Part II

An Overview of Western approaches to language.

Introduction

Some thoughts on Indian renaissance in Europe in the 19th century.

There is an interesting overview by Sri Aurobindo on the Greek civilization, according to which Greeks took their inspiration from the East and assimilated and embodied it into their own aesthetic and ethic oriented culture. Basically all the pantheon of Greek gods, with their cosmological acts and relations is a kind of caricature on the Indian pantheon of Gods. There was no other source of this religion, for the closest one Semitic had altogether another structure. Greek civilization was founded on the ancient mysteries of Apollonian and Dionysian Mysteries clearly of Asian origin, which from the beginning supported the foundations of Greek culture, and slowly built up another perception within Greek civilization. There were several great philosophers: Pythagoras, Heraclites, Socrates, as a result of this adaptation of the Eastern knowledge to the Greek context, but they were completely covered up by those who followed them: Plato and Aristotle, who gradually turned their mystic sight into a common place for all. So, once this knowledge was accepted and adapted to a common level, then it became a basis for the development of that what is known to us as Greek culture, which flourished, benefiting from it immensely, in all directions of human activities: Poetry, Art, Drama, Architecture etc. Then it was conquered by the Romans, and that, what was hidden in it as its mystic element, was now adopted by Rome.

So, Rome has established a new great civilization on the remnants of the Greek one, more aggressive and materialistic, but still valuing that mysterious element which conceived the Greek civilization. Rome spread this hidden knowledge-perception all over Europe and especially in Germany. The first Kaiser in Goslar was enthroned by Romans, paying them a tribute.

Now this mysterious element was again adapted in a different way by Germans, which supported the growth of their culture in all forms of music, philosophy, art for centuries. There was another mysterious element blended into it, which came with Romans, that of Christianity. This new element has gradually substituted the outer cult of paganism of the Greeks (Constantine) but in its depth it was supporting that deeper and hidden element adopted from the East. Christianity itself in its deeper content is very close to the eastern paradigm and can be easier qualified as coming from the Vedic than Semitic origin. It was not accepted by the followers of the Old Testimony and was altogether rejected by Jews; Christ who spoke a word of the Eastern truth was not recognized as their Messiah.[1]

So this old seed from India in the Greek-Roman-German adaptation was waiting to be rediscovered again at the end of 18th and beginning of 19th century. And when the discovery of Sanskrit and Indian culture took place in the West it immediately recognized itself and tried to formulate itself again.

It so happened that in Germany it was welcomed more than anywhere else, admired and thoroughly studied. That time Germany was still looking for its national identity and created out of this discovery a hope for its self-affirmation.

It was inwardly identified as a need to discover ones roots, beyond Rome and Greeks, back to the ancient Aryan Civilization of noble men, which was different from the Semitic origins.

This unfortunately got twisted and converted into a superiority complex and the noble ideas of a higher race with the higher mental capacities (Humboldt, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Hegel etc.) became a means for a fall. There ideals were completely abused by the coming of the two World Wars and were removed from the options of scientific thinking and human development in general. There was a tendency in Germany in the 19th century to identify the Aryan origin with the German race in opposition to others who were of Greek and Latin origin, the nations like France,

---

[1] To say: "I and my Father are one" would be natural for Indian Culture, where Avatarhood is the very core of Hinduism. The fact that Christ dared to claim the oneness with God was a complete blasphemy for Judaism, for it is even more then being a Messiah.

Italy, Spain, and Slavs who were considered to be simply 'slaves' etc. Because of this particular approach the Universities of other countries could not fully and easily accept Indian studies anymore. And after the Second World War the idea of Aryan civilisation was completely discredited and rejected and India became the outcast in the scientific world of Europe.

2

There was another reason to exclude India from the contributors to the studies of the Humanities and that was the difference between the Indian mind which is based on religious perception and the Western scientific mind which is based on a secular approach to knowledge. Any free thinking in the Medieval Europe was considered to be a threat to the Vatican and its power. Inquisition was destroying every possible questioning of the dogma. In India it was just the opposite: the flourishing of Religion always led to a flourishing of science, music, art, poetry, linguistics, philosophy etc. Religion was the source of inspiration for the development of culture and not a stumbling block or a threat. Such a mind which always had a spare space for a deeper perception of the beyond could not be fully understood by the Western mind, which fought its way through the resistance of a religious dogma of the Inquisition. So, on that basis all the achievements of Indian civilisation were classified as religious, and since Western science is not at all interested in religious approach to knowledge, Indian knowledge was classified as dogmatic and fell into the category of superstitious belief and dangerous cult. But instead there was a turn towards the Greeks again, but now to Aristotle and Plato, for they were those who prepared materialistic perception of the western mind.

Thus being conceived by Indian knowledge the Western Civilisation tried to recover all those inspirations from their own historical Greek and Latin studies, and everywhere they discovered again those seeds of the East. Denying India's contribution they considered those to be their own, which is in a way true to a certain extent, and tried to separate themselves from India even more.

Where such an approach may lead the West? It will lead it only to the rediscovery of India again in a more precise and fundamental way, for there was no other source of inspiration anyhow.

Semitic and Aryan Origins of language.

It is possible that there was a tradition, which preceded the Vedic and Chaldean; so called pre-Vedic and pre-Chaldean one, which later got split into two different directions of development: Semitic and Aryan.

We can clearly see that the Vedic and Semitic traditions have many points in common. The concept of the Word is one of them.
In the Semitic tradition of the Old Testimony, God creates the world by the Word.[2] This concept of a Creative Word of the Lord, by which the creation is put into motion, once it is uttered, is very similar to the Vedic Myths of Creation by the Word, by Brihaspati or Savitar in the RV[3] or by Prajāpati in the Brahmanas.[4]

The New Testimony provides us with another powerful statement, which is again very similar to the Vedic conception of Vac. It is the most famous passage in the Gospel of St. John:
"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." This passage sounds like a definition of *šabda brahman* by Bhartṛhari or *parā vāk* by the Kashimirian Shaivism .

But even though such profound passages existed in the Semitic and Christian traditions they could never get hold of the minds of the people and find their interpreters later who could develop these intuitions into the philosophical and philological study of language similar to the linguistic and philosophical traditions in India. Why was it so?

---

[2] "Let it be Light! – and there was light."
[3] RV 4.53.3: šlokaṃ devaḥ kṛnute svāya dharmaṇe, 'The God (Savitar) creates the Word for his own support [here in manifestation].'
[4] TaitAr 1.23-25, etc.

Before we try to answer this question let us first have a brief look into the structure of these languages. The two traditions developed their own languages quite different from each other in every respect. The first and the most striking difference is that Sanskrit has preserved and developed its own system of etymons, and the whole body of clearly demarcated sounds in the mind and articulated by the vocal apparatus, whereas the Hebrew, instead of working out the language on the basis of articulation, codified in the letters a hidden symbolism of their own mystic tradition and therefore did not have any clearly scientifically developed alphabet as a system of articulation.

On this ground it becomes quite clear why the written word was excluded from the linguistic studies in the West and only the spoken word was considered to be its sole object of study, for the written word was not in accordance with the phonetic system of articulations, it was never even conceived to be in accordance with the vocal apparatus and its clearly defined articulation in a systematic manner. The system of etymons was not even possible on such a ground. The sounds were only arbitrary choices without any clear position in the system or relation to each other, having no clear meaning in themselves nor in relation to the system of meaning.

Derrida perceives it indirectly. The word is an expression and reflection of the reality as such and therefore it is believed that the presence of it is gone when the utterance is over, for it is perceived in a particular moment of time (context) only. So the script, the written text was considered to be altogether another reality, recording the already uttered word and therefore could not be considered as original and thus was excluded from the linguistic study. The written word is clearly pointing out to the difference between the word and the object it designates. There can not be any such mysterious unity maintained which by its own vagueness and looseness sustains the logocentric belief that the word exists only in the time of pointing things out, but in itself it does not have any real existence ('it is never that'[5]).

---

[5] By Derrida.

First there is a signified, then a signifier in the form of spoken word – and then only a signifier of a signifier: a script.

What is interesting to note here is that such a view would not have occurred in India in general, where the script was only a transmitter of articulation. The idea that the script does not reflect its speech is not a part of Sanskrit culture. Writing the Vedic texts was prohibited by the Vedic tradition for completely different reasons,[6] to prevent any free access to and misuse of knowledge and most of all it had to be transmitted correctly. The idea that the script is only corresponding with the phonetic articulations and has nothing to do with the real, spoken word would not rise in Indian tradition, and such a question of script being inferior to the spoken word would be simply impossible. For the Word in Vedic perception has its own origin, its own reality, anyhow independent from the objective reality.

Difference in the Alphabets.

Another interesting observation to understand why writing was excluded from the studies of linguistics by Saussure and others can be found in the script of language itself. The Western alphabet (a, b, c, d) is not actually a proper device for a spoken language. The order of letters does not at all correspond to any clear articulatory system of how humans articulate sounds: A B C D E F G [ei bee see dee ee ef gee] etc. does not have any meaningful order of articulation if we compare it with the Sanskrit Alphabet. It comes from another system of meaning altogether.

It was *Moses* who first created and introduced the system of 22 laws which he codified into Hebrew Alphabet as 22 letters, when he brought his Ten Commandments down to the people of Israel after contemplating on the hill of Sinai. He codified his knowledge in the Five Books, which he acquired in Egypt and Ethiopia into the script of Hebrew language. He transmitted the knowledge of ancient Semitic tradition into the system of the secret laws (Arcanum)

---

[6] Aitareya Brahmana prohibits writing for those who study Vedas.

known later as a system of Tarot. It has a profound meaning in itself and in some way partly preserved the great tradition of Chaldean mystics, but he completely ignored the needs of language and the understanding of how it functions as a language, being a vocal expression of human being, articulating meaning through sound. He brought in another symbolism taken from another system of meaning.

Now when the Greeks borrowed this script from Hebrew, which was syllabic like Sanskrit, to use it for their own languages, the symbolism of the hidden meaning was getting gradually lost, leaving only its outer form, where the vowels in the syllables were often omitted, for the sake of secrecy, so the Greeks had to force it to reflect the needs of their own language, inventing thus additional letters for the sounds omitted in the syllabic writing. Thus the syllabic writing was converted into the letters (ABC). On this basis Romans developed their own Alphabet and all other European nations took their alphabets from them or from the Greeks as it was in Ukraine and Russia, without any clue of why or what it was. Thus language remained a mystery for the European mind for millennia, as a representative of some unknown symbolism. The distrust in the graphic expression which in its nature is very different from the spoken word was a natural outcome for such a mind. The logocentrism was the only way to reconcile between the discordance of seeing and hearing.[7]

---

[7] The writing was condemned as inferior and therefore was considered to be of evil creation. On this basis the spoken word was seen as the representative of the true reality. And from here we have logocentrism as a phenomenon described by Derida.

Greeks on the Word.

It is very important for us to overview some of the major points in respect to language in the Ancient Greek Philosophy.

Socrates on the Word.

Socrates:
"But where satisfactory remedies have been found for dispelling these illusions by measuring (metrein), counting (arithmein), and weighing (histamai). We are no longer at the mercy of an appearance (phainomenon) of difference in size and quantity and weight; the faculty which has done the counting and measuring or weighing takes control instead. And this can only be the work of the calculating or reasoning element in the soul."

There is a clear shift from the mysterious perception of reality to the rational which is no longer at the mercy of phenomenon but is grounded on facts of reality of scientific enquiry into all possible measurements. This faculty of reason is called by Socrates the 'reasoning element in the soul', which later in Aristotelian view will represent the soul.

"…But how shall we further analyse them, and when does the imitator begin? Imitation of the essence is made by syllables and letters. Ought we not, therefore, first to separate the letters, just as those who are beginning rhythm first distinguish the powers of the elementary sounds (stoikheion) and then of compound sounds, and when they have done so, but not before, proceed to the consideration of rhythms? Must we not begin in the same way with letters – first separating the vowels, and then the consonants and mutes, into classes, according to the received distinction of the learned, also the semivowels, which are neither vowel nor yet mutes, and distinguishing into classes the vowels themselves. And when we have perfected the classification of things, we shall give their names, and see whether, as in the case of letter, there are any classes to which they may all be referred, and hence we shall see their natures, and see, too, whether they have in them classes as there are in the letters. And when we have well considered all this, we

shall know how to apply them to what they resemble, whether one letter is used to denote one thing, or whether there is to be an admixture of several of them, just as, in painting, the painter who wants to depict anything sometimes uses purple only, or any other color, and sometimes mixes up several colors, as his method is when he has to paint flesh color or anything of that kind – he uses a particular color as his figures appear to require it. And so, too, we shall apply letters to the expression of objects, either single letters when required, or several letters, and so we shall form syllables, as they are called, and from syllables make nouns and verbs, and thus, at last, from the combination of nouns and verbs arrive at language, large and fair and whole, just as the painter used his paint to reproduce a living creature. (424b-425a)

It is a profound and detailed description of the whole process of scientific inquiry in linguistics to arrive at the elemental particles, clearly defined and classified as different from each other and then to proceed in synthesizing them into greater units, but already being conscious of their character in the synthesis.

What is interesting here, in this example of Socratic speech, is that he presumes nothing as predetermined or given as knowledge, as if he has no tradition behind him and proceeds by his own power of rational enquiry affirming that it is possible for us wherever we are to discover and to arrive at truth. This in essence is the very characteristic of the Western rationality: 'by your own consciousness and power you can know things as they are, you don't need any other authority to know.'

Of course this approach wakes up two things in man: individualism and egocentrism. But as we know it from Yoga Philosophy, we cannot arrive at true individualism without crossing the battlefields of egocentrism.

What is important for our purpose of linguistic studies here is that separation on the letters as classification of them is mentioned here, which as I think became the issue in creating of a letter-based alphabet and another altogether different perception of language: as a synthetic work of the rational mind.

The mysterious perception of meaning based on the higher Consciousness was deconstructed by Socrates into a rational construct by the individual.

But now he has to address this mysterious issue of the first names and their construct by the higher consciousness, pointing out to the original meaningful system of sounds, comparing it with paints[8]:

…Very good, but if the name is to be like the thing, the letters out of which the first names are composed must also be like things. Returning to the image of the picture, I would ask how anyone could ever compose a picture which would be like anything at all, if there were not pigments in nature which resembled the things imitated, and out of which the picture is composed." (434 a-b)

Socrates refers to the original names which were composed, and if they were to be like the things, then there should be also something in the nature of that kind by which one could make them. In other words, the things are the manifestation of some Intelligence, Knowledge, Consciousness, being carried within its own substance. It is by this particular view introducing the two approaches simultaneously of intelligence working with matter and the matter being intelligent that he becomes known in the History as a representative of the transition from the mythical structure of consciousness to the rational.[9] Plato later would completely insist on this preference of the rational approach, introducing the written language as a norm against the spoken word of the bards of Homerian type. In his ideal Republic he even banishes all the poets out of the city.

---

8 Cf. also Sanskrit alphabet is called akṣara-mālā 'garland of imperishable ones' or varṇa-mālā 'garland of colors'.
9 The first represents the ancient paradigm of knowledge and the second a new rational approach to knowledge,

Aristotle on Logos.

Aristotle later, basing himself already completely on the rational perception of things, is defining Logos in the terms of the phonetic phenomenon of speech as an expression of the individual soul:

"Now, what (takes place) in the making of vocal sounds is a show of what there is in the soul in the way of passions, and what is written is a show of the vocal sounds. And just as writing is not the same among all (men), so also the vocal sounds are not the same. On the other hand, those things of which these (sounds and writings) are a show in the first place, are among all (men) the same passions of the soul, and the matters of which these (the passions) give likening representations are also the same."

When Aristotle uses the word 'soul' he does not mean 'a soul' in the Vedic or Vedantic sense, he means a 'living and intelligent being'. For Aristotle the soul and the body were one undivided entity. In this sense he already clearly follows the latter approach to the intelligent matter of Socrates. (see his treatise "On the Soul").
Here we can clearly see the definition of logos as represented by sounds and letters; as if signifier is unified with the signified, though they are differently expressed in different languages still signifying the same psycho-physical reality of the being. This meaning will dominate in the West over all other approaches to the semantics. The word will be seen only as representative of the passions of the soul, which is an intelligent being.
And this is the real basis of logocentrism: 'All what I say is what I am, and it is what it is'.[10]

Such a view on the nature of language and our intelligent being became dominant all over the world. It is this understanding that led the Western thought to a complete identification of the signifier with signified and ended in a lap of : "I think therefore I exist" as a major driving power of the Western spirit. The mind is believed to be able to discover the truth of our existence, even if it does it in its

---

[10] cf. proverb: 'take my word for it'.

own way and in its own mental reality different from that of the signified (Phenomenology), it still corresponds with what it signifies in the 'intelligent being'.

Some concepts and issues of the Western Linguistics.

It must be noted here before we look deeper into the concepts of Western linguistics that the discovery of Sanskrit language and literature in the 18th and 19th centuries made the whole Western thought move towards a discovery of the science of language. The 19th century was a time when every philologist in Europe had to study Sanskrit Grammar in the Universities to get a degree in Philology. On its basis the whole subject of Linguistics was seen and approached. After a hundred years of studies it changed and learning of Sanskrit language was no more compulsory, which somehow affirmed in the mind of the next generations of linguists an illusion of an independent source of discovery.[11]

Humboldt
Humboldt was one of the first, who got inspired by the studies of Sanskrit language and Culture. He even could converse in Sanskrit, according to some records, with his students and colleagues and recited from the Gita by heart. The discovery of Sanskrit and especially its regularity of Grammar and transparency of etymological system led some of the great philosophers and scholars in the West to a deeper look into the issues of language, making them anticipate even a greater development of human consciousness through the studies of language. This kind of thinking was not there before in the West, it was neither in Greek philosophy nor in the medieval studies of Latin and Greek.

The central concept of the development of higher mental capacities in man through the enlightened studies of language was first presented by Humboldt in his Introduction to *Kavi language of Java*, which was later published as a separate essay: *"On the Diversity of the Structure of Human Language and its Influence on the Intellectual Development*

---

[11] Which is anyhow a major characteristic of Western culture as we saw it starting from Socrates.

of Mankind" (Berlin, 1836). This work, according to Heidegger, "has ever since determined the course of all subsequent philology and philosophy of language."[12]

According to Humboldt "articulated sound" is "the basis and essence of all speech". [13]   He speaks of language in this way:
"Properly conceived of, language is <u>something persistent and in every instant transitory</u>. Even its maintenance by writing is only an incomplete, mummified preservation, necessary if one is again to render perceptible the living speech concerned. In itself language is not work (ergon) but an activity (energeia). Its true definition may therefore only be genetic. <u>It is after all the continual intellectual effort to make the articulated sound capable of expressing thought.</u> In a rigorous sense, this is the definition of speech in each given case. Essentially, however, only the totality of this speaking can be regarded as language."[14]

Humboldt conceives of language as a particular "intellectual effort":
"Language must be regarded not as a dead product of the past but as a living creation. It must be abstracted from all that it effects as a designation of comprehended ideas. Furthermore, we must revert <u>to a more meticulous examination of its origins and its interaction with intellectual activity</u>." (p. 26).

Humboldt speaks of an "inner form of language", which is difficult to define in conceptual terms, he says:
"<u>If in the soul the feeling truly arises that language is not merely a medium of exchange for mutual understanding, but a true world which the intellect must set between itself and objects by the inner labor of its power, then the soul is on the true way toward discovering constantly more in language, and putting constantly more into it.</u>" (p.135)
Such a profound insight was never followed up by the philosophical or linguistic tradition in the West, and in itself

---

[12] M.Heidegger, 'On the way to Language', p.116.
[13] W. Humboldt, "On the Diversity of the Structure of Human Language and its Influence on the Intellectual Development of Mankind" , p.44
[14]   Ibid, p.27

requires a separate study, according to Heidegger. Actually Humboldt is remembered as the Inspirer and Idealist none could actually follow. Nevertheless his inspirations did generate the whole direction of a new approach to thinking in these matters in the fields of linguistics and the philosophy of language.

Nietzsche

Nietzsche is another giant of the 19th century who, according to Derrida, "contributed a great deal to the liberation of the signifier from its dependence or derivation with respect to the logos, and the related concept of truth or the primary signified…" ('Of Grammatology', pp 31-32)

Already in 1873, Nietzsche described metaphor as an image, which the intellect presents as "truth":

"The intellect, as a means for the preservation of the individual, develops its chief power in dissimulation. … <u>A nerve-stimulus, first transcribe into an image! First metaphor! The image again copied into a sound! Second metaphor! And each time he [the creator of language] leaps completely out of one sphere right into the midst of an entirely different one</u>." …

"that impulse towards the formation of metaphors, that fundamental impulse of man, which we cannot reason away for one moment – for thereby we should reason away man himself…(NW III, ii 373- 381) is …"will to power". …"the so-called drive for knowledge can be traced back to a drive to appropriate and conquer." "in our thought, the essential feature is fitting new material into old schemas,… making equal what is new."

This view is somewhat close to the mystic statement of Humboldt,[15] which never was totally understood and assimilated by the Western linguistic tradition. It reflects something of the psychological truth of being beyond words.

---

[15] "If in the soul the feeling truly arises that language is not merely a medium of exchange for mutual understanding, but a true world which the intellect must set between itself and objects by the inner labor of its power, then the soul is on the true way toward discovering constantly more in language, and putting constantly more into it."

Nietzsche introduces here two fundamental perceptions (1) of linguistic reality being different from the objective reality, in other words, the reality of the signified is different from the reality of the signifier and (2) the drive behind the reality of signifier is a "will to power" or "drive for knowledge".[16] These two fundamental concepts inspired Derrida to review and to develop the concept of Saussurean sign into the concept of 'differance', or 'trace-structure of the sign'. It is in this particular view that the influence of Indian Thought can be traced back and brought forward for further investigations.

The time of Structuralism and Post-structuralism was trying to deal with the concept of sign as it was seen and developed by Saussure.

Saussure

Saussure is considered to be a father of General Linguistics and Structuralism in the West.

A Sanskrit Scholar and Professor of Sanskrit Language for more than twenty years he was well educated and knew very well Sanskrit Linguistics and Philosophy of language. He introduced the term 'sign' in a new way replacing the use of the words 'concept' and 'sound-image'. He says: "I propose to retain the word sign to designate the whole and to replace concept and sound-image respectively by signified and signifier". This proposition is clearly reflecting or even translating the same concept of vācya and vācaka of Bhartrihari's definition of sphota.

"The sound-image is what is heard; not the sound heard but the being-heard of the sound." - says Saussure. −"Being-heard is structurally phenomenal and belongs to an order radically dissimilar to that of the real sound in the world."[17] This distinction was clearly defined by Bhartrihari as vaikṛta and prākṛta dhvāni, and by other grammarians of Indian linguistic tradition. The very concept of Sphota is based on it; what we actually hear is the articulation of the sound

---

[16] Cf. to the concept of pašyantī vāk in Vākyapadīya and Tantra.
[17] It reminds the exact definition of Sphota by Bhartrihari.

(prākṛta dhvāni) rather than the sound itself (vaikṛta dhvāni). Sound is only triggering in us this inner hearing-articulation.

And Saussure continues in the Bhartrihari's manner:

"The latter [the sound-image] is not the material sound, a purely physical thing, but the psychic imprint of the sound, the impression that it makes on our senses. The sound-image is sensory, and if I happen to call it 'material', it is only in that sense, and by way of opposing it, to the other term of the association, the concept, which is generally more abstract."[18]

It is this other component as opposed to 'the psychic imprint': 'the association, the concept', that Saussure will call the 'signified' and the first component 'the signifier', exactly as in Bhartrihari.

It is interesting to note here that Saussure himself hesitated to publish his lectures on Linguistics, saying that it was not yet fully ready or absolutely clear, etc. It was published and fully appreciated only after his death. It was also noticed later by Derrida that such a concept of sign with signified and signifier, constituting one reality, could not emerge in the context of the Western so-called 'logocentric' culture of thought, it must have come from some other source.

On the problem of meaning.

Examining the notion of value in his lecture in June 1911 Saussure introduced the distinction between the word and the term, based on the distinction between associative and syntagmatic relations, outside and inside speech respectively.

"On the associative level the word is something like a flexional paradigm (dominus, domini, domino), these are all connected in a certain way in virtue of that fact. Or we may compare animus, anima and animal which reflect a different order of relations in this associative family.

On the syntagmatic level, words are subjects to a kind of relation that is independent of the first (associative) and

---

[18] Cp. prakrita and vaikrita dhvani of Bhartrihari.

based on their linkage to other terms. Language itself "represents a system in which all the terms appear as linked by relations."
This is the very definition of the syntactic semantics as meaningful relations between the units of language, which later will be developed by Chomsky into his grammar of deeper syntactic structures. Language is nothing but this Syntax, a web of all possible grammatical relations among the units.
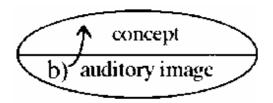And Saussure continues:
"Where there are terms, there are also values. The idea of value is tacitly implied in that of term. Always hard to keep these two ideas apart… **Value is synonymous with sense (meaning)**. The value is an element of the sense."

All the units of language have their inherent value which is a part of perception and sensation, which means it belongs to the life and experience of the individual; it can be felt as such and known as such by other means than the word, though it is triggered by the word.

And Saussure is going even one step deeper, abstracting the value as the sense-experience from the sense itself:
"It is perhaps one of the most subtle points there is in linguistics, to see how sense depends on but nevertheless remains distinct from value. On this the linguist's view and the simplistic view that sees the language as a nomenclature differ strikingly."

The arrow indicates meaning as counterpart of the auditory image. The value of a word is "the result of only of the coexistence of the different terms. The value is the counterpart of the coexisting terms" and not of the auditory image.
So if the value of the word is a counterpart of the two coexisting in one: the concept and the auditory image, and
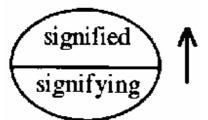
not of the auditory image only, then individual is to be seen as free from both: the concepts and the auditory images, for he can take or introduce any value to the system of signs. What it actually says is that individual though he operates and knows himself and the world by the system of values is not this system. This is a final abstracting of the word and its influence from the consciousness of man, which Derrida metaphysically presents as a 'trace' structure.

The difficulty of semantics is that, as Saussure put it: "The meaning as counterpart of the image and the meaning as counterpart of coexisting terms merge."
He compares it with a coin of 20-francs. It is exchangeable with 1) bread; 2) comparable with other coins. There is always a two values system within the word, as it were.

"You can never find the meaning of a word by considering only the exchangeable item, but you have to compare the similar series of comparable words. You cannot take words in isolation. This is how the system to which the term belongs is one of the sources of value. The value of a word can never be determined except by the contribution of coexisting terms which delimit it: or, to insist on the paradox already mentioned: what is in the word is only ever determined by the contribution of what exists around it. (what is in the word is the value). Around it syntagmatically or around it associatively."[19]

The values are also relative and are the product of the sign. "The signified element alone is nothing, it blurs into a shapeless mass. Likewise the signifying element."

"What would have to be the case in order to have this relation between signified and signifying elements given in itself? It would above all be necessary that the idea should

---

[19] This view is very similar to the Patanjali's view on the meaning of the word, which one has to learn not from the learned linguist but on the market place with common people. (See the Section on Patanjali).

be determinate in advance, and it is not. It would above all be necessary that the signified element should be something determined in advance, and it is not.
That is why this relation is only another expression of values in contrast (in the system). That is true on any linguistic level."

So this schema of the signified-signifier is not the starting or original point in the language, it is constructed, which gives us an idea what Structuralism is about.

"To sum up, the word does not exist without a signified as well as a signifying element. But the signified element is only a summary of the linguistic value, presupposing the mutual interaction of terms, in each language system."

What Saussure ended up with was nothing less than a conclusion that actually nothing can be truly known in the field of language, that there are no universal categories by which one can know things as they are; every language develops its own categories and values in accordance with the ways of living and the data it has syntagmatically and associatively available for its creation. For if the relation of the signified and signifier is not original but arbitrary then any signifier can, if necessary, if it is agreed upon, denote any signified.
What he actually did, he removed the meaning and the sound from the science of language. After Saussure Linguistics had to deal neither with meaning nor with sound, but with naked structures (morphology and syntax) in a diachronic and synchronic ways as if every sample was the original one and nothing more. The idea of a systematic approach to etymology was out of question.

Saussure did not see any other meaning in the sound content of phoneme other than of differentiating significance, delegating the problem of meaning to the social conventions and thus to the social psychology; mentioning the science of the future as semiology of which linguistics will be a part of:

"It is... possible to conceive of a science which studies the role of signs as part of social life. It would form part of

social psychology, and hence of general psychology. We shall call it semiology (from the Greek semeîon, 'sign'). It would investigate the nature of signs and the laws governing them. Since it does not yet exist, one cannot say for certain that it will exist. But it has a right to exist, a place ready for it in advance. Linguistics is only one branch of this general science. The laws which semiology will discover will be laws applicable in linguistics, and linguistics will thus be assigned to a clearly defined place in the field of human knowledge."[20]

It is nearly a prophetic statement of Saussure declaring the limitations in his own understanding in these processes and methodology in terms of semantics as such. But he clearly determined also the whole direction of research towards the outside relations with the world (denotata), away from systematic studies of etymons, denying the very possibility of such approach, since any sound can denote any meaning in the system of values.

So what happened after Saussure in the science of Semiology or as it is sometimes called Semiotics?

---

[20] Chandler, "Semiotics For Beginners, Introduction.

Semiotics: The Science of Meaning.

In this regard, it would be important to mention here the three branches of Semiotics, the science which is dedicated to the studies of meaning. These three branches were most notably formalized by the Vienna Circle into three branches of:

1) Semantics: Relation between signs and the things they refer to, their denotata.
2) Syntactics: Relation of signs to each other in formal structures.
3) Pragmatics: Relation of signs to their impacts on those who use them. (Also known as General Semantics)

We can clearly see that there is no other definition of Semantics than that of the relations of signs and their denotata in the social or linguistic context. The idea that the sound itself may have a meaning in its own system of meanings, that the word, the signifier has its own reality independent from the 'signified' is completely banished from the science. Therefore the whole stress of the Semiotics is falling on the studies of the syntactic, structural Semantics with the reference to the social conventions of language, as it was defined by Saussure.

Let us briefly mention several other important directions of philosophical and semantic research in the West in this context, which are, as we will see, very close in the spirit to Saussure's understanding of semantic.

Phenomenology.

<u>Edmund Husserl.</u>

<u>Husserl</u> is considered to be a father of Phenomenology.
In his early works he approached mathematics, psychology and philosophy with a main goal to provide a sound foundation for mathematics. Later on he went through the process of anti-psychologist in the studies of logic and mathematics to the most psychological and philosophical

realms of phenomenology assigning to it a possibility of scientific methodology.

Husserl's three stratum of logic and the three levels of syntactics:

1) <u>'morphology of meaning'</u>, the meaning of pure grammar or a logical syntax; to have a coherent statement as such;

2) <u>'logic of consequence'</u>, 'logic of non-contradiction', which explores all possible forms of true judgments. It includes syllogisms, propositional logic and that of predicates. He calls it a semantic stratum, and the laws here would be the "laws to avoid counter-sense" or "laws to prevent contradiction". These laws are similar to the logic of "transformation rules". In mathematics there is a similar stratum which is based on pure theory of pluralities, and the theory of numbers. These rules define the conditions of all possibilities of any theory. They have psychological character and belong to the meanings of the living being, an investigator.

3) <u>"theory of all possible forms of theories"</u> is the third level of logic, to which we come from the second level of *'logic of consequence'* over the so called *<u>'logic of truth',</u>* as the link between the two, which consists of possible truth, its modalities and all formal laws. It is introducing all theories a priori, as it were. The logician is free here to see the extension of this deductive, theoretical sphere of pure logic. It is a kind of pragmatic approach in the realm of pure mental consciousness, the universal mathematics. He introduces the theory of manifolds by defining the ontological correlative, which allows the investigator to operate by the symbols and the formal-ontological categories assigning to them many different significances.

In all these three strata of logic there is one fundamental underlining method which can be described as structural and relational in its character: 1) logical syntax, 2) logic of consequence, 3) theory of possible forms of theories. They all belong to the mental operations of morphological, syntactic and super-syntactic approaches to meaning. It is in

the second stratum of 'logic of consequence' that Husserl sees the answer to the problem of semantics, which is very similar to the understanding of semantics by Chomsky in his "transformation rules" providing the transformation of the text from the level of 'generative grammar' to 'surface structures'. The concept of 'meaning' as such is conceived of as of 'consequences', or 'generating structures'.

Martin Heidegger.

Heidegger's view on Being is that it is the final signified to which all signifiers refer. It cannot be contained by, for it is always prior to any signification. The end of philosophy, according to Heidegger, is in the restoration of the memory of that free and all-commanding signified, which Derrida describes as "the other side of nostalgia, … the quest for a proper word and the unique name", classifying it as logocentric in principle.

There is a fundamental difference in understanding of the signifier searching for the Ultimate Signified in Heideggerian Phenomenology and the concept of signifier in the Ancient Indian Linguistics and Philosophy of language in Tantras. We will come to it in later in our analysis of the two approaches.

Derrida.

Derrida's analysis of sign is somewhat different from Saussure's or Heidegger's, he says: "…the other of the signified is never contemporary, is at best a subtly discrepant inverse or parallel – discrepant by the time of a breath – of the order of the signifier".

It is only nostalgia for the Presence that makes of this heterogeneity a unity by declaring that a sign brings forth the presence of the signified. Otherwise it would seem clear that the sign is the place where "the completely other is announced as such – without any simplicity, any identity, any resemblance or continuity – in that which is not it".

According to Derrida, word and thing or thought never in fact become one. The sign marks the place of 'differance'. To

"deconstruct the transcendental signified" – that the sign, phonic or graphic, is a structure of differance, Derrida suggests that what opens the possibility of thought is not merely the question of being, but also the never-annulled differance from "the completely other". Such is a strange "being" of the sign: half of it is always "not there" (signified) and the other half always "not that" (signifier). The structure of the sign is to be a <u>trace-structure</u> in Saussurean linguistics, <u>not a presence-structure."</u>

To overcome logocentric habit of thinking, Derrida defines the structure of the sign as a trace-structure, the structure of differance, which is always introduced by a signifier in opposition to a presence-structure of a signified. To arrive at 'signified' even in the mind he puts a signifier 'under eraser', excluding its discrepancy with signified, as it were. It is an unusual device which thus comes to make sense and serves its purpose, for it establishes an empty space within the mind, enabling it to perceive the signified, rather than the signifier. And even here though the treatment is against the logocentric use of the mind, he deals with it in a logocentric way, because he presumes the oneness of both.

Though he declares that word, thing and thought are and will never be one; he removes the signifier in the moment of signification to reveal the presence of the signified. This device is based on presupposition of the oneness of the signified and signifier. Therefore one can say that he does it in a logocentric way.

Roland Barthes

Roland Barthes is going even farther then Saussure in his vision of a relativity of relations between signified and signifier, he sees also a relativity in the system of values, which is primer in formation of linguistic sign.

In his "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives" he examines the structure of a sentence in relation to a larger text. He introduces three hierarchical levels of the text: functions, actions, and narrative. Separate words belong to the first category of 'function', but when they are used as characters then they would appear in and introduce

the level 'action' thus forming the 'narrative'. In other words, the syntactic structure of the text on all the three levels of syntax can differ in interpretation of the meaning. In his structuralistic exercises Barthes showed how, for instance, a particular signifier could change its signified on the example of the bottle of wine signifying the bourgeois culture. For whatever reasons it was disassociated from this old signified of bourgeois life style and assigned to and associated with another signified "a healthy life style". By this example he showed how manipulative the meaning could be.

It is within the movement of post-structuralism and especially Derrida's 'deconstruction' that Barthes has changed his exercises in structuralism in search of a deeper meaning, dedicating himself to the studies of a meditation and contemplation. The deconstructive approach of Derrida completely shaken the whole foundation of Barthes structuralism, seeing now the limitations not only in signs and symbols but in the whole belief's system of the Western culture oriented towards and dependent upon the ultimate and constant standards. He wrote his Empire of Signs after traveling to Japan dedicating it to the contentment of Japanese culture in the absence of a search for a transcendental signified. At the same time he wrote his famous essay "the Death of the Author", where he completely changes his approach to the meaning of the text, where the intention of the author and the perception of the reader are seen as two different things. The notion of the author of the text becomes irrelevant, for text has its own significance and depth, and can be interpreted in many different ways by different readers.

Semantics itself was seen only in the Aristotelian sense as the 'passions of the soul'. It was never addressed differently than through the syntactic or pragmatic approaches to the text in the West.

Noam Chomsky

Chomsky is another great figure in the Western Linguistics, who formulated the hypothesis of an innate facility of comprehension of syntactic structures in human being.

According to him young children are capable of inference of meaning and structure from the language they gather naturally from all around them. They are growing together with language, as it were, building up their comprehension. He compares it with the simple arithmetic operations in common use derived from the fundamental mathematical forms of algebra or topology. Such a view can offer a solution to the problem that children can compose sentences they did not speak before and are capable of constructing a syntactic structure which is not used by adults.

Chomsky introduces the distinction between the "surface structures" of our concrete grammatical forms and the "generative grammar" as our innate structures, which can generate these surface structures. He introduces than a new term in syntax: "transformational rules", by which one set of grammar is generated from another. These rules are supposed to be universal mental structures, same for all languages, for they constitute a mental structure in any individual.

So his view on innate knowledge of language dramatically changes the whole approach to linguistics. It gave a rise to the complexity theory of Turing.

There is much of Chomsky's contribution to the syntactic semantics, but not to the semantic per se, 'meaning' of the word is still seen as that derived syntactically from the complexity of relations of grammatical meanings and loaded with pragmatic or a particular perception of the reader; that which is known to us otherwise as a 'trace structure' in the philosophical or rather psychological approach to sign and semantics by Derrida.

The approach to the problem of semantics was thus again exercised in the realm of syntactic and pragmatic approaches. And most probably it could not be otherwise, for there was no other theoretical approach to the meaning of the text rather than through the mental structure of consciousness, and thus defining the main function of language as communicative.

Jerrold Katz

<u>Language as an abstract object</u>

Katz after defending Chomsky's mentalism in linguistics, which was identifying the theory of linguistics with the theory of knowledge of language, turned towards Platonic realism, which maintained languages as abstract objects. So, his theory was defined as the theory about those objects and not as the knowledge about them.
As he himself explains in 1981:
"I had been wondering about how well Frege's realism about senses, to which I was committed, squared with Chomsky's psychologism about language, to which I was also committed. I reached the conclusion that ... a theory of abstract senses could not be fitted into a theory of concrete syntactic structures in the human mind. My solution was to adopt a realist view of grammar as a whole, a move that seemed the right choice in light of the fact that the words and sentences that grammars are theories of are plausibly regarded as types and hence as abstract objects."

In moving from mentalism to so called realism, Katz saw himself as extending Chomsky's revolution that overthrew empiricism in favor of rationalism, and nominalism in favor of mentalism. A fully rationalist theory of language demands that it be realist, not mentalist.

What is interesting here in this approach is that it can not be the answer to the problem of semantics either. And the other definition of semantics as the relation between signs and their denotata, which is an official scientific definition of modern Semiotics, is also based on and defined by the mental relations. The semantic is rather something altogether different, it is a real substance of speech beyond the mind, and in itself it can be perceived in the most systematic manner within one language as a system of sound-ideas which are interdependent and interrelated building up one system of language. But since there are many different languages which have different words for the same 'signified' our mind makes immediate conclusion that there cannot be any such systematic meaningful relation on the level of sound. The phenomenon of etymological

meanings was not deeply or systematically studied and because of the fundamental difficulty, which mind has faced to penetrate deeper into it, such a view was rather banished from the linguistic as well as semiotic studies. Instead the idea of the Ultimate Signified of Heidegger which has no signifier to reach it or to express it, which has no form, beyond time and space, was welcomed, introducing rather Buddhistic view on meaning ("there is no meaning"); or the idea of 'trace' based on 'differance' by Derrida, deconstructing everything to nothingness, from which the perception of real reality may emerge. Derrida's approach is most significant in this regard. It clearly leads mind to the end of its rational possibilities to perceive the signified. It de(con)structs all of its (con)structions and is left with something which has no name, but itself is generative of a name.

It is from this moment that we have to review our basic knowledge of Sanskrit Language and especially its relation of Artha and Vak, Meaning and Sound.