

The Patience for Liberty

Speech is shaking the air, as a wave, an energy, moving the atmosphere, hitting the membrane of other people's ears in the most physical sense of the word. Nevertheless, this physical situation is not the state of point for people's analysis of speech. Something behind physics is so much taken for granted that the physical side of speech is treated like an accident, not as the central phenomenon to be explained before we may know what language, and all its derivations, thought, logic, literature, science, try to achieve. For this reason, it would seem hopeless to analyze speech or the speaker. It is different, I trust, when we begin the analysis with the topic articulated speech.

The phenomenon of articulated speech is not the utterance of an idea by one speaker. It lies in a fact that is quite different. And that fact has been overlooked in favor of the obvious relation between thought and speech, in one and the same individual. However, this fact is at the bottom of all speech. It is true, it is not to be found in any one man's individual speech. When the analysis starts with my or your individual speech, it deals with the same Robinson Crusoe that plays his famous part in classical economics, and with the same disastrous results.

This mistake that we study "the speaker", is at the bottom of all the 18th century considerations on language,

and has handicapped linguistics ever since. By using the phrase "articulated speech", I wish to draw your attention to the fact that language exists only when sounds that are uttered by one speaker, are diversified by another. No language without diversification between interlocutors. To the command: write, the answer is I have written, I shall write, I shall not write. But without this potential variegation of the first sentence, the first sentence would be a shout, not a human word.

All language is diversity within unity, is the laying out of different variations of language between interlocutors who handle the same material in different manner. The whole mystery of grammar lies in this fact. We mostly think of the secondary situation in which a storyteller can make people speak in all forms of grammar. But the rudiments of speech are rooted in the real situation of two people of whom one may say: Love me. Do you follow me? and the other may answer: I follow you. In this combination of two grammatical variegations of one theme, grammar is nothing technical or anything coming later. Grammar is disclosed as at the bottom of the dialogue. No language in which not two interlocutors can take up the common theme and twist it in relation to the one and the other, to you and me. I cannot read this paper to you if you cannot discuss it. And whereas I say: I think, in your discussion of this paper, you will have to say: about me, "you seem to

think", or "he thinks". And in doing so, the same theme "thinking" is reconsidered from your point of view. In language, the problem of interlocution and of articulation are one and the same problem. The so-called three persons in grammar are not an accident of a special grammar or a particular language. They are the secret of language. To speak means to interlocate, not to shout or to yell or to push or to hit. When I hit a person mechanically, I may impress him more than through words. But his liberty, his bodily liberty is gone which I respect when the waves of acoustics go out toward his ear. When I think in silence of a person, the other extreme is evident: I do not contact him at all. I do not involve him in my process of thought. The risk of the dialogue is not taken.

Only in speech does this contact appear in combination with the liberty of my partner to modulate, to give grammatical variety to my thought. Only here is my thought and your thought brought to an interplay.

Grammar is the result of dialogue. All forms of speech are conditioned by this social fact. Dialogue is the assertion of a minimum of continuity and peace and freedom between men. It takes time to speak and to answer. It takes patience to speak and to answer. And it takes liberty to speak up and to reply. Grammar is, then,

1. The organon of common time among men, of an attempt to become contemporaries.

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2. It is the evidence of social peace within a group of at least two or three.
3. It is the proof of personal liberty. The slave in Aeschylus does not speak.