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The Illusion of Belief and The Question of Language: on the Problem of the Sanctity of Words

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Abstract

This study examines the structural relationship between language and systems of belief, exploring how language evolves from a communicative medium into a symbolic horizon that generates and stabilizes belief. The central hypothesis argues that belief is not an autonomous entity but a symbolic effect produced within linguistic structures, particularly through the mechanisms of naming and negation, which transform absence into an object of discourse—and eventually into an object of faith.

The research adopts a dual methodological framework. Anthropologically, it traces the emergence of language within contexts of tool-use, ritual, and social cooperation, interpreting belief as a product of symbolic interaction rather than the manifestation of pre-linguistic metaphysical forces. Philosophically, it approaches language as an ontological condition for the appearance of meaning itself, drawing on insights from Husserl, Heidegger, the later Wittgenstein, and Derrida.

The study concludes that the sacredness of words is not an intrinsic property, but the outcome of linguistic and social processes that intensify meaning and solidify metaphor into conviction. In this sense, doctrinal illusion is understood not as mere falsity, but as a condensed linguistic effect that participates in shaping both mental and social reality.

Keywords: Language, Belief, The Sacred, Illusion, Naming, Negation, Symbol, Myth, Deconstruction.

Introduction

Language is one of the most central phenomena in human existence, and since antiquity it has been the subject of profound philosophical debate concerning its origin, function, and role in shaping consciousness. While language is, in one aspect, a tool for communication, its early connection to the capacity for abstraction and the formulation of intangible concepts has elevated it from the level of a mere communicative medium to the level of the very foundational structure of the human world itself. From this perspective, language is not understood as a mirror reflecting reality, but rather as a symbolic force that reorganizes it within a semantic horizon capable of being communicated and established.

This research begins with the premise that language does not represent reality neutrally, but rather engages in a constructive act with an ontological dimension. It replaces direct presence with a series of phonetic and symbolic signs, thus allowing for a transcendence of sensory data towards conceptual spaces that may not have a direct material counterpart. Hence, the question of belief becomes a linguistic question as much as it is a religious or philosophical one. In this context, language does not appear as an innocent medium, but rather as a horizon within which the very possibilities of belief are formed. From the moment the capacity for naming combined with the mechanism of negation, the field opened up for the formulation of concepts that transcend the realm of sensory perception, such as the soul, the heavens, the gods, and other transcendental concepts. Human consciousness has accumulated a long history of trust in language, to the point that words have acquired a symbolic authority that has enabled them to produce firmly established socio-psychological truths through linguistic mechanisms such as

arbitrariness, representation, and negation, and in conjunction with social mechanisms such as ritual and prohibition.

This research seeks to analyze the relationship between language and the emergence of belief through a multidisciplinary approach based on anthropology, linguistics, and philosophy. The analysis focuses on two central linguistic mechanisms: naming and negation, as the primary structures that have allowed the transformation of absence into an object of discourse, and subsequently, into an object of belief. However, the aim is not to reduce belief to a mere linguistic phenomenon, but rather to uncover the symbolic structure that makes language a condition of possibility for its formation and continuation.

Thus, this article attempts to reconsider belief as a symbolic-social phenomenon by tracing its path from initial naming to the formation of the sacred, and from ritual to institution. From this perspective, language is not only the house of being, but also the horizon within which faith is formed, as an imaginative possibility rooted in the very structure of the sign.

1. The dwelling of Being and the crafting of the name: from instrumentality to the imaginary

Since Martin Heidegger's famous statement, "Language is the house of Being," became widespread, contemporary philosophical thought has adopted a view that elevates language to more than a tool for communication; it has become the horizon within which Being itself[1] is revealed.[1] However, this assertion does not grant words an independent metaphysical essence, but rather affirms that Being can only be understood within the sphere that language allows for its revelation. The distinction between considering language a condition for the revelation of Being and considering it a source of its creation is the theoretical dividing line; neglecting this distinction leads to the illusion of bestowing ontological sanctity upon words.

Modern linguistic analysis disentangled this ambiguity at the beginning of the twentieth century, when Ferdinand de Saussure determined that the relationship between signifier and signified is arbitrary, and that meaning is not based on a natural correspondence

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[1] Martin Heidegger, Poetry, Language, Thought, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 145see: Martin Heidegger, Letter on Humanism, in Basic Writings, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 193–242.

between the name and the thing, but rather is determined within a system of structural differences.[2] Thus, what appears to be an “intrinsic power” in a word is merely a consequence of its position within a semantic network. The name does not possess its essence in itself, but derives its effectiveness from the structure within which it is organized.

However, arbitrariness does not negate the foundational nature of naming, but rather redefines it. The name grants the entity a symbolic presence within the collective consciousness, even in the absence of its sensory referent. Claude Lévi-Strauss demonstrated that symbolic systems in traditional societies treat metaphysical and extinct entities as active elements within the cultural construct, despite their lack of physical presence.[3] The name preserves the entity from symbolic erasure and ensures its continuity in the collective memory.

On this basis, naming absence is no less important than naming presence. Negation does not erase something from consciousness; rather, it evokes it in a reversed form. It presupposes a negated subject, thereby establishing a symbolic possibility for entities that have no sensory existence. Ernst Cassirer considered humans to be "symbolical animals," and that their relationship with the world is mediated through symbolic forms that reorganize reality instead of directly reflecting it.[4] Within this framework, language becomes a space that allows for the production of an imaginary presence of entities that transcend sensory perception.

Herein lies the structural basis for the illusion of the sanctity of words. When linguistic revelation is misunderstood as the creation of existence, and naming is treated as the possession of essence, the word is transformed from a sign within a system into a transcendent entity. However, this "sanctity" is not a phonetic or semantic property, but rather the result of social recognition that grants certain words immunity from accountability. In this context, Pierre Bourdieu demonstrates that a word acquires its authority only within a social field that recognizes it and bestows upon it symbolic legitimacy.

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[2] Ferdinand de Saussure, Course in General Linguistics, trans. Roy Harris (London: Duckworth, 1983), 65–70.

[3] Claude Lévi-Strauss, Structural Anthropology, trans. Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf (New York: Basic Books, 1963), 206–231.

[4] Ernst Cassirer, Language and Myth, trans. Susanne K. Langer (New York: Dover Publications, 1946), 25–44.

existence, and naming is treated as the possession of essence, the word is transformed from a sign within a system into a transcendent entity. However, this “sanctity” is not a phonetic or semantic property, but rather the result of social recognition that grants certain words immunity from accountability. In this context, Pierre Bourdieu demonstrates that a word acquires its authority only within a social field that recognizes it and bestows upon it symbolic legitimacy.[5] Thus, the transition from instrument to imaginary does not occur through a metaphysical leap, but through a symbolic accumulation: from using the name to define the action, to fixing it within a belief system, and then to bestowing upon it ritual immunity. The problem of the sanctity of words does not lie in their linguistic nature, but in the social structure that surrounds certain names with a fence of prohibition, repetition, and collective recognition, transforming them from signs into centers of symbolic power.

2. The human as a maker of tools and a creator of symbols

Anthropological and evolutionary anthropological studies agree on a profound connection between the emergence of language and the development of toolmaking among early humans. However, this connection is not understood as a mere historical coincidence, but rather as a structural and functional relationship. The tool represents a physical extension of human agency in the world, while the word represents a symbolic extension of the capacity of consciousness to organize and frame that agency.[6] In this sense, naming can be seen as the symbolic counterpart of the tool. Just as the axe preserves the act of cutting in its physical structure, the name preserves the tool's function within the collective memory. Naming does not simply refer to the object; it establishes its function and integrates it into a system of transmittable meanings. Here, the sharpened stone is transformed from a raw material into a "tool"—that is, into an entity with a specific function within a cognitive and social system.

Terence Deacon demonstrated that the transition from primitive sign systems to linguistic symbolism was linked to profound neurological and cognitive transformations, particularly the expansion of the prefrontal cortex and the development of complex patterns of social cooperation.[2] In his view, symbolic language did not arise as an accidental addition to

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[5] Pierre Bourdieu, Language and Symbolic Power, trans. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 107–116.

[6] André Leroi-Gourhan, Gesture and Speech, trans. Anna Bostock Berger (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), 229–266.

human life, but rather as a selective response to the pressures of cooperation and the transmission of knowledge across generations. Thus, the development of language is inseparable from the need to establish and organize patterns of technical action within the community.

André Leroy-Gourand also showed that the history of technology and the history of symbolic expression proceed in parallel; gesture, tool, and word constitute a single system in which physical action and symbolic representation are integrated.[7] A tool only acquires its meaning when it is placed within a series of describable and teachable gestures and steps. Here, language becomes a condition for the transmission of technology, not merely a verbal commentary on it.

However, the paramount importance of naming is not limited to establishing presence, but also includes naming absence. The success of technical cooperation hinges on defining what must be done and what must be avoided: a faulty tool, a wrong step, or failure in execution. The ability to say "no" or "not this way" represents a pivotal moment in the formation of the symbolic structure, as it introduces negation as an organizing element within the learning process and the transfer of experience.

From this emerges a dual structure encompassing existence and non-existence, success and failure, action and its suspension. This structure is not a premature metaphysical reflection, but rather a practical condition for the success of social cooperation. In the context of toolmaking, language does not function as a mirror of reality, but as a mechanism for regulating possibilities and organizing alternatives. Thus, the first symbolic field is established within the space of technical work itself.

As a toolmaker, humankind has not only extended its physical existence through matter, but has also extended its consciousness through symbols. From this structural parallel between tool and word, the foundation is formed upon which the imaginative and conceptual realms will later be built. When naming becomes capable of establishing presence and regulating absence simultaneously, the structural conditions are prepared for the birth of symbolic entities that transcend the direct technical function.

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[7] Terrence W. Deacon, *The Symbolic Species: The Co-evolution of Language and the Brain* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997), 340–356.

3. The parallel between the emergence of tools and the emergence of language

The need to define action and coordinate collective effort was linked to an early stage of stone toolmaking, where technical action was no longer purely individual but became contingent upon sharing, planning, and procedural sequencing. In this context, language was no longer merely a fleeting sound but transformed into something akin to a "map of action," organizing the distribution of roles and regulating the sequence of operations. This transformation reinforced the cooperative value of language, enabling the accumulation and transmission of experience across generations, a crucial condition for the success of early human societies.[8] However, analyzing this stage requires a careful comparison between Ferdinand de Saussure's thesis of the arbitrariness of the sign and Charles Sanders Peirce's tripartite model of the sign. Saussure asserted that the relationship between signifier and signified is arbitrary, and that meaning is determined within a system of differences, not through a natural relationship to the referent.[9] In contrast, Peirce distinguished between the icon, the index, and the symbol, explaining that a sign may retain varying degrees of similarity, causality, or convention.[10]

Invoking this distinction allows us to explain a phenomenon that, superficially, seems to contradict structural arbitrariness: the presence of onomatopoeia or iconic influence in some primitive names. Arbitrariness need not be understood as a complete break with the referent; a sign in its earliest stages can retain iconic or indexical elements without losing its conventional character within the system. Hence, what appears “natural” in some words does not negate the principle of arbitrariness, but rather reveals the multiplicity of patterns of relationship between the sign and its referent.

When early humans began manufacturing stone tools, the need arose to distinguish and name them. However, naming was not merely a technical procedure, but a step toward abstraction. The sharpened stone is not reduced to its physical substance, but acquires, through a name, a specific function and a place within a cognitive and social system. Thus,

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[8] Leroi-Gourhan, *Gesture and Speech*, 213–245.

[9] Terrence W. Deacon, *The Symbolic Species: The Co-evolution of Language and the Brain* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997), 340–356.

[10] Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Roy Harris (London: Duckworth, 1983), 65–70.

the tool transforms from a material object into a concept that can be used and taught.

André Leroy-Gourand pointed out that the development of technology is inseparable from the development of forms of symbolic expression, and that the human transition from gesture to speech represents a moment of reorganization of experience within a system capable of being encoded.[11] Language does not simply describe action, but reconstructs it within a network of semantic relations.

If the word, in its origin, contains a metaphorical element—as a reference that does not correspond to its object—then its capacity for semantic expansion becomes a natural consequence of its structure. The concepts associated with the tool can extend to include symbolic counterparts or even its functional negation. This capacity for expansion is not a secondary feature, but a structural property of the sign, allowing for the formation of what might be called the initial linguistic imagination.

This imagination does not develop arbitrarily, but is subject to collective selective mechanisms; the words and structures best suited to serving cooperation and regulating action are the ones that become established and spread. Terence Deacon pointed out that linguistic symbolism developed within the context of social and selective pressures related to complex cooperation and coordination.[12] Thus, "survival" here does not belong to the loudest voices, but to the symbolic systems best adapted to the needs of the community.

In this sense, the parallel between the emergence of tools and the emergence of language is not a simple causal correspondence, but a structural interaction: just as the tool reshaped humanity's relationship with the material world, language reshaped humanity's relationship with action itself, paving the way for the transformation of technological experience into an expandable symbolic structure—an expansion that would later become the foundation of the imaginative and belief-based realm.

4. The role of naming in establishing cooperation

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[11] Charles S. Peirce, *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, vols. 1–8, ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931–1958), 2.247–2.249.

[12] André Leroi-Gourhan, *Gesture and Speech*, trans. Anna Bostock Berger (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), 213–245.

Naming within a group functions as an organizational mechanism that regulates collective action and reduces ambiguity in complex interactions. It enters into a procedural cycle consisting of command, response, and verification of execution, whereby the word is linked to the action within a relationship that is repeatable and retrievable. As this association accumulates, a collective memory is formed that connects the sign to the action it refers to, transforming the word into a point of fixity within the network of social cooperation.[13] This connection between speech and action finds its theoretical basis in speech act analyses, where John Austin demonstrated that speech is not merely descriptive but can be a performative act that produces an effect on social reality itself.[14] When used in the context of command, warning, or coordination, naming does not simply refer to something but contributes to organizing and directing behavior. Thus, language becomes an indispensable procedural control tool for the success of collective action.

However, the continuous repetition of names within specific contexts gradually links them to basic emotional states: safety/danger, abundance/scarcity, survival/death. Over time, certain words acquire an emotional aura that imbues them with a semantic density exceeding their initial denotative function. Émile Durkheim pointed out that collective symbols not only express social reality but also contribute to its production by charging them with a collective emotional energy that makes them a focal point for cohesion and commitment.[15] This is how the raw material of myth is formed, as a symbolic fixation of meanings that have acquired emotional power within the community.

However, linguistic cooperation does not remain at the level of a technical function. Once the determination of meaning becomes a condition for regulating action, the question of power arises: Who has the right to name? And who has the right to establish or prohibit its meaning? The distribution of the power to define meanings is itself a distribution of symbolic power. Pierre Bourdieu demonstrated that the word does not possess intrinsic power but derives its authority from the social field, which grants it legitimacy and recognizes its speaker as authorized to speak.[16] The decisive effect that naming has on consciousness lies in its

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[13] Deacon, *The Symbolic Species*, 367–377.

[14] Terrence W. Deacon, *The Symbolic Species: The Co-evolution of Language and the Brain* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997), 340–356.

[15] J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), 5–24.

[16] Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Karen E. Fields (New York: Free Press, 1995), 208–236.

ability to separate the sign from direct physical presence. The thing is no longer tied to its physical existence, but becomes negotiable in its absence. This possibility—negotiability in absence—is what subsequently allows for the naming of the negated itself. Negation does not merely abolish the thing, but transforms it into an independent symbolic object. Clifford Geertz's analysis of symbolic systems has shown that religious meanings arise within semantic spaces that grant intangible entities an effective cultural reality.[17] In this new horizon, negated or imperceptible things can be used as self-contained meanings: heaven, the soul, God… concepts whose power is not derived from their sensory presence, but from their organization within a recognized symbolic network.

This transformation does not necessarily imply deception or misrepresentation, but rather reveals language's capacity to expand the horizon of collective action by invoking references that transcend the immediate. However, this same capacity can be harnessed in two opposing directions: either to foster cooperation and regulate behavior in a way that serves group stability, or to exploit the emotional charge associated with names to manipulate individuals for private interests. Here, the "power of language" manifests itself as a continuation of the emotional structure inherent in consciousness; language does not create emotional states from nothing, but rather summons and reorganizes them within symbolic forms that are readily usable and controllable.

Therefore, naming is not merely a first step toward belief, but rather the structure that allows for the politicization of meaning itself. Wherever the ability to fix a name exists, the possibility of controlling action exists, and wherever action can be controlled, the nucleus of symbolic power arises, which will later form the discursive basis of the sacred.

5. Language as an Artificial and Metaphorical Tool

This approach stems from the assumption that naming, as a semantic reference, is not based on a natural correspondence between the word and its object, but rather on an arbitrary relationship established by the community within a specific linguistic system. Ferdinand de Saussure solidified this principle when he affirmed that the relationship between the signifier and the signified is not causal or essential, but rather

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[17] Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, trans. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 107–116.

conventional, determined by the system, not by nature.[18] Even in cases of onomatopoeia, where the word seems close to its referent, the relationship remains indirect and framed by linguistic convention, as onomatopoeia forms vary across languages. Consequently, a word acquires its meaning only through a collective recognition that establishes it within a pragmatic system.

However, this separation between the signifier and the signified has not weakened language; rather, it has endowed it with its foundational power. Thanks to this separation, the sign is no longer bound to a direct sensory referent but has become capable of constructing conceptual worlds that transcend material experience. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson demonstrated that metaphor is not a secondary rhetorical phenomenon, but rather a conceptual structure that organizes human thought and perception of the world.[19] Major concepts—such as time, existence, and causality—are constructed through networks of metaphors rooted in physical experience.

In this context, the “metaphorical nature of language” does not mean that every word is a poetic image, but rather that the act of reference itself involves a shift from one realm to another, from presence to representation. A name does not reflect the thing itself, but reconstructs it within a symbolic space. This is what has allowed language to evoke the absent and to imbue intangible concepts with a degree of mental and social reality. Ernst Cassirer pointed out that humans do not live solely in a world of objects, but also in a world of symbolic forms that organize their experience and give it meaning.[20] This capacity to detach from the material referent is what has enabled the formulation of entities that transcend sensory data without losing their social efficacy. Language does not create physical reality, but it creates a symbolic reality that operates within the collective consciousness. Thus, it can be said that the power of language lies not only in describing material reality, but also in producing a "mental reality" that is communicable and binding.

Negation, on the other hand, represents the other side of this symbolic power. Saying "there is no" does not merely negate the thing, but rather evokes it in a reversed form within consciousness. Paul Ricoeur

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[18] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 87–125.

[19] Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Roy Harris (London: Duckworth, 1983), 65–70.

[20] George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 3–32.

pointed out that negation remains linked to the possibility of affirmation it reflects, and that discourse can only conceive of absence by formulating it within language.[21] Thus, "non-presence" becomes a linguistic event before it becomes an existential given.

From this perspective, the "non-referential" is not pure non-existence, but a symbolic construction formed through the mechanisms of metaphor and negation combined. When these structures accumulate within a stable cultural system, they can produce parallel worlds that possess social efficacy, despite the absence of their direct sensory referent.

At this point, the question that will guide the subsequent analysis arises: if language is capable of invoking the absent and formulating the non-referential, how does this symbolic possibility transform into belief? And how does negation itself give birth to an entity that is treated as a transcendent truth?

6. The Power to Negate Reality

Negation is not merely a grammatical device attached to a sentence, but rather a cognitive achievement that enables the mind to engage with absence as an object of thought. Saying "there is no axe" does not simply deny the tool's existence, but rather brings it into consciousness in a reversed form; that is, as an inverted presence. In this sense, negation creates what might be called "active absence" (absence-in-presence), where non-existence itself becomes linguistically representable.

Martin Heidegger pointed out that nothingness is not merely the opposite of being, but a revelatory condition for it; nothingness appears in the experience of anxiety as a horizon within which being is revealed.[1] Although this proposition belongs to a specific ontological horizon, it reveals a structural function of negation: presence is only perceived against the backdrop of its possible absence. Thus, when language incorporates negation into its structure, it grants the mind the power to think about what is not present.

However, the paramount importance of negation becomes apparent in the context of practical action. When an agent encounters impotence—such as failing to cut or hunt—absence is not merely a physical fact, but an experience of functional deficiency. Here, language intervenes to reorganize this deficiency within a symbolic horizon. Practical impotence

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[21] Ernst Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, trans. Susanne K. Langer (New York: Dover Publications, 1946), 25–44.

is not left as a silent void, but is linguistically articulated, transforming from a deficiency in action into an object of interpretation.

Friedrich Nietzsche argued that "nothingness" is not an inherent given, but rather a subsequent effect of an action that did not occur; nothingness is not discovered, but inferred from the cessation of agency.[22] In this sense, thinking about negation does not arise from the experience of pure emptiness, but from the interruption of the capacity to act. Negation, therefore, is not so much a negation of existence as it is a designation of a deficiency in agency.

When this deficiency is articulated in language, the field opens up for the production of symbolic alternatives that fill the cognitive and functional void. The statement "no body" does not simply negate the body, but evokes its conceptual opposite. Herein lies the possibility of conceiving of the "spirit" as a symbolic compensation for the absence of physical extension. This does not mean that the metaphysical concept is reduced to a simple linguistic moment, but rather that the structure that allows for its formation is founded within the capacity to represent absence.

Ernst Cassirer pointed out that humankind, as a symbolic being, does not accept emptiness as meaninglessness, but rather reorganizes it within a symbolic network that gives it function.[23] The imagination does not produce entities from nothing, but rather from the redistribution of the distinctions between presence and absence within language.

From this perspective, it can be said that negation does not directly create belief, but it opens up its structural possibility. When absence becomes a subject capable of being articulated, it can transform into a subject capable of being believed. At this threshold, the transition begins from negation as a tool for cognitive organization to negation as an entry point for constructing worlds that transcend sensory perception.

7. Negation as a Trace of Suspended Action

When human consciousness began to take shape within the medium of language, its task was not limited to naming tangible entities. It faced a far more complex problem: how to represent what is absent? Naming a tool, fire, or animal remains linked to a tangible presence that

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[22] Paul Ricœur, *The Rule of Metaphor* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 247–274.

[23] Martin Heidegger, *What Is Metaphysics?*, in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 89–110.

can be pointed to. However, the moment of absence—especially when coupled with the inability to act—poses a different challenge to the mind.

The presence of an axe, for example, fulfills a practical need and affirms the effectiveness of the hand in the world. Its absence, when action is desired but not achieved, is not reduced to mere material non-existence, but is experienced as a deficiency of power. This moment—the moment of the cessation of action—does not remain silent, but is linguistically articulated. Here, "non-existence" is not born as an inherent ontological given, but as a trace of incomplete agency.

In this context, Friedrich Nietzsche offers a crucial analysis when he argues that activity precedes all negative conception, and that "nothingness" is not a primary principle, but rather a subsequent consequence of an experience of failure or deprivation.[24] Nothingness is not inherent to consciousness, but is inferred from the will's inability to realize its object. Consciousness, in this sense, does not create emptiness from nothing, but rather names the effect of the interruption in action.

Thus, saying "no axe" or "no fire" is not a description of absolute nothingness, but a linguistic formulation of an activity that has not been realized. The negation here is an inverted affirmation; it presupposes an object that could exist, but did not. In this sense, a structural paradox arises: language can only establish existence through the possibility of its opposite. There is no presence without a horizon of absence, no action without the possibility of failure.

However, this paradox does not produce the belief all at once, but rather opens up its possibility. When helplessness is formulated symbolically, it becomes amenable to reorganization within a network of meanings. Here, attempts may arise to compensate for the actual deficiency with a symbolic medium that gives agency an alternative form. This process should not be understood as a naive invention of metaphysics, but rather as a redistribution of experience within a linguistic horizon that allows for the representation of absence.

Ernst Cassirer expressed this dimension when he considered that humans do not live in a direct world of things, but in a world of symbolic forms that reorganize experience.[25] Linguistic representation does not

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[24] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), II, §12–18.

[25] Ernst Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, trans. Susanne K. Langer (New York: Dover Publications, 1946), 25–44.

correspond to reality, but rather reduces and reformulates it according to its own structure. Hence, the transition from "suspended action" to "symbolic entity" becomes a transition within the structure of consciousness itself, not a leap outside of it.

Therefore, negation as a consequence of suspended action does not mean that nothingness is the origin of things, but rather that language gives the experience of failure a communicable form. At this threshold, representation can gradually become independent of its practical context, transforming into a more complex belief structure. Belief, in its primitive form, is nothing more than a symbolic reorganization of an experience of lack that was not tolerated as silence.

8. The Concept of Nothingness

The question of nothingness occupies a central position in modern philosophy, not as a purely metaphysical subject, but as a boundary that reveals the nature of the relationship between language and being. While Friedrich Nietzsche saw “nothingness” not as an original principle, but as a subsequent effect of the cessation of agency or the failure of the will,[26] Martin Heidegger considered nothingness not merely the opposite of being, but an element that reveals it; for being is only revealed against the backdrop of its potential non-being.[27] Despite the difference in these two philosophical perspectives, both point to a common thread: nothingness is not given directly, but is formulated within language. It does not appear as a raw void, but is transformed into a conceptual principle through naming and negation. Language here does not create nothingness from nothing, but rather grants it the capacity for discourse and thought, transforming it from an experience of discontinuity into a semantic structure.

This transformation finds its extension in the traditions of negative theology, where negation becomes a path to absolving the Absolute of all positive definition.[28] However, this approach, while seeking to transcend analogy, simultaneously presupposes that behind limited words lies a transcendent reality that can be indicated through the negation of attributes. Herein lies a subtle paradox: the negation intended to liberate

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[26] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), II, §12–18 see: Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), §108–125.

[27] Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay on Man* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1944), 43–65.

[28] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), II, §12–18.

the Absolute from language ends up affirming its nameability through negation itself.

Returning to the anthropological perspective, the issue can be approached from a different angle. In its earliest stages, humankind encountered a material world perceived only through sensory data. The fixation of objects in memory was achieved through a phonetic symbol that granted them stability within the community.[29] However, the paradox arises when the object is absent or destroyed; emptiness is not experienced as neutrality, but rather as a lack of agency.

What might be termed an “ontology of agency” presupposes that existence is experienced through action. In his critique of metaphysics, Nietzsche emphasized the primacy of action over substance, rejecting the notion that beings possess a fixed quality prior to their movement.[30] However, when action ceases, or its object disappears, the mind encounters a void that threatens the logic of control. Here, the deficiency is not left silent, but rather reorganized within a symbolic representation that imbues it with meaning.

Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, in his analysis of the "pre-logical" mentality, observed that traditional humans do not merely name things, but also ascribe to them a power that transcends their material presence—a power that can persist even after their annihilation.[31] This should not be interpreted as a report on "primitive thinking," but rather as a description of a symbolic mechanism that preserves for things an impact that transcends their materiality.

Hence, belief is not born from activity alone, nor from absence alone, but from the interplay between the two. Wherever action ceases, language intervenes to bridge the gap between presence and absence. Where absence is reorganized within a symbolic framework, the possibility arises of fixing this organization in the form of a belief. Nothingness, in this context, is not a metaphysical origin, but a linguistic boundary that allows consciousness to give emptiness a form within which it can be lived.

9. Ritual and Absence

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[29] Martin Heidegger, *What Is Metaphysics?*, in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 89–110.

[30] Pseudo-Dionysius, The Mystical Theology, trans. Colm Luibheid (New York: Paulist Press, 1987).

[31] Claude Lévi-Strauss, Structural Anthropology, trans. Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf (New York: Basic Books, 1963), 206–231.

Anthropological studies reveal that loss and non-existence in traditional societies were not met with silence or passive acceptance of emptiness, but rather surrounded by a series of ritual practices that reintegrated them within a symbolic system.[32] Absence is not left as a passive state, but is reorganized as a "symbolic presence" that calls for an alternative discourse and action. Ritual, in this context, is not merely an expression of emotion, but a mechanism for rearranging the relationship between the community and what it has lost.

In his analysis of what he termed the "savage mind," Claude Lévi-Strauss pointed out that mythical thought operates through opposing dualities that organize human experience, such as life/death, presence/absence, and nature/culture.[33] These binary structures do not negate either pole, but rather maintain them in a state of perpetual tension that allows for the production of meaning. Thus, negation is not understood as absolute nothingness, but is reintegrated within a network of oppositions that preserves the balance of the symbolic order.

Similarly, Émile Durkheim demonstrated that rituals do not create the sacred from nothing, but rather express the community's need to solidify its collective representations and reproduce its cohesion in the face of crises, including death and loss.[34] Funeral rites, for example, do not merely bid farewell to the departed, but redefine their position within the community, transforming physical absence into a continuous symbolic presence.

From this perspective, belief is not generated solely by technical performance, because a self-sufficient act does not require a symbolism that transcends it. Belief is formed when absence is added to the equation of action, and when the hand is no longer able to maintain its direct control over the world. Here, language intervenes to fill the void, not as a direct metaphysical compensation, but as a mediator that transfers experience from the level of event to the level of meaning.

Absence, unless linguistically articulated, remains a scattered experience. But when it is named and incorporated into discourse and ritual, it becomes an organizing element of collective memory. Mircea Eliade emphasized that ritual reproduces the moment of origin and gives

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[32] Nietzsche, Genealogy of Morals, II, §1–5.

[33] Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, *How Natives Think*, trans. Lilian A. Clare (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 76–102.

[34] Bronislaw Malinowski, Magic, Science and Religion (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1954), 36–58.

the event a meaning that transcends its contingent time.[35] In this sense, what fills absence is not silence, but the word coupled with ritual action.

However, the statement that "the word is the origin of all belief" should be understood as a statement of a condition of possibility, not of an exclusive cause. Existence is established by a word, reason is understood by a word, and emptiness is named by a word; but these words do not operate in a vacuum, but within a social structure that grants them efficacy. Therefore, belief can be understood as a linguistic-symbolic possibility projected onto reality in order to organize memory and regulate collective action, not as an illusion isolated from its historical and social conditions.

10. The Historicity of Language and Belief

A comparison of various mythological and religious systems reveals that binary structures play a pivotal role in organizing human experience. Structural analysis of myth has shown that many narratives—whether in the traditions of Mesopotamia, ancient Egypt, Greece, or India—are built around polar oppositions such as life/death, earth/sky, mortality/immortality.[36] These dualities do not function as simplistic descriptions of the world, but rather as mechanisms of semantic organization, where one pole is defined by the negation of the other, and its meaning is derived from this tension.

This structural pattern demonstrates that naming and negation do not operate in isolation, but rather in constant conjunction. The definition of "immortality" is only valid against the backdrop of "mortality," and the "sacred" is understood in relation to the "profane."[37] Thus, the world is reconstructed within symbolic categories that possess relative stability over time because they organize experience within frameworks that are transmissible and teachable.

This construction is not limited to general existential dualities, but extends to the textual practices themselves. In the Indian Upanishad tradition, the famous expression “niti niti” (not this, not that) recurs as an epistemological approach that seeks to refer to the Absolute by negating

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[35] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 130–161.

[36] Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Karen E. Fields (New York: Free Press, 1995), 208–236.

[37] Mircea Eliade, Myth and Reality (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 20–63.

all positive specification.[38] This method does not offer a positive definition, but rather accumulates negation until the Absolute is understood as that which transcends all description.

A similar logic—albeit within a different theological framework—appears in the Hebrew tradition, where the name of God is surrounded by a barrier of prohibition, and its utterance is replaced by conventional alternatives.[39] This refusal to name does not negate the name, but rather imbues it with a heightened symbolic density; the forbidden acquires an authority that transcends the ordinary.

This does not imply a correspondence between different traditions, but rather reveals a common mechanism: the negation of the limited or imperfect is used as a means to open a horizon that transcends direct designation. In these cases, the Absolute is not given positively, but is inferred from the negation of all partial specification. Thus, negation is transformed from a linguistic tool into a technique for producing transcendent concepts. However, this "transcendence" should not be understood as a disdain for reality, but rather as an expression of an awareness of its limitations. When consciousness encounters the inadequacy of language to encompass experience, it resorts to negation as a horizon that allows for the expansion of meaning. Hence, it can be said that the historicity of belief reveals a structural continuity: language, through both naming and negation, organizes the tension between the limited and the transcendent, giving this tension a form within which it can be lived.

11. The Structure of Belief in Language (From Metaphor to Doctrine)

If language represents reality through symbolic mediation, then every communicative act presupposes a kind of implicit trust in the validity of this representation. When a speaker utters a word, they assume that this word has a stable meaning within the system, and that the listener is capable of understanding it. Therefore, linguistic understanding is not based on a physical correspondence between the word and the thing, but rather on a shared acceptance of the possibility of reference.

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[38] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, trans. Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf (New York: Basic Books, 1963), 206–231.

[39] Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Karen E. Fields (New York: Free Press, 1995), 34–44.

This dimension can be described as the "fiduciary" or "pragmatic" structure of language, where communication relies on the implicit assumption that the relationship between signifier and signified is reliable, despite its structural arbitrariness, as Saussure demonstrated.[40] Arbitrariness does not negate effectiveness, but rather makes it conditional upon collective agreement. Language does not function because the relationship is natural, but because the community grants it sufficient stability for use.

John Austin, in his analysis of speech acts, pointed out that utterances only produce their effect within conditions of recognition and a context that legitimizes them.[41] A sentence is not merely a carrier of subjective meaning, but presupposes a network of shared expectations between the speaker and the listener. This implicit agreement is what gives the symbol its effectiveness.

In this context, we can distinguish three layers of "belief" inherent in every linguistic use, if the term is used here in its pragmatic rather than dogmatic sense:

1. Belief that the word has a signified within the system.

2. Belief that the addressee is capable of grasping the signified.

3. Belief that what is being referred to is possible or comprehensible within a shared horizon.

This does not mean that every linguistic use is an act of religious belief, but rather that language is based on the assumption of the possibility of reference. A symbol only functions if it is considered capable of meaning. Paul Ricoeur emphasized that discourse is founded on a prior trust in the world's comprehensibility, and that this trust is a condition for the very possibility of interpretation.[42] However, this trusting structure does not remain neutral. When certain designations become established within a community and are granted immunity from questioning, pragmatic trust transforms into a normative commitment. Here, the religious dimension intersects with the political dimension. Pierre Bourdieu demonstrated that the power of the word lies not only in

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[40] *The Principal Upanishads*, trans. S. Radhakrishnan (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1953), 57–59.

[41] Exodus 3:14 ؛see: John Barton, *The Theology of the Book of Exodus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 58–72.

[42] Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Roy Harris (London: Duckworth, 1983), 65–70.

its linguistic structure but also in the social recognition that grants it legitimacy and empowers the speaker to utter it.[43] The unlimited possibilities afforded by the separation between signifier and signified only become stable beliefs through collective affirmation. The mutual trust that enables communication can, under certain conditions, transform into symbolic authority, turning possibility into certainty and metaphor into dogma. At this point, language ceases to be merely a medium for meaning and becomes an instrument for producing collective commitment.

Thus, language inherently possesses two intertwined dimensions: a trusting dimension that makes communication possible, and an authoritative dimension that renders certain meanings binding. From this intertwining arises the shift from metaphor as an open semantic horizon to dogma as a normative fixation of a specific meaning.

12. Prohibitions and Commands as a Construction of Illusion

The shift from negation as a tool for naming to prohibition as a tool for directing represents a pivotal moment in the formation of power within the community. When "no" transforms from a description of absence into an imperative—"do not do," "do not touch," "do not say"—negation becomes a technique for regulating action and controlling the body. Here, prohibition does not describe reality, but rather reshapes it by imposing limits on movement and desire.

Michel Foucault pointed out that modern power operates not only through direct coercion, but also through the production of patterns of discipline that make the body itself a field of regulation and control.[44] Despite the difference in historical context, the structural mechanism is the same: language becomes a tool for codification, and the imperative becomes a means of redistributing action within the community.

In this context, the permissible is not seen as a field of existential fulfillment, but rather as commonplace and accessible, while the forbidden is imbued with a doubled symbolic density. Émile Durkheim demonstrated that the separation between the sacred and the profane is based on a mechanism of isolation that surrounds what is forbidden to

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[43] J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), 14–24.

[44] Paul Ricœur, Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976), 71–88.

touch or say with an aura of power and awe.[45] Prohibition does not produce a void, but rather a surplus of meaning.

Sigmund Freud, in his analysis of taboo, also observed that the forbidden combines fear and attraction simultaneously, and that the power of the prohibition stems not only from its content but also from the emotional charge that accompanies it.[46] However, reading these phenomena does not necessitate accepting the psychological interpretation literally, but rather reveals a correlation between prohibition and desire: the stricter the prohibition, the greater the intensity of the forbidden object.

From this perspective, it can be said that prohibition does not merely regulate behavior, but also redistributes value within the symbolic system. The forbidden is symbolically intensified and redefined as a realm of sanctity or danger. With the accumulation of this mechanism, earthly life may be revalued as inferior to a transcendent horizon constructed linguistically around death or the afterlife. However, this "exaggeration" is not to be understood as a conscious conspiracy, but rather as a structural effect of the prohibition mechanism itself.

When the authority to name and prohibit is concentrated within a specific group—such as a shaman, priest, or arbiter—the ability to formulate "no" becomes symbolic capital. Pierre Bourdieu demonstrated that the monopoly on the production of meaning grants its practitioners actual power to direct behavior, because social recognition is what imbues discourse with its binding force.[47] However, this delegation is not always imposed by force; it may be voluntary, when individuals find in surrendering the authority to direct a relief from the burden of choice and responsibility. Here, the linguistic dimension intersects with the psychological and social dimensions: language, through commands and prohibitions, not only controls the body but also regulates the individual's relationship with their capacity for action.

Therefore, prohibitions and commands do not produce "illusion" in the sense of pure falsehood, but rather create a symbolic reality in which the boundaries between the permissible and the forbidden, between the

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[45] Pierre Bourdieu, Language and Symbolic Power, trans. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 107–116.

[46] Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay on Man* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1944), 43–65.

[47] Pierre Bourdieu, Language and Symbolic Power, trans. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 107–116.

possible and the prohibited, are redefined. Within this structure, the space emerges where symbolism can transform into authority, and authority into belief.

13. The Evolution of Faith/Abstinence (The Psychology of Asceticism and Ascetics)

The voluntary abstinence from certain vital functions—such as eating, sleeping, or sex—can be viewed as a multi-dimensional practice that transcends its immediate moral or spiritual dimension. Asceticism, in one aspect, represents a reorganization of the relationship between the body and desire within a symbolic horizon that imbues abstinence with a value beyond biological utility.

From a sociological perspective, Max Weber demonstrated that religious asceticism is not merely a rejection of pleasure, but rather establishes a form of self-discipline that grants the individual a privileged position within the community.[48] Abstinence can become a mark of distinction and a means of acquiring symbolic capital that bestows moral authority upon its practitioner. In this case, austerity is understood not only as a denial of the body, but also as a symbolic investment in a specific social position.

From a critical philosophical perspective, Friedrich Nietzsche saw in the "ascetic ideal" a mechanism for transforming weakness or deprivation into a supreme value, where physical deficiency is reinterpreted as moral superiority.[49] However, Nietzsche's reading does not imply reducing all asceticism to a mental illness or an authoritarian ploy, but rather reveals the possibility of a reversal of norms: what the body is denied may be granted a transcendent status within the belief system.

Voluntary abstinence can also be understood as a symbolic attempt to alleviate the burden of biological necessity. When the gratification of desire is suspended, even temporarily, the relationship between the individual and their body is redefined. The body is no longer a realm of mere necessity, but becomes an arena for testing the will. Here, value is redistributed between "biological life" and "spiritual life," reinforcing a conception that differentiates between two levels of existence.

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[48] Jacques Derrida, “Différance,” in Margins of Philosophy, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 1–28.

[49] Martin Heidegger, Being and Time, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), 32–63.

However, this differentiation does not always lead to an absolute rupture. In many belief systems, the individual is deprived of certain daily needs, only to be promised their restoration in an idealized afterlife. This tension between earthly prohibition and otherworldly promise reveals a dual symbolic mechanism: deprivation is presented as a temporary test, while fulfillment is guaranteed in another, imagined time. Émile Durkheim observed that religion does not negate desires, but rather reorganizes them within a horizon that transcends individual time.[50] From this perspective, we can speak of the formation of what is called the "ultimate sacred illusion," not in the sense of mere falsehood, but as a gradual abstraction of the world from its material density in favor of a symbolic horizon that promises perfection. Language, through the vocabulary of purity and impurity, soul and body, rearranges the hierarchy of values, so that abstinence is presented as liberation, and biological deficiency is redefined as a spiritual virtue.

However, this path does not negate the inherent complexity of doctrinal practice. Belief only takes root if it can connect deprivation and hope, prohibition and promise. Herein lies the power of the symbolic structure: it not only negates desire but also redirects it toward another horizon, where abstinence transforms from loss into investment in a meaning that transcends the present.

Thus, asceticism is not reduced to the repression of the body, nor is it understood merely as a competitive strategy. Rather, it represents a pivotal moment in the reformulation of the relationship between language and desire. It is here that the doctrinal structure reaches its zenith, when biological reality itself is redefined as a transient stage before a symbolic horizon presented as the ultimate.

14.Death as a Supreme Value

When the discourse of "victory through death" intensifies and becomes a symbolic center within the community, a shift in the hierarchy of values occurs: abstinence becomes a virtue, and earthly life is redefined as an imperfect or transient phase before a transcendent horizon presented as absolute truth. However, this transformation is not understood as a purely spiritual evolution, but rather as a reorganization of meaning within a linguistic structure that amplifies the vocabulary of annihilation, salvation, and the afterlife.

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[50] Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 135–169.

This analysis does not aim to diminish the moral value of asceticism as an individual choice, but rather seeks to deconstruct the discursive apparatus that surrounds it when it becomes a collective norm. In this case, asceticism becomes a coercive discursive structure that regulates action and redistributes its legitimacy. Michel Foucault has shown that moral discourses can be transformed into techniques for controlling and reshaping the body within disciplinary systems.[51] The body is not merely repressed, but is redefined as an object of testing and obedience.

On a value-based level, Friedrich Nietzsche observed that elevating death or the afterlife to the status of the supreme value inverts the hierarchy of worth, such that strength and vitality are seen as inferior to abstinence and sacrifice.[52] This does not mean that all eschatological discourse is a negation of life, but rather that some of its forms may produce a systematic preference for absence over presence, and for promise over reality. From an anthropological perspective, we can draw on René Girard's analysis of mimetic desire, where human desires tend to mimic a desired object within the community.[53] However, this mimetic drive can be redirected: instead of the community competing for limited worldly resources, desire is redirected toward an inexhaustible, otherworldly abundance. Here, desire is not eliminated, but rather postponed and reformulated.

This transformation does not occur in a vacuum, but within an institutional structure that monopolizes the keys to naming and promise. As Bourdieu demonstrated, symbolic power derives its strength from collective recognition, which grants it the legitimacy to define what is good or bad, sacred or profane.[54] Thus, the shift of competition from the arena of reality to the arena of symbolic salvation redistributes social energy within a horizon controlled by the linguistic institution.

However, this process is not reducible to a conscious conspiracy, but rather to a structural mechanism: when death is redefined as a higher gain, the relationship to life itself is reshaped. Competitive energy is thus

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[51] Émile Durkheim, The Elementary Forms of Religious Life, trans. Karen E. Fields (New York: Free Press, 1995), 34–44.

[52] Sigmund Freud, Totem and Taboo, trans. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1950), 18–44.

[53] Pierre Bourdieu, Language and Symbolic Power, trans. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 107–116.

[54] Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, trans. Talcott Parsons (London: Routledge, 1930), 95–128.

transformed from the pursuit of expanding effectiveness in the material world to the pursuit of symbolic salvation. Individual desire is thereby reprogrammed within a collective framework that monitors adherence to prohibitions and rewards obedience with the promise of deferred abundance.

Therefore, "death as a supreme value" does not signify the glorification of annihilation in itself, but rather a moment in which language is condensed to its utmost limits, when negation—negation of the body, negation of desire, negation of the world—becomes a means of producing a horizon that transcends reality. Here, the belief system reaches its culmination: meaning is not derived from presence, but from the promise of transcendent absence.

15. Language as a Transcendental Phenomenon and Worldview

From a philosophical perspective, language can be viewed not merely as a tool for conveying reality, but as a condition for its emergence into consciousness. In this sense, language performs a transcendental function; that is, it constitutes the horizon within which existence is perceived and understood. It is not about an entity transcendent to the world, but rather a structure prior to experience in its cognitive sense, enabling consciousness to organize its data and transform it into a meaningful world.

In this context, Martin Heidegger saw language as the "house of Being," that is, the space in which beings are revealed.[55] Humans do not encounter things silently, but rather enter into an interpretive relationship with them through words. However, this does not mean that language transcends or is independent of reality, but rather indicates that all understanding of reality passes through a semantic medium.

But this transcendental dimension does not negate the physical origin of language. From a material-evolutionary perspective, language is nothing more than a neural activity embodied in sounds and symbols resulting from brain processes. Terence Deacon demonstrated that linguistic symbolism evolved as a biological adaptation linked to neural structure and the pressures of social cooperation.[56] From this perspective, language is not a mystical force, but rather the result of a long

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[55] Friedrich Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), III, §11–28.

[56] Émile Durkheim, The Elementary Forms of Religious Life, trans. Karen E. Fields (New York: Free Press, 1995), 303–327.

evolutionary process. However, reducing language to its biological dimension alone deprives it of its cultural specificity. Symbols, though originating in the brain, are not reducible to its activity. They acquire relative autonomy within the social sphere, where they are reproduced and solidified through collective memory and institutions. Herein lies the structural tension that defines the nature of language: on the one hand, it is an organic product of evolution, and on the other, a symbolic horizon that transcends immediate material reality.

It can be said that every cultural-linguistic manifestation is a formalization of the will to live and survive, but it is not a direct reflection of a blind instinct. Desire, when it is channeled through symbols, is reformulated and imbued with meanings that transcend its biological function. Hence arises the paradox: language, which emerged from the need for survival, becomes capable of producing worlds that may prefer death to life, or absence to presence, if this becomes entrenched within a particular belief system.

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This tension between the physical origin and symbolic transcendence is what gives language its power and its danger simultaneously. It is not transcendent to the world, but it is capable of rearranging it semantically; it is not a force outside of nature, but it can create symbolic worlds that transcend the limited and the immediate.

Therefore, understanding language as a transcendental phenomenon does not mean deifying it, but rather recognizing it as the condition through which the human world itself is formed. It is the house of being, but also the house of possible illusion; it is an instrument of survival, but it is capable of formulating meanings that may redefine the very meaning of survival.

16.Language as a Condition of Possibility for Belief

If belief is defined as a system of concepts that transcends the limits of direct sensory perception, then language represents its structural condition of possibility. Belief is not experienced at the level of sensory perception, but rather is constructed within a symbolic space that allows for the invocation of what is unseen or intangible. Without this space, it is impossible to formulate, establish, or transmit belief across generations.

This condition should not be understood in a simple instrumental sense; language is not merely a means by which belief expresses itself, but rather the horizon within which its subjects are originally formed. The relationship between language and belief is not one of vessel and content, but one of foundation and possibility. The subjects of faith—such as the unseen, divinity, and the afterlife—are not presented directly to the senses, but are invoked within consciousness through the semantic structure that grants them conceptualization. Paul Ricoeur emphasized that the symbol "gives what it thinks about," meaning that the symbol does not merely point to a pre-existing meaning, but rather opens a horizon for thinking about what was previously unavailable.[57] In this sense, the presence of the intangible in collective consciousness is not a physical presence, but a symbolic one, created and reproduced by language through discourse.

Clifford Geertz also demonstrated that religious systems operate through networks of symbols that shape "moods and motivations" and lend them a sense of reality.[2] What makes a belief effective is not its correspondence to a sensory reference, but its organization within a symbolic structure that confers upon it credibility within the community.

The belief that language itself is a transcendent entity or an independent force represents a reflexive stage in this process; its material and historical origins are forgotten, and it is treated as a source of truth rather than a medium for it. However, philosophical and anthropological analysis reminds us that language, despite its foundational function, remains a human and historical construct, and that its effectiveness is contingent upon the social structure that grants it recognition.

Therefore, to say that language is a condition of possibility for belief does not mean that it is its ultimate cause, but rather that it is the framework that allows for its existence as a shared conception. The intangible only enters collective consciousness when it is formulated into words, and words only acquire their power when they are circulated and

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[57] Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 135–169.

accepted. From this interaction arises the sphere in which symbolic possibilities are transformed into stable beliefs.

17.Language as a Horizon for Forming Collective Institutions

A belief, at its individual level, may remain a sentimental experience or an internal emotion that does not transcend the boundaries of the self. However, it only transforms into belief when it is formulated into a discourse that is open to circulation and sharing. Language is the horizon that allows for the transformation of private feeling into shared meaning, and subsequently into an institution with rules, regulations, and organized practices.

The transition from individual belief to collective doctrine presupposes the symbol's capacity for dissemination and stability within the community. Clifford Geertz demonstrated that religion is not based solely on ideas, but on a symbolic network that produces a collective mood and imbues it with a sense of reality.[58] This "symbolic condensation" is only achieved when meanings are formulated in a language that allows for their circulation and entrenchment.

The function of language is not limited to expressing meaning; it also contributes to the production of the very logic of the sacred. Émile Durkheim explained that the sacred is not given as a natural property of things, but is created through a symbolic separation between them and the realm of the profane.[59] Terms like "forbidden" or "sacred" do not describe a prior reality, but rather transfer it from the realm of the familiar to an isolated realm of symbolic density. In this context, language performs a transformative function, not merely a descriptive one.

Furthermore, the belief structure is embodied in specific linguistic forms: negation and affirmation, command and prohibition, promise and threat. These formulations are not external additions, but rather derive their strength from the logic of language itself. Belief, once established, takes the form of propositions that can be repeated, memorized, and taught, making it organized according to grammatical and rhetorical rules before it is based on direct sensory data.

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[58] Friedrich Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), III, §11–28.

[59] René Girard, Violence and the Sacred, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 1–52.

Religious imagination, however, is shaped only through the images woven by language. Heaven and Hell, angels and jinn, are not sensory data, but rather figurative constructs created through metaphor, simile, and symbol. Paul Ricoeur emphasized that metaphor not only embellishes discourse but also opens up possible worlds that the recipient experiences as a horizon of meaning.[60] This capacity to create "possible worlds" is what gives doctrine its existential density.

Therefore, it becomes difficult to conceive of a doctrine that precedes or is independent of language. Belief only crystallizes as a system when it enters the realm of discourse and is reproduced through naming, repetition, and interpretation. Language, then, is not an external vessel that contains belief, but rather the field in which it is born, takes root, and transforms into a collective institution that organizes behavior and redefines reality.

18. The Fiduciary Dimensions of Linguistic Structure

The fiduciary structure inherent in language—which makes it a prerequisite for the formation of beliefs—manifests itself on three interconnected levels:

1. A pragmatic belief that a word has meaning within a shared linguistic system.

2. A communicative belief that the listener is capable of understanding this meaning according to established rules of comprehension.

3. A potential belief that what is being referred to is capable of meaning or existence within a shared horizon, even if it is not present in the senses.

The use of the term "belief" here does not refer to dogmatic belief, but rather to the structural trust upon which every linguistic act is based. As John Austin demonstrated, a statement only succeeds if it is acknowledged within a context that lends it validity.[61] Communication presupposes a prior acceptance of the possibility of reference; otherwise, meaning collapses before it is uttered.

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[60] Pierre Bourdieu, Language and Symbolic Power, trans. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 107–116.

[61] Martin Heidegger, Letter on Humanism, in Basic Writings, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 193–242.

Every human community constructs its symbolic world through language, not merely as a tool for transmission, but as a space in which experience is reorganized. Through the exchange of stories, rituals, and metaphorically charged names, a belief system is formed, granting the community cohesion and rationality. Clifford Geertz explained that religious systems operate through symbols that produce a "sense of realism," making meaning seem natural and self-evident.[62] What sometimes appears to be language as descended from worlds beyond material reality is not a metaphysical property of it, but rather an effect of its capacity to generate conceptual images that transcend sensory data. Linguistic imagination—through metaphor and narrative—imbues intangible ideas with conceptualization, and thus the ability to influence behavior. Paul Ricoeur emphasized that the symbol "opens up a horizon" that is not limited to what is seen, but includes what can be thought.[63] This symbolic and social accumulation is what establishes the religious dimension of the linguistic phenomenon. From within the community, language appears as a force that generates meaning and establishes the shared world, because meaning only emerges through it. However, this "power" is not supernatural, but rather arises from the interplay between common-sense trust, social recognition, and the stability of symbols within collective memory.

Therefore, the structure of belief in language does not reside in a hidden essence, but rather in the community's reliance on it as the horizon that defines what is comprehensible and binding. From this reliance, the potential of belief is generated, where the common meaning becomes a shared truth, and the shared truth becomes a reference point that organizes consciousness and behavior.

19. The Construction of the Sacred: Between Naming, Taboo, and Prohibition

The capacity of language is not limited to naming the present; its decisive power is manifested in its ability to evoke the absent. When negation is formulated in a phrase like "non-existence," it does not produce a silent void, but rather creates a semantic horizon that calls for filling. Negation, in this sense, is not limited to the elimination of a subject, but opens up a symbolic possibility that corresponds to it. The

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[62] Terrence W. Deacon, The Symbolic Species: The Co-evolution of Language and the Brain (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997), 340–377.

[63] Paul Ricœur, The Symbolism of Evil, trans. Emerson Buchanan (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), 15–25.

absence of something does not remain a negative given, but rather transforms into a linguistic structure capable of being shaped.

This is evident in the example of the body and death. The absence of the body from action or direct sensory perception is not experienced as absolute non-existence, but as an interruption requiring explanation. Émile Durkheim pointed out that funeral rites do not merely treat death as a biological end, but reintegrate it within a symbolic system that preserves the cohesion of the community.[64] The deceased is not left in nothingness, but is redefined within a discourse that ensures their continued presence in the collective memory.

The emergence of the concept of "spirit" should not be understood as a mechanical response to the negation of the body, but as a possibility made possible by the linguistic structure itself. When the death of the body is formulated as a negation, the space opens for a positive counter-conception that gives continuity a symbolic form. By naming absence, language also allows for the imagining of an extension that transcends physical presence.

Sigmund Freud observed that taboo, especially in the context of death, reflects not only a biological fear but also a complex emotional charge combining awe and reverence.[65] Cemeteries, for example, are not understood merely as physical places, but as spaces surrounded by prohibitions that regulate the relationship between the living and the absent. Here, the prohibition does not negate the thing but elevates it to a higher level of symbolic intensity.

On the other hand, Mircea Eliade demonstrated that funeral rites re-represent the event of death as a passage, not a rupture, and that the idea of "sleep" as a metaphor for death recurs in multiple cultures.[66] This metaphor does not merely describe the state but reshapes it within a different temporal horizon, where absence is understood as waiting or transition.

Thus, a temporal paradox is formed: the term "post-" refers to an event that occurred in the past, but it produces a being understood as existing outside of time and space. Memory—another name for absence—is transformed into a continuous symbolic presence, sometimes

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[64] Clifford Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 90–106.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Émile Durkheim, The Elementary Forms of Religious Life, trans. Karen E. Fields (New York: Free Press, 1995), 34–44.

surrounded by a fence of taboos that separate it from the everyday realm. Thus, the sacred is no longer an inherent property of a thing, but rather the result of a linguistic-symbolic process of separation that redefines its place in the world.

In this context, the construction of the sacred is not the creation of a mystical essence from nothing, but a reorganization of absence within a system of naming and prohibition. Naming grants the object a symbolic existence, and prohibition isolates it from ordinary use. From this isolation arises the aura that is defined as sacred.

20. The Sacred as a Linguistic Classification

Mircea Eliade points out that the sacred is not understood merely as a subjective emotion or state of being, but as a mode of revelation that separates certain phenomena from the ordinary realm.[67] However, this separation is only achieved within a symbolic structure that allows for its naming and differentiation. The sacred does not appear in a vacuum, but within a language that possesses the capacity for differentiation and classification.

According to Saussure's logic of difference, the act of naming does not confer meaning solely through affirmation, but also through distinction and the implicit negation of what is not.[68] Thus, a thing is not sacred because it possesses a transcendent, natural quality, but because it is linguistically separated from the network of ordinary use. The label "sacred" or "prohibited" not only describes reality but also reorders it, transferring its subject from the realm of everyday use to a realm surrounded by a symbolic fence.

Émile Durkheim emphasized that the distinction between the sacred and the profane is a social act that establishes a system of classifications which reorganizes the world.[69] From this perspective, the sacred can be understood as a socio-linguistic technique for dividing reality into permissible and forbidden, ordinary and exceptional. Prohibition does not negate the thing, but rather isolates it and imbues it with a heightened semantic density.

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[67] Paul Ricœur, The Rule of Metaphor (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 247–274.

[68] J. L. Austin, How to Do Things with Words (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), 14–24.

[69] Clifford Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 90–106.

In this sense, the sacred performs a dual function: it reinforces social cohesion by uniting the community around shared signs, but it can—under certain circumstances—become a closed sphere that prevents the questioning of certain meanings. When symbols are shielded from criticism, they transform from tools of organization into fixed axioms.

This dynamic is clearly evident in systems that tend to construct a unitary symbolic matrix, where the multiplicity of phenomena is reinterpreted through a single center presented as the origin or source. In such structures, the void created by the absence of direct meaning is filled by an integrated symbolic network, which may later be reduced to a single, unifying principle. This tendency toward uniformity is not an inevitable consequence of religion, but rather a structural effect of language's desire to reduce complexity and reorganize multiplicity.

When this symbolic center is projected onto a specific actor—an individual or an institution—power becomes concentrated at a single point. Pierre Bourdieu pointed out that the monopoly on the production of meaning grants its holder symbolic power that extends beyond the discursive sphere into the social sphere.[70] Here, linguistic classification becomes a structure for organizing power, where possibilities are redistributed according to the criterion of the sacred.

However, this transformation should not necessarily be understood as a moral deviation, but rather as a logical consequence of a classificatory structure that works to reduce semantic chaos. When language organizes the world, it may tend to unify it; and when it unifies it, it may open the way for the concentration of power.

Therefore, the sacred is not a given prior to language, nor a purely psychological state, but rather a symbolic classification that rearranges the world within binaries that simultaneously produce meaning and commitment. From this classification emerge the potential for cohesion, and—under specific circumstances—the potential for authoritarian control.

21.Ritual Words and the Limits of Discourse

Throughout history, human societies establish symbolic boundaries that regulate what may and may not be said. These boundaries are embodied not only in written laws, but also in words uttered only within a

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[70] Paul Ricœur, Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976), 71–88.

ritual context, names surrounded by a veil of prohibition, and rhetorical formulas whose transgression constitutes a violation of the symbolic order. Herein lies a structural paradox: the language that expanded the realm of possibility through its capacity to invoke the absent is the same language that redefines the boundaries of the possible through the regulation of discourse.

This mechanism can be understood in light of Ludwig Wittgenstein's assertion that the limits of language are the limits of the world as it is lived and understood.[71] When certain words are restricted by specific rituals, not only is the sound silenced, but what can be conceived and thought about is also redefined. The impossible, when linguistically expressed, becomes a marker that delineates the boundaries of meaning.

When a community names an entity or place and surrounds it with a series of prohibitions—"untouchable," "unseen," "to be mentioned only in a specific context"—the name transcends its denotative function to become a sign with a heightened symbolic density. Émile Durkheim demonstrated that prohibition does not negate the thing, but rather isolates it and grants it an exceptional status within the social order.[2] Sanctity is not a natural property, but rather the result of a linguistic-symbolic separation.

However, this separation operates not only at the level of practice but also at the level of the imagination. Every sensory perception passes through neural processes that interpret and reshape data into an internal image. With the intervention of language, this image is reconstructed within a network of classifications and metaphors. It can be said, then, that the sacred is formed through a dual imagining: a perceptual imagining linked to the relationship between the senses and the brain, and a symbolic imagining resulting from the reorganization of this image within the linguistic structure.

This imagining is accompanied by a dual negation: a negation of the inadequacy of material reality in the face of desire or expectation, and a negation of the possibility of free access to the object of the sacred through the imposition of symbolic constraints on speech and action. The sacred is proclaimed as transcendent, yet simultaneously surrounded by a barrier that prevents its approach outside of specific conditions.

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[71] Émile Durkheim, The Elementary Forms of Religious Life, trans. Karen E. Fields (New York: Free Press, 1995), 392–410.

The issue of the community's relinquishment of the production of meaning is not understood as a conscious contract so much as it is the result of a mechanism of recognition. As Pierre Bourdieu demonstrated, symbolic authority derives its power from the community's acceptance of it and from the recognition of the legitimacy of those who speak on its behalf.[72] When the interpretation of ritual words is monopolized within a specific institution or class, the boundaries of discourse are redefined within a framework that determines what is acceptable and what is excluded. Thus, ritual words not only establish the sacred but also define its boundaries. They regulate the relationship between the possible and the impossible, between speech and silence, transforming language from an open horizon of possibility into a system that regulates its own potential. From this regulation arises the power of symbols, as well as their fragility, since a mere shift in linguistic boundaries is enough to rearrange the world they depict.

22. The Sacred and the Function of Regulation

As a linguistic-cultural variable, the sacred functions as a mechanism for regulating meaning within a community. It not only determines what is permitted or forbidden but also defines the boundaries of speech itself: what is said publicly, what is kept secret, and what is considered desecration. In this sense, the sacred constitutes a symbolic apparatus for regulating meaning, ensuring the stability and continuity of the belief system across generations.

Émile Durkheim demonstrated that the distinction between the sacred and the profane is not merely religious in nature, but also plays a fundamental role in maintaining community cohesion.[73] The sacred serves as an ultimate authority, imbued with reverence, and is used to reinforce shared values. Through this reinforcement, the "symbolic contract" that binds individuals within a single semantic network is reproduced.

However, this regulating function does not take a single form. There is a difference between symbolic sanctification, which preserves the value of a meaning within its cultural context, and obstructive prohibition, which prevents its questioning or reinterpretation. The former provides necessary stability for any social system, while the latter can

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[72] Sigmund Freud, Totem and Taboo, trans. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1950), 18–44.

[73] Mircea Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane (New York: Harcourt, 1959), 10–23.

lead to the freezing of meaning and the closure of its potential for development.

Michel Foucault demonstrated that every epistemological system includes mechanisms for regulating discourse, determining who has the right to speak and what constitutes legitimate knowledge.[74] In some contexts, the sacred becomes one of these mechanisms, where meaning is surrounded by a barrier that prevents its disruption. However, this does not mean that all sanctity implies repression, but rather that every stable system requires a degree of organization to protect it from semantic collapse.

When the sacred becomes synonymous with a single model of agency or will, and this symbolic unity is projected onto the political or social structure, meaning may become concentrated in a single center. Herein lies what Bourdieu termed a symbolic monopoly, where a specific entity is granted the authority to define what is permissible and what is forbidden.[75] This monopoly is imposed not only by physical force but also through the recognition of its legitimacy.

In certain contexts, the priority given to transmission over critique cannot be understood as a mere rejection of reason, but rather as a strategy to safeguard the stability of meaning. Every system that fears disintegration seeks to solidify its fundamental symbols, especially when it perceives questioning as a threat to its unity. However, if this solidification reaches the point of closing off the horizons of interpretation, it can transform the sacred from a cohesive force into a disruptive one.

Thus, the sacred performs a dual function: it ensures the continuity of the community's symbolic contract, but it can—under specific conditions—become a mechanism for restricting the possibilities of thought. Understanding this function does not necessitate condemning the sacred, but rather analyzing its structure as a tool for organizing meaning and the boundaries of discourse within society.

23.The Sacred as a Belief-Generating Variable

In early societies, sacred words were not merely distinctive terms, but rather an integral part of the ritual performance itself. Some names

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[1] Ibid.

[75] Ferdinand de Saussure, Course in General Linguistics, trans. Roy Harris (London: Duckworth, 1983), 117–122.

were only uttered within a specific context, and some phrases were only used at a particular time or place. Removing them from their context was not merely a linguistic violation, but an infringement upon the symbolic order that the community considered to be the foundation of the world's equilibrium. Mircea Eliade pointed out that ritual not only re-enacts the sacred event, but also reintroduces it into the present, giving the word a constructive rather than a descriptive function.[76] From this perspective, the sacred does not appear as an extraneous element in language, but rather as an active variable within its structure. It redistributes semantic values, intensifies certain words, and isolates them from ordinary usage, thus forming a symbolic network that supports the belief system and lends it coherence. Here, the sacred does not add external meaning, but rather reorganizes the semantic field itself.

Émile Durkheim demonstrated that the sacred word derives its power from its collective recognition as a distinctive sign.[77] Value does not stem from sound or letters, but from its position within a classificatory system that reorders the world into sacred and profane. In this sense, the sacred becomes a generator of belief, because it creates a horizon within which things are understood according to a specific hierarchy.

However, this generation is not without an authoritarian dimension. When the knowledge or interpretation of ritual terms is monopolized within a specific group, symbolic power is concentrated in the hands of those who possess the keys to pronunciation and interpretation. Pierre Bourdieu explained that monopolizing the definition of the permissible and the forbidden grants its holder power that extends beyond the linguistic sphere into the social sphere.[3] This monopoly, however, is not necessarily understood as a conscious conspiracy, but rather as a consequence of a recognition structure that makes certain positions the center of meaning production.

What might be termed "cognitive blindness" to the impossible does not signify absolute ignorance, but rather cognitive limitations that humans come to understand through experience. When language articulates what transcends the senses, it does not abolish these limitations, but rather gives them a form that can be communicated.

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[76] Émile Durkheim, The Elementary Forms of Religious Life, trans. Karen E. Fields (New York: Free Press, 1995), 34–44.

[77] Pierre Bourdieu, Language and Symbolic Power, trans. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 107–116.

Herein lies the paradox: what cannot be directly perceived is redefined as a higher realm, surrounded by an aura that makes access to it contingent upon specific knowledge.

The primacy of the metaphysical over the existent is not to be understood as a denial of reality, but rather as an expression of a perpetual tension between the finite and the transcendent. However, when this tension is reorganized within a closed, singular system, it can lead to a hierarchy that subordinates reality to a higher symbolic principle. Here, the sacred emerges as a variable that redefines the relationship between being and non-being, between presence and absence.

Therefore, to say that these concepts are "linguistic constructs" does not negate their real-world impact, but rather indicates that their social existence is mediated through symbolism. The sacred generates belief because it reorganizes meaning within a linguistic network that enjoys collective recognition, and it is from this recognition that it derives its power and continuity.

24. Language as a Primary Mediator of Latent Consciousness Between the Erotic and the Dualistic

If consciousness is a complex state of feeling, then its relationship to language is not external or subsequent, but rather one of mutual crystallization. Humans do not perceive the world in its raw form, but rather through symbolic mediation that provides them with the images and classifications necessary for understanding. This does not mean that language preceded all primary sensation, but rather that consciousness, as we know it humanly, only stabilizes and organizes itself within the sign. Therefore, the assumption of a purely human consciousness prior to any symbolic mediation remains a theoretical hypothesis that is difficult to prove historically.

Within this horizon, the first structure of consciousness can be read as a tension between two opposing tendencies: a tendency towards expansion and life (Eros), and a tendency towards extinction or the realization of annihilation (Thanatos), as formulated by Freudian analysis.[78] However, invoking these two concepts here does not mean reducing language to a direct biological instinct, but rather using them as

[78] Ludwig Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, trans. C. K. Ogden (London: Routledge, 1922), 5.6.

metaphors that explain the conscious structure in which meaning moves: the desire for affirmation, and the fear of negation.

The tension between fullness and discontinuity, between continuity and annihilation, can be traced—when read linguistically—back to the very fundamental structure of meaning itself: affirmation and negation. Every utterance is, in one respect, a declaration of "yes" to something, and every negation is the demarcation of a boundary separating what exists from what does not. In this sense, desire and annihilation are understood not merely as biological events, but as two semantic structures that permeate the formation of consciousness.

• Desire (Eros) can be understood as a symbolic act of affirmation: the bursting forth of sound from silence, the assertion of presence, the saying "yes" to life. The primal sounds associated with calling and pleading, and the rhythmic repetitions in early rituals, may express this impulse toward fullness. Mircea Eliade suggested that ritual, in its origins, was an expression of a desire to symbolically renew and re-enliven the world.[79]

• Annihilation (Thanatos) is understood as an act of negation: the cessation of sound, the return of meaning to silence, and the demarcation of the boundary of existence. The silence accompanying mourning rituals, and the isolation associated with death, are not merely social behaviors, but symbolic forms of negating continuity. Ernst Cassirer observed that when faced with death, humankind did not simply accept the biological given, but reshaped it within a symbolic system that imbued it with a meaning transcending physical annihilation.[80] This linguistic-ontological tension is evident in primitive rituals: in fertility rites, communal dances, and sacrifices, life is revived through sound and movement, serving as symbolic affirmations of existence. Conversely, the moment of annihilation is embodied in rituals of mourning, prohibition, and isolation, where silence functions as a structured negation of action.

However, this debate does not end with this duality. As the symbolic system develops, nothingness itself may become an object of desire, redefined within a transcendent horizon presented as ultimate perfection. Here, the relationship is reversed: what was negation becomes

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[79] Émile Durkheim, The Elementary Forms of Religious Life, trans. Karen E. Fields (New York: Free Press, 1995), 34–44.

[80] Pierre Bourdieu, Language and Symbolic Power, trans. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 107–116.

absolute affirmation, absence becomes promise, and silence becomes a voice louder than the everyday noise. Therefore, language, as the primary medium of consciousness, does not merely represent the tension between life and death, but organizes it within a structure of affirmation and negation that produces meaning. From this initial interplay between sound and silence, presence and absence, human consciousness is formed as a continuous movement between possibility and cessation.

25. Cave Symbols and the Beginnings of Dualistic Consciousness

The earliest cave paintings cannot be reduced to primitive art or a naive representation of daily life. In light of modern anthropological analysis, they express an early formation of a complex symbolic structure. André Leroy-Gourand argued that the mural art in European caves should not be read as mere decoration, but as an organized semiotic system in which symbols of animals, hunting, and fertility are juxtaposed within an interconnected structure.[81] This structure can be read, analytically rather than historically, through the duality of life and death. Scenes of hunting and fertility represent, on a symbolic level, the horizon of continuity and the will to survive; While scenes of wounded or dead animals point to the presence of death as an inseparable part of existential experience, this duality is not to be understood as a conscious invocation of the concepts of Eros and Thanatos in the Freudian sense, but rather as an analytical metaphor illuminating the structural tension between fullness and discontinuity.[82] The juxtaposition of symbols of life and death in a single cavernous space indicates that humankind did not interact with the world in a purely direct manner, but rather reorganized it within a symbolic framework. Here, the sign does not merely imitate reality, but rearranges it within a network of relationships. In this sense, cave paintings represent one of the earliest pieces of evidence for the function of the sign as a mediator between desire and danger, between hunting as a source of life and hunting as an act leading to annihilation.

This stage is sometimes linked to what is known as the “symbolic explosion” or “communicative revolution” in the history of Homo sapiens, referring to the accelerated production of symbols beginning

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[81] Émile Durkheim, The Elementary Forms of Religious Life, trans. Karen E. Fields (New York: Free Press, 1995), 34–44.

[82] Michel Foucault, The Archaeology of Knowledge, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 216–231.

approximately seventy thousand years ago.[83] This does not imply the sudden emergence of language, but rather an intensification of the use of signs within complex social and ritual contexts.

In this sense, cave paintings constitute an early symbolic archive, revealing a dual consciousness that engages with the world through the tension between continuity and discontinuity. Early humans did not depict animals simply because they saw them, but because they lived in a symbolic relationship with them: a relationship encompassing the desire to possess them, the fear of their danger, and the awareness of their own potential death, or even their own.

This symbolic interaction confirms that human consciousness, from its earliest stages, was not merely a perceptual reflection of reality, but a reinterpretation of it through the sign. Thus, it can be argued that the beginnings of dual consciousness—life/death, fullness/lack—predated philosophy by a considerable period, but took their initial form in images and symbols before crystallizing into words and concepts.

26. The Tool as an Ontological Turning Point within Funeral Rites

In its earliest stages, the tool was linked to its immediate practical function: hunting, cutting, and protection. Its value was determined at the moment of use, as an intermediary between the body and the world. However, a qualitative shift in its meaning occurred when it was incorporated into funerary rites, particularly when it was placed in tombs alongside the body.

Archaeological discoveries at Paleolithic sites have revealed stone tools and personal belongings buried with the dead, indicating that the tool was no longer understood merely as a utilitarian instrument, but rather as an element linked to the individual's identity and symbolic continuity.[84] This ritual incorporation points to the tool's transition from the functional to the existential realm.

This shift can be understood in light of Martin Heidegger's concept of the human being's relationship to the tool as "ready-to-hand," where the tool is not perceived as an external, independent object, but as a

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[83] Pierre Bourdieu, Language and Symbolic Power, trans. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 107–116.

[84] Mircea Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane (New York: Harcourt, 1959), 68–88.

practical extension of the body within the world.[85] However, the incorporation of the tool into the tomb transcends this practical horizon; It gives it a new ontological dimension, as it is treated as part of the destiny of man himself.

Burying a tool with the body not only implies its continued physical use after death, but also signifies a redefinition of the relationship between the self and the external world. The tool, which served as an intermediary between the individual and the world, becomes an extension of the individual even in death. Here, what might be termed "external consciousness" takes shape; that is, a consciousness that corresponds to the physical world and is not merely an internal reflection.

Ernst Cassirer observed that humans do not treat objects as neutral entities, but rather as objects imbued with symbolic meanings that transcend their materiality.[86] When a tool is buried with its owner, it acquires an intimate quality: it is no longer simply an object, but a trace of the self, a part of its narrative.

This moment can be considered an ontological turning point, not in the sense of consciousness being born from nothingness, but in the sense of its shift from a utilitarian relationship with the world to a symbolic one. Through the funeral rite, the individual buries not only a body, but also a network of symbolic relationships, of which the tool is one of the most significant manifestations. Thus, the material world becomes a bearer of the self, and the object becomes a partner in destiny. From this interplay between body and instrument, between inside and outside, consciousness deepens as a movement extending beyond the limits of individual perception into the symbolic world that humanity leaves behind.

27. Consciousness as an External State within the Neurological Horizon

If the incorporation of the instrument into the funeral rite revealed a qualitative shift in humanity's relationship with the world, it also allows for a re-examination of the very concept of consciousness. Within this horizon, consciousness is not understood as a closed, internal essence, nor as a category prior to experience, but rather as a continuous openness to the external world: to the instrument, the symbol, the other, and death. It

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[85] Émile Durkheim, The Elementary Forms of Religious Life, trans. Karen E. Fields (New York: Free Press, 1995), 34–44.

[86] Pierre Bourdieu, Language and Symbolic Power, trans. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 107–116.

is an external state in the sense that it is formed through a relationship of resistance and interaction with that which simultaneously threatens the self and ensures its continuity.

This does not negate the internal dimension of consciousness, but rather indicates that this "inner" itself is formed through external mediation. The self recognizes itself only through a network of signs and relationships. In this sense, the inside is not a primary source, but rather the result of a long history of symbolic interaction.

From a neurological perspective, the complexity of human consciousness is linked to the development of the prefrontal cortex, the region responsible for planning, behavioral control, and abstract thought. Neuroscience research has shown that this region plays a pivotal role in the ability to visualize the future, delay gratification, and construct hypothetical scenarios.[1] However, this development cannot be understood in isolation from its cultural context; the brain does not operate in a vacuum, but within a dense symbolic environment.

Terrence Deacon demonstrated that linguistic symbolism was not a byproduct of brain evolution, but rather a contributing factor in reshaping its structure through a shared evolutionary path between culture and biology.[87] Language and tools not only expanded human practical capabilities but also reorganized the very structure of perception. Thus, it can be argued that human consciousness reached its uniqueness through a long accumulation of ritual and symbolic experiences, making the outside world an integral part of the brain's internal structure. What we call “external consciousness” does not imply the absence of the inner self, but rather suggests that the inner self is shaped through resistance to the outer self. The self only comes to know itself through what is not itself. In this sense, the inner self can be understood as a double negation: a negation of total immersion in the outer self, and a negation of absolute isolation from it. It is a dynamic balance between absorption and resistance.

As for the future of consciousness, with the rise of artificial intelligence and neuro-digital integration, it may open up horizons for unprecedented transformations. However, talk of a “post-biological stage” should be understood as a philosophical possibility, not a deterministic proposition. Even the most complex technological systems remain, to this day, symbolic simulations of consciousness embodied in

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[87] Sigmund Freud, Beyond the Pleasure Principle, trans. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1961), 38–64.

the biological sense. Nevertheless, the expansion of the external medium—from stone tools to digital networks—raises a new question: can consciousness continue to transform as its symbolic medium changes?

Therefore, consciousness is not reduced to mere neural activity, nor is it understood as a transcendent spirit, but rather as a continuous movement between the brain and the world, between sign and resistance. It is the fruit of a long interplay between inside and outside, between affirmation and negation, between the desire for extension and the fear of cessation. From this interplay, the self is formed as a linguistic being before it is merely a biological one.

Conclusion

From the perspective of this analysis, one can posit an alternative evolutionary path that was possible for humankind: a path in which beings attain high degrees of sensory perception, memory, and adaptation, without developing the symbolic reflective structure we call consciousness. Biological history does not impose the inevitability of reflective consciousness; there are cognitively complex beings that have not developed a coherent symbolic system. However, the integration of the instrument into the web of life and death—particularly through funerary rites—represented an ontological turning point that made the external world part of the internal structure of humankind and placed the symbol at the very heart of survival. At this point, the tool was no longer merely a practical extension of the body, but became a medium for identity and destiny. From this point, the symbolic path became deeply ingrained in human nature, a path from which it is difficult to disentangle.

This dedication to the symbolic medium not only established culture and language, but also transformed the very nature of consciousness. From its inception, language was not a neutral, descriptive mirror, but a structure capable of simultaneously representing and transcending reality. This dual capacity—representation and transcendence—is what made it a central generator of belief. It is enough for words to be granted a referential power that surpasses the limits of sensory perception for them to become the raw material from which the unseen and metaphysical worlds are constructed.

Negation played a pivotal role in this process; it enabled the imagination of absence, the formulation of concepts of non-existence, and consequently, the construction of entire systems around what is neither

seen nor directly perceived. In this sense, the "faithfulness" of language is not understood as the adoption of a particular doctrine, but rather as a constructive framework that always presupposes a relationship between the signifier and the signified, even when the signified is absent or transcendent. Every linguistic usage involves an implicit wager on the possibility of meaning, and from this wager arise the possibilities of belief as well as the possibilities of illusion.

However, describing language as a "factory of illusion" does not mean reducing it to falsehood, but rather acknowledging its constructive power. Naming, negation, and prohibition are not necessarily tools of deception, but rather mechanisms for reorganizing the world within a symbolic horizon. Through these processes, myth is born, the sacred is formed, and belief is established. Illusion, in this context, is not the opposite of truth, but rather an intensified semantic energy that transforms the symbol into an active social and psychological reality.

Therefore, belief can be understood as an amplified linguistic effect; a natural consequence of a symbolic structure capable of transcending the data of the senses. However, this "illusion" should not be demolished so much as dismantled. Language is the horizon within which humanity inhabits itself, and one cannot leave it without losing one's symbolic identity. The goal, therefore, is not to destroy the structure (language/belief), but to understand its architecture: to grasp its limitations, its mechanisms, and its strengths and weaknesses.

Ultimately, this study reveals that the question of the sanctity of words is not merely a religious one, but an ontological-linguistic one concerning the very nature of consciousness. Language is the house of being as much as it can be the house of illusion; it is the condition for the possibility of meaning as much as it is the condition for the possibility of belief. Between these two poles—meaning and illusion—humanity moves, not in search of ultimate certainty, but rather of a more responsible awareness of the limits of expression and the power of the symbol.