

life resembles our relationship with our hands and feet. As long as our hands and feet perform their natural functions, we do not sense their existence; rather, they immediately connect us with the external world and accomplish what we desire. They do not need our attention toward their operation, and it is when the hand ceases to function, or the foot stops moving, that we become aware of their existence. At that point, we contemplate remedy and only then become conscious of their presence and importance.

From Ashouri's view, the condition of the relationship between human beings and language is the same. Language becomes an issue and attains "self-awareness" when it ceases to "function," at the point where it can no longer continue its natural operation. Therefore, Ashouri states that our linguistic sensitivities arise from the fact that we Iranians, in confronting the new civilization, whether from the material or the spiritual aspect, have encountered things that were not located within our historical-cultural experience, and, as a result, our language was "silent" regarding them. Then, when we attempt to express these things in our own language, we observe that our language exhibits numerous deficiencies and obscurities in expressing such matters, and, in this tension and effort, in many places it unravels.

Consequently, Ashouri believes that as long as we have not adequately provided the linguistic and intellectual means for dialogue with the new civilization, and have not correctly assimilated what must be assimilated, whether in philosophy, or in science, or in other domains, we cannot escape the vicious circle of the "Third World". In Ashouri's view, we have become "broken-tongued," and all this self-awareness that we today possess regarding language, and all this effort that is expended in its regard, signifies nothing other than that our language has struck a stone somewhere and has halted in its movement.

In other words, the disarray of our world has caused the disarray of our language, and the reconstruction, and perhaps the upheaval, of this world, and the severe ascents and descents of these transformations, inevitably generate severe ascents and descents in language.

Therefore, Ashouri, from a phenomenological standpoint, according to which language is regarded as the existential infrastructure of the human being and the possibility of the manifestation of the human world, through humans building a relation with Being as a whole, asks how the modern world has arisen from within modern "language," and what the modern human has done with language, and how linguistic tools have been prepared, or how modern languages, as "open" languages, have been fashioned and cultivated, and from within ancient "natural" languages have been grown and transformed into a "natural language".

The posing of such outlooks and questions regarding language by Ashouri leads us to the articulation of the view that the central core of Ashouri's intellectual discourse concerning the development of the Western world and our Iran's underdevelopment is grounded in the relationship between language and development. Consequently, according to Ashouri, careful reflection upon language and modernity provides a key to understanding many points and responding to difficult questions with which the developing world is confronted.

From his perspective, in the discussion of the confrontation between tradition and modernity, reflection upon language elucidates essential points, especially in a society such as contemporary Iran, where the discussion of tradition and modernity has become an intellectual obsession for religious intellectuals as well as secular intellectuals.

As a result, in Ashouri's view, we now stand before a "historical gap" and seek to fill it. It is evident that this gap between the West and us is the same unfilled gap of development that has occupied an intellectual such as Ashouri.

In this sense, at present, science and



language have been constituted and have grown with great weight in other linguistic and cultural realms, and we, by virtue of the relation and connection that we have established with those realms, desire their science and language. Our language must newly adorn and refine itself so that it becomes efficient for the great task that we place upon its shoulders. And if our language is deficient and obscure in expressing what constitutes the subject or substance of science, this means that we still lack a genuine relation with science or with the substance and essence of its language. And if such a desire exists within us, and truly exists, the desire for science cannot, for us, be separated from the desire for its language and effort in its pursuit.

In general terms, Ashouri seeks to ascertain what occurs when we come into contact with the new world and its scientific foundations. That is, to what extent can non-Western peoples, peoples who were once designated as "Eastern" and later became "Third World," assimilate it? And why can they not assimilate it in its entirety? What obstacles operate in this interval? What motivation or need within us has caused the posing of the issue of the "language of science"? What relation has arisen between us and modern science that has rendered the posing of the issue of its language necessary for us?

It appears that understanding Ashouri's account of development and our Iranian underdevelopment requires the discovery of appropriate answers to these questions.

Darius Ashouri, linguistic modernization

In response to the aforementioned questions, the claim of the present account is that, in Ashouri's view, among various causes and factors, linguistic and cultural obstacles constitute the most significant barriers for us Iranians in attaining development and progress. In other words, the intellectual thread connecting Ashouri's views regarding our Iranian underdevelopment is embedded in language and culture, which he has articulated under the theory of the "open language".

Ashouri believes that, in the modern world, a "linguistic revolution" has taken shape parallel to other revolutions,

and that this linguistic revolution, on the basis of modern linguistic sciences, has created a linguistic industry and technology that has granted the leading languages of modernity, such as English, French, and German, the possibility of limitless development, a possibility that has been an unquestionable necessity for the relentless progress of the natural sciences and technology over the past two centuries.

Therefore, for Ashouri, the issue is why underdeveloped worlds inevitably become crumbs-eaters and ration-dependents of the leading languages of the modern world. In fact, he seeks to understand how they, namely, Westerners, were able, through linguistic development and the creation of an open language, to provide the grounds for their own development and their dominance over the non-Western world, while we remained trapped within our closed and limited language and fell outside the orbit of development.

The result is that, in Ashouri's view, the expansion of language and the empowerment of it, so that it can fulfill its new tasks, constitutes an unavoidable and extremely important part of any economic, scientific, and cultural "development policy". Hence, all countries that pursue programs of economic, social, and cultural growth, and seek to respond to the issues posed for them by confrontation with modern civilization and culture, have only two paths before them: one is to select one of the European languages, especially English, as their scientific and educational language, or to reorganize and cultivate anew their indigenous and national language so that it can function efficiently as a scientific and educational language.

Of course, Ashouri believes that this is an exceedingly difficult, delicate, and time-consuming endeavor, and that, for it, the barriers of psychological resistance, fear, and long-standing conservatism must first be broken. Since language bears a direct relation to the depths of the psyche and the personality and psychological characteristics of each society and each individual, from the standpoint of social and individual psychology, many issues exist along this path.

It appears that, among the two aforementioned paths, Ashouri prefers and proposes the second path, namely, the



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A depiction of the biblical parable of the
Tower of Babel
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Ashouri states that the language of us Iranians today is an incomplete, childish, and deficient language, with which we cannot articulate profound concepts. This is not the language in whose use our predecessors displayed virtuosity in poetry and prose and manifested genius. They expressed their concepts and thoughts with a mature, refined, and complete language, whereas the language we employ is the language of children who wish to speak with the concepts of other complete and mature adults: with the language of Western civilization.

modernization and reconstruction of the national language, that is, the Persian language. Thus, Ashouri believes that, in order to mobilize the Persian language toward expressing what we demand from it today, namely, modern scientific, philosophical, artistic, and technical expression, and everything that arises from this form of life in all domains of social existence, not for issuing dogmatic and eternal judgments, but for obtaining theoretical guiding lines, we must examine how the Persian language is, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, how its particular capacities have been cultivated within its own historical context, from what it was nourished, which substances within it have been more nurtured and which have remained uncultivated, and, in other words, what its potential capacities are for expansion and cultivation in the direction of new and contemporary needs.

From Ashouri's perspective, the posing of such a question itself requires possessing a modern outlook toward history and language, and a traditional or tradition-worshipping mind, which has not encountered the essence of modern thought and has not benefited from it, is incapable of posing it because it is so dazzled and enamored with tradition and so unified with it that it cannot create a separation between itself and tradition and place tradition before itself as an object and examine it.

Conclusion

As stated, the present discussion, on the basis of the "theory of the open language," has concentrated upon the relationship between language and development in Ashouri's thought. The findings of the present discussion indicate that Ashouri perceives a close relationship between language and development, and the establishment of such a relationship has guided him toward the formulation of the theory of the "open language". From Ashouri's perspective, every world possesses its own language and constructs its own language, and the technological and modern world, just as it has constructed technology, has also treated its language in a technological manner. Therefore, in Ashouri's view, we Iranians, with the language that we have at our disposal, cannot contend with modern philosophy and science, and, consequently, with development and progress.

Ashouri believes that his linguistic studies concerning the English language, and to some extent French and German, demonstrate that a significant linguistic turn has occurred in those languages, and that this very turn has facilitated their process of development and transformation. In the languages leading modernity in Europe, there exists a linguistic word-production factory that operates continuously in order to respond to their needs in the natural sciences, the human sciences, technology, and all material and spiritual domains of modern life.

This is while we Iranians remain deprived of this type of linguistic turn and transformation, and, as a result, have been unable to have a voice in the process of development. In Ashouri's expression, the Persian language has, over centuries, become polluted and exceedingly darkened. This darkness prevents us from entering the space of the modern world and the modern mind, whose language is transparent and luminous. One of Descartes' points is precisely this: linguistic transparency. Words are like opaque glass that we hold before our eyes, through which the light of objects does not pass. We must construct a language that possesses complete transparency.

From this perspective, the present discussion, with concentration upon development and its various dimensions, has examined Ashouri's works and thoughts in the light of the linguistic transformation he envisions. Whether we agree with Ashouri or oppose his thoughts and views, we can in no way disregard the extensive knowledge and perspectives of this intellectual concerning the reasons and roots of development and underdevelopment.