
Language, Meaning and Correspondence: A Discourse in the Philosophy of Language

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Abstract

Philosophy of language is interested in philosophical questions about the structure of language, the meanings of terms and sentences, the relationship between language and the world, language and thought, language use and communication. An important aspect of language that philosophy and language both interrogate is the theory of meaning. It is this disposition that informs the intention of this paper to interrogate the ontology of the correspondence theory of meaning using the critical analytic method. From using this critical analytic method, it was palpable based on the findings that despite the various objections to the correspondence theory of meaning, it is still one of the foremost theories of meaning. This finding is predicated on the fact that this theory of meaning is quite existential and tallies more with most language settings and schemes, formal and informal. More still, it seems to make more meaning to all, both professionals and others.

Keywords: language, philosophy, meaning, correspondence theory.

1.0 Introduction

Apart from philosophy, language as a discipline is also a critical part of the gamut of the humanities and an evergreen aspect of the humanities. Basically, language is a system that consists of the development, acquisition, maintenance and use of complex systems of communication and this is where it melts with philosophy. Questions concerning the philosophy of language, such as whether words can represent experience, have been debated at least since Gorgias and Plato in ancient Greece.

Scholars like Rousseau (1997) averred that language is emotive, that is, it originates from our emotions but Kant (2011) holds the view that language originates from rational and logical thought. Some contemporary scholars like Wittgenstein (1961) argued that philosophy is really the study of language and this makes it easy for one to understand why some linguistic experts like Ferdinand de Saussure and Noam Chomsky feature comfortably within philosophical discourse. This underscores why philosophical investigations about the ontology of language have become more and more compelling in the last few centuries. The considerations about language are objects of various areas of scientific research as well as for theoretical questioning.

Philosophical study of language sheds light on many different fields like education, linguistics, sociology, politics, psychology, etc. Baykent (2016: 65) argues that where there is human life, there exists a trace of language because language is the most distinctive capacity of man. Philosophy of language provides a deep background for other fields of philosophy and various scientific studies. Man, among all the creatures, is regarded as a speaking animal because he makes use of thought and spoken language. He is able to communicate his desires and wishes,

sensations of pain and pleasures, state and conditions which he finds either commendable or regrettable. He is the only being that is able to communicate and express feelings in writing and has the ability to improve on the language with the aid of philosophy as a tool.

This indeed has exposed the implication of philosophy for language. An important aspect of language that philosophy and language interrogate together is the issue or the theory of meaning. Without meaning, there is no language, communication and also no philosophical speculation. It is based on the interface that this paper intends to interrogate a foremost theory of meaning, the 'Correspondence Theory' in lieu of underscoring its implication for philosophy and for language. This correspondence theory is quite famous and topical because, it cuts across all the epochs in philosophy, as well as across various traditions, movements, schools and discipline including language and linguistics.

As part of the exposition of the theory of meaning, this paper highlights the interface between philosophy and language and this is with the intention of further putting in perspective the whole idea of a philosophy of language. The discourse further deals with other aspects of the paper especially as it concerns the correspondence theory of meaning itself. Traditional key figures in the twentieth-century philosophy of language include Bertrand Russell, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Rudolf Carnap, W.V.O Quine, Alfred Jules Ayer, John Austin and Peter F. Strawson. Among the most contemporary, post-modernist scholars in the field are Richard Rorty, Jacques Derrida, Foucault and Donald Davidson (Aigbodioh & Igbafen 2004: 18). The rest of the paper is structured as follows: Section 2.0 discusses the interface between Philosophy and Language. Section 3.0 gives an explication of the Correspondence Theory of Meaning and its ontology. The paper is

concluded in 3.0 with culminating reflections on the subject matter.

2.0 Philosophy and Language: Towards a Philosophy of Language

Thematically, philosophy is from two Greek words “Philo” and “Sophia” which is the “Love of Wisdom”. The literal meaning of philosophy does not end in the love of wisdom but rather it continues with the critical inquiries into what makes a thing right or wrong and what makes it that which it truly is (Orhungur 2013: 2).

Language on the other hand is a universal phenomenon of all cultures. This is perhaps the reason why some scholars of language often do not bother to provide a real definition of it. They assume that everyone knows what language is. Even when they care to define it, they do so from their point of view. Ludwig Wittgenstein (1961) in his *pictorial theory* of language defines language narrowly as the totality of propositions and by proposition he means that a description cannot legitimately be used for any other purpose than to describe a perceptible existing condition in this world of our experience. Truly philosophy of language as it is practiced today is distinctively a twentieth century development.

Indeed, the philosophical study of language is as old as philosophy itself. Thus, according to J.R. Searle (1969) Plato was concerned with language in the *Euthyphro* when he inquired about the meaning of ‘piety’ or the concept of ‘pious’ which is expressed in the Greek word *hosion*. Plato also seems to have elucidated a theory of meaning in the *Phaedo* where he claims that the meanings of general terms have the nature of forms in the world of ideas, that is, they are objectified as eternal beings.

Philosophy of language is the field in which philosophical questions about the structure of language, the meanings of terms and sentences, the relationship between language and world, language and thought, language use and communication through language are discussed. Philosophy of language is closely related to some other disciplines in philosophy like logic, epistemology, ontology and philosophy of mind. The questions about the nature of justice, knowledge or being are of great interest and debate in the history of philosophy.

Finding the appropriate answers is, in a sense, a problem of understanding the question. Is it the meaning of the word being questioned or is it the content of the concept? For instance, Wittgenstein (1961) claims that the question of “what is knowledge?” is meaningless when considered as a philosophical question. Accordingly, philosophy of language as a separate study of language is a recent offshoot of logic connected also to epistemology, metaphysics and philosophy of mind. It asks general questions about language. It is the subfield in which philosophical questions about the structure of language, the meanings of terms and sentences, the relationship between language and world, language and thought, language use and communication through language are discussed.

One of Aristotle’s fundamental convictions is that the structures of language, thought and reality are the same. He never doubts that we do have knowledge and that the structures of human knowledge are congruent with the structures of reality. How else could our minds ever come to know or understand nature if there were not some affinity between them? When we reason from one proposition to another proposition, we are not simply going from one mental item to another. Instead, we are going from one piece of information about the world to other facts that are true of the

world. We need to add language to a harmonious picture. Thus, the structure of language more or less divides reality at its joints. Language is important because knowledge does not consist of mute mystical insight but the ability to discuss intelligently about the world. Lawhead (2002: 72) opines that language must have the same structure as thought. The connection between philosophy and language also cuts across metaphysics. One problem facing the metaphysicians is the limits of language. This problem has burdened all creative thinkers, for as Whitehead (1956) puts it; the history of ideas has been the constant “struggle of novel thought with the obtuseness of language”. The problem is that Whitehead thinks that concepts and their associated terms that have been used for years to think and speak about reality have given us a misleading picture of its structure. This is because our conceptual equipment is infected with the questionable philosophical assumptions and contains the sediment of philosophical ideas that have made their mark on culture.

To use analogy, it is as though Whitehead sees reality as circular in nature, but our current conceptual categories and terms are made to hold only triangular shapes. To overcome this problem, Whitehead had to create his own technical terms, using such peculiar words as “prehension”, “nexus”, and “superject”. However, these sorts of linguistic oddities are inevitable if philosophy is the “attempt to express the infinity of the universe in terms of the limitations of language. The subject of language is one which has not been studied with sufficient care in traditional philosophy. It was taken for granted that words exist to express ‘thought’ and generally also that ‘thoughts’ have ‘objects’ which are what the words ‘mean’. Often when philosophers intended to be considering the objects meant by words they were in fact considering only the words, and when they were considering words

they made the mistake of supposing, more or less unconsciously, that a word is a single entity, not, as it really is, a set of more or less similar events. The failure to consider language explicitly has been a major problem with traditional philosophy.

For Jacques Derrida (1987) terms receive their meanings from the role they play in differentiating one category of things from another. Derrida says that all such terms receive their meanings from the distinctions that are created within language. From the premise that language has no absolute external point of reference, He concludes that language is arbitrary, imposing no limits on the play of meanings and interpretations readers may find in a text. Deconstructionists seek to reveal the incoherencies within texts, for from the conflict of multiple interpretations; new possibilities of interpretation are generated.

To undermine the seriousness of language and underscore the element of play, Derrida sprinkles his writings with puns, plays on words, unlikely metaphors, amusing allusions, phonic and typographical tricks. Derrida realizes that even his own language is infected with metaphysical pretensions. The words/concepts' essence, existence, experience, consciousness, subject and object carry with them the baggage of thousands of years of philosophical speculation and inescapably reflect the metaphysics of presence. Finding it impossible to critique philosophy without employing the traditional terms of philosophy, Derrida uses them, as he says, "under erasure".

Some of the propositions in language are on belief or perception. The philosophical analysis of an utterance like "I believe it will rain today" requires understanding the mental processes involved. Another concept in philosophy of mind is the concept of mental representation which binds the field to language. There is a relationship between mental representation of something

and the referent. Thus, the concept of reference and mental representation of the thing being referred to, have a bond. As for epistemology, the relation is that many philosophers agree that knowledge is propositional. When the relationship between a subject as a knower and an object as the thing known is considered, many argue that the object is a proposition. Besides the concepts of proposition, the two fields of philosophy are linked with the concept of truth. The argument is that for a subject to know a proposition, it is necessary that the proposition is true. Thus, the question of truth of propositions binds knowledge to language.

There are some motivations by philosophers of the 20th century; like G.E. Moore who insisted on the need for the clarification of the meanings of ordinary terms and words which we employ in everyday verbal discussions. He argues that although we communicate thoughts and ideas easily by the use ordinary language, it is surprising that when most persons are pressed to give the meanings of the words they employ so familiarly, they are unable to do so. Secondly, *scientism* is defined by Nicholas Capaldi (2004 as quoted by Aigbodioh & Igbafen) as the view that “the world is to be understood as mechanical system devoid of purpose”. The reasons which reinforce this view articulated by Capaldi is obvious in the following:

- i) Language is natural object
- ii) Natural object are explained scientifically
- iii) ...Hence language can be explained scientifically (Aigbodioh & Igbafen 2004: 15).

Philosophy of language involves the critical or systematic and ordered methodologies through which philosophy squarely

interrogates the issues of language in trying to find out the validity and authentic nature of their claims. Philosophy and language are like two sides of a coin that cannot be separated. As the mother of all disciplines, Philosophy tries to bring out the best in language because if they are separated, language may have no sufficient basis to back up its claims. Indeed, the philosophical study of language is of utmost importance for all persons, disciplines and professions that use language. Because its investigations are conceptual rather than empirical, the philosophy of language is distinct from linguistics, though of course it must pay attention to the facts that linguistics and related disciplines reveal. Basically, philosophy of language is a recent offshoot of logic, connected also to epistemology, metaphysics and philosophy of mind. Philosophy of language provides a deep background for other fields of philosophy and various scientific studies (Baukent 2016: 65). Having discussed the interface between philosophy and language, the following section gives an analysis of the Correspondence Theory of meaning.

2.0 The Correspondence Theory: An Explication

Questions asked in the philosophy of language are questions about meaning. It is asked, for example: Are there meanings? What is meaning? What is the relation between meaning and reference? What is the ability to speak a language and how does one acquire the ability to use words with pre-established meanings to refer to or talk about specific objects? By what criteria can we distinguish between meaningful and meaningless sentences? What is the ability to speak a language?

And how does one learn or acquire it? Quite often, it is part of the pre-occupation of the philosopher of language to explore the relationship between meaning and use, the descriptive and non-

descriptive (or non-cognitive) uses of language. On the whole it could be said that philosophy of language is the consequences of early twentieth century philosophical concern for dismantling and deconstructing earlier metaphysical systems, and sorting out their cognitive or epistemological contents. Apart from the preceding characterization of philosophy of language, it is important to note that it is distinctively a sub-discipline of philosophy; its subject matter lies within philosophy. It has the task of providing an adequate analysis of basic concepts such as the concepts of linguistic meaning, connotation, sameness or synonymy of meaning and meaningfulness. Based on the fact that meaning is not just a central but a critical scheme both in language and the philosophy of language, it is then pertinent to note that there are a plethora of theories about the nature of meaning and about what makes a proposition or a belief meaningful or meaningless.

One of the foremost and topical theories of meaning is the *Correspondence Theory of Meaning* championed in ancient times by Aristotle. The logic of this theory is predicated on interrogating the fundamental error of asking after the meaning of a word or name in isolation from the context of the sentence in which it is used. The theory asserts that a word acquires its meaning, not by reference to any particular or universal object or by an association with some mental processes, but by the way in which it is employed in various circumstances by the speakers of a particular language. In other words, words do not have fixed meanings except within the sentence in which they occur. Wittgenstein (1961) argues that the meaning of a word is its use in the language.

2.1 The Ontology of the Correspondence theory of Meaning

From the foregoing, it is apriori that the correspondence theory of meaning is the view that meaning is correspondence to or with, a

fact. This point of view was particularly and specially propelled by Bertrand Russell and G.E. Moore early in the 20th century. But it is usually applied much more broadly to any view explicitly embracing the idea that meaning consists in a relation to reality, that is, that meaning is a relational property involving a characteristic relation to some portion of reality. The correspondence theory of meaning is often associated with metaphysical realism. Its traditional competitors: pragmatics, coherentism, verificationism and other related epistemic theories of meaning are often associated with these schools: idealism, anti-realism and relativism. The correspondence theory of meaning appears to be one of the oldest and most probably the most widely held theory of meaning. It makes two main claims.

Firstly, a proposition is meaningful if and only if it corresponds to the facts. Secondly, a proposition is not meaningful if and only if it fails to correspond to the facts. Proponents of this theory usually add a third claim, that the meaningfulness or otherwise of a proposition or belief is predicated on the facts or upon the way the world is. Such a view is suggested by Aristotle, who wrote, “It is not because we think truly that you are pale, that you are pale; but because you are pale we who say this have the truth.” Moreover, according to the correspondence theory, one and the same proposition cannot be both meaningful and meaningless. The proposition that you are pale cannot be both meaningful and meaningless (Lemos 2007: 10). To further put the explication of the correspondence theory of meaning in perspective, it is necessary to present its historical development.

2.1.1 The Ancient Greek Period

The correspondence theory is a traditional model which goes back at least to some of the ancient Greek philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle. This class of theorists holds that meaning is determined solely by how it relates to a reality; that is, by whether it accurately describes that reality. In his *Metaphysics* Aristotle relating meaning and truth avers that “to say that that which is, is not, and that which is not, is, is a falsehood; therefore, to say that which is, is, and that which is not, is not, is true” (Aristotle 1941: 833). This scheme about truth also goes for meaning. Virtual identical formulations can be found in Plato. It is noteworthy that this definition does not highlight the basic correspondence intuition. Although it does allude to a relation to reality, the relation is not made very explicit, and there is no specification of what on the part of reality is responsible for the truth of a saying. As such, the definition offers a muted, relatively minimal version of a correspondence theory. Aristotle sounds much more like a genuine correspondence theorist in the *Categories*, where he talks of underlying things that make statements true and meaningful and implies that these things (*pragmata*) are logically structured situations or facts. Most influential is Aristotle’s claim in *De Interpretatione* that thoughts are “likenesses” (*homoiomata*) of things.

2.1.2 Medieval Period

Among the scholars in the middle era, there seem to be a division between the “metaphysical” and “semantic” variations of the correspondence theory of meaning and of truth as well. The good and classical example of the correspondence theory is the position by one of the scholastics Thomas Aquinas (1955) who argues that truth is the adequation of things and intellect -*veritas est*

adaequatio rei et intellectus, this also implies that meaning is also the adequation or the correspondence of things to the intellect. The most important thing here is the relation, the relationship which is the correspondence. Aquinas attributed this to the ninth-century Neo-platonist Isaac Israeli. In another model, Aquinas restated the same correspondence theory of meaning in the sense that a judgment is said to be true when it conforms/corresponds to the external reality. It is instructive to state here that Aquinas tends to use *conformitas* and *adaequatio*, but also uses *correspondentia* and that he gives the latter a more generic sense. In all, the correspondence theory of meaning emphasizes that meanings, beliefs and true statements should correspond to the actual state of affairs.

2.1.3 Modern Period

In the modern era, the correspondence of meaning theory was embraced either directly or implicitly by most of the early modern scholars which include; Francis Bacon, René Descartes, Baruch Spinoza, John Locke, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, David Hume, and Immanuel Kant. This is without prejudice to the fact that Spinoza and even Kant have both also been seen as sympathetic to the coherence theory of meaning and truth. This same correspondence theory has also been attributed to Thomas Reid (Harter 2011: 91). Now, in later part of modern philosophy scholars like; Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling subscribed to and defended the correspondence theory of meaning and truth alongside. And it is on record that Karl Marx also aligned with a version of this correspondence theory of meaning.

2.1.4 Contemporary Period

In the contemporary period, Edmund Husserl who is one of the contemporary scholars defended the correspondence theory. Within the analytic tradition, the likes of Bertrand Russell, Ludwig Wittgenstein, John L. Austin, and Karl Popper further defended the correspondence theory of meaning. For Russell (1912: 190);

We are driven back to correspondence with fact as constituting the nature of meaning. And in accordance with our three requisites, we have to seek a theory of truth and meaning which (1) allows truth and meaning to have an opposite, namely falsehood and meaninglessness, (2) makes truth and meaning a basic property of beliefs, but (3) makes it a property wholly dependent upon the relation of the beliefs to outside things.

2.2 Ontology of Meaning as Correspondence: The Use, The Verification, The Semantic Models

2.2.1 Meaning as Use Model

Language has been the focus of the analytic tradition in twentieth-century philosophy. A good deal of philosophizing about language has drawn its inspiration from a simple sounding idea: to understand a word is to know how to use it. The formulation is particularly associated with Wittgenstein. But the idea itself has had immensely wide influence. To understand an expression or sentence is to master its use within a grammatically structured means of communicating which is language. No more is required for full understanding than whatever is required for that. But although this formulation is particularly associated with Wittgenstein, what he intended by it is a matter of controversy. The invocation of use evoked a cluster of ideas, and commentators have highlighted different elements in this cluster (Blackburn 1984).

2.2.2 The Meaning as Verification Model

They were in their thirties when they propounded the verificationist idea of meaning and it was championed by Wittgenstein and those from the Vienna Circle. Simply put, the verificationist view of meaning states that there can be non verificationist forms of the epistemic conception of meaning, and that understanding a sentence consists in grasping what information states would verify it. An information state verifies a sentence just if a person in that state is warranted in asserting it. In contrast, a verificationist view of *truth* holds that truth is verifiability. A sentence is true if and only if it is verifiable, that is, if and only if there is evidence warranting its assertion (Wright 1992).

2.2.2 The Semantic Model

The correspondence theory of meaning swivels round the impression that meaning is a matter of accurately copying what is known as ‘objective reality’ and then representing it in thoughts, words and other symbols. Many modern theorists have stated that this ideal cannot be achieved without analyzing additional factors (Costa 2018: 6). For example, language plays a role in that all languages have words to represent concepts that are virtually undefined in other languages. The German word *zeitgeist* is one such example.

Anyone who speaks or understands the language may know what it means, but any translation of the word apparently fails to accurately capture its full meaning (this is a problem with many abstract words, especially those derived in agglutinative languages). Thus, some words add an additional parameter to the construction of an accurate truth predicate. Among the

philosophers who grappled with this problem is Alfred Tarski. Bertrand Russell and Ludwig Wittgenstein have in different ways suggested that for a statement, to be true, it must have some kind of structural isomorphism with the state of affairs in the world that makes it true. For example, ‘*A cat is on a mat*’ is true if and only if, there is in the world a cat and a mat and the cat is related to the mat by virtue of being on it. If any of the three pieces (the cat, the mat, and the relation between them which correspond respectively to the subject, object, and verb of the statement) is missing, the statement is false and meaningless. Some sentences pose difficulties for this model, however. For example, adjectives such as ‘counterfeit’, ‘alleged’, or ‘false’ do not have the usual simple meaning of restricting the meaning of the noun they modify; a ‘tall lawyer’ is a kind of lawyer, but an ‘alleged lawyer’ may not be (Russell 1927: 34). Claudio Costa (2018) developed a full version of the correspondence theory of truth and meaning. This novel version and variation of the correspondence theory of meaning duly incorporates coherence and also extends the idea of correspondence to the formal sciences. On the other hand, Austin (1962) opines that there is no need for any structural parallelism between a true statement and the state of affairs that makes it true and meaningful. He rather avows that it is only necessary that the semantics of the language in which the statement is expressed are such as to correlate whole for whole the statement with the state of affairs. And on a final note, a false statement for him; is that statement that is correlated by the language to a state of affairs that does not really exist.

3.0 Culminating Reflections

From the foregoing, it is palpable that the position of the correspondence theory of meaning is its obviousness. This can be

gleaned from Descartes position on correspondence theory of truth which also applies to meaning. He says, “I have never had any doubts about truth, because it seems a notion so transcendently clear that nobody can be ignorant of it...the word ‘truth’, in the strict sense, denotes the conformity of thought with its object”. This explains why Kant thinks that the nominal definition of truth, that it is the agreement of cognition with its object, is assumed as granted. Likewise, for William James meaning is the agreement or disagreement with reality (Vision 2004). Historically, the correspondence theory, usually in an object based version, was taken for granted, so much so that it did not acquire this name until comparatively recently, and explicit arguments for the view are very hard to find. Since the arrival of apparently competing approaches, correspondence theorists have developed negative arguments, defending their view against objections and attacking competing views (Burgess & Burges 2019). As it concerns the ontology of meaning, it is noteworthy to remark here that the idea that to understand a sentence is to have grasped its meaning and truth condition was first made explicit by Gottlob Frege, and this was nothing but the consequence of his general approach to questions of meaning. In the transition from logical positivism to modern analytical philosophy, the idea came near to being mislaid entirely. It was brought back into a new prominence in the late 1960s by Donald Davidson.

Having rediscovered the idea for himself and in his own way, Davidson pressed its claims as a principle in the philosophy of mind and meaning, and as the only proper basis on which to conduct serious semantic investigations (Feigl & Sellars 1949). Flowing from the above analysis, it is apposite to mention here that there is both the weak and strong aspect of the correspondence theory. There are basically three versions of the weak

correspondence thesis; that a proposition corresponds to a fact if and only if there is a material equivalence between a proposition and a fact. On one version, there is a material equivalence between every meaning and some fact or other.

This material equivalence is trivially true, and certainly does not capture a sought after or interesting theory of meaning. On the second version, there is a material equivalence between every meaningful proposition and a particular proper fact, e.g., the fact that *grass is green*. Thus, on the second version, there is a material equivalence between the proposition that *snow is white* and the fact, e.g., *that grass is green*. Obviously, this is not a satisfactory notion of correspondence. To arrive at the third version of the weak correspondence thesis, consider the intuition that the proposition that *snow is white* and the proposition that *grass is green* have something in common, namely, that they both bear the property meaning. If each proposition corresponds to a different fact, then it seems that meaning is not something they have in common.

Having looked at the weak version or aspect of the correspondence theory of meaning, the next is the strong aspect of the theory. Now, on the strong reading of ‘correspond’, the fact to which a meaningful proposition corresponds is the fact represented by that proposition. In order to give ‘correspond’ this reading, an account is required to explain how a proposition represents a certain fact and no other. One characterization of the strong correspondence relation draws on the similarity of pictures representing facts; that is, a meaningful proposition resembles the fact it corresponds to.

Despite the restatement of the strong aspect to the correspondence theory of meaning, there are objections to this theory. The first objection recognizes moral truths, but rejects the

idea that reality contains moral facts to which moral truths should correspond. Logic provides another example of a domain that has been flagged in this way. The logical positivists recognized logical truths but rejected logical facts. Its originator, Hume, gives two definitions of meaning, one of which borders on logical truth, broadly conceived; while the other bothers on non-logical truths. Hume (1975) posits that meaningfulness and meaninglessness consists in an agreement or disagreement either to the real relations of ideas, or to real existence and matter of fact.

However, there are four possible responses to objections of this sort. The first is from non-cognitivism which argues that despite appearances to the contrary, claims from the flagged domain are not truth-evaluable to begin with, e.g., moral claims are commands or expressions of emotions disguised as meaning bearers. The second is the error theory that posits that all claims from the flagged domain are false. The third is reductionism. Reductionism states that meanings from the flagged domain correspond to facts of a different domain regarded as unproblematic, e.g., moral truths correspond to social-behavioral facts, logical truths correspond to facts about linguistic conventions and the last one is standing firm, which is embracing facts of the flagged domain.

The second objection is that correspondence theories are too obvious, that is, they are trivial, vacuous, trading in mere platitudes. Locutions from the ‘corresponds to the facts’ family are used regularly in everyday language as idiomatic substitutes for ‘meaningful’. Such common turns of phrase should not be taken to indicate commitment to a correspondence theory in any serious sense. The third objection to correspondence theories is that they are too obscure. It is blatant to state that objections like this, which appear to be the most common, seem to protest that the central

notions of a correspondence theory carry unacceptable commitments and/or cannot be accounted for in any respectable manner (Williams 2011: 144).

Despite these, it aligns with reason to state that the theory of meaning explores the various aspects of our understanding of words and sentences, and ability to use them with a symbolic function. The important goal historically was to delimit the extent of human understanding and to end a succession of principles connecting meaning with experience, each refining the idea that you cannot know what something means unless you know what you would experience if it were true. Traditionally there have been two approaches to the understanding of language, each of which accords an essentially different place to speakers and their intentions. One approach is associated with formal theories of meaning while the other associates with what is sometimes referred to as *use theories of meaning*. Questions about meaning are central in the philosophy of language. These questions are of two kinds. On one hand, there are questions about the meanings of particular linguistic expressions (words, phrases and whole sentences), while on the other hand, there are questions about the nature of linguistic meaning itself. The first set of questions belongs to semantics, and the second set is meta semantics in nature.

Thus, correspondence theory of meaning centers heavily around the assumption that meaning is a matter of accurately copying what is known as objective reality and then representing it in thoughts, words and other symbols. And it is from this that its beauty lies and resides. Little wonder it is one of the foremost and the most popular theories of meaning in the contemporary era. The same influence that it enjoyed in the contemporary era is what it has enjoyed even from the ancient to modern era. So despite the

objections and counter objections to the correspondence theory of meaning, it is still the most sought after and the reasons is not fat-fetched, ranging from the nature of philosophy in the contemporary world, which gives pride of place to existentialism, pragmatism, phenomenism, liberalism and some sort of relativism even in its variegated forms.

If the being of man is central among all beings and what makes it different is its capacity to communicate in variety of ways, then language and linguistics remain evergreen models and mode that aid this communicative aspect of man. Of course, what is communication without meaning? Nothing. What is meaning without first and foremost the correspondence theory of meaning? This then is the perennial relevance of the correspondence theory of meaning and it also justifies the disposition of this paper.

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