

REMARKS
ON THE
IDEALISTIC EXTENSIONS OF LINGUISTIC SCIENCE

Under the direction of Amado Alonso the Philological Institute of the University of Buenos Aires has shown special interest in the field of Stylistics. The interest is embodied in a couple of volumes, both of so general a nature as to raise fundamental questions in this region. An *Introducción a la Estilística Romance*, composed of essays by K. Vossler and L. Spitzer in Spanish dress together with a bibliographical article by H. Hatzfeld, exemplifies the science as a whole; and Ch. Bally's and Elise Richter's essays in *El Impresionismo en el Lenguaje*, show how the methods of Stylistic research would apply to a particular problem. In the second volume A. Alonso and R. Lida give us the sum of the whole matter in a long essay entitled *El Concepto lingüístico del Impresionismo*. The sum of the matter is surprising: there is no such thing as linguistic impressionism: «el lenguaje mismo no puede ser impresionista». But, lest so trenchant a negation should prove disheartening, the essayists go on to assert that, despite the fruitlessness of the main research, the science of Stylistics has been advanced:

pues estos perspicaces filólogos, mientras se esforzaban vanamente en fijar los lindes y determinaciones lógicas del lenguaje impresionista, han ido señalando numerosos rasgos estilísticos muy ajenos al tratamiento meramente gramatical, e interpretándolos a la luz de intereses psicológicos y estéticos. La Estilística les debe por ello un importante avance.

We bow to superior knowledge. And, of course, the case is not unknown in science, that a research should prove vain in itself but give important collateral results. From the vain imaginations of alchemists chemistry arose, and from astrology astronomy; from witch-doctoring, medicine. Yet the plain man

cannot but ask himself what is the worth of a science which sends its devotees in search of what is not there to find (and the bibliography of linguistic impressionism covers ten pages!); and how rigorous is the method which gives eight mutually irreconcilable answers to the same question (for señores Alonso and Lida discover just so many definitions of impressionism)? This is very different from what we have experienced in phonological research or any of the older branches of philological study. In them, even if we debate the inferences (as in the Substratum Theory of Ascoli), the terms of the argument are the same and known to us. But in work in this new manner we cannot be sure that even the word «Stylistics» means the same thing to different philologists; the marshalling of evidence and methods of inference differ from almost the opening sentences of an essay. Very sweeping deductions are drawn from observations which we were taught to regard as slender; one hears of national character as displayed in language, of *Weltanschauungen*, and of single phrases which are the key to an author's whole work. One ascribes «Bescheidenheit», for example, to the Spanish people on the evidence of such a form as *usted*; but one does not stop to consider whether *usted* has the same affective value as the *v. m.* of the seventeenth century, whether the observance of social distinctions in that age was due to the modesty of the speaker or his sense of what courtesies were due to himself, or whether a people as such is capable of having qualities. The Spanish Jew says *el Dio* when the Christian says *Dios*, but it seems hazardous to connect this with the *Weltanschauung* of the two religions. *Dios* may seem a plural to those who say *el Dio* and so to distinguish polytheists from Jewish monotheists; but it is just as much due to a mere habit of saying prayers in Latin (*aeterne atque omnipotens Deus* — a vocative, rather than a nominative DEUS, I think), or not doing so. Italian *Iddio*, Catalan *Déu*, and Rumanian *Dumnezeu* cannot be construed as criticisms of the apparent plurality of the Spanish *Dios*. Observations of this sort are interesting, undoubtedly; but they are also unsettling, for to the plain man there seems to be a severe disproportion between the premiss and the conclusion.

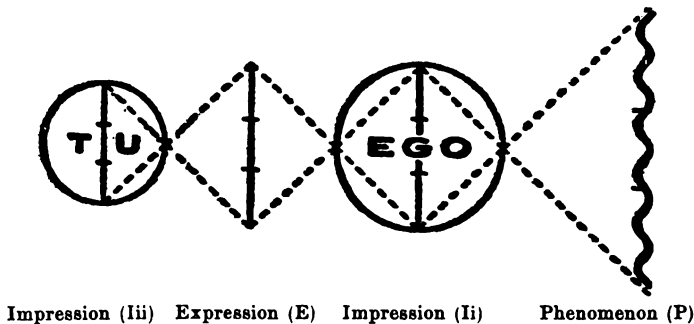
The strength and attractiveness of the new methods lies in the recognition that language is the everpresent attribute of a human being. Whatever he does, thinks, feels, hopes, imagines, all that materially or immaterially concerns him, must have its counterpart in language, since *qua* human being he is always a speaking being. The territory of philology is thus vastly greater than the comparatively restricted terrain occupied by the Young Grammarians. They investigated the sounds of which speech is composed, the forms assumed by words and the varieties of significance attached to each form, the way words grow from each other and the changes of their significance. But all this was done, though with great skill, without an experiential context. It might be urged that they did not study language at all, but only the elements out of which it is composed, since language is inseparably one of the processes of mind and it comes forth completely phrased and in a context. The idealistic researcher fully grasps this fact, and infers that there will be a linguistic aspect of every human experience; and he concludes justly. As in so many cases, A. Meillet has found a judicious formula which does honour where honour is due, when he remarks that these speculations have an element of real value: « il faut lui savoir gré d'avoir affirmé que le problème existe, et qu'il y a lieu de l'étudier, en somme d'avoir largement contribué à ouvrir la fenêtre et à donner de l'air à la linguistique »¹. The question at issue is: with what kinds of significance is our speech charged, and with what certitude may we make affirmations concerning them.

It is relevant, then, to consider what happens when we speak, taking our oration as a whole, unanalysed. It may be worth thinking on these lines, even at the risk of repeating the first pages of an elementary text-book, and even though he who

¹ MEILLET ON VOSSLER (the connection between language and civilization), quoted with approval by I. IORDAN, *Introducere in Studiul Limbilor Romanice*, Iasi, 1932, p. 126. MEILLET none the less uses the word « dangereuses » in the clause immediately preceding. Iorgu IORDAN'S admirable book has been translated into English by John ORR, London, 1937, which should be consulted by any Romance linguist who cannot read Rumanian. He has much to say on the new linguistic tendencies.

writes is in this field an unspecialized student. For unless our basic distinctions are comprehensible to the plain man, unless they require as little specialized intelligence as Euclid's axioms and postulates, then not only will the unpretentious student be confused (and he has a just right to a clear explanation from the specialists), but also the notion of Stylistics and kindred matters will vary, as they now do, from one investigator to another, no common good resulting.

We have to consider what happens when we speak. Emil Winkler's approach, in his *Stylistik*, has long seemed to me the one most likely to lead to an agreement, and, in its simplicity, the least likely to conceal some false assumption. He draws a diagram to show our experience stands to the verbal expression we give it. One may well begin with a diagram in the land of Ramon Llull, who drew so many. Winkler's diagram, however, related the phenomenon to the speaker only; and that is, I am convinced, falling short of speech. For speech is composed of comprehensible symbols, and he who comprehends, or fails to, is not the speaker but the listener. To each EGO there must correspond a TU; speech is dialogue, and monologue is only reflexive dialogue. For the speaker does not himself require to employ intelligible symbols, the effect of which would only be to convey to his mind an impression which he has already received directly from the phenomenon itself. Were he to utter sounds only to please himself, they would more likely be exclamations giving vent to unanalysed emotion, than intelligible symbols which are superfluous. The full diagram of speech, therefore, will assign roles to TU, as well as EGO, and will be something like this:



A Phenomenon (P) produces an impression (I i) on the mind of the speaker which he conveys in an expression composed of intelligible symbols (E) so as to convey an impression (I ii) to the mind of the listener. To parts of the phenomenon correspond parts of the expression and the two impressions.

The impression in the mind of TU is both logical and emotional. He has understood EGO's intelligible symbols in three ways, namely :

- 1) in their logical sense as conveying information,
- 2) in so far as there are symbols used to denote affective values, and
- 3) a certain surplus of significance not symbolically represented, which TU receives because he too is an artist in words, and is intuitively sympathetic with the thought-processes of EGO.

It will be evident from the diagram that we should not forget this sympathy is incomplete. The mind of TU is somewhat different from that of EGO, and his impression does not entirely correspond with EGO's expression, EGO'S impression or the original phenomenon.

1) The informative or logical value of the sentence, in so far as it concerns the arrangement in order of the symbols, is the field of Syntax. EGO analyses his impression of the phenomenon into parts which he arranges in a linear fashion for the benefit of TU. In this way we may begin the study of Syntax from the starting-point of the sentence as a whole : in place of the old Greek conception of an order of words, we have the conception of a united sentence which is divided. To pursue this thought further is to reach the notion of « parts of speech » not unlike that of ancient grammarians, with the sole difference that we recognize no autonomous unit but the sentence. Thus, there is a phenomenon to be expressed : every sentence will express a phenomenon, but not every sentence will possess a verb, if the phenomenon be adequately expressed without one. Still there is normally an element set apart to denote phenomenality, and that element is the verb. Once the mind can separate this element from the whole impression, there remain things which can be named in different relations with the

phenomenon proper; these are nouns in their cases. One can detect some source, agent or cause in most phenomena; often also something wholly and inertly determined by the action of the verb, and also something affected by it, but not without the possibility of some reaction. Thus the Agent, Patient and Recipient cases of nouns declare themselves. Highly inflected languages possess other «cases» which are really not such. The genitive, for instance, which attaches noun to noun, does not denote a relation to the phenomenon, and is properly an adjective. So to *nacimiento de Cristo* corresponds in Serbian *rodenje Hristovo*, where *Hristovo* is formally an adjective. In Basque and Chinese the genitive and the relative clause have the same symbol (Basque *-en*, Chinese *ti*); the relative clause is an adjective. In *el que llegó ayer nos avisó, el que llegó ayer* has the function of naming something in a particular relation to the phenomenon, and therefore is a noun. The chief difference which results from taking the sentence as the unit of Syntax, and not the word, is that the forms taken by words will not unduly influence our description of their functions. Though *Cristo* is a noun, *de Cristo* is an adjective, because that is its function; but *el que llegó ayer* is a noun, as it stands to *nos avisó*, though itself capable of further analysis.

As the relation between the parts of the whole sentence is not only expressed by order, but often by form (enclitics or terminations), it is clear that Morphology belongs to the same study as Syntax, as expressive of meaning. Enclitics bring words under the accent of some dominant word, and so also prefixes and suffixes group significant elements (though not words) under a dominant accent; there is no cause for treating of the enclitics as Syntax, but the prefixes and suffixes as Morphology, in another place. Morphology classifies words by sound and sense. These classes interfere with phonetic development on the one hand (morphophonology), and symbolize meaning on the other (morphosyntax); but for Morphology itself there is no separate place in linguistic science, though there may be one due to convenience when one treats a specific language. In such a language as Chinese, Morphology vanishes.

2) All languages have developed symbols to connote affective

values. The study of linguistic symbolism in this respect is the field marked out by Ch. Bally for his *Stylistique* :

La stylistique étudie donc les faits d'expression du langage au point de vue de leur contenu affectif, c'est-à-dire, l'expression des faits de la sensibilité par le langage et l'action des faits de langage sur la sensibilité¹.

It is a study which can be objectively conducted, since the affective symbols have fixed conventional values, and assertions made here have the same « scientific » quality as those formerly made concerning phonology, morphology or syntax by the Young Grammarians. But this study lies on the extreme limit of linguistic « science ». Language goes beyond the limits of objective study, and accompanies the mind into the higher realm of art. Philologists have, in recent times, sought to follow its flight. The greatest cause for uncertainty in accepting their conclusions seems to me the failure to notice that an intellectual frontier has been crossed. The « scientific » positivism, which has its place in the study of symbols of fixed objective value, is out of place in the more fluid realm of intuitive understanding. The philologist, if he is not to be deemed an intruder in the realms of literary criticism, social history, or psychology, must learn to moderate and condition his assertions in the manner long since discovered to be proper to the more delicate humane studies.

« Science », in our modern acceptance of the term, is less than knowledge. There are many things known which are not known to « science » or in a « scientific » manner. Science deals with things that can be measured, weighed or pondered. Science, according to a recent authority :

is most clearly defined by saying that it is firstly a vast collection of facts expressed in exact and unambiguous language in such a manner that anyone who cares to take the trouble can test their truth ; and secondly a collection of rules or laws which express the connection between these facts².

¹ *Traité de Stylistique française*, 2e éd., p. 16.

² F. SHERWOOD TAYLOR, *The World of Science*, London, 1936, p. 1.

The older philology drew its peculiar strength from the fact that it kept within this formula. Thanks largely to the example of evolutionary biologists, it was possible to collect a vast number of unambiguous facts, and to formulate rules or laws to connect them. These rules function, not perhaps « without exceptions », as the old saying went, but as norms which are generally valid ; they function even in the writings of philologists who have affected to repudiate the sound-laws. But there are many facts which are not of this nature : there are facts which depend on a context or a previous understanding, and there are facts which are different to different people. They cannot be made into a vast collection, for then they lose their essence ; nor can they be tested by anyone who cares to take the trouble. They lie outside the province of « science », and yet they can be known in their own way, and they require language for communication. The linguist justifiably follows such facts ; but he unjustifiably, in my opinion, makes assertions about them in the old positive « scientific » fashion.

3) TU is also a creator of expressions and so a fellow-artist with EGO. Through what EGO says his mind reaches out to the phenomenon itself, and he knows how this phenomenon would impress himself. He will not be impressed exactly as EGO has been, and he may even misunderstand EGO by substituting what would have been his own impression. The difficulty human beings find in understanding each other is notorious. Still, because TU is an artist he is able to gather *a*) an impression of EGO'S meaning beyond what is expressed in conventional symbols, and *b*) perhaps an impression of things not consciously present in EGO'S mind, though in various ways implicit in his expression. The first falls within the realm of knowledge, but not of « science ». What we know of EGO'S intention beyond the symbols he uses is relative and often indefinite. We may say « a little relaxation is a good thing », *dulce est desipere in loco*, or « don't keep the bow always bent ». So far as the intelligible symbols are concerned, they are of much the same logical and affective value. Yet each phrase has its own effects, though not always the same effect in all contexts. The Latin phrase, for instance, will be considered genial and intimate by

TU if he is a Latinist, but arrogant if he is not; and TU will gauge pretty accurately EGO's intention, since he knows what he would mean himself by similar conduct. An author who uses a rare word rarely gives it a significance different from that given by an author who uses the rare word frequently. In the one case the affective value lies in the word itself as it occurs, in the other it is part of a style affecting rareness, but individually counts for less. Whether a word occurs rarely or frequently is not properly a matter for a word-count; it is known intuitively. To discover on the artistic plane what was EGO's full intention, allowing due place to intuition and human sympathy, is a part of knowledge, but not of objective science; and the philologist will only go astray and lead others with him, if he employ in this sphere his old assertive language, or if he try to load on linguistic observations alone inferences which should have a wider basis. The art of interpreting EGO's intentions may be called Hermeneutics.

As to the other possibility indicated, the discovery of significance beyond EGO's conscious intention, I must make my suggestion with due reservations. What is there in poetry that makes it poetry? The poet conveys his meaning in logical and affective symbols, and he produces on the listener's mind an impression of the beauty or passion that fills his own. But he moves him yet more. He exceeds the orator by a *divinum quid*; not so wise as a philosopher, he seems to possess an inspired wisdom. His language is charged with a significance which eludes investigation; a significance that is felt to be something more than what we may learn, even relatively, of his intentions by the art of Hermeneutics. The best-loved poets meant what they meant, but they are accompanied by a chorus of echoes which they owe to posterity, so that it is next to impossible to read them according to their superficial meaning. Vergil tells us that Aeneas saw the Trojan War depicted on a wall at Carthage, and halted and weeping:

« Quis iam locus », inquit, « Achate,
 quae regio in terris nostri non plena laboris ?
 En Priamus ! Sunt hic etiam sua praemia laudi ;
 sunt lacrimae rerum, et mentem mortalia tangunt.
 Solve metus ; feret haec aliquam tibi fama salutem. »

He may have meant :

Is there any place, any region on earth, Achates, not filled with the report of our warlike toils ? Look at Priam ! Even here in Carthage he receives the rewards proper to his renown ; tears are shed for his misfortunes, and his death moves men's minds to pity. Cease to fear ; you will find a kind of salvation in this sort of fame.

The sense of the second last line, in its context, seems to be encouraging; it is better to be remembered sorrowfully than to be forgotten altogether. Yet *sunt lacrimae rerum* means something other and more moving than that. There is music and intensity in the line beyond anything Vergil may have consciously meant, and yet it was put there by Vergil. « Nature's tears and the mortal sadness of mankind » has been discovered in that music by posterity, and, I think, justly so. The music is not merely one of sounds. It is noticeable that when a man does not understand a language, he is generally convinced that its sounds are disagreeable or at best tedious. French seems a nasal snarl, Italian a sibilant buzz ; Rubén Darío thought there could be no worse fate for Spanish Americans than to learn « barbarous » English :

Tantos millones de hombres, ¿ hablaremos inglés ?

The music and persuasiveness of poetry, even the best, is not self-evident, but is connected with the meaning. It dawns on the reader when he has pierced through the symbols to the poet's impression, it grows as he enriches his mind with more and more vivid conceptions, and it reaches perfection when it dominates him as a thing immortally veritable in itself. The consummate poet's artistry reaches beyond symbols and context, and his expressions are charged with unlimited significance, « wingèd words », *paraules vives*, capable of revealing new charms and profounder beauties to a sensitive mind.

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