

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Our examination into the problem of understanding meaning proposes two basic ideas. They are: (1) The Linguisticity of understanding meaning, and (2) The historicity of language and linguistic understanding. This study can be conceived as an attempt to analyse these basic ideas to their logical conclusions

The first idea is a common notion shared by both the representational and anti-representational frameworks of thought we have examined. But the element of historicity has come into proper recognition only in the hermeneutic tradition. The hermeneutic problematic emerges as a result of this recognition.

Our study has attempted to show how the very concept of 'linguisticity' raises the hermeneutic problem by exploring the deeper meaning of that notion. It has been examined, how far linguisticity is responsible for historicity, not only for our understanding of meaning through language but also for our very being. These aspects, though perennial, had never been recognised and examined in the representational tradition, owing to its allegiance to the model of reality and knowledge propagated by the natural sciences. This has led the representational tradition to ignore the multitude of life contexts where language is being used and consequently the very life and dynamism of language.

The relationship between linguisticity and historicity, therefore, is an important aspect examined in this study. This examination has ultimately led us to see how man's very being is

formed out of his linguistic interactions in various historical contexts. This examination, in turn, leads us to note two important implications of man's peculiar relationship with language:

- 1) The ontological significance of language.
- 2) The existence of a 'linguistic horizon' that determines the norms of our actions and cognitive endeavours.

The second one actually follows from the first. To recognise the ontological significance of language is to recognise the fact that man's being is designed and determined by a particular linguistic horizon. He inherits certain prejudices from this horizon, which determine all his endeavours and experiences. The representational model, with its focus on the language-world isomorphic relationship, fails to notice the evolution of such an horizon and its determining influence upon us. With this recognition, language comes to be understood as an intersubjective plane, which provides us the space for our movement.

This factor, therefore, asserts the inevitability of interpretation in all our encounters to understand meaning, as our linguistic horizon will be defining our perspectives. This makes the interpreter an active partner in the process of understanding meaning, where he has two roles to perform.

1. The participating role:

He is not a mere observer, but approaches the text always with a set of preconceptions or prejudices. These preconceptions and prejudices will create a background of meaning for him which will make its influential presence in all his experiences.

2. The creative role:

To prevent any arbitrary imposition of his own meaning upon the text, the interpreter has to make himself open to the text's claim to truth. He must also try to assimilate the textual meaning by applying it to his situation. Hence, openness and application together constitute the creative role of the interpreter.

An analysis of this creative role leads us to recognise the fact that the original phenomenon of language is in dialogue. Such a conclusion can be arrived at from two ways:

1. From the very outset, language is a social phenomena. The very legitimacy of language requires the 'other' to be taken as a partner. Even in the most primitive forms of language use, and in the sphere of day-to-day life situations of linguistic practices the other is presupposed. The real purpose of language, therefore, lies in the formation of a "We", surpassing the individuality of the partners. This is possible only in a dialogue.
- 2 In his creative encounter with the text, the interpreter should exhibit openness towards it. Such an openness consists in the interpreter admitting his ignorance and allowing the text to say something to him. This *is* to approach the text as an answer to a question. Here the text's legitimacy as an answer is already presupposed. At the same time, the text is not viewed as 'the answer' but as a possible answer to the question. This will ultimately do away with the solidity of the text. And again, to know the question to which the text is an answer is to achieve the horizon of the question. But simultaneously with this, the interpreter has to view the text as posing him a question and thereby challenging his

opinions. The openness of the interpreter consists in conceiving the text posing him a question. This is to prepare oneself to get challenged by the text. Such a process of questioning and getting questioned constitutes the structure of any dialogic encounter.

Any discussion bears fruit only when a common language is formed. Meaning to be understood is located in this language, which is the intersubjective plane of experience, Gadamer calls this process of forming a new inter-subjective common language, "fusion of horizons". The respective horizons of the text and the interpreter in this context appear not as fixed solid structures but as fluid structures which bear within them the possibility of constant expansion and enrichment. New dimensions of meaning always emerge as possibilities. As Gadamer says, it is progress of events that brings out new aspects of meaning in historical material. (*Truth and Method*)

The traditional epistemological schema of subject-object dichotomy appears as inadequate here. With the recognition of historicity the concept of reality that is relevant in the epistemological framework gets deconstructed. The picture of an objective reality, which the epistemological tradition assumes as remaining in the background of all enquiry, no more appears as legible here. The concept of life-world proclaims the primary importance of concrete human life and the 'givenness' in that life. Even the abstractions of natural science should have their roots in such a concrete life, asserts Husserl. An alienation from this concrete life-world puts the sciences in a crisis, he adds. Such a life-world constitutes the ultimate reality here, and it is this life-world that lies in the background of all our endeavours.

The subject of experience also undergoes tremendous reformulation. Instead of a detached observer, here there is the concrete human being, interacting with reality with his inherited prejudices. His relationship with reality cannot but be an interactive participation, because he himself is a party contributing to the very creation of that reality..

The concept of interaction, which has its culmination in the dialogic encounter, completely deconstructs the concept of understanding meaning propounded by the representationalists. Language is no more a medium which conveys objective meanings, but is an intersubjective plane where different dimensions of meanings engage in dialogic interaction and get asserted and assimilated in particular ways. Along with the picture of language and the mode of linguistic understanding, the concept of objectivity also has undergone change. With the interpreter becoming a participant in the process of meaning cognition - as he himself is a partner in the dialogue from where meaning evolves - the representational ideal of objective understanding will no more hold good.

Yet, the dialogic model does not suggest a subjectivist or relativist result. The focus on linguistic horizon definitely saves the interpreter from getting locked in his subjective world. Linguistic horizon is a common property which the interpreter owns with a group or community. Again, each horizon has the capacity to be in interaction with other horizons and to form common linguistic horizons. This process is explained in the formation of a common language in the process of dialogic interaction. This newly evolving language is the new inter-subjective plane for interaction between the different participants. Identifying the real phenomenon of language in dialogue, therefore, amounts to what Richard Bernstein calls in his book, *Beyond*

Objectivism and Relativism, Science, Hermeneutics and Praxis, going beyond objectivism and relativism, a dichotomy which prevails in philosophy since the Greek age.

The limits imposed by linguistic horizons do not make us stand helpless in achieving our cognitive goals. They are, rather, not limits in the actual sense, but are conditions that define our very being, not in the light of impossible tasks, but in view of positive possibilities. These possibilities find their realisation in dialogue.