

Presentation

Yes, classes influence language, introduce into language their own specific words and expressions and sometimes understand one and the same word or expression differently. There is no doubt about that.

However, it does not follow that specific words and expressions, as well as differences in semantics, can be of serious importance for the development of a single language common to the whole people, that they are capable of detracting from its significance or of changing its character.

Firstly. Such specific words and expressions, as well as cases of difference in semantics, are so few in language that they hardly make up even one per cent of the entire linguistic material. Consequently, all the remaining overwhelming mass of words and expressions, as well as their semantics, are *common* to all classes of society.

Joseph V. Stalin, *Pravda*, 2 August 1950.¹

Language and myth are vast metaphors of reality. The essence of language is symbolic because it consists in representing one element of reality through another, as in metaphor. [...] The word is a symbol that emits symbols. Man is man thanks to language, thanks to the original metaphor that made him into another and separated him from the natural world. Man is a being that has created himself by creating a language. Because of the word, man is a metaphor of himself.

Octavio Paz, “*El lenguaje*”, *El arco y la lira*, 1956.

¹ Published in an English translation, Moscow, 1954, in *Marxism and Problems of Linguistics*.

As these epigraphs clearly show, language and its figures attract a wide variety of thinkers: from a linguist like one Joseph Stalin – though he rejected that title towards the end of his life – to poets; each with his own sensibility and handling of the phenomenon of language. For Stalin, a pragmatist and man of action, theory was to be reduced to a minimum; so he focused on simple, almost trivial, notions, even contradicting the religion of the class struggle: 99% of language, he wrote, “is common to all classes in society”. Though we shall not dispute, here, the accuracy of this percentage, it seems high. As shown below, language changes not only with (social) class, but also with age and experience. We cannot help but admire that prudence in action (“the word is action” (as Socrates wrote in the *Cratylus*), an idealization of the “culture of the masses” led the doctrinaire to accept rules “common to all people”, and thus propose a certain innocuousness of language, at least in terms of its functioning. But, indirectly, this affirms the universality of its reception, the immense faculty of persuasion it can exercise. Though Stalin does not say as much, it is doubtless present in the depths of his being. Finally, and this is a lesson in itself, silence is also an artifice of language.

Using the supposedly identical instrument, but in an individualist, even extremist, manner (language as the starting point and center of human creation), the poet, torchbearer, is much more subversive. In the manual of poetry that is his *The Bow and the Lyre* (*El arco y la lira*), Octavio Paz does indeed start from language, affirming at the outset that “the history of man could be reduced to that of the relations between words and thought”. I must confess that, as a historian, I am troubled by this phrase: though acknowledging that History does practice the art of rhetoric, it has –with few exceptions– seldom reflected on this. And those who have, analyzed the content of certain words more than the complex mechanisms of global meaning: Lucien Febvre on civilization, or Roger Chartier on representation. In this sense we have evolved little since Plato (see, again, the *Cratylus*). Of course, there are discourse analyses, ever more numerous, but they delve more into its explicit or implicit elements, instead of the linking instrument itself: signs and their interlacing.

But the poet goes further, joining other shippers of light –Luci-

fers we might call them, for they also try to play with language—philosophers and other metaphysicists. Myth is a counterpart of language, its way of surpassing itself: the myth of the cave is the most efficient, most material, most allusive, the clearest and most reproducible, the most rational and magical form that Plato found to convey that which is almost unutterable: man's destiny.² In a certain sense, this is the lesson that Immanuel Kant implicitly obtained in the opening of the Preface to the first edition of *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781): “Human reason, in one sphere of its cognition, is called upon to consider questions, which it cannot decline, as they are presented by its own nature, but which it cannot answer, as they transcend every faculty of the mind”;³ before adding that “The arena of these endless contests is called Metaphysic”.⁴ But he forgets to mention that the instrument that accompanies language here is myth, and that it is impossible to separate such figures as “Oedipus, Prometheus, Faust, Sisyphus, Narcissus”, to name but a few of the best known ones; a list that could easily be lengthened with the names of Christian saints, especially those of olden times.

But, returning to Paz, all of mankind's means of communication, all forms of expression, are metaphor, as he finds no other way of expressing himself than through a complex system of interlaced symbols, one that manifests two currents: one logical and argumentative, the other magical and imaginative. Another poet phrased it this way: “the material universe is full of exact analogies with the immaterial, and this is what endows that dogma of rhetoric with a veneer of truth, according to which a metaphor, or comparison, can strengthen an argument or embellish a description” (Edgar Allan Poe). True, writes Paul Valéry, “The orator's gestures are metaphors”.

Thus, it is time to invert the question and ask ourselves, with sociolinguists and other anthropological linguists, whether metaphor, that potent instrument of language (not just of rhetoric), is not also,

² On this topic, see “*Introducción general*”, Emilio Lledó Iñigo, Plato, *Diálogos*, Madrid, 1981, vol. 1, 108-120.

³ Translation at <http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/k/kant/immanuel/k16p/preface1.html>; accessed 10/07/11.

⁴ *Ibid.*

in its own way, gesture; which creates and annihilates, discriminates or emphasizes; *i.e.*, that model, more or less insidiously, society itself –or at least one segment of it, to be more Marxist than Stalin– while existing, at the same time, as a product of it?

The world's religions have understood perfectly the charismatic force of the word, and made it the repository of their sacraments and other mysteries, to the degree that in Christianity "the Word became flesh". How then, to doubt the magical character of some metaphors? They are a kind of recreation, at times even physical, a hierophany in Mircea Eliade's terms.

Clearly, one prominent manipulator of symbols and gestures –*i.e.*, metaphors– through the centuries is the Catholic Church and its icon *par excellence*, the Cross. In the case of Colima analyzed by Gabriela del Carmen González (one surely representative of many areas of the Mediterranean and Latin American world), the real or virtual presence (through language and, therefore, thought) of the metaphor of Christ's Passion approaches obsession. But, perhaps some clarification is needed: physically speaking, is its presence the same in all social strata and all milieus, both urban and rural? No, but returning to Stalin's proposal, language is a universal exponent that traverses all media, "all the people" and, in this case, the shape of the metaphor of the cross is a great homogenizer (one of several, of course).

Similar is that other great actor in Colima, the Volcano with its trances that create a disquieting psychological atmosphere, fatalist according to the article. Just as a votive offering (*exvoto*) is at one and the same time a propitiatory act and one of thanksgiving, in Colima the metaphor of the Cross is the best (indeed, almost only) protection against capricious geology: perhaps as in olden days when one set off on a long and perilous journey? We recognize that in cases like these metaphors are the votive offerings of language. And, like the others, these talking votive offering (*retablitos*) touch upon all aspects of everydayness. They represent a conduct, an action –taking us back to Plato and Socrates– even moreso when forming a gesture like crossing oneself, or crossing one's fingers, materializing a cross: hence, something more than simple passivity. When the divinity

forms part of living, invades consciousness, is it possible to separate the facts and words devoted to it? A positive posture as well when the metaphor allows for games of wit, figures of speech –“the sign of the cross on one’s breast, the Devil in one’s acts” (“*la cruz en los pechos y el diablo en los hechos*”)– and conceals critical attitudes, even in the face of certain, supposedly religious, behaviors.

Is one conscious of this game of overlaps? Its integration into the recesses of consciousness favors “transparency”: but is it then a synonym of neutrality, innocuousness... Or does it mean immersing oneself, once and for all, in a universe of whose proprietor is the religious institution... The author, in her way, sends us back to our own forest where we have hidden our symbols, metaphors, answers.

To the metaphor of the Cross, remembrance of Christ’s Passion, incarnation, life and death, we would oppose, first, the Narcissus myth, the resurgence of an ancient *topos*: mirror, thought, death. Perhaps it is because of this –thinking himself, not just seeing himself– that, according to Paz, the Narcissus of *our time* cannot love himself: according to Lilia Leticia García, an inversion of the classic myth. And who would not be horrified, in the year 2000, upon viewing the enormous failures of the previous century! But this is a reaction of Narcissus as historian: novelists have more individual, fluid perceptions, though ones equally forsaken, horrified by the violence of our world and their own struggle: “the violence of men in the park, in the world”. The park where the hero of *The Night of the Ants* (Aline Pettersson) dies, the cosmic world in which we all find ourselves: between the two, “a scattering of chips” (Socorro Venegas).

Then the overpowering, multidisciplinary myth metamorphoses into something more diluted, more fragmentary: the metaphor, here of memories that examine themselves in the middle of the night, in the face of death, to the routine of writing. The puddle of blood into which one’s life trickles away, the rivers of dreams, the pages upon which the memories of others are printed, all just more mirrors in the darkness of the night, central elements, here, of metaphor.

Beyond metaphor, there is, among the three novels analyzed by Lilia García, a hard, common cement: found in the intimate introspection (apologies for the redundancy), a fluid immobility (and the

oxymoron), and languid pessimism. Is this, more than 50 years later, a return to the *nouveau roman* with its morose delectation upon discovering the abyss that remains behind when things leave? A nostalgic Narcissus watching the passing of time that runs like water through his fingers. Some seem concerned about this exercise in self-reflection “that bites off its own tail”. Are we to lament that this is the illness of our time? The novel, then, is simple metaphor, a clairvoyant mirror of this world in which we live.

From the discourse-fiction of the novel Alan Emmanuel Pérez Barajas leads us into the terrain of the discourse of life, where the metaphors enclosed in the center of the narrative interview constitute the polymerization (see Appendix I) of micro-meanings: *advanced age*, the *winter* or *twilight* of life. Here we note, in passing, that the baroque language was a great school for coining metaphors: as a riddle I propose the title of the book published in 1666 in Mexico, *Llanto del Occidente en el ocaso del más claro Sol de las Españas* (*The Cry of the West at the Twilight of the Clearest Sun of the Spains*, by Isidoro Sarifana), a most perfect expression of what was the grand theater of the world... it would be worthwhile, at times, to carry out more “cultural paleo-linguistics”. To what extent were the mystics of the Golden Age not already practicing the “explosion of metaphor” that Hans Blumenberg analyzed in 1960 (*Sprengmetaphorik*)? This brings us to the perception of extended meaning, in the case of this article, between success and failure.

The corpus consists of 24 lower class adults in Colima and its outskirts: urban and rural, with experience in personal journeying. Once again we encounter the substantial force of metaphor, in its most rudimentary, yet conceptual, form. The most general case here is spatial: “above” society, “up there” in Heaven... which allows us to detect the principal global meanings in the most varied areas of everydayness: experiences of love, affection, economic change... And this, joined to the pronounced embodiment and spatiality that runs through the metaphors, leads us back to the patterns of image proposed by Mark Johnson (*container*, *coercion*, *link*, *center-periphery*...); making reference to Jorge Osorio’s article that follows obligatory.

Naturally, the “shipwreck of old age” takes center stage in the in-

terviews conducted by Pérez Barajas, and in the use of the metaphor: “your body gets cold and worn from the ravages of time”. But here the metaphor is double as, once again, it suggests space and body: the path of life, the deterioration of the organism, a juncture placed between literal (the body is, in effect, altered) and metaphoric discourse: the extended meaning captures precisely the angst associated with aging. One notes that, especially in discourses on success or failure, corporality is a key, reiterated element; though Providence is never out of mind: “by the grace of God I'll keep going”.

All of this remits us to mental mechanisms, profound legacies – ones that form part of collective histories and identities? – that resolve themselves in patterns of images. Though Osorio focuses on what he calls *chilenismos*, he is aware that those linguistic formulations lead to broader, Hispanic, experiences. In fact, of the 7 Chilean expressions presented and related to a universal Spanish (or relative, for we speak of Mexico and Spain), at least four –*movido, corto, metido, lanzado* – are used with the same meaning, and only one really requires elucidation: *patudo*. In addition to indicating a close correlation among their diverse forms in this language, the metaphors selected suggest a combination of spatiality and corporality, for they speak of the incursion, absolute or relative, of one personality into the personal space of another (or others). And, because metaphor is image, this can be measured perfectly through a few sketches.

Similarly, because economy is (in part) statistics (read: figures) it can be transmitted through tables... or graphs, if greater elaboration is desired. No one would question the importance and originality of the document on the *La Escoba* textile factory that we owe to the pen of Gladys Lizama. Sure, importance gauged in pages: I can hear the voices already, “What!... nearly 80 pages full of numbers... Unreadable!”; except those of people who consider that hard data –figures– can also constitute, in their own way, micro-meanings that enclose macro-meanings: thus, the two jails (one for men, one for women?), the active chapel and 90 adobe houses (for workers), take us back to the times, not so long ago, of the hacienda, that owner of bodies and consciences, the groundwork upon which manufacturing was erected; though at that time of transition –with the Industrial Revolution

upon us— the motor force was still limited: just 321 horsepower of steam installed. In contrast, there was no shortage of manufactured materials (tools, spare parts) or specialized workshops: a total of 15 shops and departments with a plethora of equipment, boilers and carding machines, most bearing the trademark of their Anglo-Saxon manufacturers: Corliss, Babcock & Wilcox, Howard & Bullough.⁵

The economic importance of those buildings and, especially, the machinery (practically 50% of the total estimated value in 1901), correspond to that early phase of the Industrial Revolution with its characteristic heavy industries: textiles and metallurgy. But this entailed a severe immobilization of capital, so that in the end the system collapsed due to a lack of liquidity; a fact that may well indicate that the destiny of this first Industrial Revolution, like those that followed, rested in the hands of financiers. Because the level of debt was overwhelming, well above that of industrial capital, foreclosures often followed on the heels of factory purchases. Without question, not all aspects of the fate of Francisco Martínez Negrete and his businesses is clarified here.

This extraordinarily detailed inventory practically dizzies us with its juxtapositions of pulleys – hundreds of those almost archaic transmission tools— dozens of looms of different makes (all Anglo-Saxon)... simple screwdrivers... hammers... a kilo or two of tar or wax here and there. Just like any other enterprise of the time, rural or urban, it had its barns, hay and oxen, and more than a few useless items: for example, 26 crystal telephone batteries; nothing, it seems, was thrown away. In another vein: an armory with 9 guns; doubtful they were used for hunting.

This inventory has everything one could imagine and allows infinite comparisons and an enormous scope. Religious life? We could refer to Table 34 on the chapel and its contents. It is worthy of note that in 1901 an industrial company with some 300 workers and their families had a chapel as ample as a typical parish church, and 18 vestments in all colors, 3 raincoats and, above all, 22 icons. Together, these give the idea of simplified worship practices, centered on Christ and the Virgin

⁵ Of course, this is a general case; see the description of the machinery at the San Antonio Abad and San Ildefonso factories in the late 19th century, in José Gustavo Beceiril Montero, *Las fábricas de San Antonio Abad y San Ildefonso, 1842-1915*, M.A. Thesis, UAM, 2006, 135ff.

(Guadalupe, Lourdes), but no other saint than Joseph; the message of Trent purged to the extreme by the Catholic Reform of the 19th century.

Turning to daily life, our attention is drawn to the detailed inventories of the store and pharmacy (Tables 37, 38). While some items arouse our curiosity: why, for example, a hectoliter of Valeria root?; were the workers that nervous, or so sleep-derived!; it is easy to understand the many kilos of tobacco and boxes of cigarettes. But the 142 bottles of cognac (in total)? Enough to make anyone a little woozy (or worse): hard to believe they were for the common laborers. Similarly, the quality of the apparel and shoes available for sale suggests a clientele of a certain level. Perhaps it was not really a company store (*tienda de raya*) at all, or at least not one that catered to the “wretched of the Earth”. Other significant clues to the clientele that emerge are the innumerable cans of English or Rochester mustard,⁶ and the absence of basic products in the Mexican diet (corn, beans). Also, one notes that despite a gross of *Universal* quill pens, there is not yet any typewriter in the factory (though sewing machines galore). Finally, we are left in the dark as to whether electricity had arrived at *La Escoba*: no mention of it appears, only Rochester-type kerosene lamps.

Between metaphor and the Industrial Revolution there exists at least a semblance of transition; but what of the latter and anthropology? Perhaps it is that both are etched in an air of modernity. Robert Kemper's text obliges us to pose a brutal, but necessary, question: are we all just organic intellectuals (“institutional intermediaries”, in his words), “at the service of the State”? Kemper takes as his starting point the discussion of the Tarascan Project that linked Mexico and the United States in the 1940s. The authorities' rapport with anthropological activity had been delineated long before, from the time of Cárdenas. Moreover, the tightened relations between the two nations during WW2 favored a certain rapprochement among social scientists on both sides of the border, accompanied by a few Europeans who had fled from a martyred Europe, Paul Rivet and Jacques Soustelle. Of course, Mexico's nascent ENAH (National School of Anthropology and History) was the greenhouse where those seeds were planted, but its American partners were more diffuse

⁶A kind of ethnic reference.

and included both private institutions, the Carnegie and Rockefeller Foundations, and the State Department, the leading exponent of the U.S.A.'s *Good Neighbor Policy* (Office of Inter-American Affairs, Institute of Social Anthropology). Why was the Tarascan region chosen as the object of such particular attention? In this case the determining factor was the figure of the President (Cárdenas) and his concern for agrarian problems, whose mythical and metaphoric qualities are not absent from this historical construction. Carapan and, especially, Paracho (1939), then Cherán, witnessed the materialization of the first initiatives. Two ambiguous elements must be considered: the vast majority of the researchers involved were Americans, while the few Mexicans recruited –eg., Moisés Sáenz, Pablo Velásquez– had strong ties to Anglo-Saxon culture. Bilingualism was applied systematically: indeed, it allowed the Tarascan, and other, languages to survive (see: *Consejo de Lenguas indígenas*, 1939), though Spanish, that powerful instrument of mestizo culture, was disseminated much more widely.

The presence of so many celebrated American professors propitiated the academic influence of their anthropological science; despite the fact that they published only occasionally, and in English, the work of the Smithsonian Institution, associated with the al ENAH, was crucial in “promoting North American thinking in the social sciences in Mexican universities”. Meanwhile, the arrival of republican Spaniards (Pedro Carrasco, Ángel Palerm) beside those Anglo-Saxons multiplied contacts, influences and ambiguities. However, circumstance limited intellectual expansion: the presence of those scientists was intermittent; the game of reciprocity was rarely played, as they published little in Spanish. To no one's surprise, the main opposition to that influence came not from the State or the intellectual elite, but from the Catholic Church, which opposed those heretics. Kemper mentions the case of the parish priest in Ihatzio who ran George Foster and his academic henchmen out of his territory (and made them shift their operations to Tzintzuntzan): but history does not record the name of that determined, old-school priest...

Joy to the lovers of beautiful documents!; for this issue of *Relaciones* includes not only the inventory from *La Escoba*, but also the

translation of a document in Tarascan dated in 1563 in the locality of Tzirostro. We owe the translation and its accompanying commentary to Cristina Monzón and Hans Roskamp. Tzirostro, once a subject town of Uruapan, was at that time the administrative center (*cabecera*) of a parish made up of 18 neighborhoods (*barrios*) with its own local governing council (*cabildo*) presided over by a governor elected annually: a Spanish institution superimposed on Pre-Hispanic ones. Among the members of the latter we find the *uhcambecha* (cacique in the terminology of Spanish officials), and *mandones* (middlemen) entrusted with mediating with the Spanish (especially, the *encomendero* and the Crown in matters of tribute and personal services).

This document and the accompanying commentary give a clear vision of certain aspects of Tarascan village life 450 years ago. *Tomines* (gold coins) entered in vessels similar to community chests –not the Spanish ones with their 3 keys that appeared much later– guarded by the *mandón* who could make them disappear as if by magic...; women gathering in the local *hospital* to sew the skirts that formed part of the tribute demanded –in other regions, blankets– a more or less elaborate system of social stratification: simple Purépechas (*macehuales*) and landowners (*proprietarios*), some of whom bore the title of *Señor* (principals, caciques?) and provided seasonal work in representation of “the hacienda’s absentee owner” for wages that the *uhcambechi* often intercepted *en route*. But that activity was important for the common folk: “all Purépechas enjoy the sweet labor on those haciendas”. Nor can we forget the elderly on this social scale, those who acquired authority through experience and *cargos* fulfilled and, therefore, had earned the right to lead the denouncement: “I am an old man, though I have not kept track of my true age”. In summary, a universe made not only of extortion, but also oppression: “those who complained” were fined by the *mandón*. In reality, this accusation speaks only of economic damages without broaching the topic of punishments and other abuses that, without doubt, occurred, as in other regions, the people’s daily bread.

This document is part of a larger series, the rest of which are written in Spanish. It is worthwhile to take a minute to ponder the con-

text of these records: the conquest phase is only now nearing its end, yet the Spanish administration (*i.e.*, the Viceroy) wields sufficient influence to send an *alcalde mayor* (in 1560) several dozen kilometers from his seat, then a resident judge (1564) to put the tribute system in order by carrying out a detailed census of the population with its different tributary status, and even launch a jurisdictional lawsuit against the sitting indigenous governor (*gobernador indio*); a clear expression of royal efficiency, no doubt, and all for an *encomendado* of only medium import, like thousands of others in the Viceroyalty. We must never underestimate the capacity of that administration of the organs of government, or the one of souls, not mentioned here, but also very real. However, there was one flaw: while in the cities the Crown officials had the support of the Spanish elite that enjoyed a certain degree of autonomy, in the towns everything was under the tutelage of the nobles (those that already existed and those yet to come) who preserved their old customs and forms of administration that comprised what we would call today a widespread system of corruption, that included everything from moral misconduct (drunkenness, concubinage), to embezzlement of public and private resources, no to mention simple robbery and violence; the voices of other “wretched of the Earth” filters through.

Making the voice of the forgotten, or “silenced” of history heard, as Esther Iglesias writes, is a hoary project, one that takes us back to at least the 1930s and includes the recovery of orality. This suggests a series of reflections on the multidisciplinarity and autonomy of historical science –one of the most hotly debated points in the 1989 issue of *Annales* that the author cites (*Histoire et sciences sociales. Un tournant critique*)– and, of course, of memory, for all accounts are inscribed in a temporal process. Quite correctly she writes: “accumulating memories does not replace history”. And this is never more certain than with respect to orality. Individual memories must serve to knit a collective and explanatory tissue, and thus forge knowledge.⁷

⁷ The time spent analyzing metaphor now colors my own form of expression... yet another proof of its immense capacity of suggestion. Nor does the author escape from this web of rhetoric, for she writes: “history must take such oral testimonies as tools”. This use of “tools” appears in Plato’s *Cratylus*, and since then who among us has not used it?

All of the foregoing is put into practice in the context of Yucatán, in the attempt to salvage, in the 1970s, the final remembered traces of what was once the universe of henequen in oral, unwritten manifestations (the condition of the peons, forms of labor, wages, punishments applied...). Of course, those oral sources, transformed by memory, must be compared and contrasted, reconciled with others, but with no attempt to cushion their originality or, indeed, their authenticity: for an irreplaceable experience circulates through those words.

So, on this occasion we are left with this image of the circulation of words: as blood flows through the veins, as water runs in the fast-flowing river of memory, as... So many figures of speech, so many clichés, so many commonplaces that accompany us, in every language, from the very beginning of time! We are language, we are symbol; that is, we are metaphor. Just as the poet wrote, in letters of fire.

Traducción al inglés de Paul C. Kersey Johnson