

ADAM, THE FIRST LINGUIST: AN ESSAY ON NAMING

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ABSTRACT: In view of the density of naming and its intimately linguistic character, one might think that Adam's deed in the Judeo-Christian bible, despite any and all religious attributes, portrays the inauguration of a project of knowledge of the world and its beings and, consequently, their relationship with the use of language to represent them in the social sphere. With this question on the horizon of this essay, the proposal of this study turns to a linguistic-anthropological reflection that takes Adam as the first linguist, according to his act of naming. Thus, taking Adam as a linguist, with this metaphorical expedient, instructs both those who already know the rudiments of the science of language and those who have yet to explore the intricacies of linguistics. Proof of this is precisely the path developed in this essay.

KEYWORDS: Linguistics; Naming; Adam.

RESUMO: Tendo em vista a densidade da nomeação e seu caráter intimamente linguístico, pode-se pensar que o feito de Adão na bíblia judaico-cristã, apesar de todo e qualquer atributo religioso, retrata a inauguração de um projeto de conhecimento do mundo e de seus seres e, conseqüentemente, sua relação com o uso da linguagem para representá-los na esfera social. Com esta questão no horizonte deste ensaio, a proposta deste estudo volta-se para uma reflexão linguístico-antropológica que toma Adão como o primeiro linguista, segundo o seu ato de nomear. Assim, tomar Adam como linguista, com esse expediente metafórico, instrui tanto aqueles que já conhecem os rudimentos da ciência da linguagem quanto aqueles que ainda não exploraram os meandros da linguística. Prova disso é justamente o caminho desenvolvido neste ensaio.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Linguística; Nomeação; Adão.

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1. INTRODUCTION

To know the name of something is to know how it stands out from other elements. Naming, in turn, is presenting an understanding, however tacit, of how to reach someone or some object. Because of the relationship between these two actions, there seems to be an assumption that naming encompasses a wider range of knowledge than simply knowing names that have already been assigned. Beyond the awareness of language and its internal processes of producing signifiers and meanings, naming is bringing to the world the possibility of enunciating and even representing beings, objects and actions.

Names, within the collective system to which they belong, are also cognitive occurrences, in other words, whose dependence on thought, memory and language is felt in the use of human abilities, because, as experience itself easily proves, we often think through language, regardless of what language is. It is not without reason that Vygotsky, with regard to meaning (one of the characteristics of names), peremptorily states the following: "The meaning of a word represents such a close amalgamation of thought and language that it is difficult to say when it is a phenomenon of speech or a phenomenon of thought" (Vygotsky, 2008 , p. 150).

The closeness between cognition and language, in its various manifestations, ends up generating doubts about the previous conception of one in relation to the other, as the question arises: is there cognition without language? When this question turns to humans, there is a kind of embarrassment when trying to answer it, since all expressions of language are also, in short, the impression of one or more cognitive processes activated for this purpose. In this way, giving a name to a being is, among many other possible cases of understanding, making use of both thought, in its cognitive aspect, and language, in its communicative sphere, to connect, by means of representation, subjects, whether they are namers or named.

In view of the density that exists in naming and its intimately linguistic character, it can be thought that Adam's deed in the Judeo-Christian bible, despite any and all religious attributes, portrays the inauguration of a project of knowledge of the world and its beings and, consequently, their relationship with the use of language to represent them in the social sphere. With this question on the horizon of this essay, the purpose of this study is to a linguistic-anthropological reflection , which takes Adam as the first linguist, according

to his act of naming, and, to this end, makes use of passages from the Book of Genesis according to which the "primeval father" establishes the first system of differences between names. In the next section, the theoretical principles of linguistics and philosophy and their possible relationship with Adam's founding act are postulated, according to ideals and authors enshrined in the history of linguistic thought.

2. APPOINTMENT: THE ADAMIC CUT

Faced with the objective outlined for this essay, a linguistic-anthropological reflection that takes Adam as the first linguist according to his act of naming, before any mention of the biblical text, it is essential to determine the role of the linguist so that, after this assessment, the role of Adam can be perceived, or better and more precisely, the mythical figure of the first man and his relationship with naming. To fulfil this requirement, it is necessary to refer to what the father of modern linguistics points out as the science that studies language, in paraphrase, since the object of a science needs to be observable in its homogeneity, according to Saussure (1972). In more depth, Saussure (1972) states about the inner workings of the object of linguistics that "Language can only be a system of pure values" (Saussure, 1972, p. 130).

The linguist calls these pure values a linguistic sign, whose main feature is its relationship with the others, by difference, of the language system. According to Orlandi, "This is why it is said that the value of the sign is relative and negative" (Orlandi, 2012, p. 22). Thus, we have, theoretically, the core of the object of linguistics, that is, the investigation of the value of the linguistic sign within the circuit of which it is a part. It is essential, especially for this essay, to realise that linguistics, in practically all its contemporary branches, applies the distinctive notion of value, because this, which has spread to other human sciences, allows elements of the same nature and their meanings to be verified by comparing them with pure value. In other words, "dog" means what it means because it doesn't mean all the other meaningful items and, within it, carries a general idea of a dog, which can only be specified in a context of use, as in "Alice's dog", "the guard dog", "doberman dog" etc.

From a more philosophical point of view, as Foucault (2007) explains, "The name is the term of discourse" (Foucault, 2007, p. 166), since it provides a project of saying in

which the name itself is anchored. In other words, without the possibility of the name existing, or even its equivalent, the process of representation would be compromised to the point where discourse as an interactive communication activity would not exist, because, according to Foucault (2007), "Language withdraws from the midst of beings to enter its era of transparency and neutrality" (Foucault, 2007, p. 77). This is how the attribution of the act of naming, considering a linguistic system in which this action is installed, functions as a kind of passage from the mere lexical item, name, to the use of this as a virtual representative capable of, within a chained set of others of a similar nature, producing discourse.

It is important, beyond the delineation of the name and its discursive domain, to emphasise that the name, through a complex epistemological web, binds linguistic meanings and, due to its ontological depth, carries, *mutatis mutandis*, the attributes of being named. In this direction, as Foucault (2007) explains, "The fundamental task of classical 'discourse' consists of attributing a name to things and, with this name, naming their being" (Foucault, 2007, p. 169). In view of the discursive consequence of the act of naming and the relationship that is established between being and its linguistic representation, the possibility of the existence of relatively stable categories of names and their semantic properties with repercussions in the empirical environment is stratified. A small example of this can be found in the lexical item "horse", which is a representative of a "mammal", the latter being, due to its significant features, a supra-concept of the former; if the breed of horse is "mangalarga", this is a linguistic specification, by attributes, of the type of equine. In other words, the name carries the relationships that exist both at the linguistic, semantic level, above all, and at the empirically observable level, except in special cases that this text does not cover.

Naming, as we can see, requires a number of factors that are often overlooked in order for it to be effective, especially when we realise that this action focuses on the relationship between thought and language, or rather, on a measurement between external, empirical reality and the virtuality created by the use of language. Seen from this perspective, naming touches on a relatively old question, namely that language is a mirror of the world. Now, if there is a directness to the use of language in relation to the world, what Soares (2023) says serves to explain this theoretical conception: "A very old view of language is that it is a mirror of the world and of thought (Koch, 1998, p. 9). Within this

conception, language serves to represent the world, thought and knowledge" (Soares, 2023, p. 176). Ferrari (2011) states that "there is no specular relationship between language and the world, but a relationship that is necessarily mediated by the cognitive architecture of speakers, in terms of its characteristics and restrictions" (Ferrari, 2011, p. 32).

Faced with the extent of the complexities between naming and its cognitive use, Soares (2024) affirms that "Neither language nor thought seems to be merely static or merely dynamic, both, like a leaf, have two sides: one dynamic, the other static" (Soares, 2024, p. 230). Language is in a state of use according to how cognition uses it, as in the specific case of naming. In this way, naming is a performance of organising, through language, the set of entities that can receive their virtual counterpart, that is, a linguistic sign. As can be understood from what has already been said here, naming has an ontological characteristic that is linked to both the linguistic properties present in language systems and the very functioning of thought, since these activities, by playing a systemic role, link practically all meanings. Thus, for the purposes of this essay, we trust and endorse what Benjamin says: "(...) the linguistic essence of man lies in the fact that he names things" (Benjamin, 2011, p. 55).

Within the horizon outlined by these perspectives, the first task assigned to the biblical Adam is, according to the reflective vision outlined for this essay, the act of naming and therefore organising the world linguistically. In this regard, in verse 19 of chapter II of Genesis, it is precisely written: "When he had formed out of the ground every beast of the field and every bird of the air, the Lord God brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever name the man gave to each living thing, that was to be its name" (GN, II, 19). Here we find the first proposal of labour to Adam, the purpose of which was precisely to provide a name for beings and things and, through this expedient, to create a highly sophisticated process of communication. The following passage concludes the task: "So man gave names to all the domestic flocks, to the birds of the air and to all the wild animals. But no one was found for man who would help him and correspond with him" (GN, II, 20). According to the biblical narrative, the naming was a request, in the broadest sense, made by God, and after its completion, which took place alone, the Creator realised that of His creation there was only one being capable of carrying out such an undertaking.

It is worth highlighting the fact that Adam's first work is fundamentally intellectual in nature, because, beyond any interpretative theology of the biblical text and the religious influences impregnated in its reading, the action of naming is profoundly different from manual labour and its adjacent activities. Now, naming, based on the ideals set out here, requires knowledge of both the language used to signify and the distinctive properties of the named entities. In other words, Adam made use of thought, language and experience to point to "the birds of the air and all the wild animals" and tell them their names.

It can be inferred that the first biblical man developed prototypical names, whose constituent elements of asymmetry were given the denomination of "prototypical effects" (Lakoff, 1987, p. 41), to designate and discursively represent all the beings and objects intended for him to do so. According to Cançado (2005), "This model sees concepts as gradually structured, with a typical or central member of the categories and others that are less typical or more peripheral" (Cançado, 2005, p. 96). This leads to the realisation that the nominator in question only brought exemplary beings into the field of designative language use, and is not, according to this hypothesis, responsible for the specificity of names. In other words, if Adam only named the main beings, he did so according to their primary and distinctive characteristics. When he saw the horse, most likely, and realised its features, four legs, mane, tail, long snout, long neck, long body, in other words, because he was able to capture the elementary structure of the horse, he named it horse, which functioned as a prototype.

The act of primordial naming, beyond any theorising, by following the prototypical pattern of knowledge of beings, based on a system of differences that occurs both linguistically and empirically in those named, provides the necessary security to group entities according to their respective segmentary paradigms. Here, according to this hypothesis, is one of the principles of language use set in motion: linguistic economy. According to Martinet (1972), "Linguistic evolution can be considered to be governed by the permanent antinomy between man's communicative needs and his tendency to minimise mental and physical activity." (Martinet, 1972, p. 181). In this way, the initial production of names in proportion to the existence of prototypes makes it possible for the effect of the principle of linguistic economy to work, since, according to Martinet (1972), "In this domain, as in others, human behaviour obeys the law of least effort, according to

which man only expends energy to the extent that it allows him to achieve the objectives he wants" (Martinet, 1972, p. 181).

By putting semantic prototypes into practice to name beings, Adam probably achieved the ideality present in Plato's theory of forms. It is important to emphasise that the epistemology of this Greek philosopher affected all philosophical currents, even literary ones, of interpretations of the phenomena of life and would not be different from a perspective according to which the biblical Adam is responsible for giving names through a prototypical creation. In this direction, we can refer to what Plato (1999) says, through Socrates, about the making of things: "God, knowing this, I think, and wanting to be the true creator of a real bed, and not the particular maker of a particular bed, created this unique bed by nature" (Plato, 1999, p. 324). Within the horizon of this proposition, the genesis of all beings goes back to the first creation and, by necessary extension, naming must also be guided by this contingent thickness of derived creation.

Under the aegis of the production of first names, Adam, in making a singular linguistic proposal to each of the beings he was asked to designate, moulds the very understanding of naming as a cut, the anteriority of which is the lack of the possibility of representation through language, the posteriority of which is precisely the establishment of a prototypical cut of all beings. In other words, the notions contained in the names given by Adam, however simple and however circumscribed to their unique occasion, express the inaugural act of bringing the world and its elements into the virtuality of the communicational use of language and, for this reason, the ramification of the names, that is, the subsequent nominations follow, *mutatis mutandis*, the initial pattern. If this conjecture is taken as an injunction, even if it can't be verified, it touches on Plato's perspective according to which the primordial images were "perfect" and their derivatives were not. According to the philosopher, "Thus, imitation is far from the truth, and if it models all objects, it is because it respects only a small part of each one, which in turn is but a shadow" (Plato, 1999, p. 325).

Underlying the act of naming, which was initiated by Adam as described in the Bible, is the creation of notions or concepts, as Vico (2008) comments, "(...) since this world of notions was made by human beings" (Vico, 2008, p. 45). Now, with the possibility of naming a particular animal also came the possibility of conceptualising its

make and other distinctive features. As conceptualisation is a contingent part of naming, the score opened by Adam has been carried from ancient times to the present day by a "contagion" of what was initially understood. Just like Saussure, who, when pointing out the linguistic sign, unveiled its two faces, the signifier and the signified, Adam embarks on the journey of naming and, by extension, attributing the representativeness of each linguistically designated entity, also developing a value system for each of the named beings.

3 . FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In view of the objective outlined for this essay, a linguistic-anthropological reflection that takes Adam as the first linguist according to his act of naming, it is believed that this aim has been achieved and, more than that, it is believed that the intellectual conjecture developed in this manuscript is preponderant. This is to say that the proposition reached takes the pondering about the act of naming to its highest point, which allows the reader to understand some processes of comprehension of names and their respective effects in the communicational environment. In this explanatory direction, Bakhtin (2010) affirms, "Only the mythical Adam who arrived with the first word in a virgin world, not yet discredited, only this Adam could really completely avoid this mutual dialogical orientation of other people's speech" (Bakhtin, 2010, p.88).

The figure of Adam can be considered a linguist fundamentally because he inaugurated the use of language to name and, consequently, produce distinctive conceptualisations and, at the same time, because he had no competitor, his integral dimension and his act of naming remained intact, because his "word" fulfilled the performative order of language and became law for others. Thus, taking Adam for a linguist, with this metaphorical expedient, instructs both those who already know the rudiments of the science of language and those who have yet to explore the intricacies of linguistics. Proof of this is precisely the path developed in this essay.

From the linguistic essence of man (Benjamin, 2011) as a being who names, to the relationship between signs to theorise linguistics (Saussure, 1972), passing through the abstract relationships of understanding the world and its discursive nuances (Foucault, 2007), the prototypes (Lakoff, 1987; Cançado, 2005; Ferrari, 2011) that support the hypothesis that Adam, by inaugurating the act of naming, represented the nuclear

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characteristics of beings. This ingenious expedient, in turn, revived the prototypical link with the philosophical proposition of perfect forms (Plato, 1999). This whole process, as you might expect, follows one of the principles of language use, linguistic economy (Martinet, 1972) in order to "appear", as you can see from this essay, to be something simple and relatively common, as is the structuring event (Vygotsky, 2008) between thought and language.

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