WORDS WITHOUT THINGS: TOWARD A SOCIAL PHENOMENOLOGY OF LANGUAGE

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THAT the nature of language and meaning have long been of concern to speech-communication scholars is in no need of documentation. Teachers and researchers have with varying degrees of awareness carried their particular concepts of the relation between language and meaning, and words and things into arguments over truth, into experiments, and into the classroom. Linguistic meaning has been measured, variables influencing good transmission have been isolated, and more than one student has been taught that he had better control his language before it controls him. Suffice it to say that assumptions and theories about language influence teaching and research in speech communication.

John Stewart recently suggested the importance of investigating views of language and described the predominate theories of meaning in speech communication literature.1 Stewart demonstrated in an extensive review of literature that nearly all speech scholars have based their work on three such theories: (1) referential—words refer to things; (2) ideational—words call up concepts; and (3) behavioral—symbols elicit behavioral responses. Each of these theories of meaning supports an essentially representational, derivative view of language since each assumes that the function of linguistic entities is to "represent other things, and that these other things figure prominently in what the entities mean."2 Stewart suggested as an alternative to these "derivative" views of language, the perspective of ordinary language philosophy.

While ordinary language philosophers certainly offer valuable insight, their view of language also has a derived nature. In their view, the natural ambiguity of words which allows novel implications to be seen, should be reduced so that precise expression can be made. Words as conventional objects, then, are studied and controlled by independently existing minds for the sake of doing things with words and communicating precisely. Language is thus seen simply as a tool, perhaps now a good clean tool, but a tool nonetheless. Language is secondary and derivative in regard to a proper preordained communicative function.3

While "derivative" views have led to many useful insights, a more direct language experience is present prior to any objectification which makes possible the derivative considerations. An investiga-

2 Stewart, p. 126. See Stewart's essay for further analysis of these derivative views and for demonstration of their pervasiveness.
3 Though they make language into an object—a rule-governed system of signs—the ordinary language philosophers do share several basic positions with the more phenomenological perspective to be advanced in the present essay. Two recent books in particular investigate the similarities. W. Mays and S. C. Brown, eds., Linguistic Analysis and Phenomenology (Leipzig: Bucknell Univ. Press, 1969); and K. O. Apel, Analytic Philosophy of Language and the Geisteswissenschaften (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel, 1967).

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tion of this more direct foundational experience of language may currently be necessary since the derivative, representational, functional views seem unnecessarily limited and have undesirable ramifications.

First of all, most representational views contain an implicit, alienated separation among experience, thought, and expression. Language as an object out there is simply assigned to independently existing objectified mental and physical states. With this objectification and representation of experience, communication and control become inherently connected. Even the self becomes an object to be controlled, and alienated from itself. Furthermore, many representational views grant language, as a code, only the ability to order and transmit that which is already possessed by both speaker and listener. Words represent—that is, they re-present. These views seem inadequate to describe the formative human experiences of coming to see a thing in a new way or our understanding of the dissimilar experiences of another made available in language. Finally, derived views do not demonstrate how words presented later in an utterance or speech cognitively specify or shape the meaning of former words.

Clearly, while viewing language as representational or as a carrier may be fine and necessary for making normative statements for the finding and reporting of abstracted, static "scientific fact," these views do not seem adequate as modes of understanding for apprehending language as it produces and is produced in human action. To say that language must be objectified and objectifying to keep the record straight in science is not to say that this is the way language is or should be experienced in everyday use. In fact, the efforts of scientists and semanticists to control language—to keep it from having a life of its own—seem to exemplify the notion that ordinary language operates in ways quite unlike the scientific ideal. The first theory of language should explore the workings of natural language rather than impose normative principles of use from above.

Various European phenomenologists have worked at some length to describe the basic ongoing experience of language. Fundamentally, they have maintained that language is not simply a tool used to share experience but is intrinsic to and involved in developing the possibilities for experience. This position does not deny the representational views but investigates their constitution and suggests they are derivative inasmuch as they are made possible by the sedimentation of primary language experience.

Toward a Phenomenological Perspective

To investigate this primary level of direct language experience, abstraction—separating oneself from what is immediately given—must be avoided. The phenomenologists consider the most "concrete" in consciousness to be not empirical data transcendent to the perceiver, but flowing Gestalt experience. Inquiry must be founded on this spontaneous level of experience.

The derivative views of linguistic traditionalism tend toward abstractionism. Words are treated as if they are arbitrary and experienced as separate from what they represent. This separation in traditional investigations of language is an abstraction from the primary experiential operation of language. An inno-

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4 It would not be out of line to suggest that the self alienation experienced by many in current society may have been in part created by the separation of man from his most important product, his linguistic and symbolic acts. This separation is carried not only in derivative scientific discussions of language but is implied in commonsense everyday language itself.
cent use of reflective abstraction, asking what a word means, denies access to the primary given realm of our language experience. To use J. L. Austin’s celebrated example to an end slightly different from his own: the question, “What is a rat?” is a considerably different question from “What is the meaning of the word ‘rat’?” The former question would pose no particular problem for the man on the street, while the latter could only be answered as a particular mental concept—nothing resembling the experiential reality of ongoing discourse. While the former question reveals the primary experience of language as transparent, spontaneous, and exhausting itself in making apparent what is being said, the latter shows language as representational, a derivative mode of experience calling attention to itself. Looking closely at the two questions, the first is sufficient and in itself reveals the nature of language as experienced, i.e., language as a non-object. The second expression is reflexive and abstracted from primary experiences, i.e., language becomes an object. Nearly all semantic studies of language, wittingly or unwittingly, end up considering the second type of question and assume that this research reveals something about primary language experience. While words once reflected upon—collected as a residue of speaking—may seem to refer to tangible entities or mental concepts, the abstraction which results from this reflection covers or hides languages’ primary nature. Primary language experience shows itself only in operation. Thus language experience can be explained only by exemplification and not by systematic delineation. Clearly, to understand the primary nature of language in a statement such as “What is a rat?” abstraction and ob-
jectification must be avoided. An adequate description must be pre-predicative; more suggestive than definitive.

Phenomenology was designed to produce rigorous investigations of pre-objective, pre-predicative experience. It may be helpful now to touch the development of a constitutive view of language in terms of the basic principles of phenomenology, since speech-communication researchers may not be familiar with them.

(I) Phenomenology has demonstrated that knowledge is by necessity conscious knowledge: all that is known is held in or available to consciousness. The empirical environment is not, nor can it be, presuppositionlessly grasped or experienced as simple sense impression. What is known is the direct, conscious experience of a thing, i.e., things with a possible use in one’s ongoing action in a situation. Consciousness, to the phenomenologist, is not a mental psychological construct but rather the very direction, intention, or mode of doing in a world. In a like manner conscious experience, conscious knowledge, is not

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found through introspection but is directly given in "movement." What makes possible the consideration of empirical objects and bestows the mark of objective reality on the world as experienced is that the interpretive activities, the underlying modalities of consciousness, are hidden in the making present of possibilities for action. These interpretive activities, however, are implicated in human knowledge and understanding. Thus, all knowledge is based on worldly interpretive modalities of consciousness to which no attention is paid. Even the positing of sensory or unconscious processes is a conscious activity, a meaningful experience of consciousness.

The interpretive activities are by no means private or subjective. They happen prior to the subject/object split making possible the very experience that is then abstracted into subjective and objective components. Interpretation—some understanding—is directly given in experience, not added to or inferred from it. Understanding is present before the self is established as an object to do the understanding and even the possibility of establishing the self as object is founded on this understanding. Ideas, fears, fantasies, or conceptions do not subjectively exist in vacuo. They are always of, i.e., reveal something beyond themselves in a particular manner. In this sense they cannot be locked up in the mind but are directly experienced as a dimension of the encountered thing and action in the experiential world.

Thus every conscious activity is already meaningful and composed of two absolutely correlated dimensions: a mere content or object and an intentional character or interpretive activity hidden in what is made apparent. The relationship here is not that of a subjective psychological component added to the raw world, not that of an author to his writings, but closer to the relation between a story and its motif.

(2) Since the world as experienced is always already structured and interpreted, every conscious experience is considered to be preceded by pre-reflective constitution. At this point empiricism and phenomenology diverge. Empiricism accepts the experienced objects of consciousness as the given realities, explaining their existence by theorizing, psychologizing, and abstracting—thus going beyond what is immediately given. Phenomenology accepts the objects of consciousness themselves as contingent and attempts to describe their pre-predicative constitution: the interpretive activities or intentional modalities which allow objects to come into experience as they are being experienced. Martin Heidegger contended that objects and events are never experienced as isolated or in themselves but come given with their function and relevance for ongoing activities. Things are understood directly in terms of their possibilities for our acting in the World. The World is the interpreted, understood things coming into experience in a current project or the movement toward the future. In other words, a prisoner who wishes to es-

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7 Even though many symbolic interactionists, e.g., Mead, have dealt with the self and human experience in similar ways, the symbolic interactionists differ greatly from the contemporary phenomenologists. Notable is the interactionist's subjective or psychical interpretation of values, fantasies, and so forth and inferential conception of role-taking and scientific research.


cape sees a window, a key, a chair, a guard—everything around him—in relation to his escape plans. While if he is content with staying in the prison, a window is a place for fresh air rather than a place to get out. A guard is not an enemy but someone he must learn to get along with. The nature of things, then, is not static or permanent, composed of matter and form, which is found by direct looking but rather emerges from hiddenness as its “serviceability” (action-use possibilities) comes to the fore in the ongoing functioning World. Experience is not isolated but “Worldly.” An object, thus, is essentially ambiguous and without a nature outside of the human encounter and in a specific pre-predicative constitutive activity. The object is constituted—given its specific nature—only in the human encounter. Its very permanence as object comes from already being understood in a specific modality of activity.

(3) All conscious knowledge, conscious content, is already housed in language. Thoughts and perceptions are not coded into words, rather thought and perception come present to consciousness in words. In conscious experience, thought conceived as without language would be considered lacking and non-lasting. We all know the experience of searching for the word which describes a particular experience. While this might suggest that there was thought independent of language, if we search that experience we find otherwise. Prior to language we experience the not-yet completeness of the thought, for how would one describe to himself and understand that wordless thought or even know when he found the right word to express the thought? Merleau-Ponty described the language/thought relation in the following manner: “There is a ‘languagey’ meaning of language which effects the mediation between my as yet unspeaking intention and words, and in such a way that my spoken words surprise me myself and teach me my thought.”10 That which is revealed, understood, and held is in language. We can only know what is supposed beyond language in language itself. Language, however—as it lies on the interpretive side of consciousness—in allowing things and thought to reveal themselves in a particular manner is hidden by and in its own constitutive power.

HEIDEGGER AND GADAMER’S STUDIES ON LANGUAGE

Martin Heidegger and Hans-Georg Gadamer’s very precise and original language studies explicate further the nature of direct language experience. Heidegger, searching for the foundation of being, returned to the Greeks in his philological studies and there found an essential link between language and human experience. He contended that the separation of language from experience as when language is seen as an object, sign, or representing medium is essentially inauthentic and a purely derivative mode of existence. Heidegger instead considered language as constitutive of experience.

Heidegger was highly critical of theories which see language as a tool of communication. He thought logical thinking and conceptual manipulation of objects were secondary and derivative when compared to language in the authentic living context of primary articulation-understanding.

Within Framing, speaking turns into information. It informs itself about itself in order to safeguard its own procedures by information theories. Framing—the nature of modern technology holding sway on all directions—commandeers for its purposes a formalized lan-

guage, the kind of communication which "informs" man uniformly, that is, gives him the form in which he is fitted into the technological-calculative universe, and gradually abandons "natural language." Even when information theory has to admit that formalized language must in the end always refer back to "natural language," in order to put into speech the Saying of the technological inventory by means of nonformalized language, even this situation signifies only a preliminary stage in the current self-interpretation of information theory. For the "natural language" of which one must talk in this context is posited in advance as a not-yet-formalized language that is being set up to be framed in formalization. Formalization, the calculated availability of Saying, is the goal and the norm.\(^{11}\)

Heidegger suggested that formalization, reducing a word to an unambiguous representative, would leave man in a senseless and static world. This language would only allow one to keep clear what is already known rather than allowing any formative experience. In the fallen state as signs, language becomes a veil of transcendent objects rather than an unveiling, revealing, of the "nature of things" in a World.

Heidegger contended that an assertion (where language as "sign" is taken in its extreme form) has a derived character, since it conceals the pre-ideation of constitution and makes things into objects after they have been Worldly experienced in a particular manner. For example, when walking across a room a thing is encountered as an object in the way or something on which to sit, in terms of the future dimension of the activity. In an assertion, I step back (abstract) and say, "That is a 'chair' with such and such characteristics." In an assertion the thing is objectified as a chair and isolated characteristics of the chair are pointed out but that is not what was signified by the thing in the direct experience. While the assertion is a legitimate "scientific" experience or modality, the assertive mode of experience covers up or hides the specific encounter in language which constituted the object in the specific manner encountered and upon which action is based. In the assertive abstraction where words are taken as standing for something, rather than as implied lines of action together constituting the specific manner of encounter, an experienced object, a "Worldly thing," experienced as "in-order-to" falls to an empirical mere "Worldless" thing without an ability to serve a purpose. The objectified thing is then "objective" and stable but useless. The assertive or objectifying mode of experience is derived, abstracted, from the encounter with a thing and as such is a rather narrow field with few implications for action.

Heidegger contended that Worldly things can always be passed to objects, an assertive present once and for all, but in originate language experience, language is transparent and experienced things are contextual and directly meaningful in their relevance for action. The most basic role of language, then, is that of bringing this relevance to light, establishing a World for things, thus opening purpose serving possibilities for things. To call a strange shaped modern piece of furniture a chair is not so much an identification of attributes as a suggestion that one may sit on it. Heidegger maintained that we understand the meaning of things in language by "listening" to the saying power of language—since in language things signify a World with a history (a social place) and thus a future.\(^{12}\) Without language things are not significative. Living is in the flow


of language-things which makes apparent how worldly things are experienced before a subjectivity is posited to ask what the words represent. Heidegger suggested that this was the experience of the Greeks disclosed in the word, logos. Logos originally means to uncover a possibility, bring forth possibility from concealment, to gather a worldly stance. Only later was logos used to refer to discourse, speech, or reason in a purely derivative sense. The nature of word in the early sense is well contained in the following statement by Heidegger.

The word, the name, restores the emerging essent from the immediate, overpowering surge to its being and maintains it in this openness, delimitation, and permanence. Naming does not come afterward, providing an already manifest essent with a designation and a hallmark known as a word; it is the other way around: originally an act of violence that discloses being, the word sinks from this height to become a mere sign, and this sign proceeds to thrust itself before the essent. Pristine speech opens up the being of the essent in the structure of its collectedness. And this opening is collected in a second sense: the word preserves what was originally collected and so administers [verwaltet] the overpowering power. Standing and active in logos, which is ingathering, man is the gatherer.

Language to Heidegger does not confront any man as something arbitrary or invented and added to things. Language is involved in the being, the very nature of revealed self and things in World. Things without words are static entities, language makes things into possibilities of experience. That which is brought to appearance by language, then, is not something humanly possessed but rather World, as an interconnected set of possibilities, coming into existence. Language, thus, does not express man but the appearance of World. Thinking also is not considered as something that man does nor as the manipulation of things known, rather thinking is the revealing language event. Heidegger contended that we do not speak or think a language, rather we speak and think from out of it. Language precedes existence. Authentic speech is possible only when man's speaking conforms to the unfolding language event: when expression so fills us that we are not separate from what we say.

In summarizing Heidegger's position, it is apparent that language is constitutive. Language makes possible the future and past of people and things as it makes present the possibilities of experience. Therefore, words are not objects or representations but a stance or worldly point-of-view. To name a thing is to reveal, illuminate, it in a certain light, in a certain World with particular action possibilities. Naming is not letting a word stand for something but achieving a stance as to how something is understood. Instead of signs Heidegger suggested that "speaking words" could better be seen as hints, gestures, which would "bething" the World. In opposition to the representational view and operational definition in science, Heidegger asked, "How is one to give a name to what he is still searching for? To assign the naming word is, after all, what constitutes finding." To name something is to find it in a particular relevance for all who are co-present, it is not simply letting a word stand for something known. Words do not elicit images and emotions at the very root, though they may also do this; rather, languaging is an ongoing aspect of becoming aware in a particular way. With metaphor we do not have association, in-

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14 Ibid., p. 144.
stead things show themselves in their relatedness. With synthesis we do not have a sense of putting together but letting things be seen in their togetherness. Language does not represent the world nor is it a symbolic form or conceptual scheme imposed on the world by man. Language is not an invented tool of man nor is man a symbol-using animal, but rather man and language co-act.

Hans-Georg Gadamer extended Heidegger's work. Specifically, he made the traditional or a priori nature of trans-subjective language meaning more explicit, while at the same time holding to the basic phenomenological positions of the primacy of the specific encounter with things and connectedness of language and human experience. Gadamer does not hold language as constitutive of experience, rather primary language and experience are identical.

Important to Gadamer's study is the viewing of language as a tradition, i.e., living and requiring one's participation in it. Gadamer suggested that the scientific ideal for signs of exact designation and unambiguous concepts narrows the human World, robs natural words of their fundamental formative power, and allows words to be seen as separate from the being of the thing that is thought. Gadamer contended that language is not experienced as separated from objects and meaning and able to represent them, but is involved in experience coming to perception, thought, and expression. The movement of language suggests that "more than just signifying, a word in some sense displays and reveals its subject matter. In fact, words have no raison d'être other than to reveal what they bring to language. On the other hand, what comes to language is not something that precedes language 'but receives in the word the determination of itself.' For an experience is not first wordless and then subsumed under the generality of a word through naming. One seeks and finds just the right words to display one's experience, and without them the experience itself would not be possible." Thus, the supposed distinction between experience, language and things is an illusion created by reflexive abstraction and perpetuated by the various language modes in which things and experiences are revealed. Living language is prior to this objectification. To focus on this language as an object destroys its fundamental identity with experience and meaning.

For Gadamer, as for Heidegger, the primary nature of language is, then, not that of an object used by a subject to point out other things or to move other people. Language, like understanding, encompasses things and experience and allows the "nature" of things to be revealed to a subject. Rather than persons imposing language on the empirical world, our experience suggests that things as signs of Worldly words move from the thing in language to subjectivity. Gadamer suggested that words do not belong to people but to the situation. "The tree is green" does not designate a perception or mental concept but the subject matter itself disclosed in a certain light: the tree disclosed in its greenness.

17 None of Hans-Georg Gadamer's major writings are available in English. An excellent summary, however, is found in Richard E. Palmer, Hermeneutics (Evanston: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1969). The present work is greatly indebted to Palmer's presentation of Gadamer's position. Most other critiques are less complete and unified. Gadamer's primary work, Truth and Method, has recently been translated and is forthcoming from Herder and Herder, New York.

18 Palmer, pp. 201-202.


20 Palmer, p. 203.
experience of the object which is prior to our predicking anything about it is the ‘discourse’ that the object makes of itself through the particular mode in which it presents itself.”

Each word ‘discloses’ or brings into perspective its subject matter in a particular dimension. Language makes possible the meaningfulness of things by disclosing the life-world and by developing the subjective stance from which the subject matter’s implications arise or are revealed. Language, thus, brings the life-world to people; in fact it is necessary for persons to have a life-world—an interconnected horizon of meaning—rather than simply an empirical world of static objects.

The experiential World and its revealing language are, then, in no way possessions or objectified properties of the human subject. Words do not accumulate meaning from private experience, nor is meaning in people. Both World and language are prior to and independent of a particular person’s subjective experience. People participate—have a World—in an already meaningful language through immersion in the stream of heritage. Gadamer suggested that: “The linguistic word is not a ‘sign’ which one lays hold of; it is also no existing thing that one shapes and endows with a meaning, making a sign to render some other thing visible. Both possibilities are wrong; rather, the ideality of the meaning lies in the word itself. Word is always already meaningful.”

In a manner very reminiscent of Merleau-Ponty’s sedimented meanings, Gadamer suggested that embedded in language is the cumulative experience of a society, the total objectifiable experience, and the chance for all re-experience. Language is the revealer of the socially shared traditional World, and therefore is ordered to the transpersonal area rather than to our private experience. In this sense language is shared and public, thus, objective; yet not objectified.

The commonality of the social language-World makes it such that in speaking the World is created in which isolated acts are to be seen and make sense. The very possibility of understanding any communication event comes through the ability of language to reveal a sharable World. Understanding through language is not of an isolated designation—an agreed upon or conditioned referent for a “sign”—but of the World, the social experiential context, within which the subject matter in its particular possibilities is disclosed. Understanding is not the sharing of an encapsuled subjective experience but achieving a stance in a particular open-ended, functioning World. Originative speech is projective; it pretends the speaker and hearer into a functioning World where what is said makes sense. The power of language to disclose in its self-created World is what makes possible the understanding of ancient peoples and persons experientially far different from ourselves. The transitivity of “speaking language” prescribes its own Worldly context which enables the understanding of what would be otherwise isolated and senseless representations. “Such is the saying power of language that it creates the world within which everything may be disclosed; such is its comprehensiveness that we can understand the most diverse worlds that have come to expression in language; such is its disclosing power that even a relatively short text can lay open a world different from our own yet one which

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23 Palmer, p. 205.
we are able to understand.” Gadamer’s view is seemingly supported by translators of languages far different from ours. They suggest that there is no sense of literal or word translation, rather hinting at the foreign experience, developing the frame of experience in which individual statements make sense.

Language in discourse, then, rather than a word as a sign, becomes the only possible unit of meaning. Everyday understanding in language is possible not because our individual words stand for similar subjective experiences but rather in speaking and dialogue a Worldly perspective is suggested to all by an already socially meaningful language such that what is said in language makes sense. The use of a common word in a new or unusual sense is possible and senseful because this usage and the already meaningful words about it open a new Worldly stance in such a way that traditional language shifts itself in this dimension and develops that World. Intersubjectivity is made possible by this trans-subjectivity of language—the sharable World which the linguistic gesture creates.

IMPLICATIONS FOR COMMUNICATION STUDY

The phenomenological views discussed have made possible a non-abstract non-theoretical understanding of direct language experience. Even though the explication of the experience in the works considered have of necessity not been as straightforward and explicit as is normally preferred, the major part of the perspective is certainly established. If this perspective on language in the works of Heidegger and Gadamer is plausible many rather tacitly assumed principles of research and pedagogy in speech-communication need to be rethought and reworked. Although my present project is by no means this ambitious, let me briefly suggest three such reconsiderations.

The constitutive view of language suggests caution in accepting many common inferences from studies of language acquisition and development. The naturalistic explanation and the inherent separation of man and his thought from language in these studies is sometimes naively taken as direct support for the derivative view of language that one learns to link words with already existing things and thoughts. Claude Levi-Strauss expressed the reason for caution in this inference: “. . . although it may be legitimate or even inevitable to fall back upon a naturalistic interpretation in order to understand the emergence of symbolic thinking, once the latter is given, the nature of the explanation must change as radically as the newly appeared phenomenon differs from those which have preceded and prepared it.”

Knowledge of how language is developed or how a child learns a language would seem to be of little value to our attempts to understand the nature and workings of language once acquired. Analogies from more primitive human conditions would not seem to hold in the study of symbolic thought. At the extreme many phenomenologists would question the acquisition studies themselves due to the limited, prescribed view of language accepted by researchers in forming their studies of language development. Phenomenologists contend that the assumed “already existingness” of things is made possible by traditional language. The child thus “gears” into a language World of tradition, rather than learning labels or abstract rules.

24 Palmer, p. 207.
Also prescribed in our languaging about language and in need of reworking, is the use of an abstracted intent of a speaker as the criterion for judging the success of a "coded" transmission process. Communication is often considered as simple up-take of an intended message, or teachers prescribe clarity for the sake of "good communication." Not only do these views allow language to be rather artificially and abstractly separated from speaking, listening, and communicating but make speaking an inherently conservative activity intent on presenting what has been thought rather than creating new possibilities. The linear transmitter metaphor is particularly inappropriate since in direct experience "intent" is not experienced as an aspect of the speaker given ahead of speaking but as a developing theme shaping and being shaped by what is said. Intent is not given outside of speaking, even if that speaking is only to oneself or a researcher. Perhaps the advice of many literary critics should be taken. They suggest that the abstracted author's intent is not the beginning and the end of understanding a speech act and that it may hide the implications of what is being said. Maurice Merleau-Ponty expressed the idea well. "To the extent that what I say has meaning, I am a different 'other' for myself when I am speaking; and to the extent that I understand, I no longer know who is speaking and who is listening." 26

Furthermore, the social phenomenological view undercut the supposed distinction between language and meaning: socially non-meaningful words are not words at all. Nor is the word a primary unit of meaning. The correlation of a word with psychic states, things, or behavioral predispositions is only possible through the reification of natural language use. In speaking this residue is not collected and given to the listener as a pile at the end. Words in speaking hint at a World so that even words presented sentences apart are shaping the sense of prior and subsequent words in a way such that the text World is created and each word stands in this perspective. In teaching how to communicate well, concern should shift away from advocating the use of unambiguous concepts—words for which all would give the same referent—to concern with awareness of contextualizing, reflectiveness, and "pooling" of flowing language. Good listening is not a collecting of language things, but giving into the flow of language so that a perspective and worldly implications are revealed. 27 A valid critique of a language event presupposes this giving into (understanding) the speaking.

**Summary**

In this paper I have attempted to make explicit a way of approaching the study of language which has implications for research and teaching in speech-communication. By turning to rather recent European analyses of language experience which proceed from the lived experience prior to conceptualization, a more constitutive—exhibitive and revealing—view of language was suggested. Obviously the constitutive view does not purport to be the only possible view of language. The most apparent advantage of the constitutive view, however, is that it can encompass most or all other views without reduction, for it stands as a background or source for derivative views and uses of language. Language has the nature of an open-ended social

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institution, i.e., words are already meaningful but with multiple implications. And for this reason, both exact designation and creative expression are possible. Exact designation becomes possible with the sedimentation and thus reification of authentic contextual language events. And creative authentic communication is possible since in speaking socially meaningful, Worldly words shape each other in such a way that novel implications of words are revealed and understood. These implications are not private or totally novel since they are already embedded in the traditional World and language but are concealed by the habitual common sense of the words in everyday speaking.

This view of language is not totally new and perhaps even now its time has not properly come. Yet the view seems intellectually compelling even though specific potential implications of the view are only partially apparent. Further, present day society seems to demand a new view of language. The formalistic, nominalistic, derivative conceptions of language seem to be designed for a technological society intent on controlling the environment and mankind and for transmitting facts rather than generating insight. If the current society is becoming more humanistic—accepting nature and maintaining the integrity of individual experience—then the currently accepted understanding of language will become irrelevant and new insights from some base will be sought. If we wish to understand the possibilities and implications in what another says rather than merely know what he says, we will have to begin to search for and hint at the Worldly perspective, necessary for rather than appeal for exact definition. Certainly imprecision or glibness in our expression can never be excused, yet I think we will find that exact designation, word objectification, hides the meaning, the Worldly perspective, necessary for understanding even scientific theory. The type of precision which allows relevant discrimination and, thus, makes possible greater cumulative understanding comes from the interplay of words which suggest beyond each other, resulting in the understandable uniqueness of ordinary words shaped interestingly.

28 Persons familiar with the writings of Hugh Duncan, Kenneth Burke, and the ethnomethodologists may note the similarities of these writings with the position presented here. One should, however, also see the differences—i.e., the emphasis on formal and analytic considerations in the former works.