

GRAMMATICAL METHOD - 1962

Lectures 1-3
Feringer notes
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Lecture 1

1.THE ESSENCE OF THESE LECTURES SEEMS TO BE THE QUESTION: WHAT ARE THE REASONS FOR THE PRIMACY OF SPEECH AS A NECESSARY FOUNDATION OF HUMAN SOCIETY?

2.The point of this lecture is that there is something in grammar that the linguists have never told us about, something higher than (beyond) the way they divide grammar into nouns and verbs and analyze syntax sentence by sentence.

"Intonation is a secret by which you can express all feelings, nearly, without words." (p.1-3)
ERH demonstrates his point with a story of a Salvation Army crisis-line counselor, whose tone of voice was a crucial factor; it betrays features of your soul.

3.ERH uses the example of Spinoza, who worshipped quantification, and points out that this could only account for dead things, or society as a mass, but could not explain how individuals communicate. In a like way, a dictionary is a quantification, i.e. it defines only the most common meanings of a word, which all people can use or understand, but which do not tell the whole story.

In jurisprudence, definitions (of murder, for instance) are necessary, but when we attempt to necessarily apply these generalizations to experience, the meaning soon becomes lost. Generalizations mean particular contexts have been stripped away, and with them much of the meaning. Our experience is never in terms of generalizations, rather, it includes feelings,

intentions, and unique details.

4. Names are much more than mere dictionary terms; In a social context, to call us by name is to provoke or invoke our spirit. And to address someone by name is to involve that person in life. It is the inflection put on the words that reveals the spirit of the moment, and that is mainly what is remembered by listeners.

5. To listen is also to engage in conversation, it takes in both speaker and listener. ERH recounts a story of a lady and a diplomat pointing out the way meaning derives from intonation.

6. To speak has little to do with your brain (rationalizing); it has more to do with listening to Beethoven or Bach, wherein one loses themselves in a meditation, in the spirit of the situation. TO LISTEN MEANS TO BREAK DOWN THE BARRIERS OF THE CONCRETE WORLD.

7. With leadership, one needs to make a distinction between giving commands and carrying them out. "To will, is not enough. You have to submit to some higher will, or you can't get married." (p.1-13) This process is not rational. Seeing eye-to-eye means one has "...given up the distinctions of our physical separation." (p.1-14)

8. Addressing persons by name renders them capable of responding to a command. Three grades of speech are names, numbers, and figures (images). Names point to the future, figures to past (dead) things, and images to the present.

The naming of a new-born child is an anticipation of his/her future. And when the Bible refers to "future life," this has no reference to something beyond our real life, but is rather a calling of the child into life as we live it. (p.16)

Lecture - 2

1. Speech is dangerous, mortal and life-giving, or it is nothing! (p.2)

2. Lust and love, peace and war are the subjects for this lecture. It is precisely by the grammatical method that one is able to distinguish between these fundamentals of life, and this is not so through the influence of science as the basis for the analysis of language. Words have to be spoken in order to allow us to love, and words must be spoken to allow us to live in peace. Not so with lust and war. Lust destroys love and war results from enmity (not speaking).

3. Through language it is possible to distinguish between sex and love and between peace and war. Man does not make war or love, unless they are like animals. One declares both love and war, and one accepts both declarations.

We strive to be divine (creative) in our earthly existence; the evidence is our need to acquire

power. Both real love (as contrasted with lust) and real peace (contrasted with war) point to a future for us - and these are representative of a meaning for life. (p.5)

4. Love and peace cannot be willed, they cannot be forced on another or they become degraded into lust and war the moment the force is reduced. Love and peace occur or are acquired with sacrifice. "Life, real life is never pleasurable. It's serious." (p.7)

5. You can decide over the phone whether or not a man is going to commit suicide, you can imagine that to speak is a potent act of life.

6. Marriage is not just between a man and a woman, it can apply to a political party, to a profession, to a country, etc. The same rules apply in all cases, and the foundation for all is love.

7. Peace and love can be arbitrated, but not "made." And arbitration requires sacrifice on both sides. Sacrifice means to give up something in the present to make the future.

8. The religious underpinnings of speech are inherent throughout the Bible: In every utterance the word must become incarnate (reborn), pointing toward the future. To realize our name, given to us at birth, is to render it incarnate, i.e. "the word become flesh." An invocation is a physical utterance and the only way by which the spirit can enter reality. So the spirit begins with a word that has become flesh, an indication that the spirit is ready to enter creation.

9. The sacrament of love is an indication that those smitten are willing to give up all else to manifest their love, like the husband or wife willing to leave a home they love to go off with each other. Teddy Roosevelt illustrated this in agreeing to arbitrate peace between the Japanese and Russians (against the interests of the U.S.).

Lecture - 3

1. Living only in the present would not have led to speech. In the present, things can be shown by the five senses, but referring to the past or to the future requires speech. For this reason also, (important) speech is prophetic, as it anticipates.

2. "Genuine speech is always either declaring love or declaring war." (p.3) It is relevant to the crucial, life-giving ability to change. To change is to end (kill) some habit or element of your life and strike out anew. To change is revolutionary, and sometimes dangerous (the more important the change, the more dangerous). To love or war sets new things in motion; it can create new nations or new alliances, or break old ones.

3. Thus, the power to speak and act is a fundamental power of life, and this power will at times break laws. These concepts are universal for all languages. This is what ERH calls a "deeper grammar," and thus the Grammatical Method.

4. Promise and fulfillment are also reasons why we speak; it is because we live in a context longer than our own lives, a time span necessary for fulfillment. Three generations are required to establish a (social) truth.

5. The liberal arts education is necessary to counteract the effect of natural science thinking as it is applied to social (living) experience. "Because we have to reach out beyond our own lifetime.... When we speak of people in Heaven, of the saints and -- of the Resurrection at Easter, we mean that there are people who have died long ago and are still ahead of us. If Jesus has any power in your lives, it means that He is still more of the future than you are." p.3-5

Neither the future nor the past are access to our five senses, and thus the necessity for speech.

6. The deeper grammar of the human soul (for all languages and peoples), is reflected in the sentence, "Today I feel good." This simple sentence suggests comparison with past, and anticipates the future, when one hopes health will continue.

ERH goes on to cite other examples and meanings of this grammar, pronouncing "death" to past events and anticipating future events. The future is frail and most imperiled because it depends on what and whom we name, and a devotion to causes that do not now exist. Names (Jesus, Hitler, Caesar) are a universal language "...from the beginning of humanity..." (p.9)

7. All speech is a creation of history, of tenses, of before and after. Mere philosophy is abstract, stripped of such names in context. All concrete thinking is dated, and is anti-philosophical. All life is predicated on death. Our friends and lovers may be dead tomorrow, and we had better make peace with them today. **TIME HAS TO BE LEARNED.**

8. We can always understand history if we believe in living speech, in peace and the conclusion of peace. ERH cites Hitler, who went to war never knowing that no one could conclude peace with him because they couldn't believe him. [RF - The same with the Serbs and the North Koreans today (1994).]

If our speech cannot distinguish between peace and war (which is apparently the case today), we are in a bad way, indeed!

9. Religious experience should give us the power to jump out of death (dead-end parts of our lives), to change and "get going." (p.14)

"The distinction between the secular mind and the religious mind is that the religious mind accepts the fact that life as a person begins by the experience of an order (a command). And if you think of your baby time, as a child -- you know this very well--that the great fact is that somebody called you out by your own name and asked you to do something." (p.15)

Grammatical Method - 1962 - Review

Rosenstock-Huessy gave numerous lectures about his GRAMMATICAL METHOD. This short transcript summarizes the core of fundamentals of that method: 1) that the method of natural science is inappropriate for social analysis, and 2) how society lives and is regenerated by speech. Not only do the fundamental acts that make us human rely on speech, but the social interaction itself relies more on the spirit or intent than on the rational message. To speak has less to do with and more to do with listening to Beethoven or Bach, wherein one loses themselves in a meditation in the spirit of the situation. In leadership, to will or to submit is not a rational act. "Seeing eye-to-eye means one has given up the distinctions of our physical separation..." and it reflects the spiritual act of our being. In sum, the author lays out the forceful establishing speech as the creative center of becoming human.

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