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Language, Giving-the-Meaning and Interpretation *

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Abstract: The subject that we have tried to mention in this article mainly intensifies on the meta-ontological or metaphysical field. Although we cannot know the real existence of objects, at least, we say something that cannot be expressed. Then, we should not ignore that our judgments belonging to the unknown field can be interpreted, more or less, on account of the relation to the area of the facts we know them. It is clear that trying to get the meaning of the world in itself or noumenon through the image of the concrete world is useless. Nevertheless, this condition does not mean that it should not make inquiries concerning the noumenon world and discontinue thinking about what the field of existence in itself is. Interpretations on this field of existence in itself cannot be expressed by mere knowledge of the actual area or the real notions. Because, in our image of the real world, there seems a situation that continually changes and which converts its meaning in each change.

Keywords: Language, understanding, sense, meaning, giving-the-meaning, world of meaning, interpretation.

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Introduction

A man carries out the process of giving-the-meaning both himself and the world he lives within a certain date and within time and place. Every speculation about the meaning of this process is parallel to the language of the environment in which the person lives. Language is, in its most general sense, not a means of understanding the historical process in which man lives, but a structure that saves this sense of enigma. As each structure changes according to the style of the constructor, the language is shaped according to the elements or processes that configure it. If we look at it from this point of view, what we mean to give-the-meaning keeps changing the historical process that emerges in language on the one hand, and exposes its evolution on the other hand.

Language is given to us as a gift. Combining the dimension of existence to the dimension of thought, language undertakes the manifestation of all these in the meaning and thus comes out as a mirror of the world of being for a human. Language presented in the focus of the controversies that have been going on from time to time, and the problem of giving-the-meaning depend upon it, continues to be astonishing. A living and thinking entity called human is involved in this process both at the beginning and at the end.

1. The Relation of Language and Thought

Because a human being is an entity that thinks and has language, it stands as an entity that enables the right thinking to be done within certain rules.[1] The reflections of this thought come out in language in a most beautiful way. The logos, or kalam, reduced to human discourses and thinking as mimesis or the act of creation continues to be a feature of being divine in that it is a

[1] Aristotle advanced rhetoric as an analytical art that puts method and principles truly thinking and making good use of language or eloquence. See Aristotle, *The "Art" of Rhetoric*, trans. John Henry Freese (London & New York: William Heinemann & G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1926), 1359b.

quality that brings a man to the highest level. The language reveals the given of thought with regard to being given to the human being. Every idea about language is always included in the language beforetime. Because thinking about language determines that this thought is included in the language, which is the instrument of thought. Besides the fact that human language is the main element shaping a certain thought, there is also the ability to have a structure to grasp what the essential elements of language are. The quality of the spoken words informs us about the nature of the language, depending on its shaping around the particular thought. When Augustine says that the single words in the language entitle the objects, he emphasizes the shaping of the human mind.[2] Not only he draws a picture of the situation of the mind in the face of the objects during this naming but also exposes the relation of each word to its sense.

The actions of man arise from his use of thinking in the process of naming and giving-the-meaning to the objects. If we say it like Wittgenstein, we can say *language game* for the whole composed of language and actions that the language intertwines.[3] Each thought is actualized within a certain language game and is given meaning within the same game. So when a person thinks and acts, he does not act independently on language, that is to say, the language, including symbols, reveals itself as an essential reality to determine both thinking and acting. A man who has no language is a state of thing that is void of thinking.

No thought arises out of a certain language, even though it may be possible to express any thought with a certain thought. For this reason, language and thought are not something identifying with one another but are two different structures, that which complete the whole and provide to be defined this whole and that which are known to be lack of each other completely impossible

[2] Aurelius Augustine, *The Confessions of S. Augustine*, trans. Edward Bouverie. Pusey (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1853), 1.8.

[3] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. Elizabeth M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 7.

regarding ontological. Consequently, human thinking is possible from speaking and his discourses are possible from thinking, and when the two complement each other the *logos*, i.e., the *kalam*, emerge. Logos is a concept that can express thinking on the one hand and speaking on the other hand. Both thought and discourse are included in the logos.

2. Language, Meaning and Giving-the-Meaning

As the first condition of self-expression, a person must know and recognize himself, that is, be aware of his existence. For this reason, that a person can ask himself what he is and why he exists, and then answer it, is a clear indicator of the way he expresses himself. All these statements of man are nothing more than articulate as a result. If there is no thought that is not meaningful, we think that it is not, it seems that what makes it meaningful is language. A thought that qualifies as a kind of human speech is an act of the mind that connects individual objects, as well as an act of the word. In this sense, the word, i.e. *logos*, is the *Divine Word* can be considered the source and most basic element of language. While each expression reveals itself in a language, each word internalizes itself in thought. Because it is a living being located at the center point of such fiction, man becomes a sacred structure in which all kinds of thoughts and discourses take place. Because man's relationship with God is possible by thinking about the meaning of the word and harboring abstract concepts in which the divine Mind is expressed.[4]

The fact that a concept called language has meaning through man comes from the fact that man is the only being who makes sense by establishing a connection between what he thinks. Language is, about objects, the vehicle by which common things and harmony between them are completed in itself. Man is able to give-the-meaning of the correlations between beings with the help

[4] For divine logos, see Heraclitus, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus: A New Arrangement and Translation of the Fragments with Literary and Philosophical Commentary*, trans. Charles H. Kahn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 1-2.

of language and which can be understood through reason. Giving-the-meaning, which is an aspect of the fact that man, as a rational being, is worthy of being a subject through the linguistic operability that the man's world of meaning dictates to the external world, which is his object, makes man very honorable in this regard. Each attempt to give-the-meaning leads us to a text that eventually brings with it a chain of comments. Text is an object configured by the interpretation rather than a parameter that makes the interpretation valid. The human being, because of becoming subject remaining alone with own consciousness and responsibility in the face of this text, has maintained becoming the speaking and rational being renewing throughout the history and holding new meanings himself and then interpreting these meanings differently.

The picture of the man's world of meaning, which has been the main goal of research for centuries, is a typical historical acquisition rather than an ordinary ontological picture. Every historical acquisition that occurs cumulatively must also have been given meaning *qua* being. The meaning given to an object, as a description of that object as such, is also related to the form of the perception of being *qua* being the external world.[5] Here, with being *qua* being, means that man reaches to the spiritual knowledge of which he makes sense. The realization of being *qua* being at the highest level occurs in humanity, and the fact that man is a living being who thinks and speaks, the owner of logos, symbolizes this

[5] Aristotle sought to explain the relationship between being human and being existent by the human soul. Because the characteristic that distinguishes a person from other beings is thinking. But according to him, being an existent happens with the composition of form and matter. Aristotle mentions substance in several senses, those are the sense of matter, the sense form, and the sense of that which is compounded of both matter and form, as well as that matter is energy and form is entelechy, which should be understood as both science and the application of science. In fact, the concept of entelechy is in a sense closely related to the concept of intellect and presents a view of what is mental. Aristotle clarifies this by asserting that a soul is necessarily a form of the natural body with potential life while accepting the soul is the entelechy of the body. Aristotle. *De Anima: Books II and III*, trans. David W. Hamlyn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 412a1-20.

situation. Although we cannot express our judgments about what meaning is separate from history, that is, time and space, we have a belief that there is a meaning that is not spoken of. The interpretations of the world in itself cannot be made only with concrete knowledge or concrete concepts. Because in our concrete world design, there is a situation that is constantly changing and changes its meaning every time it changes.[6]

In addition to the fact that thinking and speaking are related to each other, it is also important for us that they have an intangible structure. Because it is possible for a person to become aware of his spiritual existence with the power abstracted from matter, that is, humanity, what indicates that a person is a human, can be comprehended with the ability to understand completely abstracted from matter. Whether from a logical or ontological or even metaphysical point of view, humanity only includes what makes man human, and in this respect, it is far from factual.[7]

A man's self-understanding is closely related to the history of the phases that he has traditionally undergone. For this reason, each individual's attempt to understand himself and giving-the-meaning of the external world always comes with different interpretations. Discussions and theses on the objectivity of interpretation, which seem to be dragged into a subjective position, still do not go further than subjective. But this does not eliminate the fact that what is interpreted remains somewhat the same, although it is quite far from universality. This is what is interpreted is the tradition in the case of the historical process itself. The object of this historical process has to gain meaning through language. Gadamer states that in this regard, the recognition of language as part of the historical movement resolves the relationship between the infinity of the possibilities of world experience and the finality of

6 "When language-games change, then there is a change in concepts, and with the concepts the meanings of words change." Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, trans. Denis Paul & G. Elizabeth M. Anscombe (Boston: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 65.

7 Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *On Being and Essence*, trans. Armand Maurer (Toronto: The Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1991), 11.

man's ability to understand.[8] Such an understanding shows the historical connection between the preservation of the traditional structure of language and the preservation of interpretation. Because the act of interpretation becomes legitimate only through verbal language.

3. The Relation of Giving-the-Meaning and Interpretation

Giving-the-meaning, which is the design of human existence, necessarily goes along with understanding. The understanding design has its own possibility of development, and the development of this understanding will be called interpretation. In interpretation, while there is no differentiation of understanding, interpretation transforms itself. By changing what is interpreted with interpretation, it is not said that what is interpreted changes its own existence.[9] Just as the actual thing being interpreted never changes in itself, there is still a relationship between what is changing, because of the interpreter's interpretation of its meaning to sending the actual meaning. Each interpretation, while transforming itself, also bears witness to the change of the process in which it is located. Because the factor that transforms interpretation and differentiates it from the previous interpretation is that what is in its interpreted position transforms itself. Here, a person needs to interpret his position and the historical process in which he lives, rather than his interpretations of his own existence. But it should be noted that there is an unbreakable connection between the interpretation of man's position and his understanding of his own process of existence and his understanding of it.

Plato said that what makes all life meaningful is the effort to reach the knowledge of the forms. This ideal life is led to the depiction of an *afterlife* in parallel with the immortality of the soul.[10]

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[8] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer & Donald G. Marshall (London & New York: Continuum Publishing, 2006), 316.

[9] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 139.

[10] "So we shall be at peace with God and with cftirs elves, both in our life here and when, like the victors in the games collecting their prices, we receive our re-

As a contribution to the process of giving-the-meaning for a person's life, we have to engage in a conception that is contrary to Plato, who argues that the meaning of existence is only a form. Because in response to a question about what we give-the-meaning, it is appropriate to say that we only giving-the-meaning of this world. The problem of understanding is not separate from the historical process in which we live and surround ourselves. What is happening is only the history of the finite phenomena of this world, and the fact that every occurrence depends on corruption is the inevitable result of this process. Because generation is of something, and in this sense, it is impossible for it to have an eternal character.

Each act of giving-the-meaning concerning life and interpreting it certainly occurs within a language. So the structure of language also limits a person's ability to understand in a sense. By saying that language limits its ability to understand, we are not saying that it cannot overcome the world of facts. This discourse draws attention only to the interest between our limited ability to understand and our limited ability to express. But the ability to understand and language are limited by being in history, that is, belonging to time and space. As Gadamer says, language is not one of how the power of thinking communicates with the sphere of being. Because man never meets the world as consciousness or thought. A person is always surrounded by his own language, both in the knowledge he has about himself and the environment in which he exists. “Rather, in all our knowledge of ourselves and in all knowledge of the world, we are always already encompassed by the language that in our own.”[11]

The understanding, being literally a mental activity, has the power to transform interpretation as being influenced by the

ward, and both in this life and in the thousand-year journey which I have described all will be well with us.” Plato, *The Republic*, trans. H. Desmond P. Lee (London: Penguin Books, 1987), 621c-d.

[11] Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, trans. David E. Linge (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 62.

changes of its own process. All vital activities that are far from eternality prove their own evolution, even with this finite adjective they carried. Life has both a mental state and an actual function and therefore needs both giving-the-meaning and interpretation. A language that takes on the task of gathering all these actions under the roof can only transform the gains it provides into an operational state by shaping it around its potential structure. Every power that goes into an actual state will go into a phase of corruption again, being subject to a movement or generation. The act of reaching the peak of the spiritual power of existence, which we call humanity, emphasizes the dependence of vital activities belonging to a place on the historical process, by reminding us of the condition of understanding belonging to the time. Life, constantly changing historically and differentiating as it changes, reminds us of the difficulty of making a finite interpretation of the infinite structure of meaning.

It should be normal for there to be a parallel between the achievements provided by language and the analysis of understanding. Because interpretations of meaning can gain value to the extent of the gains that language provides, that is, the interpretation of something is only possible as long as it provides the conditions for expressiveness. It should be noted that we are not drawing a picture of any meaning here. To say that we draw a picture of meaning means to say that we state the judgments about meaning in precise language. We see that Wittgenstein points out the discourses on facts as painting, with reference to the picture theory of meanings put forward in the philosophy of the first period. According to this rule, we draw pictures of facts; so that what can be expressed is only a fact, as well as a model for reality. Propositions can tell reality as a picture and interpret and giving-the-meaning of them by talking about things that exist in this sense. "The proposition only asserts something in so far as it is a picture."[12] This is an attempt to equate existence with a factual object

[12] Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. Charles Kay Ogden (London & New York: Routledge, 2000), 4.03.

by digressing the infinite meaning of the nature of being. By such a consequence, glorifying interpretations of the meaning of man are completely eliminated. Our concern is not because such discourses strike a blow to our glorifying interpretations of meaning, but because meaning is objectified and deflected from its true meaning by being trapped in a vicious circle.

Conclusion

A person cannot be condemned to live only in a world of facts. In this case, the world in which man lives contains a world of meaning that transcends facts. This world of meaning, as we have mentioned above, hides itself in us by having infinite potential.[13] This situation is not temporary because we cannot break off our relationship with finite phenomena, it will live with us constantly and gain continuity by being in history.

Man's world of meaning is also limited to his world of thought. The understanding can explain and interpret the meaning as far as the competence it has gained in terms of being itself, and at the same time, it can attempt to reach a world of meaning by transcending the phenomena of the external world. Unfortunately, such development of the understanding or intellect will never achieve meaning itself, that is, thing in itself. Because only the world of meaning itself is closed to the understanding. This situation shows us the impossibility of the meaning of the unlimited world by the limited understanding. We can best understand this from Kant's comments on the subject. Kant clarifies that the pure reason, by the nature, makes an effort to reach into the world of meaning that in itself, but this might be possible by the only practical reason, that he will the highest Good.[14]

[13] Wittgenstein states that what is related to the field of value, namely meaning, is outside the world. And the someone who paints the world is the someone who makes sense of the world. He stated hereof that: "The sense of the world must lie outside the world." and that "*How* the world is, is completely indifferent for what is higher. God does not reveal himself *in* the world." Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 6.41 and 6.432).

[14] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer & Allan W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), A797/B825.

Reality has not completely disconnected us from hiding itself, but rather, with its mystery, it has led us to investigate and interpret itself. However, here we do not mention that there is a mystical and hermetic structure of reality, and we do not mean it can be obtained through an inner vision. On the contrary, our knowledge manifests itself to us, as much as possible, which can be obtained by valid paths belonging to the field of being. So we must go as far as our understanding limits us, even despite Kant, we must strive to go further. In this way, by being close to the world of meaning, we can be close to the world of reality.

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