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From Cognition to Being

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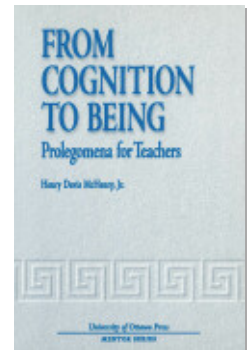
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I am supposing that our very ways of being with other people, thinking and speaking, hoping and wishing and opining and despairing, are tied up with the presumption of representation: that what we are doing with language is abstracting from reality, from what there is in nature, and describing those fixed items. For the most part, it is rather as if this notion assumes us, takes us up into itself like the atmosphere; it is part of the air that sustains us. There is fresher air. In Saussure's picture of language, we may begin to breathe it.

2 CARTESIAN DOUBT 35

In Chapter One it appeared that what we call common sense may be given by a colloquy, a dialogue. And our contemporary colloquial context of ideas about *knowledge* can be seen to originate with Descartes. If Descartes had read Saussure, what he might have meant by "I am thinking" is "I am speaking." And the purpose of Cartesian doubt would then have been to interrupt the easy and usually harmless assumption that words refer to things, supplanting it with the notion that the world is articulation.

3 LOCKEAN CERTAINTY 61

As we have gathered in re-reading Descartes, to *look through* an accepted set of ideas is to give ourselves a certain set of visible objects and relations, to commit ourselves to a vocabulary of the seen. As teachers, we should explore what kind of power the window may exert. In fixing the identities of natural and human objects for human subjects to perceive and understand—in cementing the foundations of *knowledge*—Locke had catalyzed not only the split between man and his world, but also a massive retreat from what we might call the responsibility of Adam: that naming which symbolizes our ever original say in the world.

4 WITTGENSTEIN'S INQUIRY INTO STRUCTURE..... 81

We have begun to distinguish between the window of representation, with its associated presuppositions about the structure of reality, and another window, which I have been looking through in moments of communion with my child and at other times. What is there about this second window of being together that is different from “using language,” or just plain “talking about something”? We are working on bringing about an extraordinary result: that during the class hour we look through the window of inventing being with our students even as we look at what we call the structure of reality.

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Heidegger suggests that the realm of relation, of being-with, arises in our “naming” a world. In this realm of sharing naming, where an original mutuality sources his gesture and word, a teacher, as artist, cultivates moments of encounter when he can share, invent, and bring forth with his students. And in our dialogue, in the faculty meeting or the teachers’ lounge, we are not describing facts about students or school. We are inventing our world, the context for our common experience.

6 LANGUAGING AS SHARING 127

We have now re-invented language as languaging, on our way to re-inventing the wheel of Saying. For one further shift before we attain that place, though, we turn to Martin Buber. If Heidegger is the prophet of languaging, and of Being as being-with, Buber is the prophet of I-You, of relation. He re-invents

linguaging as *sharing*. As I speak with others, listening *for a world*, not merely to *the world*, we assume together the responsibility of Adam.

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In this chapter we will begin to construct, in the vocabulary of Saying, a set of techniques for conducting schoolwork as being together and inventing. What if teachers and students, every day or week, could see themselves as having brought into being some possibility they had invented in their own speaking, and then realized, brought to completion? Provides extended examples from eleventh-grade English classes, including both a model for discussions of literature and an activity adapted from Outward Bound.

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