3-18-1988

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Language and Human Being

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Introduction

The human being considered in this paper is the dynamic becoming of Aristotle, the concern with what happens as one acts as a human being rather than the static essence of being projected in a Platonic fashion. This paper is thus the attempt to answer the questions, What happens to human beings as they use language? What is the unique contribution to being a human being which the use of language affords?

An initial attempt was made to cast the answers to these questions in naturalistic terms. It was soon perceived that such an approach, in addition to being a deliberate falsification of the context, yielded but a very impoverished account of the human situation. There are two pieces of knowledge which we have that bear powerfully on the questions at hand: all men are the literal children of the gods, and those parent-gods have given to men the language which they enjoy. This second point is not meant to deny the historic development or individual languages, which may be considered naturalistically. It is simply to note that there was an initial endowment of language, a superior language, which was given to men no more than two hundred human generations ago. The effect of that endowment is the subject of this paper.

Theses

Normal acquisition of any "natural" human language accomplishes four things:

1. Language enables each human being to attain to a fullness of agency and to accountability, which are the measures of being a fully functioning human being. The power of language unto choosing good or evil is so great and so important that every one who enters mortality must acquire language before his or her mortal probation is complete.

2. Language enables each human being to understand the message of salvation from God, to enter into a covenant with God to receive that salvation, and to abide that covenant unto the receiving of salvation.

3. How we communicate is a large part of our salvation; using language correctly is the key to that perfect communication.

4. The choices one makes between good and evil using language thrust one beyond being a human being into becoming either a devil or a servant of Jesus Christ.

1. Agency and accountability.

Definition of agency: There are three necessary and sufficient conditions for agency: There must be 1) an intelligent (goal oriented) being, who has 2) knowledge of alternatives among which to choose to solve his problems (fulfill his goals or desires), and who has 3) power to carry out the choices he makes to fulfill his desires. There is a rudimentary agency which higher animals may be
said to have, for instance, as they select a preference as to where to rest or what to eat as they fulfill desire by doing as they choose. Human beings without language (e.g., wolf children) have this rudimentary agency after the animal fashion.

But a fullness of human agency comes only with linguistic development. Language and the rich communication it makes possible greatly expand the range of desire (expands the horizon of possibilities) for each individual. Language and the resulting communication furnish vastly increased knowledge, including the possibility of tapping the corporate memory of human kind (the writings and memories of other persons), thus to increase the range of means available for choice unto the satisfaction of desire. Language and communication bring to men vastly increased technical and other ability to implement the means chosen for the fulfillment of desire. The end result of this increased agency is what we call civilization, a plethora of choices, understandings and power which enables human beings seek successfully and revel in a marvelous panoply of satisfactions. Language enables a human being to desire things both real and imaginary, to reach for the stars or to plumb the depths.

Accountability, unlike agency, is made possible only through language acquisition. Accountability is the ability of a person to give a linguistic account of what, how and why he or she has acted. Accountability presupposes normal human agency: that the person accounting acted out of choice as to what, how and why he or she acted. While agency is relative (one person has vastly different powers of choice, knowledge and action than another), accountability only demands that the person acted by choosing and can give an account of that choosing. This accountability is what enables human beings to act rationally, according to a principle or rule, for if one can give account of the past, one can also bind oneself to act in a certain manner in the future. This ability is the basis of most cooperation, of contracts and legal arrangements, of law and order in civilization. Two great barriers to civilization are thus inability to communicate through language and mendacity when communication is possible. Clearly it is the communication of good things in a truthful manner which advances civilization.

Choice always involves values as well as mere physical alternatives, thus necessitating a consideration of good and evil. One construal of the value dichotomy is to see good as that which one has learned by induction fulfills his desires, or is sufficiently like what has fulfilled his desires that it is reasonable to believe by induction that the desire will be fulfilled again by the look-alike. Evil is the value attached to things which are undesirable, which past experience has shown to bring pain or dissatisfaction, and this value is extended by induction to things which appear to be like the bearers of dissatisfaction in the past. This definition of good and evil explains the actions of human beings and of many species of animals, all of whom have a measure of agency and can learn from experience.

The Restored Gospel perspective tells us that the definition of good and evil given above is not sufficient, that there is another good and evil which may be considered the real thing, with the former being but a preliminary. In the Restored Gospel, Good is the will of God and only the will of God. The will of man in choosing either the good or the evil under the first definition of them constitute what is Evil in the Restored Gospel. Thus in the Restored Gospel, the emphasis shifts from the anticipated utility or non-utility of making a choice to a recognition of whose will it is that is determining the choice. Motive or reason
for choosing becomes more important than what is being chosen. Thus the new standard is that only God is good, and men to become good-doers must relinquish doing their own will to doing the will of God if they desire to escape from the doing of evil.

Thus men may and do choose between good and evil pre-linguistically, even as do animals. But to be able to choose between Good and Evil one must have normal human linguistic development so that the understanding of Good and Evil may be made manifest to an individual. Good and Evil are abstractions which have no physical exemplifications, whereas good and evil are based on physical experience. Thus Good and Evil are seen only through the eye of faith, which is believing in the revelations of an actual non-human being who speaks to men, to each person in his own natural language and concepts, to explain to each the new understanding of Good and Evil. One then learns that he has known Good all along, for it is the light of Christ which is given to all men.

It is what one has done with the knowledge of the Good, given by revelation, that each man must account before his Father and his Maker. This agency to know the Good and the Evil, and to be able to account for what one has done with that agency is so important that no human being is ever judged by God until he or she has received full linguistic development to enjoy that agency.

2. Language and Salvation.

Salvation in the Restored Gospel is to be placed beyond the power of our enemies. It is essentially a passive matter, though it requires all we can do. What we can do is never sufficient, but does enable us to receive the gifts of salvation from Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ saves men from four things. He saves them from the grave (from the power of Satan to prevent a reuniting of body and spirit in the resurrection). He can save them from the eternal consequences of having committed sins. He can save them from the littleness of knowledge and power and righteousness which so characterizes human beings. And he can save them from the evil in their own hearts which makes them unable to love God and keep his commandments. Resurrection, the salvation of the body, is given as a free gift to all mankind. But the other forms of salvation, which are sanctification, justification and purification, come only by covenant, by contract. One has to enter into an agreement with God to act in a certain manner (to choose and do only the Good). It is not possible to understand either the offerer of that covenant or the covenant except through language. There must be an understanding of things which are not seen, and an agreement to live by influences which are not seen; these things can only be accomplished by way of language, building on what is seen. Thus language is an indispensable element in the salvation offered to men through Jesus Christ from anything but the grave.

3. The covenant of salvation involves how we communicate and how we use language.

Communication is any affect which one being has upon another. The following is a taxonomy of communication:

1. Sensory communication:
   a. Visual: Seeing or appearing (to be seen).
   a. Auditory: Making noise or hearing.
c. Tactile: Touching or being touched (e.g., shaking hands).
d. Olfactory: To emit or to detect an odor.
e. Gustatory: To taste or be tasted.

2. Impact communication: To apply sufficient force or energy to another person to move or change some part of their body; or to receive the same.

3. Substance communication: To give or take from another person's possession something material.

4. Chemical communication: To introduce a substance into the body of another person which changes their body chemistry; or to receive the same.

5. Indirect communication: To affect something another person owns or holds dear by any of the means of communication; or to be affected in this manner.

6. Privative: To deny another person any of the above communication modes when that person desires and expects the same, or, to suffer this same treatment from another person.

We honor other persons in the Restored Gospel manner only by communicating to preserve their agency. When we use language to communicate with them to gain their full cooperation and agreement as to other possible means of communicating with them, we honor their agency, their choice. Thus we will not communicate with others except visually, and through language (which may involve auditory or tactile language forms), until we have their full permission to do so. Thus a doctor would not operate on someone who has agency until he has explained the proposed procedure and has gained the patient's cooperation (unless the patient is unconscious or not accountable for some other reason).

We can and do honor God in the Restored Gospel only by communicating with anything or anyone just as he instructs us. Thus God instructs his servants as to how to pray, how to speak, how to govern, how to teach, how to administer, how to preach; in all things we are to do his will.

We cannot abide the covenants of the Restored Gospel except we communicate as he, God, directs: to honor and love him and our fellow human beings. Thus our keeping the covenants and obtaining salvation involves using language, the increase in agency which he gives us, in a very special manner.

One of the special manners of communication which God makes available to his faithful servants is the power of the priesthood. The priesthood is the power of God, which faithful servants may use as he directs. To use the priesthood is to speak in the name of God, to command or to instruct using the power of God to bring to pass his eternal purposes. As men increase in righteousness, their priesthood power increases and the necessity of communicating to control or to subdue evil by physical communication is lessened, as when Enoch set at defiance the armies of the enemies of Zion by using his priesthood power. By speaking, the gods created the heavens and the earth. By speaking, the mind and will of God are brought to pass by one who has learned to abide the mind and will of God by obedience to every word that proceedeth forth from his mouth.

4. Language, the tool which makes us fully human, is so powerful that the experience of using it thrust us beyond a human being to become a devil or an eternal servant of Jesus Christ.

It is language which makes us fully conscious of good and evil and which enables us to understand clearly Good and Evil. Thus men have become as the gods, knowing good and evil. Knowing good and evil, men must choose between good
and evil in all things. That choosing has eternal consequences, one of which is the fact that human choices are either for Good or for Evil in all we do. Thus in all things man gives allegiance to God, or to Satan (who is the author and proprietor of Evil).

As a man chooses the way of Good and of God, he becomes godly and a candidate for glory. Eventually everyone except the sons of perdition will choose the Good and God, and will inherit glory. Some will make that choice late, and will be inheritors of a celestial glory. Others will choose earlier, and will inherit a terrestrial glory. Some choose Good and God when they first have the opportunity, and thus qualify for the celestial glory, the presence of the Father and the Son. But all who choose Good are servants of Jesus Christ, doing his will and furthering the cause of Good in the universe, of their own free will and choice, to all eternity.

Those who first know the way of Good and God, accept it, try it, taste of the powers it brings — and then renounce Good and God, are the sons of perdition. Through language they come to understand the spirit and manner of God in pursuit of Good, then they use language to lie, to deceive, to curse, to fight against the Good. Thus if they go down to their deaths in such a condition, they are past the possibility of repentance and thus must remain in the state they have chosen to all eternity, servants to Satan, whom they have chosen over God.

Thus language is the power which makes us fully human, but is so powerful that we cannot remain in this human condition. The power of language is so great in giving us knowledge and opportunity and in enabling us to act for Good or for Evil, that we are thrust beyond being human beings to become immortal beings, persons who espouse and promote Good or Evil, according to their own choice, for all eternity.

Conclusion

Thus language is the greatest power and instrumentality which human beings possess. It is the power which opens the whole expanse of eternity to each person, then closes one's own choices upon one alternative for that eternity. It is difficult to overestimate the importance and place of language in the human scheme. We are judged by what we do. But only through language can we do the greatest Good or the greatest Evil.