CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: THE TURN TO PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE
The present study is concerned with understanding Sir P.F. Strawson's philosophy of language. A philosophy of language studies the diverse aspects of language in which it is related to our use and understanding on the one hand and reality on the other.

A philosopher is not alone in the field to study language. It is studied by psychologists, anthropologists, sociologists and linguists. A psychologist is concerned with language as a stimulus-response account of the acquisition and use of language - as an aid to learning and as a behaviour that influences as well as is influenced by the environment. An anthropologist's study of language is concerned with determination of particular cultures taking language as a factor in its origin, growth and decay. A linguist's study of language shows how language is spoken i.e. the sound pattern, the structure and the origin of language in different linguistic groups. A philosopher's interest in language dates back to his interest in finding out solutions to his philosophical problems that have more or less a linguistic origin.

1.1 A philosopher's Concern with Language

A philosopher long since has been bothering about what would be a plausible interpretation of the variety of phenomena in his environment. He wondered about the nature
of the universe and man's place in it. He framed his own models of explanation and in doing so gave his own pictures of the world. In want of specialized knowledge all that a man knew or fancied that he knew came under one name — philosophy. Hence a philosopher was regarded as a wise man, first to pronounce his judgment over the secrets of nature.

As specific questions about nature were raised and experimental methods trying to find out precise, certain and definite answers were adopted, philosophy yielded its pride of place to different branches of natural and social sciences. These sciences developed and philosophy with its disreputed liberty from the facts of experience remained with its conceptual models a potential factor in encouraging or retarding scientific imagination and insight.

Philosophy naturally, could not be in competition with natural sciences or highly sophisticated first-order disciplines in interpreting, explaining and predicting phenomena. The philosopher in his eagerness to find out what these phenomena are that bothered him, tried to give a conceptual model in which the relevant informations given by specialist disciplines were put together to give a coherent look. There was coherence in these disciplines, no doubt; but these disciplines needed, as it were, some interpretation for a common man — for those untrained in these disciplines. It
would not be very much incorrect to say, if we look at the history of philosophy, that a philosopher plays the role of Oliver Goldsmith's 'village school master' in the past. He was a wise man who knew everything, beginning with how planets move to what would constitute a good government and how people should behave in a good society. Philosophy had the same subject matter to explain but the explanation was of a different nature. While the explanation in natural sciences was causal, based on observation and experiment, a philosopher's explanation was sometimes teleological and sometimes some sort of putting together the different bits of knowledge that these disciplines offered and giving a world-view for the common man to comprehend and live up to.

In giving a world-view, philosophy, especially during the medieval period, played a handmaiden to theology.¹ Theology postulated a supreme principle 'God' as the creator of this universe. The phenomena, the fauna and flora, the mountains, the sky, stars and planets, in one word, the nature, was explained as created by God and the different things in nature including human beings constituted a system - cosmos. Human beings formed a part of the cosmos as it were. But

to such teleological explanations of the world and the universe at large, it was science, the specialized discipline, which posed the main challenge. The laws of science and the natural or the causal or mechanical explanation it offered, pulled philosophy in another direction - the direction of putting all our confidence in natural explanations for things. Hence there was some tension in the philosophical thought of this period and philosophers devoted themselves, consequently, to finding out the right method for knowing reality, the world or nature.

Philosophers raised questions about the validity of empirical knowledge. Some of the laws of natural science were modified or changed in the light of new facts of experience. Hence the conclusions were merely probable. No certainty could be gained from empirical studies. Certainty was found only in mathematical methods or deductive methods that took for granted the axiomatic truth of certain principles and deduced conclusions according to the laws of logic. Certainty and universality were the declared characteristics of veridical knowledge.

It was only in 18th century that Kant inquired into the

faculties of mind. Causality, substantiality, unity and plurality etc. were found to be a priori principles that make knowledge possible or significant. These principles according to Kant, are not to be derived from experience, rather, they are the necessary principles for making our knowledge of nature a systematic, harmonious whole. Human beings make different types of judgments and from the nature of such judgments it is clear that mind in its faculty of understanding makes nature accessible to them. Our several forms and categories make nature as we know it. Hence knowledge need not be extremely personalized as in solipsism. As the faculty of understanding is common to all human beings, there is objectivity in the nature of knowledge. As the principles are a priori they need not have an empirical basis. Hence the fear of scepticism that in want of an empirical basis the principles remain unfounded need not threaten our empirical knowledge.

A philosopher's concern, at least for Kant, was not how to know phenomena. It was concerned with finding a justification for the kind of inquiry pursued in natural sciences. Scientific method appeared suspect from a philosopher's standpoint because the philosopher asked, for example, if one event followed another and the association between the two was found for a long time to hold, the two are thought to be causally connected,
but if causality means nothing more than the mere association between the two, then the knowledge based on the notion of causal connection was not certain; the scientists, therefore, can claim nothing more than the observed and the observable association between the two.

Kant makes a remark which he says every reader must keep in mind in order that he understands what he meant by *a priori* possibility of knowledge. He says:

Not every kind of knowledge *a priori* should be called transcendental, but that only by which we know that — and how — certain representations (intuitions or concepts) can be employed or are possible *a priori*. The term 'transcendental', that is to say, signifies such knowledge as concerns the *a priori* possibility of knowledge, or its *a priori* employment.

But this insight that we are to inquire into the *a priori* possibility of knowledge and also the study that makes inquiry along the lines remained for a long time away from a philosopher's concern.

Positivists during the early part of the present century took immense interest in language. Some of the words and terms that we use were seen to lack an empirical basis. A sentence was considered as significant if it was

\[ \text{ibid} \ p.96. \]
a matter of definition, a relation between ideas or if it had some empirical basis. The ideas which lacked an empirical basis and were not a matter of definitions or analytically true, were regarded as intruders into our language. Such ideas were metaphysical ideas as they transcended all our experience. Hence the positivists reiterated the slogan that such ideas were nonsense and deserved to be committed to flames.

It was Wittgenstein in his *Philosophical Investigations* who hit upon the Kantian insight to give our investigation the clue to a grammar of the language-game in which the possibilities are realized. According to Wittgenstein:

> Our investigation... is directed not towards phenomena, but as one might say, towards the 'possibilities' of phenomena.

While Kant was facing the challenge from extreme personalization of knowledge (Berkeley's solipsism) and scepticism (Hume's), Wittgenstein was facing the challenge from early positivists in the form of sense-data theory. Kant's solution was that mind is endowed with certain forms and categories.

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which are *a priori* and one need not seek to establish them through experience, rather, they make experience significant. Wittgenstein arrives at a similar conclusion though from a different standpoint. According to Wittgenstein the very question that leads to scepticism is untenable, nonsense. The question as regards the logical guarantee of our knowledge-claims is a pseudo question. The question of certainty in matters of empirical knowledge does not arise. Rather, we are concerned with the meaning of how empirical facts are represented in our language. In his early writing *Tractatus* he thought that meaning of a sentence was dependent on the logical form. It is the logical form that gives one the power of drawing inferences and these inferences of the implications constitute what meaning the sentence has. It is this form that gives a picture of reality. In his later philosophy Wittgenstein inquires into the context of use of words or expressions and concludes that depending on one's life and experience one has to interpret the language as to its meaning and truth. Hence it is the role that words or expressions play that determines the meaning of the statements.

It is not only demanded by epistemology — a theory of knowledge, that philosophers should concern themselves with our representations of phenomena or the meaning of words or expressions constituting empirical language, it is also demanded by other areas of philosophy such as logic and ethics.
Logic declared that ordinary language was ill suited for making inference precise and hence the language should be so constructed that the logical form of propositions be clearly revealed to make inference a matter of mechanical procedure. The constructed language should be ideal or perfect enough to do the job. Ordinary language contains words and concepts which are not defined and hence contain ambiguities and are liable to different interpretations. But in an ideal and perfect language the expressions are clearly defined and their logical power is clearly indicated in the form of the propositions consisting of those well-defined expressions.

Our concern with language was demanded too by ethics. Moral judgments needed to be distinguished from descriptive statements. While descriptive statements could be said to be true or false, ethical statements were neither true nor false, they belonged to a different type. So ethical language needed to be distinguished from empirical language.

Thus language became one of the major concerns of philosophers. Kutschera says:

This preoccupation with language has its origins in the most diverse areas of philosophical inquiry. It has come from theory of knowledge by way of a turn from critique of reason to a critique of language; from logic as a consequence of its concern with artificial languages and the logical analysis of natural
languages...from ethics because of its concern with linguistic forms of ethical statements and the demarcation of the boundary between them and descriptive sentences.6

This appeal to language revolutionized the whole procedure. The early analysts of language took certain words and concepts for analysis and tried to clarify them. The background belief was that once those troublesome words and the concepts were analyzed and clarified the rest of the language was clear and precise, hence it would not cause so much of confusion and chaos in philosophy. Philosophy would become a fruitful pursuit. Unnecessary non-significant, obscure questions leading to metaphysical entities were no more necessary for philosophy than they are for natural sciences. Philosophers, it was felt, should be guided by a robust sense of reality. The philosopher must be ethically neutral, scientific and impartial.7 The number of entities and properties postulated to explain the world by philosophers should be reduced to the exact number of entities and properties as are there in the world. 'Physical objects are a logical construction out of sense data'. 'Wherever possible logical constructions are to be substituted for inferred entities.'8 Most of the philosophical problems arise due to


8 Ibid. p.155.
a confusion between psychological and logical issues.

Philosophical problems when subjected to necessary analysis and purification can be seen as logical i.e. arising out of logical analysis of propositions. From a logical analysis a philosopher can determine what kind of 'facts' are there and how they are related to one another. There should be a submission to 'facts'. From such standpoints philosophical systems of the past were analysed. They were declared to be concerned with logical analysis of different concepts. Some systems were reinterpreted and reconstructed along the postulated lines to show that they were concerned with logical analysis of language.

Once language was diagnosed as the major source of 'bewitchment of the intellect', philosophical problems were nothing better than confusions and muddles. Human beings are apt to fall into certain puzzlements. They raise questions to which there is no answer. The different answers which were tried were no answers or absurd answers. A philosopher, according to Wittingstein, as an analyst can 'show the fly its way out of the fly-bottle.' A philosopher in puzzlement is like a patient suffering from illness. The analyst's task is to diagnose and treat the troublesome

10. Ibid. Sec. 209.
Philosophical problems need, therefore, no solution but 'dissolution'.\textsuperscript{11} The problems arise only when our words and concepts are studied in isolation—as abstracted from the context of their use—'when language goes on holiday.'\textsuperscript{12} The work of an analyst was to assemble reminders for a particular purpose i.e. to look to their actual or possible uses in practical or theoretical concerns, to bring words back from their metaphysical or metaphorical to their everyday employment. Instead of drawing inferences on the basis of their surface grammar an analyst must look to the depth grammar,\textsuperscript{12} to their actual use in language, to the language-game to which they belong.

But the question remains as to what must be regarded as the actual use, the actual employment? Is it the task of a philosopher to assemble reminders or to construct a theory according to which language will be considered a set or system of rules? Empirical linguists developing a science of linguistics have a theory of language, a theory as to how it is spoken by different linguistic groups. Should we,

\textsuperscript{11}\textit{Ibid} Sec. 133.
\textsuperscript{12}\textit{Ibid} Sec. 664.
the philosophers, borrow the theory and accordingly determine whether a particular use is the actual use or the everyday use?

1.2 A Conception of Philosophy of Language

As the philosopher is not in competition with the first-order disciplines and linguistics is a highly specialized discipline with its own conceptual structure, what at best he can do is to find out, understand and explain this conceptual structure, explain its use. The concepts belong to that discipline and the philosopher can borrow the concepts and interpret them in his own terminology. Just as Philosophy of Science, Philosophy of Mathematics, Philosophy of Religion etc. are studies dealing with conceptual structure of these first-order disciplines, so also Philosophy of Language has to find out the conceptual structure of empirical linguistics, understand and explain the concepts used by this discipline. Fodor and Katz propose to consider it as nothing other than Philosophy of Linguistics i.e. a discipline analogous in every respect to the Philosophy of Science, Philosophy of Mathematics etc. Later on Katz, of course, modifies his view. Katz says:

The philosophy of language is an investigation of the conceptual knowledge based upon the general theory of

language, which is the theory in descriptive linguistics that represents the facts about linguistic structure common to all natural languages.\textsuperscript{14}

Based on such a notion of philosophy of language we have the data supplied by descriptive linguistics, the philosopher tries to construct a philosophy of language to find out the methodology employed and the conceptual framework to which the concepts fit in. Accordingly for Katz a conception of philosophy of language based upon the transformational theory of grammar would be:

\begin{quote}
The special task of philosophy of language which distinguishes it from other branches of philosophy is that it seeks to shed light on the structure of conceptual knowledge on the basis of insights into the structure of the languages in which such knowledge is expressed and communicated.\textsuperscript{15}
\end{quote}

Accordingly a conception of Philosophy of Language begins with some conception of (i) what natural languages are and how best to study them, (ii) what relation obtains between linguistic structure and the concepts that give rise to philosophical problems, (iii) how the results of the study of natural languages can be relevant to the formulation of solutions to philosophical problems. Hence a philosophy of language does not only shed light on the conceptual knowledge as given by descriptive linguistics but also can help in solving philosophical problems by taking into consideration the insights and

\textsuperscript{14} J.J. Katz, \textit{Philosophy of Language} (N.Y. 1966) p.4 n.2.

According to this line of thought the difficulty with ordinary language philosophy i.e. that philosophical problems arise because we forget the actual use of words or concepts in our everyday employment, was that it lacked a general theory of language in the light of which philosophical problems were to be solved or dissolved. Philosophers who seriously attempted to solve philosophical problems followed the lead of Carnap rather than Wittgenstein. Carnap was of opinion that Wittgenstein, in spite of his ruling not to speak or to be silent, has spoken profusely.

Ordinary language philosophy following the lead of Wittgenstein, though it seemed to be backed by no theory of language, had accepted a common sense realism and appealed to our use of concepts in our day-to-day transactions with the world as the surest way to solution of philosophical problems. They adopted the procedure of selecting some problematic concept and then started looking for how it was used. In saying 'this is how it is used' they did not rely on the data furnished by descriptive linguistics. The basis behind such a procedure was that philosophers, too, are native

speakers of a language. If the data supplied by the specialized disciplines were relevant it is not so in the case of philosophy of language. The philosopher of language has a privileged access, as it were, to the linguistic data. He can, therefore, utilize his own linguistic intuitions. He has knowledge of himself being a speaker of a language. If he has to count noses, he can rely on his own nose or else there was nothing relevant for him to count.\footnote{Stanley Cavell, *Must we Mean That to Say? Philosophy and Linguistics*, op. cit. p.133.}

Actually the problem is more deep rooted than it appears. The philosopher uses a language which goes beyond his own nose. If he would rely on his own nose or his linguistic intuitions he could only say 'this is how I use the word.' But he uses language in the first person plural indicative sentence. How the problem is this: what is hidden in the claim in this first person plural indicative sentence? Does he describe the use as common to all speakers of a linguistic group? Does he represent the linguistic group in his linguistic behaviour? Does he set up a standard for others to follow? To add to the problem there are differences even among the experts as to what constitutes the proper use. These are the sorts of problems that one who relies on his own nose needs to count.
According to Fodor and Katz, when the Oxford philosopher discusses the use of words, he is pursuing an empirical investigation and not uncovering the truths of transcendental logic. Hence if his primary object is to discover 'what words we should say when' i.e. knowing the meaning of words, his empirical investigation takes the form of linguistic phenomenology. Fodor and Katz say:

The Oxford philosopher can be distinguished from the linguist by the primary difference in focus. While the linguist is concerned with problems of phonology, phonemics, morphology and syntax, the Oxford philosopher has devoted himself almost exclusively to the problem about meaning.18

Now this feature of Oxford philosophy involves not only the words and expressions, but also the structure of sentences i.e. the way words are combined as well as the discourses in which a particular sentence as a significant unit plays a part. Without taking these things into consideration it is not possible to determine the meaning of any arbitrary sentence. Moreover, there is a difference among philosophers as to who or which philosophers constitute the Oxford School. According to Dummett19 there is no common view that can be said as belonging to all philosophers alleged to be belonging


to the school. The only distinctive feature which earns them the title 'Oxford School' was their opposition to Lord Russell and their reaction against too much of logic and mathematics in philosophy. The name was coined by Gellner in his attack against analytic philosophy. Russell's comments on the later work of Wittgenstein are well known. This time when Gellner wrote boldly against analytic philosophy, Russell approvingly wrote an introduction.

However, whether it is Oxford School or analytic philosophers, the present-day philosophers have come to the central theme of philosophy of language by paying their attention to the problems relating to meaning.

1.3 The General Issues in a Philosophy of Language

As against the traditional way of doing philosophy in which all our inquiries pertained to a discussion of phenomena, the nature, we have the Kant-Wittgenstein model where philosophical investigation was concerned with a discovery of transcendental truths about the a priori characterization of meaningful use of language or with the grammar of the language-game. But the explanatory power of such a priori characterization looks doubtful unless it be related to the


content, i.e., unless it is specified to what or which such characterization is applicable. That would explain such a priori characterization would be 'to understand the nature of the situation which may not be all of the same kind, in which we feel inclined to use the same term.'

This shows that our investigation in philosophy is not purely concerned with things or phenomena to the point of exclusion of language on the one hand nor is it purely concerned with language or the possibility of employment of concepts and categories to the point of exclusion of the content. What Hare points out is that the nature of philosophical inquiry is more like a discovery of situations to which these concepts and categories are applicable.

This reflects what Austin prefers to call 'linguistic phenomenology'. According to Austin when we examine 'what we should say when' i.e. what words we should use in what situations,

we are looking again not merely at words (or 'meanings' whatever they may be) but also at the realities we use the words to talk about: we are using sharpened awareness of words to sharpen our conception of, though not as the final arbiter of, phenomena.

22 R.M. Hare, 'Philosophical Discoveries', Philosophy and Linguistics, op. cit. pp.231-32.

Austin's demand that we are looking not merely at words or meanings but also at realities was to bring back philosophical investigations to be concerned about word and object together. This was again demanded by Cavell explicitly when he says that in order to find out the meaning of what 'umiak' is, 'we normally reach for our dictionary and look at it'. But it is surprising that we learn something about the world by hunting in the dictionary. It is surprising only because 'we forget that we learn the language and learn the world together that they become elaborated and distorted together and in the same places'. What seemed like finding a world in the dictionary was really a case of bringing the world to the dictionary. According to Cavell 'we had the world with us all the time in that armchair, but we felt the weight of it only when we felt a lack in it.' It may sometimes so happen that we need to bring the dictionary to the world. That happens especially when we run across in a small boat around Alaska of a sort we have never seen and wonder what (?), or what it is or what it is called? In either case 'learning is a case of aligning language and the world.' The point is the conventional character of language, the relation between words and world.

24Stanley Cavell, op. cit. p.146.

25Ibid p.146.
This conventional character of language has been understood differently by different philosophers. The British empiricist philosophers like Locke, Berkeley and Hume have taken this relation to consist in a correspondence or association between words and ideas that we get through sense experience. The ideas, sensations, impressions or mental images were, therefore, postulated as constituting the meaning of our words and concepts. But these being psychological in nature, they have been criticised as lacking identity-conditions. Hence the particulars, the objects which seem to have identity-conditions were, later on, supposed to constitute the meaning of words or expressions. The import of names was to give the objects at the other end of the relation unity and identity. Accordingly we have two sorts of entities, and meaning is supposed to be a sort of relation or correspondence between the two. But it was soon realized that naming and meaning are two different things. Meaning is a wider term in relation to naming. There are many words which are not names of objects or entities but all the same they are meaningful and necessary for the structure of sentences, hence for communication of our thoughts. Now it was only the a priori characterization of meaningful use of language which could bring back the notion of unity and identity to objects which appeared according to empiricist
theory a matter of disjointed bits of perceptual data, the ideas or sensations or whatever.

But as the naming theory of meaning was not universal, it was quite natural to admit exceptions. Terms were thought of as having two aspects: their connotative or qualitative as well as their denotative or quantitative or pointing to aspects. Proper names were regarded as having only the denotative or pointing to aspect whereas there remained some words or expressions which did not have any denoting aspect. As this theory was far from satisfactory, another alternative was tried - the alternative of behaviour analysis. According to this kind of analysis words are supposed to be related to the function they perform in speech i.e. the response they obtain from the audience. The meaning of a word, therefore, is what it does in speech.

It was here, some philosophers felt, that our investigation into what constitutes the meaning of words, has, again, gone wrong. Though words have their lexical meaning, the meaning which constitutes the subject matter of philosophical investigation is something different. Philosophers do not inquire into the lexical meaning of words. Language is used for a variety of purposes. When it is used for speaking about a particular state of affairs i.e. in a factual or
fact-stating discourse, if the state of affairs obtains as
per the saying of the sentence, then the sentence is true,
otherwise it is false. A true sentence points to a state
of affairs or 'now things are' i.e., it gives us a picture
of how things are whereas a false sentence does not show
or picture how things are.

Hence we have not only the concept of meaning and the
associated concept of denoting of words and expressions in
a sentence, but also the notion of truth. While an ex-
pression in a denoting relation pointed to a particular
object as in a naming relation, the notion of truth has the
added advantage of picturing or showing a state of affairs
that a sentence depicts or speaks about. Meaning, if at
all it is to be retained, is therefore nothing other than
the conditions under which a sentence is true, 'to give the
truth conditions is a way of giving the meaning of a
sentence'.

You have given all the meaning when you have
given the truth-conditions of all the sentences.

But there are certain problems which this truth-theoretic
approach to language faces. The first problem is whether a

26 Donald Davidson, 'Truth and Meaning' Synthese 17
(1967) p.31c.

27 W.V.O. Quine, 'Reply to Davidson' Words and
Objections (ed) Davidson and Hintikka (Dordrecht : Reidel,
1969)
linguistic sentence i.e. a sentence considered as grammatically correct, should be the bearer of truth, or it is to be a statement or assertion or proposition that should be considered truth-relevant? Can we attribute truth to any sentence whatsoever? What are the general conditions under which a sentence could be said to be true? Such questions make truth as a central concept in our investigations, a problematic one.

Again there is a further question as regards the truth of sentences expressing questions, commands etc. Such sentences do not point to a state of affairs in any assertive style. The question of whether ethical statements or for that purpose religious utterances should be truth-relevant makes the matter with 'truth' more complicated.

Alternatively the question now turns on the notion of communication. If communication is to be taken as the function of language then the general features of language should be captured by a theory that takes into consideration the intention of the speaker in communicating his thought through language to his audience. This leads to the further question whether the audience should recognize the communication-intention of the speaker. Before an audience distinguishes a sincere and serious utterance of a sentence from a playful utterance of the same sentence, he has to recognize the intention of the speaker,
otherwise there is no point in inquiring what the speaker tries to communicate. Though each word in a sentence has its own lexical meaning, a speaker has the full liberty to use the sentence either significantly while speaking about a particular state of affairs or to use it as a piece of illustration. Again in our day-to-day discourse we do not make all our words and expressions explicit. Some words take their meaning from the context of their utterance, or use. Hence recognition of the communication-intention of the speaker has to draw all its resources from the context of use.

But if communication-intention of a speaker has to play so vital a role in a theory of language then the same should be available to the audience. Again this must be through linguistic means. From the heard speech the audience should be able to know whether the speaker wants to communicate the sentence sincerely and honestly. The speaker, of course, does not add 'sincerely and honestly' to his sentences nor is there an 'assertion sign' available so that an assertion could be distinguished from a jestful utterance. As the nature of this communication-intention has not been sufficiently worked out many philosophers interpreted it as psychological on a par with belief which by its very nature remains hidden to an audience unless again specified by the speaker.
even in this case the audience has to rely on the linguistic clues given to him. The regress would be infinite if not resorted to some extra-linguistic clues.

There is yet a different attempt in which communication as a function of language is not ignored but at the same time the recognition of the communication-intention is left to the linguistic ability or competence of a community of speakers. Adult speakers of a language have a sort of mastery over language and they can distinguish in virtue of their competency whether a particular utterance of a sentence is significant or not, whether a sentence is intended to be communicated or not. The competent speakers are capable of interpreting an otherwise unmeaning sound pattern as statements made by speakers— as significant speech-acts. As speakers of their native tongue they have an information-processing capacity and in virtue of this capacity they interpret whether any arbitrary sound pattern is a significant speech-act or not.

The notion of competence that an adult speaker of a language is said to possess has its ambiguity between knowledge of language and its rules on the one hand and the knowledge of things. The notion of competence implies that an adult speaker

has the ability to form new sentences and understand new sentences uttered to him as well-formed sentences of his tongue.

Now the problem that such an approach to language faces is that the various modes of speech used in communication of thought have to be seen as amenable to a smooth division into force of an utterance and its content. But the speakers of a linguistic community seem to be proficient in a phenomenology of language use which does not yield to semantic monism of a type required for a theory that divides utterances into force and content. The reduction to content seems unduly and unnecessarily simplistic. The speakers and hearers have a natural understanding of language in its various modes of speech with reference to a knowledge of things surrounding us. It is about these things that we talk of and it is these things that are given names or linguistic symbols. Moreover, there is the further problem whether competency in a language of a speaker can bear the immense load of distinguishing a sincere use of a sentence from that of an insincere or simple playful utterance. Again, if competency on the part of native speakers is to include a knowledge of things besides a knowledge of well-formedness of sentences as demanded by the conventional character of words or expressions, then it seems imminent to distinguish between the two and clearly specify which must be appealed to in a theory that is to be taken as a theory of language. Conventional association between words
and things not being a universal fact and antiquity in case of natural languages being a fact, it seems necessary not to appeal to this conventional character of language in all cases. Therefore, it seems that the knowledge of linguistic rules be supplemented by knowledge of things in a linguistic theory. It will not simply do to say that a native speaker has an information-processing capacity. We need to specify what this notion of competence is. A knowledge of things seems to demand more than a knowledge of semantic markers.

1.4 Strawson’s approach

There is a universality in Strawson’s approach which distinguishes it from all other approaches. According to Strawson a speaker refers to a particular with the help of a referring expression. He refers to a particular in order to go on to speak something about it by way of predicating an attribute to that particular or by way of classifying it under a broader principle or category. Thus he identifies the object of the individual and then predicates an attribute. Hence reference and predication are the functions which a speaker performs by introducing terms into their different roles in a proposition. This is, in other words, a linguistic or communicational situation in which a speaker asserts a sentence or makes a statement. The peculiarity of this assertive style of occurrence of a sentence is that it has a truth-value.
i.e. it can be assessed as true or false. If a speaker simply utters a sentence without intending to do anything by it, then that utterance has to be distinguished from a significant use of the sentence. Though the meaning of a sentence is established by conventions, the linguistic habits or practices of a people, the communication-intention to use a sentence with its full significance cannot be presupposed in case of every occurrence of the same sentence. In a particular context a sentence might be true but in a different context and in the mouth of a different speaker it might be false. Only when there is a reference made by a speaker the particular to which reference is made can be presupposed as existing. But this is not so in case of a simple (unintended) utterance without the linguistic or communicational situation. Accordingly the notions of reference and predication get a different and significant treatment in Strawson's philosophy. I propose to discuss the whole issue of how reference can be successfully made and what the speaker goes on to say in my second chapter: Reference and Predication.

The context in which Strawson's notion of reference seems relevant gives significance to a concept of meaning which may be classified as communication-intention theory of meaning. Strawson recognizes the role played by customs, habits and conventions that people have. These habits establish the relation of language to reality. The speaker's communication-intention specifies only that the sentence is meant to be
taken as a sincere and serious utterance which has a
referring expression that is used by the speaker to refer
or identify the particular or the universal as the case
may be and a predicative expression that specifies the
higher category or principle under which the thing identi­
fied comes when the utterance is true. Hence the intention
of the speaker is not something psychological nor does it
need to be divined beneath the linguistic clothing. What
it does is to fix up the reference of the term so that truth-
value can be attached to it. If a particular cannot be
presupposed to exist as referred to by the referring expression
then the sentence cannot have a truth-value. But against this
Strawsonian approach there is a contending approach that
treats truth as a sort of correspondence between the sentence
as a linguistic unit and the world. The truth of a sentence
according to this contending approach points to a state of
affairs that obtains. It points to or says 'how things are'.
According to Strawsonian approach the role of relating
language to the world especially in an assertion or proposition
is played by 'reference' when the speaker uses referring
expressions identifyingly. Hence the notion of truth as a
sort of correspondence between a statement and facts or state
of affairs is simply unnecessary and unwarranted. It does not
mean that truth is a redundant concept. It has its role to
play when a proposition is declared to be true. The role is a
confirmatory one. One who says that a proposition is true,
He corroborates what is stated. What is stated is not an episode. Truth plays its role of confirming or corroborating what is stated in this non-episodic sense. I shall discuss the related issues in my third chapter: Meaning and Truth.

The recent revival of interest in the concept of truth as a semantic and key notion is due to Tarski. He defined truth in terms of a biconditional only in the context of a fully formalized language. Natural language was declared to be defective as regards its syntax as well as vocabulary. Hence only a fully defined language with hierarchical structure was truth-relevant. Davidson instead of formalizing natural language for truth-application, relativized the notion of truth so that truth is applicable to natural language. Davidson's concern was not so much to give a theory of truth, rather, it was to give a theory of meaning. The meaning of a sentence is declared accordingly to be the conditions under which it is true. Now in the hands of these semantists a theory of meaning for natural language turns to be a theory of understanding. Dummett in his attempt to develop a theory of meaning as a theory of understanding required an additional theory besides the theory of force and the theory of sensus to cover our natural understanding of the content of a sentence from different concepts. Thus there is an emphasis on epistemological aspect. McDowell in his attempt to make Davidson's approach more significant has challenged Dummett's thesis at many points. I shall
try to point out the problems involved in such an attempt. I shall discuss the issues in my fourth chapter: Communication and Knowledge.

McDowell's approach though it tries to accommodate communicative function of language in a truth-conditional theory of meaning lays too heavy a burden on the notion of competence. According to McDowell the speakers of a linguistic community being adult, native and competent, possess an information-processing capacity in virtue of which they interpret the meaning of a sentence. They can distinguish a sincere and serious utterance of a speaker from a playful utterance of it. Hence the element of communication-intention comes through the speech-acts that the speakers perform through available linguistic means. Besides the speech-acts the communication-intention plays no essential role in a theory of meaning that can be regarded as a theory of understanding.

Now in order to understand Strawson's notion of communication-intention it is necessary that we analyse the notion of competence with special reference to transformational generative grammar of Chomsky and his followers. Strawson also points out how the transformational generative grammarians were after explanatory adequacy when they discovered the fact that descriptive adequacy was not sufficient to give a theory of language. A grammar that does not take into consideration the
type of roles that expressions are assigned to play in a sentence lacks perspicuousness. Hence according to Strawson even if we lay a great emphasis on the notion of competency, the notion will work only when it is specified to which language-type a sentence belongs. In other words this involves a specification of language-type and a consideration of the communication-intention of the speaker to use a sentence in a particular language-type. I shall discuss the related issues in my fifth chapter: The Concept of Perspicuous Grammar.

Even though truth-theoretic approach is not unproblematic when extended to natural language this does not confer plausibility on Strawsonian thesis. But then alternatively a proper understanding of Strawsonian approach will, it is hoped, go a long way to make available a theory of language and meaning as true of natural language. In my concluding chapter I shall present Strawson's philosophy of language in a nutshell that will, if my arguments are sound, serve the purpose.