Chapter IV

Logical Positivism - The Problem Stated

4.1 Positivist theses of meaning, reference and ontology

This thesis or this chapter is not meant to issue a profound analysis or exposition of the logical positivist philosophy but to give an introduction as a background or a basic understanding of logical positivism. The aim is to give a clarification of what is the case and why it comes to be that a portion of the thing called 'language' is considered 'meaningless' or as 'signifying nothing'. That the articulation or the announcement of the meaninglessness of metaphysical statements is crusial or relevant to the concern of this thesis is because metaphysics in some respects has close relationship with literature.

The positivists hold that for one to know whether a statement is true or false one must first know or understand its meaning. As Wittgenstein pointed out, 'meaning' is one of the chief problems of confusions in philosophy. The positivists seek to establish the theory of meaning upon the doctrines of verificationism. The principle of verifiability serves as the touchstone the positivists use to test whether a sentence is meaningful or meaningless. In short the whole principles consist in their theory of reference which is no where explicitly manifested. Only it is recognized that the positivists proclaim that the matter of the realm of trans-empirical reality, or the

transcendental realm of nature, if it is true that there is such a realm, is inexpressible or cannot be understood in the natural languages. And since it is unverifiable and then ununderstandable it is held to be meaningless.

Obviously, the problem on which the positivists focus their intention is the problem of reference which is consisted in the problem of ontology. One of the chief problems of ontology is often recognized as the problem of abstract entities. As Carnap once wrote, "empiricists are in general rather suspicious with respect to any kind of abstract entities like properties, classes, relations, numbers, propositions, etc.."[1] Carnap noted that the problem of abstract entities in his day arose "in connection with semantics, the theory of meaning and truth."[2] Principally, concerning the relation between language and the world, there are two opposing views: realism and instrumentalism. The realists hold that certain expressions - general terms or theoretical terms or whatever - designate certain entities, and among these designated entities they include not only concrete material things but also abstract entities. This view, Carnap noted, was objected strongly by adherents of the other view as "violating the basic principles of empiricism and leading back to a metaphysical ontology of

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[1] Rudolf Carnap, "Empiricism, Semantics and Ontology," in Reading in Philosophy of Science, edited by Philip P. Wiener, [New York: Charles Scribner and Sons, 1953], p. 509.

[2] Ibid., p. 509.

the Platonic kind."[3] The instrumentalists, on the other hand, hold that concepts or ideas or terms are to be considered as instruments. "Theories are merely instruments, tools, or calculating devices for deriving some observation statements (predictions) from other observation statements (data)."[4] Carnap wrote the essay "Empiricism, Semantics and Ontology" to argue that "using such a language that which consists of abstract terms does not imply embracing a Platonic ontology but is perfectly compatible with empiricism and strictly scientific thinking."[5] He stated at the outset of the essay that empiricists, by which he seemed to mean the logical positivists, "usually feel much more in sympathy with nominalists than with the realists."[6] According to the nominalists in modern philosophy, an abstract term denotes a common property shared by certain things although it does not denote a special existing entity.

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[3]Ibid., p. 510.

[4]Jennifer Speake, A Dictionary of Philosophy, [London: Pan Books, 1979], p. 162.

[5]Rudolf Carnap, "Empiricism, Semantics, and Ontology," Ibid., p.

[6]Ibid., p. 509.

Carnap pointed out to distinguish between two kinds of questions concerning the linguistic framework of entities and the existence of entities. There are in his terms internal questions and external questions. By the internal questions he meant "questions of existence of certain entities of the new kind within the linguistic framework"[7] constructed. The answer to this kind of questions, Carnap wrote, "may be found either by purely logical methods or by empirical methods, depending upon whether the framework is a logical or a factual one".[8] For example, such a question as 'Is there a snake in the school garden?', can be answered by an empirical investigation for we have learnt the convention of the English-language kind of the linguistic framework for entities. We learn that the terms or signs or sounds 'snake' and 'garden' are meant to two certain things. According to Carnap, the "concept of reality occurring in these internal questions is an empirical, scientific, non-metaphysical concept".[9]

By the external question, he meant the question of the existence or reality of the thing world itself, in another expression, the question of the external world. In Carnap's point of view, the controversy between realists and subjective idealists concerning the reality of the external world cannot

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[7]Ibid., p. 510.

[8]Ibid., p. 510.

[9]Ibid., p. 511.

be solved "because it is framed in a wrong way."[10]   The external

world for the positivists is the world within "the realm of

significance", "the empirical external world." Schlick

distinguished positivism from realism by citing that the realists

leap illegitimately far beyond the empirical realm of existence

to "the transcendental external world." According to Schlick,

by this leap the realists fall into the realm of the

"metaphysical" "reality", a position against which Schlick

argued that it causes the problem concerning the question of

"reality". They would have to reject the principle that 'only

the given [the empirical world] is real.'[11] Schlick concluded

that such expressions as "absolute reality", or "transcendent

being", "independent existence", or "transcendent reality"

were "simply and only the expression of a feeling, of a

psychological attitude of the speaker."[12] He wrote as follows:

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[10]Ibid., p. 511.

[11]Moritz Schlick, "Positivism and Realism", in Logical
Positivism, edited by A.J. Ayer, [New York: Free Press, 1959],
pp. 102 - 104.

[12]Ibid., p. 105.

If someone assures us that there is a real external world in the trans-empirical sense of the word, he is of course believing himself to have communicated some truth about the world. But in actual fact, his words express something very different; they merely express certain feelings which give rise to various linguistic and other reactions on his part.[13]

Apparently, the problem of abstract entities gives rise to the question of the relation between terms and their referents. Generally a word or a term is conceived to stand for something, "that there is an object in the world, and the word serves as a substitute for that object; as that is a kind of proxy: something that does duty for, or stands in place of the object."[14] As Carnap notes, "in a semantical meaning analysis certain expressions in a language are often said to designate (or name or denote or signify or refer to) certain extralinguistic entities."[15] The question of this matter is the question of the relation between, in Carnap's words, 'the thing language' and 'the thing world'. Carnap would not have a difficulty when he said "Therefore no God and no devil can give us metaphysical knowledge" if his position was or if he accepted Plato's world of Ideas. The

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[13]Ibid., p. 105.

[14]Bernard Harrison, An Introduction to the Philosophy of Language, [London: The Macmillan Press, 1979], p. 22.

[15]Rudolf Carnap, "Empiricism, Semantics, and Ontology", in Reading in Philosophy of Science, edited by Philip P. Wiener, [New York: Charles Scriber and Sons, 1953], p. 517.

word 'god' is, metaphorically speaking, a citizen of the
metaphysical realm whose meanings, according to the positivists,
can not be verified, confirmed or tested. But, if the word
'god' is meaningless, why then Carnap's very statement is
understandable or, at least, why does Carnap succeed in this,
in my term, 'stanza' of communication? To this question, such
a realist as Plato might answer in a way that the understanding
is realized because there is another possible world and in that
world there is an entity god.

Certainly, Carnap cannot agree with this contention of
the metaphysical world by which to get to it one needs a bridge
of faith. Faith, according to those who are labelled as
'scientific spirits', is often conceived of as the foundation
of dogmas. A common feature of having 'scientific spirit' is
the principle of avoidance of dogmas. In his meeting with the
problem of reference, Carnap points out to distinguish between
the practical reason and the theoretical reason for the
acceptance of a "system of linguistic expressions". For
Carnap, accepting the system of linguistic expressions does
not imply accepting the system of the entities in question."
"To accept the thing world", writes Carnap, "means nothing more
than to accept a certain form of language, in other words, to
accept rules for forming statements and for testing, accepting,
or rejecting them."[16] To accept a system of linguistic

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[16]Ibid , p. 511.

expression is to accept, for Carnap, a form of speech which "is customary". Carnap stresses that the positivists "take the position that the introduction of the new ways of speaking does not need any theoretical justification because it does not imply any assertion of reality."[17] The acceptance of the new framework, i.e. of the new linguistic forms "must not be interpreted as referring to an assumption, belief, or assertion of the reality of the entities."[18] According to Carnap, "There is no such assertion". An alleged statement of the reality of the system of entities is a pseudo-statement without cognitive content".[19] " Thus", Carnap concludes, "it is clear that the acceptance of a linguistic framework must not be regarded as implying a metaphysical doctrine concerning the reality of the entities in question." [20]

To state it in better terms, Carnap's 'external question' is the questions which concern the status and legitimacy of the linguistic framework. In other words, it is the question of the legitimacy of the reference of words to things.

Ontology, according to Ayer, in the view of some American empiricists, e.g. Quine and Goodman, concerns the question as to

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[17]Ibid., p. 516

[18]Ibid., p. 516

[19]Ibid., p. 516

[20]Ibid., p. 517

to "how far one's choice of language commits one to saying that certain things exist."[21] According to what has been noted above, Carnap, in his later article "Empiricism, Semantics and Ontology" which was published in 1950 - ten years after the Vienna Circle had been dissolved, appears to share the same ground with instrumentalists. In this period, Carnap has paid more attention to semantics, whereas in the early period he focused his interest on syntax. Carnap contends that:

> For those who want to develop or use semantical methods, the decisive question is not the alleged ontological question of the existence of abstract entities but rather the question whether the use of abstract linguistic forms or, in technical terms, the use of varibles beyond those for things (or phenomenal data), is expedient and fruitful for the purposes for which semantical analyses are made, viz. the analysis, interpretation, clarification, or construction of languages of communication, expecially languages of science.[22]

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[21]A.J. Ayer, Logical Positivism, edited, [New York: Free Press, 1959], p. 26.

[22]Rudolf Carnap, "Empiricism, Semantics, and Ontology", Ibid., p. 521.

Again, in the concluding paragraph, Carnap points out to place the emphasis on the question of the expediency of the linguistic forms rather than on the ontological question of 'abstract entities'. The following quotation is considered by this thesis as a remarkable point in his philosophy with respect to the concern of this thesis.

> The acceptance or rejection of abstract linguistic forms, just as the acceptance or rejection of any other linguistic forms in any branch of science, will finally be decided by their efficiency as instruments, the ratio of the results achieved to the amount and complexity of the efforts required. To decree dogmatic prohibitions of certain linguistic forms instead of testing them by their success or failure in practical use, is worse than futile; it is positively harmful because it may obstruct scientific progress. The history of science shows examples of such prohibitions based on prejudices deriving from religious, mythological, metaphysical, or other irrational sources, which slowed up the developments for shorter or longer periods of time. Let us learn from the lessons of history. Let us grant to those who work in any special field of investigation the freedom to use any form of expression which seems useful to them; the work in the field will sooner or later lead to the elimination of those forms which have no useful function. Let us be cautious in making assertions and critical in examining them, but tolerant in permitting linguistic forms.[23]

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[23] Rudolf Carnap, "Empiricism, Semantics and Ontology", Ibid., p. 522.

Traceably, this contention is a consequence of Russell's attempt to refine the languages of science in a certain confinement. Previously, in Ayer's words, "Russell had labored to depopulate" "the baroque universe" of scientific discourse.[24] The root of this problem, I will contend later, lies in the field of that which is termed "semantics". In fact, Carnap has recognized this point as he said: "After all, semantics in the technical sense is still in the initial phases of its development, and we must be prepared for possible fundamental changes in methods."[25]

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[24]A.J. Ayer, Logical Empiricism, Ibid., p. 26.

[25]Rudolf Carnap, "Empiricism, Semantics and Ontology", Ibid., p. 522.

4.2 Metaphysics and literary arts

Metaphysics, for the logical positivists, is respected as merely expressing attitudes towards life. That is -- it is out of or far beyond or irrelevant to the assessment in terms of truth or falsity. It might be regarded by some people as 'knowledge', but according to the logical positivists it is not a sort of scientific knowledge. The literary arts, music and literature, also, according to the logical positivists, serve merely for the expression of the general attitude of a person towards life.

Certainly, the consideration of metaphysics as a species of verbalization of meaninglessness needs more understanding other than that of the technical reason -- the logical analysis. Because, as Carnap also recognizes it himself this event causes "a painful feeling of strangeness". For the fact is there have been "so many men of all ages and nations, among them eminent minds", spending "so much energy, nay veritable fervor, on metaphysics."[26] Moreover, another fact is that metaphysical books have exerted such a strong influence on readers up to the present day. These facts all together induce one to raise a doubt as to how to account for them, if metaphysical books contained not even errors or mistakes, but nothing at all. Carnap answers this confrontation as follows:

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[26]Rudolf Carnap, "The Overcoming of Metaphysics through Logical Analysis of Language", Ibid., p. 32.

These doubts are justified since metaphysics does indeed have a content; only it is not theoretical content. The (pseudo) statements of metaphysics do not serve for the description of states of affairs, either existing ones (in that case they would be true statements) or nonexisting ones (in that case they would be at least false statements). They serve for the expression of the general attitude of a person toward life ("Lebenseinstellung, Lebensgefuhl").[27]

Concerning the theme of this thesis, it is here the very important remark Carnap makes on the relation of literature and metaphysics. Carnap identifies this relation as that poetry and theology spring or grow out of or proceed or originate from the same root -- mythology. And metaphysics is a substitute for theology. What is the difference between metaphysics and theology is that metaphysics is issued or presented "on the level of systematic, conceptual thinking." "The child is angry", Carnap writes, "at 'the wicked table' which hurt him. Primitive man endeavors to conciliate the threatening demon of earthquakes, or he worships the deity of the fertile rains in gratitude." Seeing this account as premises, Carnap then concludes: "Here we confront personifications of natural phenomena, which are the quasipoetic expression of man's emotional relationship to his environment."[28] Obviously, this viewpoint is reminiscent of Hume's thought which has already been noted in the preceding chapter. Carnap thus goes on to identify the relation between poetry, theology and metaphysics:

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[27]Ibid., p. 32.

[28]Ibid., p. 32.

The heritage of mythology is bequeathed on the one hand to poetry, which produces and intensifies the effects of mythology on life in a deliberate way; on the other hand, it is handed down to theology, which develops mythology into a system. Which, now, is the historical role of metaphysics? Perhaps we may regard it as a substitute for theology on the level of systematic, conceptual thinking. The (supposedly) transcendent sources of knowledge of theology are here replaced by natural, yet supposedly transempirical sources of knowledge.[29]

That is, according to Carnap, metaphysics is originally or principally mythology disguised or dressed in a different uniform.

On closer inspection the same content as that of mythology is here still recognizable behind the repeatedly varied dressing: we find that metaphysics also arises from the need to give expression to a man's attitude in life, his emotional and volitional reaction to the environment, to society, to the tasks to which he devotes himself, unconsciously as a rule, in everything a man does or says. It also impresses itself on his facial feature, perhaps even on the character of his gait.[30]

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[29]Ibid., p. 32.

[30]Ibid., p. 32 - 33.

The difference between art and metaphysics, in Carnap's view, consists in that art is an adequate means for the expression of the basic attitude, whereas metaphysics is inadequate. Above all, metaphysicians are the victims of the confusion between the system of ontological entities and that of the linguistic framework, and succumb to self-delusion. Concerning this common aspect of art and philosophy, Carnap made an interesting and striking remark. He considered music, an artistic mode of expression without verbalization, to be the purest (and perhaps the most adequate) means of expression.

> Perhaps music is the purest means of expression of the basic attitude because it is entirely free from any reference to objects. The harmonious feeling or attitude, which the metaphysician tries to express in a monistic system, is more clearly expressed in the music of Mozart... Metaphysicians are musicians without musical ability.[31]

Thus; Carnap put the (meaningless) verbalization of metaphysical statements in the same category of music. And the difference lies in that metaphysicians are in the poor class of musicians. In this respect, however, Carnap seems to share the same view with the mature Zen-Buddhist monks, although, however, looking from a different ground.

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[31]Ibid., p. 33.

After all, that which is fundamental to Carnap's view concerning this point is his principle of the distinction between 'theory' and 'attitude'. And the metaphysician's fault results from his self-delusion and his confusion. The metaphysician makes a methodological mistake in expressing his attitude in the form of a theory. This does not mean that there is a prescription rule for selecting means of expressions. Carnap agreed that "there need be no intrinsic objection to one's using any means of expression one likes."

But in the case of metaphysics we find this situation: through the form of its works it pretends to be something that it is not. The form in question is that of a system of statements which are apparently related as premises and conclusions, that is, the form of a theory. In this way the fiction of theoretical content is generated, whereas, as we have seen, there is no such content. It is not only the reader, but the metaphysician himself who suffers from the illusion that the metaphysical statements say something, describe states of affairs. The metaphysician believes that he travels in territory in which truth and falsehood are at stake. In reality, however, he has not asserted anything, but only expressed something, like an artist.[32]

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[32]Ibid., p. 33.

Simply speaking, poets in Carnap's view do not argue and refute other poets' statements in their poems. They simply write to express their attitudes. Explicit in the above and the following quotations is Carnap's notion that poets in the domain of art are not in concern with truth and falsehood. And in this do poets differ from metaphysicians. It must be noted that Carnap distinguishes the domain of art from the domain of theory.

> That the metaphysician is thus deluding himself cannot be inferred from the fact that he selects language as the medium of expression and declarative sentences as the form of expression; for lyrical poets do the same without succumbing to self-delusion. But the metaphysician supports his statements by arguments, he claims assent to their content, he polemicizes against metaphysicians of divergent persuasion by attempting to refute their assertions in his treastise. Lyrical poets, on the other hand, do not try to refute in their poem the statements in a poem by some other lyrical poets; for they know they are in the domain of art and not in the domain of theory.[33]

To conclude, Carnap does not state explicitly that there is no truth in literature. Carnap denies metaphysics because metaphysicians try to assert their thoughts and claims to knowledge of 'reality' in the domain of theory. The domain of theory, to Carnap, is the domain of science. Namely, metaphysics is pretended to be a science but metaphysicians fail to make the positivists understand their sentences.

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[33]Ibid., p. 33.

According to Schlick, the positivists do not say that the metaphysician's statements are false or contradict him, but that 'I don't understand you'.[34] Although in the positivists' view metaphysicians seem to talk nonsense, the poets do not. According to Ayer, the assumption that both talk nonsense is false. "In the vast majority of cases the sentences which are produced by poets do have literal meaning."[35]

However, although the positivists admit that many literary works are not composed of pseudo-propositions, they seem to regard implicitly them as composing of falsehoods. This view may be understood as inherited from Russell's analytic philosophy. The distinct point of the positivists is that literature serves only as a means for the expression of attitudes towards life. Epistemologically, what consists in this view is the notions that literature is devoid of theoretical contents or epistemic tributes, and that what is contained in literary arts (or all the arts) is only the emotive contents. The literary arts, in the positivists' view, are not concerned with the assertion of true propositions as what sciences do. This thesis will argue that this notion is a mistake.

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[34]Moritz Schlick, "Positivism and Realism", Ibid., p. 107.

[35]A.J. Ayer, Language, Truth and Logic, Ibid., p. 60.

4.3 I.A. Richards' theory of emotive language.

I.A. Richards was a contemporary of the Vienna Circle
positivists. While the Vienna Circle positivists were activating
their philosophy in Austria, on the continent, I.A. Richards was
influencing and prominent in the British islands. He was both
a critic and poet. Socially he belonged to no philosophical
school, but theoretically concerning his notion of language and
literature he seemed to share the same ground with the
positivists. He is considered important in this thesis in the
respect that while the positivists placed the emphasis on the
philosophy and languages of science, I.A. Richards focused his
attention on literature and its language. His important works,
The Meaning of Meaning (with C.K. Ogden), Practical Criticism,
and The Philosophy of Rhetoric, were first published in 1923,
1929 and 1936 respectively. It should be noted that during
this period the Vienna Circle was flourishing in Austria.

I.A. Richards was one of the influential advocates of
the distinction between two kinds of language. These two kinds
are 'the emotive language' or 'the affective language' on the
one hand, and 'the referential language' on the other hand.
Usually, the referential language is conceived to pertain to
the domain of science, whereas the emotive language to the
domain of poetry or literature. Popper, as a philosopher of
science, also distinguishes the human natural languages into
two divisions: the lower functions and the higher functions.
"Human languages", says Popper, "share with animal languages
the two lower functions of languages: (1) self-expression and

(2) signalling."[36] The higher functions of language are, at least, the descriptive function and the argumentative function. According to Popper, "the most important functions or dimensions of the human language (which animal languages do not possess) are the descriptive and the argumentative functions."[37] Language of the higher functions is one factor or component among quite a few which are "the indispensable means of scientific growth."[38] "The autonomous world of the higher functions of language becomes the world of science."[39] However, according to Popper, "human language has many other functions.. ..for example, advisory, hortative, fictional, etc. ."[40]

Certainly, the language of science, in Richards' terms, is the referential language. In The Meaning of Meaning, Richards introduces a science of what he called Symbolism. "Symbolism is the study of the part played in human affairs by language and symbols of all kinds, and especially of their influence on

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[36]Karl Popper, "Epistemology Without a Knowing Subject", in Objective Knowledge, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972 , p. 119.

[37]Ibid., p. 122.

[38]Ibid., p. 122.

[39]Ibid., p. 121.

[40]Ibid., p. 120.

Thought."[41]   From this it can be inferred that he means by 'language' a species of symbols.   Symbolism, his subject or specialization, according to Richards, "singles out for special inquiry the ways in which symbols help us and hinder us in reflecting on things.[42]   Words, in his terms, are symbols.

Symbols direct and organize, record and communicate.   In stating what they direct and organize, record and communi-cate we have to distinguish as always between Thoughts and Things.   ...though we know that the direct relation of symbols is with thought, we also say that symbols record events and communicate facts....Words, as every one knows, 'mean' nothing by themselves, although the belief that they did...was once equally universal.   It is only when a thinker makes use of them that they stand for anything, or, in one sense, have 'meaning'.   They are instruments.   But besides this referential use which for all reflective, intellectual use of language should be paramount, words have other functions which may be grouped together as emotive.[43]

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[41]C.K. Ogden and I.A. Richards, The Meaning of Meaning, [London: Routledge and Kegan, 1972], 10th ed., p. 9.

[42]Ibid., p. 9.

[43]Ibid., p. 9 - 10.

In Richards' view, poetry is 'the supreme form of emotive language'.[44] According to Richards, that the people who are concerned with the arts often tend to deprecate a scientific approach as being likely to impair appreciation is "a typical symptom of a confusion as to the uses of language." And his citation of "the disparity of function between words" was meant to be a cure to the confusion. The disparity was cited in terms of "words as supports or vehicles of reference and words as expressions or stimulants of attitudes", a distinction which he thought was, at that period, receiving more attention.[45] The following quotation will serve as an explication of his terminology.

> In ordinary everyday speech each phrase has not one but a number of functions....here a twofold division is more convenient, the division between the symbolic referential use of words and the emotive use. The symbolic use of words is statement; the recording, the support, the organization and the communication of references. The emotive use of words to express or excite feelings and attitudes....Under the symbolic function are included both the symbolization of reference and its communication to the listener, i.e.,the causing in the listener of a similar reference. Under the emotive function are included both the expression of emotions, attitudes, moods, intentions, etc., in the speaker, and their communication, i.e., their evocation in the listener.[46]

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[44] Alan Bullock and Oliver Stalleybrass, The Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought, [London: Fontana, 1977], p. 201.

[45] C.K. Ogden and I.A. Richards, The Meaning of Meaning, Ibid., p. 151.

[46] Ibid., p. 149.

To support his distinction, I.A. Richards quotes Vendryes:

> The logical element and the effective element mingle
> constantly in language. Except for technical languages,
> notably the scientific languages, which are by definition
> outside life, the expression of ideas is never exempt from
> a nuance of sentiment.[47]

Concerning the reference and truth in poetry, he writes:

> It is true that some element of reference probably enters,
> for all civilized adults at least, into almost all use of
> words, and it is always possible to import a reference, if
> it be only a reference to things in general. The two
> functions under consideration usually occur together but
> none the less they are in principle distinct. So far as
> words are used emotively no question as to their truth in
> the strict sense can directly arise. Indirectly, no doubt,
> truth in this strict sense is often involved. Very much
> poetry consist of statements, symbolic arrangements capable
> of truth or falsity, which are used not for the sake of
> their truth or falsity but for the sake of the attitudes
> which their acceptance will evoke. For this purpose it
> fortunately happens, or rather it is part of the poet's
> bussiness to make it happen, that the truth or falsity
> matters not at all to the acceptance.[48]

Lastly, according to Richards, "it is not necessary for the
speaker or the poet himself to experience the emotion which
he attempts to evoke."

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[47]Ibid., p. 152.

[48]Ibid., p. 150.

4.4 The poetic reference and poetic referents.

Parallel with the theory of emotive language is the
problem of reference. It is the problem of reference which, in
the positivistic view, plays the crucial role in the determina-
tion of the presence or absence of truth and falsity in
literature. About the philosophical discussion on the subject
'meaning', whereas the Vienna Circle positivists were concerned
with metaphysics, I.A. Richards concerned himself with literature.
Richards'view concerning truth or falsity and meaning in
leterature is called the referential theory. And his view of
the distinction between emotive language and referential
language is sometimes referred to as the Independence Theory.
Richards' view of the referential theory may be traced back as
being inherited and developed from Bentham, the British
utilitarian philosopher, and as being influenced by Bertrand
Russell. Richards referred to characters in works of literature,
i.e. Hamlet, Macbeth, as "fictitious entities".

C.K. Ogden, Richards' collaborator had studied Bentham's
Theory of Fictions. Jeremy Bentham (1748 - 1832) divided
entities into two kinds: "perceptible" and "inferential".
According to Bentham,

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*Ogden, in his book Bentham's Theory of Fictions, first
published in 1932, declared: "It is the purpose of the present
volume to give some indication of the debt which future
generations may acknowledge to Jeremy Bentham..."

An entity is a denomination in the import of which every subject matter of discourse, for the designation of which the grammatical part of speech called a noun-substantive is employed may be comprised.*[49]

And "an entity, whether perceptible or inferential, is either real or fictitious." "A perceptible entity is every entity the existence of which is made known to human beings by the immediate testimony of their senses, without reasoning, i.e. without reflection." "A perceptible real entity is, in one word, a body."[50] Interestingly, an inferential entity is, according to Bentham, either "human" or "superhuman",

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*This is old English, eighteenth century English. I fail to understand exactly what Bentham meant by the paragraph, I find that this 18th century English is even peculiar to the native speakers of English themselves. The paragraph is quoted here also for another purpose:- as an illustration of the relation of the change of time, language and mentality - a case of Kuhn's paradigm-change.

[49]Jeremy Bentham, The Theory of Fictions, [Paterson: Littlefield, Adams and Co., 1959: annexed to Ogden's,] p. 7.

[50]Ibid., p. 7.

...which, in these times at least, is not made known to
human beings in general, by the testimony of sense, but of
the existence of which the persuasion is produced by
reflection — is inferred from a chain of reasoning....A
human inferential entity is the soul considered as existing
in a state of separation from the body....A superhuman
entity is either supreme or subordinate.... [And, according
to Bentham, the] supreme, superhuman, inferential entity is
God.[51]

The 'subordinate' is either good or bad: if good an 'angel' and
bad 'devil'.

"A real entity", wrote Bentham "is an entity to which,
on the occasion and for the purpose of discourse, existence is
really meant to be ascribed." Still, this is not clear, so
Bentham clarified his term thus:

Under the head of perceptible real entities may be placed,
without difficulty, individual perceptions of all sorts: the
impressions produced in groups by the application of
sensible objects to the organs of sense: the ideas brought
to view by the recollection of those same objects; the new
ideas produced under the influence of the imagination, by
the decomposition and recomposition of those groups: — to
none of these can the character, the denomination of real
entities be refused.[52]

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[51]Ibid., pp. 8 - 9.

[52]Ibid., p. 10.

As for "fictitious entities", Bentham wrote:

A fictitious entities is an entity to which, though by
the grammatical form of the discourse employed in speaking
of it, existence be ascribed, yet in truth and reality
existence is not meant to be described....Every noun-
substantive which is not the name of a real entity,
perceptible or inferential, is the name of a fictitious
entity....Every fictitious entity bears some relation to
some real entity, and can no otherwise be understood than
in so far as that relation is perceived -- a conception of
that relation is obtained.[53]

A remarkable point of Bentham's classification of
entities is the differences between "fictitious entities",
"non-entities", and "fabulous entities". All these terms are
rather ambiguous and obscure and comprise a big problem in
ontology. In Ogden's version,

Fabulous entities, whether persons or things, are supposed
material objects, of which the separate existence is capable
of becoming a subject of belief, and of which, accordingly,
the same sort of picture is capable of being drawn in and
preserved in the mind, as of any really existent object....
for example: Gods of different dynasties; ...animals, such
as dragons and chimaeras; etc..[54]

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[53]Ibid., p. 12.

[54]C.K. Ogden, Bentham's Theory of Fictions, [Paterson:
Littlefield, Adams and Co., 1959], pp. xxxv - xxxvi.

As for the term 'fictitious entity', Bentham attempted to clarify it with the following words:

> By this term is here meant to be designated one of those sorts of objects which in every language must, for the purpose of discourse, be spoken of as existing -- be spoken of in the like manner as those objects which really have existence, and to which existence is seriously meant to be ascribed, are spoken of; but without any such danger as that of their possessing, each for itself, any separate, or strictly speaking, any real existence.[55]

In other words, an illustration may help clarify the point of the distinction between the terms 'fictitious entity' and 'non-entity'. Concerning the poetic species of entities, the word 'Hamlet' is a name of a fictitious entity. He is believed to exist in the context of the story. He is 'fictitious' and not 'fabulous' because his image is a copy of a possible thing of the real kind of entities. A fabulous entity will remain 'fabulous' and not as non-entity only in the context of the fable story. The word "Cerberus" is a name of a fabulous entity. He has a place in the fable story, but not in the world perceptible through the senses of human beings. He is 'fabulous' and not merely 'fictitious' because his image is a mixture of possible things rather than a copy of a possible object. Now, if someone claims that he saw a monster of Cerberus image running around the Narkorpatom pagoda at

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[55]Jeremy Bentham. The Theory of Fictions, Ibid., p. 16.

6 o'clock on the 25th of December of the year 1984, his

assertion would be regarded as an averment of a non-entity.

No one will believe that such a monster of the description

really exists. Neither the existence of Hamlet is believed.

They are Fictions. The difference, thus may be stipulated by

degrees of disbelief.

According to Bentham, there were different species of

Fiction; distinctively they are logical species and poetical and

political species. Here below is his view concerning the

poetical species of Fiction.

> The Fictions of the poet, whether in his character of
> historic fabulist or dramatic fabulist, putting or not
> putting the words of his discourse in metrical form, are
> pure froms of insincerity, and, neither for their object nor
> for their effect have anything but to amuse, unless it be
> in some cases to excite to action....In the mind of all,
> Fiction, in the logical sense, has been the coin of
> necessity - in that of poets, of amusement...[56]

I.A. Richards adoptes Bentham's theory of fictions.

After the same strategy of analysis which takes the principle

of verification as the basis, he derives at the conclusion of

the distinction between the referential and emotive uses of

signs. Reference in poetry has no referents in experience,

then, does not accord with the principle of verification, and

therefore is the emotive use of signs and is an unscientific

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[56]Ibid., p. 18.

means of using signs. To understand the poetic reference in the way of the scientific means of using signs, Richards points out, reminiscent of Russell's remark, would result in "the peopling of the universe with spurious entities, the mistaking of symbolic machinery for referents".[57] Richards mentions such interesting terms as "levels of reference" and "particular fields of reference", but he does not expose this terminology. "The fictitious entities", Richards writes, "are thus introduced by language from a special variety of what are called fictions".[58] "It is owing to such a discussion in contracted symbols[*] that what is known as the Problem of Truth has arisen".[59] Namely, in our experiences of the common, perceptible, physical, material world, we do not find Hamlet, or Macbeth, nor King Lear, nor Pra Abhai Mani. All these are 'names' of 'poetic, fictitious entities'.

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[*]Concerning the point, Richards introduced these two terms: "contracted symbol" and "expanded symbol". An example of "contracted symbol" is "Hamlet was mad", whereas that of the other is "Hamlet was mad on the stage". In another word, these may be better understood as 'uncontexted symbol' and 'contexted symbol'.

[57]C.K. Ogden and I.A. Richards, The Meaning of Meaning, Ibid., p. 94

[58]Ibid., pp. 98-99

[59]Ibid., p. 95

4.5   I.A. Richards' view of the function of poetry.

The problem of reference leads Richards to accept the
view that sentences in poetry are pseudo-statements. But he
insists that we should look at poetry and reference in poetry
in a different way. "A poem", he writes"...has no concern with
limited and directed reference. It tells us, or should tell us,
nothing."[60] Richards contends that poetry has a different
function which is equally important and even far more vital than
purveying 'scientific knowledge'. What poetry does or should do
is "to induce a fitting attitude to experience." Recognizing
the ambiguity of 'fitting attitude', he footnotes that the word
'fitting' does "not imply any narrow code of the proper attitudes
to be adopted on all occasions"; and he suggests that the term
'attitude' should be understood in a wider sense, "as covering
all the ways in which impulses may be set ready for action... ."
According to Yevgeny Basin, a prominent Soviet aesthetician,
"a key notion in Richards' naturalistic theory of value is the
concept of impulse...When an impulse displays a tendency for
action, for behaviour of a certain type, it is characterized
as an attitude."[61] The quotation below is Richards' view of
the function of poetry. It might be regarded as the core of
his contention.

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[60]Ibid., p. 158.

[61]Yevgeny Basin, Semantic Philosophy of Art, [Moscow:
Progress Publishers, 1979], p. 44.

As science frees itself from the emotional outlook, and modern physics is becoming something in connection with which attitudes seem rather de trop, so poetry seems about to return to the conditions of its greatness, by abandoning the obsession of knowledge and symbolic truth.[62]

This view may be understood as being related to Bergson when he said, as Richards quotes his expositor:

The bussiness of philosophy, according to Bergson, is not to explain reality, but to know it. For this a different kind of mental effort is required. Analysis and classification, instead of increasing our direct knowledge, tend rather to diminish it.[63]

Relatively, he also quotes Bergson:

From the infinitely vast field of our virtual knowledge we have selected, to turn into actual knowledge, whatever concerns our action upon things; the rest we have neglected.[64]

What is notable in these quotations is the question of the relation (or the relevance and irrelevance) between 'to explain' and 'to know', or in other words, between 'explanation' and 'knowledge' in the former and between 'actual knowledge' and 'virtual knowledge' in the later. Hobsbaum notes that: "Ogden

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[62]C.K. Ogden and I.A. Richards, The Meaning of Meaning, Ibid., p. 159.

[63]Ibid., p. 154.

[64]Ibid., p. 154.

and Richards seem to require literature to give up its efforts
to convey knowledge or referential truth in favour of an
intuitive recording of experience."[65]

4.6 I.A. Richards' theory of belief.

A discussion of the problem of truth and knowledge is
hardly clear of the problem of belief. Belief seems to be the
real problem underlying the philosophical discussions and
disagreements.

The problem discussed so far leads Richards on to an
analysis of belief. According to Richards, there are two forms
of belief: intellectual belief and emotional belief.
"Intellectual belief", Richards explicates his term, "more
resembles a weighting of an idea than anything else, a loading
which makes other, less heavily weighted, ideas, adjust them-
selves to it rather than vice versa." The whole use of
intellectual belief is "to bring all our ideas into as perfect
an ordered system as possible."[66] We disbelieve something only
because we believe some other thing else that is incompatible
with it. The ground from which belief or disbelief arises is
the logical consistency and contradiction.

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[65]Philip Hobsbaum, A Theory of Communication, [London:
Macmillan, 1970], p. 202.

[66]I.A. Richards, Practical Criticism, [London:
Routledge, 1966], p. 274.

Emotional belief is a very different matter. It is a matter of interests, desires and attitudes. Given a need, "any idea which can be taken as a step on the way to its fulfilment is accepted", unless some other need equally active at the moment bars it out. "This acceptance, this use of the idea - by our interests, desires, feelings, attitudes, tendencies to action and what not - is emotional belief."[67] That is any idea will be believed so far as it is useful to these factors. However, according to Richards, "most beliefs,...that have any strength or persistence are mixtures of intellectual and emotional belief."

The difference between these two kinds of belief consists in the way they are justified. "Whether an intellectual belief is justified is entirely a matter of its logical place in the largest, most completely ordered, system of ideas we can attain to." But, on the other hand, "There are obviously countless ideas in poetry which, if put into this logical context, must be disbelieved at once." For an emotional belief is not justified through any logical relations between its idea and other ideas. "Its only justification is its success in meeting our needs - due regard being paid to the relative claims of our many needs one against another."[68] The desirability or undesirability of an emotional belief has nothing to do with its intellectual status, provided it is kept from interfering with the intellectual system. Thus, Richards concludes:

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[67]Ibid., p. 275.

[68]Ibid., p. 277.

It is better to say that the question of belief or disbelief, in the intellectual sense, never arises when we are reading well. If unfortunately it does arise, either through the poet's fault or our own, we have for the moment ceased to be reading and have become astronomers, or theologians, or moralists, persons engaged in quite a different type of activity.[69]

4.7 A brief summary of the problems recognized.

I.A. Richards' view is identified by Yevgeny Basin as neo-positivism. Basin accuses Richards of being guilty of scientism. Concerning the status of literature, it might be here concluded that when the poetic language is analyzed in the positivistic view of 'meaning' and 'language', the analysis will result in the problems stated below.

a) The poetic language, if it is still respected as conveying meanings, belongs only to the category of emotive language. Hence; as Richards puts it: "In the effect of the thought upon our feelings and attitudes, all its importance, for poetry, lies."[70]

b) Literature contains no truth, especially of the scientific kind. One should not look for truth in reading poetry. This point may be best illustrated with Bentham's words as quoted below:

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[69]Ibid., p. 277.

[70]Ibid., p. 273.

Between poetry and truth there is a natural opposition: false morals, fictitious nature. The poet always stands in need of something false. When he pretends to lay his foundations in truth, the ornaments of his superstructure are fictions; his business consists in stimulating our passions, and exciting our prejudices. Truth, exactitude of every kind, is fatal to poetry. The poet must see everything through coloured media, and strive to make everyone else to do the same. It is true, there have been noble spirits, to whom poetry and philosophy have been equally indebted; but these exceptions do not counteract the mischiefs which have resulted from this magic art. If poetry and music deserve to be preferred before a game of push-pin, it must be because they are calculated to gratify those individuals who are most difficult to be pleased.[71]

c) Literature is not even at least a species or kind of knowledge. For knowledge, according to the general concept, is justified, true belief. The denial of truth in literature entails the denial of the claim of literature to a status of knowledge. In Carnap's view, poetry is merely an expression of the basic attitude towards life.

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[71]C.K. Ogden. Bentham's Theory of Fictions, [Paterson: Littlefield, Adams and Company, 1959], p. xciii.