

OUR COMMUNICATION LANGUAGE IS NOT A LOST LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

THE ARTICLE ADDRESSES THE MULTIPLICITY OF LANGUAGES FROM SEVERAL PERSPECTIVES SUCH AS COMPREHENSION AND COMMUNICATION. THE PRETEXT OF THE STUDY IS THE BIBLE MYTH ON THE BABEL TOUR AND THE MIXING OF THE LANGUAGES, BUT ALSO OTHER MYTHS RELATED TO LANGUAGES, AND THE PURPOSE IS THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE RELIGIOUS AND MYSTICAL LANGUAGE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF HEIDEGGER AND STRUCTURALISM.

KEY WORDS: BABEL, LANGUAGE, IDIOM, MYTH, STRUCTURE, REVELATION.

Motto: „Now the whole world had one language and a common speech.”. (Genesis, 11,1)

We know the legend of the Babel tower in which people wanted to build a tower up to the sky. God himself envious of this work came down among them and mixed their languages to make them unable to understand and not build the tower. What did God envy? The planned dimensions of the work or the harmony between people achieved through language? The answer, unreachable itself, is not our interest anymore. What is obvious is that from one language, of the Shem[1] tribe, were born thousands of idioms, and in each idiom dozens of languages, even hundreds[2].

Taken into serious, the issue of the monogenesis of the languages and their classification always leads to more pronounced contradictions. Specialists agree that they dispose on documentation not too old on very few languages and that there is a huge desert time in the history of languages that will remain forever a mystery and, moreover, they agree that the current distribution is its result. They consider, however, skeptical the idea of the existence of a single language to have derived all the others. We can be convinced however, that if Latin had disappeared, the common origin of the Romanic languages would have been put under the sign of doubt, as they were able to quickly find a common root of the Latin languages, Greek and of Sanskrit[3] (Indo-European languages) and afterwards to state it was a false track, but nobody is sure of this also. Their hesitation keeps the plausibility of the model of the original language, as well as the myth of its „mixing” or multiplication.

The "Supreme Mystery" of anthropology is the anomaly of language diversity. How can we explain the logic that human beings of the same ethnic origin, living in the same territory, equal climate and ecological conditions, often organized in the same types of communes structures, shared beliefs and kinship systems, speaking completely different languages?[4] The idea of superior or inferior languages, of languages able to survive, perfectly adaptable, and of languages that are not adaptable, on the verge of disappearing at first population riots seems an absurdity and must be rejected from the start, especially because it can not explain how they could have been excluded from the history monuments of linguistic beauty such as Latin, Greek, etc.. and how could have withstood some languages so primitive that their vocabulary seems composed mainly of onomatopoeia and interjections.

This sick pluralism can only be an anomaly. The language, the ultimate tool of communication that reflects the unity and the universality of the human intellectual, the source of human communion, became because of it a seed of disunity. The language in which the deity was summoned, through which the logos of things was revealed, that could raise a tower up to the sky, in which was the truth is now the object of suspicion and seems the best tool with which we can cheat and lie.

Another myth, similar to the first one, says the God does not understand us anymore and does not listen to us anylonger, because we do not (anymore) speak his language. The minimum scientific basis could be represented by some Bible expressions such as: "mene, techel, ufarsin" or "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani" that mean nothing in any language, always being accompanied by their interpretation; The idea is that they are expressed in the original language, before the Babel, that was the language of the God. Therefore, in the communication with God, apart from the fact that our question is translated into the original language, it is badly raised, according to the specifics of each language. Any question requires an answer and all questions get their answers, and yet, until now, the fundamental questions of humanity remained open. The existence of some fundamental philosophical languages does not help because these are not the Language. They, at best, have only complicated things. The real questions cannot be asked than in that Language and answers cannot be given than in that Language[5]. The words of the original language have the force of the answers, whereas those of the fallen or derived languages[6], of the people are nothing but pure interrogation.

„Our language - writes G. Steiner – is interposed between perception and reality as a dusty window or a distorted mirror. The language of paradise was as a perfect language: the light of a total understanding passes through it. Thus, the Babel was a second fall of man, in some ways just as sad as the first. Adam was banished of the garden, people were now cast out from the only family of the man, the language” [7].(my translation)

The same language before the Babel, was also sought by Frederick the Great of Prussia, of whom it is said to have had the unfortunate idea to isolate the two children of any auditory stimulus that could have been materialized in language, hoping that from their chests would burst the words of the original language. Yet all the royal care children died in a few years “absorbed into an abyss of silence”(Pleșu). The King was not able to find a word of the paradise language, but found, with a price that only kings can pay, the truth that language is not an appendage of the human condition, "an auxiliary piece of its biological and social economy: the language is, for the man, a reality of the same rank as food and air, it is nutritious and, therefore, vital. Talking does is not a simple "communication" exercise - as merely believe an important part of modern linguistics.

Talking is poisoning or vitaminizing your interlocutor. The word is not a derivative phenomenon of life and intelligence: it is, rather, the source of both, their maintenance rhythm in short their breath. To be alive and to have the gift of talking are two simultaneous effects of the same cause.”[8] (my translation)

The link between the being and the language[9] is not a pure and an ingenious philosophical speculation. In the help of Heidegger who wrote „The language is the shelter (home) of the being, and in its shelter lives the man” comes, to the surprise of all the world the Chinese language and the Aramaic version of the "Genesis". In Chinese the word ming that means life, destiny, appoints simulataneously the name (vocal or graphic). In the Aramaic version of the Genesis, God blows over the man created of clay not to make him a living spirit (as the Greek version says), but a „talking spirit” – which would be the same thing[10].

Returning to Babel, for Derrida history illustrates in some ways the issue of translation, but it also raises issues regarding the common or proper name. First, the multiplying of languages leads to the problem of the impossibility of a total translation. The dispersion of languages on earth is exactly their sentenced to confusion (Babylon) and to the need to be translated between them - without ever reaching a perfect translation, which would impose a single language. We are thus condemned to live in a continuous translation work that is neither "total incomprehensible" nor "untranslatable pure", but also can not become understanding. Everything is located between confusion and understanding, without understanding or confusion to be given to us absolutely. (If people can not communicate perfectly with themselves, then how could they communicate and how could they understand God?). This is the curse of our fathers!

Another issue raised by J. Derrida, related to the one of the translation, is the one of the proper and common name. The proper name seems to be foreign to the language economy. It's still not absolutely untranslatable, but it is more difficult to translate than the common name. It is understood in a given language and its transmission to another language creates confusion because of the similarity and the proximity to other names from the language that receives it (for example Babel is simmilar from a phonic point of view to the English "Babble" or to the French „Babil" - "chatter", moreover there are some semantic similarities). What happens is inevitable, to avoid the lack of precision, is the translation of the proper name through a common one (Babel=confusion). This is even more serious if we think about the translation of the name of God through a common name[11],which would mean the depersonalisation of God and, in general, of the proper name.

The myth of an unique language can be easily transformed into the idea of a „fixed innate scheme(Chomsky) of the language. The fixed scheme sends to the original language or, at least, to an extremely general structure of the language: "If it is true that the grammars of the natural languages are not only complex and abstract, but also very limited in their variety, especially at the most abstract level, it is necessary to bring again to discussion the issue of knowing wether they are really the product of culture, as it is generally believed. It might be as well possible for a grammar to be acquired by the simple differentiation of a fixed innate scheme, not by the progressive acquisition of data, sequences and new associations...and the little we know about the structure of language, in general, would lead to the belief that the rationalist hypothesis is more likely to prove fundamentally correct.”[12] (Chomsky).

The linguistic structures have not remained the same as in the time of Babel, of that „illo tempore”, but have multiplied and evolved through various processes of internal

balance and self regulation. This opens the interpretation that the original language was imperfect and required evolution. On the other hand, through this evolution that was accomplished by processes of internal balance and self regulation, it could be understood the adaptation of the symbolic, intimate and irrational language (therefore incommunicable) to the pattern of a language made to express communication. The one who talks needs to communicate and create a general common template of the thought who expressed his feeling, because the persons who listens cannot translate the individual symbolism of the person who talks into a symbolism of the same kind or, even in the act of speaking-listening.

Therefore both will end in reducing their unconscious symbolism to a socialising and conscious language with which they can operate (ending, in fact, in the involution of their thinking and living). This latter language, more general and abstract, gives the possibility of its analysis, of the detachment of a general structure and so the possibility of the changing of elements without changing the structure. In short, the linguistical structure is archetipal (before the Babel), and the evolution of languages (through which symbols are expressed) is related to the individual ontogenesis of peoples (if we consider them subjects creators of languages). The original language needs to be understood as an universal language as it used to be (once!), understood music, or as a hieroglyphic language, composed of sound hieroglyphs as suggestive as the graphic ones and universally accessible, if this can be imagined. To speak would then mean to compose music or to paint hieroglyphic images, it would mean to be a language creator in the act of speaking and listening.

Religious language. Mystical language

Talking about God is not the same as talking to God.

To speak of God is only possible after a preliminary talk to God.

Talking to God is to be in God, which means you are revealing God.

Language is communication, but the word of God is not the communication of speech with God, of revelation, only with its certification and indication. Holy books attest revelation, they do not transmit it and they are not the very revelation. The revelation is incommunicable, so we can not talk about it. Theology however, touches this topic. Herein lies the imposture of any theological language. [13].

The religious language is different from the language of classical logic and is not in agreement to it. The sentences of this language cannot be verified by the empirical positivism. This verifiability refers to universally valid acts of perception, with empirical sense; the religious experience is not universal available. Mystics are perfectly satisfied with their experience, and if everyone could share their enlightenment sensation, the discussion would be pointless in terms of empirical verifiability. The position of the non religious man lies within the Aristotelian logic: to think is to think logically. Data about God cannot be passed through the filter of logic. If we do that, the following reasoning would be valid: "If God is all-powerful, then he can create a boulder that he can not raise up!" etc.

The atheist says he cannot believe in God because there is no evidence, that is a demonstration of the existence of logic. However, the fact that someone demonstrates that Christ existed, from the historical point of view does not multiply the number of believers. It turns out that religious language is not connected at all to logic and is language. Thus, in the absence understanding, there are often attacks against religious and mystical language or religion itself. On the other hand the mystical language is lacking in coherence. However, it expressed some thoughts. We could say that the thought itself is lacking in

coherence? that, in fact, it's not a thought? We may be sure that the one who thinks about God in a religious sense, has exactly the same thought that he expresses, or his mind is different from what he says, as long as he has no expressions and words with which to describe the reality that he reflects? In other words, the reality about which he thinks is neither descriptive nor conceptual, mathematical or formal and he has no expressions or words to show it to us in order to make us understand it and accept it without reservation? Is the Babel language the only language in which you might talk about God or to God? Or is faith the language of God?[14] It would be ideal that any term used to be given together with its technique of use. It should say: "this term has this purpose and should be used in these circumstances. But what could the Mystic or the religious man say about his terms? Could he refer to them precisely? Could there be a mystic speech in terms of compliance with the principle of identity and contradiction? Would religion not become a domain of silence?

However, the revelation exists and it has its language, which attests it, not communicates it, but the tendency of the revelation language as of any language is communication. Example: "Supernatural trinity, super-divine and super-good, which stands at the head of the Christian Theosophy, head us towards the highest peak, the super-unknown and super-bright of the mystical prophecies, where, immersed in the darkness, are the simple, absolute and immutable mysteries of theology, super-shining in the most over-bright way in the deepest darkness, and overly filling the poor minds with brightness about what is entirely impossible to achieve and see" [15]. At first glance the text seems to be hermetic and filled with metaphors, but this is only an impression.

The metaphor is a name that we give to the object of our knowledge, a proper name that has the same strength as a concept; But God can no longer be treated with names or concepts, it is impossible to define. There is a need to upgrade the language, to discover new values. A language of revelation should refer to the being or God in the process of His discovery, and it (language) can be inspired only by God.

"If man wants to discover the being, he must first learn to accept a world without names. He must become aware of both the attraction towards the public space and the lack of vigor of the private existence. Man must, before speaking, listen to the voice of the being again, with the risk that this demanding voice has little to say. Only this way, man will find the shelter to live in the truth of the being." [16]

In one of Pascal's manuscripts it was found a curious note which was even dated "Fire! Fire! Fire! God of saints, not of philosophers!" which critics were a little reluctant to include it among their duties (for good reason), especially as it did not seem a philosophical or psychological text. As expected, the interpretation came from theologians. The first issue they approached was the date. Why did Pascal consider the text so important in his life that he tried not to forget it? Was he dating a religious revelation which he had and had to be remembered somehow? If it was a revelation what did Pascal see; what was it? If his intention was to note it, we are inclined to believe that it had a minimum of content that could be communicated: Fire! Did Pascal "see" the fire "hear" fire, "think" about (concept) fire, "feel" fire burning, "dream" fire? Neither of the possibilities seems plausible, which means that the language of revelation that he tried to experience, without managing to transmit us something, does not translate perfectly into any language of the senses mentioned before, although we are sure that, in a very metaphorical manner he saw, felt, heard, thought and dreamed of fire. The language of revelation would embrace all the others (even the mathematical language) but we cannot

specify to what extent. It is the closest to the poetic language, to art, maybe it's the language before the Babel, the language of God or of the being.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Cf. J. Bennington, *La philosophie de J. Derrida: "Bavel" or „Babel”* in Jewish is similar to/means "confusion", and the name of **the tribe** Shem means even "name", related to the fact that by the raising of the tower, the Shem tribe wanted to make a (re) name and its language to be imposed everywhere. Derrida's interpretation is that against the tribe's wish to impose its name, God imposed confusion and, thereby, the necessity and impossibility of translation.
- [2]. The multiplicity of languages is seen by Lacan as a consequence of the fact that "word is not a sign, but a significance. When you say the word "curtain" for example, it is not only a convention indicating the use of an object that can be diversified a thousand ways as it is perceived by the worker, the merchant, the painter or by Gestalt psychologist as labor exchange value, physiognomy colored or spatial structure. .. It is, finally, an image of the meaning of the sense that, should be discovered to be revealed " - cf. J. Lacan , *Scrieri*, Seuil, Paris, 1966.
- [3]. The basis of this discovery was related to the similar grammar structure of these languages, unlike the grammar of the Semitic d.e., which is radically different, and in the similarity of some words: devah (India), deevo (Iran), dios (Grecia), deus (Latina) who suggested the idea of day light, bright sky etc. This fact also created similarities among religions.
- [4]. Cf. G. Steiner, *După Babel. Aspecte ale limbii și traducerii*, Univers, București, 1983, cap. II (Limba și gnoză).
- [5]. The fact that on different parts of the planet developed different forms of philosophical thinking is an argument for this issue. The escape, in the metaphor of the ones „inspired”(poets, mystics) is a manner to avoid the fallen language, choosing to use mental images instead of concepts.
- [6]. Platon, Cratylos
- [7]. G. Steiner, *op. cit.*, pp. 88-89
- [8]. A. Pleșu, *Limba păsărilor*, București, Humanitas, 1994, pp. 10-11;
- [9]. Cf. și Heidegger, *Scrisoare despre umanism* in *Repere pe drumul gândirii*, Ed. Politica, 1988, p.343: "The language is the language of the being, as clouds are the clouds of the sky" și p. 297: "The language is the shelter of the being".
- [10]. Although modern or classical languages do not preserve this homonymy, we must not forget Parmenides and Hegel's conclusions according to which to be is the same with to think Of course, by thinking people understand expressed thought, said.
- [11]. Cf. Dionisie Areopagitul, *Despre numele divine*, Ed. Institutul European, Iași, 1993, to name God is the same as to know or see (at least with the mind's eyes). But God can not be seen because who sees it dies, so he does not see. Therefore to be seen, God needs names derived according to his deeds: Demiurge, Heavenly Father, Savior, Lord of lords etc. or by attributes which we assume that he has: Almighty, Omnipresent, Finisher, Good etc.