conduct concepts operate differently in our language and therefore have a different logic of their own. According to Ryle philosophical confusions can be removed and philosophical understanding can be achieved by drawing the logical geography of the different concepts. Wittgenstein mentions in the *Tractatus* -

6.5 - "The riddle does not exist."

7 - "What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence."

He takes the language of science as an ideal means for analysis of meaning. By limiting significant discourse to that of science he probably confined the function of language to its fact stating job only. Language for him consisted of elementary propositions as their ultimate
constituents which directly picture reality by denoting a state of affairs in the objective world. Although Wittgenstein starts with certain considerations about language and meaning, he ends up with a pluralistic conception of reality. He says in the *Tractatus* -

2.021 - "Objects make up the substance of the world"

1.1 - "The world is the totality of facts, not of things." The atomism of Wittgenstein was the logical consequence of certain assumptions about language and meaning.

The Wittgenstein of the *Philosophical Investigations* starts with a critical re-examination of the Tractarian views. He not only questions the very assumptions on which his logical atomism was broadly based but also goes on to analyse the very nature of philosophical problem, their genesis and solutions.

In *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein says that "A philosophical problem has the form: I do not know my way about."^2

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As Pitcher puts it -

"When a person thinks about something philosophically, he inevitably becomes puzzled. Being bewildered in this way is not, according to Wittgenstein, merely an unfortunate condition that some good philosophers happen to fall into but might have managed to avoid, it is an essential preliminary aspect, literary a pre-condition of being good philosopher. To know, in the fullest sense, what a philosophical problem is, entails being thus bewildered."

For a layman the ideas of matter, mind, cause, effect, do not contain any obscurity. But when a philosopher starts thinking about these fundamental concepts their definition, implication, inter-relation he finds himself entangled with a nest of confusions. For example, we all in our day to day life do implicitly believe that everything has a cause irrespective of our knowledge of them. A medical scientist has not yet succeeded in detecting the cause of cancer but he, for that reason does not claim "here is an event which is not caused." For not finding the cause is attributed to one's failure to find the same but not to the non-existence of it. Similarly we all believe that most human actions are free. Given certain alternatives man is at liberty to choose one course of action rather than another depending on his interest and purposes. He is free to choose either the good or the bad, the desirable or the undesirable. But when a

3. Pitcher George, *The Philosophy of Wittgenstein*, p.188.
philosopher considers the idea of cause in the context of human actions he finds himself in contradictions. If an action is taken as an event as per the strict deterministic laws of causality it must have been due to the sum totality of antecedent conditions and the antecedent condition can also be accounted for by referring to their antecedents and so on. This goes to suggest that what one is doing at present is determined by factors and conditions in the remote past over which one does not have any control. In other words one does so because one could not do otherwise. This leaves no room for free will. In the absence of free will and volition the entire edifice of ethics and morality would find no base for their coherence. Wittgenstein philosophizes against the background of a host of brilliant metaphysicians. But while diagnosing the nature of the philosophical puzzlements Wittgenstein attributes them to misunderstanding about the nature and functions of language.

Language is indispensable for human communication. The words and expressions that constitute the outer clothing of language are vehicles of ideas and meanings. It grows out of the necessities of man to communicate with each other. The words and expressions as it has been earlier pointed out in order to be meaningful should not only satisfy a given set
of rules and conventions but should also be employed in the right context. Language is context bound. If one would describe one's kindness by saying "my kindness is long or short," one would only betray one's ignorance about the use of certain expressions. Concepts like length, breadth are relevant in the description of objects in space and time. The spatio temporal rootings of these concepts make them irrelevant in the description of human qualities and virtues. Use of language is wedded to life situations. Therefore Wittgenstein observes that when words and expressions are treated or considered in abstraction, i.e., irrespective of the context one is likely to land oneself in absurdities. Metaphysical paradoxes are of this type.

Bradley for example subjects the notion of 'matter' and 'relation' to philosophical scrutiny, finds them to be contradictory and therefore relegates them to the level of appearance. Zeno's paradox of motion, Berkeley's idealistic thesis "esse-est-percepi" go down as the specimens of philosophical conclusions. Wittgenstein would observe that the concepts handled by the philosophers have their meaning and significance in ordinary language of which they are part and parcel. So like other concepts they become meaningful only against the semantic conditions (verbal and non-verbal).
When the terms are used in isolation apart from the mode of life which makes them significant they hardly convey any sense. Metaphysicians are prone to such mistakes and confusions. Wittgenstein traces them to two fundamental sources viz., the unity seeking character of human mind and picture thinking. Man has a basic tendency to find unity in diversity. When a number of particulars or individuals are brought under one class one tends to ignore the differences among the members of the class. This basic tendency also motivates the scientists to discover more and more general laws which subsume the less general ones under them. Craving for generality also governs our thinking about language and meaning. Having been prompted by this natural tendency, one tends to find similar functions in case of words belonging to different categories. The function cannot be read off from the grammatical form of the expression only. In other words, given two expressions of the same grammatical form, they may have two different kinds of functions in the language. For example - Body and mind are nouns, therefore belong to one grammatical category. Descartes was obviously led to think that body and mind stand for two different substances hence whatever is true of body in so far as it is a thing or a substance must be true of mind. One thing
that is true of the body in so far as it is a thing at all, is that there are processes going on in it. It was supposed, therefore, that correspondingly in the mind also there must be mental processes going on. Since mind as a substance is non-spatial the processes there of are not public and therefore must be going on in the "private arena" of the mind itself. Thus Descartes having thought of mind on the model of body was prompted to invoke mind as a private chamber. So also Plato thought of universals on the model of particulars and invoked a supersensuous world to house the ideas.

"Of course, what confuses us is the uniform appearance of words when we hear them spoken or meet them in script and print. For their application is not presented to us so clearly. Especially when we are doing philosophy." 4

The craving for unity leads one to assimilate words into certain paradigms. We think that all nouns function alike and all verbs stand for actions and processes. This leads one to form pictures. Picture thinking is endemic to human mind. Once a word is assimilated to a paradigm the models and pictures associated with the paradigm also influence our thinking about it. The word 'time' because of its

similarity with other nouns has been thought as signifying a thing and conceived on the model of a stream which carries things and events with it. We speak of 'time' in terms of an eternal flow towards the future from the past through the present the pictures which are otherwise formed in our experience has certain usual connotations such as change, irrevocability and so on and so forth. Therefore when time is taken as a flow of stream one is likely to ascribe the properties of flux, irrevocability to time. In a sense our thinking about time is largely influenced and determined by suggestions from the picture. In other words we are held captive by pictures. When one is under the spell of pictures one tends to be oblivious of the real connotations of terms and falls into philosophical puzzlements. Pictures are also embedded in our language. For example, somebody remarks "I shall keep it in mind" The word 'keep' has a spatial connotation. We normally speak of "keeping things in the basket, box etc." Because of the spatial undertone of the term when it is used in relation to mind, we think of the mind as if it is respectable where informations are stored for future reference.

Philosophical conclusions according to Wittgenstein are partly due to certain frailities of human mind and the
peculiarities of language. The peculiarity of philosophical puzzles consists in the fact that they are not amenable to solution in the light of facts. Had it been so philosophical problems would have been long solved like their scientific counterparts. The philosopher is already conversant with all the relevant facts but clings to his view in spite of the evidences contrary to it. Idealism in its extreme form maintains that an object is nothing but conglomeration of ideas. In experiencing an object, ideas and concepts are all that we have access to. So the postulation of an external world over and above ideas is logically unwarranted. From this idealists go on to "refute" the belief in the existence of an external world. Berkeley would subscribe to the above version of idealism, in spite of his obvious awareness of the evident facts that there is an external world in which he has his being. Wittgenstein compares the philosopher with a neurotic who continues to doubt the intention and the gestures of one and all even though there are no circumstantial justification for having them. Wittgenstein would observe there is hardly anything wrong with the people. The difficulty of the psychotic lies within himself. In case of the philosophers "the trouble, in short, lies not in the alleged "facts" to be explained, but in the philosopher's way of looking at them,
in his way of thinking and talking about them. It appears to him as though there are profound difficulties about sense perception itself, about free will itself, about truth itself, and so on; but in fact the difficulty lies not there, but rather in the philosopher's way of viewing them." A philosophical problem says, Wittgenstein is "not a scientific one; but a muddle felt as a problem." The philosopher is the man who is intellectually sick and hence stands in need of a cure. So the proper treatment of a philosophical puzzle is "like the treatment of an illness." The philosopher like the psychoanalytic patient can be made to see sense by making him realize the real source of his difficulty. A person caught in a philosophical confusion is like a man in a room who wants to get out but doesn't know how. He tries the window but it is too high. He tries the chimney but it is too narrow."

Philosophical problems are, therefore, pseudo problems, philosophical doubts pseudo doubts, philosophical questions pseudo questions. One must, however, add that although, they are "pseudo," they are not so in any trivial sense.

There is profundity to them not unlike the profundity of the neurotic's sickness. They arise as consequent upon profound misunderstandings of uses of language. Wittgenstein would urge that all terms and expressions get their meaning from the ordinary language which is their home. Metaphysicians in their attempt to get to a "world view" select certain expressions current in ordinary language and define them in abstraction. But meaningful use of an expression is not possible if it is divested from the context which renders it meaningful. As a result of metaphysical stretch of ordinary expressions metaphysicians harvest confusions and paradoxes. Bradley treats space, time and matter in abstraction and assess them by his own definition of reality and as a consequence arrives at conclusions like, space is unreal, matter is unreal, time is unreal, which obviously conflicts with common sense truths. Since metaphysical puzzles are due to taking expressions away from the contexts of their actual use, they can be solved by bringing back expressions from their metaphysical use to their home use.

Unlike in the Tractatus Wittgenstein in Philosophical Investigations admits the possibility of alternative language games. Fact stating though primary is not the only function of language. Language is used for different purposes.
We perform different speech acts by means of language. It is also used in doing something i.e., in course of our speech activities. To state facts, to ask questions, to wish, etc., are different speech acts. But statements containing informations, statements in form of questions, exclamatory expressions may also occur in course of relating a story. But Wittgenstein would insist that the rules governing a descriptive expression would be different from the rules of the language of ethics. To use one language by means of the semantic rules of another is as good as playing one game by the rules of another. So Wittgenstein admits all possible alternative kinds of life which give rise to their respective languages. Philosophical confusions disappear only when one gets adequate clarity as to the meaning of the word by finding it in the way it functions in the language. In finding out the meaning of an expression he would urge to enumerate not only the actual and remote use of the expression but also to invent and imagine possible states of affairs and see if they could be meaningfully employed in them.

The above analysis reveals meaning of an expression is not part of it rather it gets meaning from the context.
So the criterion of intelligibility cannot be fixed a priori. Is it not possible to make sense of the philosophical treatment of concepts in the context of the metaphysical thinking? Is it logically sound to dub all metaphysical problems as pseudo ones as they do not conform to the ordinary or common sense ways of looking at it? What is after all the idea of ordinary language? Does it stand for the language of the rif-raff? A close perusal of the history of metaphysics would make one think that the metaphysician is very well aware of the uses of the expressions in ordinary language and in spite of this, being persuaded by certain logical considerations, he defines them in a particular way rather than another. Metaphysical conclusions can sometimes be traced to certain assumptions which are accepted again on the basis of rational considerations. Metaphysics is the philosophical exercise with concepts to offer a coherent and holistic explanation of reality. Of course a philosopher does not explain the world in the way a scientist does. Nonetheless the endeavour to explain the world by means of certain basic concepts and categories no doubt illuminates one's understanding and furthers the cause of philosophy. To pronounce metaphysical problems as muddles because the metaphysical uses of expressions
are not in conformity with their uses in ordinary language might itself amount to evaluating one game by the principles of another.

The foregoing might give the suggestion that philosophical problems are solely caused due to linguistic and conceptual confusions. This point stands in need of elucidation. As a matter of fact a philosophical theory might have various type of causes. The causes might be psychological, social, religious, scientific and cultural as well. Therefore it is wrong to say that linguistic confusion is the sole cause of philosophical theories. The philosopher proposes a particular theory which might have multiple axes to grind. He might be trying to advance a particular ideology. As a matter of fact many philosophers have tried to advance ideologies in the form of philosophical theories. Therefore it is wrong to say that philosophical theories are caused due to conceptual confusions alone. We wish to point out that Wittgenstein is not oblivious to this fact. What he is trying to point out is this: whatever might be the causes of a philosophical theory, it can be presented as cases of conceptual confusions. A philosophical theory is a concatenation of concepts. Wittgenstein would argue that certain philosophical theory exhibit cases of conceptual confusions.