UNIT 2 LANGUAGE-GAMES AND PARADIGMS

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2.0 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this unit is to familiarize the student with the theory of language game and why it brought about revolutionary change in the philosophical thinking. The unit also aims at familiarizing the student with the notion of paradigm as how a concept of the philosophy of science helps in understanding the traditional philosophical thinking.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The revolutionary idea in the history of philosophy came at the strategic time when the whole of philosophy was moving in one direction. The turns which were intended and were brought were anyway not in a day but came out of the constant struggle to debug the complexities of problems as understood by the philosophers of the time. A constant search and reflection has paved way towards novel understanding, resulting in the new direction of human understanding and newer heights of comprehending the reality. One such turn we find at the end of 19th century and reached its fuller manifestation in the person and works of Wittgenstein. The pure speculative thinking, which was considered as the subject matter of philosophy got blurred as the advancement in science took place. Science became part of human existence and secondary reflection was needed on science itself. A unique analysis of the growth of science with its history paved way to the novel insight into the notion of Paradigm. In fact, later on the term paradigm-shift became so popular, that it was a reflection on science and its growth. Paradigm became the substratum

of any theory, through which phases of development were differentiated and newer understandings were reached. In this unit we are going to see these two notions of language games and paradigm, their implications to philosophy, particularly to epistemological issues.

2.2 WITTGENSTEIN BEFORE LANGUAGE GAMES

The term 'language game' is unique to the 20 century linguistic philosophy. After the drastic turn in philosophical approach, where in the language became the focus of philosophy, the analytical mode of philosophizing gained its importance. The century old philosophical problems were looked from the language perspective and hence, language became the focal point of philosophical analysis. From the time of Brentano , Meingong and Husserl, we find a slow movement towards the focusing of language. However, the movement became intense at the end of the 19 century with the emergence of the ordinary language philosophy of Moore, Logical atomism of Russell and culminated in the Picture theory of Wittgenstein. The mathematical application towards language in the form of symbolic logic by Frege and analysis through the analytical school of Vienna too contributed towards this movement. All through this history Wittgenstein stands out as a unique philosopher, philosopher of language who contributed intensely to the language philosophy and the philosophy that followed after.

2.3 PICTURE THEORY AS THE PRELIMINARY FOR LANGUAGE GAME THEORY

Before entering into the language game theory, the picture theory of language plays an important role in understanding Wittgenstein. It was his earlier work, the *Tractatus*, which contains the main idea of picture theory.

Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus is one of the original works of Wittgenstein in its content and style. It is arranged as a series of remarks numbered in decimal notation. Altogether it contains seven propositions and rests are the explanations of these propositions. They are:

1. The world is everything that is the case.

2. What is the case, the fact, is the existence of states of affairs.

3. A logical picture of facts is a thought.

4. A thought is a sentence with a sense.

5. A sentence is a truth-function of elementary sentences.

6. The general form of a truth-function is $[P, \xi, N (\xi)]$.

7. Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent.

In analyzing the history of philosophy, Wittgenstein found that the philosophical problems arose due to the misunderstanding in the language itself. Therefore, a clarification of language would result in answering the questions which were

considered as philosophical. Through *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein wanted to dissect language as to make it an answer for the philosophical problems. The result of such an enterprise is the picture theory, apart from which there are also other important themes in the *Tractatus*. Picture theory aims at explaining the nature of sentences / propositions. Wittgenstein wanted to find out what makes it possible for a combination of words to represent a fact in the world? How is it that by producing a sentence I can say something – can tell someone that so-and-so is the case?

He held that a sentence is a picture / model of reality. His understanding was that, when we put a sentence together we construct a model of reality. As picture represents for Wittgenstein a sentence represents the reality. It does it so by showing its sense. It shows how things are if it is true. A sentence composed of old words is able to communicate a new state of affairs by virtue of being a picture of it. The pictorial elements have one-to-one correspondence with the things in the state of affairs it represents. Picture theory held that a picture must have something in common with what it pictures. A sentence as a picture has something in common with the reality. It was a two twofold answer to the philosophical problem. At one hand he analysed language as the one which as a propositional structure at the basis upon which ordinary language is built up. On the other hand there is reality at the root of which there is thought as the basis. As the ordinary language represents the surface structure, the deep structure of language / propositions represents the thought. This representation is done in the way of picture. However, he understood the limitation of the picture, that it cannot represent itself, for which it needs some other form of representation. Applying it to the language and thought, Wittgenstein felt that that which cannot be thought cannot be said. Whatever can be thought can be expressed. Thus, the analysis of language shows the limits of our thinking. The function of philosophy therefore, is to indicate what cannot be said by presenting clearly what can be said. The conception of propositions / language rests on the notion of 'name'. Name being the simple sign, not composed of other signs. Name stands for objects but doesn't picture the reality for it can do so only in a combination of names. This combination of names portrays a combination of objects – i.e., a state of affairs.

Another important contribution of *Tractatus* is the notion of elementary propositions, which consist of names. Elementary propositions cannot be analysed further. The names in elementary propositions exist as a logical necessity. This logical necessity arises out of the requirement that propositions have a definite sense. An indefinite sense therefore is no sense at all. The analysis of elementary propositions showed that that either they are true or false, in representing the reality. Wittgenstein held that our ordinary language is in perfect logical order. The work of a philosopher is to analyse the propositions into elementary propositions and show what evidently lies there and not bringing an order where it is not. Wittgenstein employed a technique of truth tables to analyse the truth and falsity of propositions. His understanding was elementary propositions either fall under the tautologies or contradictions. A tautology shows a certain combination of propositions and the structure of the constituent propositions. In this whole scheme of things, there was no place for will and action, ethics, metaphysics: all that falls outside of logic. He conceived anything outside of logic as accidental.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answer.

1. What are the Wittgenstein's important contributions?

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2. What is picture theory?

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3. What is the world-view we get out of picture theory?

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Language Games-A Framework For Meaning

The picture that emerges of the *Tractatus* is that of a static, clear cut, and a binary world. The realities which at times defy the logic or the logic of which is not yet identified become accidental to the world of our living. The picture theory accords a sidelined status with regard to their role, for they fall outside the realm of logic. Yet these are the facts which make much sense and living possible along with human constructs and perception. Therefore, the static picture of the world through the clarification of language failed to have a holistic account. The realization from the part of Wittgenstein that his earlier philosophy failed to attempt at a holistic picture of human world, gave way of understanding philosophical problems in a new light. We find a drastic shift in his views, in the *Philosophical Investigations*. It is not an overthrowing of the *Tractatus* rather; it is in the background of *Tractatus* his *Investigations* make sense. Therefore, in the history of philosophy it is unique to Wittgenstein; he produced two different original systems at different periods of his life.

2.4 LANGUAGE GAME: A SHIFT FROM PICTURE THEORY

The important elements of picture theory in the *Tractatus* were names, elementary propositions, states of affairs, logical space etc. The purpose was to understand the logical world, the possible world which could be expressed in language. The path taken was logical analysis of propositions. In the *Investigations* the move was from the foundations of logic to the nature of

the world. The shift therefore is from the limited understanding of language, language of the natural sciences to the language of wider forms of life. It is no longer one view of language rather languages within the language. Given the totality of names and the totality of elementary propositions, the language will not give the essence of language and the essence of the world. This is the very idea which presupposed that the proposition carries with it the whole of language. *Investigations* rejects this idea. A sentence / proposition does presuppose a 'language game', but a language game will be only a small segment of the whole of language. The example for such notion appears in the example of the mason and his helper. It is not the mere words, but the totality of signs and symbols within the framework of construction of building gives meaning to the language. In comparison with the higher, complex languages, this language may appear as lower. But it has its own language game in which the elements of language make sense.

Another important shift is from the limited understanding of the language to the forms of life. The *Tractatus* anticipated the newer combination of objects in the logical space. The *Tractatus* held that what is given can be arranged differently provided the new arrangement confirms to the laws of logic. *Investigations* differed from this understanding. A new language game would embody a new 'form of life' which is not merely a rearrangement of what already exists. It is a form of life because the new language game carries with it not merely words but behaviours, reactions etc.

In the third place, the *Investigations* rejects the claim of *Tractatus*, the universal form of language. There is nothing common to the various forms of language that makes them language. There is not something common to all language games just as there is something common to all the games. The commonality that which makes them the game rather it is the multitude of relationships 'overlapping and crisscrossing'. The language game therefore can be better understood in the light of the concept of family resemblance. Therefore, it is not the unity of essence which makes the world rather it is the difference which is at the root of reality.

Another important shift is from names as absolute to names as relative. The names stood for objects in the *Tractatu*s, whereas *Investigations* held the view that the words, names are neither simple nor complex. The simplicity and the complexity are brought in when they are viewed against the background of a language game. Two other objections that were brought against the notion of names based on the understanding of *Tractatus*. They are, firstly, *Tractatus* equated the meaning of the name as the object it stands for; and the names are a priori for meaning. *Investigations* goes further and says that the meaning of the word is never a thing and secondly, before one can find out what a name stands for one must already have mastered the language game to which the name belongs.

Investigations also considers the logical necessity of the simple objects not as absolute. Their sense is not definite in relation to the particular language games. Therefore, the language analysis need not be propositional only, rather it differs according to the language games. Therefore, precision, exactness are relative to particular language games, where in we find the actual language as imperfect based on these ideals. Therefore, the philosophical ideal and the actual language comes into conflict because the analysis doesn't lead to what

is there. In this context of bewitched by the language, we are called to see what is really there. There needs to be a shift from the analysis to description. It is through description we come realize that there is no hidden structure beneath language and reality rather in description we come to see what is really there.

Language Games and Meaning

It is worth noting the central notion of Investigation i.e., meaning as use. While Tractatus maintained that sentence / proposition has meaning or sense because it is a picture, Investigations turns it upside down and says it is the 'use', employment, application that gives meaning. Therefore, it is not the analysis of the elementary proposition which made sense, rather the situation in which a word, a sentence / proposition that is used gives meaning. A significant sentence therefore is a tool with which a certain job is done. The use here is understood not as correct use of the word / sentence, but use stands for meaning. Thus, there is particular behavior and circumstances go along with the sentence in its meaning. Ultimately it is the use in the context makes meaning.

2.5 MEANING AS USE AND HERMENEUTICS

In the background from *Tractatus* to *Investigations*, some insights can be derived in understanding hermeneutics in the Language game theory. Basically, how a word, sentence or the *Tractarian* Picture is interpreted determines what use is made of it. What is deduced out of the proposition is entirely dependent on the understanding of the proposition. Therefore, the meaning being identical with use comes before use. The use is based on the understanding of the proposition. Therefore, the use presupposes the meaning known. We can thus, say that, understanding carries with it the compulsion. In this prior knowledge of meaning, comes in relation to the logical compulsion / necessity which was discussed in the *Tractatus*. Going beyond in the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein puts-in the notion of mental act between the act and the state of understanding. The mental states can be deduced from the action resulted or are known by the conclusions drawn in a particular language game. However, Wittgenstein calls them the general disease of thinking, because the newer situations are dealt in the mental act confirming to a rule. Therefore, it appears that the mental acts do confine the newer situations to particular way of rule application. *Investigation* differs here in saying that there is a difference in our understanding of a rule and application of rule in a particular way. The emergence of meaning is determined in the way a particular rule is applied and not by the deductions of mental acts. Thus, the meaning emerges not merely by the way rule is formulated in a sentence but by what we say and do in actual cases. It is the agreement that determines whether a particular action is in accordance with a rule. Therefore, it is our agreement fixes the meaning of the rules and defines their content. There is proximity between the growth of meaning and increase in the practice. It is in this practice, the rules get their meaning. Therefore, the emergence of meaning is in actual practice and in the application of rule in particular situations. Going beyond the 'private rules' of a language, Wittgenstein asserted that such a thing is not possible because meaning arises only in the context of circumstances or situations. The notion of private language seems to be obscure because the

rule applications of such language cannot be known / made known to others. Therefore, the meaning in exclusion, without forms of life is not possible. For the hermeneutical enterprise, this understanding of meaning and understanding has great impact.

The hermeneutical enterprise becomes meaningful when we look at the meanings emerging from the life world.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answer

1. What is language game theory?

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2. What is the picture of the world derived through language game theory?

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3. What is meaning as use?

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2.6 THE ANALYSIS AND UNDERSTANDING OF PARADIGM

The term paradigm became famous with Thomas S. Kuhn, a philosopher of science in his '*The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*'. In his attempt to analyze the history of science, he found that science has grown in a systematic way. However, the new insights into science which brought revolutions in science were altogether different way of looking at things happened than the traditional way of looking at things. Identifying this as the basis for understanding what a paradigm is, Kuhn was able to go to the conceptual understanding of the paradigm. Science, when it works within an established framework, a framework supported by theories and empirical data, still faces complicated questions. The answer to these questions is challenging and at times the answer can never be found in the given framework. A certain amount of arbitrariness is present in such enterprise of searching for the answers. The science at this stage is called as normal science for it is based upon certain foundations which are well established.

Paradigm is therefore, an established framework within which many unsolved problems are answered. It need not be science only, for that matter any scientific discipline. Paradigm is not a complete thing in itself, it emerges as one finds it out, as the research advances, thinking advances, and it becomes more refined. Paradigm, in this sense, gives meaning to the larger body of facts and establishes their relation within the paradigm. Secondly, it helps in prediction to the given data. Thirdly, a paradigm resolves some of the ambiguities and problems within the given paradigm. It is worth noting in the analysis of Kuhn that long gap of time elapses before the signs of new paradigm emerge. Certain notions are important to note in the Kuhnian analysis of science, which could be applied to other sciences as well.

The term paradigm has been used by Kuhn in two senses. First of all it stands for 'the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques and so on shared by the members of a given community'. On the other hand, paradigm denotes one sort of element in that constellation, the concrete puzzle-solutions which, employed as models or examples, can replace explicit rules as a basis for the solution of the remaining puzzles of normal science. Since, Kuhn was within the framework of normal science, he has applied this understanding of paradigm to the natural science. Kuhn emphasizes on the second understanding of paradigm as deeper for it gives a place for new framework.

The second important aspect to notice in the understanding of a paradigm is the notion of the community structure, who share a particular paradigm. It is circular in its relation to a community, because, paradigm is shared by a scientific community and scientific community consists of individuals who share a paradigm. Community here refers to the persons who hold on to / share a paradigm. Science is not freed from the community structure because science is essentially a shared enterprise. Therefore, paradigm in the philosophical sense (the second understanding) is the collection of community commitments. The proper term can be used in the Kuhnian sense is the 'disciplinary matrix'. It is disciplinary because it refers to a discipline as a common possession of the practitioners, and secondly matrix because it is composed of ordered elements of various sorts, which need further specification. This disciplinary matrix is characterized by symbolic generalizations, beliefs in particular models, values inherently held and shared, and shared examples (exemplars).

In this sense, as the new paradigm emerges, the diverse scientific communities are merged into and are reduced to a fewer groups. This is the function of foundation because it unites diversities of problems and reduces them, unites them around a central problem around which other problems are centered. The nature of paradigm is such that, it has the unique function of uniting pre-paradigm period and the new paradigm. The older problems are understood in the new light. In this light when we analyze a paradigm, a paradigm governs not the subject matter but the group of practitioners.

A few insights can be gained from the analysis of paradigm by Kuhn. They can be classified as following and can be applied to linguistic turn as a paradigm shift.

1. In an established paradigm, all problems are looked from a particular framework, which in turn determines the nature and solution to the problems.

2. The period of such status quo, the normal science, has problems with those empirical data which defy the existing paradigmatic frameworks

3. The attempt to newer solutions to the problems comes as the paradigm shift where in the older problems are understood in a new light.

4. This results in the revolution in science where in stray phenomena of established framework become the examples / models of new framework.

5. New paradigm rules the science for a period of time until the anomalies are found to be answered with a shift in the paradigm.

2.7   LANGUAGE GAME AS NEW PARADIGM

Within the school of language philosophy it is worth noting that it has progressed through different directions. From the rigorous analysis of language to the ideal conception of it, to the building of artificial languages the language philosophy has influenced. However, name of Wittgenstein mainly for his contributions to this particular field cannot be ignored. From the point of view of static view of language, he progressed towards the dynamic view of language.

In his hands the language analysis has become a novelty and in fact a paradigm. It is paradigm because it has shifted the issue of static view to the dynamic view of language. The focus on the 'forms of life' throws light on the variety of language rules. The notions of logical space and logic-rule-governed determinate language is understood in different light. There is no single rule governing language rather; each 'form of life' has its own logic which determines the type of language. Therefore, the language is never a fixed static thing, rather it acquires meaning and structure as it emerges from the life world.

This is a new paradigm shift because the philosophical problems had been understood as absolute in all realms. They are problems within the form of life of philosophy. Hence, the answers to these problems need to be found within the framework of philosophical discussions. This understanding also presupposes a paradigmatic shift in the Investigations with regard to the notion of family resemblance. A problem in one form-of-life may have similarity in other forms-of-life. This is a grand insight because, though language as a language game, rule governed is not an isolated entity rather, it shares some similarities with other life –worlds, forms-of-life. The rules of one form of life govern one particular type of language at the same time that is not absolute to other forms of life, rather, it has similarities and dissimilarities in its logic in relation to other languages.

2.8   EPISTEMOLOGICAL ISSUES

Looking at language from a paradigm shift of 'language game', certain problems surface in the epistemological realm. The problems can be categorized as realistic problems, logical problems and epistemological problems etc. In the epistemological realm, in the first place, how does a language incorporates the structure of realistic framework? Basing on the empirical content of the sense data, what logic of language connects it to the reference of all that is outside our mental realm. What is the logical structure of those forms of

language which refer to the empirical content, a realistic picture of the world.

In the second place the question is concerned about the languages which are based on the logic of idealism. What actually is the logical structure of those languages which have a structure of idealistic form-of-life. The form of life concerned with imaginations, ideal states, etc. too need to have a structure within the given form of life. In relation to the understanding of family resemblance, how do these different languages resemble each other? The sharing between different forms-of-life, how does it take place? Is the rule governing of language is our reading into a particular language or it is inbuilt into it? These are the questions which need to be tackled in the epistemological aspect of language game theory of Wittgenstein.

As epistemology is concerned with knowledge, can we stratify the contents of our knowledge according to different language games, then which is that language which unifies all different forms-of-life, and what is its rule as a game?

Check Your Progress III

Note: Use the space provided for your answer

1. What is a paradigm?

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2. How is language game a paradigm?

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3. What are some of the epistemological problems of language-game paradigm?

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2.9   LET US SUM UP

Language game theory unfolds the creative genius of Wittgenstein. In fact it became a paradigm because many contemporary schools of philosophy found a basis of synthesis in this view of language where in they could go deeper into plurality and meaning within the contexts. Deeper analysis of philosophical problems within the given realm took place. The philosophical problems were

understood in new light. Creatively, the clarification of language as its structure was exposed to rigorous analysis in finding out the rule governedness, led to the better understanding of natural language. The enterprise of artificial language construction owes deeply to the language game theory. The epistemological realm has its gratefulness to language theory for it shed new light on perception, language and linguistic structure.

2.10   KEY WORDS

Picture Theory: Picture theory is the earlier position of Wittgenstein. According to this theory, the ontological structure of the world which is logical has its parallel in the structure of the language. The names being basic constituents of the propositions which are either true or false as expressed in the logic of language have a correspondence to the structure of the world. That which can be logically represented in the language is a possible state of affairs in the world. The logical necessity of propositions determines the states of affairs in the world.

Language Game: Language game theory is expressed in the *Investigations.* The language game theory moves from the foundations of logic to the nature of the world. The shift therefore is from the limited understanding of language, language of the natural sciences to the language of wider forms of life. It is no longer one view of language rather languages within the language. A sentence / proposition does presuppose a 'language game', but a language game will be only a small segment of the whole of language. It is the use, employment of particular word in the given language game gives rise to meaning. The language game theory therefore, is the understanding that the language is determined by rules which are particular to the form-of-life.

Paradigm: It has been used by Kuhn in two senses. First of all it stands for 'the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques and so on shared by the members of a given community'. On the other hand, paradigm denotes one sort of element in that constellation, the concrete puzzle-solutions which, employed as models or examples, can replace explicit rules as a basis for the solution of the remaining puzzles of normal science.

2.11   FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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