

La langue n'existe qu'en vertu de la société,
de même que les sociétés humaines ne sauraient
exister sans langage."

-INTRODUCTION A L'ETUDE COMPARATIVE
DES LANGUES INDO-EUROPEENNES
(Meillet 1964:18)

The writer, for one, is strongly of the opinion
that the feeling entertained by so many that
they can think, or even reason, without language
is an illusion.

-LANGUAGE
(Sapir 1949:15)

31. LANGUAGE AND ZOOSEMIOTICS

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INTRODUCTION:

This topic is near and dear to my heart, having earned a doctorate in linguistics many years ago, but over the years, I have become more impressed with the complexity of language than I was then. The more I learn, the more I know that I have more to learn than I know I know now. (ha) Language is tightly bound up with logic, and together they stand just below free agency in the list of my cardinal characteristics of humans (at least for those on this earth).

Just what is language? The humorous response is that "It is the worst form of communication known to man!" That's painfully true. Sapir stated it differently. He said that language is inherently sloppy. It is all of those, but it is probably the dominant form of communication we humans use, the other forms of communication being body language, scent, possessions, etc. I say "probably" because there is research that suggests that 60% or so of the information^[1] communicated between individuals talking face-to-face results from non-verbal signals.

Why is it so sloppy? This question is obviously one that a secular linguist would get a good laugh out of if it were framed in the religious context it is being put forth here. Spirits and their properties are irrelevant to them. However, I believe - please pardon the naivete of this statement- that the only way to get at the true answer of this question is to couch it in this framework where a mortal body and its parts are viewed in terms of its relationship to the spirit it houses.

So what are the components of this story that fit together to suggest the proper direction to look for an answer? First, as noted, there are the spirit and the mortal body. Second, there are the conditions of mortality that require the transfer of information between sentient beings. And third, there are the properties of the two bodies combined.

SPIRIT COMMUNICATION:

The spirit is endowed with powers beyond our poor abilities to even guess at. Communication, the transfer of information between spirits, occurs, though the medium is unknown to us. Whether it is through some sort of emanation of the spirit matter or is accomplished through the use of some part of a "spirit" electromagnetic spectrum, or some other mechanism, really doesn't matter for this discussion. The transfer of information apparently occurs quickly, and with the use of "words" if LIFE AFTER LIFE is correct (which I believe it is in general outlines). Spirits somehow transmit information through some sort of mental telepathy.

¹At this point one become embroiled in what "information" is, and what "communication" means and what the purposes and advantages and disadvantages are of the various communication methodologies.

What's interesting about it is that while concepts or ideas or information is easily received and transmitted, the spirits must nonetheless be able to keep their inner "thoughts" secure from the snooping of other spirits. This means that communication is not something that represents a constant process such as the emission of radiation from a warm body would be.

The spirit can select the time (I'll continue to use that construct though it is not precise enough for the non-mortal worlds) when it will initiate communication. And the spirit can apparently select the specific information that it is going to transmit. I also assume that it can focus that signal in a particular direction. And I assume that it can also control the amplitude (loudness) of that signal so that it does not always radiate out to the same distance from its location. It can whisper or shout, depending on where the recipients are located in relationship to it. And the control mechanisms for these properties are beyond our comprehension. They may actually be exceedingly simple within the framework of the reality in which they occur, but they are not discoverable by us.

COMMUNICATION BREAK:

So when a spirit is shrouded^[2] in a mortal body, it must have these incredible powers or properties truncated in some manner. It may be that this veiling requires considerable power from the priesthood, but it may also be true that the truncation really is not a specific process that lops off specific properties of the spirit. In this case, the truncation is accomplished by the manner in which the mortal transducer is inhibited and impaired, impaired in contrast to the spirit. When the spirit brain is inserted into the mortal cranium and attached to the mortal brain, probably only at the cerebellar level rather than in the lower reptilian levels^[3], only a few of the less sophisticated properties of the spirit are "patched" into the mortal brain. The remaining ones are simply denied expression, although they still exist.

A rough analogy to illustrate something of how this veiling generally works is our clothing. When we put on clothing, analogous to putting a mortal body over a spirit, the parts of our body which are covered thereby are no longer visible to the rest of the world. And if we put layers of clothing on, i.e. underwear, shirt, sweater and coat, even the underlayers of clothing are

² Notice this word - it denotes a covering for a dead body. Apt metaphor for what the mortal body represents for the immortal spirit.

³ You read a great deal about this business above in chapter 24. BRAIN ANATOMY AND PHYSIOLOGY. Other relevant material appears in chapter 15. CONSCIOUSNESS - COGITO, ERGO SUM.

invisible.[⁴] Those features are invisible, but they remain part of the body nonetheless. That's how the spirit veiling occurs: priesthood power conjoins the two bodies and only those properties that are connected up will function.

Among the spirit functions that are hooked up is the one that allows communication. But even that connection is incomplete. The connection is not made with all of the resources available to and used by the spirit. Another analogy are the large cables used by phone companies to connect telephones. Such a cable can have more than a thousand pairs of wires. But only those pairs that are connected between a phone in a home or business, and the central phone operation, will function. The other pairs are still there, but they are essentially invisible to the end user and the central switching operation. This is comparable to the connection made between the mortal brain and the spirit brain: the spirit brain has thousands of pairs of wires that aren't connected to the mortal brain. They are real, they are 'present' to the spirit, but are invisible to the mortal brain. This means that only a few of the communication circuits are open so the process of communication between spirit and mortal brain is severely restricted. But that network is where mortal language enters into the discussion.

SPEECH ORGANS:

The communication medium that our bodies employ during mortality is the one termed language and it cleverly takes advantage, for speech production, of various features of our body that really have other primary functions. Ignoring the brain for a moment, the body parts that participate in speech production are:

**nasal cavity,
sinuses,
lips
oral cavity,
tongue,
uvula,
palates,
epiglottis,
larynx (especially the vocal bands and the intrinsic
musculature required to manipulate the arytenoids),
trachea,
lungs,
ribs,
external and internal intercostals,
ribs
diaphragm and
abdominal muscles.**

⁴ However, bulges through a shirt can suggest something about the nature of the terrain being covered. We imagine that there is also comarable information about our spirits that can be gleaned from the 'bulges' of behaviors and capacities that shine through our mortal envelope.

Of these structures, there is not one that doesn't have another major function besides speech production, so the good Lord was being incredibly efficient -Parsimony Principle again- by packing so many features and functions together to accomplish all of the things that had to be done. Whether the bodies of mortals in other worlds are like ours is not known, but it is an interesting thought.

When speaking of mortal language, the question is asked: which is the original language, meaning the language of Adam? That's not an unreasonable question to ask, actually, from the point of view that Adam and Eve were the first people on earth, and they apparently were able to communicate with each other. This means that they had language, so the question, which language is Adam's is not too outrageous. The response so far is that there is no way to tell what language is Adam's, but it certainly isn't any living language today. Glottochronology has pushed the proto-languages, meaning 'ancestral' languages, further and further back in time, proto-Hittite and proto- (get the name), etc. being some of the oldest, totally un-historical languages so far deduced from the evidence of comparative linguistics.^[5]

GENETIC LANGUAGE CODE:

Let's look at the brain again in a general way to get some ideas about language. Some of the stray facts that fit were first drawn together admirably in 1973 by Eric Lenneberg in his BIOLOGICAL FOUNDATION OF LANGUAGE. Among the facts he pulled together are things like the following:

Language acquisition proceeds in a linearly ordered sequence of a specific number of stages for all members of the specie.

This orderly sequence of steps is also apparently programmed to unfold at essentially the same rate, with the process terminating around the age of 12.

Language acquisition, while being limited to varying degrees by native intelligence and mental impairments, is nonetheless an independent ability that persists and develops in spite of surprisingly severe neurological handicaps otherwise.

⁵ Some rather startling claims are made today regarding the origin of languages. For example, Ascarrunz, in his GRAMMATICA DE LA LENGUA AYMARA, states:

"El escritor boliviano, D. Emeterio Villamil de Rada, en su notable libro "La Lengua de Adan", propugna, de manera sugerente, la premisa: 'El aymara es lengua primitiva de la humanidad y de ella se derivan las demas.'" (p.14)

We frankly find this comment as humorous as it is unbelievable. It represents a type of ethnocentrism that isn't really rare, unfortunately.

For example, babies born without hearing will go through the same initial babbling and cooing stages a hearing child will go through, though the next stages that require the reception of audible cues for language development to progress are terminated fairly abruptly. All unimpaired kids go through a "naming explosion" between the ages of 2 and 4 during which time they painlessly and miraculously learn around 2,000 new words. Syntax develops uniformly, in a predictable sequence and at the same ages. English-speaking kids can discriminate between active and passive sentences at 3 years, then slowly develop a "theory" that says that the first noun in the sentence is the "actor" -which is not a true generalization though it is an admirable conclusion to arrive at with only intuition guiding the theory construction process- after which, around the age of five or so, they finally sort out the two types and can tell where the actor really is. All (normal) English-speaking kids do this at the same age, which is persuasive evidence for the inherited nature of the language learning skill. There are other compelling evidences to marshal here, such as the varying effect of types of aphasia which differ according to the age at which aphasia is acquired, but these examples suffice to show that language acquisition must be a genetically encoded feature of mortal brains.^[6]

The fact that it is encoded in the neurological network of the brain allowed the school of generative grammar to flourish as it did. Its basic focus was to attempt to develop a black box that would produce correct utterances, which would shed light on what must actually be contained in the highly abstract language center of the brain.^[7] Linguists were polyglots out of necessity, but that was incidental to their objective to examine the abstract neurological language network. Here it is also assumed that language is genetically encoded for transmission across generations, and that code was built in by the Lord specifically to provide mortals with a medium that they could use to think and communicate in.

This medium had to fit the mortal body but it also had to allow communication with the spirit. So language is built to allow us to shock each others' tympani, but more importantly, it is designed to allow the fragile substance of our brains to communicate with the spirit brain. Language is probably rather like a pidgin or creole when compared to pure spirit communication, but it must nonetheless conform in general principle with spirit communication needs, otherwise mortal language would not work. It is likely that the features of the logic of language are expressions of aspects of the spirit communication process.

⁶ I suppose the spiritualist might argue that the SPIRIT is what is learning, that it is the spirit that has the latent ability rather than the mortal brain. If this were the case, then perhaps there is no need for a genetically encoded, abstract language model. However, we find it too far fetched to entertain that concept.

⁷ One of the fascinating features of this approach to language is that transformationalists find ill-formed or ungrammatical utterances to often be more helpful than well formed ones. Mistakes often give startling insight into where a rule exists and how it must be formulated.

To use some of the features of generative grammar, I doubt that phonetics and phonology are aspects of spirit communication. They are required by the fact that mortals are creating disturbances in the flow of air out of the lungs, which disturbances are transmitted through the atmosphere to another mortal who receives that energy through his aural input devices, from whence it is sent to the brain for translation and then it is transmitted to the spirit brain. But all this is required by the limitation of the mortal body, not by the spirit brain. Spirits communicate directly between themselves without speech so these two sub-specialties of linguistics are byproducts of mortal bodies, not spirit communication. In a similar manner, morphology and morphophonemics are probably characteristics of mortal language, not spirit communication.

WHEN I GET THE ENERGY, I'LL ADD ZOOSEMITICS