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Eugenio Coseriu

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Beyond Structuralism

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This book is dedicated to Eugenio Coseriu's disciples

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I won't thank ChatGPT because it still knows little about Coseriu's linguistics (for fun I asked it to produce a text about Coseriu's semantics and it made a cognitivist out of him); I am sure that the online version of this book will contribute to improvements here. Nevertheless, the dictation function of Word was a great help, as were DeepL and Google Translate in providing working translations of some of the quotations. They were, though, corrected with great care, checked for terminology, and subsequently revised by the HI (human intelligence) of John Barlow, who was of invaluable help in the process of revising the English.

For any shortcomings or errors, the responsibility is my own.

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Preliminary remarks

Eugenio Coseriu (1921–2002) is considered to be one of the most important linguistic scholars of the second half of the 20th century. He is known mainly as a structuralist and a Romance linguist, but his work goes far beyond this, offering a comprehensive linguistic theory, with writings covering a wide range of research fields, from semantics, syntax, typology, variational linguistics, language change, pragmatics, and text linguistics, to empirical fields such as Vulgar Latin, the history of the philosophy of language, and the history of Romance linguistics. His thought is founded on solid philosophical grounds, and throughout his life he came into contact with a number of different academic traditions and cultures. However, for a variety of reasons (among which, the dominant languages in which he published: Spanish, Italian, French, and German), knowledge of Coseriu's thought is rather marginal in the Anglo-American world. He is sometimes mentioned in a very general way by name or as a reference to “one of these European structuralists”, or is cited because of some particular contribution a particular subject, or because certain terms that he coined (such as the threefold distinction between *diatopic*, *diastratic* and *diaphasic* varieties) have entered into the linguistic canon. But it is difficult to find a broad and full expression of the Coserian universe, and this is essentially because most of his work remains unavailable in English translation, as well as due to the absence of a general introduction to his work¹.

This book aims to fill this gap by offering an overview of his main contributions to linguistics (and to other disciplines), as well as tracing the main periods of his life. The title derives from the aim to show that Coseriu's thought, even if linked to and based on the systemic study of language structure, goes far beyond structuralism, and illustrates both the achievements and the limitations of structural analysis. The title is not new, having been used by Coseriu himself, and appearing in several publications in German, Spanish and Romanian². The decision

1 It should be noted that in 2021, the centenary of Coseriu's birth, De Gruyter published (in English) the collective volume *Eugenio Coseriu. Past, present and future*, edited by Klaas Willems and Cristinel Munteanu, which contains a list of publications by Coseriu available in English (p. 37–39).

2 Coseriu himself had announced two volumes of collected papers under the title *Más allá del estructuralismo*, ‘Beyond structuralism’, by the Madrid publisher Gredos. In 1982, he published a paper in French with the title “Au-delà du structuralisme”, in: Moll Marquès, Aina (ed.): *XVI Congrés Internacional de Lingüística [i] Filologia Romàniques* (Palma de Mallorca 7.–12. 04. 1980), Actes, I, *Sessions plenàries i taules rodones*, Palma de Mallorca: Moll, 163–168. In 2002, he participated with two contributions on Humboldt to a collective volume edited by Kennosuke Ezawa, Wilfried Kürschner, Karl H. Rensch and Manfred Ringmacher: *Linguistik jenseits des Strukturalismus*, ‘Linguistics beyond structuralism’. In 2019, we launched a project at the University of Zurich funded by

to use it for this book is due to the fact that it encapsulates in two words that idea that there is much more to discover in Coseriu's oeuvre than just a particular branch of European structuralism.

As the author of this book, I will not be able to offer a completely neutral view: as a student at Tübingen University in the 1980s, and due to a close relationship with Coseriu until his death, I was very strongly influenced by the man and his thought, and part of my own linguistic work is based on Coseriu's theory or on the further development of it. This obviously creates a bias, but it also has the advantage of drawing on intense and protracted personal knowledge, plus access to a vast amount of information. Apart from several years of study as one of Coseriu's final disciples, this includes years of intensive and in some periods daily contact with Coseriu, frequent trips to conferences, innumerable hours of conversation, in addition to the experience, over two summers, of intensive interviews with Coseriu about his life and work (published in collaboration with Adolfo Murguía in 1997³); before he died, he asked me to assume the responsibility for his legacy, and in 2005 the Coseriu Archive at the University of Tübingen was inaugurated. I have also contributed to his legacy by providing access to digitised information on the site www.coseriu.com / www.coseriu.ch, as well as directing or co-directing research projects on his work, founding the online-journal *Energeia* in 2009, organising or co-organising several events on Coseriu's linguistics and, finally, through numerous publications that include reflections on Coseriu's thought, plus editions of, and comments on, his unpublished work⁴.

the Swiss National Science Foundation with the aim of publishing Coseriu's correspondence: *Über den Strukturalismus hinaus* – *Briefe an Eugenio Coseriu und die Geschichte der Linguistik im 20. Jahrhundert*, 'Beyond structuralism. Letters to Eugenio Coseriu and the history of linguistics in the 20th century'. Within the project, several publications under this general title appeared in Romania (among others: Kabatek, Johannes/Bleorțu, Cristina (2019): "Dincolo de structuralism. Scrisori către Eugeniu Coșeriu și istoria lingvisticii în secolul al XX-lea", *Limba română* (Chișinău) 4/254, 45–49; Kabatek, Johannes/Bleorțu, Cristina (2021): *Dincolo de structuralism. Scrisori către Eugeniu Coșeriu și istoria lingvisticii în secolul al xx-lea. Corespondența Marius Sala – Eugenio Coșeriu*, București: Editura Academiei Române; Kabatek, Johannes/Bleorțu, Cristina (2021): "Dincolo de structuralism. Scrisori către Eugeniu Coșeriu și istoria lingvisticii în secolul al XX-lea" (III), *Limba română* 1, 54–56; Kabatek, Johannes/Bleorțu, Cristina (2021): "Dincolo de structuralism. Scrisori către Eugeniu Coșeriu și istoria lingvisticii în secolul al XX-lea" (IV), *Limba română* 2, 60–63; Kabatek, Johannes/Bleorțu, Cristina (2021): "Dincolo de structuralism. Scrisori către Eugeniu Coșeriu și istoria lingvisticii în secolul al XX-lea" (V), *Limba română* 4, 55–62).

³ Kabatek, Johannes/Murguía, Adolfo: *Die Sachen sagen, wie sie sind...*. *Eugenio Coseriu im Gespräch*, Tübingen: Narr 1997 (= *DSs*).

⁴ Two years after Coseriu's death, in 2004, I moved to Tübingen to occupy the chair of Romance linguistics ("Coseriu's chair") that had remained vacant after his successor Brigitte Schlieben-Lange (1943–2000) had passed away so early. At that time, I established the Coseriu Archive, whereby the

I hope that this book will contribute to a wider and more general knowledge of Eugenio Coseriu's oeuvre and that it will serve as an invitation to read his texts. Coseriu's body of work is a "classic"; it offers a coherent and profound view on language which should not only be considered a monumental achievement in the history of linguistics, but is also surprisingly relevant and challenging in the context of current linguistic research and thought.

published works were digitised and made available on the internet. More recently, much more content was added in a project at the University of Zurich (see www.coseriu.ch), and manuscripts were made accessible through a project at the University Library of Tübingen (http://idb.ub.uni-tuebingen.de/digitue/regio/coseriu_archiv) on the initiative of my successor at Tübingen, Prof. Wiltrud Mihatsch. For further details on the personal history of these projects, see chapter 12.

List of abbreviations

Coseriu's works are cited in brackets followed by the year of publication [xxx] (xxxx) e. g. [11] (1953), and are organised according to the numbers in the list of references at the end of this book (see chapter 14.1); the numbers in that list are also identical to those to be found at www.coseriu.com/www.coseriu.ch (where most of the work can be freely accessed and downloaded). Letters are quoted with the letter ID of the project *DiLeCos* (*Digitized Letters to Coseriu*, www.coseriu.ch). Manuscripts from the Coseriu Archive at Tübingen are quoted with the manuscript number and the indication *ArCos* (http://idb.ub.uni-tuebingen.de/digitue/regio/coseriu_archiv). Further abbreviations:

- CLG* = Saussure, Ferdinand de (1916/1984): *Cours de Linguistique Générale*, édition critique préparée par Tullio de Mauro, (1st edition 1972, on the basis of the original version by Bally, Sechehaye and Riedlinger, Lausanne/Paris 1916) Paris: Payot.
- DSs* = Kabatek, Johannes/Murguía, Adolfo (1997): “*Die Sachen sagen, wie sie sind...*”. *Eugenio Coseriu im Gespräch*, Tübingen: Narr.
- Energeia* = *Energeia. Online Journal for Linguistics, Language Philosophy and History of Linguistics*, www.energeia-online.org
- ENERGON* = Albrecht, Jörn/Lüdtke, Jens/Thun, Harald (eds.) (1988): *Energeia und Ergon. Studia in Honorem Eugenio Coseriu*, 3 vols., Tübingen: Narr.
- SDH* = Coseriu, Eugenio (1958): *Sincronía, diacronía e historia. El problema del cambio lingüístico*, Montevideo: Universidad de la República.
- SNH* = Coseriu, Eugenio (1952): *Sistema, norma y habla*, Montevideo: Universidad de la República.

Citations are generally reproduced in English (my translations) in the text in single quotes, with original versions in footnotes. Double quotes indicate that the text is reproduced in the original language.

Introduction

This is the first comprehensive monograph on Eugenio Coseriu. Its aim is to serve as an introduction to the vast Coserian oeuvre, an overview that will offer, chapter by chapter, basic insights into his work and thought. This is not an easy task: we live in a world of experts, and due to today's high degree of disciplinary specialisation, no linguist in the 21st century is likely to have a thorough grasp of all the fields in which Coseriu was active throughout his life. The general programme of what he himself used to call "Integral Linguistics" from the 1980s onwards is not only extremely ambitious, but is also something to which Coseriu himself contributed from a wide variety of scholarly fields. Not only did he work within a number of areas of general and Romance linguistics, he was also an expert on the history of linguistics and the philosophy of language, as well as on the theory of aesthetics. To produce an adequate and satisfying monograph on the whole range of Coseriu's thinking would ideally presuppose expert knowledge in all these areas, something beyond the reach of a single author, and thus in what follows it is possible that scholars from one or another specific field might feel that their own area of expertise has not been dealt with in the kind of depth which ideally they would like. This may be the reason why such a work has never been attempted before. Be that as it may, it was on the centenary of Coseriu's birth that I was reminded that such an endeavour was indeed necessary, and I felt it almost a duty to write this overview. I apologise, however, for any shortcomings herein; I am perfectly aware that each of the chapters is imperfect, and that much more could be said. On the other hand, a compact overview also has advantages, and the aims of this book will have been fulfilled if it contributes to the knowledge of Coseriu's thought and makes the reader curious to explore Coseriu's own texts; from personal experience I know that reading him can be enormously enriching. Perhaps this is also the right moment to look at his work afresh. The Japanese linguist Takashi Kamei, in comparing the reception of Coseriu's writings with those of Saussure and Jakobson and observing that a true reception only comes after a certain time, claimed that Coseriu would in fact become "a linguist of the 21st century".

Coseriu's life is marked by different places – Romania, Italy, Uruguay, Portugal, and finally, Germany (besides Spain, France and other countries) – and languages – Romanian, Italian, Spanish and German (besides Portuguese, French, the Slavic languages, Japanese...). He was a polyglot linguist who lived in different languages and felt the diversity of language structures and linguistic culture from the inside. He conceived of universality from a particular view, or better said, from a combination of several particular views. His linguistic biography and his interest in languages, not only as objects of research but as part of his own practical experience,

strongly contributed to his theoretical views, and even if his biographical background may not directly or straightforwardly explain his language theory, it may help us to understand some of his conceptions.

Eugenio Coseriu (Eugeniu or Eugen Coșeriu, in the original spelling) was born on July 27th, 1921, in Mihăileni, a village in Bessarabia, within the Romanian-speaking lands north of the Black Sea between the rivers Prut and Dniester. It was part of Romania when he was born, but is now part of the Republic of Moldova. Mihăileni itself sits close to the small town of Bălți, where he attended high school, following primary school in his home village. His father was a public sanitary agent and his mother organised the household: a lower-middle-class background, not particularly intellectual, although his father had studied at a Russian high school and used to talk to his son about the classics of Russian literature. Eugeniu was talented and in his youth he would write poems and short stories, some of which were published by the Romanian literature historian Călinescu (who saw in Coseriu a literary talent) in his *Jurnalul Literar*. After completing high school in 1939, he moved to Iași and studied law, plus French and Romanian philology; in 1940, after being involved in fascism, he was awarded a grant and left to continue his studies in Rome. It was here that he developed a growing fascination for language diversity and for philosophy; he also came into contact with Croce's aesthetics and the linguistic thought of Antonino Pagliaro. Both led him to Humboldt and thus to acquiring the historical foundations for a cultural conception of language and linguistics. He completed his studies with a thesis directed by Giovanni Maver on language and folklore in Bessarabia, the region where he had grown up, before beginning studies in philosophy, first in Padua, and then in Milan. Apart from his ongoing studies in philosophy and in Slavic and Romance linguistics, he became part of the *Sodalizio Glottologico Milanese*, founded in 1947 by Vittore Pisani, his later father-in-law, a linguistic circle organised along the same lines as others that existed in different places at the time. In the journal of the *Sodalizio* he published his first linguistic studies. In 1949, he submitted his second thesis, on *The Evolution of Aesthetic Ideas* in Romania, this strongly influenced by his supervisor Antonio Banfi, being essentially a Marxist approach to Romania's "new aesthetics" (see chapter 11). In parallel with his studies, Coseriu worked as an author for an encyclopaedia, translated texts, and wrote literary and art criticism, among other things. But he aimed to become a university professor, and he achieved this by moving to another country: Uruguay. This destination was just one option among several, but Coseriu's wife was Uruguayan and he was attracted by the possibilities of a wealthy country far away from a Europe decimated and divided by the Second World War and far away from communist Romania.

His years in Uruguay would be enormously productive and creative. Coseriu began work at a university without a specialised library and without a real tradi-

tion in linguistics. Perhaps the challenge of having to build everything almost from nothing shaped his linguistic and intellectual personality more than would have been the case had he found himself in a more comfortable and traditional academic environment. In any case, the Montevideo years are absolutely remarkable: it is here that Coseriu's theory of language, which had probably taken shape to a greater or lesser extent during his years in Italy, was explicitly formulated. It is where the basic concepts were defined, and where some of his most notable studies were written: *Sistema, norma y habla*, *Sincronía, diacronía e historia*, *Determinación y entorno*, *La geografía lingüística*, apart from the monumental unpublished manuscripts on language correctness (see chapter 2) and on the theory of proper names (see chapter 3). Due to his personal circumstances at the time, all these works were written in Spanish, and of course the reception of his oeuvre was, and remains, strongly determined by the languages in which it was, and is still, available.

In far-away Montevideo, Coseriu created a fruitful atmosphere of collaboration, establishing international contacts and sending his own work and that of his group to linguists around the world (see chapter 2.6). This is how the Montevideo school became rather well-known, not only in Latin America, but indeed far further afield.

But from 1957 onwards, when he met linguists from many parts of the world at the International Conference of Linguists in Oslo, his orientation was tending towards Europe once more, and indeed he would go on to establish more and more contacts with European linguists. In 1960, he visited Portugal for several months and then, in 1961, the Western German University of Bonn, through an invitation by the Romance studies scholar Harri Meier. Finally, in 1963, after spending another year in Bonn and Frankfurt, he was appointed as full professor in Tübingen, where he remained until his death in 2002. In Tübingen he further developed his theory, and it is during these years that his influence on Romance linguistics in Germany and in Europe began to be felt in earnest. His main works were re-published in Spain, and subsequently in Germany and other countries. Several contributions written in the 1960s, including some of his most significant writing on structural semantics, were originally written in French. From the 1970s onwards, the Tübingen school became the most influential centre of Romance linguistics in Germany, and Coseriu not only continued to develop his programme of structuralist linguistics, but also addressed systematically what he called the “universal level” of “language in general” as well as the “individual level”, the level of *text*. He wrote about Vulgar Latin (one of his favourite fields), about text linguistics, he attacked Generative Grammar, and he produced many detailed studies on specific issues in general and Romance linguistics, as well as on the history of linguistics and language philosophy.

During his final years, the international nature of his career was recognised with numerous academic distinctions, among them dozens of honorary doctorates from universities around the world. When he passed away, a research project in Tübingen was already at work classifying his unpublished manuscripts, and three years after his death, the Coseriu Archive at Tübingen University was established as a place of research. An international biennial conference, held in different locations, now discusses his work; monographs and journal papers are dedicated to his theory; and new, previously unpublished texts are progressively being made available to the public. Coseriu's influence on a variety of different fields is still very strong, but varies greatly, from complete absence to an almost monopolistic presence, depending on the disciplines in question, on schools, and on countries. There are still those with an almost blind admiration for Coseriu's work, who claim that he saw almost everything, and that outside the limits of his thought there is nothing worthy of our attention in linguistics, an attitude that Coseriu himself would have rejected. There are others who just as firmly believe that looking at the outdated linguistics of the 20th century is a waste of time. This book is addressed to a third group, those who share the idea (defended by Coseriu himself) of "Lingua et Traditio" (see the following chapter and chapter 7): in the history of linguistics as a cultural science, we find many ideas which remain relevant; we must of course have a critical view of the traditions of scholarship and consider older views in the context of newer ones. But we should also look with respect at a coherent body of thought which was conceived of and built by Coseriu during his life, and I hope this book will contribute to bringing this thought a little bit closer to an interested readership.

The book is not a biography. The chapters might refer to biographical details every now and then, when these seem important in explaining Coseriu's intellectual and academic evolution. The aim, however, is not to explore his personal life per se. The opening chapters of the book of interviews *DSs* mentioned above are based chronologically on the places where he lived, and for those interested in biographical details, I recommend reading these. In addition, a short biographical chronology can be found at the end of the current book (chapter 13).

The chapters in this volume are thematic and more or less independent; however, they reflect, at least partly, a certain chronology in Coseriu's thinking, and the later chapters sometimes make reference to previous ones, so in this sense a linear reading is preferable. I have decided to place the chapter on aesthetics at the end, even though it deals with an issue that was central in Coseriu's work prior to his systematic construction of a linguistic theory, because Coseriu is far better known as a linguist than as a theorist on aesthetics. This of course does not mean that his writings on aesthetics are less important, and I believe that there is much of Coseriu still to be discovered in this respect.

Each chapter ends with a list of some of Coseriu's works on the subject dealt with in that chapter, as well as details of the titles cited therein and some suggestions for further readings. A complete bibliography of Coseriu's work, plus works on Coseriu, can be found at the end of the book, as well as an index of names.

Chapter 1

Coseriu's epistemological principles and the essence of language

1.1 Introduction

There are different possible ways to approach Coseriu's oeuvre, and probably the best recommendation for getting to know how he worked and thought is by accessing his own writing. But those who do not know Coseriu might ask: where should I start? Which of his contributions to linguistics or to the philosophy of language are the most important and still worth reading? The answer depends on individual preferences and on one's own repertoire of languages, since much of his work is only available in Spanish, Italian, French, German or Romanian. Another way of understanding Coseriu is by reading his own reflections on his life's work, especially the extensive book of interviews *Die Sachen sagen, wie sie sind (DSs)*, available in German, Romanian and Spanish, and to which I will refer repeatedly. In the present book, I have decided to take a different approach, starting from Coseriu's own epistemological principles, since these underly his whole scientific activity and will allow us to explain, at least in part, why his oeuvre is so vast and yet so coherent. As we will see in the following chapters, what characterises Coseriu and lends him enduring significance, perhaps more than any of his specific contributions to linguistics, is a critical view on linguistics (and on science in general); a kind of a meta-view that has had a notable impact on his disciples and continues to influence his readers. Reading Coseriu has two important effects: it makes readers feel that they understand the issues under discussion, and perhaps also (sometimes erroneously) that they know more about it than is generally known. Coseriu has a very clear style and a very convincing way of argumentation which helps to orientate the reader; this orientation is valid not only for a particular issue at hand, but goes far beyond, in that it locates that issue within a broader epistemological context. The basic requirement of a scientist – and this essentially holds for all fields – is to be critically conscious of one's own activity without getting lost in the vast universe of facts. This “meta-thought” not only needs an exhaustive background, but also conviction and stability, and during the final decades of his life Coseriu continually emphasised the steadiness of his conceptions. On several occasions, he argued that his basic linguistic thought had already been conceived in the 1950s and that the remainder of his life was dedicated to the “elaboration” of an already intuitively existing framework of thought. Asked about any changes of mind over the course of his life, Coseriu stated in 1996:

'I would not see such changes of mind. Immodest as I am, I use to compare myself with Hegel and to say that in the way that all of Hegel, the whole Hegelian system, is already given in the *Jenaer Realphilosophie* and that all the rest is just an elaboration of it, also in my case the whole system was already there in a nutshell from the beginning. I may admit partially that it was not sufficiently reasoned or that it did not undergo sufficient elaboration, but I stand by everything because it was actually not a development, but, if development, then only in the sense of an unfolding and not in the sense of a "stupid evolution", where one moves to something else and says that what was valid before no longer applies. I have always been convinced that what I described corresponded to a certain side of the reality of language. Everything was already there in the draft, and one could already imagine how this or that would be realized afterwards.' (DSs, 139)¹

This "elaboration" or "unfolding" does not happen in a completely linear way. Rather, we can identify periods in Coseriu's life that are marked by different focal points and languages:

- the Italian period (1940s): publications in Italian about aesthetics and art criticism; literary publications,
- the Montevideo period (1950s): texts in Spanish; central issues in different linguistic fields; elaboration and criticism of basic concepts of Saussurean thought,
- the first German period (1960s, Frankfurt and the early Tübingen years): publications in French about language typology and structural semantics; first teaching in German,
- the end of the 1960s and the early 1970s: blossoming of the Tübingen school, teaching in German with publications emerging from teaching activities; philosophy of language, current linguistic theories (generativism, sociolinguistics), history of Romance linguistics,

1 "Ich würde keine solchen Brüche sehen. In meiner Unbescheidenheit pflege ich mich mit Hegel zu vergleichen und zu sagen, daß so, wie der 'ganze Hegel', das ganze Hegelsche System, bereits in der Jenenser Realphilosophie gegeben und alles weitere nur Entfaltung davon ist, auch in meinem Fall das System schon von Anfang an im Keim da war. Ich kann teilweise zugeben, daß es nicht genug fundiert oder entfaltet wurde, aber ich stehe zu allem, weil es eigentlich keine Entwicklung war, sondern, wenn Entwicklung, dann nur im Sinne von Entfaltung und nicht im Sinne der 'dummen Evolution', wo man zu etwas anderem übergeht und sagt, daß das Vorherige jetzt nicht mehr gilt. Ich war immer schon überzeugt, daß das, was ich beschrieben habe, einer bestimmten Seite der Realität von Sprache entsprach. Es war alles im Entwurf bereits da, und man konnte schon sehen, wie dies oder jenes dann gemacht werden würde". The sideswipe at Noam Chomsky is made explicit in the subsequent text, when Coseriu says: 'For example, a linguist who abandons or even denies the things is Chomsky' ("Ein Linguist, der die Sachen verläßt und auch leugnet, ist zum Beispiel Chomsky"), see chapter 10.

- from the mid 1970 onwards: continuation of previous issues in several languages.

In this chapter I will present Coseriu's own view on his principles and his main claims about the essence of language and of language science, which will then be developed in a variety of fields in the following chapters. This particular approach makes sense for a linguist who explicitly refers to these principles and contrasts them with others.

From the 1970s onwards, Coseriu was frequently invited to present his overall view on language, and the dozens of ceremonies at which he was appointed Doctor *honoris causa* at universities around the world allowed him to talk about the general foundations underlying his work². As an example, we can cite his address at the ceremony to appoint him as a Dr. h.c. in Granada in 1991³, where he enumerated the following five basic epistemological, methodological and ethical principles:

- the principle of scientific objectivity,
- the principle of humanism or “original knowledge”,
- the principle of tradition,
- the principle of anti-dogmatism,
- the principle of public good or social responsibility.

In the following section I will present these epistemological principles one by one, providing some brief comments on them (section 1.2). Section 1.3 will then offer some of Coseriu's fundamental thoughts on language as expressed in his “Theses on the essence of language and meaning” that emerged in 1999 at a symposium in Strasbourg where he summed up the general background of his theory.

1.2 The five basic epistemological principles

1.2.1 Scientific objectivity

The principle of scientific objectivity, or as Coseriu himself calls it the *principle of the true or truthful Logos* (DSs, 171), is summed up in his idealist platonic motto “τὰ ὄντα ὡς ἔστιν λέγειν”, ‘say the things as they are’. It was first explicitly formulated

² For the following, see also Kabatek 2013.

³ Coseriu [275] (1993a).

at the occasion of his inaugural speech at the Academy of Heidelberg in 1977⁴. This principle refers to the belief in the existence of scientific objects not only in natural science but also in the humanities, and to the possibility – or at least the ideal – of being able to objectively describe them. This does of course not imply that objects only allow for a single perspective (see principle 4), but it denies a constructivist view in which the existence of objects is considered to be an arbitrary construction of the describer and the only “objectivity” must be sought in the description (or construction) itself.

The original quote is taken from Plato’s *Sophist*, section 263b, where a guest discusses true and false sentences with Theaitetos, with the guest at one point saying: “λέγει δὲ αὐτῶν ὁ μὲν ἀληθῆς τὰ ὄντα ὡς ἔστιν περὶ σοῦ” (‘The true one states facts as they are about you’)⁵. Coseriu slightly modifies this sentence and repeatedly claims that it is the basic principle of science, not only of his personal view on science, but of science as such: the object as object, without any subjective bias. Three aspects merit comment in this context: the first relates to the passage in the *Sophist* itself and the contexts of sentences. It is important to recall the fact that truth is not a matter of words; language as such is “innocent” and in itself implies neither lying nor saying the truth. In several contexts, Coseriu quotes Aristotle’s *De interpretation* (Περὶ Ἑρμηνείας) and the discussion therein about the truth of words. Truth or lies are not even a matter of sentences, they are a matter of *text* (see chapter 3).

The second aspect refers to the basically utopian nature of this principle. Coseriu recognises that to say the things as they are seems an easy task but is in fact the most difficult one in science, and he also admits that it might frequently be impossible to reach this goal, although he also insists on the general validity of the principle even if it is never attained (*DSs*, 172). He even insists in a further kind of objectivity, one that not only affects the objects themselves but also the way in which they must be treated: the “intrinsic norm of the object” (*ibid.*). This norm is imposed by the task itself: the artist knows what the perfect sculpture is and even if the result is not perfect, the principle of perfection remains. In a similar way, the linguist knows what the perfect treatment of a problem is, and the impossibility of perfection does not invalidate the existence of the intrinsic norm.

The third aspect refers to the classical and philosophical background of Coseriu’s thought. As we will see throughout this book, his linguistics is not based solely

4 Coseriu [127] (1977).

5 <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0059.tlg007perseus-grc1:263b> (last accessed 23.01.2023).

on the analysis of language or languages, but also frequently refers to philosophy. This is not simply an ornament or an intellectual game, but there is a solid and ever-present foundation. One of the main tasks in understanding Coseriu's linguistic theory is to see and recognise this. When he discusses language change and finality, for example, we must have Aristotle in mind; when he deals with distinctions of degrees of knowledge, Leibniz is present; when he talks about the *Einzelssprache*, the 'particular language', we can detect the presence of Herder and indeed the whole tradition from Herder to Humboldt; when he mentions history, there is a Hegelian background to his discussion. Coseriu was in possession of a profound knowledge of the history of language philosophy and of philosophy in general (see chapter 8), and there has been some discussion about the implicit philosophical references in his works. Does he have Bergson in mind when he talks about time? Is he influenced by Cassirer when he discusses semiotics? In the following chapters, I will not speculate about possible backgrounds of this kind whenever there is some parallelism to philosophical thought, instead limiting references to those writers explicitly mentioned by Coseriu himself. However, we should recall that philosophy is always present, and that there is a tradition in his writing of the positive connotations of authors, one that begins with Plato and Aristotle, progresses towards a convincing view of language through the contribution of German Idealism, and distinguishes authors he esteemed like Croce and Heidegger from other, less esteemed ones, like Russell and Wittgenstein (see chapter 8, for concrete arguments).

1.2.2 Original knowledge

The second principle is that of original or intuitive knowledge. Here, Coseriu stands in clear opposition to probably most of the dominant tendencies in humanities in the second half of the 20th century. The basic idea is that there is a fundamental epistemological difference between natural science and the humanities, and that it would be wholly wrong to adopt scientific principles and methods created in natural or "exact" science in the humanities, due to the completely different nature of their objects of study. In his opinion, the first error consists of considering natural science as "exact" – with the consequence that the only way of becoming "exact" in the humanities is by imitating or adopting methods from the natural sciences. As we know, the dream of linguists has probably always been the exact classification of linguistic objects, be it in the case of semantically universal categories, such as in the work of Raimundus Lullus and Leibniz, or in the Neo-Grammarians' exactness of sound laws. In more recent times, when language has been treated as a phenomenon of biology, or when language evolution

or linguistic phenomena are calculated mathematically in order to achieve objectivity of description, human language again seems to be considered as an object like any other in the natural or social sciences. Such a unified view of science is perhaps even dominant, and can be partly explained as a reaction to impressionistic and pseudo-scientific tendencies in many fields of the humanities, including linguistics: if we oppose mere impressionism to hard science, we in fact oppose science to something esoteric and non-scientific.

But Coseriu's position is different from both of these extremes: the first principle argues for exactness and is clearly opposed to any kind of subjective impressionism. But the second principle introduces a distinction between two kinds of scientific objects, those that are external to us, and those that are produced by ourselves as objects of culture. Among cultural objects, further distinctions will be necessary between artefacts created by individuals and objects of shared knowledge, and languages have the most privileged status among these (see chapter 4). Yet language can be described from the starting point of the intuitive knowledge that we have as "creators" of language, something that is not the case if we look at a mineral or a chemical substance or at any other external object in nature. In the case of a mineral, for example, humans have little intuitive knowledge about its characteristics; they might describe its colour or say that it is solid, but further information is limited and needs arbitrary hypotheses which will then have to be tested. One of Coseriu's examples is the boiling point of water. No human can know intuitively the temperature at which water changes from liquid to gas. However, we can simply test this to confirm that water is stable in one state or another, and that this depends, for example, on the mineralisation of the water or on the surrounding air pressure. The procedure: arbitrary hypothesis → test → verification would be the same for linguistic issues on a unified view of science. But as Coseriu claims, humans as "producers" of language know intuitively what a language is, what a syllable, word or sentence is (even children can syllabify spontaneously and rather well); they intuitively know what a dialect is and that different groups of speakers have different linguistic habits. This by no means implies that such an "intuitive" or "original" knowledge can be taken for scientific knowledge. The following table by López Serena (2019b, 111) nicely summarises Coseriu's objection between natural sciences and humanities:

Tab. 1.1: Coseriu's opposition of natural sciences and human sciences (López Serena 2019b, 111).

	Natural sciences	Humanities
Nature of the object of study	Natural objects, of universal character	Human objects of historical-normative (social) nature endowed with free will
Types of laws / rules they are subject to	Universal laws of causality-necessity that allow for prediction	Norms or historical rules that can be violated
Relation subject–object of investigation	Independent	Coinciding
Characteristic types of explanations	Causalist	Finalist
Prototypical epistemic act	Observation	Intuition

On this “humanistic” view, linguistics is a cultural science. Asked about the origin of this “humanistic” conception, Coseriu refers, in the first place, to Humboldt and to Vico (with Croce as an intermediary), in particular to Vico's distinction between *verum* and *certum*. Coseriu claims that the humanities are in fact “exact” sciences because it is here where the *verum* and the *certum* can coincide. Coseriu explains his differentiated view between natural and cultural sciences in *DSs*:⁶

6 “Was die Ebene der Theorie betrifft, so besteht im Bereich der Naturwissenschaften die Theorie notwendigerweise aus allgemeinen Hypothesen hinsichtlich des Wesens der entsprechenden Objekte sowie aus im Einklang mit diesen Hypothesen konstruierten Erklärungsmodellen. Hier brauchen wir tatsächlich Hypothesen, denn es handelt sich nicht um Fakten, die wir selbst schaffen, sondern um Fakten, die uns in der Welt als schon gemacht begegnen: hinsichtlich des Wesens dieser Fakten verfügen wir nicht über Gewißheit, über das *certum* im Sinne von Vico. Auch dürfen wir hier mit Popper sagen, daß wir die Hypothesen nicht ‘verifizieren’, sondern nur eventuell ‘falsifizieren’ können: feststellen, daß eine Hypothese, die uns für die Erklärung gewisser Erscheinungen gedient hat, sich für die Erklärung anderer Erscheinungen in demselben Bereich als unbrauchbar erweist.

In der Kulturwissenschaften hingegen brauchen wir keine Hypothesen in bezug auf das Universelle, auf das Wesen der Fakten, denn dafür verfügen wir über unser ‘Urwissen’. Mehr noch: es ist absurd, hier Hypothesen zu formulieren in bezug auf das, was man intuitiv schon weiß, d. h. anzunehmen, daß man gerade das nicht weiß, was man genau weiß. So was können wir nur tun, wenn wir zu didaktischen Zwecken eine *reductio ad absurdum* brauchen. Es ist sinnwidrig z. B. zu sagen ‘Nehmen wir an, eine Sprache sei dies oder jenes’; man weiß doch, was eine Sprache ist. Es ist sinnwidrig zu sagen: ‘Nehmen wir an, eine Grammatik sei ein Mechanismus zum Verbinden vor bestimmten Lauten mit bestimmten Bedeutungen’, da wir wissen, daß dem nicht so ist, daß alles Grammatische schon Bedeutung hat und daß man in einer grammatischen Konstruktion nicht Laute mit Bedeutungen, sondern Bedeutungen mit Bedeutungen verbindet. Im Kulturbereich

‘As for the level of theory, in the field of the natural sciences, theory necessarily consists of general hypotheses about the nature of the objects concerned, and of explanatory models constructed in accordance with these hypotheses. Here, we really need hypotheses as we are not dealing with facts created by ourselves but with facts we encounter as given ones in the world. We do not have at our disposal any certainty about these facts, no *certum* in the sense of Vico. We can also say, along with Popper, that these hypotheses cannot be “verified” but maybe only “falsified”. We may state that a hypothesis that served for the explanation of certain phenomena is not suitable for the explanation of other phenomena in the same area.

In cultural sciences, however, we don’t need any hypotheses concerning the universality or the essence of the facts because we have our “original knowledge” (*Urwissen*) at our disposal. Even more: it is absurd to formulate hypotheses concerning what we intuitively know already, i. e. to suppose you don’t know exactly what you in fact know. We might only do this if we need a “*reductio ad absurdum*” for didactic reasons. It does not make sense to say “let’s suppose a language is this or that” – we know what a language is. It does not make sense to say: “a grammar is a mechanism for the association of certain sounds with certain meanings” since we know that this is not true and that everything that is grammatical already has a meaning and that in a grammatical construction it is not about linking sounds to meanings but rather about linking meanings to other meanings. In the area of culture, hypotheses only make sense if they concern unknown particular and historical facts, and on a general view, they only make sense if we look at the biological foundation of cultural activity (if we suppose or need such a foundation). It’s the same with “models”. We don’t need, in the cultural sciences, any hypothetical models based on hypotheses. Our models (the term must be used even if I don’t like it) can only be didactic schemes of a reality already known to us in its principles. Natural and cultural sciences are thus radically different from this point of view, because so too are nature and culture.’ (*DSs*, 197–198)

Coseriu [239a] (1988), 204–205, refers to Hegel when he says that a difference must be made between the ‘known’ (“*das Bekannte*”) and the ‘recognised’ (“*das Erkannte*”):

sind Hypothesen nur in bezug auf das uns unbekannte Partikuläre und Historische sinnvoll; in allgemeiner Hinsicht nur, was die biologische Grundlage der kulturellen Tätigkeiten betrifft (wenn man überhaupt eine solche Grundlage braucht oder annimmt). Desgleichen verhält es sich mit den ‘Modellen’. Wir brauchen in der Kulturwissenschaften keine hypothetischen – auf Hypothesen beruhenden – Modelle. Unsere Modelle (man muß ja diesen Terminus verwenden, obwohl er mir nicht gefällt), unsere Modelle, sage ich, können nur didaktische Schemata der uns in ihren Grundzügen bekannten Realität sein. Die Naturwissenschaften und die Kulturwissenschaften sind also unter diesen Gesichtspunkten radikal verschieden, weil die Natur und die Kultur es sind”.

'By applying this Hegelian distinction to linguistic knowledge, we can distinguish between the knowledge of speakers, who ignore the justifications, and the knowledge of linguists, who also know the reasons.' [239a] (1988), 205.⁷

This means that speakers know how to produce coherent and grammatical utterances in their language, but they have no explicit knowledge of the underlying grammatical principles of what they do (or, at least, they don't need to have). 'In this sense', Coseriu claims, 'linguists follow consciously or unconsciously Hegel's recommendation that "all that's knowledge must become recognition"' (ibid.)⁸.

A more detailed distinction, and one that Coseriu used to quote in this context, can be found in Leibniz's 1684 treaty *Meditationes de cognitione, veritate et ideis*, a short text that, as Coseriu frequently repeated, should be, 'without kidding' (ibid.), known by heart by those who argue about the disciplines within the area of the humanities. Leibniz distinguishes different steps of human cognition with the aim of showing the nature and the way to scientific knowledge, the *cognitio clara distincta et adaequata* (Fig. 1.1).

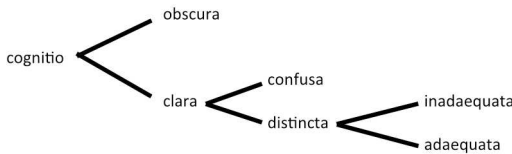


Fig. 1.1: Types of human cognition according to Leibniz 1682, [239a] (1988), 206.

Linguistic competence is located at the level of *cognitio clara confusa* and *cognitio clara distincta inadaequata* (speakers know how to speak, and they can also argue about what they do, but the argumentation remains generally subjective and does not reach the level of scientific argumentation, even if the results may coincide). Linguists apply systematic methods in order to reach the final level, the one of scientific objectivity: the *cognitio clara distincta adaequata*.

The principle of intuitive knowledge should not be confused with a general mentalistic view. Coseriu is mentalistic in the sense that he believes linguistics must depart from the knowledge of the speaking individual. But he is strongly against the adoption of a scientific methodology drawn from natural science,

7 "Wendet man Hegels Begriffe auf das sprachliche Wissen an, so kann man unterscheiden zwischen dem Wissen der Sprecher, die keine Begründungen kennen, und dem Wissen der Linguisten, denen auch die Gründe bekannt sind".

8 "In diesem Sinne folgen die Linguisten bewußt oder unbewußt dem Rat von Hegel: 'Alle Kenntnis muß Erkenntnis werden'".

and he defends a completely different view than that of Chomsky's mentalism, for example (see chapter 10). In the 1950s, however, the paradigm that was most radically opposed to Coseriu's approach was *Behaviorism*. Coseriu always mentions the work of Bloomfield with respect (in fact, he used to call Bloomfield's 1933 *Language* the best introduction to linguistics ever written; *DSs*, 181) and he even recognises the 'extraordinary effort' (Coseriu [182] (1981), 116) of Behaviorism to achieve 'total objectivity in the scientific study' (*ibid.*)⁹. But he continues:

{[...] the objectivity it is aiming at does not concern the cultural objects in their proper being; it is thus not an effective objectivity but rather a lack of scientific objectivity. And the Behaviorist method – far from being strictly scientific or even, as frequently claimed, the only scientific one in cultural sciences – rigorously exhibits the absolute opposite, since it contravenes the basic postulate of scientific activity, which is to “say the things as they are” (*ibid.*)¹⁰

1.2.3 Tradition and innovation

The third principle somehow derives from the second, and refers to the respect for tradition. In natural science, it is quite common to refer only to the most recent results of a discipline due to the evolution of the discipline itself. Older findings are outdated and no longer of relevance. Those who believe in a unitary view of science will probably also adopt this view in linguistics, and we can frequently observe the tendency of ignoring the tradition of the discipline because the knowledge gained in the past is no longer considered relevant. Coseriu's view here is summarised in the following paragraph:

'If the principle of the human subject, and consequently the principle of original knowledge, is valid, then of course the principle of tradition also applies, because I must assume that all the scientists before me wanted the same thing. I cannot assume that they were not acting in good faith or that they only wanted to deceive, even though I might discover that they in fact deceived. And if I assume that people have always been intelligent, then when they make mistakes, I have to ask myself why they were wrong, what they actually wanted to say, and which of their findings were correct. As for the problems and the questions, they have always existed. Even in so-called pre-scientific linguistics. And very often the solutions were also analogous. In the *History of Linguistics*, I have shown that very often the same questions and

9 “extraordinario esfuerzo por alcanzar una objetividad total en el estudio científico.”

10 “la objetividad a la que aspira no concierne a los objetos culturales en su ser propio y, por tanto, no es objetividad efectiva, sino falta de objetividad científica. Y el método behaviorista, lejos de ser estrictamente científico, o el único científico en las ciencias de la cultura, como a menudo se pretende, es, en rigor, todo lo contrario, pues contraviene a la exigencia básica de la actividad científica, que es la de ‘decir las cosas como son.’”

the same solutions have been found, both in descriptive and in historical linguistics.' (*DSs*, 180) ¹¹

The importance given to tradition can be observed throughout his work. Coseriu builds his own language theory on a tradition that reaches back as far as the classical Greek writing of Plato and Aristotle. We have seen that the first principle is a Platonic one; the general conception of language as activity, as *energeia* (see chapter 4) is adopted from Aristotle via Humboldt. Coseriu is a conscious traditionalist even if his language theory is original and new. He recognises his debt to those who taught him linguistic and philosophical thought, and he generally mentions them explicitly:

I am willing to recognise that everything of value and of worth in my writings and in my conceptions and in the methods I follow is the fruit of a dialectal reworking of the reflections and of the development of ideas that can be found in other linguists and philosophers of language. [295] (1995), 187–188.

The principle of tradition is explicitly central in his writings on the history of linguistics (see chapter 7). Indeed, Coseriu's oeuvre includes numerous publications on the history of linguistics, one of the preferred areas of his research: on the origins of European linguistic thought in Ancient Greece, on the history of linguistic concepts (e.g. the masterpiece of reconstruction of lines of tradition tracing the origin of the notion of *arbitraire du signe*¹²), on individual contributions to linguistics (like the work of Fernão de Oliveira, Andrés de Poza, Lorenzo Hervás, Hieronymus Megiser, Wilhelm von Humboldt and many others), and on the history of linguistics in general. Only recently has the monumental *Geschichte der romanischen Sprachwissenschaft*, 'History of the Romance Languages' ([374] (2003); [442] (2020); [443] (2021)), been published, a unique view on the traditions of linguistics

11 "Wenn das Prinzip des menschlichen Subjekts und folglich das Prinzip des Urwissens gilt, dann gilt natürlich auch das Prinzip der Tradition, denn ich muß annehmen, daß auch alle Wissenschaftler vor mir das gleiche gewollt haben. Ich kann nicht annehmen, daß sie nicht guten Glaubens waren und nur täuschen wollten, auch wenn ich entdecken kann, daß sie getäuscht haben. Und wenn ich annehme, daß die Menschen immer schon intelligent gewesen sind, dann muß ich mich bei ihren Irrtümern fragen, warum sie sich geirrt haben, was sie eigentlich sagen wollten und was sie doch Richtiges festgestellt haben. Was die Probleme betrifft und die Fragen, so waren diese immer schon da. Auch in der sogenannten vorwissenschaftlichen Sprachwissenschaft. Und sehr oft waren die Lösungen auch analog. Ich habe in der Geschichte der Sprachwissenschaft gezeigt, daß man sehr oft bei den gleichen Fragestellungen auch zu den gleichen Lösungen gekommen ist, sowohl in der Sprachbeschreibung als auch in der Sprachgeschichte".

12 Coseriu [39] (1967).

concerning the Romance languages. Together with his Tübingen colleague Hans Helmut Christmann, Coseriu launched a series of publications under the title *Lingua et Traditio*, in which their disciples published reconstructions of the predecessors of modern linguistic thought.

Tradition is by no means seen as opposed to innovation; however, the claim is that real innovation is only possible on the basis of the knowledge of tradition. Several publications refer in the title, as does our own chapter 7, to *Tradition and innovation*.

1.2.4 Anti-Dogmatism

A similar pair of concepts, seen repeatedly in the titles of Coseriu's works, is 'Achievements and limitations' (Germ. *Leistung und Grenzen*, Sp. *Alcances y Límites*), with the basic idea that one of the tasks of a linguistic scholar is to show the contributions and innovations of an individual to general linguistic thought. In this context, Coseriu repeatedly postulates a 'sympathetic' approach, in the sense that one should try to look at the conceptions of others in a holistic way and try to understand their thinking from within, whilst also being able to see any shortcomings. The 'sympathetic' approach has two sides; on the one hand, the understanding of the way an author thinks, and on the other, the creative continuation of what an author would have said about a certain issue if he or she had investigated it:

[...] sympathetic in two dimensions; not only to put oneself into the position of interpreting a certain view from within (also in the case of the errors committed) but also in the sense of discovering the virtualities and the possible evolutions of certain points of view.¹³ (*DSs*, 169)

This 'sympathetic' approach leads to the fourth principle, the principle of "anti-dogmatism". As Coseriu himself states in his inaugural speech at the Academy of Heidelberg in 1977:

The fourth and final principle is "Achievements and limitations" ("Principle of Anti-Dogmatism"); this is especially valid for my critical activity. If we suppose that the findings from which the different theories of explanation depart are fundamentally or at least intuitively correct (no one is assumed to say wrong things on purpose), we also have to suppose that the errors occur due to partialisations or shifts when passing from the 'known' ("Bekanntes") to

¹³ "sympathetisch in zweierlei Hinsicht. Nicht nur sich in ihre Lage versetzen und versuchen, sie von ihrem Gesichtspunkt aus zu interpretieren, auch bei den Fehlern, die sie machen, sondern auch ihre Virtualitäten entdecken und die Entwicklungsmöglichkeiten ihrer Ansätze".

the 'recognized' ("Erkannten"). Thus, each theory contributes something to our self-knowledge through what it stresses in particular, but it also has limitations due to the things it leaves in the shadow. To paraphrase Leibniz, each theory is correct in its affirmations and wrong in its negations.¹⁴ ([127] (1977), 109).

In the final decades of his life, Coseriu talked and wrote about this principle on many occasions. He claimed that it was possible to continue the thinking of someone in an emphatic way. In the case of typology (see chapter 9), he claimed with respect to Humboldt's thought that a language type in the sense of an abstract ordering principle that guides structural changes of a language was something one could develop out of Humboldt's writings, even if it had not been developed explicitly by Humboldt himself. Coseriu claimed that this was confirmed when he found Humboldt's grammar of Náhuatl, in which the principle was in fact applied to a concrete, empirical case. He published several papers about "his" linguists ("My Saussure" [295], "My Pagliaro" [287]) where he explains how his own thinking was marked by these scholars, showing at the same time his differences in terms of their theories. This is especially the case with Saussure: most of Coseriu's writings of the 1950s take Saussure's *CLG* as a central reference point. But Saussure's doctrine (or that of his editors) is only a starting point and also serves to show the limitations of Saussurean thought. However, Coseriu by no means considered himself an anti-Saussurean (see chapter 6); rather, he thought of himself as the true defender of Saussure by showing the whole range of the possibilities of structural linguistics.

In general, when Coseriu discusses other theories, he focuses on the individuals who produced them and looks at their whole production in a systematic way. This rather individualistic view is omnipresent in his writings, and not only in works on the history of linguistics or of philosophy. The same approach was also part of his teaching: he used to present theories in the context of the author's whole life and work. When a famous and much-valued linguist died, Coseriu would interrupt the programme of his courses and dedicate a whole class to the life and work of the person who had passed away.

14 "Der vierte und letzte Grundsatz ist 'Leistung und Grenzen' ('Prinzip des Antidogmatismus') und gilt insb. als Grundsatz meiner kritischen Tätigkeit. Da die Einsichten, von denen die verschiedenen Erklärungstheorien ausgehen, grundsätzlich und zumindest im Bereich der Intuition richtig sind (niemandem darf unterstellt werden, er wolle absichtlich Falsches sagen), muß man annehmen, daß das Irrtümliche durch Partialisierungen und Verschiebungen beim Übergang vom Bekannten zum Erkannten eintritt und daß deshalb jede Theorie durch das, was sie besonders betont, einen Beitrag zu unserem Selbstverständnis leistet, daß aber auch jede wegen dessen, was sie im Schatten läßt, ihre Grenzen findet, oder, Leibniz paraphrasierend, daß jede Theorie in dem, was sie behauptet, richtig, in dem, was sie negiert, falsch ist".



Fig. 1.2: Coseriu and Harri Meier in Tübingen in the 1980s, © Coseriu Archive Tübingen.

I personally remember this in the case of the death of the romanist Harri Meier in 1990: Coseriu not only talked about Harri Meier's role in his personal life (in fact it was when Harri Meier came to Montevideo in the fifties that plans were made to bring Coseriu back to Europe, an objective achieved afterwards with the help of the German Academic Exchange Service, which made Coseriu's exchange stay in Bonn possible and opened up the way for his permanent move to Germany); he also explained Meier's ideas on etymology, mentioned some of his specific empirical contributions to historical issues in Ibero-Romance languages, and explained his theory of the romanisation of the Iberian Peninsula, all this as a means of seeing the whole person and his principles of thought, including his personal preferences for certain explanations over others. The aim of this change in the program of lectures was not only to share his personal memory of a particular linguist with his students, but also to show that a biographical and contextual view on linguistic ideas made sense.

1.2.5 The principle of “public usefulness”

The fifth principle was explicitly added in later writings and does not appear in the Heidelberg speech; however, it is a principle that is present in Coseriu's activity since the 1950s. He rejects a strict separation between the world of linguistics and the “outside world”. Linguists do not live in an isolated sphere, and they work on an object that is common to all humans, as well as being in the interests of all humanity. This leads to a responsibility that linguists have in society: they must serve society with their expertise, and must not treat speakers as ignorant. Of course, there is a difference between linguists, who are experts, and non-linguists or lay-people, who are not. But this gap should not be left open: linguists should not be arrogant and conceal their activity within ivory towers. This means that all the issues on which society seeks the help of linguists should be taken seriously. For example, when linguists are asked about the difference between a language and a dialect, they should neither say “you won't understand this” nor “there is no coherent answer”, but rather try to transfer scientific knowledge to the people. And they should consider as serious disciplines all the applied approaches to language: language teaching, translation, language policies and the organisation of language(s) in society, language and communication. This includes text analyses and the development of critical tools to analyse when and where language is abused in the interests of manipulation or tyranny. Parts of Coseriu's work are indeed dedicated to issues of this kind. In the 1950s, he wrote an exhaustive manual on language and correction aimed at language teachers (see chapter 2); several of his works were dedicated to the theory of translation, and others to language and politics (to the language of politics as well as to language policies, in both general and in specific situations) as well as to language and education.

1.2.6 A critical view of the principles

A critical view of Coseriu's principles might, in the first place, question the need for such principles. Are they not so general that in fact there is no need to formulate them explicitly? Isn't the formulation of such principles “dogmatic” and thus contradictory in itself? Coseriu's self-conception probably justified the explicit formulation of such principles – not only for himself, but also as a model for others (in the first instance for his disciples). As we have already noted, the first principle is a utopian one. It could be considered arrogant, in the sense that those who claim this principle for themselves might also claim that they are capable of fulfilling it while others are not; otherwise, the principle could be considered superfluous or so general that no explicit formulation is necessary. Another question relates to the

intrinsic norm of the object. If such a norm exists, it might be difficult to consider it as an absolute and objective norm. Of course, criteria exist for the relative fulfillment of quality criteria. But it is questionable whether perfection is an absolute value.

The principle of tradition could also be considered to be of general value, but it seems necessary to insist on it given the fact that many branches of linguistics or cultural science in general deny their own tradition. Coseriu was himself criticised in several contexts for not always explicitly recognising his own tradition, or because he sometimes implicitly referred to sources which were not explicitly mentioned (a criticism which he used to reject with convincing arguments). We will return to this question in the following chapters. As for the principle of anti-dogmatism, Coseriu's strong personality did not generally appear to be truly anti-dogmatic. Throughout his life, he very clearly attacked those who rejected his theories or who defended other ones which he did not accept. He also openly rejected the work of renowned scholars in his own writing. An example is his harsh criticism of Bertrand Russell and Wittgenstein. Radical judgements can be found in Coseriu's work, and sometimes he tended to divide people into two classes, those he saw as coherent and serious and those he rejected completely. He even confessed this kind of radical binarism:

{[...] there are thinkers who are reliable and others who are not at all reliable. This is something one learns by experience and over time. We assume, for example, that Aristotle is in general reliable, and when we find something that seems completely absurd at first sight, we must ask ourselves in which way he is right and what the sense of the apparent lack of sense is. In this way, the Arabs said about Averroes that if Aristotle had claimed of a seated person that she is standing, Averroes would have sworn that she was standing, too. I think that Averroes was right: because if Aristotle had said such a thing, it would have been for a reason, and hence one should ask what he actually meant by it. [...]

But since I am also malicious, I say that there are also completely unreliable persons, where even in cases when something seems to be right at first sight, we should doubt if it is not in fact wrong and only seems to be right by coincidence. I used to give the example of Bertrand Russell for this kind of case. If you find something apparently correct, it will probably be wrong. This is of course malicious and exaggerated, but I also have my phobias.¹⁵ (DSs, 148–149)

15 "es gibt glaubwürdige Denker und überhaupt nicht glaubwürdige. Das lernt man mit der Erfahrung und im Laufe der Zeit. Man sagt dann, Aristoteles ist grundsätzlich glaubwürdig; und auch wenn etwas bei Aristoteles auf den ersten Blick völlig absurd erscheint, muß man sich doch fragen, in welcher Hinsicht er recht hat und was der eigentliche Sinn des scheinbaren Unsinn ist. Wie die Araber von Averroes sagten, daß, wenn Aristoteles von einem sitzenden Menschen behauptet hätte, er steht, auch Averroes geschworen hätte, daß er steht. Ich meine, daß Averroes recht

So it seems that some people were excluded from the principle of anti-dogmatism. Some of the radical judgements about famous philosophers and linguists have probably not contributed very much to Coseriu's international reception. Coseriu was not considered to be a particularly nice person in contexts of conferences and colloquia where he sometimes attacked other scholars severely. Tullio de Mauro (2007, 15), who maintained a friendly relationship with him, pointed out, 'There were people who loved him; many considered him to be overbearing, some called him "a buffalo" or even "a bison", an unstoppable natural force capable of annihilating publicly a scholar who seemed unworthy to him. Everybody was afraid of him.'¹⁶

But as Coseriu himself would say, the fact that we do not always manage to accomplish our principles does not invalidate those principles as such. And at the same time that Coseriu could leave impressions like those described by de Mauro, in the descriptions of some of his disciples he appears to be exactly the opposite: as a person of an enormous intellectual generosity with great empathy for the individuality of his students and followers.¹⁷

1.3 The general conception of language

1.3.1 Preliminary remarks

Beyond his general epistemological principles, Coseriu defends a series of fundamental ideas about language and linguistics. Most of these stem from his studies in the 1950s, and several have to do with a direct discussion of Saussure's thought.

hatte: denn wenn Aristoteles so etwas gesagt hätte, so hätte er es aus einem bestimmten Grund gesagt, und deshalb hätte man sich fragen müssen, was er eigentlich damit gemeint hat. [...]

Da ich aber auch boshaft bin, sage ich, daß es auch völlig ungläubwürdige Menschen gibt, wo auch in solchen Fällen, wo etwas auf den ersten Blick zu stimmen scheint, Zweifel angebracht sind und man sich fragen muß, ob es nicht doch in Wirklichkeit falsch ist oder nur durch Zufall stimmt. Als Beispiel dafür pflege ich Bertrand Russell anzuführen. Wenn bei ihm etwas auf den ersten Blick zu stimmen scheint, ist es doch wahrscheinlich falsch – was natürlich boshaft und übertrieben ist: man hat eben auch so seine Phobien".

¹⁶ "C'era chi lo amava, molti lo ritenevano un prepotente, qualcuno diceva 'un bufalo' o anche 'un bisonte' una forza della natura inarrestabile, capace di annientare in pubblico uno studioso che gli paresse non degno, tutti lo temevano".

¹⁷ On the occasion of Coseriu's 100th birthday, the University of Zurich prepared dozens of short individual interviews with his disciples and other persons with some kind of relationship with him. These testify his generous attitude and can be viewed at the site <https://coseriu.ch/interviews-en/>.

A common strategy is to discuss the famous dichotomies attributed to Saussure and to add a third element, while also reordering and redefining the remaining two, as we will see in the following chapters. So *langue* and *parole* are replaced by *system*, *norm* and *speech*; *synchrony* and *diachrony*, by *synchrony*, *diachrony* and *history*. Threefold distinctions are clearly the favoured in Coseriu's conceptions; we find them in the classification of dialects (*primary*, *secondary* and *tertiary*) as well as in the distinction between dimensions of variation (*diatopic*, *diastatic* and *diaphasic*). Only when it is absolutely inevitable does Coseriu accept a more complex terminological framework (see chapter 3).

The central distinction of Coseriu's linguistic conception is also threefold, and this in two dimensions. In his own opinion, this nine-field distinction as the central axis of how to consider language is his most important contribution to linguistics:

If I were asked what I consider to be my main contribution to the understanding of language and consequently to the foundation of linguistics or, to put it in other words, what constitutes my permanent frame of reference, the very often implicit fundamental principle underlying my treatment of the different, general, or particular linguistic problems, I would answer that it is a relatively simple distinction, one also made intuitively by the speakers of any language, which became entirely clear to me only around 1955; in any case, it was only in 1955 that I formulated it explicitly and undertook to justify it. This distinction, which originated as a result of the discomfort with the distinction *langue/parole*, *language/speech* in the context of the post-Saussurean discussion of these notions, in reality concerns the levels of language, but applies first of all to what in recent decades has been called 'linguistic competence' and what I called at the time, and continue to call, 'linguistic knowledge' (*saber lingüístico*). And I consider this distinction to be important, as it enables us to assign a precise position to the different problem areas of linguistics and to its various questions with respect to the complex object language. It has been, for me at least, a helpful epistemological frame of reference for the interpretation not only of the various linguistic problems, ranging from that of linguistic change to that of translation and of linguistic correctness, but also of the structure of the linguistic disciplines themselves and of recent developments in linguistics. (Coseriu 1985 [216], XXVI)

This distinction is first outlined in the 1955 paper *Determinación y entorno* and explained in one of Coseriu's few original English contributions, his presidential address of the Modern Humanities Research Association in January 1985.

In it he distinguishes three levels for considering language: a universal level of "speaking in general", a historical level of the "concrete particular language", and an individual level of "discourse". The universal level concerns all the universal facts and the general principles of speaking that characterise language in general, prior to any distinction between different languages. The historical level is the level of languages such as English or Spanish; it is historical because a language is always a historically given object of a community. The individual level, finally,

is the level of language coming into concrete existence: the concrete utterance with all the semiotic values of the interplay between text and contexts.

These three levels can all be regarded in terms of three different aspects: as an activity, from the point of view of knowledge or competence, and by viewing the product. These three aspects are given Aristotle's labels *energeia*, *dynamis* and *ergon*. Two of the terms are of course well known as central concepts in Humboldt's view of language as activity, *energeia*, and not as a result or product, *ergon*; indeed, Coseriu's view is Humboldtian from the very beginning. However, Coseriu not only adopts and shares the Humboldtian distinction but goes back to Aristotelian roots in finding a threefold distinction.¹⁸ The resulting scheme, published originally in 1955–56 in *Determinación y entorno* and in English in a 1985 paper, is the following:

Levels	Points of view		
	ἐνέργεια Activity	δύναμις Knowledge	ἔργον Product
Universal	Speaking in general	Elocutional knowledge	Totality of utterances
Historical	Concrete particular language	Idiomatic knowledge	(Abstracted particular language)
Individual	Discourse	Expressive knowledge	Text

Fig. 1.3: Language levels and points of view [216] (1985), XXIX.

We will return to this scheme at several points throughout the present book. It will be the fundamental reference point for Coseriu's work and the elaboration of disciplines that emerge from it (including the rejection of approaches that do not distinguish these different levels and viewpoints). During his life, he would focus mainly on the historical level and propose new distinctions and disciplines here: he would introduce the distinction between *system*, *norm* and *speech*, and between different dimensions of language variation (*diatopic*, *diastratic* and *diaphasic*) in order to be able to isolate the functional language as an object for structural analysis. He would apply the three-level distinction to semantics and distinguish between *designation* (on the universal level), *meaning* (on the historical level in the sense of the signified) and *sense* (on the individual level), and he would develop a theory of structural semantics (i. e. the theory of meaning, of signifieds, on the historical level) and baptise it *lexematics*. He would also look at the individual

¹⁸ It should be noted that the threefold distinction can also be found in the work of the almost forgotten Spanish philosopher and linguist Ángel Amor Ruibal, see Kabatek 2009.

level, the *sense*, and propose a theory of text linguistics as hermeneutics of sense. Not all of the aspects would be developed by Coseriu himself; for instance, he proposed the creation of a “semantics of objects” or *skeology* without ever developing it further (see chapter 6). Yet he also indicated possible further evolutions, admitting that he simply did not have the time to work on all possible fields. It is, however, surprising how he always related everything to this basic conception. The following section will present a short text with further details on this general framework.

1.3.2 The Strasbourg Theses on the essence of language and meaning

In October 1999, Coseriu participated in a seminar organised at the University of Strasbourg under the title “Perception du monde et perception du langage”. Probably in order to make his standpoint clearer to the participants, several days after the workshop he sent a few handwritten pages to the organiser asking that the text of these be distributed among the students. The text contains “some theses about the essence of language and meaning”. The theses would subsequently be published, with some variations, in several versions and in several languages¹⁹.

I will first reproduce the theses, then briefly comment on them:

Ten theses on the essence of language and meaning

1. Absolute priority of language

The fundamental error of most theories or “philosophies” of language consists in the attempt to reduce language to some of the other human faculties (or free activities): to understanding (or rational thinking), to the practical spirit, or to art. But in fact language cannot be reduced to “something else”. Language – and Hegel saw this clearly – is one of the two essential dimensions of the essence of human beings, the other one being work. Human beings are the only existing beings that work and speak in the proper sense of these terms. Through work, human beings constantly create a world which is adequate for their physical existence whereas through language, an appropriate world for spiritual existence is created: a thinkable world (the world of sensual experience, even if representable, is not thinkable). This is why language is the “access” to all cultural possibilities of

¹⁹ The text was published in French in 2001. In *Energeia* 4 (2012), 49–52 (see energeia-online.org), Mónica Castillo and I published a Spanish version with digital access to other versions and to the original manuscript; this is why we don't add the original version here. A commentary on the theses can be found in Kabatek 2013.

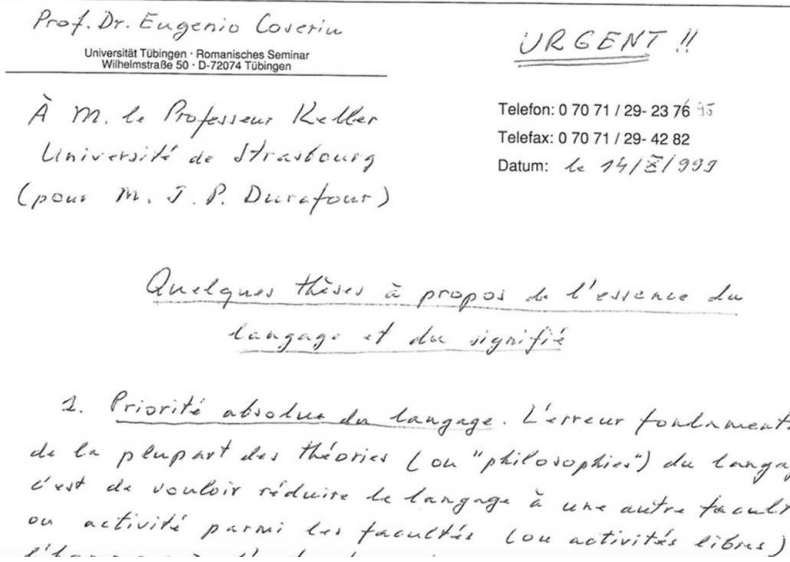


Fig. 1.4: First page of the handwritten manuscript with the Strasbourg theses, © Coseriu Archive Tübingen.

human beings (including discursive thinking, science, philosophy, poetry). In this sense, Hegel stated that language was “voreilig” (“precipitated”) because it contains beforehand all the forms of evolution of the spirit. All the other characteristics of language derive from this fundamental fact.

2. Language and culture

Language is a creative activity and as such an infinite “cultural” activity; but at the same time, it is a form of culture and the foundation of culture, in particular as cultural *tradition*.

3. Language universals

Language is characterised by five universals: three primary universals, *creativity*, *semantivity*, and *alterity*, and two derived universals, *historicity* and *materiality*. Creativity (*energeia*) is characteristic of all forms of culture. Among these, language is the activity that creates meanings, signs with significations, and this is what *semantivity* consists of.

These signs are always created “for the other”, or rather, as if they were also the other’s from the beginning, and this is what their *alterity* consists of. In this sense, language is the primary manifestation of alterity: of this “being-with-the-

other” characteristic of humans. *Historicity* derives from creativity and alterity. It means that the technique of linguistic activity is always given in the form of traditional systems that are specific to historical communities, systems called languages: what is created by the language faculty is always created within a language. *Materiality* results from *semanticity* and *alterity*. Indeed, semanticity is a mental fact and remains within the mind; in order to become accessible for the other it needs to be represented in the world of the senses by *material* signifiers. This is of course also the case for other cultural activities, the contents of which, as we know, are constituted only in the mind and must all be represented in the world of senses. However, the materiality of language is different from that of other cultural activities, since it is always the specific materiality of a particular language. The same is true of the specificity of linguistic *historicity* vis-à-vis that of other cultural activities; in this sense, styles in art are not analogous to languages. We will also observe that language is the only cultural activity (therefore creative as such) defined by *two* universals (*semanticity* and *alterity*), and not by just one, and that *alterity* is involved there three times, since it is a condition for *historicity* and *materiality*.

4. Communication and community

Language (as speech) is, certainly, communication. But we must distinguish between the communication of something – a practical fact that may also not occur without language ceasing to be such – from communication with the other, without which language is no longer language and which must always be given (it is already present in the creation of meanings/signifieds), since it corresponds to the fundamental alterity of language. From the point of view of the community, language is not simply a social fact, a product of society comparable to the social institutions; on the contrary, it is, through alterity (and Aristotle saw this clearly in his *Politeia*), the foundation of any human association.

5. To name and to say

The two fundamental functions of language are *onomazein* and *legein* (Plato): to name and to say, which corresponds roughly to the distinction between lexicon and grammar. But, while in the case of naming (which is primary) everything is language (since it deals with the organisation of the world in categories and species), in saying (where it is a question of establishing relations in this world and with this world), only the generic form – the semantic modality – of these relations is, properly, language, since, as to its substance, saying is also science, practical activity, feeling, art (poetry), etc.

6. The content of saying

In the content expressed and communicated by saying, a distinction must be made between designation, signified and sense. Designation is the reference to extralinguistic (or, better, external to signs) things (states of affairs, events, processes). The signified is the objective possibility of designation given in the signs of a language. Sense is the finality of each saying, the content specific to a discourse as such (or to a fragment of discourse). Thus, the observation, the reply, the answer, the question, the objection, the agreement, the disagreement, the prayer etc. (all the *logoi* of the Stoics) are units of sense and not of the signified/of meaning. From the linguistic point of view, sense is the finality of a given discourse expressed by the signified (lexical, categorial, grammatical, ontic) and by designation, and the knowledge of things and their surrounding fields (their “setting”) also contribute to its constitution. The exclusively (and properly) linguistic content is, therefore, the signified.

7. Language and poetry

In that it is the identification of a modality of being, the signified is an act of knowledge, precisely, like poetry (and art in general), an act of intuitive knowledge. This has led some philosophers to identify language with poetry, at least as far as imaginary acts of creation are concerned. However, the signified (and, therefore, language) is not identical to poetry. On the one hand, the signified is always the work of a subject endowed with alterity, while poetry (like art in general) is the work of an absolute subject (that positions her- or himself as absolute). On the other hand, language as such is only signified (lexical, categorial, grammatical, ontic), while poetry is saying with its own substance. Philosophers who identify language and poetry only consider language as saying (of an absolute subject). We affirm, on the other hand, the priority of language also vis-à-vis poetry. It is quite another thing to say that poetic language is language in its functional fullness.

8. The signified and the being

The signified of a name is *diacriticon tes ousias* (Plato): delimitation and, thereby, constitution of a modality (always virtual) of being. In itself, the signified of a name is always universal, since it does not name entities recognised as such, but an infinite possibility of being. It is found not at the end, but at the beginning of the constitution of a class (which, in relation to the real world, can also be a class with only one known member – e.g. *sun*, *moon* – or even an empty class). As a result, designation is not the primary fact of language, but a secondary fact, subordinate to the signified: it is the fact of relating a thing observed to a signified already given. The proper name is, in language, a secondary fact: it is a name

for the historical identification of an entity within a class already recognised as such.

9. Signified, truth, existence

The signified (and, therefore, language as such) is neither true nor false: it precedes the very distinction between true and false. Likewise, representing only a virtual modality (possibility) of being, it is prior to the distinction between existence and non-existence (Aristotle). Only what is said in the sense of a proposition (*apophantikos logos*) can be understood as true or false. Likewise, it is only by knowing a signified that one can ascertain the existence of designatable entities which correspond to it. This is what I call the deictic character of language: a name shows a modality of being (or, better put, it constitutes and represents it), but it does not say anything about it (derivatives and compounds, for their part, already contain some saying, which means they correspond, from the linguistic point of view, to a certain grammaticalisation).

10. Language and objects

It is language which confers being on objects: it is not a nomenclature for classes of things recognised in advance as such. Of course, language does not create objects, but it creates their being: it makes them be this or that. Thus, language does not create trees, but it creates their “being trees” (and not being plants in general, for example, or being representatives of another species). This is how language leads us towards an ordered world of objects. By delimiting modalities of being, language makes it possible to observe or recognise in the world entities corresponding to these modalities, and in this way, it offers the possibility of research concerning objects themselves and, consequently, the possibility of new delimitations: here we are dealing with objective delimitations because they are made in the very world of objects for which we can create names (terms). Science necessarily begins with the classifications made by language, but it does not stop with these classifications. This is how technical language (or terminology) arises. All terminology (even the terminology of vulgar knowledge) is, in this sense, the reverse of the original non-terminological language: it goes from designation to meaning and gives names to classes recognised in advance as such. But technical language can only be constituted secondarily by starting from the delimitations already given in and by non-technical language.

1.3.3 A short comment on the ten theses

In Kabatek 2013, I provide brief commentaries on the ten theses. Similarly brief comments will also suffice here, since the remainder of the book will return to the ideas expressed in this dense text. It should be noted that the text was written in 1999 but that it mainly contains ideas that go back to the 1950s and that these are absolutely basic for the understanding of Coseriu's thinking. *The first thesis* involves Coseriu's logocentric view: language is not seen as a simple result of the continuous evolution of cognition, but rather as something that is qualitatively different. Humans are characterised by human language and language is prior to all the other manifestations of culture, even prior to science. This logocentric view implies that language, even if it has a biological foundation, is cultural in essence, and is the door that opens onto all other manifestations of culture. The consequences of this view are manifold: Coseriu rejects the idea of considering particular languages as simple instances of a biologically determined universal grammar (chapter 10); he rejects the idea of a priority of logical principles and considers logic rather to be an achievement that presupposes the existence of language (chapters 3 and 6). Language is prior to all the other manifestations of culture (*thesis 2*), and language is always a particular language, not language as such (*langage*). This language-centred view stems from German idealistic philosophy (chapter 8) and insists on the particular and different nature of mankind and human language within the biological universe.

Thesis 3 identifies language universals, not in the sense of universal grammatical principles (see chapter 9), but rather in a very essential way of defining what language is and how language differs from other cultural manifestations. These universals are axiomatic, and they can be visualised as follows:

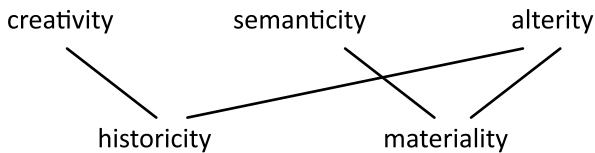


Fig. 1.5: Language universals.

They allow us to distinguish between language and other human cultural activities: only language is characterised by the particular combination of the three essential universals of creativity, semanticity and alterity. “Alterity” is a concept Coseriu adopts from the Italian linguist and philosopher Antonino Pagliaro (see also Raible 1998, Schlieben-Lange 1998). It does not mean “otherness” in the sense of the

other who is different, but rather in the sense of the common creation of linguistic signs. The signs of a language are created in accordance with the other; the other is the instance of the objectivation of the sign. The signs are recognised in their association with referents in accordance with other members of the speech community. In the act of reference, the individual recognises their “being” expressed by the signified. The shared knowledge of signs presupposes historicity; human beings are historical beings who live together in historically shaped communities; by using the same language they express their being part of those communities. However, historicity becomes “synchronic” for the individual, in the sense that this commonly shared history is assumed and interiorised in a systematic way; the synchrony of a language is determined by history, but speakers do not depend on concrete references to that history, since they are free to use a technique they carry within themselves, and this is part of their own being.

Thesis 4 concerns the linguistic foundation of human community: the human being is a *zoon politikon* in the Aristotelian sense, and is such due to the *logos*. Language is not just something that emerges out of social activity: language is the foundation of any social human community; without language, there would be no human community.

Theses 5 and 6 further detail the difference between language and speaking; language as an abstract system and its “coming into existence” in concrete discourses. Here we again find the three-level scheme discussed above and the importance of distinguishing between designation, the signified, and sense. The level of discourse or text is the level of sense; and sense is not only determined by the concrete usage of linguistic signs but also by the concrete act of designation and the ‘surrounding fields’ or the “setting” of a discourse (see chapter 3).

Thesis 7 warns of the confusion between language and poetry not without accepting that poetry is language in its functional plenitude (see chapter 11).

Thesis 8 involves the priority of the linguistic sign with respect to the acts of designation: language is not a reflection of objects but rather a way towards a linguistically shaped view of the world, not in a Sapir-Whorfian sense as a kind of prison, but rather in a sense that derives from freedom and creativity. In opposition to common names that are prior to designation, proper names derive from objects and presuppose their recognition via common names (“Zurich is a city”, see chapter 3).

Thesis 9 refers to the discussion about the truth of language as outlined in Aristotle’s *Peri Hermeneias* which is picked up here with the explanation that the signified can be neither true nor false, since true or false are not possible judgements about a virtual sign; only a concrete discourse can be true or false.

Finally, *thesis 10* also insists, like thesis 8, on the priority of language and postulates such a priority also with respect to science and to scientific terminology.

1.4 Conclusions

In this general chapter, we have presented the fundamental epistemological principles that guided Coseriu's work according to the author himself, and we outlined some of the general principles of his linguistic thought as expressed in the ten "Strasbourg Theses" of 1999. Coseriu can be seen as a linguist and as a philosopher with a belief in "language-based linguistics": linguistics must not ignore the relationship between language and objects or between language and general principles of thinking, but the central object of linguistics is the signified, the content of particular signs of a particular language. It is not through "language in general", but through a particular language system, that the individual becomes a member of a community and accesses the *being* of things through linguistic signs. These signs are part of a historically grown community and are determined by a dialogic activity. Some of the central issues addressed by Coseriu during his life are already outlined in the short text of the ten theses: the particular position of linguistic signs in a coherent theory that includes universality and individuality and that is marked by a clear isolation of the signified as an object of research; the difference between common names, proper names, common names with unique referents and terms; the difference between language and things, between language and text, between language and poetry, the historicity of language and its creativity which implies change... what is presented here in a nutshell is developed in different subsections of Coseriu's activity as a linguist and as a philosopher of language. The following chapters will present some of the aspects of this activity in more detail, starting with what has become probably Coseriu's most popular concept, the *norm*.

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Chapter 2

Norm and correctness

2.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on Coseriu's concept of *norm* and some related issues.¹ As an initial observation, it must be said that what Coseriu calls *norm* differs substantially from what is currently understood, even in most linguistic terminologisations, by the same expression, and hence it will be important to clarify this difference and to introduce the concept in detail. It is first exhaustively presented in Coseriu's early groundbreaking paper, *Sistema, norma y habla* ('System, Norm and Speech', Montevideo 1952). The paper is one of the foundational contributions of the Montevideo years, and it is, together with *Forma y sustancia en los sonidos del lenguaje* ('Form and Substance in Sounds of Speech', 1954), a kind of linguistic "going public" after his years of study in Romania and Italy. Coseriu's conception of *norm* has become a canonical one in Romance linguistics and one of the Coserian concepts that most widely influenced linguistics in the second half of the 20th century. The paper has several characteristics in common with other contributions from those years (such as *Determinación y entorno*, 'Determination and Surrounding Fields', see chapter 3, and *Sincronía, diacronía e historia*, 'Synchrony, Diachrony, and History', see chapter 4):

- it departs from a debate about principles attributed to Saussure and set out in the *Cours de linguistique générale*, but it also includes an exhaustive discussion of other contemporary theoretical proposals in the same context,
- it introduces novel terminology which is based on current usage but which also differs from it, so much so that Coseriu considers his conception to be important enough as to allow for what could easily lead to terminological confusion,
- it appears first in Montevideo and in Spanish, and hence comes, together with the other seminal contributions of that time, from the geographic and linguistic periphery of modern linguistics,
- it deals with a certain aspect of the theory of language but it is related, together with several other studies, to a comprehensive theoretical conception of language.

1 For the whole chapter, cf. also Kabatek 2020b.

The following section of this chapter (2.2) will introduce the background of the 1952 paper and Coseriu's conception of *norm*, and section 2.3 will comment on some major issues related to this term. Whereas Coseriu's conception of *norm* must not be confused with the most common ideas about norm and normativity, there is also a relationship between the descriptive concept of *norm* and prescriptive normativity and notions like *standard*; for this reason section 2.4 will introduce Coseriu's theoretical reflections on what he calls *correction* and *exemplarity*. Section 2.5 goes on to discuss the relationship between norm and the more recent concept of *Discourse Tradition*. Finally, section 2.6 will mention some of the consequences of the term norm and introduce some criticisms.

2.2 Coseriu's conception of *norm*: background

Broadly speaking, the term *norm* refers to what is normal in the realisation of a language system. But this of course is too simple, and needs to be contextualised. As in other writings from the 1950s, the aim of the 1952 paper is to criticise and to show the limitations of an orthodox structuralist view and, at the same time, to signal the importance of an adequate structural analysis for the structured aspects of language. The main claim is that between what Saussure calls *langue* (in the sense of a structured system of oppositions) and the individual realisation in the *parole*, there is a third dimension: a language system is usually also, beyond the purely systematic oppositions, realised in a certain traditional way. One of Coseriu's favourite examples to illustrate this is the Spanish vowel system: there are only five oppositional vowel phonemes, /a/, /e/, /i/, /o/, and /u/; but speakers of Spanish normally realise the first *e* in a word like *verde* 'green' as an open vowel and the second as a closed vowel [b'ɛrðe]. They could equally say [b'berðe], [b'berðe] or [b'berðe] and they would still be understood, since they remain within the boundaries of the system, but this would not be "normal": they would violate the Spanish *norm*. At first glance, this looks like a new term for allophones and as such nothing new, but it is related to a broader conception, one involving a different view on the relationship between the common and the individual and the systematic and the non-systematic; it goes beyond the expressive capacity of a language and is basically a term valid for all levels of linguistic structure. But we will come back to this in the next section.

As we have already seen, the scientific background of the term is Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistic theory, or perhaps better said, Coseriu's Saussure as outlined by himself in the paper "My Saussure" [295] (1995). For Coseriu, "his" Saussure is the real Saussure understood with empathy, but maybe it is also his construction of Saussure, the construction he needs in order to have an interlocutor for the pre-

sentation of his own conception. In fact, Coseriu insists on several occasions that “his Saussure” is the Saussure of the *CLG* and not some critically reconstructed “real” Saussure (cf. Bouquet 2012; Kabatek 2015a).

But before a serious and exhaustive discussion of Saussure and the introduction to the concept of *norm* into current linguistic theory took place, Coseriu had already presented some intuitions on the issue. Some years prior to his exhaustive study on the phenomenon he would call *norm*, he analyses the language of the Romanian poet Ion Barbu (1895–1961) in a short paper published in 1948 in Italian in the journal of the Milan Linguistic Circle (*Sodalizio Glottologico Milanese*), the linguistic society founded in December 1947 by Vittore Pisani mentioned in the introduction of this volume.

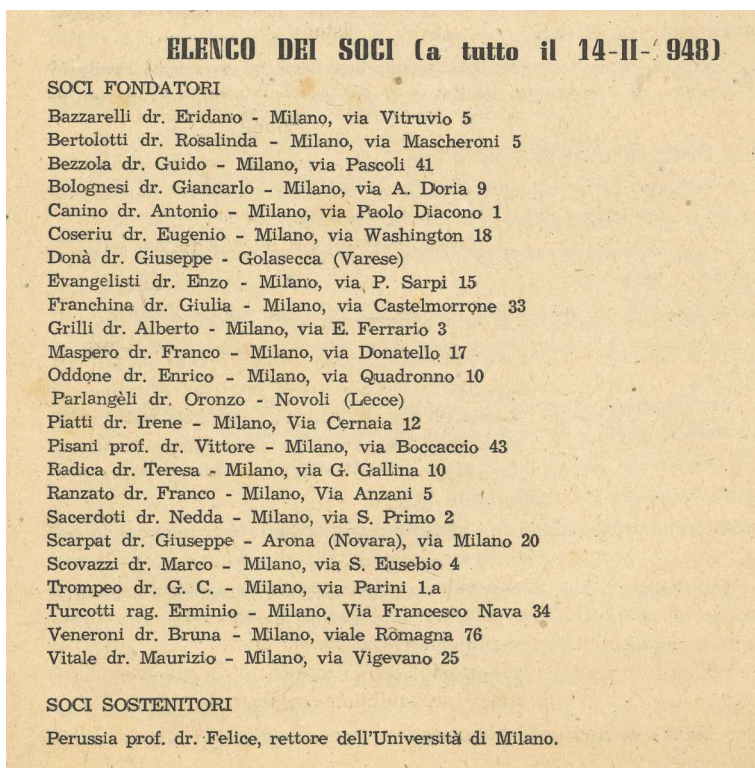


Fig. 2.1: List of the founding member of the *Sodalizio Glottologico Milanese* as published in the first information bulletin of the society in 1948.

Coseriu was part of the *Sodalizio* from its beginning until his departure to Latin America in 1950. In this paper, he observes some lexical and syntactic phenomena particular to Barbu's style. At the very beginning of his analysis, Coseriu says:

'I.B.'s language – even if it's a "literary language" – seems to me to be suited to make us discover some functional characteristics of the Romanian language system and to clarify certain issues of general linguistics. This is the case because Barbu's innovations – which are above all syntactic and lexical – are normally extensions of normal usages within the Romanian system, and they are generally not aberrant, which means they are not "errors" with respect to the common logical convention considered as a "rule" ([5] (1949), 3).²

Ion Barbu's texts are characterised by "extensions" of normal usages. That is, he derives rules from existing facts in Romanian and creates new, analogical cases with stylistic effects. For example, in Romanian, items that in formal terms are adjectives can also be used regularly in the function of adverbs, but in certain cases, usage favours periphrastic forms. Barbu extends this possibility to cases where it is not habitual and where it causes a certain effect of surprise or linguistic alienation. Coseriu lists several further syntactic and lexical examples, arguing that such deviations can affect the form and the content of the text. He also adds a few further observations: he distinguishes between internal linguistic change and external change due to language contact; he claims that only Italian as a language is directly inherited from Latin and that to a certain degree the other Romance languages are in some ways rather creoles than languages directly derived from Latin³, going so far as to classify the Romance languages with an index from 1 to 10 according to their degree of Latinity. This might of course sound somewhat adventurous and it is not picked up in later studies; however, two of main ideas would indeed be further developed:

2 "[...] la lingua di *I.B.* – pur trattandosi di una 'lingua letteraria' – mi sembra atta a farci scoprire alcune caratteristiche funzionali del sistema linguistico romeno e a chiarire certe questioni di linguistica generale. Ciò perché le innovazioni di *B.* – soprattutto sintattiche e lessicali – sono normalmente estensioni di usi normali nel sistema linguistico romeno e non sono, generalmente, aberranti, cioè non costituiscono 'errori' rispetto alla convenzione logica comune considerata come 'regola'".

3 The comparison between the emergence of the Romance languages and creolisation is a topic discussed repeatedly by various scholars; Coseriu's disciple Brigitte Schlieben-Lange dedicates a paper to this issue (Schlieben-Lange 1977). In fact, even if nowadays it is still not (or again not) clear if creolisation is just a special case of language contact or something fundamentally different, I think that the fundamental difference between Romanisation and a classically imagined plantation creole scenario is that in Romance the contact is generally between two languages and there is no need to communicate in a "third" lexifier language, given the lack of a common means of communication. See also Lang 1981.

- the idea that there is a difference between the systematic principles or rules of a language and the traditional realisation of these principles. Not all the virtual possibilities given in the system are in fact realised,
- the fact that when someone learns a second language, the discrepancy between systematic rule and traditional realisation becomes particularly visible. The rules are more easily acquired than the whole tradition. When a whole community adopts a foreign language, the flexibility of the system will probably be exploited to the maximum. This also holds for the phonic side of the language: phonemes will be pronounced differently by foreign speakers, but as long as they remain within the limits of the phoneme this does no harm to the system.

The second aspect would show up again some decades later in a paper on linguistic interference among highly educated people, where Coseriu identifies interference phenomena that run against the tradition of a language without violating its rules⁴. In contrast to the contradictory difference made by Weinreich (1953) between “interferences in language” and “interferences in speech”, Coseriu here distinguishes between “interferences that violate the system” and “interferences that violate the norm”.

Looking back at the origins of his theory, Coseriu himself sees in his study on Barbu the roots of his later linguistic thinking:

‘[...] because there is already the idea of creativity and of system and norm, but obviously in a very vague and blurred way. But the idea is there, and it is capable of further development. But there I also still talk about language as a conventionality and I distinguish two kinds of conventions, a logical and a stylistic one etc., and all this is nonsense. The unfolding of ideas always also means clarification.’ (*DSs*, 144)⁵

This clarification concerning the concept of *norm* unfolds precisely in the paper published in 1952 which will be presented in the following section.

⁴ See [121] (1977) and, based on this conception, Kabatek 1997.

⁵ “[...] weil sich dort schon die Idee der Kreativität und von System und Norm findet, aber natürlich in einer noch sehr vagen und verschwommenen Weise. Doch die Idee ist da, und sie ist entwicklungsfähig. Aber dort spreche ich auch noch von Sprache als Konventionalität und unterscheide zwei Arten von Konventionen, eine logische und eine stilistische usw., und das alles ist Unfug. Entfaltung bedeutet daher auch stets Klärung”.

2.3 System, Norm and Speech

The 1952 paper *Sistema, norma y habla* is first published in Montevideo in Spanish as a short monograph of 73 pages with a four-page summary in German, still considered at the time to be the international language of the cultural sciences. When Coseriu came to Montevideo in 1950, he organised, following the model of the Milanese *Sodalizio Glottologico*, a linguistic circle with regular sessions and presentations of recent research (see chapter 3). The publications of the circle were sent to linguists all over the world in order to make the Montevideo school – Coseriu’s school – known worldwide, and *Sistema, norma y habla* was one of those papers, together with other publications by Coseriu such as *Forma y sustancia en los sonidos del lenguaje*, plus publications by other members of the circle. The Coseriu Archive conserves hundreds of letters from renowned linguists expressing thanks for the publications sent to them. It is difficult to discover today what the real impact of this form of massive publicity was: how many of the recipients really read the publications? How many of them understood Spanish? Were these publications, arriving as they did from a little-known point on the international map of linguistics, considered as serious contributions to the current discussion? Who was this Coseriu who dared believe he could criticise Saussure and Hjelmslev and who ventured to propose that an established dichotomy such as *langue* and *parole* should be rethought? We hardly know what the international reaction was. However, Coseriu was full of energy and probably believed that this was the best means of conquering step by step the world of linguistics. And as time passed, he achieved more and more of his goals. Not at the beginning, when he was perhaps considered to be a rather exotic maverick. But his persistence, and the continuous creation of new substantial contributions, allowed him to move from the periphery towards the centre. For him, when he was a child, this centre was Germany (he dreamt of becoming a professor at Heidelberg). He would achieve this goal (in Tübingen of course, not in Heidelberg), and he would also become a famous linguist. And his first exhaustive study would become a classic; translated into many languages and part of the canonical knowledge of linguistics in the second half of the 20th century, at least in some places. The concept of norm probably had its widest acceptance after the re-publication of the original text as part of the *Cinco estudios*, ‘Five studies’, published in a volume by Gredos in Madrid in 1962 ([30] (1962)). But this again was in Spanish, and the term and the concept never became part of the general canonical knowledge of general linguistics outside the Romance speaking world, with the possible exception of Germany due to Coseriu’s own school from the 1960s onwards, and also in Russia (Bojoga 1999) and Japan (Tămăianu-Morita 2002), where a notable receptivity to Coseriu’s work can be observed.

But what is the text about? It starts with Hjelmslev and with his attempts through Glossematics to add further terms to the Saussurean distinction between *langue* and *parole*. But Coseriu immediately criticises the all too abstract conceptions of the school of Copenhagen (see chapter 6), and the main argument he adopts for his own conception is that Saussure's terms and general view are not untouchable, noting that it might make sense to use a trichotomic distinction instead. After Hjelmslev, the work goes on to discuss Jespersen, Gardiner, Bally and Trubetzkoy, but above all Saussure, with Coseriu showing profound knowledge of the work of all these writers as he argues for or against their proposals. The issue is clear: Saussure's distinction between *langue* and *parole* is insufficient, as the terms are said to be ambiguous. Maybe Bühler's quadrifolium and the combination with Humboldt's terms *energeia* and *ergon* might help? Yes, but... Incidentally, Croce's ideas on language and poetry are discussed (with sympathy, but also rejecting their validity beyond the aesthetic aspects of language), and admiration is expressed for Antonino Pagliaro. Coseriu is, as a consequence of his education, an Italian linguist, and his most immediate background is still very Italian. From Pagliaro he adopts the term *alterity*, one of his "language universals" (see chapters 1 and 9), and indeed it is here that he first mentions it.

Then, after these rather long preparatory discussions, he comes to the point: he mentions his own study of Barbu as the predecessor of the 1952 paper, and goes on to offer empirical examples in order to explain the difference between system and norm on all levels of linguistic structure. The first and probably clearest of these is the phonic level, for which he lists a series of examples from Spanish and illustrates the aforementioned vowel distinctions in a graph:

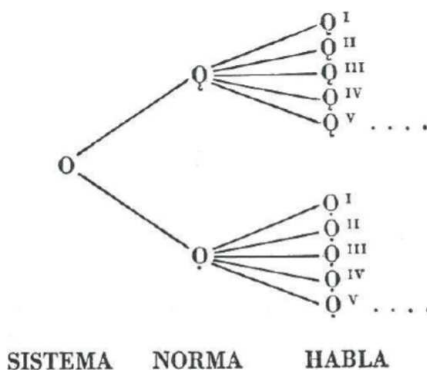


Fig. 2.2: System, norm and speech with the example of a Spanish vowel ([8] (1952, 43).

There is only one phoneme /o/ in Spanish, and all the individual realisations of this phoneme lead to an open, unending list of productions in individual speech marked by differences in voice, situational conditions, and various contextual factors. But between the abstract *phoneme* (which is not a physical reality but only a mental representation of a *difference*) and the concrete individual infinity of physical realities, there is a regular tendency (in this case partly physically conditioned but also mentally anchored) to pronounce an open or a closed vowel according to the phonic context. Thus, the /o/ in *esposa* is a closed vowel and the /o/ in *rosa* is open. The opposite pronunciation would be possible and would not lead to confusion, but it would not be considered as *normal*.

But the term is not limited to the sound system of language or to allophones. The norm – not the system! (see chapter 5) – expresses the socio-cultural, traditional dimension of a language on all levels. On the morphological level, the English system would foresee the plural form *oxes*, but the norm prefers *oxen*; in French, the plural of *cheval* is supposed to be *chevals* according to the system, but it is in fact *chevaux* in the norm of French. In field of word formation, Coseriu offers a few Spanish examples that he claims to be possible according to the system but that do not appear in the dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy. Since he is interested in a concept of norm as a purely descriptive one, it might not have been a very fortunate choice to contrast “possible” forms with normative choices. But it is nonetheless interesting to observe that several of his examples (Sp. *planteo*, *concretamiento*, *ocultamiento*, *sincronización* and *sacapuntas*), with the exception of *concretamiento*, have subsequently entered the dictionary, and that Sp. *papal* is no longer only an adjective referring to the Pope but can also be a plantation of potatoes. Some of these words (like *planteo* or *papal*) in fact existed in Uruguayan Spanish when Coseriu wrote this text, and they well illustrate how regionally different norms can exist (see chapter 5). Yet even if they had no concrete existence anywhere in the Spanish-speaking world, they could still be considered as possible forms of the system. In the case of word formation, it can also be seen that norm does not only refer to formal aspects but also to the content of the words. If at the time when the text was written the word *papal* was not a plantation of potatoes, this is because a certain preference has been chosen by the tradition. In German, the term *Türschloss* (‘door lock’) could also be, from the point of view of the system, a castle with many doors or with particular doors. This could be created, we might imagine, in a fairy tale, but current usage needs the word primarily to designate door locks, which are probably more frequent. On the syntactic level, Coseriu offers, among others, the example of Latin word order, claiming that even if word order was rather free, the only stylistically neutral order, i.e., the unmarked *normal* order, was SOV (*Petrus Paulum amat*).

The most difficult level for the application of the concept is the lexicon, and Coseriu needs to explain to what degree he considers the lexicon to be a structured system before being able to situate the concept of norm in this context (see chapter 6).

Coseriu's aim in his 1952 paper is nothing less than to offer a 'coherent theory of speaking' (he always prefers the nominalised verb *hablar* 'speaking' instead of the more common noun *habla*, 'speech', because he wants to emphasise the dynamic character of language). The distinction between the system and the norm, and their mutual relationship, is one of the pillars of his theory. The system as a virtual system of rules contains less than the norm, on the one hand, since it does not include the nuances of the socially established realisations of the norm. On the other hand, being a system of possibilities, the system includes also those forms that have not yet been realised but that are "foreseen" by the systematic rules. The relationship between system, norm and "speaking" is schematically represented as follows:

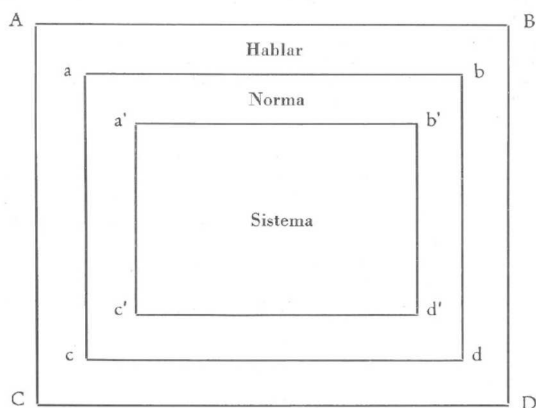


Fig. 2.3: The inclusive relationship between system, norm and speech ([8] (1952, 57).

At the centre of a language, there is its systematic organisation. On its base, the norm adds conventions of regular realisation, and beyond these regularities, the concrete materialisation of language in individual speech adds further details.

The language system is the structural heart of the language; it consists of an abstract set of rules that are not considered to be an invention by linguists but a mentally existing reality that can be uncovered by structural analysis, as in the tradition of Prague structuralism (see chapter 6).

The *norm* is not only the concrete application of the rules but contains further knowledge. It could also be called “usage” in a more recent sense, and in fact many of the observations made in cognitive grammar or by constructionists about usage touch on aspects of language that Coseriu would have included in his concept of norm, with the important difference that system and norm interact (and even, on a higher level of abstraction, system and type, see chapters 4 and 9), and also that the Coserian norm is only conceivable in the background of the system. This is also why he rejected purely usage-based models such as the one presented by Langacker in the 1980s (Langacker 1987); with respect to an opposition between usage-based unitary approaches and “modular” or “componential” conceptions of language like the one discussed in Croft 2001, Coseriu offers a usage-based modularity: language is considered from the point of view of speech, but speech is not only usage-based but also system-based. And between the “modules” of system, norm and speech, the relationship is not unidirectional: to speak is not just to produce individual utterances according to a norm according to a system. The interface between speech and norm is also the place where individual innovations – proposals for change – might achieve the status of facts in the norm of the language, and the interface between norm and system is where new norms may change the system (see chapter 4).

Contrary to Saussure’s claim that the *langue* is the place of social identity, it is the norm that establishes social boundaries (see chapter 5). Deviations from the norm can be due to the influence of another tradition (interference) or due to stylistic individual deviation, as in the case of Ion Barbu or many other poetic creations⁶.

Coseriu’s distinction between system and norm has repeatedly been misunderstood. In Kabatek 2015b, we describe a case of “abuse” or “vulgarisation” of the term: in Portuguese linguistics, the difference between European and Brazilian Portuguese was described as a difference of several linguistic norms, in Coseriu’s sense, within one system. Similar affirmations were made about the unity or diversity of Spanish: one language system with different norms. Here, linguistic objectivity and clear terminology is used in order to confirm something that is outside the scope of this terminology: a system is a system of oppositions, and one single different opposition already makes, by definition, a different system. European and Brazilian Portuguese show differences in the vowel system, to take just an example, and peninsular Spanish has a different consonant system than American

⁶ An author Coseriu estimated greatly, and who was very proficient in the creation of neologisms according to the German system of word-formation, was Paul Celan (with coinages like *Niemandss-rose*, *Sprachgitter*, *Fadensonnen*, etc.).

Spanish. Both varieties (if we accept this obvious simplification of *two* varieties), then, have clearly different systems, in a structural sense. However, this does not mean that there might not be an abstract idea of one Portuguese and one Spanish language on top of these varieties, but this idea is rather an issue of cultural contact, identity, historical links etc., not of structural analysis. Purely structural analyses cannot solve the problems of a possible abstract idea of linguistic unity in pluricentric languages.

Misunderstandings aside, there were also attempts to further develop Coseriu's concept of norm. Among others, a distinction between norms of language and norms of speaking was proposed (Ezawa 2012), and the concept was also applied to textual norms and the traditionality of texts (Koch 1988, see section 2.5).

In the following section, I will turn to an aspect partly discussed in the 1952 paper and that will become important in another exhaustive work from the Montevideo years, the unpublished *El problema de la corrección idiomática*.

2.4 Linguistic correction

In the 1952 paper, Coseriu insists that his conception of norm should not be confused with the common notion of a prescriptive norm (see also Ezawa 1985):

'We furtherly clarify that it is not about norm in the common sense, something established or imposed according to criteria of correction and of subjective valorisation of what is expressed, but rather about the objectively attested norm in a language, the norm we follow necessarily because we are members of a linguistic community. So it is not the norm according to which, in the same community, you recognise that someone "speaks well" or in an exemplary way.' (Coseriu [8] 1952/1973, 90).⁷

This does not mean, however, that Coseriu is not interested in the prescriptive norm and in linguistic correction. But this is something he addresses elsewhere, namely in his still unpublished manuscript on linguistic correction, as well as in several papers that draw on ideas from that text (Polo 2012, 25).

The incredible activity of the years in Montevideo not only led to an significant number of publications, including some "classics" of modern linguistics. During the 1950s, Coseriu also prepared two extensive yet unfinished monographs, both

7 "Aclaremos además que no se trata de la norma en el sentido corriente, establecida o impuesta según criterios de corrección y de valoración subjetiva de lo expresado, sino de la norma objetivamente comprobable en una lengua, la norma que seguimos necesariamente por ser miembros de una comunidad lingüística y no aquella según la cual se reconoce que "hablamos bien" o de manera ejemplar, en la misma comunidad." (Coseriu [8] 1952/1973, 90).

surprisingly still unpublished, that are perhaps among his most important works. One of these is an exhaustive study on proper names, *Teoría lingüística del nombre propio*, ‘Linguistic theory of the proper names’ (see chapter 3), and the other is *El problema de la corrección idiomática*, ‘The problem of linguistic correction’. This latter text was originally conceived as a manual for Spanish teachers and was planned to be published in co-authorship with his Uruguayan colleague Luis Juan Piccardo, who taught Spanish grammar at the *Instituto de Profesores Artigas* where Coseriu also worked between 1951 and 1961 in parallel to his activity at the *Universidad de la República*. Coseriu took charge of writing the theoretical foundation whereas Piccardo’s contribution was to trace the concept of linguistic correction through the history of Spanish grammar, including the history of Spanish purism. According to Coseriu (DSs, 132), he had almost finished the theoretical sections in 1957, but Piccardo became ill and could not finish his part, so the book remained unpublished. However, as in the case of other unpublished manuscripts, it served as a rich source of material for papers, and it is also an important element in the foundation of Coseriu’s language theory. Several papers on linguistic correction and on language policies are partly extracted from this manuscript (e.g., [249] (1990)), and some of the main thoughts of Coseriu’s text linguistics are also based on the observations contained therein (see chapter 3). In 1988, a partial German translation of some of the central pages was printed in the Coseriu Festschrift *Energeia und Ergon* (ENERGON [234] (1988)), and in the 1990s, Reinhard Meisterfeld and I prepared a digitised version of the first part of the manuscript ([23a] 1957)); more recently the Spanish grammarian José Polo, who helped Coseriu to classify his unpublished work during the years before his death, has been working on an edition. Finally, in 2019, a short and partial version of the theory was published by Alfredo Matus and José Luis Samaniego (Coseriu [440] (2019)), but the publication of the larger manuscript is still “in preparation”.

Although the text very dense, it is written in a relatively accessible style, aimed as it is at a wider, also non-academic readership. The text begins by introducing what it states to be a very common confusion: the one between ‘correctness’ (*lo correcto*) and ‘exemplarity’ (*lo ejemplar*). As on other occasions, Coseriu’s terminology is again close to current usage, but it is also problematic since what he terminologises as ‘correctness’ is certainly not what is commonly understood by this word. He uses *correct* in a purely descriptive sense as “pertaining to a language or variety”, independently of the status of that variety in a certain community. This means that all the varieties of a language have their correctness in the sense of rules and traditions. An example is the address form *vos* in the spoken Río-de-la-Plata variety of Spanish. *Vos* does not exist in many Spanish varieties, but it is the normal informal address form in the variety of Buenos Aires and the wider region. It is, thus, a *correct* form in that variety, whereas *tú*, the form

used in Mexico or Madrid, would not be correct in the Spanish of Buenos Aires because it is not a form of the corresponding system. In English, *there ain't no sunshine* would be correct in certain varieties, whereas *there is no sunshine* would be correct in others. The other term, *exemplarity*, is used for what in modern linguistics is generally called the standard language: a variety chosen within a community for certain prestige functions, an ideal language, a language for teaching and for writing, for certain cultural and public purposes.

According to Coseriu, the error commonly committed in the discussion about correctness consists of two possible reductions: either the reduction of correctness to exemplarity, or the reduction of exemplarity to correctness. The former is the case that we typically find in purist traditions, when language usage tends to be reduced to one single acceptable form. In a later paper on American Spanish, in which he picks up this distinction (1990 [249]), Coseriu cites the famous Spanish philologist Ramón Menéndez Pidal who, in a discussion on linguistic unity in the Spanish speaking world conducted in the 1940s, defends the idea that the address form of *vos* should be prohibited in Argentina even in the schoolyards in order to recover the unity of the Spanish speaking world and to eradicate this “aberrant” form. According to Coseriu, this is an unacceptable reduction: even if the form *vos* might not be the exemplary form of an international Spanish standard (nowadays even the Spanish Royal Academy speaks of several standards in a pluricentric language, but this was still not the case in the 1950s), it is the normal and correct form of spoken Buenos Aires Spanish.

The opposite case would be the acceptance of everything as exemplary, the negation of the need for a standard language. This is sometimes considered to be a progressive and critical attitude, critically opposed to powerful institutions such as governments or academies, to elitism generally, and to the imposition of norms by what is normally a small elite. Yet Coseriu strongly criticises what he calls a ‘false liberalism’ here. He claims that in fact this linguistic liberalism leads to oppression and to discrimination. Why is this so? Because if you “leave your language alone” (this motto by Robert A. Hall Junior was, in the 1950s, one of the principal objects of Coseriu’s attacks), you will also leave alone those who are not able to speak or write in the prestige variety. This means: you can say with generosity that the speaker with a strong dialectal accent may continue to speak with this accent and that there is no need to adapt to any prestige language, since all languages and varieties have the same dignity and the same prestige. Unfortunately this is not true in the real world, and leaving the dialect speaker alone implies that the barriers to social mobility that he or she encounters will remain. The ‘false liberalism’ is criticised as the typical urban armchair arrogance of those who are in a prestigious position and perhaps with idealism and good will claim justice for all, but who in fact live in a world where such a linguistic equality is

utopic. In fact, before defending such a “liberal” position, linguistic inequality should be defeated, but Coseriu believes, rather, that it is normal that there is a prestige variety and that this variety also has a special status, because it serves as an instrument for cultural and aesthetic activities, and equality must thus be achieved by offering access to an adequate education to everybody without discrimination.

His text on correctness and exemplarity offers a theoretical analysis with important political implications not only for the Spanish teachers of the 1950s but also for the present more broadly. Of course, attitudes in the world have changed considerably, and the old, colonial idea of linguistic unity with a standard language located in the centre of the colonist power (Madrid’s Spanish or Lisbon’s Portuguese, for example) is now generally considered to be an ideology of the past. However, linguistic “liberalism” can be observed everywhere, be it in the attempts to emancipate the Andalusian dialect, in proposals to accept colloquial varieties in the Brazilian Portuguese standard, or in the debates over so-called Spanglish. Thus, if someone postulates Spanglish to be a new American language, the attitude of “speak Spanglish, only bad, discriminating people are against it, and you have the right to do speak it” might in fact be a problematic, elitist position, one that abandons speakers of discriminated varieties with their linguistic stigma. Genuine individual emancipation is probably only possible from a position of strength, after having acquired the codes of power. Moreover, collective emancipation requires a society that enhances social and linguistic mobility.

Coseriu’s book on linguistic correction not only contains reflections on correction and exemplarity but inserts these into a comprehensive theoretical system which means that the text is also relevant for recent and contemporary debates about linguistic norms. A related notion is that of *discourse traditions* introduced into linguistics with explicit reference to Coseriu by Peter Koch in 1987. The following section will briefly discuss how this notion might be related to Coseriu’s manuscript on language correction, through an exploration of some thoughts presented therein.

2.5 Norm and discourse traditions

In the Festschrift *ENERGON* in 1988, Peter Koch, a disciple of Hans Martin Gauger at Freiburg University who had been strongly influenced by Coseriu’s later successor Brigitte Schlieben-Lange, published an article on ‘Norm and language’ (“Norm und Sprache”) in which he discussed Coseriu’s concept of norm and distinguished several subtypes of norm. It is here where Koch first publicly presents the term *discourse traditions* (in plural) in the context of the following reflection:

‘However, appropriateness is not only oriented towards the idiosyncratic parameters of the respective individual discourse, but also towards the traditions in which this discourse stands. On the one hand, these are of course the language norms, but on the other hand – somehow transversely – they are also certain discourse traditions, which are intersubjectively valid as *discourse norms* and participate in the constitution of the respective meaning of a discourse: text types, genres, styles etc. These are complexes of *discourse rules* which operate on the basis of the rules of speech as well as the rules of language, but which, unlike the former, are not universal but historical and conventional and, unlike the latter, are precisely not (or at best coincidentally) bound to language communities. We recognise here the genuine form of the *historicity* of discourse.’ (Koch 1988, 342–343)⁸

This idea goes back to Koch’s 1987 habilitation thesis on the medieval *Ars Dictaminis* in Italy; an empirical study with a theoretical introduction that refers to Coseriu’s three-level-distinction (see chapter 1) and that criticises this distinction as insufficient for the description of certain phenomena. Koch adds two further dimensions to Coseriu’s scheme: on the historical level, he divides linguistic historicity into a historicity of the language system (the grammar and the lexicon) and the historicity of texts. On the individual level he adds the dimension of the idiolect. The phenomena of the second historical dimension are called *discourse traditions*, an umbrella term that contains different forms of textual traditionality. Koch needs this concept in order to describe the medieval rhetorical traditions and the fact that the texts are constructed according to traditionally established models. The idea of the importance of taking into account textual traditions was adopted from Brigitte Schlieben-Lange’s book *Traditionen des Sprechens* (Schlieben-Lange 1983; see also Schlieben-Lange 1990), but it was Koch who coined the term. He refers to Coseriu’s individual level and the corresponding competence, *expressive competence*, arguing that knowledge about traditions must necessarily be a historical one and thus be located on the same level as the historicity of the idiomatic knowledge:

‘On the other hand, expressive competence is neither actual nor individual. The [...] rules of discourse, this is what we must specify now, offer patterns to the speaker for adequately de-

⁸ “Doch orientiert sich die Angemessenheit nicht nur an den idiosynkratischen Parametern des je individuellen Diskurses, sondern auch an den Traditionen, in denen er steht. Dies sind einerseits natürlich die Sprachnormen, andererseits aber – gewissermaßen querliegend dazu – bestimmte Diskursstraditionen, die offensichtlich als *Diskursnormen* intersubjektiv gültig sind und den jeweiligen Sinn eines Diskurses mitkonstituieren, Textsorten, Gattungen, Stile usw. Es handelt sich dabei um Komplexe von *Diskursregeln*, die auf der Basis der Sprechregeln sowie der Sprachregeln operieren, aber im Unterschied zu ersteren nicht universal, sondern historisch und konventionell sind und im Gegensatz zu letzteren gerade nicht (oder allenfalls zufällig) an Sprachgemeinschaften gebunden sind. Wir erkennen hier die genuine Form der *Historizität* des Diskurses”.

signing the actual discourse. [...] Given that this knowledge is historically marked all the way through, expressive knowledge must be part of the same level as idiomatic knowledge.’ (Koch 1987: 31; italics in the original)⁹

The object identified by Koch seems somehow fuzzy at first glance, since the list of phenomena subsumed under the new term is quite heterogeneous. However, he does point out something that is absolutely relevant here: the fact that to speak and to write is not only to produce utterances according to the grammar and the lexicon of a language, but that speaking or writing is frequently a matter of simply repeating something that has already been said or written; to repeat an *ergon*, an existing text. To say *good morning* or to open an e-mail with *I hope this e-mail finds you well* does not involve creating a new text, but rather repeating a text already pronounced or written thousands of times. And this is not only the case with formulae, but also with textual forms, with structures of texts, with the form of a sonnet, a cooking recipe or an instruction about how to install software. But does the identification of this relevant object, the traditionality of texts, justify the duplication of the historical level of Coseriu’s model? Koch’s arguments to do so are two-fold: first, he identifies the object and states that it has not been taken into account in Coseriu’s model; second, he denies the possibility of locating discourse traditions on the individual level, as a kind of traditionality of the individual utterance, since in his view the individual utterance is always unique and thus without tradition.

Both arguments can be rejected from a strictly Coserian point of view (see Kabatek 2021 and 2023). In his manuscript on linguistic correction, Coseriu shows that he is clearly aware of the historicity of texts and that this dimension fits perfectly into his conception of language. He argues:

‘[...] even if it’s true that the level of language to which expressive competence belongs is ‘particular’ in the sense that it deals with individual, concrete and occasional realisations of linguistic activity – this does not imply that such competence is particular in its content and its sphere of application. It is not even necessarily individual in its extension in linguistic communities.

The content of the individual competence applies to *types* of circumstances and of discourses. It does not refer, for example, to ‘how to talk to this child, here and now’, but rather to how to talk to children in general, or at least to ‘how to talk to this child in several situations’: otherwise it would not be a competence (Sp. *de otro modo, no sería un saber*). And in its

9 “Was nun andererseits das expressive Wissen betrifft, so ist es weder aktuell noch auch individuell. Die [...] Diskursregeln geben, wie wir jetzt präzisieren müssen, dem Sprecher Muster an die Hand, um den aktuellen Diskurs angemessen zu gestalten. [...] Insofern es sich hier um ein durch und durch historisch geprägtes Wissen handelt, gehört das expressive Wissen auf dieselbe Ebene wie das idiomatische Wissen”.

extension, this competence may in some aspects belong to very limited communities and even to one single individual, but it also presents aspects of a much larger extension. For example, only the best friends of Juan Pérez Alonso might know how you have to speak with him when he is angry after having lost a bet, and maybe only his best friend José Sánchez knows how to do so, but to know how to speak with a friend is a competence of an indefinite number of individuals. However, apart from some special cases, the interesting aspects of expressive competence are those that in both senses present a certain degree of generality. Such aspects may be ‘historical’ or ‘universal’. They are universal if they have to do with the nature of humans or with human experience in general, and they are historical if they depend on historically determined spheres of experience or culture. *This means that expressive competence has its own universality and its own historicity.* There are, in fact, universal (non-idiomatic) ways of speaking in certain circumstances and universal ways of structuring certain types of discourse (e.g. narrative discourse) [...], and, by analogy, historical modes of both species’ ([23a] (1957), emphasis mine).¹⁰

Against the opinion that there is no historicity of the individual level, Coseriu recognises the traditionality of texts, and he not only postulates a historicity of the individual level but also its universality, and consequently we suppose that there should also be a universality of the historical level, as in Fig. 2.4 (Kabatek 2021, 238).

On this view, the duplication of the historical level is different: it emerges out of the individuality of utterances, thus establishing a kind of “secondary historic-

10 “[...] si bien es cierto que el escalón del lenguaje al que corresponde el saber expresivo es “particular”, en el sentido de que se trata de realizaciones concretas, individuales y ocasionales de la actividad lingüística – ello no implica que ese saber sea particular en cuanto a su contenido y a su esfera de aplicación, ni que sea necesariamente individual en cuanto a su extensión en las comunidades lingüísticas. Por su contenido, el saber expresivo se aplica a *tipos* de circunstancias y, por ende, de discursos; no se refiere, por ej., a *cómo hablar con este niño, aquí y ahora*, sino a cómo hablar con los niños o, por lo menos, a cómo hablar con este niño en varias situaciones: de otro modo, no sería un saber. Y en cuanto a su extensión, este saber puede, por ciertos aspectos, pertenecer a comunidades muy limitadas, y hasta a un solo individuo, pero presenta también aspectos de extensión mucho más amplia. Así, cómo hay que hablar con Juan Pérez Alonso cuando está enfadado porque acaba de perder una apuesta, lo sabrán los íntimos de Juan Pérez Alonso, y quizás sólo lo sepa su buen amigo José Sánchez; pero el saber cómo hablar con un amigo pertenece a un número indefinido de individuos. De todos modos, salvo casos especiales, los aspectos interesantes del saber expresivo son los que presentan, en ambos sentidos, cierto grado de generalidad. Tales aspectos pueden ser “universales” o “históricos”. Son universales los que se relacionan con la naturaleza propia del hombre y con la experiencia humana general; son históricos los que dependen de ámbitos históricamente determinados de experiencia o de cultura. Es decir que el saber expresivo posee su propia universalidad y su propia historicidad. Existen, en efecto, modos universales (no-idiomáticos) de hablar en tipos de circunstancias y modos universales de estructurar ciertos tipos de discursos (por ej., discursos narrativos), y, análogamente, modos históricos de ambas especies”.

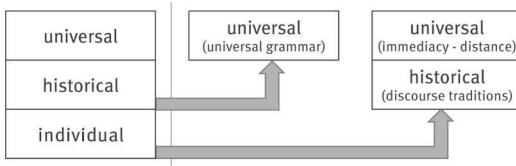


Fig. 2.4: Coseriu's three-level distinction with the addition of higher-level aspects of the lower levels, Kabatek 2021, 238.

ity”¹¹. And there is a very important reason as to why this historicity is “secondary” (Kabatek 2015c): Coseriu’s primary historicity – where language systems and norms are located – is not just tradition in the sense of repetition (as with the tradition of saying *good morning* or non-linguistic traditions like wearing special clothes when playing in an orchestra or when working as a cook). Primary historicity does not refer to external repetition, but to the essence of the language received within us: it refers to our historical being, to the recognition of the value of linguistic signs in exchange with other members of the language community. Primary historicity is prior to all other forms of historicity: it is a matter of the shared access to the world through language. The “secondary historicity” is clearly different. In the case of the secondary historicity, texts, content or textual forms, *erga*, are repeated. This is of course also *energeia*, a creative act, but it is a somewhat external way of referring to tradition and is comparable to non-linguistic traditions.

Coseriu is absolutely aware of these two types of historicity, and he refers to them in several works. To cite just one example: in a report on a thesis from 1975 that discussed the language philosophy of Frege, Russell and Wittgenstein, Coseriu raises the criticism that analytical philosophy does not see the difference between the two kinds of historicity:

“The double historicity of language (i. e. the historicity of the particular languages and that of the texts) appears in these theories almost only in the completely inappropriate, in rational terms even absurd, form of “conventionality”.” (Coseriu 1975, report on a thesis)¹²

11 This has also been observed in a similar way by Loureda Lamas in his introduction to the Spanish edition of Coseriu’s book on text linguistics ([397] (2007), see the next chapter), a text where Coseriu expresses this view explicitly (Coseriu 1981 [1980]). Other scholars have also noted the need to locate the traditionality of texts on the individual level (see Lebsanft/Schrott 2015, 22; cf. also López Serena 2012).

12 “Die doppelte Historizität des Sprachlichen (d. h. die Historizität der Einzelsprachen und diejenigen der Texte) erscheint in diesen Theorien so gut wie nur in der völlig unangemessenen, ja in rationaler Hinsicht sogar absurden Form der “Konventionalität”.”

Coseriu's main goal is to defend the primary historicity of language, the level of the particular language as opposed to universality and individuality. Throughout his life, he insists on this particular primary historicity. Koch's aim, by contrast, is to remind us of the traditional aspect of texts, of repetition, a dimension of language in no way ignored by Coseriu but seen as secondary issue for linguistics. The recent flourishing of studies on discourse traditions has shown that there is an interaction between both historicities and that the bias created by the repetition of texts must not be ignored when studying systemic factors or historical grammar; we see that neither a reduction to the first historicity (as at least implicitly postulated by structuralists or by generative grammar) nor a reduction to the second one (as postulated by constructivism) is adequate.

To sum up this section: Coseriu's conception of norm as 'normal realisation of a system' can clearly be distinguished from "discourse traditions", traditions of texts, of *erga* on the individual level. The traditions of texts are not ignored by Coseriu; they are clearly located in a secondary historicity of the individual level distinct from the primary historicity prior to the utterance. Koch's criticism highlights a phenomenon largely ignored by systemic linguistics in the 20th century; it is a necessary correction with regard to the phenomenon it emphasises, but not with regard to the localisation of this phenomenon in Coseriu's theoretical work.

2.6 Reception

Coseriu's discussion of the concept of *norm* in his 1952 paper, and its further development over the following years, had effects on two levels: on the level of the evolution of linguistic thought, it introduced a term and a concept which became part of the linguistic canon; on the personal level of Coseriu's career, its function was that of a kind of a business card by which Coseriu presented himself to the world. His strategic correspondence with linguists across the planet led to international recognition. This is in part reflected in the reaction to his oeuvre by other scholars. From 1952 onwards, he distributed the writings of the Montevideo school widely around the world. Frequently, a reaction consisted of a simple confirmation of receipt. From the correspondence with Coseriu conserved in the Coseriu Archive and the basis of a project at the University of Zurich, Coseriu's struggle here can be reconstructed. In some cases, as with Noam Chomsky, it seems that the reaction was zero, despite several attempts by Coseriu. Leo Spitzer only reacted after two years of repeated insistence, apologising for not having confirmed the arrival of Coseriu's works. In other cases, such as André Martinet, we can see a rapid evolution from a rather cold first response (in English: "Thank you very much for your kind letter", June 14, 1952) to a close and confident relationship (very direct

and clear communication, in French, about Bloomfield, Jakobson and structuralism, in 1955). As the years pass, Coseriu gradually becomes better known: in 1957, Raimundo Lida writes from Harvard that he considers *Logicismo y antilogicismo* (an extract from the theory of proper nouns, see the following chapter) one of the most stimulating lectures of recent months, noting that “we frequently remember you in our conversations, Roman Jakobson and I. When will we see you here? Are there no conferences in sight that may bring you closer to us? I really would enjoy seeing you personally” (Cambridge, Mass., 20.10.1957).

A menudo lo recordamos a usted, en nuestras conversaciones, Roman Jakobson y yo. ¿Cuándo lo veremos por aquí? ¿No hay congresos en perspectiva que nos lo acerquen? Tendría muchas ganas de verlo personalmente.

Gracias otra vez, y muy cordiales saludos de
Raimundo Lida

Fig. 2.5: Extract from a letter by Raimundo Lida, Ukrainian-Argentine hispanist from Harvard, in October 1957, *DileCos* ID 707673.

Coseriu’s concept of norm has been widely applied within and outside his school: it has become a classical concept of linguistics. However, there was also a lot of criticism. Maybe the most explicit attack was formulated by Baumann (1976), who claims, in a rather polemic paper with several clearly erroneous arguments, that Coseriu misunderstood Saussure as well as Humboldt and von der Gabelentz and that Coseriu’s attitude of opposing the ‘truth of the things’ to other theories is more than problematic:

‘It looks as if one only has to look a little more sharply and precisely than before in order to then simply establish the real truths about language. An essential scientific problem then consists in the question of naming; things are already there as such and such, the relations are really there – they only have to be established, named and described. Coseriu often gives his explanations the appearance of somehow obvious evidence. When reading his writings, one becomes a vision that grasps and reveals what is true and right.’ (Baumann 1976, 1)¹³

¹³ “Es sieht so aus, als ob man nur etwas schärfer und genauer als bisher hinsehen muß, um die wirklichen Wahrheiten über die Sprache dann einfach nur noch festzustellen. Ein wesentliches

Baumann denies that there is an objective truth and adequacy. He claims that the subjective view on the object shapes the object itself and that we will never get to the things themselves but rather to more or less adequate models (see also Kabatek 2020b).

At the same time, we find also very positive attitudes towards Coseriu's distinction and towards its utility. In a generative context, Fábregas (2023, 32) states the following:

'Generative grammar has not developed a theory of language use, which is traditionally included within what Chomsky (1965) calls performance: the specific application of the generative capacity of language within concrete communicative situations. [...]

In the Hispanic linguistic tradition, however, the notion of established use within a community of speakers – influenced by history, and more generally by the fact that the speaker uses the language to communicate within a larger community, with habits and conventions – is well established, and probably the most widespread definition goes back to Coseriu (1952).¹⁴

2.7 Conclusions

Coseriu's tricotomic distinction between *system*, *norm* and *speech* is his first important contribution to the theory of language; in the 1952 paper he appears as a mature linguist who attacks one of the most established pillars of modern linguistics, Saussure's distinction between *langue* and *parole*. The addition of the *norm* resolves numerous questions left open by Saussure's dichotomy, and its strength lies in its applicability to all levels of linguistic structure, not only to the phonic level. The concept was successful from the very beginning and became part of the common terminological grounds of contemporary linguistics, at least in

wissenschaftliches Problem besteht danach in der Frage der Benennung; die Dinge sind schon so und so als solche da, die Verhältnisse liegen eben wirklich vor – sie müssen nur noch festgestellt, benannt und bezeichnet werden. Coseriu gibt seinen Darlegungen nicht selten den Anschein von an sich selbstverständlichen Evidenzen. Man wird bei der Lektüre seiner Schriften zu einer das Wahre und Richtige erfassenden und offenbarenden Schau".

14 "La gramática generativa no ha desarrollado una teoría del uso lingüístico, que tradicionalmente se incluye dentro de lo que Chomsky (1965) llama *actuación*: la aplicación específica de la capacidad generativa del lenguaje dentro de situaciones comunicativas concretas. [...]

En la tradición lingüística hispánica, sin embargo, la noción de uso establecido dentro de una comunidad de hablantes –influida por la historia, y más en general por el hecho de que el hablante emplea su lengua para comunicarse dentro de una comunidad mayor, con costumbres y convenciones– está bien establecida, y probablemente la definición más extendida sea la que se remonta a Coseriu (1952)".

Romance linguistics, but also in other branches. It is his first important contribution to a structuralist conception beyond structuralism: the concept of norm builds a bridge between the abstract system and the individual speech. The norm is established by usage, and it is conditioned by physiological factors in the case of the phonic level. Thus, it fills the gap between substance and form, yet also allows us to preserve the conception of an oppositional system. At the same time, some questions arise: can the norm on the phonic level really be compared to the norm on other levels? On the phonic level, the concept refers to a distributional selection among possibilities; on the morphological level it refers to an open technique and its realisations (for criticism, see Baumann 1976). Are these not two completely different issues? And is the idea of a descriptive norm not a squaring of the circle? As stated in Kabatek 2020b:

The main problem with Coseriu's conception, however, seems to lie in the difficulty to merge a descriptive view with the conception of norm and to invalidate Hume's principle of is and ought [...].

But as we have seen, the concept has also been misinterpreted and used to justify issues for which it had not been created (see also Cerdà 2003, 546). In the discussions about pluricentrism, as we have seen, it is simply wrong to believe that the terms system and norm resolve the problems of unity and diversity, an issue of variational linguistics and not of structural analysis.

Coseriu's norm has to be considered in the context of his whole language theory; it is a relevant concept for many linguistic analyses, be it in phonology, in word formation, semantics, in language contact studies, or in other fields. Its relevance becomes evident if it is used and applied in its original sense, and distinguished from other issues such as prescriptive normativity, variational linguistics or textual traditions. We will return to it in several of the following chapters.

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Chapter 3

On proper names, pragmatics and text linguistics

3.1 Introduction

When Coseriu in 1951 sets out his thoughts on ‘Proper names, their denotation and connotation’ (*Denotación y connotación en los nombres propios*) in one of the sessions of the Linguistic Circle of Montevideo, he not only initiates a series of studies on the concrete subject of proper names which would be reflected in several publications of the following years¹. In fact, his reflections on the nature of proper names would lead to some of his fundamental conceptions in linguistic theory.

He founded the Linguistic Circle of Montevideo after his arrival there, based on the model of the *Sodalizio Glottologico Milanese* that he was part of in the years prior to his move to America. The circle brought together in regular meetings linguists and other intellectuals interested in language in order to discuss current questions of linguistics or to present results of their own research to the group. In an interview I carried out in 2008 in Montevideo, Olaf Blixen, one of the members of the linguistic circle, noted:

‘Coseriu [...] arrived with the idea of doing something modeled on the *Sodalizio Milanese*; he tried to bring together people who were interested in linguistics: some in normative grammar, others in philology, others in similar subjects. [...] Coseriu organized meetings at the Institute (I don’t remember if weekly, but regularly) with topics that generally treated – when he spoke, and most of the time he had the lead – the Indo-European family and the most important languages, but also lesser known languages.’ (Kabatek 2012, 55)²

Unfortunately, the manuscript of the first talk on proper names has not been preserved, so we don’t know much about how later ideas evolved from this early text. But we do know that this talk was probably the starting point for the development of a large, unfinished but exhaustive book manuscript on a ‘Linguistic Theory of Proper Names’ (*Teoría lingüística del nombre propio*, [17a] (1955)), which remains

1 See the list at the end of the chapter: No. [16], [20], [21], among others.

2 “Coseriu [...] vino con la idea de hacer algo que tuviera como modelo el *Sodalizio milanese* porque trató de reunir gente que se interesara en la lingüística: algunos en la gramática normativa, otros en filología, otros en temas parecidos. [...] Coseriu organizaba en el Instituto que dirigía reuniones, no sé si decir semanales, pero eran reiteradas con temas que generalmente versaban — cuando hablaba él, que la mayoría de las veces llevaba la voz cantante— sobre la familia indoeuropea y las lenguas más conocidas, pero también sobre lenguas poco conocidas”.

unpublished. This manuscript is, in terms of theory, among the most important and the most exhaustive conceived by Coseriu during his life. It encompasses and develops almost the complete theoretical thought of the prodigious Montevideo years. In it we find not only a synthesis of his linguistic thought, but also the (partly literal) models of some highly influential published works such as *El plural de los nombres propios*, ‘The plural of proper names’, [16] (1954), *Logicismo y antilogicismo en la gramática*, ‘Logicism and antilogicism in grammar’, [20] (1957) and *Sobre las categorías verbales*, ‘On word categories’, [76] (1972), and, most importantly, *Determinación y entorno*, ‘Determination and surrounding fields’ [21] (1955–1956), the first outline of a ‘Linguistics of speaking’ which includes the idea of text linguistics developed much later.

In the following section of this chapter, Coseriu’s theory of proper names and some of the central ideas of that manuscript will be presented. Section 3.3 will describe the main ideas of *Determinación y entorno* and discuss their relationship with pragmatics, with the claim that the paper in fact constitutes an important outline of some central issues of pragmatics, even if Coseriu himself avoided this term. *Determinación y entorno* is a sketch of a theory of speech, of universal conditions of speaking, and at the same time it identifies the individual level of text as an autonomous subject of linguistic research. For this reason, section 3.4 will be dedicated to text linguistics, and section 3.5 to Coseriu’s theory of translation as a subdomain of text linguistics. Section 3.6 will wrap up the main ideas and offer some critical remarks.

3.2 The linguistic theory of proper names

When asked about why the exhaustive and important manuscript on the theory of proper names was not yet published, Coseriu stated in 1997:

EC: [...] There are some 500 written pages, but another 500 are lacking.

AM: Here we read: “Montevideo 1955”. Almost forty years have passed. Why have you never published this manuscript?

EC: Because another 500 pages are lacking, half of the work. Several chapters are lacking. There’s a whole chapter on John Stuart Mill, a chapter on Brøndal, then Gardiner, Bertrand Russell and Whitehead – with high esteem for Whitehead – and then the theory itself.

It's already quite well written, with plenty of details. Some parts I published separately: *Determination and surrounding fields* is one of the chapters and *The verbal categories*, too.' (DSs, 126)³

The manuscript has a long history of development: first, there exists a first handwritten and completely formulated version (including footnotes and references) of the first four parts as well as an incomplete handwritten version of the conclusions. A handwritten, detailed index offers a general synopsis and the content of the first three chapters. Furthermore, there are lots of notes on different aspects. The handwritten parts stem from the Montevideo period. Second, there is a typewritten version of the first three chapters, probably prepared in Tübingen in the sixties, and a third, digitised version of the first three chapters prepared by María Xesús Bello Rivas and corrected by myself in the 1990s. This means that the first part could easily be published (and in fact it is accessible online in a draft version, see [17a] (1955)). In later years, the developed parts of the first four chapters and the finished part of the conclusions were completely digitised and corrected.

There are several options for the continuation of the project of publication: one is to try to expand the notes and to finish the book without updating it; a second option is to finish the book by adding references and updating it with current discussions, and a third avenue is to publish the material at our disposal more or less in its current state: the developed parts as they are and the notes as notes. This last option is probably the most realistic one; there have been entire libraries published on the issue of reference and on proper names, and the notes are partly cryptic and difficult to put into order. So the first two options are not only very complicate, but would also postpone the publication to an indefinite future. Hence, the currently plan is that I will probably finish the last corrections of the texts, digitise the notes, and publish everything in the near future, so that it will be accessible to the community of researchers.

The book is also an example of the clear but covert structuring principles of Coseriu's publications: he used to have a hierarchically organised chapter structure reflected only in a decimal number system and not openly visible in the

3 "EC: [...] Es sind so ungefähr 500 Seiten geschrieben, aber es fehlen noch weitere 500.

AM: Hier lesen wir ‚Montevideo 1955‘. Das ist fast vierzig Jahre her. Wieso haben Sie dieses Manuskript nicht veröffentlicht?

C: Weil noch 500 Seiten fehlen, die Hälfte des Ganzen. Es fehlen verschiedene Kapitel. Es gibt ein ganzes Kapitel über John Stuart Mill, ein ganzes Kapitel über Brøndal, dann Gardiner, Bertrand Russell und Whitehead – mit Hochachtung für Whitehead – und dann die eigentliche Theorie.

Es ist schon ziemlich gut geschrieben, ziemlich genau. Einiges habe ich dann getrennt veröffentlicht, *Determinación y entorno* ist ein Kapitel davon und *Las categorías verbales* ebenso”.

from the natural sciences, in which a paper's structure is not only made explicit and visible by titles and subtitles, but explicit “moves” are used to openly refer to the structure of the text. Among the manuscripts of the Theory of Proper Names there is a general index with indexes for the different chapters.

The figure consists of two pages of handwritten text. The left page is a general index with Roman numerals I through VIII and numbered entries. The right page is the first page of the index of the first chapter, titled 'Cap. I - Justificación y principios teóricos', with numbered entries 1.1 through 4.4.2.

Section	Entry
I	1 - Negación - Justificación
	2 - Principios teóricos
	3 - Discusiones
II	4 - Definiciones por la extensión
	5 - Definiciones por el objeto
	6 - Definiciones por la función
III	7 - Resultado de las definiciones "objetivas"
	8 - Necesidad de modificaciones esenciales
	9 - Apéndice
IV	10 - Opción a Mill.
	11 - Sección de Mill.
	12 - Advantages de Mill. a. más exactitud
	13 - Conclusiones en resp. al siguiente
	14 - Teoría de Brentano
	15 - Teoría de Sartre
	16 - Teoría de B. Russell
	17 - Resultado del v. propio
	18 - Et a. p. como n. de obj. históricos.
	19 - Conclusiones
VIII	20 -

Section	Entry
Cap. I - Justificación y principios teóricos	
1.1	Antigüedad griega
1.2	Romanos y Edad Media
2.1	La distinción no se ha siempre
2.2	Formalistas, unicidad, logros
2.3	de punto de vista (Arist., Brent., Dummett)
2.3.1	Vandenberg, Jaeger, Quine
2.4	Metalingüística
2.4.1	Episodio metalingüístico - Unicidad en esta
2.4.2	No unicidad 2.2.
2.5	Castillo 2.2.
3.1	Rango histórico
3.1.1	Objetos y nombres.
3.1.2	Caso Santos
3.1.3	Parojos
3.1.4	Justicias que se hacen
3.1.5	Palabras concretas y abstractas
3.1.6	Palabras significativas y nuevas
3.1.7	No refieren las abstracciones
4.1	Reflexión - just. entre "deus" u "algebra"
4.1.1	No se trata de "mundo" - abstractamente unívoco.
4.1.2	

Fig. 3.2: *Teoría lingüística del nombre propio*: general index and first page of the index of the first chapter, © Coseriu Archive Tübingen.

What is the overall structure of the book? It opens with a general justification of the subject:

“The purpose of this research is to try to determine what the specific nature of the “proper name” consists of, that is, the nature of the linguistic “category” to which words such as *Socrates*, *César*, *Rubicón*, *Burgos*, *Tagus*, *Mancha*, *Indies* are usually attributed, or, rather, to which category such words actually correspond in real sentences and phrases such as: “Socrates is mortal”; “Caesar crossed the Rubicon”; “Through Burgos he hastened forth, and came to the Castle” [...]” ([16b] (1955), I)⁴

The structure of the book is very typical for Coseriu’s way of proceeding; we find similar structures in other publications and in his teaching. The initial justification is followed by some general theoretical principles and a systematic treatment of different explanations of the issue that can be found in the scholarly literature.

4 “El propósito de esta investigación es tratar de determinar en qué consiste la índole específica del ‘nombre propio’, es decir, de aquella ‘categoría’ lingüística a la que suelen atribuirse palabras como *Sócrates*, *César*, *Rubicón*, *Burgos*, *Tajo*, *Mancha*, *Indias*, etc., o, mejor dicho, a la que tales palabras corresponden efectivamente en oraciones y sintagmas reales como: ‘*Sócrates* es mortal’; ‘*César* cruzó el *Rubicón*’; ‘*passó por Burgos*, al castiello entrava’”.

Step by step, these are rejected as insufficient, and the need for clarification is thus derived from the unsatisfying answers thus far available. In the case of this particular manuscript, an exhaustive and critical discussion of explanations that can be found in the tradition of linguistic and philosophical thought is followed by four monographic chapters on the theoretical contributions of John Stuart Mill, Viggo Brøndal, Alan Henderson Gardiner and Bertrand Russell. Finally, in the last two chapters, the whole problem is reconsidered from a philosophical point of view, enquiring as to the essence of proper names and providing what is considered a coherent account.

The initial assumption is that of the intuitive knowledge (as mentioned in chapter 1); the fact that we intuitively know what a proper name is:

‘The problem that arises is, then: What is it that is recognized as a proper name? – that is, what is the concept under which the various expressions fall that, in concrete speech, are immediately recognized as proper names? It is not about establishing the concept of proper name itself, since such a concept exists and belongs to the ‘natural knowledge’ about language, it is only necessary to clarify and distinguish it, transferring it from the level of intuition to the level of rationality, or, in terms of Leibniz, from ‘confuse knowledge’ to ‘distinct knowledge’. In this sense, precisely, the problem of the proper name is a problem of linguistic theory, understood as organization, clarification and overcoming of ‘original’ linguistic knowledge. This does not mean that we want to reduce linguistic problems to the level of ‘natural knowledge’: this knowledge is a starting point, not a solution. But it means in fact to affirm that the original knowledge is what makes the science of language possible. In this specific case, we could never ask ourselves: what is a proper name? As if we didn’t already know somehow!’ ([16b] (1955), I)⁵

Speakers know intuitively what proper names are (in this sense, the orthographic convention of several languages to write proper names with capital letters can also be seen as evidence that writers know it already and thus are able to distinguish such forms orthographically). Coseriu’s main claim is that there is no opposition

5 “El problema que se plantea es, pues: ¿qué es aquello que se reconoce como nombre propio?, o sea, cuál es el concepto bajo el cual caen las varias expresiones que, en el hablar concreto, se reconocen de inmediato como nombres propios? No se trata de *establecer* el concepto de nombre propio, pues tal concepto existe y pertenece al “saber natural” acerca del lenguaje, sólo es necesario aclararlo y distinguirlo, trasladándolo del plano de la intuición al plano de la racionalidad, o, en términos de Leibniz, del “conocimiento confuso” al “conocimiento distinto”. En este sentido, justamente, el problema del nombre propio es un problema de *teoría lingüística*, entendida como organización, aclaración y superación del saber lingüístico “originario”. Esto no significa reducir los problemas lingüísticos al plano del “saber natural”: se trata de un punto de partida, no de una solución. Pero significa, esto sí, afirmar que el saber originario es lo que posibilita la ciencia del lenguaje. En el caso específico, no podríamos nunca preguntarnos ¿qué es el nombre propio? Si ya no lo supiéramos de algún modo”.

on the same level between common names and proper names – the latter are secondary, they represent “another kind of naming”. The intuitive knowledge is the starting point of the analysis; it must not be confounded with an explicit or “distinct” knowledge (Coseriu recalls the Leibniz scheme presented in chapter 1), and after a first statement of the subject, the path towards this distinctive knowledge is followed through reflection and discussion of explanations given in the scholarly literature.

The book is full of examples of many kinds, most of them related to the Hispanic culture. It discusses several traditional proposals, rejecting, among others:

- the idea that there is a logical explanation for what a proper name is and that linguistics must take logic as a starting point. For Coseriu, language is prior to logic and logic is only possible once language exists,
- the idea that the possibility of pluralisation is a major challenge for a coherent theory of proper names (cf., e. g., Lerner/Zimmermann 1991). Coseriu discusses in detail a number of different cases, identifying several of them as examples in which proper names are in reality used as common names (the Picassos) as well as others, where we are dealing with a material identity, ‘pure forms’ with ‘purely identical expressions’ of names that are “multivoque” but always “monovalent” (they are not names of classes, no ‘signifieds’, cf. also [16] (1954)),
- the idea that there is no difference between proper names and names of unique objects. For Coseriu, *sun* or *moon* are not proper names but names with a unique referent,
- the idea that children first think that all names are proper names. In Coseriu’s view, for children many times there might be only one referent for a name, but this does not convert a common name into a proper name,
- the idea that technical terms are proper names. For Coseriu, technical terms are common names in a technical “universe of discourse” and not secondary names such as proper names,
- the idea that the essence of proper names can be identified from the point of view of their referents. For Coseriu, proper names represent a different universal verbal category than common names and their characteristics must be defined with independence from reference.

One of the main observations is that common names establish “identity” between “ipseities” (e. g., two trees that are recognised, “identified” as trees), whereas proper names establish an “identity with their own ipseity”.

Several of the main reflections were published as separate papers, some of these during the Montevideo years, some much later. One of the chapters addresses the question of word categories and discusses the status of proper names within a language. This was published in the 1970s in a Spanish journal (“Sobre las catego-

rias verbales”, [76] 1972) and also entered into Coseriu’s general reflections on the theory of grammar. The idea is that there is an important distinction between word categories and word classes: word classes are language-specific whereas word categories are universal, and so are the categories common name – proper name:

‘Verbal categories, understood in the sense that we have tried to clarify, are, thus, categories of speaking, “universal” significant modes, which are verified in concrete linguistic activity and are defined without necessary reference to a specific language.’ ([76] (1972), 15)

Another paper extracted directly from the manuscript is *Logicismo y antilogicismo en la gramática*, ‘Logicism and antilogicism in grammar’, published first in a Portuguese translation in 1956 and the following year in the Spanish original ([20] (1957)). This paper (or chapter of the book) discusses the general relationship between grammar and logic (or more generally, between logic and language), postulating the absolute priority of language also with respect to logic, a fact that invalidates all linguistic theories that seek to explain the functions of language from the viewpoint of a universal system of logic. The consequences of Coseriu’s antilogicism are manifold; in the context of the theory of proper names, they encompass a rejection of explanations that start from logic; in the case of concrete areas of particular grammars (e. g., in the case of the Romance verbal system) they lead to an objection of inner-linguistic against universalist logical principles, and in the case of semantics they lead to a rejection of logic-based formal accounts (see also López Serena 2019).

A third paper that is in fact part of the book is the one that is closest to the issue dealt with, *El plural de los nombres propios*, ‘The plural of proper names’ ([16] (1954)), published in Spanish in the Brazilian Journal *Revista Brasileira de Filologia*, a prestigious journal in the region and an international publication for Coseriu, but not precisely the most visible place in terms of international recognition. The paper reproduces in a very dense form some of the central thoughts of the monograph without going into the detailed discussions to be found there. The fact that the paper was published in 1954 indicates that there were probably previous versions of the manuscript on proper names (before 1955).

Another text closely related to the Theory of Proper Names is *Determinación y entorno*, ‘Determination and surrounding fields’ ([21] (1955–1956)). As far as I can say from what is preserved in the manuscripts, this text, however, is not extracted directly from the large manuscript but clearly related to it (see next section).

At the end of the large manuscript, Coseriu’s own theory is presented in chapters 7 and 8, but in the Coseriu Archive there are only fragmentary notes and an initial statement of the final, concluding chapter:

‘The fundamental law for something to have a proper name is that that something must already be classified with a common name: the name of what it is. Thus, *Sicily* is an ‘island’; *Spain*, a ‘country’, *Crime and Punishment*, a ‘novel’; *Bucephalus*, a ‘horse’; the *Balearic Islands* are ‘an archipelago’; the *Pyrenees*, ‘mountains’; the *French*, a ‘people’. In this sense, the proper name is “a name of second degree.” To the question what is *A?* (*A* = a proper name), it must be possible to answer *a* + a classifier common name. And for this very reason *sun*, *moon*, *earth*, *world*, *God*, despite the uniqueness of the designated objects, are not proper names, because they are found on the level of ‘classification’, and not on the level of distinction within the classified. But if in astronomy we say that there are many ‘stars’ and one of them is *the Sun*; that there are many ‘satellites’, and one of them is *the Moon*; that there are many ‘planets’, and one of them is *the Earth*, these ‘same’ names become proper names, because they have already changed levels: they are on the level of individualization.’ ([16b] (1955), s.p.)⁶

Hopefully, the complete manuscript of the theory of proper names will be published soon, and probably an important task here – as in the case of other central texts in Coseriu’s work – will be to organise a translation into English in order to make the text accessible for an international readership.

3.3 *Determination* and ‘surrounding fields’

Coseriu himself comments on the relationship between his general conception of language, his article *Determinación y entorno*, ‘Determination and surrounding fields’, ([21] (1955–1956)) – one of his most important and most influential papers – and the manuscript on proper names:

‘The more important unfolding, however, comes between *System, norm, and speech* and *Synchrony, diachrony, and history*. The first draft, where almost the whole conception is more or less expressed in a nutshell, is *Determination and surrounding fields*, which corresponds to a chapter from the unpublished theory of proper names.

6 “La ley fundamental es, pues, que, para que algo pueda tener un nombre propio, ese algo debe estar ya clasificado con un nombre común, el nombre de aquello que la cosa es. Así, *Sicilia* es una ‘isla’; España, un ‘país’, *Crimen y castigo*, una ‘novela’; *Bucéfalo*, un ‘caballo’; *las Baleares* son ‘un archipiélago’; *los Pirineos*, ‘montañas’; *los Franceses*, un ‘pueblo’. En este sentido, el nombre propio es “un nombre de segundo grado”. A la pregunta ¿qué es *A?* (*A* = un nombre propio), se debe poder contestar *un* + un nombre común clasificador. Y por esto mismo *sol*, *luna*, *tierra*, *mundo*, *Dios*, a pesar de la unicidad del objeto designado, no son nombres propios, porque se hallan en el plano de la “clasificación”, y no en el plano de la distinción dentro de lo clasificado. Pero si en astronomía decimos que hay muchas ‘estrellas’ y una se ellas es *el Sol*; que hay muchos ‘satélites’, y uno de ellos es *la Luna*; que hay muchos ‘planetas’, y uno de ellos es *la Tierra*, estos “mismos” nombres se vuelven nombres propios, porque ya han cambiado de plano: se hallan en el plano de la individualización”.

As I stated *Language competence*, especially in that essay, my basic distinctions can be found: the distinction between language in general, historical language and text. This distinction means that all questions have to relate to it, i. e. that one has to ask how phonetics, language history, sociolinguistics and everything else must be considered on each of these three levels.' (*DSs*, 150).⁷

As I have noted, I cannot confirm that the paper in its entirety is a chapter from the manuscript on proper names and it also does not seem to be a lost chapter since it is not included in the general index; but *Determinación y entorno* is related to the theory of proper names and, even if it addresses a far more general field of linguistic theory, most of the examples in fact refer to proper names.

The text was published in Spanish in the German journal *Romanistisches Jahrbuch* in 1956. To publish in Germany was an important step for Coseriu's international profile and a means of making his activities in Montevideo visible to a wider public; however, the language of publication was not the most commonly used in Romance linguistics at the time, and the title seems somehow cryptic (and the subtitle probably too broad for a journal paper: *Dos problemas de una lingüística del hablar*, 'Two problems of a theory of speaking'). What is the paper about?

In the introduction, as in *Sistema, norma y habla*, Coseriu refers to Saussure's theory. But whereas in the 1952 paper only one aspect of Saussure's thought is criticised and expanded, now it is the whole theoretical foundation that is inverted. We know today that the radical focus on the *langue* that can be found in the *Cours de Linguistique Générale (CLG)* is probably an addition of the editors and that the famous last sentence of the *CLG* cannot be found in the manuscripts, but as stated above, Coseriu's Saussure has always been the Saussure of the *CLG* and not a critical reconstruction of a "real" Saussure. Be that as it may, Coseriu openly inverts the primordially of the *langue* postulated in the *CLG*, "the fundamental idea of this course":

'[...] the true and unique object of linguistics is language studied in and for itself.' (*CLG*, 232)

7 "Die wichtigere Entfaltung kommt jedoch zwischen *System, Norm und Rede* und *Synchronie, Diachronie und Geschichte*. Der erste Entwurf, wo fast die ganze Auffassung mehr oder weniger in nuce steht, ist *Determinación y entorno*, was einem Kapitel aus der unveröffentlichten Theorie des Eigennamens entspricht.

Schon vorher, aber ganz besonders in diesem Aufsatz finden sich bereits die Grundunterscheidungen, wie ich in *Sprachkompetenz* festgestellt habe: die Einteilung von Sprache im allgemeinen, historischer Sprache und Text. Diese Einteilung bedeutet, daß alle Fragestellungen sich darauf beziehen müßten, d. h. daß man sich fragen muß, wie es sich mit der Phonetik, mit der Geschichte, mit der Soziolinguistik und mit allem jeweils auf diesen drei Ebenen verhält".

This is already stated clearly in the introduction to the *Cours*:

‘[...] from the very outset we must put both feet on the ground of language and use language as the norm of all other manifestations of speech.’ (CLG, 9)⁸

In Coseriu’s inverted version, this idea is expressed as follows:

‘[...] one must place oneself from the very outset in the field of speaking and take it as the norm for all other manifestations of language’ (including the “langue”)’ ([21] (1955–1956), 32)⁹

This radical change of perspective will then be the main step for overcoming the limitations of structural linguistics. Here, Coseriu opens the way for almost everything that follows in his linguistic theory: language is not an only abstract system, but the abstract systems emerge out of the activity of speaking, being only one aspect of this activity. In order to explain language and why languages change, one must go back to the *enérgeia*, the creative activity, and only then it will be possible to understand all the consequences of this original motor of language coming into existence.

The second important aspect of the introduction is the distinction of the three levels presented in chapter 1. The main parts of the paper are divided into the “two issues”: the problem of – basically nominal – determination and the importance of the so-called “surrounding fields”.¹⁰

Even if the examples are Spanish, the dimension of degrees of nominal determination is considered to be a universal one that identifies different steps that lead from the pole of virtuality to the pole of actuality. Coseriu distinguishes different operations for the actualisation (the term is adopted from Amado Alonso) of a linguistic sign, *actualisation*, *discrimination*, *delimitation* and *identification*. Through *actualisation*, a virtual sign is directed towards a referent and an “identity” (e. g., *house*) becomes an “ipseity” (*the house*). The set of operations that go beyond actualisation and that “orient the denotation towards some real or virtual group of particular entities” (p. 297) is called *discrimination*, with three subcategories: *quantification*, *selection* and *situation*. Through *quantification*, the countability of the referents is indicated. *Selection* is an operation that allows the referents to be considered as specific. That is to say, while *quantification* only separates a certain

⁸ “[...] il faut se placer de prime abord sur le terrain de la langue et la prendre pour norme de toutes les autres manifestations du langage”. (Saussure 1916 [1972], 117)

⁹ “[...] hay que colocarse desde el primer momento en el terreno del hablar y tomarlo como norma de todas las otras manifestaciones del lenguaje’ (inclusive de la “lengua”).

¹⁰ The presentation of the “two issues” largely follows the text I prepared some years ago for the website www.coseriu.com (now also www.coseriu.ch).

quantity or a group (for example, *I am looking for a waiter*), *selection* refers to particular or individual objects (*I am looking for a waiter whose name is Juan Pérez*). Finally, with *situation*, the designated objects are related to individuals through possessives or to space or time through deictic elements.

Actualisation and discrimination follow the same “ideal line” from virtuality to actuality of the sign without limiting the designative range of the sign itself. Contrary to these operations, delimitation does modify these possibilities. Also in this field Coseriu distinguishes three subgroups: *explanation*, *specialisation* and *specification*. *Explanation* highlights certain characteristics of what is designated without modifying it: *the vast ocean*. *Specialisation* marks certain external or internal limits of what is determined, such as *the whole man*, *Visigothic Spain*. Finally, *specification* restricts the designative possibilities of a sign by adding characteristics not contained in the meaning: *blonde boy*, *the priest of our town*.

The different operations of determination serve to refer linguistic signs to actual objects. Apart from them, linguistic communication functions as a result of further relationships that Coseriu subsumes under the term of *entornos*, ‘surrounding fields’. This term is adopted from Karl Bühler’s *Sprachtheorie*, and there is a certain tradition in English to translate it as “surrounding fields”. The term stems originally from the theory of colours, and maybe a better, more suitable translation would be that of “setting”, as suggested by Klaas Willems (p.c.). Here, the traditional translation will be maintained, although not without noting its possible shortcomings.

The term refers to what is traditionally conveyed by the term *context*, and it replaces this rather vague notion with a much more sophisticated system of categories. Of course, further precisions do exist, such as Catford’s distinction between the extralinguistic *context* and the linguistic *cotext*. But Coseriu’s classification is much more detailed and differentiated. It is based on four core dimensions of surrounding fields. The first refers to speaking and the person who speaks (“situation”), the second to the sign and its referential systems (“region”), the third to the concrete sign in a text and its “context”, and the fourth to a general system of referential worlds, the “universes of discourse”.

In detail, the following surrounding fields are distinguished:

a) Situation. This term, which is used in a non-unitary and sometimes somewhat vague way both in text linguistics and in pragmatics, is defined by Coseriu in a restricted way, referring only to ‘the spatio-temporal circumstances and relationships that are automatically created by the very fact that someone speaks (with someone and about something) at a point in space and at a moment in time’ ([21]

(1955–1956), 310).¹¹ It is thus, in Bühler’s sense, the *origo* of the speaker, the *ego-hic-nunc* of speaking and the constellations that emerge from it.

b) Region. The general term *region* refers to those spaces within which a linguistic sign functions in certain signification systems. Coseriu distinguishes three subtypes: *zone*, *scope* and *environment*. The *zone* refers to the space within which a sign is known; hence, it refers to borders of a language or a variety. The *scope* is the cultural space in which the designated objects are known. Finally, the *environment* is a ‘socially and culturally established’ region: ‘the family, the school, the professional communities, the castes, etc.’ ([21] (1955–1956), 312)¹²

c) Context. Coseriu distinguishes three types of context: idiomatic, verbal and extraverbal. The idiomatic context consists of the signs of the language or languages in which a text is composed. Verbal context corresponds largely to what is also commonly known as cotext, with a further distinction between indirect and immediate context, that is, between (actually continuous) degrees of distance from parts of the text. Furthermore, a distinction is made between the *positive* and the *negative* verbal context, the latter referring to unsaid elements that can be perceived as “missing” due to a certain expectation (for example, for reasons of a certain tradition). Regarding the extraverbal context, Coseriu distinguishes between the physical context, which refers to those things ‘to which a sign adheres’ ([21] (1955–1956), 316)¹³ (like the material of a sign); the empirical context, that is, the objects and facts ‘known by those who speak in a given place and time’¹⁴, the natural context, which relates to knowledge of the natural world, and the practical or occasional context, which refers to ‘the particular subjective or objective conjuncture in which the discourse occurs’ (ibid.)¹⁵. Another extraverbal context is the historical context, in which the knowledge of the speaker and the listener are divided between particular knowledge, related to the history of a more restricted community, and universal knowledge, related to a nation, a broader cultural community, or even to humanity as a whole. Here, too, a distinction is made between the current and the non-current historical context, in a similar way to the case of the situation, in which a distinction is made between immediate and mediate situations

11 “las circunstancias y relaciones espacio-temporales que se crean automáticamente por el hecho mismo de que alguien habla (con alguien y acerca de algo) en un punto del espacio y en un momento del tiempo”.

12 “establecida social y culturalmente: la familia, la escuela, las comunidades profesionales, las castas, etcétera”.

13 “a las que un signo adhiere”.

14 “que se conocen por quienes hablan en un lugar y en un momento determinados”.

15 “la particular coyuntura subjetiva u objetiva en la que ocurre el discurso”.

(the latter allow what Bühler calls the ‘deixis at the phantasm’, “Deixis am Phantasma”).

Finally, the cultural context is mentioned, which refers to the cultural traditions known in a community.

d) Universe of discourse. The universe of discourse is the ‘universal system of meanings to which a discourse belongs’ ([21] (1955–1956), 318)¹⁶ (a *root* is something different in the universe of botany than in the universe of mathematics or in linguistics). This concept is originally adopted from Urban (1939), who in turn had taken it from De Morgan (1847, 41). It enters into Coseriu’s conception of text linguistics (see next section) as ‘the universal system of meanings of which a text is part and by which it receives its validity and its sense’ ([176a] (1981), 134)¹⁷ and is one of the few Coserian concepts that were modified during his life: originally, it refers to an open list of possible “universes” such as mathematics, jurisprudence, biology, administration, etc. In his last paper ([363] (2002)), Coseriu reduces the universes of discourse to exactly four:

- a) the universe of everyday current usage, where subjects talk subjectively about objects; b) the universe of science, where subjects talk objectively about objects; c) the universe of fiction (subjective creation of “imagined” objects) and, finally, d) the universe of faith, involving the intersubjective creation of “imagined” objects that are considered to exist. (Kabatek 2023, 117, with further comments)

The distinctions of the “surrounding fields” presented in *Determinación y entorno* are very clearly differentiated, so that they can be applied to all texts or discourses. In the case of written texts, the environments are reduced. Various surrounding fields overlap or are constrained. Thus, for example, the situation is fixed in a written text while in an oral conversation it is dynamic. However, written texts can also create situations by linguistic means. Also, other surrounding fields present in an oral conversation have to be verbalised in a written text. At the same time, if the act of reading written texts is taken into consideration, the surrounding fields are widened again. Thus, between a written text and the reader, the situation can be duplicated. The following scheme presents the different types of surrounding fields synoptically:

¹⁶ “sistema universal de significaciones a las que pertenece un discurso”.

¹⁷ “das universelle System von Bedeutungen, zu dem ein Text gehört und durch das er seine Gültigkeit und seinen Sinn erhält”.

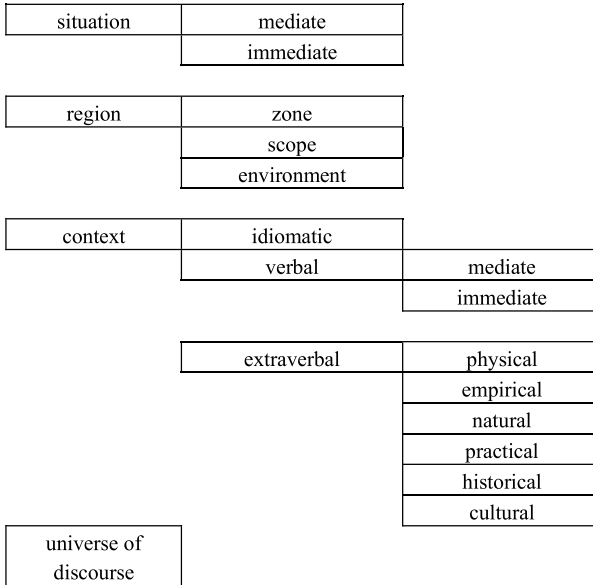


Fig. 3.3: “Surrounding fields” according to Coseriu 1955–1956.

In comparison to Coseriu’s most successful terminological tricotomic contributions, the terminology presented in *Determinación y entorno* is far more complex. He comments on this in *DSs*:

‘JK: *Determinación y entorno* [...] is also quoted very often, but rarely really worked out or further developed. Can you find an explanation for this?’

C: First of all, unfortunately, it has to do with the text type. It’s a whole treatise in an essay. Everything is so condensed that it can hardly be understood. I recently wrote an essay on deixis where I explain, among other things, that *Determinación y entorno* was written for a specific purpose, because I just wanted to show how proper names are individual names, and that’s why I was interested in the principle of individuation and of historical individualization. The examples usually concern proper names, i. e. not everything that Wittgenstein says, but only that he noticed that in Julius Caesar, “Caesar” is a sign within a sign.

So first of all, it is very compressed, and one would have to write a long paper about it. Secondly, as I said, everything is written with a view towards the interpretation of proper names, and thirdly, this was completely new at that time and it still is new in linguistics, because it was there for the first time that the text appeared as the object of an autonomous linguistics. This was also noted in the reviews; Karl Horst Schmidt remarked quite astutely that the essay contains an early anticipation of text linguistics. The idea of a linguistics of language use, which has not yet been developed as such, also appears there for the first time. We practice either a linguistics of the text or a linguistics of language and language structures,

but this transition from language to speech is not examined and the whole linguistics of language use has yet to be constructed.' (DSs, 127)¹⁸

The theoretical distinctions presented in *Determinación y entorno*, which have continued to be quoted with a certain respect until recent times in introductions to Pragmatics (see, e.g., Escandell 2006, 31–32), have mainly been applied by direct or indirect followers of Coseriu (see, e.g., Meisterfeld 2000, Wall 2015, on determination, and Kirstein 1997, Aschenberg 1999, Kabatek 2005, Robu 2015, on “surrounding fields”).

The classification of the “surrounding fields” is still an important contribution to the study of context; it offers a multi-dimensional unfolding of the complex relationships that linguistic signs establish in communication with linguistic and extralinguistic contexts, and it overcomes more limited views generally present in linguistics until recently.

3.4 Text linguistics

Determinación y entorno is a paper on the “hablar”, on speaking considered from a universal perspective: all languages must dispose of means for determination, and all acts of communication are conditioned by the relationship between signs and

18 “JK: *Determinación y entorno* [...] wird zwar auch sehr häufig zitiert, aber selten wirklich erarbeitet oder weiterentwickelt. Finden Sie eine Erklärung dafür?

C: Das hängt zunächst einmal leider mit der Textsorte zusammen. Es ist eine ganze Abhandlung in einem Aufsatz. Es ist alles so komprimiert, daß man es kaum verstehen kann. Jetzt habe ich vor kurzem einen Aufsatz über die Deixis geschrieben, wo ich unter anderem erkläre, daß *Determinación y entorno* zu einem bestimmten Zweck geschrieben wurde, denn ich wollte nur zeigen, inwiefern die Eigennamen Individualnamen sind, und deshalb interessierte mich das Prinzip der Individuation und der historischen Individualisierung. Die Beispiele betreffen meist gerade die Eigennamen, d.h. also dann nicht z.B. alles, was Wittgenstein sonst sagt, sondern nur, daß er bemerkt hat, daß in Julius Caesar “Caesar” ein Zeichen in einem Zeichen ist.

Es ist also erstens sehr komprimiert, und man müßte darüber eine lange Abhandlung schreiben. Zweitens ist alles wie gesagt im Hinblick auf die Interpretationen der Eigennamen geschrieben, und drittens war das völlig neu damals und ist es immer noch in der Sprachwissenschaft, denn da erscheint zum ersten Mal der Text als Gegenstand einer autonomen Linguistik. Das wurde auch in den Rezensionen festgestellt; so hat Karl Horst Schmidt ganz scharfsinnig bemerkt, in dem Aufsatz finde sich eine frühe Antizipation der Textlinguistik. Dort erscheint auch zum ersten Mal die Idee einer Linguistik der Sprachverwendung, die bis heute noch nicht als solche entwickelt wurde. Wir machen entweder eine Linguistik des Textes oder eine Linguistik der Sprache und der Sprachstrukturen, aber dieser Übergang von der Sprache zur Rede wird nicht untersucht, und die ganze Linguistik der Sprachverwendung ist noch zu konstruieren”.

“surrounding fields”. But even if the principles and dimensions are universal, they only enter into concrete relevance in individual *texts*. This is why the most popular way for the diffusion of Coseriu’s thoughts on universality is not the study of the universal level itself but rather the application of the universal criteria in the concrete analysis of texts.

Coseriu has always claimed that *Determinación y entorno* is a foundational paper for text linguistics: it identifies the text as a dimension of language and of linguistic analysis. But Coseriu does not continue in the 1950s with the further development of this dimension; his manuscript on *Linguistic Correction* (see chapter 2.4), where this is partly developed, remains unpublished, and in the following years he turns to other issues such as language change, historical linguistics, variational linguistics and structural semantics. During the 1960s, the dimension of text is becoming more and more important in linguistics. The Bloomfieldian limitation to the sentence as the maximum dimension of linguistic analysis is overcome in German and French linguistics. In 1964, Harald Weinrich analyses temporal systems from a narrative point of view and establishes the base for his textual grammatical approaches. On these lines, Wolfgang Raible and Elisabeth Gülich publish important contributions on text typology in the early 1970s, while in the field of Germanic and general linguistics several introductions to text linguistics are presented (e. g., Dressler 1972). Alongside with the more international Pragmatics, Text Linguistics becomes a flourishing discipline.

Coseriu reacts to this tendency by giving a course on text linguistics in the winter semester 1977–1978. His *Textlinguistik* is transcribed by his disciple Jörn Albrecht and published in 1980 with Coseriu’s “house publisher”, his former student Gunter Narr, in a version authorised by Coseriu himself ([176a] (1980/1994)). This book was rather successful and has since been re-edited several times. It was also translated into other languages, with great success above all in the Spanish speaking world after the publication of the translation (based on a previous version by Ana Agud) that Óscar Loureda produced with exhaustive commentary ([397] (2007), see also Casado Velarde/Loureda Lamas 2009).

In *Textlinguistik*, Coseriu claims priority in having established the discipline, but as on other occasions, he does not seek solidarity with what had emerged as Textlinguistik in the previous years: rather, he remains in a solitary and critical position.

He rejects, on the one hand, the idea that text linguistics is only an expansion of syntax to a higher level that includes the relationship between sentences and the relationships of elements within sentences that refer to elements of other sentences, such as certain anaphoric or cataphoric features. On the other hand, he rejects the possibility of subsuming linguistics completely under a textual approach. His own proposal distinguishes *two* disciplines for the investigation of texts: first,

what he calls “transphrastic grammar”, which refers to grammatical techniques that go beyond the level of the sentence, and second, text linguistics *stricto sensu*, which is something different: the individual level of text is, in his model, the level where the *sense* of the text is being created, and since sense is a dimension characterised by unlimited relations between signs and knowledge, text linguistics must be a hermeneutic discipline: *hermeneutics of sense*. This does not mean that the interpretation of texts is arbitrary and free. The sense of a text can be reconstructed applying systematic analyses. The examples that he offers cover a wide range of texts taken from the world literature, from Cervantes to Sappho, from Kafka to Argentine folk songs.

He also offers a sketch of transphrastic grammar, a discipline not referring to the individual level of text but to the historical level of languages.

3.5 Translation theory

One of the principles outlined in chapter 2 is the “principle of public good or of social responsibility”, which entails that linguists have to care about what society demands and needs. In the field of text linguistics, a concrete application is *translation*. Coseriu was an extremely polyglot person, and he had gathered practical experience in translation mainly during his years in Italy, when he earned some money doing translation jobs and when he translated poems and philosophical treatises from Slavic languages and from Romanian into Italian. Since he only seldomly worked in his first mother tongue (he used to consider Italian his second), his whole life was implicitly or explicitly marked by translation.

In the 1970s, he published several contributions to the theory of translation: on Juan Luis Vives and the theory of translation ([71] (1971)) or on translation theory in general ([135] (1978)). The 1978 paper on *Falsche und richtige Fragestellungen in der Übersetzungstheorie*, ‘Erroneous and adequate questions of translation theory’, which was translated into several languages, is his most influential contribution to the field. The initial claim of this paper is that translation theory is part of text linguistics and that translation is nothing other than a particular form of speaking. Coseriu claims that the paradox between the idea of an impossibility of translation versus the real existence of good translations finds its intuitive answer in the work of translators. Translation and translators are for him the key to the understanding of language, and when he highlights the deep insights into language philosophy given by German idealism he always mentions that many of the philosophers between Herder and Humboldt had practical experience in the field of translation (see chapter 8).

He identifies four major misunderstandings in attempts to describe the theoretical principles of translation. First, translation is not a matter of languages but of texts, and the contrastive grammar of languages, even if possibly relevant for the process of translation, is a matter of languages. Words are not equivalent in different languages, and neither are grammatical forms. This is why sometimes the claim as to the impossibility of translation arises; but translation is not about words or isolated forms but about texts. Texts have a sense, and the task of translation is to reproduce the sense of a text in a different language. The process of translation is represented schematically as follows:

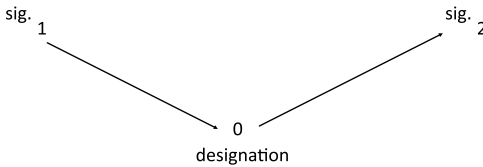


Fig. 3.4: The phases of the process of translation ([135] (1978), 22).

The first step of translation is the ‘semasiological phase’, which consists of the process of understanding the source text. This is followed by a second step, an onomasiological phase, when a new text corresponding to the original sense is created in another languages. So, in theory, there is no direct path from language 1 to language 2, notwithstanding the fact that in reality translators are by definition proficient in the source and the target language and there will always be language contact in their brains and interferences between both languages in the produced texts. Be that as it may, the issue is not to translate this or that word, this or that form, or this or that signified, but rather to reproduce the *sense* of a text:

‘They [i. e., the signifieds] *must* not be translated because the task of translation is a completely different one; they *cannot* be translated because they pertain by definition to a particular language (which is why they can only be described, i. e., explained analytically); and it does not make sense to demand that they be rendered as such’ ([135] (1978), 22).¹⁹

The second ‘erroneous’ problem is the problem of perfection: the idea that a translation should in principle reproduce everything that is in the original text, even the

19 “Sie *dürfen* nicht übersetzt werden, da die Aufgabe der Uebersetzung eine völlig andere ist; sie *können* nicht übersetzt werden, weil sie per definitionem einzelsprachlich sind (weshalb sie auch nur ‘beschrieben’ d.h. analytisch erklärt werden können); und es ist nicht sinnvoll zu verlangen, dass sie als solche wiedergegeben werden”.

feelings that certain expressions evoke in a community, the connotations of the word “Wald” in German, the deeper sense of a word like “gemütlich” etc. But as Coseriu puts it, the idea of perfection cannot be demanded even of speaking (ibid., p. 26). The sensation a certain speaker has when talking about a forest or about a cosy situation is not in the signified of the word but rather in the experience of the person speaking. Language is never concrete, it only indirectly transmits feelings and connotations that can be created in text but that are not part of the words.

The third issue distinguishes between *transposition* and translation and admits that a transposition of the content of a text is not always possible due to linguistic or cultural divergences, but translation is always possible since it implies a creative process and creative decisions of the translators.

Finally, the fourth problem concerns the idea that there is an optimal translation: a *contradictio in adiecto*, according to Coseriu. There are different, coexisting principles and no “objective” optimality. Translation is always a choice among options, and translators are decision-makers in a creative process. There are of course better or worse translations, especially when there are misunderstandings due to a lack of knowledge of the original language, of the “surrounding fields” of the original text or of the cultural background relevant for the interpretation of the original. Once a translator has all relevant information at her or his disposal and is able to re-create the text, the decisions begin: is it more important to maintain certain phonic characteristics of the original or formal elements such as rhyme, or is the content of the message independent of that? There is no overall valid answer; there are just different ways of translating, and the parallel existence of different yet equally outstanding translations of the same work serves to show that this is true.

Coseriu’s theoretical reflections on translation were followed and developed by several of his followers, the most productive here being Jörn Albrecht, who held a chair of translation studies at the University of Heidelberg and who always took the starting point of Coseriu’s thoughts in his numerous publications on translation practice and theory (see, among others, Albrecht 1973; 2016).

Coseriu never claimed that his reflections on translation were completely new: on the contrary, he generally notes that they are more or less well-known in modern translation studies. His contribution is above all one that allows us to know what the place of translation is within his theory of language, and it shows that he is not only interested in general conceptional frameworks but also in concrete applications and the practical usefulness of the theory.

3.6 Outlook and criticism

Coseriu's Montevideo years were marked, on the one hand, by several contributions to language theory that further developed distinctions formerly introduced by Ferdinand de Saussure. But on the other hand, he has a radically new view on language in that he inverts the Saussurean doctrine that everything in linguistics must take the level of the *langue* as a starting point. Coseriu's tripartite distinction between three linguistics – general linguistics, “historical”, i. e., language-specific, systemic and variational linguistics, and text linguistics – as well as the postulation of speaking as the starting point of any linguistic research – including the investigation of the *langue* – opens completely new horizons that go far beyond structuralism: in fact, the linguistics of the individual level cannot be structural because the interpretation of individual texts is not structured. It is Coseriu's unpublished monograph on proper names (alongside with the also unpublished monograph on language correction) in which all this is outlined exhaustively for the first time, and it is in his article *Determinación y entorno* where some of the main ideas are published in a very condensed form. The general principles of speaking are reflected in the analysis of concrete texts, and the later developments of this level in his monograph on text linguistics and the application in translation are but extensions of what can be traced back to these first foundational writings.

Here again, Coseriu appears as a solitary fighter for his own ideas, with his own terminology and continuous claims of having pioneered the study of the text. When almost two decades later text linguistics becomes a central issue in European linguistics, he tries to convince the world of an erroneous limitation to textual grammar and he rejects a general approach to language that subsumes all linguistic issues under the perspective of the text. On several occasions (see, e. g., [310] 1996), he complains about linguistics going into “wrong” directions, with an adequate view here represented only by his followers:

‘Today's linguistics is actually in crisis, if you consider linguistics around the world. Linguistics is looking for ways of its own, and for the most part linguistics follows “erroneous paths” and finds itself “off the beaten track”.’ (*DSs*, 266)²⁰

This view is problematic since it encompasses the danger of a certain isolation. Instead of criticising the current evolutions, Coseriu should probably have tried

²⁰ “Die heutige Sprachwissenschaft befindet sich nämlich eigentlich in einer Krise, wenn man die Sprachwissenschaft in der ganzen Welt genau betrachtet. Sie ist auf der Suche nach eigenen Wegen, und zum großen Teil ist sie auf ‘Irrwege’ und ‘Holzwege’ geraten”. The quotation marks refer to an allusion to Heidegger.

much more to participate in the current discussions. On an international level, this is even more important in the case of pragmatics. He did not participate in the pragmatic turn and he did not contribute actively to pragmatics. When his disciple Brigitte Schlieben-Lange offered him a copy of her 1983 *Traditionen des Sprechens*, a book on historical pragmatics, he thanked her with the comment that it was a beautiful contribution to a discipline without existence. Pragmatics was, in his view, only concerned with the universal level of speaking, and so there could be no language-specific or historical pragmatics:

‘There is work on linguistics of speech in general or on texts within the linguistics of particular languages. Or there are attempts to work on the linguistics of speaking and to consider it then a linguistics of particular languages or of one particular language, e.g. when general pragmatics is presented as the pragmatics of German. In reality it is the pragmatics of speaking with German exemplification. There are no pragmatic categories of the particular language.’ (*DSs*, 159–160) ²¹

In this context, it is problematic, in a strictly coserian sense, to apply the distinction of three levels to pragmatics and to postulate three different levels of pragmatics (Schrott 2021, 216). However, this is also a terminological question: there are of course language-specific means that have a predominantly pragmatic function, such as discourse particles or forms of address; and there are reasons to argue that the traditionality of individual utterances (see the previous chapter) can only be understood considering its respective pragmatic source. In this sense, the following scheme offered by Schrott (*ibid.*) illustrates dimensions of linguistic realities that must not be ignored:

21 “Man macht auch Linguistik des Sprechens im allgemeinen oder der Texte innerhalb der Linguistik der Sprachen. Oder man versucht, eine Linguistik des Sprechens im allgemeinen zu machen und diese dann als Linguistik der Sprachen oder einer Sprache hinzustellen. Z.B. wenn man allgemeine Pragmatik macht und sie als Pragmatik des Deutschen darstellt; in Wirklichkeit ist es Pragmatik des Sprechens mit deutscher Exemplifizierung. Es gibt keine pragmatischen Kategorien in der Einzelsprache”.

Tab. 3.1: Three levels, three fields, and three perspectives of pragmatics (Schrott 2021, 216).

Level	Universal level	Historical level	Individual level
Rules and traditions	Universal principles and rules	Linguistic traditions	Discourse traditions
Fields	Universal pragmatics	Language pragmatics	Discourse-traditional pragmatics
Perspectives	Universal	Historical	Historical and cultural

Only indirectly, mainly through the work of his followers (see also Păduraru 2009) were Coseriu's important and early contributions to pragmatics sometimes recognised as such by other authors in the field with a more distant relation to Coseriu. Brigitte Schlieben-Lange's 1975 introduction to pragmatics had a significant impact in this sense, since she mentions not only the theory of the surrounding fields but also the distinction of the different levels of linguistics: she uses the label pragmatics for ideas that would never have been presented as contributions to that field by Coseriu. But possibly it's not only about labels. Coseriu's lack of participation in the actual discussion on pragmatics from the 1970s onwards was probably also seen as a certain arrogance. And there were also ideological reasons involved in the very reduced reception of Coseriu's work in text linguistics and pragmatics. Both disciplines boomed after the 1968 students' movements, in that they were considered progressive and somewhat opposed to the ancient traditions. Coseriu, by turn, was considered to be rather conservative; an opponent of the left-wing movements at the universities and not considered to be part of the family of innovators in linguistics in Germany, France and beyond.

What is left today of the work by Coseriu discussed in this chapter? A very intelligent treatise on proper names that should be published, despite a whole literature on the subject having come into existence in the meantime. It is of course outdated, and many discussions in the book could not be considered today without reference to more recent work; however, apart from the discussions of his contemporaries in the 1950s, the book is full of very astute reflections not only on proper names but on language in general, and reference to Coseriu is absent in most current publications in the field due to access to the book having been reduced to only a few chapters (see e.g. Caro Reina/Helmbrecht 2022). The reflections on the priority of language over logic are still relevant for language philosophy, and the complex casuistics of the surrounding fields presented in *Determinación y entorno* can still be considered more sophisticated than simplifying notions such as “encyclope-

dic knowledge” or “world knowledge” frequently used in pragmatic studies. And finally, even in the era of AI and highly advanced machine translation, Coseriu’s thoughts on translation are still relevant (see also Tămăianu-Morita 2022). One could object that automatic translation ignores the sense of a text and that a good translation is just a matter of algorithms and of large quantities of data. But this is only partly true: machines derive regularities from translated texts and they are thus trained by the product of human cognition. The fact that machines can produce translations full of sense does not change the principles of what a translation really is.

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Chapter 4

Language change

4.1 Introduction

When in 1968 Weinreich, Labov and Herzog publish their influential paper “Empirical Foundations for a Theory of Language Change”, the second footnote (the first contained institutional acknowledgements) mentions Coseriu, saying:

Coseriu (1958), in his monograph on structuralist theories of language change and their philosophical foundation, distinguishes between the “rational” problem of why languages change of necessity, the “general” problem of conditions under which particular changes usually appear in languages, and the “historical” problem of accounting for concrete changes that have taken place. He finds linguistics widely plagued by the mistake of confusing the three levels of the question. (Weinreich/Labov/Herzog 1968, 99–100).

In the rest of the paper, several of the ideas presented by Coseriu in his 1958 *Sincronía, diacronía e historia* (‘Synchrony, Diachrony, and History’) are taken up and discussed, but there is no further reference to him. Was this citation in at the beginning of the paper merely a symbolic reference in the sense of recognizing the existence of Coseriu’s work, or was the study more deeply inspired by Coseriu’s thought? In fact, as William Labov and Marvin Herzog say in the introduction, Uriel Weinreich had died on March 30, 1967, and they note that he had worked on the paper until the final days of his life: “In the last weeks of his life he devoted his major effort to the final revision of this paper, and worked actively on it until two days before his death.” (ibid., p. 97). Labov and Herzog explain then in detail what Weinreich’s contribution was and how they had to finish the text without him.

Asked about this article, Coseriu stated the following about William Labov and the paper:

JK: We once talked about the paper on language contact where you are quoted in the first footnote and then in the remainder of the paper not a single time, even if most of the problems raised are treated by you exhaustively, for example the critical remarks on the notion of “idiolect”.

C: I asked myself if he really had read me or if someone had told him: “This guy also exists, you must mention him also” or if he maybe read some of my things and then forgot them. In a review in the *Modern Language Review* someone said about *Sincronía* that the book contained good ideas but that these ideas were much further developed by Labov. It doesn’t say that these ideas were developed much earlier but that they can be found in Labov’s writ-

ings in a newer version and that Coseriu is not necessary anymore, that's the tenor. As on similar occasions, I refer to this review in a footnote stating that it would have been better if the reviewer had read the book at least.' (*DSs*, 237–238)¹

Coseriu's reflections on language change never really had any notable impact in the Anglo-American world; his 1958 book *Sincronía, diacronía e historia* – in fact the first of his exhaustive monographs to be published – had been written in Spanish (with later translations into German, Russian, Japanese and Romanian), and when he presented some of his central thoughts on language change in English in the short paper “Linguistics Change does not Exist” in 1983, it was in an Italian journal, thus without the kind of international visibility that it demanded. An English translation of *Sincronía* was in preparation and maybe even existed, but it has never been published. In the 1997 interview book he talked about two attempts to translate the book. A first one in the late 1960s with Cornelius van Schooneveld, editor of Mouton's series *Janua Linguarum*,² and a second one in the 1990s at Stanford, on the suggestion of Hans-Ulrich Gumbrecht. Both attempts failed, and the book remains largely unknown in the Anglo-American world.

We begin here with the reception of Coseriu's conception of language change, rather than with the ideas themselves, because I think that the original thoughts presented in the Montevideo book would have had a far greater influence on 20th-century linguistics had they not been generally ignored outside Hispanic and Romance linguistics. Again, we can see that the relative isolation of Montevideo, which had the advantage of being a place of unhindered creativity, also had

1 “JK: Wir hatten einmal über den Aufsatz zum Sprachwandel gesprochen, wo Sie in der ersten Fußnote zitiert werden, später aber, obwohl die meisten der Probleme bei Ihnen schon ausführlich besprochen wurden, zum Beispiel die Idiolekt-Kritik, kein einziges Mal mehr.

C: Ich hatte mich gefragt, ob er mich tatsächlich gelesen hat oder ob ihm jemand gesagt hat: “Den gibt es auch, Sie müssen ihn auch zitieren.”, oder ob er einiges von mir vielleicht gelesen und dann wieder vergessen hat. In einer Besprechung in England, in der *Modern Language Review*, wurde von der Synchronie gesagt, das Buch enthalte schon gute Ideen, aber diese Ideen stünden viel weiter entwickelt bei Labov. Es heißt nicht, daß diese Ideen schon viel früher da waren, sondern daß sie schon alt sind und jetzt bei Labov in neuerer Version stehen, und da braucht man nicht mehr Coseriu, so ist der Ton. Ich beziehe mich, wie ich es zu tun pflege, in einer Fußnote auf diese Besprechung und sage, daß es besser gewesen wäre, wenn der Rezensent das Buch wenigstens gelesen hätte”.

2 Coseriu says in *DSs* (234–235) that he had several contracts with Mouton for the translations of his books and that these never appeared because of the collapse of Mouton. It would certainly be interesting to check in the C.H. van Schooneveld Collection in Leiden University whether there exist translated manuscripts or other information about Coseriu's attempts to have his work translated into English.

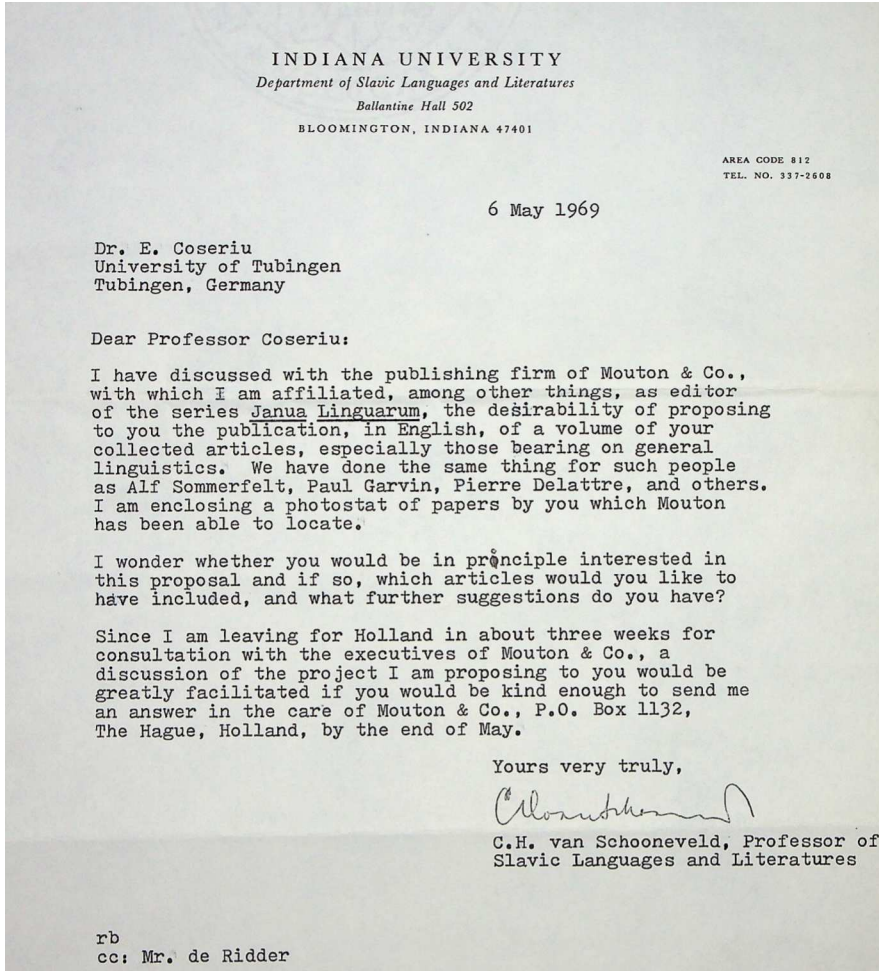


Fig. 4.1: Letter from Cornelius van Schooneveld to Coseriu (May 6th, 1969) offering the possibility of publishing some of his work in English in the series *Janua Linguarum*, *DileCos* ID 1096928.

the disadvantage of its international marginality, as too did Spanish as main language of publication.

The issue of language change is continuously present in Coseriu's thinking from the early Montevideo years and even earlier. For Coseriu, language change shows one of the essential characteristics of language: the creativity of speakers that leads to a constant becoming of the language. In this chapter, I will first look at Coseriu's ideas about language change in publications before *Sincronía*, then present the main ideas of this central book. Furthermore, other publications

and contributions to the theory of language change, and Coseriu's opinions on other theories, will be presented. Finally, I will offer some conclusions and critical remarks.

4.2 Language Change before *Sincronía, diacronía e historia*

It is difficult to trace the origins of Coseriu's deep interest in language change, but if we consider his conception of language itself we might suppose that these origins date back to the 1940s, the years when the basic conceptions of his theory were being shaped. As we have seen in chapter 2, the first explicit mentions of what later becomes the concept of *norm*, directly related to language change, can be found in the short paper about Ion Barbu published in 1949: language implies creativity, and the poet may overcome the tradition by creating new linguistic items based on the application of patterns in the word-formation system, but also in semantic and syntactic innovations. These innovations remain within the possibilities of the language system and do not change the rules but rather apply them. The result is not yet a change to the language, but simply a case of individual innovation.

Here we already find some of the components of Coseriu's theory of language change: individual innovation as the motor (rather than looking at the abstract "system" as the usual starting point in structuralist thought), differentiation between what is later called *system* and *norm*, and a distinction between *innovation* and *change*.

Where do these distinctions come from? If we look at the authors cited later in the 1958 book, several of Coseriu's Italian teachers as well as other Italian scholars appear; there is of course Croce and Pagliaro, and there is Humboldt and Bühler as well as Saussure, plus Humboldt and Bühler as opposed to Saussure. Interestingly, we don't yet find any mention of Schuchardt, despite Coseriu's criticism of Saussure being strongly in line with Schuchardt's thought. Probably the most important starting point for Coseriu's reflections on language dynamism is the energetic view of language that he found in Humboldt and his Aristotelian background.

The first explicit publication on language change is part of the 1951 *Introducción a la lingüística* ('Introduction to linguistics', [7a] (1951)), a booklet prepared to address issues for future high school teachers at the *Instituto de profesores Artigas*, where Coseriu taught linguistics. This introduction was published in Mexico much

later, in 1983, by Juan M. Lope Blanch ([203] (1981)), and then reedited in Madrid with some minor corrections introduced by José Polo ([218] (1986))³.

The book contains some of the central ideas that will be crucial for Coseriu's thought over the following years, such as a general Humboldtian conception of the individual act as the basis for all linguistic phenomena (in fact, the book first explains the importance of the individual act before turning to language on the historical and the universal level). And there is a chapter dedicated to language change, entitled "Sincronía y Diacronía" with the subtitle "El cambio lingüístico: teorías acerca de su naturaleza y de sus 'causas'" ('Language change: theories about its nature and its "causes"'). The subtitle, with the distancing quotation marks around the word "causes", already indicates one of the main battlefields of Coseriu's argumentation: language change is not considered as a "causal" phenomenon. Rather, it must be "explained" in terms of finality (see next section). As with most of Coseriu's reflections in the 1950s, the 1951 chapter takes Ferdinand de Saussure as its point of departure. It introduces the distinction between synchrony and diachrony and immediately claims, contrary to Saussure, that even if the distinction between the two aspects might itself be reasonable, only the diachronic (or better: the historical) aspect is real:

[...] in a certain way (if we take into account the partially innovative character of any linguistic act), only the diachronic aspect exists, that is to say, the continuous evolution, whereas for a language considered in its totality, the other aspect, the synchronic one, is rather a necessary scientific abstraction to study the way in which a language functions and to see the characteristics that remain constant in two moments of its evolution.' ([218] (1951/1986), 82)⁴

This is one of the main claims to be found during all of Coseriu's discussions about language change: the "synchronic" view (or the juxtaposition of two synchronies) does not in fact "explain" language change since it only consists of the comparison of two abstract projections at two different moments in the history of a language. Even if what happened in between might be inferred through this comparison, the

³ There are several significant differences between the original version from 1951 and the two published versions, and it would be interesting to study these systematically. There are also a more recent translation into Romanian ([293] (1995)) and into French ([437] (2018)).

⁴ "[...] en cierto sentido (si se tiene en cuenta el carácter parcialmente innovador de todo acto lingüístico), sólo existe el aspecto diacrónico, es decir, el continuo desarrollo, mientras que el otro aspecto, el sincrónico, para una lengua considerada en su totalidad, constituye más bien una abstracción científica necesaria para estudiar el modo como la lengua funciona y los rasgos que, entre dos momentos de su desarrollo, permanecen constantes." ([218] (1951/1986), 82. We quote the revised Spanish edition from 1986).

explanation itself is not immediately given in the data. So in order to “explain” language change, we have to go back to the source of language production, the individual act, and this will make the “problem” of language change disappear:

‘An adequate consideration of the linguistic act as act of creation implies in a certain way the elimination of the general problem of language change as an inconsistent problem. Change is by definition a property of language: it is an axiomatic fact.’ ([218] (1951/1986), 85)⁵

This ‘axiomatic fact’ is the constant centre of all of Coseriu’s reflections on language change. “Change” is nothing but an effect of observation, and in reality, speaking by definition involves creativity (which under a certain perspective appears as “change”): change is language “coming into existence”. Indeed, the title of the 1983 paper “Linguistic change does not exist” must be understood in this sense: it is not that Coseriu denies the existence of language change (as sometimes claimed by those who have probably only read the title of the paper), but change is simply an essential characteristic of speaking and its explanation comes with the adequate description of the speaking activity.

Apart from this central claim, the 1951 chapter reviews some of the theories of language change that are being discussed in the 1950s. First of all, the “grammar of errors” is seen as an important source for phenomena of linguistic innovation because the “errors” that are discussed by normative linguists are frequently innovations in a language and show its dynamic character. Several other approaches are then rejected, first of all, and emphatically, “naturalistic” or “biologistic” ones that relate language change to climate (a view which, it seemed, had been overcome but which has resurfaced in the recent years), to race, or to ethnic factors. The chapter continues by discussing formal and semantic innovations due to language contact; it rejects the idea attributed to Meillet that languages change from generation to generation (the concept of “generation” being an abstraction without a concrete reality); it discusses the importance of analogy and finally stresses the limited explanatory value of accounts that are based on the principle of “economy”. The chapter is quite dense and the aim is not an exhaustive treatment of language change, but it already contains some of the basic ideas that will be found later in the development of Coseriu’s theory:

- language change can not be explained on the level of a synchronic abstraction. Language change is not an issue of diachrony (in the sense of subsequent synchronies), but rather of *history*

⁵ “Una consideración adecuada del acto lingüístico como acto de creación implica en cierto modo la eliminación del problema general del cambio lingüístico como de un problema inconsistente, puesto que el cambiar pertenece al lenguaje por definición: es un hecho axiomático”.

- creativity is an essential characteristic of language, and language change is nothing but the consequence of individual creativity. So the (causal) question as to why languages change is misleading; rather, the question should be: what is the finality of this or that innovation?
- innovation, however, should not be confounded with change: change is given by the adoption of an individual innovation by others.
- innovation can create new elements according to existing patterns (analogy) or by introducing new patterns.
- language is a socio-cultural phenomenon and biologicistic explanations are not able to account for its dynamics.
- language change is not change from generation to generation.
- economy is not a sufficient explanation of language change.

We can see here again, as in other cases, that many of the central conceptions of Coseriu's theory were already there in a nutshell at the beginning of the years in Montevideo; they would be developed during the following years and would serve as a basis for his reactions to new approaches that appeared during the following decades. In the case of language change, the next section will present the exhaustive study *Sincronía, diacronía e historia*, one of the few publications during Coseriu's lifetime that was planned as a book from the outset.

4.3 *Sincronía, diacronía e historia*

Sincronía, diacronía e historia. El problema del cambio lingüístico was first published as an independent volume in Montevideo in 1958; the first publication, however, carries the date 1957 and was an exhaustive paper within the *Revista de la Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias*, the journal published by Coseriu at his own faculty.

In *DSs*, Coseriu talks about two versions of the book, a less exhaustive one which was awarded with a prize at the faculty but was never published, and the published one. I recall that Coseriu once told me that for the award, candidates had to submit a minimum of pages and that he added the more or less independent chapter on the expression of future in the Romance verbal system in order to achieve the required length of text. So, in a way, the first real book published by Coseriu began life as a paper and was enlarged due to circumstances.

The book is an exhaustive study on “the issue of language change”, not on concrete changes in this or that language, not on the concrete mechanisms and regularities of language change. Rather, it discusses what language change is and how it

is simply an aspect of the essence of language. The book is divided into seven chapters which will be presented briefly in what follows.

The starting point in the first chapter is once again Saussure and the idea of the unchangeability of the language system as expressed in the *CLG* (124) “en lui-même (le système) est immuable” (‘in itself (the system) is immutable’). Other testimonies by followers of Saussure’s ideas, such as Bally and Malmberg, are given and the general aim of the book is presented: to ask why a system changes that is supposed to be stable is in fact the consequence of an error of perspective. Language must not be identified with its synchronic projection. The synchronic projection is necessary in order to describe the object, but the object language itself is not identical to that projection. The solution of the contradiction is already set out in this introduction and Coseriu claims that it can even be found, at least partly, in Saussure’s own thinking. Language change must not be discussed in terms of causality, and the apparent contradiction between synchrony and diachrony can be resolved in the “historicity” of a language. This “historicity” is not identical with the one postulated by Herman Paul who claimed that linguistics must always be historical. Coseriu proposes a third way between historicism and synchronism: his “historicity” includes the structural projection of synchronies that are part of coherent views on the phenomenon of language.

Coseriu’s view is constructed on the basis of rejection and inclusion: he strongly opposes his view to extreme structuralist positions as well as to views that exclude the structural aspect. He makes Saussure his ally for structural views and even for overcoming them, and Hermann Paul for historicity. He quotes Schuchardt with obvious sympathy, and Humboldt with great respect. In fact Humboldt’s (Aristotelian) *energeia* is seen as the most adequate conception of the essence of language, against an artificial dualism that separates synchrony and diachrony. This strongly Humboldtian view led his later colleague Hans Helmut Christmann classify Coseriu’s linguistics as “Humboldtian structuralism”, a term Coseriu himself accepted up to a certain point.

The second chapter begins with the *ergon-energeia*-distinction and then explores Durkheim’s theory of the *fait social* which is seen as the background (even if not mentioned by him) for Saussure’s idea of language being something outside the individual or independent from it (for a discussion, see Baumann 1976, Bierbach 1978). Durkheim’s argumentation is rejected as fallacious, and all approaches that postulate such an independent, external view on language are also rejected, from 19th-century ideas of language as an organism to more recent views. The chapter also recalls the distinction between *system* and *norm* and refutes the idea that the solution of the problem of language change might be found in the notion of *idiolect*. At the end of the chapter, three main issues for the theory of language change are identified: the *rational* problem (why do lan-

guages change?), the *general* problem (under which circumstances do languages change), and the *historical* problem (what are the concrete circumstances of this or that concrete change). These will constitute the subjects of the following three chapters of the book.

In the third chapter, the *rational* problem is discussed – or rather rejected since, as already stated, language change

{[...] it is not a problem “to be solved”, but rather a problem implicitly solved by the very understanding of the real existence of the language. A language changes precisely because *it is not done*, but it is continually *being done* by linguistic activity.’ (SDH, 69)⁶

The question should rather be: why do languages not change radically, and what makes them remain stable? Then, *dialogue* is identified as the locus of change, and the idea that innovation is change is again rejected:

{[...] innovation is not “change”. Linguistic change (“change in language”) is the dissemination or generalization of an innovation, which means, necessarily: a series of successive adoptions. Thus, in the final analysis, any change is originally an adoption’ (SDH, 79–80).⁷

Coseriu identifies several types of innovations (alternations of a given model, selection among existing variants, creation according to the possibilities of a system, borrowing or functional economy), but he insists in the role of adoption rather than that of innovation. And an adoption can be twofold: it can be the adoption of an individual fact or the adoption of a rule or a technique. The first can lead to the “extensive generality” of a fact (e.g. the adoption in a community of a new lexical item) or to “intensive generality” (i.e. the adoption of a rule or e.g. the regular adoption of a different pronunciation of a phoneme). The relationship between both types of generalities is responsible for the question of the regularity of the laws of sound systems, this exemplified by several historical examples from Spanish (the coexistence of different forms, “irregularities” due to dialect mixture). Change is not a necessity, it is a matter of freedom and creativity:

6 “[...] no se trata de un problema ‘por resolver’, sino de un problema implícitamente resuelto por la misma comprensión del ser real de la lengua. La lengua cambia justamente porque *no está hecha* sino que *se hace* continuamente por la actividad lingüística”.

7 “[...] la innovación no es ‘cambio’. El cambio lingüístico (‘cambio en la lengua’) es la difusión o generalización de una innovación, o sea, necesariamente, una serie de adopciones sucesivas. Es decir que, en último análisis, todo cambio es originariamente una adopción”.

‘[...] linguistic change is nothing but the manifestation of the creativity of language in the history of languages.’ (SDH, 108).⁸

The fourth chapter addresses the *general* conditions of change. The distinction between universal, essential, axiomatic facts and “generalities” is one that is constantly present in Coseriu’s thought (see chapter 9). Language change from a universal perspective is simply a correlate of speech; on a general view, certain factors can be identified that make languages change. But Coseriu criticises the “wrong” question usually asked in this context: “why” do languages change? He sees here a confusion between natural science and science of culture: in natural science, the causes of the phenomena must be analysed, whereas in cultural science – with objects that are the products of human freedom – the finality of the actions that produced change should be considered (see chapter 1 and López Serena 2019b, 111). Coseriu sees here also a general theoretical deficit of cultural science and a lack of an adequate conceptualisation. The question of generality refers to usual circumstances of change, and these basically derive from what people do in order to fulfil their expressive needs. This means that an adequate account of the general conditions of change is nothing but a description of what speaking usually is and of what kinds of expressive needs are usually in play. Communicative needs might include the adoption of elements from other systems and they also might emerge from systemic marginalities with low functional value.

In the next chapter, the *historical* level of the problems of language change is discussed. This is about concrete explanations of the concrete conditions of a change in language. Coseriu argues against any biological explanation (here again it might be interesting to look at current discussions in this light, given that biologism is back in vogue in linguistics). He insists on the original individuality of innovation. Some cases of functional efficiency are discussed. What follows is an exhaustive section on the example of the evolution of future forms in Romance in which several attempts of explanation are introduced, from structural to extralinguistic ones and including Vossler’s “idealistic” view. Interestingly, Coseriu offers an almost Vosslerian explanation, seeing in the rise of Christianity reasons for a different conception of the future that helped the emergent Romance forms to spread.

Chapter six returns in more detail to the discussion of causality and finality. Coseriu not only distinguishes the three levels of change, he also distinguishes, with Aristotle, four different types of causality (the material, efficient, formal

⁸ “[...] el cambio lingüístico no es sino la manifestación de la creatividad del lenguaje en la historia de las lenguas”.

and final cause) and shows how one of the problems in discussions of language change is a confusion between different types of causality, e.g., when the cause of a change is located in the language as if language by itself was an agent, or in time, as if time were more than a frame where agents can act than an agent itself. And he argues:

‘In the case of natural phenomena we are dealing without doubt with an external necessity, or *causality*; in cultural phenomena, on the other hand, what corresponds to look for is an inner necessity, or *finality*’ (SDH, 193–194)⁹

Language change corresponds to the final cause, with a material cause (the human being) endowed with freedom. Only in this sense does language change have “causes”:

{[...] language change has “causes” because it has in fact the four Aristotelian motivations: the new linguistic fact is made by someone (efficient cause), with something (material cause) with the idea of what is being done (formal cause) and it is made for something (final cause).’ (SDH, 201)¹⁰

This can be reduced to two single “causes”: the freedom of the speakers and their expressive finality. This also means that explanations such as “economy” are not very helpful: expressive finality can consist in a reduction of the means of communication, but it can also consist in the opposite. The chapter also comments on the attempts to explain language change within structuralism and criticises the absurd explanations that argue that the system by itself is an agent that exerts pressure on language change.

The final chapter concludes the previous discussions and goes back to Saussure, showing that Saussure himself implicitly indicates the solution of how to overcome the apparent incompatibility of synchrony and diachrony. The key is seen in the historicity of language and in the creative activity of individuals. So, as in the case of langue and parole, a third term resolves the problematic contradiction: *history*. ‘Language is being made, but it’s becoming is a *historical becoming*’.

9 “En los fenómenos de la naturaleza corresponde, sin duda, buscar una necesidad exterior, o causalidad; en los fenómenos culturales, en cambio, lo que corresponde buscar es una necesidad interior, o finalidad”.

10 “[...] el cambio lingüístico tiene ‘causas’, pues, en efecto, tiene las cuatro motivaciones aristotélicas: el hecho lingüístico nuevo se hace por alguien (causa eficiente), con algo (causa material (con la idea de lo que se hace (causa formal) y se hace para algo (causa final))”.

ing, and not an everyday one: it is a becoming within a framework of permanence and continuity.¹¹ (*SDH*, 283)

After its first publication, the book was re-edited several times and had a significant impact mainly in the Spanish-speaking world. Some of the reviews were quite enthusiastic. The Spanish-Mexican hispanist Juan M. Lope Blanch (1958, 397) said:

‘Coseriu’s book must be regarded as one of the best substantive contributions to the sometimes somewhat weak chain of comments of Saussure written in recent times.’¹²

The book was translated into several languages: as early as 1963, into Russian ([31] (1963), with quite some impact, see Bojoga 1999); into German ([89] (1974)), into Romanian (with several editions [315] (1997)) and into Japanese in 2002 ([366] (2002)) as well as in 2014 ([427] (2014)). In 2007, an open access French version was published online ([400] (2007)).

This brief outline of the content of the book cannot reproduce the enormous amount of information and the acumen of argumentation to be found in the full text. The presentation of each of the issues is extraordinarily rich in arguments and founded on an exhaustive discussion of the literature available at that time, including many references to a long tradition of linguistics and language philosophy.

However, even if the book is frequently cited as one of the classic studies on language change, the overall reception of the multiple ideas presented in the work has not been great. Perhaps the title is not transparent enough, but the most important reason for its relatively scant reception in the Anglo-American world is surely the language barrier. It would still be an interesting task to translate the book into English, even if only for reasons of historical justice. Some ideas already discussed here in the 1950s are picked up much later by others, but the whole context of Coseriu’s conception remains largely unknown. The book is a very coherent and complete contribution to the theory of language change, with challenging proposals for current theories, and as such it remains a very recommendable text to read.

¹¹ “La lengua se hace, pero su hacerse es un hacerse histórico, y no cotidiano: es un hacerse en un marco de permanencia y de continuidad”.

¹² “El libro de Coseriu debe considerarse como una de las mejores contribuciones de fondo que se han escrito últimamente dentro de la cadena —en ocasiones algo débil— de comentaristas de Saussure.” (Lope Blanch 1958, 397).

4.4 Further developments I: *Sincronía, diacronía y tipología*

Among the possible linguistic innovations there is the creation of new forms according to the system of a language: the application of existent rules for the generation of new forms. Coseriu observed this phenomenon in his early work on Ion Barbu, and he used to quote Ferdinand de Saussure's examples of such creativity that are cited in the *CLG* in the chapter on analogy (Fr. *interventionnaire, répressionnaire*). The application of rules, rather than changing the system, confirms its actual functionality and stability.

In a paper published in 1968 (and originally presented at the International Conference of Romanists in Madrid in 1965), *Sincronía, diacronía y tipología* ('Synchrony, diachrony and typology'), Coseriu takes this idea further and applies it to another level, the *language type* (see chapter 9). The language system is a set of open rules, a "system of possibilities", but interestingly, language systems seem to be open to certain innovations and do not easily accept others (or only accept them in some learned, rather artificial styles). It seems not the case that "anything goes" in language change. Coseriu quotes Hockett, who stated in a review published in *Language* in 1956:

A language is neither a closed system, into which no new meaning-carrying element can be added; nor is it a completely open system, into which any element from any other language (or quasi-linguistic system) can with absolute freedom be introduced. (Hockett 1956, 467)

For Coseriu, the Romance languages are perfect as a means of exemplifying this idea. He lists numerous cases where the Romance languages seem to "resist" certain innovations and where (e.g., in contact situations) only elements that do to contradict certain principles are adopted. He again rejects analogy as an explanation, since analogy is only the application of regularities and not an explanation of this application. In his view, there is a certain ordering principle above the language system that makes speakers favour certain innovations and avoid others: the language "type":

[...] the language type includes the functional principles, that is, the types of procedures and the categories of the oppositions of the system, and it represents, thus, the functional coherence that can be attested between the different sections of the system itself. Interpreted in this way, the type is an objective linguistic structure, a functional level of the language: it is simply the highest structural level of a language technique.¹³

¹³ "[...] el 'tipo lingüístico' abarca los principios funcionales, es decir, los tipos de procedimientos y categorías de oposiciones del sistema, y representa, por ello, la coherencia funcional comprobable entre las varias secciones del sistema mismo. Así interpretado, el tipo es una estructura lingüística

Coseriu adopts from Humboldt the idea of a language type not as a purely correlational empirical observation but rather as a real principle of structuration.

Schematically, the two levels of change are represented as follows in this paper: the norm changes within the frame of the system, and the system changes within the frame of the language type:

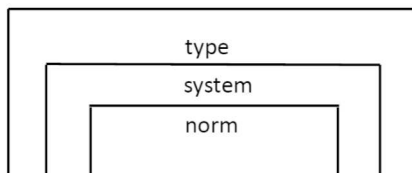


Fig. 4.2: *System, norm and type* according to Coseriu 1968.

We will return to this in chapter 9 when discussing Coseriu's conception of language type in more detail.

4.5 Further developments II: *Linguistic change does not exist*

In 1983, Coseriu publishes the aforementioned short paper in English with the title “Linguistic change does not exist”. The paper was originally a talk given at a UCLA conference on “causality and linguistic change” in 1982. Here, Coseriu recognises the fact that his thoughts on language change as presented in *Sincronía, diacronía e historia* were not sufficiently understood due to their “Hispanicum est, non legitur”, an alteration of the famous *Graeca non leguntur* that Coseriu himself repeatedly applied to his oeuvre, showing his awareness of the language barrier as a problem for reception. The paper basically offers a very short and condensed version of the “essentials” of the 1958 *SDH* and includes his observations on language type.

objetiva, un plano funcional de la lengua: es, simplemente, el nivel de estructuración más alto de una técnica lingüística.” (Coseriu 1968, 276).

4.6 Coseriu's criticism of the *invisible hand*

Coseriu did not only defend his own theory of language change, he also commented continuously on publications and new approaches by others.

In 1987–1988, he taught a one-semester course on theories of language change where he discussed intensively different approaches to the subject: Menéndez Pidal's theory of the “estado latente”, the theories of Vendryes and Meillet, Helmut Lüdtke's comparison of thermodynamics and language change and, among other contemporary contributions, Rudi Keller's “theory of the invisible hand”, in which a whole chapter is dedicated to Coseriu. Keller had presented the first outlines of his theory in a paper in 1982 and in a contribution to the Coseriu festschrift *Energieia und Ergon* in 1988. From the first publications onwards, Keller's theory refers to Coseriu's ideas about language change and his criticism of “causal” explanations. Finally, in 1990, Keller published his book *Sprachwandel – Von der unsichtbaren Hand in der Sprache* (English translation 1994). The book enjoyed enormous success immediately after its publication; it seemed that finally the “problem” of language change had been resolved.

Keller distinguishes between “natural phenomena” and “cultural artefacts” and claims language to be neither the former nor the latter, but rather a “phenomenon of the third kind”. In contrast to artefacts, speakers do not produce language consciously; they do not intentionally change their language. Keller distinguishes an individual level of individual actions and the level of the ‘collective non-intended consequences of intentional individual action’ (Keller 1988, 153).¹⁴ He compares language change to the paths on the campus of his University of Düsseldorf, claiming that none of the students when shortcutting the way to the university restaurant by crossing the green lawn had the intention of creating a path but that the path is precisely such a kind of collective result of individual actions. The path is thus created by an “invisible hand”, a well-known metaphor going back to Adam Smith and applicable to other collective phenomena like stock values or traffic jams.

Keller's theory includes a chapter on individual acts where he strongly supports Coseriu's view, claiming that language change is a phenomenon to be considered in terms of finality on the individual level, but rather in terms of causality on the general level of language change.

Coseriu's reaction to Keller's ideas was an overall rejection of a “sophistic construction”. According to Coseriu, Keller's theory is not a theory of language change

¹⁴ “kollektive, nicht-intendierte Konsequenzen einer intentionalen individuellen Handelns” [original italics].

but rather a theory of the process of language change. He claimed that Keller's ideas were largely unacceptable since they added an unnecessary metaphor without any explanatory value to a coherent theory of linguistic change. Language is not a stable system and there is no need to "explain" language change by means of "invisible hands": the "invisible hand" is neither the only nor the most adequate explanation; it is not even an explanation, and language change does in fact not need to be explained. The only reality of language change is that by speaking, language is creatively coming into existence. The path on the university campus is not created by an invisible hand but rather by visible feet of the students (see also Kabatek 2005). It is their motivation that must be addressed: the motivation on the individual level that makes speakers be creative in a certain way.

Since he was aware of Coseriu's opinions about Keller, in September 1995 the Romance scholar Thomas Stehl organised a section on theories of language change as part of the German *Romanistentag*, the biennial German Conference of Romanists; he invited Coseriu and Keller to participate in order to allow both to discuss Keller's theory. However, when Coseriu presented his criticisms, Keller was absent, so that there was no direct confrontation. Only ten years later and three years after Coseriu's death were the proceedings of the conference section published. They included two short contributions by Coseriu, a first one titled "Divergenz, Konvergenz, Parallelismus: Typologie des sogenannten Sprachwandels" [385] (2005) that contains an introduction with a few arguments against Keller's approach, with the claim that the "theory of the invisible hand" is in fact only right in those aspects that are not new and that it is wrong in all its "innovative" insights.

4.7 Outlook and criticism

Coseriu's writings on language change are among his most important contributions to 20th century linguistics. His central book on language change is by no means an isolated contribution: it stands at the centre of his theory, condensing his previously formulated ideas on language change and developing them. During the rest of his life, it is present as a continuous point of reference. Coseriu's theory on language change goes beyond structuralism in that it criticises the shortcomings of structuralist accounts and in that it takes the activity of the individual, the Humboldtian-Aristotelian *energeia*, as the triggering force of change. The activity of speaking is the key to language change, and from a universal perspective language change needs no further explanation than the simple fact that it is simply an aspect of this creative activity. At the same time, Coseriu's theory is structuralist in several senses: the language system as a structured system allows for changes of the established tradition of realisation, the norm; and the type of the language,

an abstract bundle of structural principles that makes it possible to relate apparently very different and separated sections of a language, allows for changes in the system.

Coseriu's 1958 book is a masterwork, a volcano of arguments that remains a very persuasive book. However, it also contains some ideas that seem adventurous: the idealistic, almost Vosslerian explanation of the spread of new forms of future in the Romance languages by the advent of Christianity is at least difficult to be proved empirically, and such "spiritual" explanations can probably be said to be problematic in general. But such criticism refers to just one aspect of the book, and does not invalidate the generally convincing level of argumentation. Later in the 20th-century, new approaches would arise, and would place the activity of speakers and hearers, rather than the abstract language, at the centre of their considerations. In this sense, Coseriu's work from 1958 is clearly a pioneer in the field.

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Chapter 5

Varieties and variational linguistics

5.1 Introduction

One of the most successful Coseriu trichotomies, which has become part of the canonical terminology of linguistics, is the distinction between *diatopic*, *diastratic* and *diaphasic* varieties. These terms – and the whole field of language varieties and variational linguistics – are of central importance in Coseriu’s oeuvre in two ways. First, from the point of view of a structural analysis of the language system, linguistic variation must be identified in order to exclude it. Prior to the structural analysis of a language system, a homogeneous variety must be identified, or rather constructed, since such a structurally homogeneous variety is an abstraction (see chapters 4 and 6). Second, varieties must be described in their different dimensions, since there is no language without variation and varieties. Throughout his life, Coseriu has made important theoretical and empirical contributions to variational linguistics, and especially in the field of Romance linguistics and with reference to Coseriu’s thoughts, a coherent theory of language variation and varieties has been built up and partly exported to other fields. It is in fact a privilege for Romance linguistics to be able to count on such a highly developed theory of variation (a privilege obviously related to the rich empirical evidence that the Romance languages and varieties offer, cf. Glessgen/Kabatek/Völker 2018). Coseriu’s contribution to variational linguistics is not limited to the identification of three dimensions of variation in the “architecture” of a “historical language”. It also includes the classification of dialects into primary, secondary and tertiary dialects, as well as reflections on the (ordered) relationship between the different dimensions. In this chapter, I will first refer to the origin of Coseriu’s terminology and its relationship to the Norwegian linguist and Romanist Leiv Flydal (1904–1983). I will then present some further evolutions of Coseriu’s thought and his attitude towards a “structural dialectology”. Finally, criticisms of Coseriu’s limitation to three dimensions will be discussed, followed by some general remarks to conclude the chapter.

5.2 Coseriu, Flydal and the “three dimensions of variation”

The distinction between the three dimensions and the sketch of a theory of variational linguistics appears most explicitly synthesised in some publications from the

1970s onwards ([162] (1980); [185] (1981); [194] (1982); [328] (1998)), but it is also mentioned in the context of the identification of the object of structural analysis (e.g. [184] (1981)) and as part of the general language theory in overviews published in the 1980s ([182] (1981): 298–310; [239a] (1988), 132–153). However, it comes as no surprise that its origins can be found in the 1950s, as part of the foundations laid in Montevideo. The paper published in 1979 is in fact a revised German version of a talk presented in 1958 in Porto Alegre at the *Primeiro Congresso Brasileiro de Dialectologia e Etnografia* (Altman 2017, Crivelli 2021), and as early as 1955, Coseriu had published the essay *La geografía lingüística*. This is an introductory paper which presents the “new method” of linguistic geography, with some remarks on the history of linguistic cartography before Gilliéron, a central part explaining Gilliéron’s data acquisition method for the *Atlas Linguistique de la France*, and a short chapter on Bartoli’s areal norms. In the concluding pages, Coseriu stresses the importance of the individual speaker underpinning all spatial categories and he discusses the concept of *isogloss* as a general concept for describing language. He also states that a language not only varies in space but that there is also a social stratification of language as well as individual variation:

‘The “horizontal” variation schematically asserted by linguistic geography is not the whole variation of language: there also exists a “vertical” variation between social and cultural strata, as well as variation in the speech of a single individual according to different situations and different expressive instances.’ ([17] 1955), in: [118] (1977), 67¹

The three terms *diatopic*, *distractic* and *diaphasic* appear later in his writings, but the idea of the three dimensions is already clearly formulated here, and it can also be found in his earlier descriptions of Vulgar Latin as a language with variation not only in space. Coseriu always mentions that he adopted two of the terms from the Norwegian linguist Leiv Flydal and that he added only the third one, *diaphasic* (or *diaphatic*) varieties. Flydal had published a paper in 1952 in the Norwegian journal *Norsk Tidsskrift for Sprogvidenskap*²: *Remarques sur certains rapports entre le style et l’état de langue*, where he coins the first two terms, *diatopic* and *distractic*. We do not know when exactly Coseriu became aware of Flydal’s

1 “La variedad ‘horizontal’ que comprueba esquemáticamente la geografía lingüística no es toda la variedad del lenguaje: existe también una variedad ‘vertical’, entre ‘capas’ sociales y culturales, y en el hablar del mismo individuo, según las distintas situaciones y los distintos momentos expresivos”.

2 Coseriu always quotes the paper as “Flydal 1951”, but issue XVI of the journal in which it is published clearly says 1952 on the frontpage. The pages indicated by Coseriu also don’t coincide with the publication (240–257 instead of 241–258). This can be explained by the fact that Coseriu used an offprint (documented in the Coseriu Archives) with slightly different pagination and metadata.

paper, but he met him personally in August 1957 at the International Conference of Linguists in Oslo. In *DSs*, he says that the two men became good friends from that moment onwards, and that Flydal had already known Coseriu's writings before they met. Flydal probably gave Coseriu an offprint of his paper on that occasion. Coseriu says later that he adopted Flydal's terminology in 1957, but there is no publication from 1957 in which this is the case. So he is probably referring to his unpublished manuscript from 1957 on linguistic correction, *La corrección idiomática*, where indeed Flydal's terminology is introduced explicitly and the third dimension is added:

'A 'language', despite presenting a certain unity and a certain cohesion (which may vary according to the cases), is not usually a single linguistic system, but rather, more often, a 'diasystem', a 'system of systems'; that is to say, it encompasses several idiomatic traditions, several 'languages', which partly coincide and are partly different: it is, if we want to put it this way, a 'collection' of historically related ways of speaking. Indeed, in a language, in this sense, there are usually at least three types of internal differences, more or less profound: differences in geographic space or *diatopic* differences, differences between the various socio-cultural strata of the community or *diastratic* differences, and differences between the types of expressive modality (according to the circumstances of speaking) or *diaphasic* differences.' Coseriu [23a] (1957)³

And in a footnote, he explains:

'We adopt the first two terms from L. Flydal, "Remarques sur certains rapports entre le style et l'état de langue", in *Norsk Tidsskrift for Sprogvidenskap*, 16, 1951, p. 240–257, and we ourselves propose the third.' Coseriu [23a] (1957)⁴

Coseriu also mentions here that all three dimensions were known in linguistic thought long before this systematisation: diatopic variation since antiquity (e.g., in Quintilian's concept of *loquendi genera* with reference to the Greek "dialects"),

3 "Un "idioma", a pesar de presentar cierta unidad y cierta cohesión (que varían según los casos), no suele ser un solo sistema lingüístico, sino que es, por lo común, un "diasistema", un "sistema de sistemas"; es decir que abarca varias tradiciones idiomáticas, varias "lenguas", que en parte coinciden y en parte son diferentes: es, si así se quiere, una "colección" de modos de hablar históricamente conexos. En efecto, en un idioma, en este sentido, suelen presentarse por lo menos tres tipos de diferencias internas, más o menos profundas: diferencias en el espacio geográfico o diferencias *diatópicas*, diferencias entre los distintos estratos socio-culturales de la comunidad o diferencias *diastráticas*, y diferencias entre los tipos de modalidad expresiva (según las circunstancias del hablar) o diferencias *diafásicas*."

4 "Adoptamos los dos primeros términos de L. Flydal, "Remarques sur certains rapports entre le style et l'état de langue", en *Norsk Tidsskrift for Sprogvidenskap* 16, 1951, págs. 240–257, y proponemos nosotros mismos el tercero".

diastatic variation at least since the Portuguese grammarian Fernão de Oliveira in the 16th century (see [96] (1975)), and diaphasic or “stylistic”⁵ variation in rhetorics since ancient times.

Let us first consider Flydal’s text, and then see how Coseriu further develops his ideas here (see also Völker 2009, Pirazzini 2013). Flydal is a rather orthodox follower of Hjelmslev’s glossematics, and he has in common with Coseriu the fact that he develops his own linguistic thought taking the ideas presented in Saussure’s *CLG* as a starting point. In the 1952 paper, he begins with the notion of an *état de langue* and the idea that the speaker of a language ignores its past: “il est devant un état”, ‘confronted with a state’ (*CLG*, 81). The idea of an *état de langue* is of course opposed to the dominance of historical linguistics in the 19th and early 20th century, claiming as it does that a synchronic view is the relevant one for speakers as well as for linguists. Flydal starts with some examples from Norwegian and French and cites the song *A la claire fontaine les mains me suis lavées*, with a syntax that does not follow the rules of modern French and that is recognised by French speakers as “archaic”. This observation leads Flydal to the point that linguists should distinguish between structural elements of a language and “extra-structuralisms” that may be known within the community without being part of their current grammar. He identifies diachronic elements, and then continues with other dimensions of such elements. In analogy to Saussure’s term *diachrony*, he claims there to be a *diatopic* dimension as well as a *diastatic* one.

Elements pertaining to other dialects or to varieties of other social groups may also be used in speech with special stylistic effects. As already noted, a structural analysis needs to exclude variation and identify a *syntopic*, *synstratic* (both terms are also Flydal’s) and a *simphasic* variety, where oppositions, neutralisations etc. can be identified according to the structuralist method.

Apart from these terms, Flydal also introduces a difference between language structure and the *architecture* of a language: the architecture would be the whole building that includes all the varieties; in the case of French, for example, the architecture would include all dialects and sociolects and all historical varieties of the language (note that we use *variety* here as a structural unit, a *langue* in the Saussurean sense, thus opposed to *variation* as a general term for varying phenomena in language, and *variants* as functionally equivalent interchangeable elements within a system). Even if Flydal is obviously the father of the terms, and even if his paper could be regarded as a fascinating sketch of sociolinguistics *avant la lettre*, his basic aim is to show the stylistic effect of “extrastructuralisms”. However, he wanted his authorship to be recognised, which is understandable. In a letter to

5 The term “style” is used with a certain ambiguity in linguistics; see Koch 1997, 52.

Werner Abraham from 1978, Flydal mentions his work in this regard and complains that the new terminology is generally not attributed to him, but to “his friend (since 1957) Eugenio Coseriu” (in fact both linguists maintained a friendship that is reflected in several letters from Flydal to Coseriu in *DiLeCos*). He also states that the terms have become common knowledge and are used without the necessity of any further comments:

Teilweise dank der von Ihnen zusammengestellten Terminologie zur neueren Linguistik ist heute die Vereinfachung des pan-chronischen, bzw. -topischen und -stratischen Spectrums, die diese drei Dichotomieperspektiven repräsentieren (cf. im Sonderdruck S. 253), in der Sprachwissenschaft so geläufig und selbstverständlich geworden, dass sie sogar ohne weitere Erläuterungen benutzt werden kann, so wie z. B. in gewissen Plenarvorträgen am Wiener Kongress.

Ich muss aber bekennen, dass ich wirklich darüber enttäuscht gewesen bin, dass die oben erwähnte Verallgemeinerung – die mir damals (im 1950–51) so viel Mühe bereitet hat, obschon sie heute jedermann so einleuchtend berechtigt scheint – nicht nur in Ihrer Terminologie z. n. L., sondern auch in vielen andern, besonders deutsch-sprachigen Werken nicht mir, sondern meinem Freund (seit 1957) Eugenio Coseriu zugeschrieben wird.

Fig. 5.1: Letter from Leiv Flydal to Werner Abraham, 25.4.1978, with comment on his terminology and its common attribution to Coseriu, © Werner Abraham.

Coseriu adopts Flydal’s terms and adds the third dimension of diaphasic variation. The chapter on language varieties in the unpublished text of *La corrección idiomática* from 1957 is the source for the publications of the 1980s. It is subsumed almost literally into the *Lecciones de lingüística general*. Just an example:

<i>Corrección</i> [23a] (1957), 46	<i>Lecciones</i> [182] (1981), 298–301	English translation of the <i>Lecciones</i> text
En efecto, en un idioma, en este sentido, suelen presentarse por lo menos tres tipos de diferencias internas, más o menos profundas: diferencias en el espacio geográfico o diferencias <i>diatópicas</i> , es decir, diferencias en el espacio geográfico (del gr. διά, “a través” y τόπος, “lugar”); b) diferencia <i>diastáticas</i> , o sea, diferencias entre los estratos socio-culturales de la comunidad lingüística (del gr. διά, “a través” y	En efecto, en tal lengua suelen presentarse diferencias internas, más o menos profundas, correspondientes a tres tipos fundamentales: a) diferencias <i>diatópicas</i> , es decir, diferencias en el espacio geográfico (del gr. διά, “a través” y τόπος, “lugar”); b) diferencia <i>diastáticas</i> , o sea, diferencias entre los estratos socio-culturales de la comunidad lingüística (del gr. διά, “a través” y	Indeed, in such a language there are usually more or less profound internal differences, corresponding to three basic types: a) <i>diatopic</i> differences, i.e. differences in geographical space (from Gr. διά, ‘across’ and τόπος, ‘place’); b) <i>diastatic</i> differences, i.e. differences between the socio-cultural strata of the linguistic community (from Gr. διά, ‘through’ and Lat. <i>stratum</i>); and

Continued

Corrección [23a] (1957), 46	Lecciones [182] (1981), 298–301	English translation of the <i>Lecciones</i> text
las circunstancias del hablar) o diferencias <i>diafásicas</i> . [...]	lat. <i>stratum</i>); y c) diferencias <i>diafásicas</i> , es decir, diferencias entre los diversos tipos de modalidad expresiva (del gr. διά, “a través” y φάσις ‘expresión’. [...])	c) <i>diaphasic</i> differences, i. e. differences between the various types of expressive modality (from Gr. διά, ‘through’ and φάσις ‘expression’. [...])
2.2.1. A estas diferencias corresponden, en sentido contrario (es decir, en el sentido de la convergencia de los saberes idiomáticos individuales), tradiciones más o menos unitarias; precisamente, de nuevo, en el espacio geográfico: unidades <i>shintópicas</i> o <i>dialectos</i> ; en los estratos socio-culturales: unidades <i>sinstráticas</i> o <i>niveles de lengua</i> (“lenguaje popular”, “lenguaje de la clase media”, etc.); y unidades <i>sinfásicas</i> o <i>estilos de lengua</i> (“lenguaje familiar”, “lenguaje solemne”, etc.).	A estos tres tipos de diferencias corresponden en sentido contrario (es decir, en el sentido de la relativa homogeneidad de las tradiciones lingüísticas) tres tipos de unidades, de sistemas lingüísticos más o menos unitarios, o sea, de ‘lenguas’ comprendidas dentro de la lengua histórica: unidades consideradas en un solo punto del espacio o que (prácticamente) no presentan diversidad espacial, es decir, unidades <i>shintópicas</i> o <i>dialectos</i> (término que podrá aplicarse a todos los tipos de variedades regionales comprendidas en la lengua histórica: también a las de la lengua común); unidades consideradas en un solo estrato socio-cultural o que (prácticamente) no presentan diversidad desde este punto de vista: unidades <i>sinstráticas</i> o <i>niveles de lengua</i> (los llamados “dialectos sociales”; y unidades de modalidad expresiva, sin diferencias <i>diafásicas</i> , o sea unidades <i>sinfásicas</i> o <i>estilos de lengua</i> (por ejemplo: estilo familiar, estilo literario épico, etc.).	To these three types of differences there correspond three types of units in the opposite sense (i. e. in the sense of the relative homogeneity of linguistic traditions), these being more or less unitary linguistic systems, i. e. ‘languages’ within the historical language: units considered in a single point of space or which (practically) show no spatial diversity, i. e. <i>syntopic</i> units or <i>dialects</i> (a term which can be applied to all the types of regional varieties that are part of the historical language, including those of the common language); units considered in a single socio-cultural stratum or which (practically) show no diversity from this point of view: <i>synstratic</i> units or <i>language levels</i> (the so-called ‘social-dialects’); and units of expressive modality, without diaphasic differences, i. e. <i>symphasic</i> units or <i>language styles</i> (e. g. family style, epic literary style, etc.).

This is another example of the striking continuity of Coseriu’s thought: the ideas formulated in the manuscript written in the 1950s are hardly modified and reappear almost literally, with a few additions, in later publications, in Coseriu’s teaching, and even in his “spontaneous” interventions during the interviews we carried

out in the 1990s. To the three dimensions of variation, Coseriu adds the term *register* (“registro”) for “general types” of diaphasic varieties such as the spoken language, the written language, or the literary language.

Another distinction adopted by Flydal is the one between *architecture* and *structure*. Flydal calls the sum of structure and extrastructuralisms the *architecture* of a language. Coseriu also uses the term *Lengua histórica*, ‘Historical language’, for the whole building of a language as an ensemble of varieties, including a possibly existing standard language. He argues that the term “historical” is adequate since languages are historically grown and can generally be identified by an *adiectivum proprium*, like French, German or English language.

For Coseriu, the existence of a common language serves as criterion for the adscription of a dialect: a dialect will normally be classified as dialect of the closest common language, which means that Corsican will be considered (if it is not considered as an independent language) an Italian dialect, Galician (before standardisation) was considered to be a Portuguese dialect, and the lower German dialects should be considered as Dutch dialects. This idea led to some discussion between Coseriu and other linguists at a Marburg Symposium in 1977, and Coseriu defends his position in that he states that structurally, a dialect and a language are the same, but that the term dialect loses its sense if it does not have an additional value, so dialect is a relational term in the sense of “a dialect of x”.

In several publications, Coseriu schematises the relationship between the three dimensions as follows:

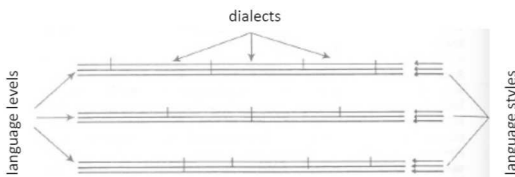


Fig. 5.2: Dialects, levels of language and styles.

He explains, however, that the apparent separation between the different dimensions is only due to the schematic representation and that in the reality of languages the three dimensions appear as a continuum. This leads to four further clarifications that Coseriu insisted on several times. The first two refer to what he called the “double problem of dia-units” ([328] (1998)): the problem of delimitation of dia-units and the problem of the identification and classification of individual facts. The third is about the directional relationship between the varieties. Finally, the fourth relates to the distinction of different types of dialects.

According to Coseriu, the first two questions refer to “false” problems (recall that he frequently contrasts “false” and “adequate” problems). The delimitation of units seems to be impossible because in the empirical reality there are many continuous facts that often do not have clear limits. He states that the gradual and plural nature of limits does not imply the impossibility of there being clear delimitations (see also Kabatek 1996, 31–37). Also, he notes that to complain about the lack of clear limits already implies the supposition that such limits should exist:

‘The problem of delimitation is in reality not the problem of the existence of units; on the contrary, supposing them implicitly means that one has previously admitted the existence of the units to be delimited. Indeed, when we say that there is a gradual passage and that there is no precise limit (or a single clear limit for a whole series of characteristic features), we are at the same time implicitly saying that there are different and clearly identifiable “things” between which there is a “gradual passage” or plurality of limits, i.e. that our units are perfectly identifiable where they are radically different but that they are not “discrete”: that they encroach on each other.’⁶ ([328] (1998), 11)

Coseriu illustrates the relationship between discrete units and a continuum in the following scheme:

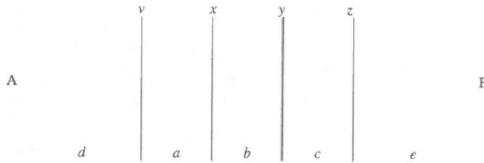


Fig. 5.3: Continuum and discrete units (Coseriu [328] (1998), 11).

In a continuum between the clearly distinguishable varieties A and B, there can be stronger limits (limits where several isoglosses coincide), as in the case of *y* in the above scheme, and such limits will be defined as the dialect border, but there are also sub-units between the extremes that do not invalidate the clear delimitation. Co-

6 “En effet, le problème de la délimitation n’est pas le problème de l’existence des unités ; au contraire, les supposer signifie implicitement qu’on a admis au préalable l’existence des unités à délimiter. En effet, lorsqu’on dit qu’il y a un passage graduel et qu’il n’y a pas de limite précise (ou une seule limite nette pour toute une série de traits caractéristiques), on dit en même temps implicitement qu’il y a des ‘choses’ différentes et bien identifiables entre lesquels il y a ‘passage graduel’ ou pluralité des limites, c’est-à-dire que nos unités sont parfaitement identifiables là où elles sont radicalement différentes mais qu’elles ne sont pas ‘discrètes’ : qu’elles empiètent les unes sur les autres”.

seriu insists on the fact that this kind of delimitation, firmly established in dialectology, is also valid in social and stylistic variation. But in the case of social varieties and of styles, how many units can be identified? This issue is illustrated in another scheme:

	1	2	3	4
				I
A	-----	a	a	-----
				II
			III	III
B	-----	b	-----	
			IV	IV

Fig. 5.4: Levels of diastratic or diaphasic varieties (Coseriu [328] (1998), 13).

The levels are defined in a structural analysis on the basis of synonymic forms that are marked as pertaining to different levels or styles. However, only some forms are marked and most forms are not: the “typical” situation in a European language is such that in many cases, there is no difference of levels and the forms are valid on all of them (first column). Then there can be forms where a difference exists between two levels, others where we can find three or even four levels etc. Coseriu illustrates this in [328] (1998) with French lexical examples such as *parler / causer* (two levels) and *s’ennuyer / s’embêter / se barber* (three levels). He introduces a criterion of frequency or “weight” of the different columns in a language: when there are many cases with a distinction of four levels, this distinction is said to be valid for that language (and it is neutralised in the cases where it is not relevant), but if there are only a few such cases but there are frequently three levels, a three-level distinction is preferred, and in the marginal cases of a four-level distinction, sub-levels of one of the three levels will be supposed to exist.

The second “false” problem refers to the attribution of a feature to one or another dimension of variation. A concrete feature is not “either diatopic or distratic” but rather tri-dimensionally defined: it is syntopic, synstratic and symphasic at the same time. It has a three-dimensional anchorage in the variational space.

The third issue that arises from the classification of varieties into three dimensions is one of their mutual relationship. Coseriu argues for what later would be called the “chain of varieties” (Germ. “Varietätenkette”, Koch/Oesterreicher 1985, see 5.4). Dialects, sociolects and styles do not have the same values; dialects or diatopic varieties are considered to be the primary manifestations of language. And

dialects may “function” as sociolects and sociolects may “function” as styles (and thus, consequently, dialects may also function as styles), but not vice-versa (for criticism see section 5.5).

Finally, the fourth question is about the classification of dialects. Coseriu distinguishes between ‘primary’, ‘secondary’ and ‘tertiary’ dialects: primary dialects are those that have emerged in parallel with the common language they are associated with, secondary dialects are further diatopic differentiations of primary dialects (like colonial or conquest varieties such as Andalusian Spanish or Brazilian Portuguese), and tertiary dialects are local standards that have emerged from secondary dialects, like the American standard of English or the Mexican standard of Spanish. These terms are of course relative ones, and primary dialects like Asturian or Piemontese are secondary ones with respect to Latin.

5.3 Diasystem and structural dialectology: Coseriu and Weinreich

Two terms used by Coseriu from 1957 onwards are *variety* (as a neutral term for any form of language, be it syntopic, synstratic or symphasic) and *diasystem* as a synonym for architecture ([182] (1981), 301). In these cases (and in the earlier quotation cited above), the origin of the terms is not mentioned, and the terms are frequently attributed by others to Coseriu. However, they were in fact originally coined by Uriel Weinreich in his seminal paper *Is a structural dialectology possible?*, published in 1954, in which Weinreich says:

It is proposed that the term ‘dialect’ be held in reserve for the time being and that, for purpose of structural analysis as set forth here, it be replaced by ‘variety’. (Weinreich 1954, 389).

In the case of *diasystem*, Weinreich talks about “systems of a higher level out of the discrete and homogeneous systems that are derived from description and that represent each a unique formal organisation of the substance of expression and content”, and he explicitly says: “Let us dub these constructions ‘diasystems’” (Weinreich 1954, 390). In this paper, Weinreich postulates a combination of structural and dialectological analysis, comparing the oppositions in different varieties of a language. Two varieties may share a similar phonological system but differ in one opposition, which is made in one variety but not the other. Both systems can be placed together under the common denomination of a diasystem. Weinreich gives several examples of this kind of analysis and also provides maps where not only individual forms are represented but also their respective phonological or morphematic value. He states that traditional dialectologists only deal

with substance and not with form, and that “the structural map is after all more true to the reality of functioning language” (see also Labov 2008). In his view, the aim of linguistics should be to reconcile dialectology and structural analysis:

If dialectologists would consider the functions of the elements which they use in their comparisons, their conception of a ‘diasystem’ would come close to that proposed here for structural linguistics and might lead to the unified theory which is so badly needed. (Weinreich 1954, 393).

Weinreich’s conclusion is that “it is submitted that a structural dialectology is possible” (1954, 400).

Against this view, and on several occasions, Coseriu rejects the idea of a “structural dialectology”. In a 1982 booklet that goes back to the Porto Alegre paper of 1958, he states:

‘dialectology, in what characterizes and determines it as an autonomous discipline, cannot be properly “structural”; and the very expression structural dialectology is either a contradiction in terms, or is applied to only one discipline extrinsically structural and thus cannot correspond to all dialectology’ ([194] (1982), 28).⁷

In the Coseriu Archive, there are two unpublished manuscripts on this subject, the first one in Italian about “dialettologia strutturale” and the second one in Spanish with the title “Is a structural dialectology impossible?”.

Here, Coseriu claims that “structural dialectology” is a *contradictio in adiecto*, and he argues against Weinreich’s “squaring of the circle”. The manuscripts were published and commented in 2021 in *Energeia* by Manuela Crivelli. Here, Coseriu declares himself a structuralist, on the one hand, and on the other hand he distinguishes between a structural analysis of dialects (which, in his view, has always been one of the tasks of dialectology) and a “structural dialectology” which he rejects as impossible (the text was translated on the base of Crivelli’s transcription):

“The “structural” point of view implies the consideration of linguistic phenomena in an internal, oppositional structure (different forms for different values). Furthermore, the forms and the values constitute systems. Now, this is possible only at certain points, or even better: syn-
topically.

The point of view of dialectology, on the other hand, is diatopic: it is not about internal functional oppositions (in a linguistic structure with respect to the objective meaning), but

7 “la dialectología, en lo que la caracteriza y determina como disciplina autónoma, no puede ser propiamente ‘estructural’; y la propia expresión dialectología estructural, o es una contradicción en los términos, o se aplica a una disciplina sólo extrínsecamente estructural y que, por otra parte, no puede corresponder a toda la dialectología”.

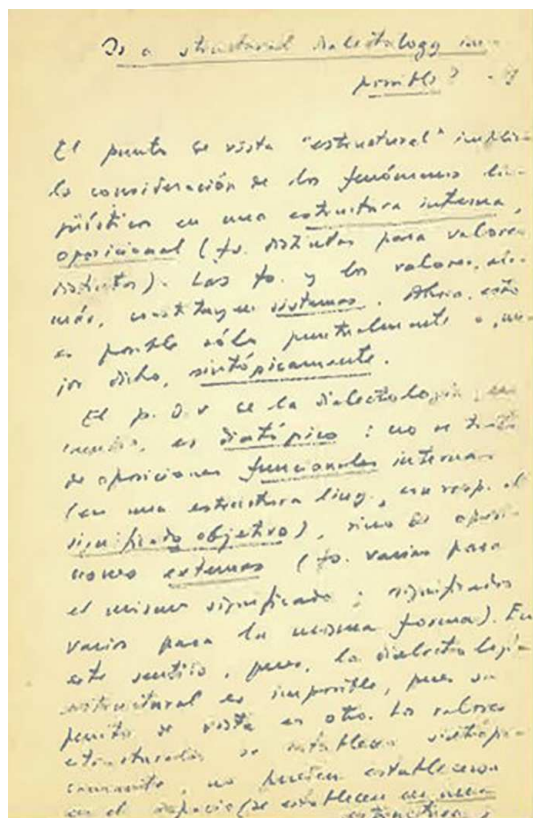


Fig. 5.5: Manuscript ArCos B XIII, 21, Coseriu Archive Tübingen (first page).

about external oppositions (various forms for the same meaning; various meanings for the same form). In this sense, however, structural dialectology is impossible, since its point of view is different. Structural values are established syntopically, they cannot be established in space (they are established in a structure).

Another thing entirely different is the description of a dialect, which of course must be structural. But in this sense, it is not a question of 'dialectology', but rather of analytical linguistics (a "dialect" not considered in relation to another is not distinguishable from a "language").

Yet another thing is establishing boundaries between structurally different elements (which have been established as such in the corresponding structures). But, in this sense, it is not a matter of 'structural dialectology', but rather a dialectology of structural facts.' (Coseriu, *apud Crivelli* 2021)⁸

⁸ "El punto de vista 'estructural' implica la consideración de los fenómenos lingüísticos en una estructura interna, oposicional (f[ormas] distintas para valores distintos). Las f[ormas] y los val-

Coseriu is not opposed to Weinreich's proposal, but he does not agree that what it shows is a "structural dialectology" (see also section 5.5).

He maintained contact with Weinreich from 1956 onwards, and several letters from Weinreich to Coseriu are conserved in the Coseriu Archive as well as letters from other linguists – Karl Jaberg, Vittore Pisani, Giuseppe Vidossi, Herbert Pilch, William G. Moulton, Diego Catalán, Manuel Alvar and Gregorio Salvador, among others – that discuss the relationship between dialectology and structuralism (Crivelli 2021, 104–105). A further study of the whole relationship between Coseriu and other linguists in this field would be an interesting task.

5.4 Coseriu, Koch and Oesterreicher

Among the further developments of Coseriu's conception, the one proposed by Peter Koch and Wulf Oesterreicher should explicitly be mentioned here due to its notable impact and its enormous success in Romance linguistics and beyond over the last 40 years.

From the 1980s onwards, an exhaustive discussion arose that aimed to include the difference between spoken and written language in the Flydal-Coseriu terminology. In analogy to the other terms, a *diamesic* dimension was postulated by some scholars, especially in Italy.

As already mentioned, Peter Koch (see chapter 2) was not a direct disciple of Coseriu, but he had received exhaustive information about Coseriu's theory at Freiburg via Hans Martin Gauger, who had already worked at Tübingen when Coseriu arrived and who had had intensive contact to him in the 1960s, and via Brigitte Schlieben-Lange, who had also moved to Freiburg from Tübingen in order to be-

ores, además, constituyen sistemas. Ahora, esto es posible sólo puntualmente o, mejor dicho, sintópicamente.

El p[unto] d[e] v[ista] de la dialectología, en cambio, es diatópico: no se trata de oposiciones funcionales internas (en una estructura ling[üística] con resp[ecto] al significado objetivo), sino de oposiciones externas (f[orma]s varias para el mismo significado; significados varios para la misma forma). En este sentido, pero, la dialectología estructural es imposible, pues su punto de vista es otro. Los valores estructurales se establecen sintópicamente, no pueden establecerse en el espacio (se establecen en la estructura).

Otra cosa enteramente distinta es la descripción de un dialecto, que, naturalm[ente], debe ser estructural. Pero en este sentido no se trata de 'dialectología', sino de ling[üística] analítica simplemente (que un 'dialecto' no considerado en relación con otro, no se distingue de una 'lengua').

Otra cosa, todavía, es el establecer fronteras entre elementos estructuralmente diferentes (que se han establecido como tales en las estructuras correspondientes). Pero, en este sentido, no se trata de 'dialectología estructural', sino de dialectología de hechos estructurales".

come an assistant to Gauger's chair. Wulf Oesterreicher, who also worked at Freiburg for a long time, was indeed a direct disciple of Coseriu. Both presented their ideas about 'language of immediacy' and 'language of distance' in 1985 in a paper that became one of the most successful contributions to Romance linguistics in the final decades of the 20th century (Koch/Oesterreicher 1985; English translation 2012; see also Kabatek 2000).

The paper is strongly based on Coseriu's conception of variational linguistics. The authors adopt, among other concepts, his aforementioned idea that there is a linear, ordered relationship between the three dimensions of variation: a dialect can function as a sociolect (e.g., in France, *patois*, the regionally spoken dialects, are generally associated with lower classes) and a sociolect as a style (when lower class speech is associated with informal speech) and, consequently, a dialect as a style. Koch and Oesterreicher call this order the 'chain of varieties' (*Varietätenkette*), a term that is frequently cited without mention of the Coserian origin of the concept. Their main development of Coseriu's conception, however, consists of the addition of two further dimensions to his three-dimensional architecture.

The authors' starting point here is a fourfold distinction introduced in the 1970s by Ludwig Söll (1974) which aims at clarifying a common misunderstanding that confounds medial differences with different degrees of linguistic formality. According to Söll, "spoken" and "written" are two concepts metonymically linked to "spontaneous" and "elaborate" speech (and there are of course reasons for this), but he proposes to distinguish the purely medial difference from the conceptual difference of formal and informal speech, since both can in principle be realised in the written and in the spoken code. He furthermore observes that the difference between the two codes is a discrete one whereas the conceptual difference is a continuum.

Now, Koch and Oesterreicher link Söll's distinctions to those of Coseriu, introducing the terms *Immediacy* ("Nähe") and *Distance* ("Distanz") for the two poles of the conceptual continuum. According to them, this distinction embraces the whole architecture of a language. The three Coserian dimensions are all more or less marked, and, according to the chain of varieties, a strong diatopic marking is linked to immediacy as well as low diastratic and informal diaphasic marking. Moreover, they claim that there is not only a universal continuum between immediacy and distance (in all languages, even those without literacy) but that there exists also a fourth level of immediacy and distance within a historical language, strongly linked to written and spoken varieties. An example would be continental French, where the spoken and the written variety have sometimes been claimed to be like two "languages" coexisting in a diglossic situation (cf. Koch 1987, Radatz 2003, Massot 2008), with features like the *passé simple*, used in writing in contrast

with *passé composé*, whereas in spoken French *passé composé* with no opposition to *passé simple* is used.

Coseriu, who had a close relationship to both authors (to Wulf Oesterreicher as a disciple, and to Koch as a colleague after his appointment as a professor at Tübingen University in the 1990s) and he showed strong respect for their work. He was, however, also sceptical about their modification of his theory. In *DSs*, he says that there were some misunderstandings (see Kabatek 2021):

‘For example, the distinction between written and spoken language is for me by no means the central one when we distinguish varieties because these are different realizations. They might have their own traditions, but they do not correspond to a general type of variety in the sense of varieties in space, in the socio-cultural strata or in style, in first place because they are not two or more communities.’ (*DSs*, 153)⁹

Koch and Oesterreicher’s proposal enjoyed enormous success because it obviously touched on an important point. However, there were also critical reactions, not so much against their model but rather against the link to Coseriu’s conception. To mention but two examples: Jörn Albrecht criticised the addition of more dimensions (1986; 1990) because in his view the distinction between immediacy and distance can be subsumed into the diaphasic one, and I myself presented a model in which the main distinction is the diaphasic one and further dimensions can be subsumed under this, with the link between writing and “distance” in fact being a link of metonymic association to preferably written diaphasic varieties (Kabatek 2000).

5.5 Outlook and criticism

Coseriu’s thoughts on variational linguistics were very successful. In the 1990s, an international research group coordinated by Rika van Deyck from Ghent University was created, several conferences were organised and a journal was launched (*Les Cahiers δià*, cf. [328] (1998); [329] (1998)) on the background of Coseriu’s variationist theory (see, e.g. van Deyck/Sornicola/Kabatek 2005).

Even if he never did dialectological fieldwork himself and never participated directly in a linguistic Atlas or in larger dialectological projects, he was very much

⁹ “Zum Beispiel ist die Unterscheidung Geschrieben-Gesprochen für mich überhaupt nicht die zentrale bei der Unterscheidung der Varietäten, denn das sind verschiedene Realisierungen, die auch ihre eigenen Traditionen haben können, aber keiner allgemeinen Art von Varietät im Sinne der Varietät im Raum, in den sozial-kulturellen Schichten oder im Stil entsprechen; zunächst einmal, weil das keine zwei oder mehrere Gemeinschaften sind”.

respected as a theorist of variational linguistics among experts in the field, and his practical knowledge of many Romance (and other) languages and varieties, as well as his encyclopaedic knowledge of the specialised literature, made him an authority in variational linguistics from the time of the publication of his *Geografia lingüística* in the 1950s. Many of the ideas that were only presented much later in various publications stemmed from the Montevideo years and can be traced back to the manuscript *La corrección idiomática* from 1957 or to his long unpublished contribution to the Brazilian Conference of Dialectology and Ethnography in Porto Alegre in 1958. His terminology and his central thoughts on linguistic variation have entered into the canon of linguistics and have been further developed, mainly in Romance linguistics. One of his central aims coincides with that of other linguists in the 1950s, such as Leiv Flydal and Uriel Weinreich: to show the relationship between variational approaches and structural analysis. Coseriu's variational linguistics is in part framed as having the negative task of excluding varieties from structural analysis. However, it presents a coherent classification of variational dimensions and shows from the early work in Montevideo onwards that the heterogeneity of a historical language is a fact that must never be ignored.

Several aspects of Coseriu's variational linguistics have led to criticism, and in this final section of this chapter I will just mention a few of them.

The first concerns the number of dimensions of variety. Flydal started with diachronic variation and then added the terms “diatopic” and “diastratic”: two dimensions of synchronic variation. Coseriu adds the diaphasic dimension, and it seems that this allows to take into account the complete range of variational phenomena. We have already seen the discussion about a possible fourth dimension in the work of Koch and Oesterreicher. Coseriu's disciple Harald Thun (Thun 2000–) proposed the addition of further dimensions to the three identified by Coseriu. The diastratic dimension is further subdivided into diasexual, diagenerational and other possible dimensions. This is justified with empirical findings in particular communities, where these dimensions play a role. On the other hand, the opposite tendency would be to reduce the dimensions to only two and to consider spatial variation as an (empirically rather frequent) case of group-specific varieties due to settlement culture (see Halliday 1978, Dufter/Stark 2002, Kabatek 2002).

Another critical point is the differentiation between the three dimensions. “Diatopic” is the less controversial one since it has long been accepted in linguistics as a central dimension in linguistic analysis; the dimension of the traditional *Ortsmundarten* or dialects. The fact that it is difficult to find homogeneous varieties even on this traditional level (see already Gauchat 1905) is not a theoretical but rather a practical problem. More problematic seems to be the notion of “diastratic” varieties, especially in relation to “diaphasic” ones. Coseriu defines the “diastratic” dimension as corresponding to socio-cultural strata. In traditional sociolin-

guistics, we could mention here differences between upper class and lower class speakers, the term “strata” being more flexible than the term “class” (which implies a certain societal model). “Diaphasic” would, by contrast, be situational and hence by definition would vary within the same individual when changing, for example, between formal and informal speech. But what about other group differences beyond social “strata”? What about Thun’s “diasexual” or “diagenerational” differences? In [182] (1981), 298, Coseriu notes on gender differences:

[...] the linguistic differences that – in the same sociocultural stratum – characterize “biological” groups (men, women, children, youth) and professionals can also be considered as “diaphasic”.¹⁰

Aside from current controversies about the extent to which such groups are really ‘biological’ and to what extent they are culturally constructed, it seems at least problematic to subsume formal and informal speech, on the one hand, and male and female speech, on the other hand, under the same dimension. Rather, it seems appropriate to distinguish between those linguistic features that are specific to social groups in a very wide sense, and situational varieties. Groups are not defined in some prior point, but rather are part of a continuous process of emergence and constitution, and there might be linguistic correlations of these constituting processes that can characterise any kind of group, be it with a “biological” background (like age or gender) or not. Whether groups develop linguistic characteristics or not depends on each individual case, and there is no law about gender groups being linguistically relevant: there can be linguistic differences or not, and female speech can be “more progressive” as well as “more conservative” with regard to male speech according to the particular societal situation and the motivation of the respective groups (Schlieben-Lange 1985). But if the term “diastatic” is opened to groups in general, should not diatopic groups be included? In fact, locally defined dialects are not universal characteristics of human language but derive from settlement culture, and human language existed long before this stage (and still exists as such in nomad cultures). However, a “space apriori” has been postulated (Schmidt/Herrgen 2011) defining the most important parameter of variety in human society, and there are probably ways of extending the notion of “origin” to nomadic tribes as well, thus distinguishing it from other group phenomena.

Another discussion arises from the directionality of the ‘chain of varieties’, at least in its extension by Koch/Oesterreicher (see previous section). In many societ-

¹⁰ “[...] las diferencias lingüísticas que —en un mismo estrato sociocultural— caracterizan a grupos ‘biológicos’ (varones, mujeres, niños, jóvenes) y profesionales también pueden considerarse como ‘diafásicas’”.

ies, recent centuries have been marked by urbanisation and partial loss of local varieties (Stehl 2017), as well as by the emergence of regional forms of the language (Auer 2005). These developments, however, are determined by historical-cultural evolutions that are by no means universal. In France, local dialects might be characterised as “lower-class-phenomena”, but if we look at German speaking Switzerland, even the most prestigious urban population uses the local dialect as a general means of expression, and this also in rather formal settings (as long as there are no reasons to switch to another language because the dialect is not understood by all interlocutors).

Maybe a certain discrepancy between “universal” and “cultural” tendencies can also be observed in other areas. In a ‘dispute’ I had with Coseriu during our interview sessions in the 1990s (a discussion he later published as ‘dialogue with a disciple’ in a Romanian translation, see [318] (1997)), we discussed the ethics of communication, and he rejected the possible “normality” of asymmetric dialogues (i. e. dialogues where the interlocutors use different languages or varieties) as contrary to the general ethics of speaking and the aim of trying to communicate in a common variety. However, if we again look at the German speaking part of Switzerland, “polylectal dialogues” (Christen 1998) are the established norm of inter-regional communication, with some exceptions and the obvious condition of a culture in which passive knowledge of other dialects is not only presupposed but part of the generally established linguistic culture (cf. Kabatek 2015d). Such pluridialectal or plurilingual situations are probably quite frequent in the world, and they might even have been very common in Europe prior to the early modern emergence of standard languages.

One last critical point refers to the notion of “diasystem”. In the paper cited above, Weinreich distinguishes between the view of the dialectologist and the view of the structuralist. But in the meantime a whole tradition of perceptual dialectology has emerged and it is obvious that the structural view is not the only relevant one from the speaker’s perspective. As stated in Kabatek 2002, for example, for a speaker from Madrid, both western Andalusian and eastern Andalusian are clearly perceived as dialects different from the one in Madrid, despite the vowel system of western Andalusian being not structurally distinct from the one in Madrid but eastern Andalusian having a structurally different system. This is why I proposed that “diasystem” should be regarded as a structural term, a “system of systems”, but that a dialect continuum is not only a continuum of systems but also, beyond the systematic differentiations, a continuum of norms, a *dianorm* in the sense described in chapter 2. So, two levels of variation should be distinguished:

Yet a notion such as “dianorms” also derives from a further development of Coseriu’s thinking, and shows thus that his thoughts can be carried further even within

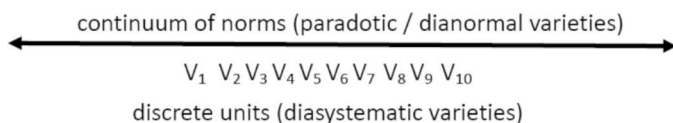


Fig. 5.6: Diasystem and *dianorms* according to Kabatek 2002.

his own conceptual framework. Variational linguistics is a field that naturally invites such a continuous process of development and extension.

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Chapter 6

Structuralism

6.1 Introduction

Coseriu, of course, is widely known in the history of linguistics as a structuralist. However, in the previous chapters of this book, his structuralist view on language has not been the main issue, and thus far I have almost avoided to go further into it. This should not be misunderstood: the structuralist approach is present throughout Coseriu's entire scientific activity, and in none of those aspects that go beyond Structuralism is the structural view denied; rather it is presupposed as one of the most important achievements of 20th-century linguistics (with predecessors, see section 6.2), albeit not exploited fully in all the fields of its possible application. It is also the case, though, that Coseriu always sought to show the limits of structural linguistics. Thus, at the beginning of his 1969 *Introduction to structural linguistics* he states:

‘Structuralism must be overcome, and this overcoming must be dialectical, namely by an elevation into a more comprehensive, higher synthesis.’ ([58a] (1969), 11)¹

Until now, we have seen examples of fields in which the structuralist view is the starting point, but the main issue is then to go beyond its limitations: the notion of system is presupposed in order to introduce the concept of norm; and the notion of correctness is important in its distinction from exemplarity, a non-structural term. In the same vein, linguistic change is not a basically structural issue, even if changes may also constitute changes in structure and a structural perspective of change is possible; rather, change is seen as something that emerges as an effect of the activity of speaking, the *energeia*, and by no means can change be explained at purely structural levels. And finally, variation is described because it is a reality, but its recognition also allows for its exclusion in structural analysis. So the “elevation into a higher synthesis” has two main effects: it shows those fields that go beyond structural analysis and at the same time it rescues Structuralism as a method for the genuinely structured aspects of a language as a system. In this sense we can say that Coseriu's linguistics, against the contemporary view that Structuralism has been buried and forgotten, shows a way to go beyond Structur-

1 “Der Strukturalismus muss überwunden werden und diese Überwindung muss dialektisch sein, nämlich eine Aufhebung in eine umfassendere, höhere Synthese”.

alism by retaining some of its principles and limiting them to the restricted area of systemic aspects of language.

Coseriu's attitude towards Structuralism opens three different but deeply connected dimensions. The first of these is the dimension of tradition that goes back to the roots of Structuralism. He shows that long before the "birth" of Structuralism at the 1st International Conference of Linguists in The Hague in 1928, when Jakobson, Trubetzkoy and Karcevskij presented their "thesis 22", and indeed long before Saussure himself, the "father" of modern Structuralism, structural approaches existed, mainly in the work of Georg von der Gabelentz in the 19th century, as well as in the work of Humboldt, Steinthal, Madvig, Finck and Marty. And he shows that some concepts, such as the arbitrariness of the sign, are far from being an invention by Ferdinand de Saussure and indeed can be traced back to antiquity (see [39] (1967), and chapter 7). Second, he shows that a dogmatic reduction of language to systems and structures is a poor and unsatisfactory limitation. The critical-historical analysis of prior work here leads to a critical view of the present, which in turn opens up new perspectives for the future. Coseriu is clearly conscious of the fact that there has been too much critical thought and too much diversity of ideas in the history of linguistics to allow oneself to fall into the trap of a blind limitation to some of these aspects, as fascinating as they might be. He is both a historian of the theory of language and a theorist himself, and these two aspects are closely connected. So, linguistics should not necessarily be limited to structural views, but must go beyond. Third, if we accept that structures exist, then an adequate treatment of these on all levels at which they can be identified must be found.

From the beginning of his activity in Uruguay in the early 1950s, Coseriu defends this critical view on Structuralism, a critical view from the inside, a "sympathetic" view in the sense that he assumes the double role of presenting the innovative structuralist perspective and simultaneously adding what he considers to be necessary criticism of it. This is indeed one of the great strengths of his scholarship: when he arrives in Germany in the early 1960s, Structuralism is, surprisingly, still not well known. There were scholars like Hansjakob Seiler in general linguistics and Hans Helmut Christmann in Romance linguistics who had informed about structuralist principles, but due to the interruption by the Nazi period, with the exodus of intellectuals and an absence of an international influence, Structuralism and Generative grammar in Germany were not subsequent developments, but rather simultaneous achievements in linguistics. In Coseriu's own words, his structuralist scholarship in the 1960s was not due to the fact that he considered himself mainly as a structuralist, but rather because he thought there was still a lot to do in that field:

'AM: But what was for you the situation in the Federal Republic [of Germany]? You spoke of advantages and disadvantages. The disadvantage would be that your main field, Structuralism, was largely unknown here, i.e. that a lot of catching up had to be done.

C: That's how it was, even though it's not true that Structuralism was "my main area". I was concerned with providing information on all of recent linguistics. And if the lack of information was a disadvantage, the advantage was that one could and was allowed to do a lot in this area.' (DSs, 111)²

Coseriu put his Tübingen school on the international map of linguistics not just with another branch of the application of structuralist methods, but by accompanying this with a critical perspective on Structuralism as a whole. However, he left no doubt that 'Structuralism is qualitatively as well as quantitatively the major event within general linguistics in this century and, at the same time, its major contribution' ([58a] (1969), 10).³ For him, this also included a coherent treatment of Generative grammar which, in his view, could only be adequately understood from the point of view of Structuralism (see chapter 10).

The main topics of Coseriu's Structuralism can be summed up as follows:

- Structuralism should not be seen as an ideology but rather as an approach towards the real, objectively existing structure of human languages on all levels of structuration. This means that – against contemporary criticism – structuration is seen as a property of natural language and not as an artificial invention by linguists,
- language is much more than structure alone, and the structure is not openly accessible but needs to be accessed by means of a method that presupposes a series of distinctions in order to identify the structured parts of languages,
- linguistics should be aware of the partiality of the structural method, but also of those fields that Structuralism had not yet sufficiently exploited, mainly semantics and syntax.

² "AM: Aber wie war dann die Lage in der Bundesrepublik für Sie? Sie sprachen von Vorteilen und auch Nachteilen. Der Nachteil wäre, daß Ihr Hauptgebiet, der Strukturalismus, weitgehend unbekannt war hier, d.h. daß man viel nachholen mußte.

C: So war es, auch wenn es nicht stimmt, daß der Strukturalismus "mein Hauptgebiet" wäre. Mir ging es um die Information der ganzen neueren Sprachwissenschaft. Und wenn die mangelnde Informiertheit ein Nachteil war, so bestand der Vorteil darin, daß man auf diesem Gebiet viel machen konnte und durfte."

³ "sowohl quantitativ als auch qualitativ das größte Ereignis innerhalb der allgemeinen Sprachwissenschaft in diesem Jahrhundert und zugleich deren wichtigster Beitrag".

6.2 The general principles of Structuralism

In several of his works, Coseriu explains what in his view are the most important principles of “analytic Structuralism”: Structuralism departs from real existing linguistic facts, analyses them and identifies, through systematic procedures, the minimal functional units of a language and the paradigms they form. He notes that these principles are implicitly present in structuralist praxis but that they are generally not formulated explicitly. In his work, he refers to these principles from 1961 onwards:

- the principle of functionality, which encompasses the principle of ‘unitary meaning’ and the consequent method of commutation,
- the principle of opposition and the methodological correlate of the distinctive features,
- the principle of systematicity (or of systematic structuration),
- the principle of neutralisation, which is restricted to European branches of Structuralism.

The principle of functionality refers to the unity of form and function: there is no distinction on the side of the content without a formal distinction and vice-versa. Coseriu considers the formal side of language – against Saussure’s claim that both sides of the sign are mental units – as its material side, and materiality is an important universal characteristic of language. He also claims that the principles of structural analysis are valid for all levels of a language system. The principle of functionality includes the principle of the unity of units; there can be variants on both sides of the sign, but they must clearly be distinguished from the functional systemic unit. Here the difference between system and norm again becomes relevant, as well as the difference between the functionally unitary meaning of a form and its different “contextual meanings”. The identification of the unitary meaning is one of the tasks of structural analysis. This is far more difficult than to postulate polysemic values and to suppose that long lists of different meanings of a form exist; rather, the identification of the systematic value of a form allows us not only to explain the existence of the variants but even the creation of new meanings ([182] (1981), 201).

The term “functional” in the structuralist sense as described by Coseriu should not be confused with “functional” in the sense of “functional linguistics” or “functional grammar” in the vein of a Greenbergian functionalism or in newer uses that establish an opposition between functional and formal and identify the former with cognitive or usage-based linguistics and the latter with generative linguistics. “Functional” in Coseriu’s understanding of the term appears frequently in his approach when he analyses the function of certain linguistics forms.

The second principle is the principle of opposition: the function of a form is defined in its oppositional value to other forms. The opposition must be identified in those contexts where it is relevant; this is why this principle is closely related to another one, that of neutralisation. The functional value of a form cannot be identified in contexts where it is neutralised. For example, it is not possible to determine whether /d/ and /t/ are phonemes in German when looking at the word-final position, in that here there is no distinction. The same argument is valid for grammatical forms. In generic contexts like *elephants are mammals* / *the elephant is a mammal* / *an elephant is a mammal*, the value of the determiner cannot be identified: we must look for contexts where there is a clear opposition. In grammar, it is sometimes difficult to find cases with clear oppositional values that allow for the clear and unequivocal identification of functions.

The principle of systematicity or systematic structuration refers to the fact that linguistic units are not isolated but systematically organised: there are hierarchies and fields in the lexicon and in grammar, and the explanation of a part of the system implies the explanation of the rest of it by virtue of systematicity; e.g. a vowel system that distinguishes /a/, /e/ and /i/ will probably also distinguish /o/ and /u/; and probably a vowel system with two degrees of vowel opening /e/ and /ɛ/ is also likely to distinguish /o/ and /ɔ/. We will see in the case of the Romance verbal system (section 6.8) how this also applies in grammar, when the description of part of the system (the “actual level”) already implies how another one, the non-actual level, will be organised.

6.3 Structural analysis: previous distinctions

Structural analysis always has two sides for Coseriu. On the one hand, several prior distinctions are necessary in order to identify the object of structural analysis, the functional language, yet at the same time in the procedure of progressive exclusion everything that is excluded must be recovered in non-structural disciplines. This is how “integral linguistics” can be defined: it identifies the way towards structural analysis and shows how structural analysis must be done on all levels of a language system, and it also shows all the other fields that are relevant for linguistics:

‘In Integral Linguistics, on the one hand, what was not developed by Saussure himself for the level of the functional language had to be developed, but with the awareness that one is acting on this level and excluding other aspects. So the questions were: is there a coherent functional grammar, a functional syntax? Not really. There were only partial drafts. Is there a structural semantics? There was no such thing at all; there were only beginnings in that di-

rection. There was phonology, certainly, but the task was to investigate how the phonological method worked with respect to the other levels of language.

On the other hand, it was about what had been explicitly or tacitly excluded. First of all, the other two levels of language, the level of the text and the level of speaking in general, which are excluded when one concentrates on the level of the particular language. It is now the task of integral linguistics to recover all this for linguistic research. Therefore, it was necessary to develop an integral linguistics of speech, already outside Saussurism (the other evolutions, Functional Syntax and Functional Semantics, were still further developments within a Saussurian framework). First of all, a linguistics of speech in general and of language use had to be developed, which is justified in *Determinación y entorno*; and at the same time text linguistics had to be created, something not foreseen by Saussure, because he does not even recognise this level as a level of “langage”; he only speaks of language (*langue*) and realisation. Moreover, we need a linguistics that tells us what the contribution of the knowledge of things to the structuring and interpretation of speech is; a linguistics of meta-language; a linguistics of “repeated speech”, a linguistics of variation. There only existed, without precise delimitation, dialectology. So now dialectology, sociolinguistics and stylistics of language had to be understood as linguistics of variety.

So, on the one hand, I was concerned with completing Saussure’s linguistics in its own, strictly delimited framework and, on the other hand, with recovering everything that had been excluded by Saussure.’ (*DSs*, 158)⁴

4 “In der Integralen Linguistik mußte dann einerseits das entwickelt werden, was bei Saussure selbst für die Ebene der funktionellen Sprache nicht entwickelt wurde, aber mit dem Bewußtsein, daß man sich auf dieser Ebene bewegt und andere Aspekte ausklammert. Also die Frage: gibt es eine kohärente funktionelle Grammatik, eine funktionelle Syntax? Eigentlich nicht. Es waren nur partielle Entwürfe da. Gibt es eine strukturelle Semantik? Die gab es überhaupt nicht; es gab nur Ansätze in dieser Richtung. Es gab die Phonologie, sicherlich, aber man mußte untersuchen, wie es mit der phonologischen Methode steht in bezug auf die anderen Ebenen der Sprachen.

Andererseits ging es um das, was man ausdrücklich oder stillschweigend ausgeklammert hatte. Zunächst einmal um die beiden anderen Ebenen der Sprache, die Ebene des Textes und die Ebene des Sprechens im allgemeinen, die man ausklammert, wenn man sich auf die Ebene der Einzelsprachen konzentriert. Es ist nun Aufgabe der Integralen Linguistik, das alles wieder für die Wissenschaft zu gewinnen. Es ging also darum, eine integrale Linguistik des Sprechens zu entwickeln, schon außerhalb des Saussurismus (das andere, die Funktionelle Syntax und die Funktionelle Semantik, war noch Weiterentwicklung im Rahmen des Saussurismus). Und zwar ging es zuerst um eine Linguistik des Sprechens im allgemeinen und der Sprachverwendung, was in *Determinación y entorno* begründet wird; und zugleich um eine Linguistik des Textes, die bei Saussure nicht vorgesehen ist, weil er diese Ebene nicht einmal als Ebene des ‘langage’ erkennt; er spricht nur von Sprache (*langue*) und Realisierung. Außerdem brauchen wir eine Linguistik, die uns sagt, welches der Beitrag der Kenntnis der Sachen zur Strukturierung und zur Interpretation des Sprechens ist; eine Linguistik der Metasprache; eine Linguistik der ‘wiederholten Rede’, eine Linguistik der Variation. Es gab nur, ohne genaue Abgrenzung, die Dialektologie. Jetzt mußten also die Dialektologie, die Soziolinguistik und die Stilistik der Sprache als Linguistik der Varietät verstanden werden.

The term “Integral Linguistics” is adopted by Coseriu himself for this overall view on language from all possible perspectives. He used it from the 1980s onwards in publications (e.g., [212] (1984), see also Borcilă 2021). It became very successful, mainly in Romania, where Coseriu’s linguistics is frequently subsumed under this general term and where whole research groups continue to follow an “integralistic” approach today.

In several works, the path towards structural analysis is described as a direction that presupposes the application of “seven preliminary distinctions”. These are represented in the following scheme ([90] (1974), 148):

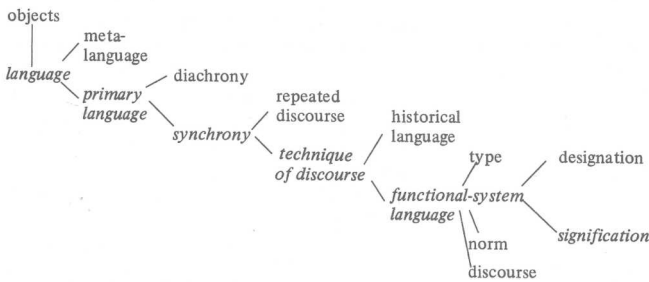


Fig. 6.1: The seven preliminary distinctions for structural analysis.

The first distinction is that between the extralinguistic reality (objects) and language. Structural analysis presupposes that the particular language is structured individually, and that this is arbitrary, i.e. language is not a nomenclature and there must be a clear differentiation between linguistic meaning and extralinguistic reference. Moreover, there is an extralinguistic knowledge about objects that may be relevant for language use, but this should not be confounded with linguistic meaning (see below, 6.5).

The second exclusion is that of metalanguage. Coseriu does not agree with Jakobson in identifying a “metalinguistic function” (nor with a “poetic function” as defined by Jakobson). For Coseriu, metalanguage is simply language, with the only particularity that language is seen as an object of discourse.

Each element on the level of expression (*signifiant*) of the primary language can be used metalinguistically and is substantivized for this purpose. Metalinguistic usage constitutes an in-

Es ging mir also einerseits um das Vervollständigen der Saussureschen Linguistik in ihrem eigenen, streng abgegrenzten Rahmen und andererseits um die Wiedergewinnung von all dem, was bei Saussure ausgeklammert worden war”.

finite possibility of discourse (*parole*). It does not include any semantic structuring, for we are here concerned with an unlimited nomenclature in which every element stands in contrast to every other element. The metalinguistic sphere is therefore to be eliminated from the viewpoint of structural semantics. ([90] (1974), 143)

There is, however, a whole field of “linguistics of metalanguage”, with interesting phenomena in different languages and cultures. Coseriu wrote about metalanguage in several of his works, and several of his followers also contributed to the field (cf. Ulrich 1997, Kabatek 1996, Loureda 2009). Yet all this is outside the realms of structural analysis.

The third preliminary distinction is between synchrony and diachrony. Structural analysis requires a homogeneous system, but a state of a language (“état de langue”) is not necessarily homogeneous. Coseriu adopts the idea of “diachronic extrastructuralisms” from Leiv Flydal (see previous chapter): in a language there may exist partial archaic traditions that are based on rules that no longer correspond to the current system. These must be excluded from structural analysis because they are not structured.

The next distinction is between “repeated discourse” and the “technique of discourse”. Such a distinction refers to “fixed expressions and locutions, idioms, proverbs” ([90] (1974), 144) and the like that are not part of the current structure of a language (even if they can to a certain degree been analysed as “phrasemes” that are commutable).

The fifth distinction is between “architecture” and structure, and involves the distinction between “dia”-units described in the previous chapter and the syntopic, synstractic and symphasic, structurally analysable homogeneous projection of language.

The sixth distinction is between type, system, norm and discourse: the domain of structural analysis is only the system, and all the other levels must be excluded; in particular the level of discourse and emergent meaning in discourse: structural analysis is only concerned with the abstract meaning in the system, not with the variants of discourse.

Finally, the seventh distinction is between signification and designation. The designation of, or reference to, objects has to do with the extralinguistic reality, but the structure of a language must be analysed within the language system as a structure between signifiés (signifiés):

Signification is determined by means of purely linguistic relations on the content-level, by the relationships of *signifiés* to one another (similar to Saussure’s *valeur*); designation, on the other hand, is the relation of whole linguistic signs to ‘objects’ of extralinguistic reality. ([90] (1974), 146–147)

This is represented schematically as follows (only the highlighted section is relevant for structural analysis):

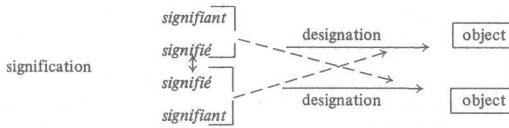


Fig. 6.2: Signification and designation ([90] (1974), 147; highlighting J.K.).

Extralinguistic reality is accessed via the signs of a particular language: the signs shape the view on the objects in a particular way and are prior to their recognition in the objects (cf. Albrecht 2017). However, language can also be used in order to name objectively identified objects: then it is no longer used as primary language but as a means for expressing scientific knowledge by *terms* within a ‘specialised language’:

‘Science in all its forms, however, does not remain with the delimitations given in language, but necessarily arrives at the things themselves. It starts from the individual linguistic delimitations, but then questions them and, if necessary, makes other or more precise delimitations. Science, for example, determines that a whale is not a fish and therefore draws a different line than language. Such new or different demarcations are named in some way, and a language is created that is no longer a particular language but a specialised language. In this process, the signs of the particular language that are already available are used to a large extent, but the specialised language of science is an objective language that corresponds to the things themselves in its delimitations. In this respect, thinking is indeed linguistic, but it is precisely not thinking in a particular but in a universal language. It converts the particular language into a universal language, that is, a language that wants to correspond to the delimitations made in the things themselves.’ ([283d] (1993), 17)⁵

5 “Die Wissenschaft in all ihren Formen bleibt aber gerade nicht bei den in der Sprache gegebenen Abgrenzungen, sondern sie gelangt notwendigerweise zu den Sachen selbst. Sie geht zwar von den einzelsprachlichen Abgrenzungen aus, stellt diese dann aber in Frage und macht gegebenenfalls andere bzw. genauere Abgrenzungen. Die Wissenschaft stellt z.B. fest, daß ein Walfisch kein Fisch ist, und zieht deshalb eine andere Grenze als die Sprache. Solche neuen oder anderen Abgrenzungen werden auf irgendeine Weise benannt, und es wird eine Sprache geschaffen, die nicht mehr Einzelsprache sondern Fachsprache ist. Dabei werden zwar weitgehend die schon zur Verfügung stehenden Zeichen der Einzelsprache verwendet, die Fachsprache der Wissenschaft ist jedoch eine objektive Sprache, die in ihren Abgrenzungen den Sachen selbst entspricht. Das Denken ist in dieser Hinsicht zwar sprachlich, aber es ist gerade nicht einzel-, sondern universalsprachlich. Es macht auch die Einzelsprache zu einer Universalsprache, zu einer Sprache also, die den in den Sachen selbst vorgenommenen Abgrenzungen entsprechen will”.

It is important, in this context, to note that the English term “meaning” not only refers to the signified but also to the other dimensions of meaning that are always clearly distinguished in Coseriu’s theory, as Dietrich puts it:

The general English term ‘meaning’ is much too vague and not suitable to be used in linguistic analysis. Therefore, Coseriu’s distinction between three kinds of ‘meaning’ is of key importance to the study of grammar, syntax and the lexicon: the signified (G. *Bedeutung*, Fr. *signifié*) (and the corresponding verb ‘signify’, G. *bedeuten*, Fr. *signifier*) is the lexical or grammatical contents given in a particular language. Designation (G. *Bezeichnung*) (corresponding verb: ‘designate’) is the semantic relation between a linguistic sign made up of a form and a signified and its reference to an extralinguistic object or concept in a specific text. Finally, ‘sense’ or ‘text meaning’ (G. *Sinn*) refers to the meaning of a whole text or piece of utterance (compare, e.g., “what is the sense of your question?”) (Coseriu 1985, 2007 [1988]) (Dietrich 2021, 279)

After having applied the seven distinctions, the object of structural analysis is a rather reduced aspect of language and not language as a whole. And all the excluded disciplines are equally important for linguistics. On the structural side, after the distinctions have been applied, the analysis may begin. The field to which Coseriu made the greatest contribution is *lexematics*, as he himself calls his theory of structural semantics. However, before introducing some of the main principles of lexematics, it seems useful to briefly outline Coseriu’s relationship with a notable predecessor in this field: Louis Hjelmslev. As Coseriu himself states:

There can be no doubt that it was L. Hjelmslev who after all laid the foundation for the possibility of a structural semantics with his idea that the content-level of language can be analyzed in a way analogous to the level of expression. (Coseriu/Geckeler [90] (1974), 127)

6.4 Coseriu and Hjelmslev

The most fruitful initial application of Saussure’s distinction between *langue* and *parole* with a focus on systemic analyses was in the field of phonology, as postulated in the foundational thesis presented at The Hague in 1928 and later outlined in Trubetzkoy’s *Grundzüge*. Over the following years, several linguists made proposals to enlarge the structural view and to include other levels of language structure. Perhaps the most radical attempt to extend and develop Saussure’s thought can be seen in the Cercle Linguistique de Copenhague founded in 1931 around Viggo Brøndal and Louis Hjelmslev and then further developed in Hjelmslev’s *Glossematics*. Hjelmslev’s seminal *Omkring Sprogteoriens Grundlaeggelse* from 1943 proposes an adoption on the level of the lexicon of the commutation test common in phonology, and Hjelmslev also considers an enlargement of the structural method to syntax, although observing possible problems here. The influence of Hjelms-

slev on Coseriu was enormous, as he himself states in a letter to the Danish phonetician Eli Fischer-Jørgensen from March 1962:

‘Almost everything I’ve done so far is related (positively or negatively) to glossematics or has been also said, in one way or another (or denied), by Mr. Hjelmslev (to whom I currently feel closer than ever).’ (*apud* Jensen 2021, 97, author’s translation)⁶

What are the sources for the reconstruction of the Coseriu-Hjelmslev relationship? Unfortunately, Coseriu never wrote about Hjelmslev a text like his “My Pagliaro” ([287] 1994) or his “My Saussure” ([295] 1995) or like other personal recognitions of other linguists, even if he had the intention to do so. However, several clues do exist. Among these:

- several exhaustive mentions of Hjelmslev and discussions of the principles of Glossematics in Coseriu’s work,
- letters from Coseriu to Hjelmslev in the Hjelmslev Archive and correspondence sent from Hjelmslev to Coseriu in the Coseriu Archive,
- letters from others that discuss the relationship of Coseriu’s thought to Glossematics (among others, Eli Fischer-Jørgensen, Göran Hammarström and Leiv Flydal),
- manuscripts in the Coseriu Archive that comment on aspects of Glossematics,
- several studies on the relationship, among others, recent contributions by Jensen (2021, with further references) and Cigana (2021).

However, the complex relationship between two of the most important representatives of European Structuralism still largely remains to be explored.

Perhaps the first open aspect to be addressed here is the exact chronology of Coseriu’s “discovery”, and then his in-depth knowledge of Hjelmslev’s work. His first exhaustive reference is probably an indirect one, to be found on the opening pages of *Sistema, norma y habla* (see chapter 2), in which Coseriu’s discussion of the limitation of Saussure’s *langue/parole* distinction and its replacement by a tripartite distinction begins with reference to another conception involving three terms: at a conference in Nice in 1951, Hjelmslev had presented, together with John Lotz, the tripartite distinction *schema, established norm, parole*, and Coseriu refers to a report on the conference by the Italian linguist Giacomo Devoto in the *Archivio Glottologico Italiano* in the same year (Devoto 1951). Coseriu’s tripartition is different from that presented by Hjelmslev/Lotz, but it was probably their at-

⁶ “Presque tout ce que j’ai fait jusqu’à présent est en rapport (positif ou négatif) avec la glossématique ou bien a été dit aussi, d’une façon ou d’une autre (ou nié), par M. Hjelmslev, (auquel à présent je me sens plus proche que jamais)”.

tempt to add a third category to the langue/parole distinction that led to him proposing his own, alternative view, accompanied by an initial criticism of the all too abstract conception of Glossematics. As Jensen (2021, 108) points out, there are coincidences and differences between the two sets of terminologies, and these can be represented as follows:

Hjelmslev:	Schema	Norm	Usage	
Coseriu:		System	Norm	Speech

Fig. 6.3: The relationship between Coseriu's and Hjelmslev/Lotz's terms according to Jensen (2021, 108).

Jensen also refers to Hjelmslev's previous tripartition as presented in a 1942 paper; and wonders why Coseriu did not mention it: probably his knowledge of Hjelmslev's work was still rather limited at the beginning of the 1950s. This is suggested in a letter Coseriu received in 1955 from Eli Fischer-Jørgensen in which she says:

'As I agree completely on almost all points, your book does not give me the opportunity to make critical remarks. There are only a few minor points which invite me to comment.

In the article "Langue et Parole" Cahiers Ferdinand de Saussure III, 1942 (which seems to have escaped you despite your extensive reading), Mr. Hjelmslev made a distinction which is very similar to the one you make in 3.1: acte (hablar), usage/usus (realización normal, norma), norme (sistema funcional) schéma (schema) – there is, however, a somewhat awkward difference in terminology, as is clear from my comparisons above. This is actually quite an important article.' (Letter to Coseriu from Eli Fischer-Jørgensen, 4.9.1955)

Comme je suis complètement d'accord sur presque tous les points, votre livre ne me donne pas l'occasion à des remarques critiques. Il y a seulement quelques points sans grande importance qui m'invitent à des commentaires.

Dans l'article "Langue et Parole" Cahiers F. de Saussure III, 1942 (qui semble vous être échappé malgré votre lecture étendue) M. Hjelmslev a fait une distinction qui ressemble beaucoup à celle que vous faites sous 3.1 : acte (parler hablar), usage (realización normal, norma), norme (sistema funcional) schéma (schema) -- il y a pourtant une différence de terminologie un peu gênante, comme il ressort de mes rapprochements ci-dessus. C'est d'ailleurs un article assez important.

Fig. 6.4: Letter from Eli Fischer-Jørgensen dated 4.9.1955 [DILeCos ID 707706], © Coseriu Archive Tübingen.

The phonetician Eli Fischer-Jørgensen is a bridge to Hjelmslev; she was one of the most active members of the Copenhagen circle and she maintained close contact with Hjelmslev. In *DSs*, Coseriu mentions his friendship with her, and the letters, such as the one in Fig. 6.4, show a very friendly and positive relationship in the

correspondence from the mid 1950s. Coseriu also quotes her 1949 paper on phonemic analysis several times in *Forma y Sustancia* (1954), with a more positive attitude to her work and to that of Brøndal than to Hjelmslev's extreme formalism.

However, it can also be said that from his first texts from Montevideo onwards, Coseriu's work not only consists of a dialogue with Saussure, but also with Hjelmslev, and in both cases (in the case of Saussure for obvious reasons) the dialogue is rather unilateral or indirect, even if there were also several direct points of encounter between Hjelmslev and Coseriu. The first documented direct contact dates from 1951. There is a letter in the Hjelmslev Archive in Copenhagen dating from October 1951 in which Coseriu writes

that it would be an honor for him to establish and maintain contact with Hjelmslev and have the possibility of receiving suggestions and advice from a professor with such a wide experience. Coseriu also proposes exchanging books and journals. (*apud* Jensen 2021, 98)

In the Coseriu Archive, there are several postcards from Hjelmslev from 1953 onwards where he thanks for Coseriu for sending him his work, but there is no real interchange of opinions.

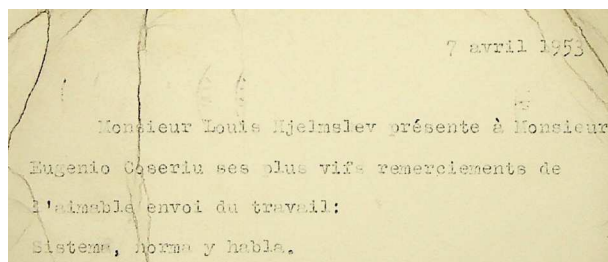


Fig. 6.5: Postcard from Hjelmslev to Coseriu (7.4.1953) announcing the reception of *Sistema, norma y habla* [DiLeCos ID 883941], © Coseriu Archive Tübingen.

From the very outset, Coseriu is sceptical about the orthodox Saussurianism in the approach of Glossematics, and he discusses his view on the materiality of the formal side of language (against the purely mentalistic view) as early as *Sistema, norma y habla* and in particular (and exhaustively) in *Forma y sustancia en los sonidos del lenguaje*, where he also clearly rejects Hjelmslev's well-known claim that linguistics should be 'an algebra of language' (Hjelmslev 1943, 79).

Over the following years, Coseriu continued to send his work to Hjelmslev, and the responses from the latter are postcards expressing gratitude, such as the one in fig. 6.5. But even if there is no personal contact and interchange of ideas, Coseriu continued to discuss the contributions of Glossematics to linguistics. In the manu-

script on the proper name from 1955 (see chapter 3), for example, he makes exhaustive reference to Hjelmslev and Brøndal and indeed introduces numerous examples from Scandinavian languages.

The first personal encounter of the two linguists would take place at the 1957 Conference of Linguists in Oslo. Here, Hjelmslev presented his thoughts on the possibility of structural semantics, and Coseriu discussed critically the possibility of applying the commutation test to words. However, in later contributions, Coseriu himself applied the commutation method to semantics (not to words but to distinctive features). He was certainly influenced in many ways by Hjelmslev, who was more than twenty years his senior. The idea of a language system as a system of possibilities can be found in Hjelmslev's writings before Coseriu developed it, and the whole proposal of enlarging the structural view beyond phonology, including structural semantics, made Hjelmslev's work is an important reference point for Coseriu.

It seems, however, that, apart from that episode at the 1957 conference, there was no real direct confrontation of ideas. Coseriu discussed Hjelmslev's thought with people close to Hjelmslev and who worked in the field of Glossematics, but as far as we can judge from what is preserved in the Coseriu Archive, not directly with him.

Cher ami,

Je viens de lire "Pour une sémantique diachronique structurale Et permettez-moi de vous le dire sans ambages: je trouve que c'est un article très important à plusieurs égards. En face d'une Amérique du Nord myope et trop souvent incapable de se figurer l'existence d'entités qui ne sont directement perceptibles ni par les sens ni par ~~ix~~ l'intermédiaire de la machine, vous vous élevez, grâce à un appareil théorique d'une grande efficacité, à une sphère dans laquelle l'esprit "se meut avec agilité" justement parce que cette élévation lui permet d'embrasser dans des perspectives à la fois larges et profondes toutes les bases concrètes et matérielles d'où vous êtes parti dans vos raisonnements. Je vous

Fig. 6.6: Letter concerning diachronic structural semantics from Leiv Flydal to Coseriu 26.11.1964 [DileCos ID 438331], © Coseriu Archive Tübingen.

There are several notes about Hjelmslev and Glossematics among the unpublished manuscripts in the Coseriu Archive. His rejection of Glossematics is harsh, as in the following undated note, which is probably from the early 1950s:

‘Glossematics represents the extreme form of mathematical naivety in the human sciences (which believes itself to be ingenious).’⁷

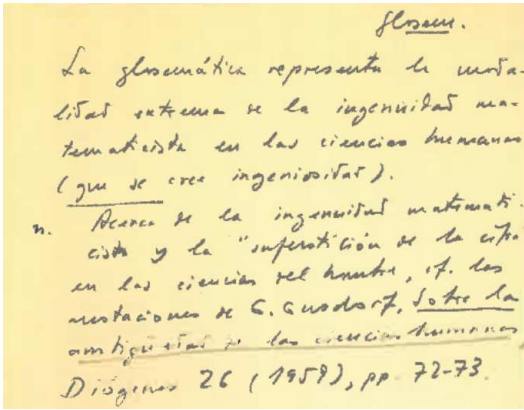


Fig. 6.7: Note on Glossematics, *ArCos*, Tübingen, © Coseriu Archive Tübingen.

At the same time, and in the same collection of notes, Coseriu speaks with great respect about Hjelmslev as a linguist:

‘A distinction must be made between the contribution of “glossematics” and Hjelmslev’s contribution as a linguist. Hjelmslev has an excellent knowledge of the history of linguistics and he is a very fine analyst as well as an exceptional grammarian. His theory of the verb, his theory of implicit morphemes, etc. touch on really fundamental points. In fact, the problems that he touches on are the most fundamental ones in linguistics – and are those of Humboldt: Form, Stoff, internal form (=scheme) – external form, universality of linguistic structures, even if his solutions are not acceptable due to mathematicism and antihistoricism [...]’⁸

When Hjelmslev died, Coseriu said in 1965 that the most important linguistic thinker since Humboldt had passed away (Trabant, p.c.).

⁷ “La glosemática representa la modalidad extrema de la ingenuidad matemática en las ciencias humanas (que se cree ingeniosidad)”.

⁸ “Hay que distinguir entre la contrib.[ución] de la “glosemática” y la contrib.[ución] de Hjelmslev en cuanto lingüista. Hjelmslev es un gran conocedor de la historia de la lingüística y un finísimo analista así como un gramático de excepción. Su teoría del verbo, su teoría de los morfemas implícitos etc. tocan puntos realmente fundamentales. También los problemas que toca son los mayores de la lingüística – y son los de Humboldt: Form, Stoff, [forma] interior (=esquema) – forma exterior, universalidad de las estructuras lingüísticas aunque sus soluciones no sean aceptables debido a un matemático y un antihistoricismo [...]”.

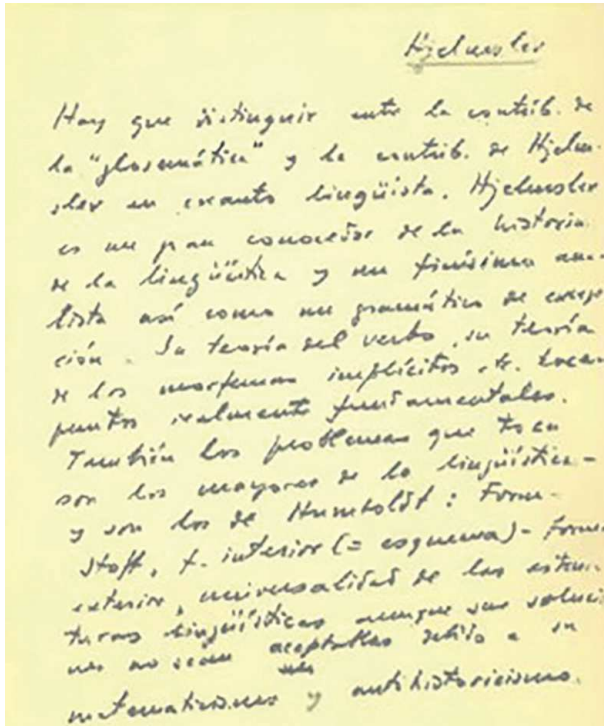


Fig. 6.8: Note on Hjelmslev, ArCos, Tübingen, © Coseriu Archive Tübingen.

These are just some brief impressions about the Coseriu-Hjelmslev connection. A more comprehensive reconstruction remains to be undertaken, as Jensen notes:

[...] much work remains to be done with regard to the material harboured in the Coseriu Archive if we wish to reconstruct in detail the inspiration Coseriu found in Hjelmslev. (Jensen 2021, 110)

6.5 Structural semantics

Coseriu leaves us in no doubt that he considers his contribution to structural semantics – for him the “real” linguistic semantics and part of “a genuine linguistic theory of languages”, ([350] (2000), 41) – the most advanced version of lexical semantics:

E. Coseriu has proposed the most comprehensive conception of a semantics of lexematic structures to date. ([90] (1974), 139)⁹

This can be justified by the fact that his conception goes far beyond the description of those lexical fields that can be found in the work of other authors. He offers an overall descriptive system that includes not only what he calls “primary paradigmatic structures”, i. e. lexical fields and lexical classes, but also an account of “secondary structures”, i. e. of a theory of word formation that, contrary to most methods that deal with word formation, is not based on form but on content. The overall conception can be summarised as follows (Fig. 6.9):

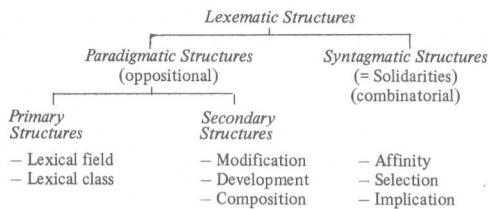


Fig. 6.9: Lexematic structures: overview ([90] (1974), 148).

It is developed in publications from the early 1960s onwards and also includes an account of the diachronic view on lexematic structures ([32] (1964)).

The first distinction within lexematic analysis is between paradigmatic and syntagmatic structures, the former being the central object of structural semantics. Since syntagmatic analysis presupposes categories of paradigmatic analysis, we will first discuss the “lexical field” and the “lexical class”, before returning to a horizontal perspective.

The notion of lexical field goes back to the work of Jost Trier (1931) and his application of Saussure’s principles to vocabulary, with a continuation of work by Leo Weisgerber. For Trier, the lexicon of a language is an organised whole that can be described through organised sections or “fields”. For Coseriu, the paradigmatic structures build up “systems of opposition” (s. Fig. 6.10).

The lexemes (simple, not compound words of a language) function within lexical fields. The lexical field is defined as follows:

⁹ Coseriu frequently mentions his own work – sometimes with a certain irony – in the third person. In this case, it is probably also due to the fact that his disciple and co-author Horst Geckeler had written the text.

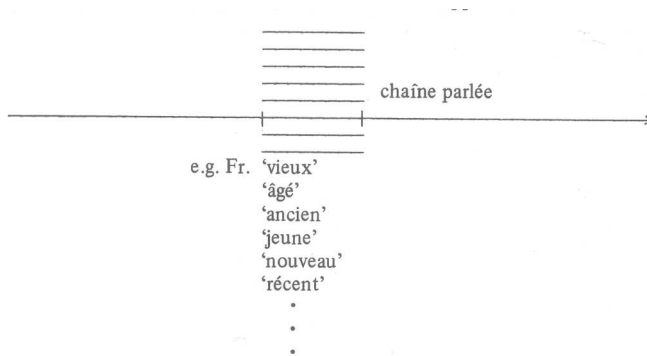


Fig. 6.10: Paradigmatic lexical structures: The lexical field (ibid.).

'In structural terms, a lexical field is a lexical paradigm that is created by dividing a lexical content continuum through various units given in the language as words which by simple content-distinguishing features stand in direct opposition to each other.' (Coseriu [40] (1967), 294)¹⁰

Lexemes are opposed to each other not in their totality but by means of distinctive features, the so-called *semes*. The whole content of a lexical field may be identified by an *archilexeme* (which can be an existing unit of the language under scrutiny or an artificially created metalinguistic construction like "verbs of movement").

Lexical fields must be distinguished from "lexical classes". A lexical class is the totality of lexemes that share one seme, independently of the lexical field they belong to. These semes can be called *classemes* (a term coined by Pottier), "a specific kind of seme which are able to function also outside of lexical fields or throughout a series of lexical fields" ([90] (1974), 152). *Classemes* like "animate", "inanimate", "person", "animal" etc. are part of "a kind of grammar of the vocabulary" (ibid.).

With "syntagmatic structures" or "lexical solidarities", Coseriu refers to semantic affinities between words on the syntagmatic level that are given through *semic* relationships between them. The idea is basically adopted from Walter Porzig (1934) and further developed in Coseriu [40] (1967). Porzig observes that beyond paradigmatic "fields", in the sense of Trier (1932), there are also relationships between words, e.g. between Germ. "Hund" 'dog' and "bellen" 'bark'. Coseriu develops this idea further, distinguishing solidarities through classes, through *archilex-*

¹⁰ "Ein *Wortfeld* ist in struktureller Hinsicht ein lexikalisches Paradigma, das durch die Aufteilung eines lexikalischen Inhaltskontinuums unter verschiedene in der Sprache als Wörter gegebene Einheiten entsteht, die durch einfache inhaltsunterscheidende Züge in unmittelbarer Opposition zueinander stehen".

emes, or through lexemes that function as semes of a lexeme. This means that the relationship of solidarity is directional: the German verb “*fallen*” ‘to fall, to cut down’ implies the lexeme “*Baum*” ‘tree’ but not vice-versa. The three subtypes of lexical solidarities are called “affinity” (“the class of the determining lexemes functions as a distinctive feature in the determined lexemes, that is, e.g., the relationship between the class ‘woman’ and Lat. *nubor*” ([90] (1974), 155), “selection” (“the archi-lexeme of the determining lexemes function as distinctive feature in the determined lexemes; thus in the case of German *Schiff, Zug, Auto* etc. with respect to *fahren*”) (ibid.), and “implication” (“an entire determining lexeme functions as a distinctive feature in the determined lexeme; thus e.g. [...] Dutch *fietsen* ‘to ride a bicycle’”, ibid.).

“Secondary structures” refer to word-formation processes that are treated from the point of view of the content. Coseriu criticises the fact that generally, word-formation is considered from the perspective of the form (with terms like “prefixation” or “suffixation”) but that this is not done rigidly, and form and content are frequently mixed (as in the case of terms like “diminutives”). As Dietrich (2021, 288) states, “Coseriu is anxious to avoid morphological classifications, in particular in terms of suffixation on the one hand and composition on the other.” He distinguishes three types of “secondary lexematic structures”. “Modification” is a word-formation process by which the signified of the lexical base is “modified” without changing its lexical class, frequently in some kind of quantification (creating diminutive, augmentative or collective forms). “Development” is a word-formation process by which a syntactic (predicative or attributive) function is added to the content of the basic lexeme: Fr. *beau* → *beauté* (predicative); *friend* → *friendly* (attributive). The third type, “composition” (see also [122] (1977)), should not be confused with morphological composition and should be understood strictly from the point of view of content. Coseriu distinguishes lexical or “specific” composition, with two lexemes being combined (Germ. *kaufen, Mann* → *Kaufmann*), and “generic” composition (see also Staib 1988), where a “generic” or “pronominal” element is added to the base: Fr. *pomme* ‘apple’ → *pommier* ‘apple tree’. Morphologically, this case would in French be an example of suffixation, but from the point of view of the content it is a composition between an element with a meaning like “something” that is combined with another lexeme. The fact that it refers to a tree is not a fact pertaining to the content relationship on the abstract level but rather a fact of the normal usage of the composed word in French (and of our knowledge of things, see next section).

Coseriu’s theory of word formation is part of a “grammar of the lexicon” (Laca 1986) and is radically distinct from most common accounts.

Structural semantics is not only a synchronic discipline for Coseriu. Contrary to his rejection of a “structural dialectology” (see chapter 5), Coseriu proposes ap-

plying the structural method to diachrony. In the case of diachrony, a continuation of the same system can be identified, and changes within this system can be classified in analogy to phonological changes:

‘[...] a change in structure or function is in principle the appearance or disappearance of a distinctive feature and thus the appearance or disappearance of an opposition (in phonology: “phonologization” and “dephonologisation”)’ Coseriu [32] (1964, 173)¹¹

Schematically, this can be represented in the following way:

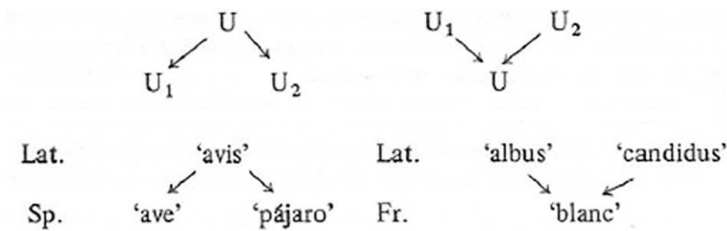


Fig. 6.11: Diachronic semantic changes: addition and loss of an opposition ([90] (1974), 157–158)

His famous 1964 paper *Pour une sémantique diachronique structurale* ([32] (1964)) is a masterpiece that offers numerous examples from Latin and the Romance languages that exemplify these possibilities.

6.6 Semantics beyond Structuralism: *Skeology*

Structural semantics is the field in which Coseriu most clearly contributed to the empirical study of languages based on a coherent theory and methodology, and it is also an area where he attracted numerous followers, who applied his principles mainly to the identification and the analysis of lexical fields in different languages (see, e.g., Geckeler 1971, Salvador 1985, Trapero 1979, Casado 2016, Casas 2023), including classical languages (cf. García Hernández 1990; 2012).

Until the final years of his life, Coseriu defended lexematics as the most appropriate method for the analysis of meaning, and he insisted on the need to analyse

¹¹ “un changement de structure ou fonctionnel es ten principe l’apparition ou la disparition d’un trait distinctif et, par là, l’apparition ou la disparition d’une opposition (en phonologie: ‘phonologisation’ et ‘déphonologisation’)”.

meaning on the historical level of the particular language system, and not on the universal or individual levels.

However, semantics shifted away from Structuralism as well as from traditional Generative semantics, from the 1970s onwards. The cognitive turn led to new approaches such as prototype semantics and various branches of cognitive semantics. Coseriu reacted to cognitive semantics on several occasions, most notably in a paper published in Spanish in 1990 [248] and later translated into English by Klaas Willems and Torsten Leuschner with additions from several of his Tübingen lectures on the subject ([350] (2000)). There were also several occasions of direct debate between Coseriu and representatives of cognitive semantics. In 1996, Andreas Blank and Peter Koch organised a symposium in Berlin where they invited Coseriu and Wulf Oesterreicher as well as Dirk Geeraerts, Ronald Langacker, Elisabeth Traugott and John Taylor, among others. The idea was to create a productive dialogue; however, in the foreword to the collective volume, the editors describe what in fact occurred at the Berlin meeting:

The symposium was organized with the double intention of providing a forum in which synchronically and diachronically oriented scholars would have to exchange their ideas and where American and European cognitive linguists would be confronted with representatives of different directions in European structural semantics. While the confrontation indeed happened as planned, the expected synergetic effects were perhaps not as intensive as we had hoped. (Blank/Koch 1999, V).

The most exhaustive reaction to Coseriu during the symposium was the contribution by John Taylor (1999), where Taylor refers to the English version of Coseriu's 1990 paper and criticises, among other points, the fact that Coseriu's view of cognitive semantics is basically limited to the theory of prototypes. While Taylor constructs a close connection between cognitivism and Saussure's heritage, the main gap between cognitive and structural semantics in Coseriu's sense is the unitary perspective on language, cognition and referential properties in cognitive linguistics, against a modular view in structural semantics: the relationship between signifieds as represented in scheme 6.2 must be regarded in itself and without reference to object properties. This means that structural semantics aims to identify contrastively not what the object properties in fact are (this is also Coseriu's main criticism of Pottier's well-known structural analysis of the field "seat" in French that in his views deals with artefacts and argues with object instead of language properties, cf. Pottier 1963). In Coseriu's modular view, object properties are not excluded but treated in a different context. He considers prototype semantics not as a theory of linguistic semantics but as a "semantics of things":

[...] the observation that prototype semantics turns out to be a “semantics of things” (instead of being a semantic theory of linguistic meanings) does not mean that reference to objects and extralinguistic knowledge should be excluded from either linguistic semantics or linguistic theory in general. ([350] (2000), 41)

In several works, Coseriu proposes the term *skeology* (cf. Greek σκεῦος ‘thing’), the discipline that is concerned with the relationship between speaking and object knowledge:

[...] a “linguistics of objects” is an auxiliary discipline of general text linguistics, for it can only be concerned with interpreting and documenting “things” by means of the extralinguistic knowledge speakers possess and make use of in discourse. (ibid.)

6.7 Structural syntax

As early as the 1940s, Hjelmslev mentioned the possibility of applying the structural method to syntax. Coseriu proposed a structural syntax in several published works and in his teaching in the 1980s ([163] (1980); [210c] (1983); [243] (1989); [251b] 1990), with important ideas stemming from earlier publications (e.g. [50] (1968); [86] (1973)). In [50] (1968), he states:

‘I intend to show that syntactic facts can be structured in exactly the same sense as phonic facts and, in my opinion, lexical facts, namely by establishing paradigms in which the terms involved are opposed to each other by means of functionally differentiating elements (distinctive features). The only formal difference between these paradigms is that the corresponding terms belong to different levels of linguistic organisation. In the case of syntactic facts, the terms in opposition will naturally be “syntagmas” of different levels (e.g., word groups, sentences).’ ([50] (1968), 35)¹²

Coseriu’s first proposal of a structural syntax can be seen as a reaction to the overall presence of Chomsky’s syntax in the 1960s (see chapter 10). The emergence of “transformational syntax” made Coseriu postulate that apart from this “syntagmat-

12 “me propongo mostrar que los hechos sintácticos son estructurables exactamente en el mismo sentido en el que lo son los hechos fónicos y, en mi opinión, también los hechos léxicos, o sea, mediante el establecimiento de paradigmas, en los cuales los términos implicados se oponen unos a otros por medio de elementos funcionalmente diferenciadores (rasgos distintivos). La única diferencia formal entre esos paradigmas consiste en que los términos correspondientes pertenecen a niveles diferentes de organización lingüística. En el caso de los hechos sintácticos, los términos en oposición serán, naturalmente, ‘sintagmas’ de varios niveles, por ej.: grupos de palabras, oraciones”.

ic” syntax there should also be a “paradigmatic” syntax that identifies oppositional structures as in other fields of structural analysis.

As a consequence of the structural principles, and in analogy to structural semantics, structural syntax must be initiated from content:

‘The content is the determining factor; only from the perspective of the content can one write a coherent grammar of a language.’ ([251b] (1990), 54)¹³

Basically, the principles of functional (structural) syntax derive from those established in general. Functional syntax must be the “paradigmatics of grammatical meaning”:

‘Functional grammar aims at establishing the grammatical meanings (=signifieds) distinguished by a given language and the structured (oppositional) relationships between these meanings in the same language’ ([243] (1989), 12)¹⁴

As in semantics, the object of study in functional grammar is the signified and the oppositions between signifieds. The signified is supposed to be unitary and must be clearly distinguished from variants in speech. An example given by Coseriu is that of the French construction *avec x* that may have different “meanings” in speech that derive from the knowledge of the objects referred to; the construction, however, has one single unitary meaning, “copresence”, this being the oppositional meaning in the system and the one that justifies all different variants in the norm (see fig. 6.12).

Coseriu distinguishes different levels of grammatical organisation and four universally different relationships of grammatical relations: hypertaxis, hypotaxis, parataxis and antitaxis. He gives numerous examples of how to apply his principles to the concrete grammatical analysis of particular languages; however, this field has remained rather unexploited in comparison to structural semantics on the lexical level.

6.8 Applications: The Romance verbal system

Coseriu’s structuralist approach goes beyond lexical semantics and is applied by him to different fields of linguistic structuration. An interesting contribution in

13 “Die Inhalte sind das Bestimmende, nur vom Inhalt her kann man eine kohärente Grammatik einer Sprache schreiben”.

14 “La grammaire fonctionnelle se propose d’établir les signifiés grammaticaux distingués par une langue donnée et les rapports structurés (oppositifs) entre ces signifiés dans la même langue”.

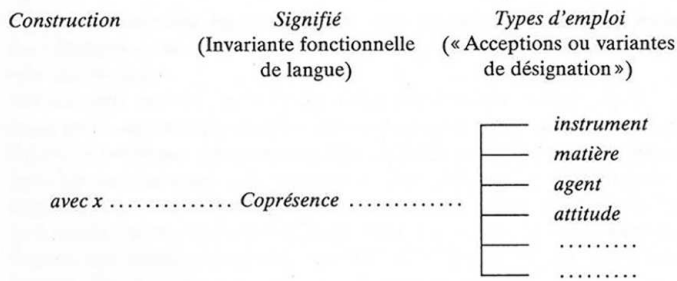


Fig. 6.12: Unitary meaning (signifié) and variants in functional syntax: the example of French *avec x* ([243] (1989), 10).

this context is his work on the Romance verbal system, a field in which Coseriu applied his functional-structural principles extensively. Throughout his life, he dedicated numerous lectures and publications to different issues relating to this: the general organisation, the temporal and aspectual system including the (indirect) relationship between perfect and imperfect, the aspectual periphrastic system, and the relationship between simple and compound perfect (Port. *fiz* and *tenho feito*), an issue also related to his typological view. The verbal system is also important in his conception of a general Romance language type (see chapter 9).

He had been interested in the Romance verb from his early Montevideo years. Indeed, verbal evolution is a central aspect in his writing on Vulgar Latin and the Greek influence on Romance, and several of his contributions discuss the function of certain verb forms in Romance languages. What is particularly interesting about this field in Coseriu’s research, as Brenda Laca notes, is the fact that, contrary to other contributions, it is the system itself that is the focus of attention and not a theoretical framework simply illustrated by examples of Romance languages:

Even if clearly guided by theoretical interests, this is comparative description of the Romance languages at a level of detail which is not pursued in Coseriu’s more theoretically oriented writings. In the latter, empirical data are usually presented as illustration or support for theoretical claims, as examples. By contrast, in the study of the categories of the Romance verb, empirical data constitute the problem to be solved by an in-depth analysis. (Laca 2021, 307)

The central issues discussed in relation with the Romance verb are as follows:

- the existence and identification of the main oppositions within a Romance verbal system,
- the relationship between tense and aspect,
- the periphrastic verbal aspect in Romance.

Among the several publications on the Romance verbal system, the most central one is probably the 1976 short book *Das romanische Verbalsystem* edited by Hansbert Bertsch, another book that emerged from Coseriu's university teaching. In fact, this work combines a number of lectures on the Romance verb given in the years 1962 in Bonn and in 1963, 1968 and 1969 in Tübingen.

Further publications on the Romance verb are [29] (1962); [51] (1968); [103] (1975); [164] (1980). Moreover, the Coseriu Archive contains a number of unpublished manuscripts on the Romance verb, and several of Coseriu's disciples, such as Brigitte Schlieben-Lange (1971), Wolf Dietrich (1973), Nelson Cartagena (1977) and Brenda Laca (2021), have developed Coseriu's views in this regard.

The 1976 booklet is not only about the Romance verb but also contains a rather compact introduction into structural analysis. Coseriu begins by discussing some existing accounts of the Romance verbal system and criticises their shortcomings. The principles of Structuralism as well as the aforementioned seven distinctions are presented and illustrated with examples of Romance verbs. After discussing various other approaches that explain the particularity of the Romance imperfect in contrast to the perfect, Coseriu arrives at the central point of his own concerns: he rejects the idea that there must be a direct opposition between the imperfect and the perfect. Instead, he postulates the existence of two levels: actual and a non-actual. The unmarked form on the actual level is the present tense; the unmarked form on the non-actual level is the imperfect. As Laca observes,

the assumption that the Romance tense system is organized on two distinct temporal planes, an 'actual temporal plane' whose center is the present, and a 'non-actual temporal plane' whose center is the imperfect, is the most original and controversial feature of Coseriu's analysis (Laca 2021, 300).

The imperfect is thus something like a non-actual present tense. This justifies numerous usages of the imperfect in Romance languages (e.g., imperfect of politeness, ludic imperfect). The unmarked forms on both levels can substitute the marked ones in an inclusive opposition: the present can be used as a historical present or as a future; the imperfect as a pluperfect or conditional. Both levels are systematically analogous: the central neutral form is opposed to prospective and to retrospective forms. Instead of a direct opposition between perfect and imperfect there is an opposition between the present tense and its retrospective counterpart, the perfect, on the one hand, and between the present perfect and the imperfect as unmarked forms of the two levels, on the other. This "primary perspective" is complemented by a "secondary perspective", with varying degrees of grammaticalisation in the different Romance languages. The secondary perspective further

subdivides the categories of the primary perspective. This can be represented schematically as in Figure 6.13.

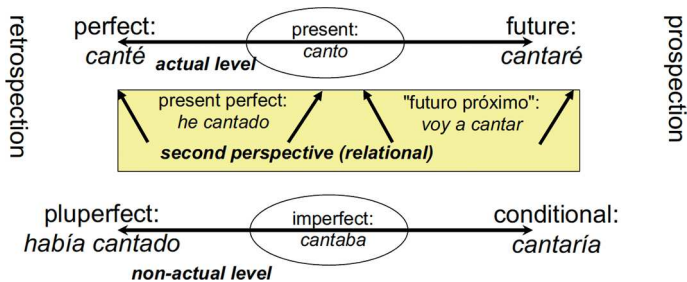


Fig. 6.13: The Romance verbal system according to Coseriu (primary and secondary perspective with the example of Spanish).

Then, a tertiary perspective with aspectual periphrasis is identified with varying functions in the different languages. Numerous facts about the functioning of verb forms in Romance languages can be explained by this systematic view. Coseriu always insists on the existence of a more or less unified Romance verbal system:

the basic organization of the verb is more or less the same in all Romance languages, and this allows us to speak of a Romance 'verbal system', not only from a historical but also from a synchronic point of view. (Coseriu 1976, 91; translation *apud* Laca 2021, 295)

However, this seems to be somehow problematic, since a system is always language-specific, as Brenda Laca observed. It is probably more adequate to speak of a Romance type than of a Romance system (see Chapter 9). Coseriu also shows that a clear distinction between a unitary meaning of the forms and its variables in Norm and speech is much more efficient and clearer than an explanation that begins by offering long lists of variants in speech without identifying the unitary meaning that allowed them to emerge.

Coseriu's book on the verbal system was translated into Spanish in 1996. Already before, in 1982, Vidal Lamíquiz, a Spanish grammarian who had studied with Pottier in Paris, had published a short introduction into the Spanish verbal system where several aspects that are similar to Coseriu's view appear: the distinction between an actual and a non-actual level as well as the parallel organisation of both levels in Spanish. Vidal Lamíquiz already had published previous papers on this issue without reference to Coseriu (cf. Vidal Lamíquiz 1971). In *DSs*, I asked Coseriu about this relationship:

JK: In Spain, this little booklet by Vidal Lamíquiz on the Spanish verbal system was published, where your distinction between the actual and the non-actual level appears. Your verbal system was only published in 1976, the other one a few years earlier, but it does not refer to Coseriu, although it clearly corresponds to your view.

C: I have already noted that. But he says in the preface that he refers to me.

JK: But it is not mentioned afterwards in the exposition of the whole system.

C: In the preface he says that his ideas are based on Coseriu and Pottier. This kind of thing happens all the time.' (*DSs*, 136).¹⁵

This is in fact not the case: there is no mention of Coseriu in Vidal Lamíquiz' book. Lamíquiz refers in his work to earlier attempts of two-level distinctions in Romance verbal systems, like that of Benveniste (1959) between "discours" and "histoire" as well as that of Weinrich between 'discussed' and 'narrated world' ("Besprochene und erzählte Welt", Weinrich 1964), but the distinction he actually presents resembles to a great extent that of Coseriu (which had been presented by Coseriu in several lectures and courses long before Lamíquiz' publication).

But in fact there exists another, much more concrete antecedent published by André Burger in 1961 in the Cahiers *Ferdinand de Saussure* and where Burger distinguishes an actual and an non-actual level and associates the non-actual level with the French verbal suffix /ε/ (as found in the imperfect forms like *aimait*, *faisait*). This suffix indicates 'that the event signified by the verbal radical is outside the speaker's actuality at the moment of speech. From this derive the various meanings of the imperfect tense.' (Burger 1961, 15)¹⁶. The exact filiation of ideas and the relationship between possible polygenesis and implicit quotes will still have to be reconstructed. Probably Coseriu knew Burger's reflections and maybe Vidal Lamíquiz was aware of Coseriu's distinctions.

Coseriu sometimes insisted in the fact that some of Saussure's sources are not mentioned in the *CLG* either because Saussure had mentioned them and the disciples did not take note of them or because he considered certain ideas as general

15 "JK: In Spanien ist dieses kleine Büchlein von Vidal Lamíquiz zum spanischen Verbalsystem erschienen, wo Ihre Darstellung von der aktuellen und inaktuellen Ebene vorkommt. Ihr Verbal-system ist erst 1976 erschienen, das andere einige Jahre früher und bezieht sich nicht auf Coseriu, obwohl es eindeutig Ihrer Darstellung entspricht.

C: Das habe ich schon festgestellt. Aber er sagt im Vorwort, daß er sich auf mich bezieht.

JK: Aber es wird dann nachher bei der Darstellung des ganzen Systems nicht gesagt.

C: Im Vorwort sagt er, daß er sich auf Coseriu und Pottier stützt. So etwas passiert immer wieder".

16 "que l'événement signifié par le radical verbal est en dehors de l'actualité du parleur au moment de la parole. De là découlent les diverses significations de l'imparfait".

knowledge. If we compare Coseriu's meticulous references in his writings that were prepared as such with the sometimes scarce references to literature in the publications that emerged out of his teaching, we can observe an enormous difference, and there is – with a certain danger of speculation and error – still a lot of work to do in order to reconstruct the background of his ideas.

But be it as it were, the originality of Coseriu's account of the Romance verbal system as well as of his structural analyses in general should not be seen in isolated details but in the complexity and clarity of the conception as a whole.

6.9 Final remarks

In this chapter we have seen the importance of the structural analysis of language in Coseriu's work. In summary, the following principles can be identified:

- language (as a language system) is structured and can be described in terms of its structuredness. The task of structural linguistics (not linguistics *per se*) is the identification of such linguistic structures,
- the structures are not immediately visible. They have to be “uncovered”. This requires a certain method and the application of seven preliminary distinctions. Everything that is excluded through the preliminary distinctions must be investigated in other areas of linguistics (beyond structural linguistics),
- language is *form* with *substance* (contrary to Saussure, Hjelmslev). The two are interdependent,
- language is always *expression* and *content*. The content is always determinant,
- form and content must never be confused in the examination of linguistic phenomena,
- the basic principle is that a form corresponds to the corresponding content (at the level of the system). Thus, a unified meaning corresponds to a form. This unified meaning must be clearly identified for an adequate analysis of the function at the level of the system. The unitary system meaning must not be confused with norm or speech meanings,
- in certain cases, an expression may correspond to several elements of content (syncretism) or the content may correspond to several expressions (polymorphism). However, these cases must be justified systemically. Syncretism is identified when there are other cases where the different functions are expressed by different forms; and polymorphism must refer to the same content, without the possibility of associating different meanings to the forms,
- oppositions can be neutralised in certain contexts. Again, we can only speak of neutralisation if the opposition has been established elsewhere. The value of a form must always be determined where it is oppositional.

The list could continue, and none of the principles can be found exclusively in Coseriu's work. But his principles are embedded in a comprehensive theory with a corresponding method, and its strength lies precisely in its completeness and its broad applicability.

Structuralism as a theory or general approach is generally regarded as something which has been overcome or superseded, and this is certainly true of Structuralism as an absolutistic linguistic model. However, the principles mentioned in this chapter can still be found today, especially wherever grammatical systems and their functions are described. Even without explicit reference to Structuralism, the description of grammar has, on the one hand, internalised the structuralist principles and, on the other hand, has always argued with oppositions and with the notion of regularity, even if without explicit reference to Structuralism. In this respect, grammar today – not the theory of grammar, and not the application of certain grammatical models to individual questions in order to underline their efficiency, but grammar as the grammar of a particular language – is the area in which certain structuralist approaches and methods are still most clearly alive. Thus, the field that has been least 'structural' since the beginning of the 20th century is precisely the one that has guaranteed the survival of structural linguistics, this for reasons that probably lie in the empirical objects and in the nature of the issues at hand. In any case, as Jörn Albrecht stated:

'Structuralism can probably be overcome, but not circumvented; no serious linguist can simply bypass it.' (Albrecht 2002, 153)¹⁷

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17 "Der Strukturalismus kann wohl überwunden, aber nicht umgangen werden; kein ernsthafter Sprachwissenschaftler kommt einfach an ihm vorbei".

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Chapter 7

‘Tradition and innovation’: the History of Linguistics

7.1 Introduction

“Tradición y novedad”, ‘tradition and innovation’, is one of the principles presented in chapter 1, and as noted there, for Coseriu it is far more than simply a principle that highlights the importance of the history of linguistics. For him, the history of linguistics, a somewhat marginal discipline in contemporary research, is not considered to be merely a way of looking from the outside at what our predecessors said about language. Rather, Coseriu takes it to be essential and necessary, deriving as it does from the human condition as a historical being. There is a chain of connected ideas that leads to the study of the history of linguistics: humans are *historical* in that they are born and grow up in a world in which they recognise things (or better: the being of these things) through the signs of a particular language. This language is not provided by nature but is a cultural phenomenon of human transmission. The human being is a cultural being, and the first and foremost condition of all forms of culture is language. Human culture and human languages evolve, and so does our thinking about our own condition as a part of our world and about language itself. However, since human language also has a universal side, any reflection on the universality of language by necessity refers to a constant and unchanging object and by definition cannot be outdated. If Aristotle makes some clearly argued observation on language, we cannot say: “this is not valid anymore since he lived in a time when language was different”. Ancient Greek is obviously different from contemporary Greek, but the principles of linguistic conventionality, the general principles of how language signifies through concept-encoding signs, and even the relationship between the phonic and the written language as formulated by Aristotle, must still be taken seriously.

The principle of traditionality is present throughout Coseriu’s work; any subject he addresses is always approached on the basis of long traditions in the history of linguistics and philosophy. When he talks about language change, he does not take Saussure or the latest contributions of 20th-century linguistics as the starting point for modern linguistics. Before Saussure there is Georg von der Gabelentz; before modern linguistics there is Humboldt and Aristotle, not of course in a direct line, but with various filiations and moments of innovation and creativity that must be identified as forming part of the whole.

Coseriu's traditionality is not only a general characteristic of his writing, it is also an explicit subject of research, and there is a lot of specific work on the history of linguistics in his scholarship. We can identify three main pillars here: the first is reflected in several publications on detailed aspects of the history of linguistics and language philosophy; the second, closely related to this, are his monumental (and only recently published entirely) overviews of the history of Romance linguistics and the history of the philosophy of language; and the third consists of work on the history of linguistics which he delegated to various disciples and that was published in the series *Lingua et Traditio*.

This chapter will focus on the history of (mainly Romance) linguistics; the following chapter will consider language philosophy and its history. Such a separation is somewhat arbitrary, in that prior to the emergence of modern linguistics there was a close connection between the two fields, and hence between these two sections.

There are a number of principles that guide Coseriu's work on the history of linguistics, some of which were formulated explicitly by him, whereas others can be derived from his writing:

- the principle of reconstruction. Coseriu reveals in several works the conceptual and textual background of ideas that in the history of linguistics or philosophy were attributed to certain individuals but that in fact arise from others. In the next section we will see the example of Saussure and Georg von der Gabelentz, but there are in fact several other examples. Coseriu presents various studies that involve a meticulous juxtaposition of texts and fine-grained philological reconstructions in making these comparisons,
- the principle of individual originality. This is in some ways a correlate of the first principle: there are individuals in the history of linguistic and philosophical thought that are original, creative thinkers. One task is to reconstruct the originality of their ideas and another is to reconstruct the impact of these ideas. Coseriu highlights, according to Meisterfeld (2002, 144) and with reference to [182] (1981), the following "emersions":
 - ‘– the distinction between lexical and grammatical meaning in Plato's *Sophistes*;
 - the distinction between signifiant and signifié in Aristotle's *De Interpretatione*;
 - the distinction between language and metalanguage in Augustine's *De magistro*;
 - the distinction between synchrony and diachrony in François Thurot's translation of James Harris' *Hermes*;
 - the distinction between language and speech in Hegel's *Encyclopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse*.¹

1 “– die Unterscheidung von lexikalischer und grammatischer Bedeutung in Platons *Sophistes*;

- the principle of judgement and evaluation. From the first two principles there derives a third one that has to do with normative judgments on the different contributions made by writers in the history of linguistics. Coseriu tends to distinguish historical landmarks in thinking from those contributions that have not advanced the history of ideas, or indeed that represent retrograde evolutions of thought. He defends the idea that it is an obligation of any scholar to indicate to his readers and disciples both originality and banality, this towards avoiding the repetition of errors. The principle of judgement and evaluation also entails a principle of individual coherence as reflected in confidence or in mistrust: those authors who lack originality in one work are also likely to lack it in others, and those who are highly original at one point of their thinking are likely to be so elsewhere in their work.
- the principle of sympathetic interpretation: the work of an individual should not only be described from outside, but should be traced back to its creation and be understood in all its dimensions, including its potential for further development,
- the principle of integrity: the work of an individual should not only be considered partially, but in the context of the author's whole life and work,
- the principle of overall contextualisation. Even if strongly focused on individuals, Coseriu identifies different epochs and historical lines that characterise the work of several individuals. He even offers a general scheme from the origins to the 20th century of changing dominant tendencies between theory and description, on the one hand, and comparison and history, on the other hand ([182] (1981), 20):

- die Unterscheidung von *signifiant* und *signifié* in Aristoteles' *De Interpretatione*;
 - die Unterscheidung von Sprache und Metasprache in Augustins *De magistro*;
 - die Unterscheidung von Synchronie und Diachronie in François Thurots Übersetzung des *Hermes* von James Harris;
 - die Unterscheidung von Sprache und Rede in Hegels *Encyclopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse*".

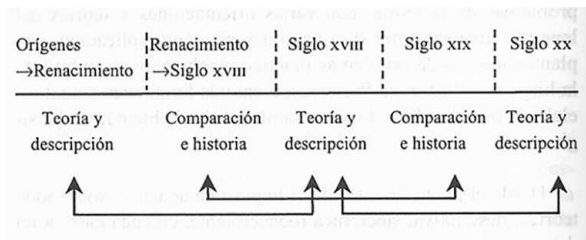


Fig. 7.1: Basic orientations of linguistics ([182] (1981), 20).

7.2 Individual studies on the history of (Romance) linguistics

From the end of the 1960s onwards, Coseriu began to publish individual studies on the history of linguistics, in many cases in collective volumes in honour of colleagues (Martinet, Jakobson etc.). Interestingly, his publishing activity in this field only started in 1967, with no less than four papers in that very year, but henceforth would become one of his most active fields of work, with a considerable number of publications.

The four papers published in 1967 already show a wide range of subjects: one ([42]) is about an early predecessor of structural semantics (the German 19th-century linguist K. W. L. Heyse), one ([37]) is about the forgotten French grammarian François Thurot (1768–1832), and two are exhaustive studies of the origin of Ferdinand de Saussure’s concepts, the first of these on the pre-history of the concept of the arbitrariness of the linguistic sign (“arbitraire du signe”, [39]) and the other about the 19th-century German sinologue Georg von der Gabelentz (1840–1893), who is seen as the most significant of Saussure’s predecessors [41]. With these latter two studies, Coseriu surprised the linguistic community in that Saussure had been considered not only as the founder of modern structural linguistics but also as the original creator of most of his own concepts. Both texts are exhaustive studies and both illustrate how some of the aforementioned principles can be applied in practice.

The main message of the extensive text on the prehistory of the principle of arbitrariness is summarised in its final paragraph:

‘So it is perfectly legitimate to speak of a “principe saussurien de l’arbitraire du signe”, if what is meant is Saussure’s particular interpretation of this principle and the relevance it has in Saussure’s theory of language. On the other hand, it is completely wrong and misleading to

speak of a “principe saussurien” when the principle itself is meant, for the principle itself is already 2,300 years old.’ (Coseriu [39] (1967): 112)²

Saussure himself had only mentioned Whitney as a predecessor of this principle; Coseriu begins his own text by quoting several other linguists who had identified further antecedents, but without reconstructing the long lines of tradition of either the concept or the term. Drawing on an exhaustive knowledge of philosophical and linguistic thought from Ancient Greece to the 20th century, and using an impressive amount of documentation, Coseriu traces the lines of tradition of the principle of arbitrariness back to Aristotle, showing that there is both a certain continuity of thought here, as well as several side-paths and deviations.

In the case of his study of Georg von der Gabelentz, Coseriu juxtaposes text extracts from Saussure’s *CLG* with others from Gabelentz’ monograph *Die Sprachwissenschaft* (‘Linguistics’, 1891) in order to show how deeply present Gabelentz’ ideas were in Saussure’s conception. Indeed, some of the central dichotomies attributed to Saussure can be found in Gabelentz’ work (langue-parole; synchrony-diachrony). In his paper on Thurot ([37] (1967)), Coseriu had already shown that the conceptual distinction between synchrony and diachrony (not the terms) even appears some 100 years before Gabelentz, in Thurot’s 1796 comment on his French translation of James Harris’ *Hermes, a philosophical inquiry concerning universal grammar* (1751). Gabelentz’ synthesis of 19th-century linguistics also emphasises the consideration of language as a system in which everything is related and held together by the systemic organisation in the sense of Meillet’s “système où tout se tient” (often attributed to Saussure, see Koerner 1997). Coseriu’s purpose here is not to underplay or diminish the value of Saussure’s synthesis (or his original terminologisation of central concepts) but rather to show the tradition of which Saussure is a part:

‘The distinctions between *language* and *speech*, between *signifier* and *signified*, between synchrony and *diachrony*, are almost always attributed to Saussure, who, in reality, found them in tradition. Saussure has undoubtedly reformulated them and, in part, given them a new interpretation within the framework of a coherent system, but he was not, however, the first to establish them.’ ([41] (1967), 74)³

2 “So ist es also durchaus legitim, von einem ‘principe saussurien de l’arbitraire du signe’ zu sprechen, wenn damit die besondere Saussuresche Deutung dieses Prinzips und die Relevanz, die ihm in der Saussureschen Sprachtheorie zukommt, gemeint sind. Dagegen ist es völlig falsch und irreführend, von einem ‘principe saussurien’ zu sprechen, wenn das Prinzip selbst gemeint ist, denn dieses ist schon 2300 Jahre alt”.

3 “on attribue presque toujours à Saussure les distinctions entre *langue* et *parole*, entre *signifiant* et *signifié*, entre *synchronie* et *diachronie*, toutes distinctions que Saussure a retrouvées dans la

His high regard for Georg von der Gabelentz is also seen in the fact that he was active in the re-publication of Gabelentz' seminal *Die Sprachwissenschaft*, published by Gunter Narr in 1969 with the inclusion of Coseriu's 1967 paper. Indeed, this publication contributed substantially to the renaissance of Gabelentz.

In other cases, Coseriu's historical reconstruction is much more critical, and carries the accusation of a lack of originality. An example is his view of the Portuguese grammarians of the 16th century. In his manuscript on João de Barros he illustrates that Barros, who used to be considered the most influential 16th-century grammarian in Portugal, copied almost everything from Nebrija; as evidence for this, Coseriu includes even examples that made sense in Spanish but not in the Portuguese adaptation (see Kabatek 2016). On the other hand, he highlights the importance of another grammarian, who was far more original in his thought yet less recognised in Portuguese historiography: Fernão de Oliveira (see [96] (1975), [442] (2020), and Schlieben-Lange 1994).

Coseriu's studies not only seek to reconstruct the historical value of a contribution from a diachronic perspective, but also to show the spatial relations and the spread of ideas throughout European thought, using here a broad perspective, as we will see in the case of Nebrija in the next section.

In this context, it seems appropriate to introduce a brief digression. In a whole series of studies, Coseriu focuses on the role of the Romanian language in linguistics as well as on the contribution of Romanian intellectuals to the history of linguistic thought. It should not be surprising that a Romanian linguist is interested in Romanian; however, the specific studies on the historiography of Romanian linguistics must be contextualised historically. Having left Romania in 1940, Coseriu continued to dedicate research to Romanian issues for only a few years; in Uruguay and in the early Tübingen years his contact with Romania was restricted largely to private correspondence with his family and with certain Romanian colleagues. The year 1968 was an important turning-point in this respect, since he was invited to participate in the conference of Romanists in Bucharest.

This return to Romania, itself not without controversy, was a very emotional one for Coseriu. The Catalan linguist Ramon Cerdà, who also attended the conference, recalls:

I had the opportunity to live a historical moment with him, at the Conference of Romance Linguistics in Bucharest in 1968. Despite being listed as an expatriate by the communist regime, the organisers enrolled him and assigned him a classroom and a normal slot within the regular schedule. But when the moment of his talk on the influence of Greek on vulgar

tradition, qu'il a, sans doute, reformulées et auxquelles il a donné en partie une interprétation nouvelle, dans le cadre d'un système cohérent, mais qu'il n'a pas été le premier à formuler".

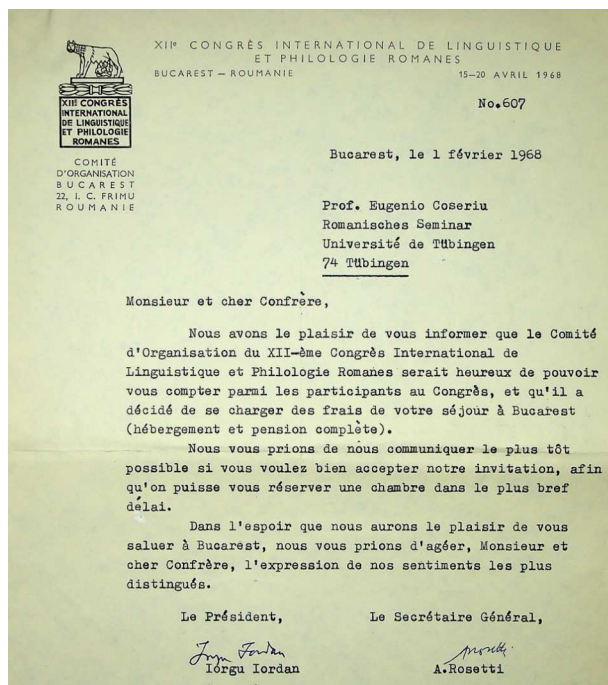


Fig. 7.2: Invitation letter to Coseriu, February 1968, from the Romanian linguists Iorgu Iordan and Alexandru Rosetti, to attend the conference of Romanists in Bucharest in 1968 [DILeCos ID 1083838] (see also Kabatek/Bleortu 2021, 82), © Coseriu Archive Tübingen.

Latin arrived, the expectation was so massive that they had to find a larger space. During that conference, he even had the opportunity to meet his parents again and to receive some official recognition, amid popular admiration.’ (Cerdà 2003, 543)⁴

The numerous publications on Romanian and Romanians can thus be explained by a certain return to his roots as well as by invitations he received to contribute to collective volumes and festschrifts for his Romanian colleagues. Coseriu also received numerous distinctions by Romanian universities during the final decades

4 “vaig tenir l’oportunitat de viure en directe un moment seu històric, en el congrés de lingüística romànica de Bucarest l’any 1968. Tot i figurar com un expatriat pel règim comunista, els organitzadors el van inscriure i li van assignar una aula i un horari normal dintre la programació ordinària. Però quan va arribar la seva comunicació, sobre la influència del grec en el llatí vulgar, l’expectació va ser tan multitudinària que van haver d’habilitar un espai especial, que va quedar tanmateix migrat. En aquell congrés va tenir fins i tot l’oportunitat de retrobar-se amb els pares i de rebre un cert reconeixement oficial, enmig de l’admiració popular”.

of his life. After the 1968 conference, he accepted invitations to participate in various meetings and courses held in Romania. In the latter stages of his career, he was awarded a high number of distinctions worldwide. But in no region these were as numerous as in Romania and the Republic of Moaldavia, where he became a doctor *honoris causa* of the following universities: Bucharest 1971, Cluj 1992, Iași 1992, Chișinău, (Rep. Moldova) 1993, Constanța 1994, Craiova 1994, Timișoara 1995, Bălți (Rep. Moldova) 1998, Târgoviște 1998, Sibiu 1998, Suceava 1999, Pitești 1999, Târgoviște 2000, Oradea 2000, The Pedagogical University of Chișinău (Rep. Moldova), 2001 and Galați 2001.

Currently, several research groups in Romania and Moldavia are dedicated to the study of his oeuvre; regular conferences, meetings and journal sections are organised on Coseriu's thought (see chapter 12) and there is even a museum dedicated to him in his native Mihăileni.



Fig. 7.3: Coseriu (2nd from left) with colleagues at the conference of Romanists in Bucharest in 1968. To his left Petru Caraman, his former teacher at the University of Iași, © Coseriu Archive Tübingen.

7.3 The history of Romance linguistics

In the foreword to the Spanish collection of his texts on the history of linguistics published under the title “Tradición y novedad en la ciencia del lenguaje” (‘Tradition and Innovation in Language Science’) in 1977 ([116], 9), Coseriu says that the

studies presented in the volume are ‘mostly fragments of a history of linguistics that has yet to be written.’⁵ In fact, by 1977 that history already existed, at least partly, in that from 1970 onwards Coseriu had given a series of one-semester courses not on the general history of linguistics but on the history of Romance linguistics, starting in the winter semester 1970–1971 with a course on ‘The History of Romance Linguistics – Main Epochs and main Currents’, and continuing over the following semesters until reaching Part IV. This *History of Romance Linguistics* was originally written to be taught rather than published but, as Reinhard Meisterfeld notes, Coseriu always had in mind the idea of converting the texts into a book:

‘The care with which they [the manuscripts] were written indicates that they were intended from the outset for later publication.’ (in: [374] (2003), VII)⁶

From the end of the 1990s onwards, this publication was, along with the preparation of other manuscripts, the aim of a project supported by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, the German Research Council, under the direction of Brigitte Schlieben-Lange and myself, and subsequently, after Brigitte’s early passing, by Peter Koch and myself. Reinhard Meisterfeld, who became the heart of the project, had been a disciple from the early Tübingen years and was now back in Tübingen after a long period working in Portugal (see chapter 12). Meisterfeld was very meticulous in his approach, seeking to convert Coseriu’s oral style and his sometimes cryptic or outdated notes into a readable text, as well as updating the references and adding several comments. But this work took several years, and Coseriu did not see the final result, which was published a year after his death in 2003 (Coseriu/Meisterfeld [374] (2003)). Moreover, the monograph was only the first part of the whole. Meisterfeld continued working, now without feedback from Coseriu, on the next part, but other obligations delayed the work. He then fell ill and passed away in 2017, and the remaining parts continued to be announced as “forthcoming” in the catalogues of the publisher Gunter Narr. Finally, Wolf Dietrich, a Coseriu disciple who had retired from his active work as a professor at the University of Münster and who knew Coseriu’s work extremely well, and indeed had attended some of the original lectures in the 1970s, devoted himself to continuing the enterprise. The announced edition was finished and published in three volumes from 2020 onwards ([442] (2020); [443] (2021); [455] (2022)). The editor justified the publication so many years after the original conception thus:

5 “en su mayoría fragmentos de una historia de la lingüística todavía por escribir”.

6 “Die Sorgfalt ihrer [= der Manuskripte] Niederschrift weist darauf hin, daß sie von Anfang an für eine spätere Veröffentlichung vorgesehen waren”.

‘Coseriu’s history of Romance linguistics is still unique in its conception and depth of thought. There is no comparable work which, like this one, encompasses all the Romance languages that were known, relating them to each other, and which is based on such a comprehensive expertise and knowledge of all the particular languages as well as of the history of linguistics in general.’ (Dietrich in Coseriu 2020, 9)⁷

The entire work (four volumes) amounts to more than 1,600 pages. Its main justification lies in Coseriu’s principle of tradition, that is, only through a knowledge of the history of a discipline can one truly innovate. Such a history is not only an enumeration of historical facts, but the reconstruction and appreciation of historical contexts.

The uncovering of continuities and changes ends where, for others, the history of Romance linguistics begins: with the official foundation of the discipline at the University of Bonn and the creation of the first chair of Romance Philology for Friedrich Diez (see Hirdt 1993). So, in this sense Coseriu’s history is rather a pre-history, and its aim is above all, as Dietrich puts it,

‘to make clearer the largely unknown “prehistory” manifest in diverse and multi-layered efforts in the individual countries, especially in the 17th and 18th centuries, and to show its way towards differentiation, and to help it towards its rightful place in view of the following developments and not to let it fall victim to oblivion.’ (Dietrich in Coseriu [455] (2022), 234)⁸

The argument for ending the work with the 19th-century birth of the discipline is that there already exist exhaustive descriptions of more recent developments, whereas the history prior to Diez and Meyer-Lübke is less familiar to most Romanists. However, Coseriu denies that there is any separation between the “prehistory” and the history of Romance linguistics:

7 “Coserius romanische Sprachwissenschaftsgeschichte ist bis heute in ihrer Konzeption und Gedankentiefe einzigartig. Es gibt kein vergleichbares Werk, das wie dieses alle damals bekannten romanischen Sprachen umfasst und zueinander in Bezug setzt und das auf so umfassender Gelehrsamkeit und Kenntnis aller Einzelsprachen sowie der Geschichte der Sprachwissenschaft überhaupt beruht”.

8 “die weitgehend unbekannte “Vorgeschichte”, die sich vor allem im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert in den einzelnen Ländern in vielfältigen und vielschichtigen Bemühungen manifestiert und sich so sehr differenziert, deutlicher werden zu lassen und ihr von den folgenden Entwicklungen zu ihrem Recht verhelfen und sie nicht der Vergessenheit anheimfallen zu lassen”.

‘In the sense of our idea of an ideal history of science, we see the history of Romance linguistics as an uninterrupted continuity since the oldest Provençal grammars.’ ([374] (2003), 6)⁹

With reference to Gustav Gröber’s *Grundriss*, although with some differences, Coseriu divides his *History of Romance Linguistics* into five parts. The first part, updated and published by Reinhard Meisterfeld ([374] (2003)), opens with the beginning of Romance linguistics in the form of the early Occitan grammars in the 13th century until the end of the 15th century.

The second part ([442] (2020)) starts with Nebrija’s Castilian grammar (1492) and includes the exhaustive production of vernacular grammars and treatises on various Romance languages in the 16th century.

As an example of how the work is written, let us introduce a short digression and take a closer look at the treatment of Nebrija (see also Kabatek, *in press*). In a comprehensive chapter, Coseriu first praises Nebrija’s Castilian Grammar of 1492, which is ‘the very first proper, that is, truly descriptive grammar of the Romance languages and by far the best one, a truly scientific work.’ ([442] (2020), 15).¹⁰ Nebrija is situated at the beginning of a new epoch, although he is certainly also a link to the Renaissance in Italy – after all, he acquired much of his knowledge during his time in Bologna at the Spanish Colegio San Clemente. Nebrija’s grammar, which symbolises the linguistic beginnings of the modern era, not only through its content and printed form but also due to its publication date in the significant year 1492, is presented in the context of his complete works. After a brief overview, some special features of the content are described, followed by certain weaknesses, and finally the special merits of the grammar.

Above all, Coseriu shows great reverence for Nebrija in both his sovereign view of the Spanish language and in his descriptions, which are based on classical models but, where appropriate, frequently introduce original and differing ideas. Nebrija can be seen as the pivotal point for what would follow. In Spain, he continued throughout the following century to be considered a pioneer, in Portugal he was copied, and he also exerted an important influence on grammar in France and Italy. Far better known to his contemporaries as a Latinist than in terms of his work on the vernacular, Nebrija identifies the central issues of European Romance linguistics of his time and proposes coherent and appropriate solutions in many respects. He clearly sees the origin of Spanish from Latin, the problems of render-

9 “Im Sinne unsere Vorstellung einer ideellen Wissenschaftsgeschichte sehen wir die Geschichte der romanischen Sprachwissenschaft als eine ununterbrochene Kontinuität seit den ältesten provenzalischen Grammatiken”.

10 “die allererste eigentliche, das heißt wirklich deskriptive Grammatik der romanischen Sprachen und bei weitem die beste, ein wirklich wissenschaftliches Werk”.

ing the actual sounds with Latin letters, the independence of Romance grammar and the issues of an adequate presentation of its system with appropriate terminology.

Among the weaknesses, Coseriu criticises the principle of logicism, which appears again and again. Nebrija’s grammatical logicism is a remnant of the medieval, “speculative” way of thinking, which seeks in language a mirror of logical principles; thus, his grammar contains several normative statements in which he rebukes Spanish for the fact that its construction does not correspond to nature or logic. Although the special characteristic of the grammar is its extensive emancipation from classical models, Coseriu argues that Nebrija does not manage to break away completely from classical categories and, in a kind of over-differentiation, searches for categories that no longer exist in Spanish. On the other hand, as Coseriu shows, there are also cases of under-differentiation, in which the true complexity of the Romance language is not grasped because Latin grammar does not offer the appropriate differentiations.

Hence, we can see here Coseriu’s approach, which comprises various steps. Firstly, he embeds the personality of the author in his historical context, before, secondly, moving on to establish the personal context of his entire life’s work. Thirdly, he addresses the immediate local significance of the work and the significance beyond the narrower area (in Nebrija’s case in the whole of Europe), before finally providing evaluation and criticism, which in Nebrija’s case avoids blind admiration and notes significant limitations.

But let’s move back to the presentation: the third part of *History of Romance Linguistics* begins with Celso Cittadini’s *Trattato della vera origine, e del processo, e nome della nostra lingua, scritto in vulgar Senese*, Venezia 1601, in which the concept of Vulgar Latin and its evolution into the Romance languages is outlined clearly for the first time. The fourth part ([455] (2022)) starts with August Wilhelm Schlegel’s *Observations sur la langue et la littérature provençales*, from 1818, the ‘first synthesis of Romance linguistics’ ([374] (2003), 11)¹¹.

The *History* ends abruptly, ‘without further outlooks and also without conclusions from what has been said so far’ (Dietrich in Coseriu [455] (2022), 234).¹² Its main merit is not to have gathered an immense amount of individual documented material, but to have established and illustrated lines of tradition, interruptions, returns to previous thought and predominant tendencies of the different epochs, as well as overall patterns of progress and setbacks.

11 “Die erste Synthese der romanischen Sprachwissenschaft”.

12 “ohne weitere Ausblicke und auch ohne Schlussfolgerungen aus dem bisher Gesagten”.

‘There is no continuous development, but rather repeated flashes of – from a later point of view – correct intuitions, the anticipation of what gradually solidified towards the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th centuries, the recognition of language historicity, with certain time-limited developments under certain conditions. But this recognition still does not fully break through. It marks the transition to the following epoch, which is no longer dealt with here.’ (Dietrich in [455] (2022), 235)¹³

7.4 Lingua et traditio

When Coseriu, as a child, dreamt of becoming a professor in Germany, this was also a dream about the desire of becoming part of a certain tradition. In Tübingen he found that tradition, and he worked together with colleagues such as Ernst Gamillscheg and Gerhard Rohlf, who represented the heritage of the German tradition of Romance philology. Years earlier, when he arrived in Montevideo, there was not even a university library at his disposal, whereas in Tübingen he was impressed by the enormous amount of literature that could be found there. Just one example:

‘I had already studied J. L. Vives in Uruguay on the basis of the Aguilar edition, everything he had written on the language; but then I wanted to write about him in the Festschriften for Mönch and Wandruszka, and I needed a Latin edition to quote the original texts. I asked someone to go to the university library, I don’t remember which assistant, to look up what he could find there by Vives. Otherwise we would have tried to get it through interlibrary loan or maybe from St. Gallen. He came back with a long list that surprised me: everything you could imagine was there, the edition from Zurich, one from Basel, this edition and that one; also Mayáns’ edition from Valencia. You wouldn’t have dreamed of such a thing in Uruguay or even in any other country in South America. The disappointment, on the other hand, was that the new texts were missing, and often even information about them.’ (DSs, 113–114)¹⁴

13 “Dabei gibt es keine kontinuierliche Entwicklung, eher immer wieder das Aufblitzen aus späterer Sicht richtiger Intuitionen, das Vorausahnen dessen, was sich gegen Ende des 18. und zu Beginn des 19. Jahrhunderts allmählich verdichtet, die Erkenntnis der Geschichtlichkeit der Sprache, mit bestimmten zeitlich begrenzten Entwicklungen unter bestimmten Bedingungen. Aber diese Erkenntnis bricht sich immer noch nicht voll Bahn. Sie kennzeichnet den Übergang zur folgenden Epoche, die hier nicht mehr behandelt ist”.

14 “Ich hatte auf der Basis der Ausgabe Aguilar schon in Uruguay J. L. Vives im ganzen studiert, alles, was er zur Sprache geschrieben hatte; aber dann wollte ich darüber schreiben für die Festschriften für Mönch und Wandruszka und brauchte eine lateinische Ausgabe, um die Texte im Original zu zitieren. Ich habe jemanden in die Universitätsbibliothek geschickt, ich weiß nicht mehr, welchen Hilfsassistenten, damit er nachsieht, was er da von Vives finden konnte. Ansonsten hätten wir versucht, es über Fernleihe zu bekommen oder vielleicht aus St. Gallen. Er kam zurück

In 1974, Hans Helmut Christmann was appointed professor at Tübingen, and Coseriu and Christmann became allies in their interest in the history of linguistics. Christmann had studied with Erhard Lommatzsch, a disciple of the Swiss Romanist Adolf Tobler, who himself had been a direct disciple of Friedrich Diez, so the line extended back to the roots of Romance philology. Christmann not only continued working on the Old French dictionary initiated by his teachers Tobler and Lommatzsch, he also shared with Coseriu an interest of preserving the tradition of Romance philology and also of handing it down to the next generation. With this in mind, the two Romanists founded the series *Lingua et Traditio* with the publisher Gunter Narr, with 13 published volumes on particular aspects of the history of Romance linguistics and translations or editions of largely forgotten works. The first volume, published by his disciple Jörn Albrecht with a foreword by Coseriu in 1975, was on the 18th-century French historian Pierre-Nicolas Bonamy and his ideas on Vulgar Latin (Bonamy (1975 [1736])). As Albrecht (2019, 96) stated, the idea for this study came about in the context of Coseriu's lectures on the history of Romance linguistics, which were the basis for the volumes discussed in the previous section. Due to the shared interest of both editors in the history of French linguistics, but also because most of their students were principally studying French, 18th-century France became one of the central foci of the series, alongside the grammars of the 16th century (with two contributions by Christmann's disciple Franz Josef Hausmann). But there were also works on linguistic typology, such as Uwe Petersen's translation from Danish of Rasmus Rask's *Undersøgelse om det gamle Nordiske eller Islandske Sprogs Oprindelse*. Coseriu himself contributed to the book series with a collection of papers on the history of Romanian studies in Europe ([177] (1981)).

7.5 Conclusions

In the introduction to the first volume of the monumental *History of Romance Linguistics*, Coseriu jokes that those who are not able to do linguistics dedicate themselves to the history of linguistics, and those who are unable even to do this dedicate themselves to the methodology of the history of linguistics ([374] (2003), 2). Coseriu, of course, did not work on the history of linguistics due to any lack of al-

mit einer langen Liste, die mich überraschte: alles, was man sich vorstellen konnte, war da, die Ausgabe von Zürich, eine aus Basel, diese Ausgabe und jene; auch die von Mayáns aus Valencia. So etwas hätte man sich nicht einmal träumen lassen in Uruguay oder auch in einem anderen Land Südamerikas. Die Enttäuschung hingegen war, daß das Neue fehlte und oft sogar die Information darüber”.

ternative fields in which he could have been active, but his language theory is consciously framed within a long tradition, and his specific work on the history of linguistics provides a very clear visibility to this facet of his thought. As he states:

‘In our view, however, the historical perspective is absolutely necessary from a scientific point of view for understanding the questions within each discipline. For the questions of a science do not stand in an empty space. They are not absolute, and they are not untimely. Rather, each question corresponds to a historical situation and can only be properly understood within the framework of and from the point of view of this situation. Every question takes over other questions in whole or in part, confronts other questions, rejects other questions explicitly or implicitly. In this respect, the history of any subject is *continuity* and *change* at the same time, i. e. *development*. That which has only continuity (as stability) or only change has no history.’ ([374] (2003), 3)¹⁵

In this sense, the history of linguistics not only becomes an accompaniment of “real”, “serious” linguistics, but serves as an essential foundation for any linguistic study. Far beyond the explicit studies of the history of linguistics, this historical background is indeed one of the principal characteristics of Coseriu’s linguistics.

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¹⁵ “Die historische Perspektive ist aber nach unserer Auffassung in wissenschaftlicher Hinsicht absolut notwendig für das Verständnis der Fragestellungen innerhalb jeder Disziplin. Denn die Fragestellungen einer Wissenschaft stehen nicht in einem leeren Raum. Sie sind nicht absolut, und sie sind nicht zeitlich. Vielmehr entspricht jede Fragestellung einer geschichtlichen Situation und kann nur im Rahmen dieser und von dieser her richtig verstanden werden. Jede Fragestellung übernimmt im ganzen oder teilweise andere Fragestellungen, stellt sich anderen Fragestellungen gegenüber, lehnt andere Fragestellungen explizit oder implizit ab. In dieser Hinsicht ist die Geschichte eines jedes Gegenstandes *Kontinuität* und *Änderung* zugleich, d.h. *Entwicklung*. Was nur *Kontinuität* (als Beständigkeit) oder nur *Änderung* aufweist, hat keine Geschichte”.

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Chapter 8

Philosophy of Language

8.1 Introduction

This chapter should probably be the first in the book, since philosophy is the foundation of all knowledge, and Coseriu's thinking is consistently philosophical in two senses: first, in that he always aims to return to 'the things themselves', avoiding the dangers of losing himself in meta-discussions that are separate from what is believed to exist as an original object; and second, it is philosophical in a more specific sense, in that he makes continuous reference to philosophical thought and the history of the development of ideas (see also Bota 2007, 5). Throughout the chapters of this book, philosophical issues have been present: his principles outlined in the first chapter, his Aristotelian-Humboldtian conception of language as *energeia*, his Hegelian conception of history and the philosophy underlying the conception of language change (see López Serena 2019), the philosophical debate on the essence of proper names, the Herderian insistence on the centrality of the particular language and the Humboldtian conception of language diversity as a background to the structured particularity of each language, in the lexicon and elsewhere (see Albrecht 2015)... there is philosophy everywhere! It makes sense, however, to dedicate this chapter to Coseriu's explicit work on the philosophy of language.

At the beginning of the previous chapter, I mentioned that both chapters 7 and 8 are intimately connected, in that Coseriu's attitude towards philosophy, as well as his approach to the history of linguistics, are historical in nature, and indeed one of his principal works is the comprehensive *History of the Philosophy of Language*, a synthesis of his main reference points in the history of philosophical-linguistic ideas.

I will begin this chapter with some references to his philosophical background. The second section will focus on the history of the philosophy of language, some of the main lines of tradition identified by him, and some of his historical discoveries. The third section will seek to reconstruct some of his own central philosophical views.

8.2 Coseriu: a philosopher

Coseriu's philosophical background has often been claimed to constitute the main factor that distinguishes him from most other linguists. When he arrived in Italy,

he was already familiar with some of the basic works of classical philosophy, but initially his enormous curiosity focused largely on language diversity and on the literatures of the world, Romance and Slavic in the first instance. Over the course of his years in Rome, philosophy shifted towards the centre of his attention, especially aesthetics, which derived from his passion for literature and art. He missed the chance to attend Croce's and Gentile's lectures, although he began to study philosophy officially during the final years in Rome. After finishing his first *Tesi di Laurea* (on a literary-historical subject) and after moving to Padua in 1944, he started to prepare a dissertation on a second topic: a philosophical thesis with a focus in aesthetics. Philosophy continued to be his main subject in Milan from 1945 onwards, and finally, in 1949, he finished this second thesis, on the evolution of aesthetics in Romania (see chapter 11). Within the field of philosophy, he produced more writing on aesthetics than on the philosophy of language during the late Italian and early Uruguayan years, and in general he dedicated far more time to linguistics than to philosophy from the first years in Montevideo onwards. However, his academic activity always had a broadly philosophical orientation, seeking the answers to questions like what language (the essence of language) is, what a dialect is, what translation is, etc. Asked about his academic instructors in philosophy, he commented:

'I always say—and this is not a joke—that my teachers were Aristotle, Hegel and Humboldt, because they are the thinkers from whom I have learned the most for my general conception or with whom I have identified myself finding substantial and vital material for my own activity.' (Matus/Viramonte 2022, 206)¹

His relationship with these masters derived from close reading and from a critical-textual, philological approach, not from the “living and breathing word” in a Platonic sense.

Even if Coseriu's professional evolution, as well as his international recognition, revolved principally around his activity in linguistics, he never lost or denied his philosophical background, and particularly the philosophy of language became—with a total of about 15 one-semester courses—an integral part of his teaching in Tübingen. From the first years in Tübingen onwards, he maintained close contact with various philosophers and became an associate member of the department of philosophy. He participated as an expert in numerous PhD and habilitation defen-

¹ “Yo siempre digo —y no es una broma— que mis maestros fueron Aristóteles, Hegel y Humboldt, porque son los pensadores de los cuales más he aprendido para la concepción general o con los cuales me he identificado, donde he encontrado materia sustancial y vital para mi propia actividad”.

ces. His reports on PhD theses or other philosophical writing show not only his expertise in the field, but also his own philosophical personality, as well as his preferences for and rejections of other philosophers. For example, some of his observations on the concept of truth in the work of Husserl and Heidegger (in the report on Tugendhat's habilitation thesis), or his reflections on Wittgenstein in several places, well demonstrate a potential for philosophical thought far beyond his published work on language philosophy. His students were instructed in the basic principles of the philosophy of language, although only some of them, like Jürgen Trabant, Donatella di Cesare, Ana Agud and Jörn Albrecht, among others, continued to work directly on philosophical matters.

8.3 The history of the philosophy of language

As in the History of Romance Linguistics (chapter 7), Coseriu's manuscripts on the History of the Philosophy of Language were basically notes that laid the ground for several university courses. The publishing history in this case is as follows: in the winter term of 1968–69, he taught the first part of several weekly courses on 'The history of philosophy of language from antiquity until the present'. This first lecture series, with the subtitle: 'Part 1: From antiquity to Leibniz', was transcribed and typewritten by two attending students, Gunter Narr and Rudolf Windisch, and then reproduced by Gunter Narr in the Polyfoto Vogt printing studio in Stuttgart. Windisch would later become a professor of Romance linguistics, Narr a notable publisher of linguistics, and the initiative to transcribe and publish Coseriu's teaching would serve as the basis for one of the major German linguistic publishing houses². The first volume was published in 1969, and then, in a second edition revised by Gunter Narr, in 1975. The lectures that comprise the second part ("from Leibniz to Rousseau") were delivered in the winter semester 1970/71, and transcribed and published by Gunter Narr in 1972. These publications were "authorised"

2 In fact, Gunter Narr's publishing house came into existence with these first publications of Coseriu's lectures. Narr and Windisch had prepared a written version that was sold across Germany through the AStA student organisation. Narr, a Coseriu disciple, was working at the faculty as a secretary when a representative of Berlin's publishing house De Gruyter was sent to Tübingen to look at the possibility of publishing Coseriu's lectures. This was when Narr became afraid of losing the business and quickly improvised the foundation of his own independent publishing house – and not without success! He initiated the series "Tübinger Beiträge zur Linguistik" ("Tübingen Contributions to Linguistics"), edited by himself, and little by little his house became one of the important German publishing houses in linguistics, to be enlarged following the takeover of the Swiss publishing house Francke and the Tübingen University press Attempto in later years.

by Coseriu himself, which means that he corrected the manuscripts (at least partly). For him, however, the “real” history of language philosophy in fact began after Rousseau, with its first steps in the work of Vico and a real flourishing in the period he used to classify as “between Herder and Humboldt”. After an initial overview in the early 1970s, Coseriu prepared more in-depth lectures on Herder, Hegel, Schleiermacher and Humboldt in the 1980s.

As his disciple Jörn Albrecht points out (who had already prepared the edition of the book on text linguistics, see chapter 3), Coseriu had a conversation with him in 1991, during which they discussed the possibility of preparing a new and revised edition of the whole history of the philosophy of language ([427] (2015), XI). Only shortly after Coseriu’s death in 2002 was the first volume, from the beginnings until Rousseau, published (with a fine foreword by Jürgen Trabant), and later translated into several languages.

The parts dealing with “real” language philosophy – “real” because, according to Coseriu, language as an autonomous object becomes the centre of attention of language philosophy during German Romanticism, and is no longer an instrument for understanding – had been, in their detailed versions of the 1980s, meticulously transcribed by Heinrich Weber (in part with the help of others), a linguist who had been working at the German department since 1969 and who used to attend Coseriu’s lectures after his “discovery” of Coseriu in the early 1980s ([283c] (1993); [283d] (1993); [292b] (1994)). However, for many years, these texts only circulated informally among colleagues. As Weber states in a preliminary remark:

‘With this transcript, E. Coseriu’s last cycle of lectures of on the philosophy of language is available in its entirety. It is not intended for publication in this form. It primarily serves for making Coseriu’s thoughts on this subject accessible to the editor himself and to other interested persons.’³ (Weber in [292b] (1994), II)

Only very recently have these transcripts been made accessible online. But it was not until 2015 that they were published together in an elaborate monograph by Jörn Albrecht, who based the edition on Weber’s texts, and thus made it available to a readership beyond the inner circle of those who had had access to Weber’s transcriptions. This text is absolutely fundamental as a means of understanding Coseriu’s linguistic thought (see the following section). As in the history of linguistics, during his lifetime Coseriu himself only published selected elaborations of cer-

3 “Mit dieser Nachschrift liegen die Vorlesungen des letzten Vorlesungszyklus von E. Coseriu zur Sprachphilosophie vollständig vor. Sie sind in dieser Form nicht für die Publikation bestimmt. In erster Linie dienen sie dazu, dem Herausgeber selbst und anderen Interessierten die Gedanken Coserius zu diesem Thema zugänglich zu machen”.

tain parts of this monumental work, and whereas he might have had plans to publish the whole (see chapter 14 and Kabatek 2002), he hesitated to do so because of the heterogeneity of the manuscript:

‘for the complete publication some parts would have to appear as monographs, for example the chapters on Schleiermacher, Hegel and Humboldt. In an overall presentation of the history of the philosophy of language, it is of course not possible to have, for example, thirty pages on Aristotle and 180 or 200 on Schleiermacher; these chapters would have to be summed up in the complete edition. In the lectures until Leibniz, I had mainly followed the general evolution. I then gave monographic lectures on the later epochs. Herder was already almost a whole semester.’ (*DSs*, 123)⁴

The lectures on German idealism were especially important for Coseriu at a time of dominant linguistic universalism and a relative ignorance of what he considered to be fundamental: the primacy of the particular language.

Due to Albrecht’s 2015 edition of the second volume of Coseriu’s history (which was published in parallel with a re-edition of the first volume), we now have a two-volume comprehensive history of the philosophy of language by Coseriu, and this in some ways reflects the unity and the context that served as a background to all the individual lectures, with whole semesters dedicated to individuals like Herder, Schleiermacher and Humboldt. This is also why we can now justifiably consider this edition as the canonical one, albeit without overlooking the way in which it evolved.

What is it that makes Coseriu’s lectures worth being read today? In his foreword to the 2002 edition of the first part, Jürgen Trabant offers several explanations. First and foremost, it is the author’s encyclopaedic knowledge and close reading of the primary texts. His history of the philosophy of language is a “classic”, indeed one of his most popular works, and this is also the case because underlying the written text there is a genuine spoken voice, a didactic style of a master who does not want to set out to the maximum degree all possible knowledge on a given issue, but rather seeks to transmit to his audience the essential lines of the tradition, and to identify what he considers to be primary. Trabant speaks about the ‘rousing power of criticism’ accompanied with the ‘gesture of masterful speech’

4 “für die Gesamtveröffentlichung müssten einige Teile als Monographien erscheinen, zum Beispiel die Kapitel zu Schleiermacher, Hegel und Humboldt. In einer Gesamtdarstellung zur Geschichte der Sprachphilosophie geht es natürlich nicht, daß man z.B. über Aristoteles dreißig Seiten hat und über Schleiermacher 180 oder 200; diese Kapitel müsste man in der Gesamtausgabe resümieren. In den Vorlesungen hatte ich bis Leibniz vor allem die gesamte Entwicklung verfolgt. Zu den späteren Epochen habe ich dann monographische Vorlesungen gehalten. Schon Herder war fast ein ganzes Semester”.

(in: [428] (2015), XVIII and XX)⁵. The second aspect is Coseriu's extreme originality, standing in opposition as it does to current fashions. When he gave his lectures, the philosophy of language had already begun to be identified with analytic philosophy, an approach that Coseriu criticised severely (see below). Who were the most significant authorities in contemporary philosophy of language at the time? Trabant lists 'Frege, Russell, Wittgenstein, Carnap, Quine, Putnam, Davidson, Wittgenstein II, Austin, Searle'. And what was Coseriu's canon? 'Plato, Aristotle, the Stoa, Augustine, the scholastics, the humanists (Valla, Vives), Locke, Leibniz, Condillac, Vico, Herder, Hegel, Humboldt, Cassirer, Heidegger, Jaspers'. And he adds: 'this tradition, which was not least a German tradition, apparently no longer plays a role in the German-speaking world and in the 'philosophy of language'' (in: [428] (2015), XXIII)⁶. We may add that this goes far beyond the German context. The opposition to contemporary trends means that Coseriu stands alone, in both a positive and a negative sense: the lack of contact with current discussions was surely a problem for the reception of his ideas. A third issue noted by Trabant is that Coseriu always attempted to understand the thought of philosophers from inside their work and not to instrumentalise them as predecessors of his own thought, something which he criticises in Chomsky's attempts to convert Descartes and Humboldt into pioneers of what led to his own linguistic theory (see chapter 10).

Coseriu's *History of the Philosophy of Language* begins with some general reflections on the subject. What is the philosophy of language? He makes a clear distinction between the tasks of language philosophy and those of linguistics. They are independent endeavours: the philosophy of language is only concerned with the essence of language, with what language is, whereas linguistics must presuppose language:

'In contrast to general linguistics and to the theory of language, philosophy of language is concerned with the essence of language itself, and therefore the question of philosophy of language cannot, or cannot only, be posed "within language". It must go beyond language. In the philosophy of language, language must be considered in connection with other human activities and with the nature of the human being in general.' ([427] (2015), 13)⁷

5 "mitreißende[n] Überzeugungskraft der Kritik"; "Gestus der meisterhaften Rede".

6 "Diese Tradition, die nicht zuletzt eine deutsche Tradition war, spielt heute im deutschen Sprachraum in der 'Sprachphilosophie' offensichtlich keine Rolle mehr".

7 "Im Gegensatz zur Allgemeinen Sprachwissenschaft und zur Sprachtheorie geht es in der Sprachphilosophie um das Wesen der Sprache an sich, und deshalb kann die sprachphilosophische Frage nicht, oder nicht nur, 'innerhalb der Sprache' gestellt werden. Sie muß über die Sprache hinausgehen. In der Sprachphilosophie muß die Sprache im Zusammenhang mit den übrigen menschlichen Tätigkeiten und mit dem Wesen des Menschen überhaupt betrachtet werden".

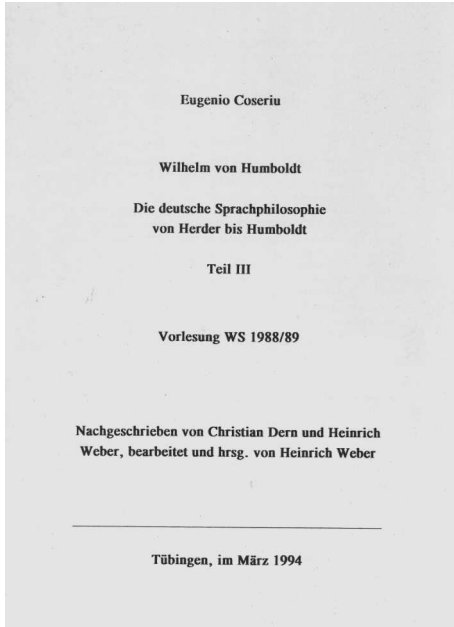


Fig. 8.1: Frontpage of the 1994 transcription of Coseriu's 1988/89 course on Wilhelm von Humboldt's philosophy of language ([292b] (1994)).

Language philosophy is not about “how” language is but about “what” language is. This excludes several branches and works that are labelled “language philosophy”, including the question of what linguistics is; in Coseriu's view this is a philosophical, epistemological question, and not an issue of the philosophy of language itself (see also López Serena 2019b).

In the introduction to the first part, Coseriu anticipates (with an allusion to Heidegger) his own views on the evolution of language philosophy: only after Vico and during German Romanticism does language become the main subject of philosophy:

‘In the older philosophy of language, it is always about language with regard to something else, which on closer inspection turns out to be the actual goal of the question. [...]

Until Vico and until German Romanticism, the philosophy of language does not thematise language as such. It is not about the sense of language alone, it is rather about the sense of language in relation to something else: about the instrumental role of language in the expression of thought, about its medial function in the representation of extra-linguistic reality or of ‘the real’ itself. It can thus be said—and others have already done this, though not in these words—that the philosophy of language up to Vico and up to German Romanticism has only ever been “on its way to the problem of language”.’ ([427] (2015), 14–15)

The first part of the History of the Philosophy of Language includes a brief chapter on Ancient India and then four exhaustive chapters on Greek philosophy: Heraclitus, Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics. Central issues such as discussions on the relationship between names and things (and the whole debate about *physei* and *thesei*, to which Coseriu dedicates several studies (see [308] (1996); [379] (2004)) are presented here, as well as Aristotle's contribution to the understanding of language κατὰ συνθήκην, the different types of *logoi*, the differentiation between language and truth, and the notion of unitary meaning. Aristotle is identified as the most important predecessor of modern language philosophy, exerting an enormous influence right up to the present, but also with some shortcomings, such as 'the incomplete discovery of language historicity' ([427] (2015), 92)⁸, with reference to the famous passage in *De interpretatione* about the letters and their relationship to cognition.

The journey continues with St. Augustine (and, among other things, the importance given to the difference between object language and metalanguage), the "speculative grammar" of the Middle Ages, and a chapter on Vives and the language philosophy of the Renaissance. Vives is another philosopher to whom Coseriu dedicates several studies ([69] (1971); [71] (1971)). The chapter on Descartes opens with criticism of Chomsky's Cartesian linguistics (see chapter 10) and includes a general criticism of the 'misguided path' of discussions on a universal language from Raimundus Lullus to Leibniz. After two chapters on Locke and Leibniz, respectively, Coseriu shifts from a person-related to a thematic focus, highlighting both advances and retrograde steps in the evolution of ideas. He now discusses a variety of directions taken, such as Empiricism, Rationalism and the Enlightenment in Germany and France, but there is one further chapter on an individual writer: Giambattista Vico. Vico is not only the founder of anthropological philosophy, with a strong influence on 18th- and 19th-century thought and the 'German movement', but also develops several ideas which, in Coseriu's opinion, are crucial for an adequate view of language. In the *Scienza nuova*, the differentiation between nature, mathematics and the "mondo civile" can be found, with the humanities as the genuinely "sure" sciences (that is, with assured knowledge). Vico also argues for the priority of language over logic, and the priority of the particular languages over a supposed universal language, contrary to Descartes or Leibniz (see also [294] (1995) and Trabandt 1995). With Vico, the way is thus set for the second part of the philosophy of language, the period that begins with Herder.

Coseriu defends the idea that there is a series of common ideas that mark German philosophical thought on language in the work of Herder, Hamann, Fichte, the

8 "Die unvollständige Entdeckung der Historizität der Sprache".

brothers Schlegel, Schleiermacher, Schelling (who is seen quite critically, see also [120] (1977)), Hegel and Humboldt. He also includes very disapproving section on the “dark chapter” of the “case of Schopenhauer” (see also [149] (1979)).

For Coseriu, the ‘German movement’ marks the second most important moment in the history of language philosophy:

‘The language philosophy of German Romanticism is the second great epoch of philosophy of language ever, after the epoch of Plato and Aristotle. From Herder to Humboldt, an almost unbroken, rich and varied chain of meditation on language can be traced.’ ([428] (2015), 6).⁹

The protagonists here share a series of characteristics: they are polyglot, they work as translators, they draw on all available sources and absorb everything that is produced in other countries, thus developing an interest in all kinds of knowledge. The Humboldt brothers are perhaps the most emblematic examples of this hunger for universal knowledge, Alexander in the field of natural sciences and Wilhelm in linguistics. ‘The keywords of that time are *people* (or *nation*), *history*, *philology*, *comparison*, *difference spirit* and *language*’¹⁰ (ibid., 7).

The first chapter is on Herder. With Herder, a new tradition begins, as Coseriu already had stated in 1977 in a short paper ‘on Hegel’s semantics’:

‘Herder famously (or: as should be famous) stands at the beginning of classical German philosophy of language and not only chronologically; he is at the same time the “main source”, so to speak, and the constant, even if only implicit, reference point of the philosophy of language. Fichte, Friedrich and A.W. Schlegel, Schleiermacher and Schelling, Hegel and Humboldt all take over, directly or indirectly, explicitly or tacitly, ideas of Herder’s. That many of these ideas often appear in these authors much more elaborated and better proven than in Herder himself should not be allowed to obscure the fact that they were already to be found in Herder at least in a seminal form and that Herder in many respects simply made the beginning.’ ([119] (1977), 185, translation apud Forster 2010, 1).

In his exhaustive study on Herder, Forster (2010) takes these reflections of Coseriu as a starting point. He considers Coseriu to stand somewhat on his own in his vindication of Herder’s centrality in the “German movement” and dedicates his study to the comprehensive confirmation of Coseriu’s claim. Coseriu shows the tradition that Herder represents as a continuation of Vico’s ideas, and identifies Herder’s originality in the insistence on the particular language as the starting point of

9 “Die Sprachphilosophie der deutschen Romantik ist die zweite große Epoche der Sprachphilosophie überhaupt, nach der Epoche Platons und Aristoteles’. von Herder bis Humboldt lässt sich eine fast ununterbrochene, reichhaltige und vielfältige Kette der Meditation über Sprache verfolgen”.

10 “Die Schlagworte jener Zeit sind Volk (oder Nation), Geschichte, Philologie, Vergleich, Verschiedenheit, Geist und Sprache”.

all knowledge: the mother tongue as the means by which we attain knowledge of the world in common acts with others. But Coseriu also notes an important shortcoming in Herder's work, and a deficit that repeatedly appears in the German language philosophy of that time (as well as in its later reception):

'This is where an aberration begins: the thesis of the identity of the particular language and thought. This error, which can be traced back to Herder, lives on and sometimes produces strange blossoms. Peculiarities of the national language are understood as an expression of the "national way" of thinking. In reality, the particular language is the starting point of thinking, but thinking goes beyond the particular language.' ([428] (2015), 62).¹¹

However, with Herder and Hamann, a moment of change in the history of language philosophy is reached:

'If Kant marks a turning point in epistemology, Herder and Hamann mark a turning point in the philosophy of language. After them, epistemology is not possible anymore without recourse to language.' ([428] (2015), 62)¹²

This is the case with the philosophy of Fichte, the brothers Schlegel, Schleiermacher and Schelling. Schleiermacher's contribution is exposed extensively, including a comprehensive discussion of the relationship between language and mind as well as of Schleiermacher's theory of translation in the context of his language philosophy.

No separate chapter is devoted to Kant because there is little to be found in his work on the question of the philosophy of language. Hegel, on the other hand, is treated in great detail, although in his case, at first glance there is also not much to be found on the philosophy of language and therefore Hegel has often been rather neglected in the history of the discipline. Coseriu's claim is that language is omnipresent in Hegel's work:

11 "Hier beginnt ein Irrweg: die These von der Identität von Einzelsprache und Denken. Dieser Irrtum, der auf Herder zurückgeht, lebt weiter und treibt mitunter seltsame Blüten. Eigentümlichkeiten der Nationalsprache werden als Ausdruck 'nationaler Denkart' verstanden. In Wirklichkeit ist die Einzelsprache zwar Ausgangspunkt des Denkens, das Denken geht aber über die Einzelsprache hinaus".

12 "Wenn Kant einen Wendepunkt in der Erkenntnistheorie bezeichnet, so bezeichnen Herder und Hamann einen Wendepunkt in der Sprachphilosophie. Nach ihnen ist keine Erkenntnistheorie ohne Rekurs auf die Sprache möglich".

‘One can regard Hegel’s entire philosophy as determined by his conception of language, as connected with the essence of language.’ ([283d] (1993), 124)¹³

This is the case in Hegel’s explanation about the *Process* as exposed in his *Phenomenology* as well as in the *System* as exposed in the *Encyclopedia*:

‘In the Process, we find language at the point where self-consciousness goes out of itself and into others, so that it is no longer alone and for itself, but it is at the same time for others. This is what Hegel calls the perfect existence of consciousness. The basic form of “going out of oneself” is language. Thus language is seen as the basis and construction of the world of spirit.’ ([283d] (1993), 131)¹⁴

And in Hegel’s *System*:

‘Where is language to be found in the system of reality? On the one hand, language is an expression of the individual, even in its empirical individuality, even if not as language but as a material expression. On the other hand, it is a form of cognition, so that one may expect to find language in the realm of the soul, the effective soul working in the world, and on the other hand in the realm of the spirit, the theoretical spirit.’ ([283d] (1993), 131)¹⁵

The central importance of Hegel in the history of the philosophy of language is seen in his own contributions as well as in his general influence on philosophical and linguistic thought:

‘Hegel influenced Humboldt directly and F. de Saussure both indirectly via the Dane Madvig as well as directly, so that his ideas still live on today, even if they are not recognised as such.’ ([283d] (1993), 125)¹⁶

13 “Man kann die ganze Philosophie Hegels als von seiner Sprachauffassung her bestimmt, als mit dem Wesen der Sprache zusammenhängend ansehen”.

14 “Im Prozeß finden wir die Sprache an dem Punkt, an dem das Selbstbewußtsein aus sich selbst aus- und zu den anderen eingeht, so daß es nicht mehr allein an und für sich selbst ist, sondern zugleich für andere ist. Dies bezeichnet Hegel als vollkommene Existenz des Bewußtseins. Die Grundform des ‘Aus-sich-selbst-Herausgehens’ ist die Sprache. Somit wird die Sprache als Grundlage und Konstruktion der Welt des Geistes angesehen”.

15 “Wo findet man die Sprache im System der Wirklichkeit? Die Sprache ist einerseits Ausdruck des Individuums auch in seiner empirischen Individualität, wenn auch nicht als Sprache, sondern als materieller Ausdruck. Andererseits ist sie eine Form der Erkenntnis, so da man erwarten darf, da man die Sprache einmal im Bereich der Seele, der wirksamen, in der Welt wirkenden Seele, zum anderen im Bereich des Geistes, des theoretischen Geistes, antrifft”.

16 “Hegel hat Humboldt direkt und F. de Saussure sowohl indirekt über den Dänen Madvig als auch direkt beeinflußt, so daß seine Ideen auch heute noch weiterleben, auch wenn sie nicht als solche erkannt werden”.

Hegel's philosophy in general, and his philosophy of language in particular, is fundamental for Coseriu's own thought (see section 8.5); he admired Hegel to the point that his German writing style, as Dietrich observes, was strongly influenced by the style of Hegel (Dietrich in [443] (2021), 14).

Beyond Hegel, the culmination point for the philosophy of language as outlined in the second volume of Coseriu's history is Humboldt. Although Humboldt is not really a philosopher but rather a linguist, Coseriu considers his contribution to language philosophy as absolutely elementary and identifies his own philosophical linguistics strongly with Humboldt (and according to Forster 2017, 165, there is also a lot of Coseriu's own philosophy of language in his chapter on Humboldt). Humboldt was not only basic, as we have seen in the previous chapters of this book, for Coseriu's own conception of language and for his criticism towards the limitations of structuralism. Coseriu also coincides with Humboldt in his insistence on language diversity and on the structured organisation of language systems up to the level of the language type (see next chapter). The chapter on Humboldt in the History of the Philosophy of language stems from his last Tübingen semester as an active professor when he dedicated a whole course to Humboldt and confesses:

'This is my last winter semester in Tübingen, officially at least, and that's why I've decided for the first time to devote an entire course to Wilhelm von Humboldt. We have always dealt with Humboldt, in seminars and in parts of lectures on the philosophy of language, but we have never been able to devote an entire semester to Humboldt. Actually, all our lectures were directly or indirectly related to Humboldt, so that my view of language was sometimes classified as "Humboldtian structuralism", whatever that means. We dealt with Humboldt much earlier than others, at a time when Humboldt had not yet become fashionable.' ([292b] (1994), 1)¹⁷

Coseriu admits that Humboldt's writings on language are not easy to understand and that he has a particularly difficult style. He insists, however, in that behind the complexity of his work, where everything is related to everything, there is a

17 "Das ist mein letztes Wintersemester in Tübingen, offiziell wenigstens, und deshalb habe ich mir zum ersten Mal vorgenommen, eine ganze Vorlesung Wilhelm von Humboldt zu widmen. Wir haben uns eigentlich immer wieder mit Humboldt beschäftigt, in Seminaren und in Teilen von Vorlesungen zur Sprachphilosophie, wir haben aber bisher noch nie ein ganzes Semester Humboldt widmen können. Eigentlich waren aber alle unseren Vorlesungen direkt oder indirekt auf Humboldt bezogen, so daß meine Sprachauffassung bisweilen als 'Humboldtianischer Strukturalismus' eingestuft wurde, was auch immer das bedeuten mag. Wir haben uns viel früher mit Humboldt beschäftigt als andere, schon zu einer Zeit, als Humboldt noch nicht Mode geworden war".

unitary conception of what language is. Language is the primary form of human creativity:

‘For Humboldt, language is the first form of human formativity or creativity. Humans are characterised by formativity, and at the same time formativity is the characteristic trait and task of humans. Since language is the first and most general form of formativity, analysing language is the best way to determine its characteristic traits and its sense.’ ([292b] (1994), 129)¹⁸

Language is *energeia*, the power that enables to create new linguistic facts at any moment; language allows us to be conscious as well as to transmit the content of our consciousness to others and is the basic form of intersubjectivity. Language is always a particular language that offers a certain perspective of the world and allows at the same time access to all possible other languages and perspectives (for more on Humboldt, see next chapter).

Coseriu announced his lectures on the history of the philosophy of language as continuing “until the present”, but in fact he ended his overview with Humboldt. It has repeatedly been seen as a cause of regret that Coseriu did not carry on his work and that there was, among other things, no discussion of modern American Analytic philosophy (cf. Trabant in [428] (2015) XXIV). As Jörn Albrecht points out in the introduction to the second volume of the *History of the Philosophy of Language*,

‘This regret is not entirely unjustified. Coseriu, a typical representative of ‘old Europe’, occasionally reacted with quite ‘unphilosophical’ irritation to the carelessness with which some American colleagues tended to disregard European tradition. In terms of terminology, he made no concessions to modern analytic philosophy of language.’ ([428] (2015), XIII)¹⁹

18 “Die Sprache ist für Humboldt die erste Form der Formativität bzw. Kreativität des Menschen. Der Mensch ist durch die Formativität charakterisiert, und zugleich ist die Formativität der charakteristische Zug und die Aufgabe des Menschen. Da die Sprache die erste und allgemeinste Form der Formativität ist, kann man an ihr am besten ihre charakteristischen Züge feststellen und ihren Sinn erschließen”.

19 “Dieses Bedauern ist nicht ganz ungerechtfertigt. Coseriu, ein typischer Vertreter des ‚alten Europa‘, reagierte gelegentlich mit ganz ‘unphilosophischer’ Gereiztheit auf die Unbekümmertheit, mit der einige amerikanische Kollegen sich über die europäische Tradition hinwegzusetzen pflegen. In terminologischer Hinsicht machte er keinerlei Konzessionen an die moderne analytische Sprachphilosophie”.

8.4 Analytic philosophy

Even if the monumental *History of the Philosophy of Language* did not deal with the philosophy of language of the late 19th and 20th centuries, Coseriu left no doubt as to his critical attitude of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, and he rejected the language-philosophical contributions of Wittgenstein and Russell, to mention just a few examples. He defended his term “Sinn” as being wholly different from Frege’s “Sinn”, and he criticised him as lacking an acknowledgement of the language-particular dimension due to a reference-based view of language. His pronounced aversion to Bertrand Russell is also noteworthy (see chapter 1). Asked about his opinion on Wittgenstein, in *DSs* he states:

‘AM: What is your relationship with the other great and influential philosophical theorist of this century, Wittgenstein, in the two phases of his work?’

C: I have written about this several times, in various reports on works on Wittgenstein. I think both phases are completely useless. First of all, the first phase with all the presumption and with this appearance of saying something very deep about language, but where actually nothing deep is said and where the meaning and also the designation are simply not understood. It is, how shall I put it, an inferiority complex of so many who swear “in verba Wittgensteini” and don’t have the courage to say that he never understood what meaning is. These confusions also underlie analytic philosophy, when there is simply a lack of understanding of what language and its meaning really is. Actually, when one looks deeper at it, language is considered either from the point of view of the language of science or from the point of view of an artificial designation system. In the first phase, in the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein’s ideas actually still agree with Frege and even more so with Bertrand Russell; and the meaning is simply reduced to the object designated.

And in the second phase, i. e. in the *Philosophical Investigations* and also in the so-called *Blue and Brown Books*, there is a correction of this fact or this error; but not through an understanding of language per se, but through another error. Better said, the error is replaced, but not by a more precise or deeper insight, but by a confusion between the “usus”, the usage of the language forms in speech, and the reason or the ‘ratio’ of the usage. It is rightly remarked that one cannot say that the meaning coincides with the object, since, for example, one can still say “the cup” of a cup that no longer exists, a cup that I broke. So you have to justify it in some other way. And up to here everything is correct. But Wittgenstein’s conclusion is wrong, for he sticks to the “meaning” as a usage in the reference. Hence the recourse to language use and wordplay, etc. He never wanted to understand that it was not a question of determining the use of language, but of the motivation behind the use of language, i. e. the question of why the speakers use the forms in this or that way, what is behind it, what is the content they mean. For the meaning also admits completely new usages, and therefore it neither coincides with the usage nor can it be deduced from the usage alone; for it can

be used for entirely new objects or in entirely new situations and contexts, and that is the real problem of meaning.' (DSs, 227–228).²⁰

At the beginning of this long quotation, Coseriu mentions “various reports on works on Wittgenstein”. I have already quoted one of these reports (on a PhD thesis defended in the mid-1970s), in Chapter 2, in the context of the “two historicities”. In a more extended context, Coseriu writes with reference to Frege, Russell, and both Wittgensteins, as well as to Speech Act theory:

20 “AM: Wie steht es mit Ihrer Beziehung zu dem anderen großen und einflußreichen sprachphilosophischen Theoretiker in diesem Jahrhundert, zu Wittgenstein, in den zwei Phasen seines Werkes?

C: Ich habe mich mehrmals schriftlich dazu geäußert, in verschiedenen Gutachten zu Arbeiten über Wittgenstein. Ich halte beide Phasen für völlig unbrauchbar. Zunächst die erste Phase mit der ganzen Anmaßung und mit diesem Anschein, sehr Tiefes zur Sprache zu sagen, wo aber eigentlich nichts Tiefes gesagt wird und wo die Bedeutung und auch die Bezeichnung einfach nicht verstanden werden. Es ist, wie soll ich sagen, ein Minderwertigkeitskomplex von so vielen, die ‘in verba Wittgensteini’ schwören und nicht den Mut haben, zu sagen, daß er nie verstanden hat, was die Bedeutung ist. Es sind diese Verwechslungen, die auch der analytischen Philosophie zugrunde liegen, wenn einfach nicht verstanden wird, was die Sprache ist und welches ihr Sinn ist, sondern es wird die Sprache im Grunde, wenn man tiefer geht, entweder vom Gesichtspunkt der Sprache der Wissenschaft oder eines künstlichen Bezeichnungssystems betrachtet. In der ersten Phase, im *Tractatus*, stimmen die Ideen Wittgensteins eigentlich noch mit Frege überein oder sogar noch mehr mit Bertrand Russell; und es wird die Bedeutung einfach auf den bezeichneten Gegenstand zurückgeführt.

Und in der zweiten Phase, also in den Untersuchungen und auch in den sogenannten Blauen Heften, gibt es zwar eine Korrektur dieses Faktums oder dieses Irrtums, aber nicht durch ein Verständnis der Sprache schlechthin, sondern durch einen anderen Irrtum. Besser gesagt, der Irrtum wird ersetzt, aber nicht durch eine genauere oder tiefere Einsicht, sondern durch eine Verwechslung zwischen dem ‘Usus’, dem Gebrauch der Sprachformen im Sprechen, und dem Grund oder der *ratio des Usus*. Es wird mit Recht bemerkt, man könne nicht sagen, daß die Bedeutung mit dem Gegenstand zusammenfällt, da man z. B. auch von einem Becher, der nicht mehr existiert, den ich zerbrochen habe, doch noch ‘der Becher’ sagen kann. Deshalb müsse man das irgendwie anders rechtfertigen. Und bis hierher ist alles richtig. Aber die Schlußfolgerung von Wittgenstein ist verkehrt, denn er bleibt bei der ‘Bedeutung’ als Verwendung in der Bezeichnung. Daher das Zurückgreifen auf den Sprachgebrauch und die Sprachspiele usw. Er hat nie verstehen wollen, daß es nicht um die Feststellung des Sprachgebrauchs geht, sondern um die Motivation des Sprachgebrauchs, d. h. um die Frage, warum die Sprecher die Formen so verwenden, was dahinter steht, was der Inhalt ist, den sie meinen. Denn die Bedeutung läßt auch einen völlig neuen Usus zu, und deshalb fällt sie nicht mit dem Usus zusammen und kann auch nicht aus dem Usus allein deduziert werden; denn sie kann für völlig neue Gegenstände oder in völlig neuen Situationen und Kontexten verwendet werden, und das ist das eigentliche Problem der Bedeutung”.

‘These points of view do not recognise the essence of language and the corresponding, supposedly “language-philosophical” theories cannot solve the actual philosophical problem of the essence of language, because they do not even pose this problem. Even more, they tacitly regard this problem as already solved—in the sense that language would be a system of designation for a “world” that is already given in some other way—, they regard language as something given, as an instrument that is already available, and they limit themselves to examining the use of this instrument in a form of speaking that is understood as purely technical behaviour [...].

The double historicity of language (i. e. the historicity of the particular languages and that of the texts) appears in these theories almost only in the completely inappropriate, in rational terms even absurd, form of “conventionality”. What is missing in these theories is the distinction between the communication *of* something and the communication *with* someone (i. e. the already originally assumed togetherness that makes communication possible). Linguistic creativity in its proper sense is also missing: language is treated as if it were the expression and communication of knowledge gained elsewhere, not as a knowledge-creating, original form of cognition (also the speech act talked about in speech act theory is an act of use and not the original, creative speech act through which language always comes into being) [...].

Language is a free activity and therefore its object (the creation of meanings) is by definition an infinite one. Therefore, the presumption that philosophical problems can be solved with the help of linguistic analysis by starting with the refusal to pose the actual philosophical problem of language is nothing other than presumption, which should be exposed as such.’ (Unpublished PhD Report, 1975)²¹

21 “Diese Fragestellungen gehen am Wesen der Sprache vorbei und die entsprechenden, angeblich ‘sprachphilosophischen’ Theorien können das eigentlich philosophische Problem des Wesens der Sprache grundsätzlich schon nicht lösen, da sie dieses Problem nicht einmal stellen. Mehr noch, dieses Problem betrachten sie stillschweigend als schon gelöst – und zwar in dem Sinne, dass die Sprache ein Bezeichnungssystem für eine schon anders gegebene “Welt” wäre –, die Sprache betrachten Sie als ein Gegebenes, als ein schon zur Verfügung stehendes Instrument, und sie beschränken sich auf die Untersuchung der Verwendung dieses Instruments in einem als rein technischem Verhalten aufgefaßten Sprechen [...].

Die doppelte Historizität des Sprachlichen (d. h. die Historizität der Einzelsprachen und diejenigen der Texte) erscheint in diesen Theorien so gut wie nur in der völlig unangemessenen, ja in rationaler Hinsicht sogar absurden Form der ‘Konventionalität’. Es fehlt in diesen Theorien die Unterscheidung zwischen Mitteilung *von* etwas und Kommunikation *mit* jemand (d. h. dem schon ursprünglich angenommenen und die Mitteilung ermöglichenden Miteinandersein). Es fehlt ebenso die sprachliche Kreativität in ihrem eigentlichen Sinne: die Sprache wird so behandelt, als ob sie Ausdruck und Mitteilung eines anders gewonnenen Wissens wäre, nicht als Wissen schaffende, ursprüngliche Form der Erkenntnis (auch der Sprechakt, von dem in der Sprechakttheorie die Rede ist, ist ein Verwendungsakt und nicht der ursprüngliche, schöpferische Sprechakt, durch den Sprache stets entsteht) [...].

Die Sprache ist eine freie Tätigkeit und deshalb ist ihr ‘Objekt’ (das Schaffen von Bedeutungen) per definitionem ein unendliches. Daher ist auch die Anmaßung, philosophische Probleme mit Hilfe der Sprachanalyse aufheben zu können, indem man damit anfängt, daß man sich wei-

His attitude towards Wittgenstein is, however, threefold: it consists, as we have seen, of basically rejecting both phases of Wittgenstein's thought. However, beyond this rejection there are also numerous documents that discuss general and also more detailed aspects (the same holds for Bertrand Russell: apart from the clear rejection, there is discussion, even detailed discussion, of certain issues, such as the theory of proper names). And third, there is respect for the need to study Wittgenstein's work, to the point that Coseriu, after participating in April 1977 in a Tübingen conference on Wittgenstein, was a mediator and one of the leading figures in trying to convince the Heidelberg Academy of the usefulness of an edition of Wittgenstein's complete works (Erbacher 2019). In the Coseriu Archive there are several documents that testify to this three-part attitude.

I personally conserve a sheet of paper on which he explains to me in a few words, in Spanish, his main criticism of Wittgenstein's ideas, with notes I took during a conversation about some further details on the matter. It would be an interesting task to gather all the texts about Wittgenstein and other 20th-century philosophers and to reconstruct in detail their possible influence on Coseriu's work, as well as, in other cases, the exact reasons for his rejection of them.

8.5 Coseriu's philosophy of language

The question that arises after our outline of Coseriu's history of the philosophy of language is whether there in fact emerges a Coserian philosophy of language. As in the case of the history of linguistics, he postulates that only through an awareness of the past is it possible to say anything that might have sense or be innovative in the present. This is one of the applications of his principle of historicity (see chapters 1 and 4). His own philosophical view is surely unique and individual, but it is based on a combination of lines of thoughts. There has been some speculation as to the influence of certain philosophers on Coseriu, and we will certainly find many possible parallels in his ideas with the work of Kant, Cassirer, Collingwood, Husserl, Dewey, Heidegger and others, although sometimes these also may be due to similar thinking and not to direct influence. Several studies have discussed Coseriu's philosophical references (cf., e.g., Munteanu 2013; 2020; 2021), but there remains still a lot to be done in this field. There are some basic authors, as well as certain less central ones, who clearly influenced Coseriu, and he himself men-

gert, das eigentlich philosophische Problem der Sprache zu stellen, nichts anderes als Anmaßung, die als solche bloßgestellt werden müßte”.

Wittgenstein
 Con respecto a W. - el error consistió en inter-
 pretarlo - es decir en creer que sólo lo que aparece y
 lo que se dice es lo que es. Pero en un momento
 que 'el significado es el uso en el lenguaje' -
 lo importante es que se dice cuando 'que el
 significado no es el 'objeto descrito' y que el
 significado es el uso. Pero de esto se
 ha deducido que es el uso (como lo hacen
 algunos W.) - Pero que es aquello que
 justifica el uso, que está en la base del
 uso - y a que se le llama 'el fundamento'
 es el hecho de que, la descripción.
 Por tanto la posibilidad de descripción
 los condiciona a su descripción.
 Además: no simplemente 'en el lenguaje' - sino
 en una lengua determinada.

Fig. 8.2: Notes on Wittgenstein and language, ms. written in 1995, © Coseriu Archive Tübingen.

tioned on different occasions that the two he considers most important in the history of the philosophy of language are Aristotle and Hegel:

'In absolute terms, i.e. as far as the essential definition of the essence of language is concerned—if one may say so—I regard Hegel as the second high point in the history of the philosophy of language in general (as is well known, I regard Aristotle as the first one).' ([263d] (1993), 125)²²

One might wonder why a name like Humboldt is not mentioned in this context, but Humboldt—though very much admired by Coseriu—might rather be considered to represent a continuation of Hegel's thought (which does not deny that he is much more important than Hegel in terms of the history of *linguistics*). At the same time, Hegel is an admirer of Aristotle and adopts important ideas from him, and Hegel also influences Saussure, both directly, and also via Humboldt and Madvig. There is, hence, a line of historical continuity, and Coseriu identifies "his" family of philosophers, those who contribute, on his view, to progress in thinking on language.

²² "In Absoluter Hinsicht, d.h. was die wesentliche Bestimmung des Wesens Sprache betrifft, wenn man so sagen darf, betrachte ich Hegel als den zweiten Höhepunkt in der Geschichte der Sprachphilosophie überhaupt (als ersten Höhepunkt betrachte ich bekanntlich Aristoteles)".

The Aristotelian background is important for the general idea of language as *energeia* and the fact that language is arbitrary ('due to establishment', "κατὰ συνθήκην"). Humans are humans due to the *logos*. But *logos* is language in general and not necessarily one particular language, and the really important second step in language philosophy was taken during the idealist period. Here, language becomes the central object of language philosophy, and language is "prior" or "premature": that is, language is there before anything else. There is no other thing without language. No reference, no object, no logic. It is not that the existence of objects independently of language were denied, as in an extreme version of linguistic relativism; rather, it is a matter of the way we consider objects, their *being* as accessible only through linguistic signs. Language and work are the two basic dimensions of humans:

'In the eternal ideal history of human development, language is "premature" because it already contains everything spiritual in advance, even if it is not yet differentiated. It is—as I once put it—the "coming into appearance of the human" and the "opening of all (spiritual) possibilities of the human being". Therefore, with Hegel and with Hegelian justification, I accept *work* and *language* as the basic dimensions of human nature. Work for humans as biological beings, language for humans as thinking beings.' (DSs, 266)²³

But language is not just language tout court, it is the particular language ("Einzelsprache") by which the world is accessed in accordance with others who share that language. We have seen in chapter 1, presenting Coseriu's principles, as well as over the course of the other chapters of this book, that Coseriu always insists on this fact, that the major achievement of language philosophy and of linguistics is, for him, this perspective on the particularity and the diversity of human languages, together with the perspective of the world from the point of view of this particularity which, at the same time, constitutes access to universality. His mission is to defend such an achievement, and the retrograde steps in the recent history of linguistics in this sense, all those views that ignore the individuality of each particular language, earn his strong rejection and harsh criticism.

23 "Die Sprache ist in der ewigen Idealgeschichte der Entwicklung des Menschen "voreilig", weil sie alles Geistige schon im voraus enthält, wenn auch als noch nicht differenziert. Sie ist – wie ich es einmal formuliert habe – das "In-Erscheinung-Treten des Menschlichen" und die "Eröffnung aller (geistigen) Möglichkeiten des Menschen". Deshalb nehme ich mit Hegel und mit Hegelscher Begründung eben die Arbeit und die Sprache als Grunddimensionen des Wesens des Menschen an. Die Arbeit für den Menschen als biologisches Wesen, die Sprache für den Menschen als denkendes Wesen".

Die Sprache ist in der ewigen Idealggeschichte der Entwicklung des Menschen "voreilig", weil sie alles Geistige schon im voraus enthält, wenn auch als noch nicht differenziert. Sie ist - wie ich es einmal formuliert habe - das "In-Erscheinung-Treten des Menschlichen" und die "Eröffnung aller (geistigen) Möglichkeiten des Menschen". Deshalb nehme ich mit Hegel und mit Hegelscher Begründung eben die Arbeit und die Sprache als Grunddimensionen des Wesens des Menschen an.

Fig. 8.3: Insertion of an additional paragraph in DSs by Coseriu (see the English translation above), © Coseriu Archive Tübingen.

8.6 Criticism and outlook

This chapter has sought to present Coseriu's explicit work on the history of the philosophy of language. The explicit part is the openly visible side of the omnipresent philosophical palimpsest underlying his oeuvre: finality and causality, competence and creativity, signification and arbitrariness are not just words or terms that refer to a single source; across and between all the concepts he employs there is a long tradition, indeed a story, that can be seen in his two important historical overviews, as presented in this and the previous chapter. Coseriu reconstructs the historical lines of philosophical thought not only by looking indirectly at reports of some of the central ideas of history or by picking out certain convenient ideas; he critically evaluates the entire work of the most important thinkers here, also mentioning many of the lesser-known ones, and trying to do justice to the originality of concepts.

A critical perspective on Coseriu's philosophical work will encounter several aspects where recent research should be taken into account: his original conception of the history of the philosophy of language is more than 50 years old, and his first contact with the work of many philosophers stems from the 1940s, when he first became familiar with their texts, often in Italian translation, before later reading them critically in their original versions.

As in the history of Romance linguistics, the always-evaluating perspective might seem strange for today's readers. Coseriu tries to identify the originality and the progress of thought. One might raise the criticism that there is a certain tendency towards a teleological perspective and to a view that always tries to

draw on what might be of particular use for his own conceptions (which is considered to be the most appropriate one). Coseriu, however, explicitly criticises this attitude, for example, when analysing Croce's interpretation of Vico (vol. 1, 201–303) or when referring to Chomsky, and he would probably have objected, if such a judgement had been applied to his own work, that rather than partialising the historical view, he does in fact identify what is useful for his own conceptions, and what can be adopted as an element for their greater coherence.

Another possible criticism relates to a certain selectivity in references. Michael N. Forster, who in other contexts speaks with great esteem of Coseriu, mentions omissions such as Parmenides in the chapters on ancient philosophy, or the fact that, in his opinion, Coseriu overlooks certain issues, such as the anticipation in the work of Leibniz and Wolff of “the doctrine of thought's fundamental dependence on language that came to play such an important role in the philosophies of language of Herder, Hamann, Schleiermacher, Humboldt, and others” (Forster 2017, 166). This is not the place to judge the degree to which such criticism is valid or appropriate: as we noted above, Coseriu selects and deselects very consciously those who, in his view, made real contributions to language philosophy, and indeed he exhaustively reports on Leibniz' and Wolff's contributions.

In general, and against all possible shortcomings that must be discussed seriously, Coseriu's *History of the Philosophy of Language* is a fascinating work, one that offers not only important insights into his own background as a philosopher and linguist, but also an enormously well-informed and refreshingly critical view on the subject it addresses. As Trabant fittingly puts it:

‘Nevertheless, Coseriu's reading of the classics of philosophy of language is not obsolete today; moreover it has itself the status of a classic, and the stirring and fascinating nature of his lectures can still be experienced today.’ (Trabant in Coseriu 2015, 1, XIX)²⁴

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²⁴ “Dennoch ist Coserius Lektüre der sprachphilosophischen Klassiker heute nicht überholt, sie hat gleichsam selber den Status eines Klassikers, und das Mitreißende und Faszinierende, jener Vorlesungen ist auch heute noch erfahrbar”.

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Chapter 9

Romance languages and linguistic typology

9.1 Romance languages and linguistics

This chapter is dedicated to Coseriu's work on individual issues in particular languages as well as to his conception of linguistic typology. As we will see, it is surprising that the two fields are connected by a common principle: historicity. Coseriu's work on the Romance languages traces their history or describes, explains and systematises historical facts that can be found in different languages. The historical evolution and the synchronic view on systems are but two sides of the same coin, and the synchronic projection is always simply a particular view on historicity. It includes, as we have seen in chapter 4, all levels of synchronic analysis (see also Albrecht 2021): the norm as well as the system, and finally the language type (section 9.2).

Coseriu was never a “fieldworker” in the classical sense. He was of rural origins, but even his work on dialectology and linguistic geography is theoretical rather than empirical. However, it would be too simplistic to consider him an “armchair linguist” in the sense of this classical and reductive binarism. His insistence on the individuality of particular languages not only derived from his affinity for German idealistic philosophy, but also – in accordance with German idealistic philosophers – from his own individual knowledge of many languages and his pleasure of speaking and reading them. Coseriu was not only interested in structures and grammars, he enjoyed discovering languages, practicing them, and living within them: the Romance languages as well as the classic languages Latin and Greek, the Slavic languages, German, English and even Japanese. He was an admirer of literature and considered it to be worth learning a language just to be able to read its poetry in the original version. When he arrived at the University of Rome, he tried to profit as much as possible from the wide range of language courses available. During his Italian and early Uruguayan years, he translated a great deal, doing so from various languages (Romanian, Slavic languages, German, among others) also into languages that were not his mother tongue, Italian and Spanish (which in fact he considered to be his second and third mother tongues). As a language learner, he was an interested observer of language phenomena, of language structures as well as of idiosyncratic constructions, phraseologisms and lexical particularities. He not only published several studies on particular linguistic phenomena mainly from Romance languages, but also dedicated a significant amount of his teaching to issues in particular languages, often doing so in the very lan-

guage in question. During his final official semester in Tübingen prior to retiring in 1991, he taught a course on ‘The principal issues of the Romanian language’ in Romanian, ‘The principal issues of the Spanish language’ in Spanish, and the same in Portuguese and Italian. But he was not only interested in the major Romance languages; looking at the list of his courses in Tübingen, we find Old Occitan and contemporary Occitan, Dalmatian, Franco-Provençal, Sardinian, Sursilvan as well as Rheto-Romance in general.

He was also a notable pioneer of Catalan studies in Germany. Catalan is now a recognised and widely studied language, but was in a wholly different situation in the 1960s when Coseriu, in the middle of the Franco dictatorship and the oppression of Catalan in its own territories, initiated Catalan studies, teaching several courses in Tübingen and offering a position at the university for the poet and translator in exile Antoni Pous. Several of Coseriu’s disciples then studied aspects of Catalan (Schlieben-Lange 1971, Lüdtke 1978 Kremnitz 1979), and Jens Lüdtke (1984) wrote a general introduction in German that became a milestone in the boom of German Catalan studies in the 1980s. Lüdtke had also been one of the organisers of the *Jocs florals de l’exili* in Tübingen in 1970, a poetry competition in the tradition of medieval poetry disputes which became an important manifestation of Catalan culture, with thousands of participants. In Tübingen, the poet Salvador Espriu was awarded the Montaigne Prize in the same context, and much later, Coseriu became a semi-fictional figure in the impressive Catalan best-seller novel *Jo confesso*, by Jaume Cabré (2011).

Coseriu also taught courses on the literature of these languages (on the *Divina commedia* and the *Lusiadas* as well as on the Spanish *Conde Lucanor*, plus the work of the Arcipreste de Hita, Mistral’s *Mirèio* and the Roman poet Giuseppe Gioachino Belli). Literature was for him an important source of linguistic examples and he knew many important literary works in intimate detail, indeed sometimes by heart. He combined his exhaustive empirical knowledge of these languages and literatures with his own personal view on them, with insights derived from personal observation. And his reflections were never only descriptive; he always searched for some kind of explanation, be it the discovery of structural principles underlying the phenomena, or a search for areal or evolutionary principles that added some kind of explanatory evidence to the mere description of facts.

This means that in his empirical work too Coseriu is always a theoretical linguist, if “theoretical” is understood as the search for explanations beyond pure observation and description; that is, with reference to some abstract model or to some general inventory of principles, and where “theoretical linguistics” is not reserved for those approaches that deny theoretical value to any explanation that does not refer to a supposed universal grammar.

The vast oeuvre on language-particular issues is still only partly known, since there are numerous unpublished manuscripts in the Coseriu Archive that remain to be discovered, from the more exhaustive and partly or completely written studies, to the sketches of ideas he used to subsume under the title of ‘various ideas’, “*idee varie*.” These sometimes refer to very detailed aspects and observations, but there are also extensive manuscripts that were the basis for Coseriu’s teaching, many of these containing not only reports on what he found in literature but also original thought, such as his manuscript on *Evolución de la lengua* ([462] (2023)) on the history of Spanish, or other monographic descriptions of the history of a language (Italian, Romanian, French, Portuguese), as well as notes on the “Main issues of the language x”, a title he used repeatedly in reference to a number of Romance languages. We have already mentioned the verbal system (chapter 6) as an area of particular interest, and there are several publications and many manuscripts on questions of tense and aspect in different Romance languages, a field continued by several of Coseriu’s disciples. Coseriu’s studies on the verb also includes work on Japanese, a language he became interested in from the 1970s onwards ([151] (1979)).

The work on particular languages not only includes systemic aspects but also external factors such as the position of one language with respect to another one or concrete issues concerning language policies. As early as the aforementioned manuscript on the evolution of Spanish, from the early 1950s, he argued for a pluricentric view, against the more common positions at that time, this in accordance with what would eventually become the official language policy of the Royal Spanish Academy (to which Coseriu was a corresponding member) and the Association of Spanish Academies from the 1990s onwards. His view on American Spanish was also pioneering in this sense ([249] (1990)).

He participated in the once controversial discussion about the position of Galician with respect to Portuguese ([228] (1987); [242] (1989)), as well as in the debates on so-called *moldovenesc*, the artificially constructed language variety of his birthplace which he simply claimed to be Romanian (e.g., [362] (2001); see also Bojoga 2017).

Coseriu’s personal biography led to him live and work in several Romance languages, from his Romanian childhood, via Italian, to Ibero-Romance. He also had an excellent knowledge of French, yet the southern Romance languages were the ones he knew best. This clearly influenced his view on the “lateral” similarities between Romanian and Ibero-Romance. The idea of the lateral areas, as formulated by Matteo Bartoli (1945) and critically revised by Coseriu, accompanied his personal linguistic experience throughout his life and was the basis for several studies. In his introduction to *Vulgar Latin*, from the early 1950s, he had already provided exhaustive lists of forms where Eastern and Western Latin go hand in hand and

where the central areas are different because they received later innovations. But Coseriu also uncovered laterality in several cases that went beyond the level of the simple lexicon, showing as he did parallel constructions such as Sp. *no cabe duda* and Rom. *nu încapă îndoială* (1987 [229]) or, with a much wider, pan-European scope, the case of *tomo y me voy* (1966 [36]).

Yet laterality can also be unilateral. From his very early work, Coseriu looked for particularities of “Eastern Latinity”, and in the 1970s and 1980s he published several studies on the different Latin base of Romanian, this related to his “Romanian turn” which we referred to in chapter 7. The studies on phraseology and of “repeated discourse”, a field to which he and his disciples dedicated many studies (cf. Munteanu 2007), presupposed a vast knowledge of the languages involved, including their respective histories. This also led to several etymological studies (see, e.g., [27] (1961); [45] (1968); [100] (1975)). Already in one of his first linguistic publications he explained a case of Slavic etymology.

E. Coseriu: *Sull'etimologia del serbocroato bugârstica* 'canzone epica in versi lunghi'.

Delle due etimologie proposte: da *bugar* 'bulgaro' e da lat. *vulgaris* o it. *volgare*, nessuna appare accettabile per tutta la famiglia della parola. In questa vanno perciò distinti tre gruppi: 1) b., *bugarkinja*, *bugarka*, *bugarski* 'indigeno, del luogo' (idioma), *bugar-kabanica* 'pelliccia rustica' da lat. *vulgaris* o it. *volgare* (adattamenti dotti o, forse, da un più antico *bugarski* 'rustico' da *vulgares*, termine col quale la romanità balcanica designava gli slavi pagani); 2) *bugariti* 'lamentarsi, cantare tristemente', *bugàranje* 'lamento, canto lamentoso' (per cui bisogna cercare un'altra etimologia); e 3) *bugar* 'stallone', *bugar* 'maiale', alb. *bullgarë* 'cetra' (da *bugar*, *bulgar*: aggettivi sostant.). L'accostamento *bugarstica-bugariti* (per cui *bugarin* 'cantastorie'), che si trova già in Hektorovic' (1568) è probabilmente arbitrario, dovuto alla somiglianza fonetica (in seguito si ebbe anche una contaminazione di significato, per cui il Diz. Acc. Zag. definisce la b. come 'canzone sulla morte di un eroe', mentre il significato originario era semplicemente 'canzone epica in volgare' [cioè non in it. o lat.]). Ancor più recente la contaminazione con *bugar* 'bulgaro', avvenuta quando *bugarski* 'volgare' si era completamente vuotato di significato. L'espressione *na srpskon. nacinu, starinski* (modi et styli sarbiaci) che spesso accompagna la parola b. sarebbe tautologica: sarebbe, cioè, una spiegazione con altre parole del significato di b. (parola coniata e quindi, in un primo tempo, inintelligibile).

Alle ore 19 è tolta la seduta.

Fig. 9.1: Note on an early contribution on etymology presented in the *Sodalizio Glottologico Milanese* ([3] (1948)).

From his early Montevideo years onwards, Vulgar Latin was a field of interest for him and the subject of several publications. It was only following his death that his disciple Hansbert Bertsch prepared a comprehensive volume with all the significant contributions that Coseriu had made to this field of study ([401] (2008)).

The first exhaustive “publications” in this area are several typewritten and re-produced manuscripts from the early 1950s, among them a teaching script (recently edited, see [462] (2023)) for the second year of the course on Spanish linguistics at the Instituto de Profesores Artigas in Montevideo. Already here, as well as in several other teaching scripts, the basic knowledge on Vulgar Latin (periodisation, local differentiation, sources, characteristics) is combined with an original, critical view. In later contributions, further issues are added and elaborated on, such as the influence of Greek on Vulgar Latin and its relationship to the Romance type, and consequently the Greek influence on of the emergence and evolution of the Romance languages. This brings us to his particular view on language typology.

9.2 Language typology

Coseriu always claimed that there was great stability and continuity in his thought, but at the same time there were periods in his life marked by a particular focus on certain issues. We have seen in the previous chapters how the history of linguistics and the philosophy of language – despite already being present at earlier times – constitute one of his central concerns from the mid-1960s. A few years prior to that, with Coseriu’s return to Europe early in the decade, there is not only a period of the importation of the ideas developed in Montevideo, but also of the emergence of further interests. In chapter 6 we saw how his development of structural semantics and lexematics falls within this timeframe. Another subject, apparently less theoretical and more of a general issue of Romance linguistics, is the influence of Greek on Vulgar Latin:

‘During this time [i. e. in 1961] I gave lectures in Strasbourg and Mainz, among other places, and in Germany I also visited Harri Meier in Bonn, where I gave a lecture on my favourite topic at the time, the Greek influence on Vulgar Latin.’ DSs, 94¹

This is connected to Coseriu’s particular conception of a “Humboldtian” language typology, which we will review in the current chapter. Humboldt’s *energeia-ergon*

¹ “In dieser Zeit habe ich unter anderem Vorträge in Straßburg und in Mainz gehalten und kam in Deutschland auch zu Harri Meier nach Bonn, wo ich einen Vortrag hielt zu meinem damaligen Lieblingsthema, dem griechischen Einfluß auf das Vulgärlatein”.



Fig. 9.2: Coseriu with Harri Meier and Dieter Woll in Bonn in 1962, © Coseriu Archive Tübingen.

distinction was the main argument towards overcoming the limitations of a structural, abstract view of language change, and Humboldt's notion of the "character" of a language is the starting point for a particular language typology by Coseriu. This "integral typology" is first outlined clearly in a paper given in Madrid in 1965 and published in 1968 ([44] 1968)).

9.3 Humboldt and language typology

In several publications, as well as in his lectures, Coseriu refers with admiration to the work of Wilhelm von Humboldt as the founder of modern linguistics. His "sympathetic" interpretation of Humboldt is characterised by the fact that he sees a clear coherence in Humboldt's linguistic thought, and he makes the German's anthropomorphic metaphors suitable for contemporary linguistic analyses. Coseriu published a number of studies on Humboldt ([75] (1972); [154] (1979); [235] (1988); [292b] (1994); [364] (2002); [365] (2002)) and several of his disciples (Jürgen Trabant, Donatella di Cesare, Manfred Ringmacher, Heidi Aschenberg, Ana Agud) became leading Humboldt experts.

As we have seen in chapter 7, Coseriu is always keen to relate his own theoretical thoughts to the tradition of linguistics, and this is also the case in his studies on typology. Tradition plays a twofold role in his work here: on the one hand he seeks to identify the origins of classificatory typology and the traditional typological ter-

minology, and on the other hand he derives his own specific and different conception of typology from a consideration of Humboldt's work.

Against the usual claim in linguistic handbooks that associated the distinction between synthetic and analytic languages with August Wilhelm Schlegel (under the influence of his brother Friedrich), Coseriu shows that Schlegel's distinction can already be found half a century earlier in the work of Adam Smith and his *Dissertation on the Origin of Languages* (1759), a work which Schlegel himself used to develop his own terminology and conceptions ([53] (1968)). As for the distinction between fusional, agglutinative, polysynthetic and isolating languages, it seems in fact to have its origins in Humboldt's work, even if Humboldt never understood these terms as classificatory categories, but rather as principles that could coexist within the same language ("Alle Sprachen tragen eine oder mehrere dieser Formen in sich", 'all languages carry within them one or more of these forms', Humboldt 1903–1936, VII, 254). In the case of "agglutination", Humboldt's brother Alexander, who provided information to Wilhelm about several Native American languages and who believed that they were built on similar principles, was possibly the first to use this term (Trabant 2005, Kabatek 2019).

But what is more important for Coseriu than the history of these terms is something else: as in his text linguistics, also in the field of typology, he postulated (with reference to Humboldt) a completely different discipline than the one established at the time. What is generally meant by language typology? Let us take a current definition:

Linguistic typology (or language typology) is a field of linguistics that studies and classifies languages according to their structural features to allow their comparison. Its aim is to describe and explain the structural diversity and the common properties of the world's languages. (Wikipedia, s.v. *Linguistic Typology*, last accessed March 11th, 2023)

Coseriu considers this kind of comparative typology as rather poor in comparison to "his" "integral typology":

'The content of today's conceptions of "type" is determined by the fact that, due to a temporary partiality of linguistic interests at a time when the comparison of genealogically related languages is almost exclusively predominant, typology has also been reinterpreted as a comparative discipline, and to this day it usually tends to be nothing more than a multilateral language comparison or, at best, a comparative characterisation of languages. In this process, facts of different language systems are brought into relation with each other, without the need to go beyond the level of the language system in the direction of the principles of structuring in even one of the languages involved.' ([364] (2002), 33–34)²

2 "Die heutigen Typus-Begriffe sind ihrem Inhalt nach dadurch bestimmt, dass aufgrund einer

Even if Humboldt is considered one of the fathers of such a comparative approach, he also argued for a different kind of typology, not an external one but rather an internal “characterology” (Aschenberg 2001) that seeks to identify the constructional principles of a language. This should not be confused with a correlational typology such as the one proposed by Greenberg (1973):

‘The empirically established coexistence or mutual exclusion of features is not in itself a “real connection” and does not exhaust language typology. Typological research only begins with this kind of determination, because in the actual typology, the empirically determined connections must be interpreted and their unified sense must be uncovered.’ ([364] (2002), 38)³

In Humboldt’s work, this “actual typology” is present in two ways, as a theoretical conception and as an instrument of concrete language description. The language type is explicitly defined as the “characteristic form” of a language:

‘The characteristic form of a language depends on each and every one of its smallest elements; each is determined by it in some way, however imperceptible it may be in detail.’ (Humboldt 1903–1939, VII, 48)⁴

For Humboldt, the structural description of a language is not the ultimate goal of linguistic analysis; he believes that there is something more subtle, something which he calls, again with an anthropomorphic metaphor, its ‘soul’:

‘However, its essence is far from being exhausted with its *grammatical structure* as we have considered it so far, and with the *external structure* of language in general, and its real and

vorübergehenden Vereinseitigung der linguistischen Arbeitsinteressen in einer Zeit des fast ausschließlichen Vorherrschens des Vergleichs genealogisch verwandter Sprachen auch die Typologie zu einer vergleichenden Disziplin umgedeutet wurde und bis heute gewöhnlich nichts als ein multilateraler Sprachvergleich oder allenfalls eine ebenfalls vergleichend angelegte Charakteristik von Sprachen zu sein pflegt. Dabei werden Fakten verschiedene Sprachsysteme miteinander in Beziehung gebracht, ohne dass auch nur in einer der beteiligten Sprachen die Ebene des Sprachsystems in Richtung auf die Prinzipien der Strukturierung überschritten zu werden bräuchte”.

3 “Die empirisch festgestellte Koexistenz bzw. wechselseitige Ausschließung von Merkmalen ist an und für sich noch kein ‘realer Zusammenhang’ und erschöpft die Sprachtypologie nicht. Mit ihrer Feststellung nimmt die typologische Forschung nur ihren Anfang, denn in der eigentlichen Typologie müssen die empirisch festgestellten Zusammenhänge interpretiert und ihr einheitlicher Sinn entdeckt werden”.

4 “Die charakteristische Form der Sprachen hängt an jedem einzelnen ihrer kleinsten Elemente; jedes wird durch sie, wie unmerklich es im Einzelnen sei, auf irgendeine Weise bestimmt”.

true *character* is still based on something much finer, more deeply hidden and less accessible to analysis.’ (Humboldt 1836, 206)⁵

This is exemplified in the case of Humboldt’s Mexican grammar (i. e., his grammar of Náhuatl), a work that was edited by Coseriu’s disciple Eréndira Nansen Díaz with the support of Manfred Ringmacher, and then edited and published by Manfred Ringmacher (Humboldt 1996), who between 2004 and 2018 worked on a research project directed by Jürgen Trabant at the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Science with the aim of editing Humboldt’s American grammars. Humboldt discovers a principle of compression inherent to Náhuatl, and identifies this principle in several areas of its grammar:

‘It leaves no part of grammar untouched and gives the language, where it appears, its very own type and character.’ (Humboldt 1994, 194)⁶

Coseriu considers Humboldt’s ideas as the formulation of the principles of a different typology that can serve as a basis for language comparison, but in fact the “type” must first be identified within a single language and only then, in a second step following this identification, can it be compared to other languages:

‘The task of language typology, in fact, is only to identify and describe language types, i. e. the common ground of structuring principles, and this in only one language at a time; and once this is done, the respective language type can be used very well as a criterion for classification; then it can be established that several languages correspond – approximately – to the same underlying principles.’ ([364] (2002), 36)⁷

However, Coseriu sees this typology as something which still needs to be developed. He quotes Georg von der Gabelentz, who describes this kind of typology as an “unborn child” and postulates that it should be possible to identify, behind

5 “Mit dem grammatischen Baue, wie wir ihn bisher im ganzen und Großen betrachtet haben, und der äußerlichen Struktur der Sprache überhaupt ist jedoch ihr Wesen bei weitem nicht erschöpft, und ihr eigentlicher und wahrer Charakter beruht noch auf etwas viel Feinerem, tiefer Verborgenem und der Zergliederung weniger Zugänglichem”.

6 “Sie läßt keinen Theil der Grammatik unberührt u. ertheilt der Sprache, wo sie sich zeigt, einen ganz eigenen Typus und Charakter”.

7 “Die Aufgabe der Sprachtypologie besteht nämlich nur darin, Sprachtypen, d. h. das Gefüge der Strukturierungsprinzipien zu identifizieren und zu beschreiben, und zwar jeweils in einer Sprache, und nachdem dies geschehen ist, kann der jeweilige Sprachtypus sehr wohl als Kriterium für eine Klassifikation angenommen werden; es wird dann festgestellt, dass mehrere Sprachen – ungefähr – denselben Strukturierungsprinzipien entsprechen”.

the structure of a language, the forces that led to such a structure emerging, something that would be achieved

‘if we were able to say about language without hesitating: You have this and that individual feature, consequently you will have these other properties and this overall character! – If we could construct the linden tree out of the linden leaf, as bold botanists have tried to do.’ Gabelentz 1901, 481 apud Coseriu [364] (2002), 37⁸

Coseriu was explicit in saying that he himself proposed, on the base of Gabelentz’ sketch, ‘to make this child come into being’ (ibid.)⁹. The application of the Humboldtian principles will be described in the following section.

9.4 Examples of typological analysis

Coseriu had already sketched the Humboldtian typology before learning about its application in the Mexican grammar, and he felt a certain satisfaction when he discovered therein a confirmation of Humboldt’s coherence. His most prominent example of typological analysis involves the Romance languages in contrast to Latin, i. e., not a single language but a whole language family (or at least part of it). Here, he criticises Humboldt’s famous statement about the relationship between Romance and Latin. Humboldt had stated:

‘Forms sank, but not the form, which rather poured out its old spirit over the new transformations.’ (Humboldt 1903–1936, VII, 243)¹⁰

Coseriu’s analysis arrives at a different conclusion: the Romance languages are indeed typologically distinct from Latin, since they do not simply replace synthetic structures by analytic ones with identical functions. This does indeed seem to be the case, at first glance, if we take the Latin case system, which is replaced by prepositional, analytic constructions (compare *domus hominis* to *la maison de l’homme*,

8 “wenn wir einer Sprache auf den Kopf zusagen dürften: Du hast das und das Einzelmerkmal, folglich hast du die und die weiteren Eigenschaften und den und den Gesamtcharakter! – wenn wir, wie es kühne Botaniker wohl versucht haben, aus dem Lindenblatte den Lindenbaum construiren könnten”.

9 “Ich habe [...] mir dann zur Aufgabe gemacht, ausgehend von dem von Gabelentz Skizzierten diesem Kind ins Leben zu verhelfen”.

10 “Es sanken Formen, nicht aber die Form, die vielmehr ihren alten Geist über die neuen Umgestaltungen ausgoß”.

for example). Yet this is not the whole story. The principle identified by Coseriu is twofold, in which we find

“internal” (paradigmatic) material determinations for “internal”, designative, i.e., non-relational functions (like gender and number), and “external” (syntagmatic) material relations for “external”, relational functions (like the functions of cases, the comparison of adjectives, etc.’ [44] (1968) 277¹¹

This somehow “iconic” principle (Kabatek/Pusch 2011, 75–76) can be observed throughout the Romance language systems: “inner” categories such as number and gender are coded at the level of the word, whereas “external” relations (case, comparison, relational tenses etc.) are expressed by periphrastic constructions. If we look at a language like Spanish, we can see, with just a few examples, the following division:

Tab. 9.1: Spanish examples of the “Romance type” (according to [67] (1971) and Kabatek/Pusch 2011, 75).

synthetic, “inner functions”		
Number	perro, ‘dog’	perros ‘dogs’
Gender	perro ‘dog’	perra ‘female dog’
relative (without direct comparison)	grandí si mo ‘very big’	
analytic, “external functions”		
Case	la casa del padre ‘the father’s house’	
	lo doy a Juan ‘I give it to John’	
superlative (with comparison)	más grande que ‘bigger than’	

The “iconism” of this principle can be illustrated with the “genitive case”, where the relationship between possessed and possessor is expressed with a prepositional construction and where the preposition functions like an arrow between the two referents:

¹¹ “Determinaciones materiales ‘internas’ (paradigmáticas) para funciones ‘internas’, designativas, es decir, no-relacionales (como el género y el número); determinaciones materiales ‘externas’ (sintagmáticas), para funciones ‘externas’, relacionales (como las funciones de los casos, la comparación de los adjetivos, etcétera)”.

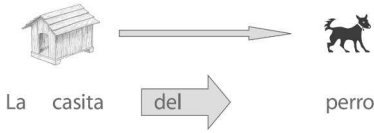


Fig. 9.3: “Iconicity” of the Romance type (Kabatek/Pusch 2011, 76): Sp. *La casita del perro* ‘The little doghouse (kennel)’. “Internal” functions like the diminutive “casita” ‘little house’, gender and number “perro” ‘(masculine) singular dog’ are expressed by suffixes or endings, whereas “external” functions like “possession” are expressed by prepositions linking two referents.

Coseriu identifies these principles throughout the grammars of the Romance languages (with the exception of French, a language which follows a different type) and identifies several examples where such principles “work”: in the verbal system, the tenses of the “secondary perspective” (see chapter 6) are relational tenses (between two reference points in time) and are thus expressed by means of analytical, periphrastic forms. The Latin synthetic passive is replaced by a periphrastic passive because it relates an agent to a patient; the middle voice and the impersonal uses of the Latin passive, however, are replaced by reflexive or active forms. Local adverbs are simple when they refer to a simple location and complex when they relate two locations; the comparative that relates two entities to each other is expressed by a periphrastic form, whereas the relative that refers to the entity itself is expressed by a synthetic form, etc.

The profound transformation of the language type within the process of evolution from Latin to Vulgar Latin, that is, the tendency to create periphrastic forms, can be related to contact with Greek ([72] (1971)). The result is a completely new language type that calls into question Humboldt’s observation about the continuity of the form. As Coseriu puts it:

‘in accordance with the language typologist Humboldt and against the Romanist Humboldt, one has to draw the conclusion: The characteristic form of Latin also declined and was replaced by a new form, the type of the Romance languages.’ ([364] (2002), 41)¹²

Another example described by Coseriu in [169] (1980) is the relationship between the existence of modal particles and other characteristics of a language. Here, he goes beyond the description of a language type as a historical-structural description of the characteristics of a single language, and supposes that when two lan-

¹² “mit dem Sprachtypologen Humboldt und gegen den Romanisten Humboldt hat man die Schlussfolgerung zu ziehen: Gesunken ist auch die ‘charakteristische Form’ des Lateinischen, ersetzt durch eine neue Form, den Typus der romanischen Sprachen”.

guages present similar and rather striking features, it makes sense to ask about further similarities and to discuss whether both languages are of a similar “type”, i. e., if the similarities correspond to a common underlying principle. In Coseriu’s view, this is the case when comparing Ancient Greek and German. Both languages have a rich system of modal particles, a very productive system of verbal prefixation and a productive system of nominal compounds. Coseriu claims that all these features have a general common function and can be subsumed under a broad ‘principle of contextual-situational relationality’ ([169] (1980), 206).¹³ He does not claim that this is the main typological principle of German or Ancient Greek, but it is a principle that not only led to unrelated correlations but also to effects that are all part of the same general “character”.

Lehmann (1988) criticises the fact that in Coseriu’s typology it is not clear how one type may develop into another. Coseriu used to refer to the typological change of French in the Middle French period, when the language suffered a complete reorganisation that led to it becoming separated from the common Romance type. Coseriu’s disciple Gabriele Eckert (1986) dedicated her dissertation to this question and to the emergence of a new type, the coexistence of the old and the new types, and, finally, to the change of the type. As she states:

‘A precise analysis of the changes shows that the thesis formulated by E. Coseriu of a “gradual transition from a common Romance to another language type” (Coseriu 1983, 278) applies precisely to the period of Middle French: between about 1350 and 1650, the categorical distinction between relational and non-relational functions is abandoned. As far as procedures are concerned, there is a reduction of paradigmatic procedures and a simultaneous expansion of syntagmatic procedures.’ (Eckert 1988, 108)¹⁴

9.5 Outlook

Coseriu’s profound knowledge of Romance and other languages, as well as their respective evolutions, allowed him to write a number of in-depth studies on particular issues. His conception of language typology developed Humboldt’s idea of the “characteristic form” of a language. As in the case of text linguistics and socio-

13 “Prinzip der kontextuell-situationellen Bezogenheit”.

14 “Die genaue Analyse der Veränderungen ergibt, daß die von E. Coseriu formulierte These von einem ‘graduellen Übergang von einem gemeinromanischen zu einem anderen Sprachtypus’ (Coseriu: 1983: 278) gerade für die Epoche des Mittelfranzösischen zutrifft: Zwischen ca. 1350 und 1650 wird der kategorielle Unterschied zwischen relationellen und nicht-relationalen Funktionen aufgegeben. Was die Verfahren anbelangt, so findet eine Reduktion der paradigmatischen Verfahren statt und ein gleichzeitiger Ausbau der syntagmatischen Verfahren”.

linguistics, and indeed other fields, Coseriu went against the linguistic mainstream, and with his “integral typology” claimed to propose the “real” typology. This typology is language-specific and historical, more or less the opposite of what was generally studied in the field. This led to relative isolation; perhaps Coseriu should have baptised his child differently, as Lehmann (1988, 20) has suggested, considering the Coserian typology to be a ‘sub-discipline of language-particular descriptive linguistics with connection to language typology’¹⁵. Again, Coseriu probably did not pursue the most effective strategy here for the promotion of his ideas within the linguistics community.

Lehmann also criticises a second problem, that of the rather obscure formulation of Coseriu’s theory. I think this is an unacceptable critique: as in other fields, Coseriu’s thoughts on typology are very clear and coherently formulated. There might be doubts as to their practical applicability or in terms of the evidence in this or that specific case, but the idea of a deeper underlying structural principle for the organisation of a language system should not be seen as a kind of mysticism, not least because such an idea can readily be found elsewhere in linguistic thought. In any case, for the concrete analysis of a language type in Coseriu’s sense, a very deep knowledge of the respective language is necessary, and his typology is far from being an easily applicable discipline. His analysis of the Romance language type shows such a profound knowledge of these languages together with an admirable capacity of abstraction, and as such can be considered a masterpiece of Romance linguistics.

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Chapter 10

Coseriu and Chomsky

10.1 Introduction

The relationship between Eugenio Coseriu and Noam Chomsky is a rather asymmetrical one. Chomsky, as far as I know, never mentioned Coseriu, and it is possible that he has never even read anything written by him. Coseriu, by contrast, dedicated several books, in-depth courses and papers to Chomsky and to early versions of his linguistic theory. Both linguists had an enormous impact in the field of linguistics and beyond, but they lived in different worlds: they not only defended fundamentally opposed views on languages, they also generally did so by publishing in different languages. Chomsky was more successful for many reasons, and it is of course too simplistic to attribute his success as a linguist to his popularity as a very vocal political activist from the 1960s onwards, even though it is true that his statements on politics have tended to reach a far wider audience than his writing on linguistics. The asymmetric relationship between Chomsky and Coseriu, it seems, goes further than this: the US versus Latin America and Europe; MIT versus Montevideo and Tübingen; English versus Spanish, French, Italian and German; the unification of linguistics with natural science, mathematics and computation versus the consideration of language as part of human culture... The asymmetry is also one of power, to which we can add that Chomsky has the advantage of enjoying greater longevity. Who is Coseriu?, a Chomskyan linguist might reasonably ask, whereas such a question would hardly seem plausible the other way round. So, is this chapter superfluous? Wouldn't it be better to admit that even if Coseriu were to be called a "giant", he would be a giant in the relatively small world of Romance and European linguistics, and that he did not ascend to the very highest level of undisputed worldwide recognition (whereas in the case of Chomsky the enthusiasm for his ideas might be accompanied by a rejection of them, yet still there is recognition)? The reality, as always, is more complicated than that. What is clear is that Coseriu and Chomsky had opposing views and that there was no way of combining or accommodating the theories of both in a single whole. Generative linguists seldomly discuss Coseriu's theory, and on the other hand, there is a widespread and partly unfounded attitude of superiority among Coserians towards Chomsky, this largely derived from Coseriu's own attitude of almost total rejection and criticism of Generativism. This criticism is basically limited to earlier contributions by Chomsky and covers both his general conception of

grammar and language as also the role that historical references to linguists and to philosophers play in his work.

It would indeed be of scant interest to write about Coseriu and Chomsky if the relationship were only limited to mutual (or rather, unilateral) rejection. But Coseriu's discussion of the principles of Generative Grammar goes far beyond this; it shows his own attitude towards language and linguistics and thus offers an interesting example of his principle of 'Achievements and limits' (Sp. "alcances y límites", Germ. "Leistung und Grenzen") of a certain theory, and this indeed is why the current chapter is included in this book. It is structured as follows: first, a general sketch of Coseriu's relationship with Chomsky will be given; second, some of the main critical arguments of the 1975 book *Leistung und Grenzen der Transformationellen Grammatik* ([104a] 1975) will be presented; finally, some later comments on Chomsky and his work, as well as comments on Chomsky and the history of linguistics and philosophy, will be presented.

10.2 Coseriu and the "new guy"

Coseriu never met Chomsky personally. In *DSs*, he explains that in 1971, a meeting of the two linguists had been planned:

'He was supposed to participate in a celebration of the Korean Language Research Society in Seoul. The Koreans had invited a linguist from England, one from Germany (myself) and one from the United States. The invited American linguist was Chomsky, and so I thought we would meet for the first time. But Chomsky did not come, and he was replaced by Fillmore. That would have been the opportunity, there was no other one.' (*DSs*, 239)¹

Whilst there was never a personal meeting, Coseriu did send some of his papers to Chomsky in the 1950s (as he did to most renowned linguists), but it seems there was no reply or further contact. When Coseriu's former assistant Christian Rohrer, who wrote his PhD on Transformational Grammar, visited Chomsky in the mid-1960s, Chomsky seems to have told him that he knew some of Coseriu's work.

The deeper interest in the work of Chomsky probably dates from the time Coseriu arrived in Germany in 1962. Hans Martin Gauger often told the story about

1 "Er war vorgesehen bei einer Feier der koreanischen Gesellschaft für Linguistik in Seoul, da hatten die Koreaner einen Linguisten aus England, einen aus Deutschland, und zwar mich, und einen aus den Vereinigten Staaten eingeladen. Aus den Vereinigten Staaten hatten sie Chomsky eingeladen, und da dachte ich, zum ersten Mal werden wir uns treffen. Doch Chomsky kam nicht, und er wurde durch Fillmore ersetzt. Das wäre die Gelegenheit gewesen, später haben wir keine mehr gehabt".

how around 1960 Christian Rohrer announced, in his Swabian dialect, that ‘there’s a new guy now’ (“do gibt’s etzt an Neia”, cf. Gauger 1995, 193): Chomsky had appeared on the scene. Coseriu’s conquest of European Romance linguistics after his arrival was confronted, from the very beginning, with the impact of Chomsky’s new linguistic thinking as it began to come to Europe from the US. While Coseriu’s attraction was immediate for Romanists and polyglots, departments of Germanic and English linguistics in Germany saw the more likely course of their post-war development in terms of an orientation towards the Anglo-American world, to Generative Grammar, or to pragmatics and sociolinguistics. As the Germanic linguist Heinrich Weber from Tübingen stated:

‘We Germanic linguists had a certain distance towards Coseriu at the time because, as a professor, he tended to represent rather the conservative positions and we in German studies felt particularly progressive.’ (<https://coseriu.ch/interviews-en/>)²

It took Coseriu a few years to react openly to this situation, and from the beginning his attitude was so clearly negative that the doors were closed to any real dialogue, even if he afterwards dedicated quite some time to a more comprehensive view on Transformational Grammar. His attempt to show the ‘Achievements and limitations’ of Chomskyan linguistics sometimes made the critique yet harsher, and the principle of a “sympathetic” discussion was overshadowed by the direct disapproval formulated without too much diplomacy.

Coseriu’s first publication that openly refers to Chomsky is a text on coordination in Latin and Romance that defends a structural syntax as an alternative model to transformational syntax (see chapter 6).

‘In recent times, precisely in connection with the investigation of syntactic structures, much has been said about the so-called “transformational” grammar or theory (actually: technique). This technique, which has even become a fashion in current linguistics, has enjoyed, and still enjoys, a noisy and largely undeserved publicity. However, one of the most serious defects of transformational grammar is that it neglects (even deliberately) the functional level of language, i.e. the linguistic level par excellence, about which structuralism, especially European structuralism, has done so much work – and discovered so many facts.’ ([50] (1968), 36)³

2 “Wir germanistischen Linguisten hatten damals eine gewisse Distanz zu Coseriu, weil er als Ordinarius eher die konservativen Positionen vertrat und wir uns in der Germanistik als besonders fortschrittlich gefühlt haben”.

3 “En los últimos tiempos se ha hablado mucho, precisamente a propósito de la investigación de las estructuras sintácticas, de la llamada gramática o teoría (en realidad: técnica) ‘transformacional’. Esta técnica, que se ha vuelto inclusive una moda de la lingüística actual, ha gozado, y goza aún, de una ruidosa y en gran parte inmerecida publicidad. Ahora bien, uno de los defectos más graves de la gramática transformacional es el de que ella descuida (hasta deliberadamente) el

In the same year, 1968, he published a report on *Iberoamerican and Caribbean Linguistics* in *Current Trends in Linguistics*, which contains a complaint about the scarce reception of the work of Iberoamerican linguistics, mainly the Montevideo school (his own school) in North America and in Europe. Here, in one of Coseriu's seldom publications in English, we can read:

Strangely enough, the theory developed in Montevideo has remained unknown even to the promoters of generative grammar, although they assert a number of principles which have been maintained in Montevideo since 1952, e.g. a) the conception of languages as 'rule-governed creativity'; b) the dynamic interpretation of language as a technique to express and understand also what is new and what was never said before; c) the criticism of antimentalism and the stressing of the importance of the speakers' intuition, which is considered as the very subject and foundation of linguistic theory, d) the necessity for re-interpreting and re-evaluating traditional grammar in so far as it corresponds to the actual functioning of language; e) the necessity for describing languages as systems for linguistic creation. In the transformationalists' writings one can sometimes find textual coincidences with former writings of Montevideo, coincidences which are evidently due to an analogous point of view. It is regrettable that the transformationalists should have ignored this, since generative grammar would have found in the Montevideo writings a clear distinction of levels of grammaticality, the determination of the actual nature of the speaker's intuition, and its relation to scientific analysis as well as its theoretical basis, and, more generally, those philosophical foundations which it lacks and is still searching, not always in adequate places. In addition, the theory developed in Montevideo has gone much further than transformational grammar, which explicitly limits itself to synchrony, as it has shown that linguistic technique not only works synchronically, but also diachronically, i.e. that 'linguistic change' is the historical realization of this system of possibilities, which each language is. ([47] (1968), 59–60).

And he adds in a footnote:

The coincidences in views and intentions do not imply, however, that I agree with [the] transformational technique. On the contrary I consider this technique as inadequate and as a further form of an arbitrary partialization of the concrete linguistic experience. 'Inadequate', as in the case of other abstract and dogmatized models, of course, means 'only partially adequate'. (ibid.)

The same footnote is enlarged in its Spanish translation in the book *Tradición y novedad* ('Tradition and innovation', see chapter 7) ([116] (1977)) with a three-page response to two reactions to the English original publication. The first comment refers to Yakov Malkiel, who had stated that Coseriu considered himself to be a predecessor of transformationalism. Coseriu rejects this strongly, claiming

plano funcional de la lengua, es decir, el plano lingüístico por excelencia, en el cual tanto ha trabajado – y ha descubierto – el estructuralismo, sobre todo el europeo”.

that Malkiel had neither read carefully nor understood his text. But the main criticism is directed towards the Spanish engineer, philosopher and linguist Víctor Sánchez de Zavala, who complained in 1972 that Coseriu had not followed a coherent evolution since he had not come to embrace Generative Grammar. This footnote is one of the most explicit and direct attacks ever written by Coseriu, and well reflects the confrontational atmosphere of 1970s linguistics. Coseriu’s reaction to Sánchez de Zavala’s criticism is severe (I will quote only a few extracts, which fail to capture the whole rhetorical brilliance and cruel sarcasm of the original text):

‘Sánchez de Zavala did not understand me at all, because he totally lacked the necessary basis for it: in fact, he pretends to talk about the theory of science and does not even realise that my opposition to Chomsky and Chomskyism is precisely of an epistemological nature and is based on a very serious epistemology, of which he does not, it seems, have the slightest knowledge. I expressly declare that it has never occurred to me to consider myself a precursor of transformationalism; among other things, because, if I were, it would not be for me any title of glory, but quite the contrary. [...] I cannot help observing that, owing to the influence – in this sense, baleful – of Chomsky, the motley world of linguistics, already so afflicted by other amateurs, has been filled with Sánchez Zavalas of both sexes who think they can make up with arrogance for the lack of discernment and even of mere information, and the less they understand, the more they pretend to teach linguists how things properly stand with regard to language and linguistics.’ ([116] (1977), 358–360)⁴

But there is more than just an open battlefield of polemics and confrontation. In 1968, Coseriu taught a one-semester course on Transformational Grammar which was transcribed and published locally the following year as a book by his disciples Gunter Narr and Rudolf Windisch. In 1971, he taught another one-semester course, on “Kritik der transformationellen Grammatik” (‘Critique of Transformational Grammar’). In those years, several other publications are dedicated to Transformational Grammar and to the comparison between structural and generative approaches ([55] (1970); [62] (1970); [73] (1971); [63] (1970)). In 1972, Coseriu gave a further one-semester series of lectures on “Leistung und Grenzen der

4 “Sánchez de Zavala no me ha entendido en absoluto, pues carecía totalmente de la base necesaria para ello: en efecto, pretende hablar de teoría de la ciencia y no se percató siquiera de que mi oposición a Chomsky y al chomskismo es precisamente de carácter epistemológico y está fundada en una epistemología muy seria, de la que él no tiene, al parecer, la menor noticia. Declaro expresamente que nunca se me ha ocurrido considerarme precursor del transformacionalismo; entre otras cosas, porque, si lo fuera, ello no sería para mí ningún título de gloria, sino todo lo contrario. [...] no puedo dejar de observar que, debido a la influencia —en este sentido, nefasta— de Chomsky, el abigarrado mundo de la lingüística ya tan afligido por otros aficionados, se ha llenado de Sánchez Zavalas de ambos sexos que creen poder suplir con la arrogancia la falta de discernimiento y aun de mera información, y cuanto menos entienden, tanto más pretenden enseñar a los lingüistas cómo están propiamente las cosas con respecto al lenguaje y la lingüística”.

Transformationellen Grammatik”, ‘Achievements and limits of transformational grammar’, which was prepared for publication in the form of a book by Gunter Narr in 1975 ([104a] (1975)). Here, he explicitly says that transformational syntax cannot be ignored by linguistics and that a serious critical view is necessary. And he points out that he clearly understands “critique” in a neutral, positive as well as negative sense:

‘We have always been concerned with establishing the exact meaning and motivation of the criticised conception. Every conception has an internal coherence which is motivated historically, internally as well as from the point of view of its object. In order to take a truly critical stand, the principles of each theory must be understood in its own terms.’ ([104a] (1975), 16)⁵

He claims that this critique is necessary because the critical remarks about Transformational Grammar that had been presented to date were more or less superficial and did not go deep enough into the essence of Chomsky’s theory. In the next section, I will present some of the main arguments of that book, not going too far into the detailed discussion of the different outdated versions of Transformational Grammar, but rather focusing on those aspects that touch on the principles that are also relevant for later generative approaches to language.

10.3 ‘Achievements and limitations of Transformational Grammar’

In his 1975 book, Coseriu presents and discusses three versions of Transformational Grammar: the first one, already completely outdated at that time, as presented in *Syntactic Structures* (Chomsky 1957), the second one as presented in *Aspects* (1965) and *Topics* (1966) and in Katz and Postal’s *Integrated Theory of Linguistic Descriptions* (1964), and a third one as it appears in the collective book *Universals in Linguistic Theory* edited by Bach and Harms in 1968. Coseriu first introduces some of his own principles and concepts of linguistics and then contextualises the birth of Generative Grammar as a reaction to American structuralism and *Behaviorism* and to the lack of syntax within structuralism. He discusses the principles and the advantages of the different versions of the model, and comments on Chomsky’s critical reaction towards the third version (the 1971 book reflected the state of

5 “Es ging uns immer darum, den genauen Sinn und die genaue Motivation der kritisierten Auffassung festzustellen. Jede Auffassung hat eine innere Kohärenz, und diese ist historisch intern und vom Objekt her motiviert. Um wirklich kritisch Stellung nehmen zu können, müssen die Prinzipien jeder Theorie in ihrem eigenen Sinne verstanden werden”.

the art at that time). The book ends with a rather exhaustive general criticism. But first, some positive aspects of Transformational Grammar are presented. Coseriu claims that any grammar is in some way transformational and that “transformations” as a heuristic procedure can already be found in the Spanish 15th-century grammar of Nebrija and in the work of the 16th-century French grammarian Louis Meigret. Regardless of this background, he admits that Transformational Grammar itself is something very much new in linguistics and that it involves several important innovations and corrections with regard to the shortcomings of Behaviorism and of American structuralism. Among others, these include:

- the overcoming of a purely corpus-based approach (an issue that has become relevant once again in 21st-century linguistics, see Kabatek 2013),
- the recovery of a mentalistic view, leaving behind the antimentalism of Behaviorism,
- the recovery of syntax, against the ‘hostility to syntax’ (“Syntaxfeindlichkeit”) of structuralism ([104a] (1975), 43),
- the focus on an onomasiological approach (i. e., what in non-Coserian usage we might call a “typological” or “functional” approach) to grammar. Coseriu underlines the need to look at how particular languages organise possible universal “functions” like “modality”, “finality” etc. ([104a] (1975), 59); a view completely overlooked by structural linguistics and its focus on semasiological aspects,
- the creation of a unitary and ordered system of rules for the description of languages.

Coseriu clearly rejects the idea that Transformational Grammar, as an apparently more complete model, can replace other models of grammar, namely structural grammar (scheme 1 in fig. 10.1), and he defends the idea that there is, rather, only a partial overlap between some aspects, and with two diverging zones, in that structural and transformational grammar are simply referring to different things (scheme 2 in fig. 10.1):

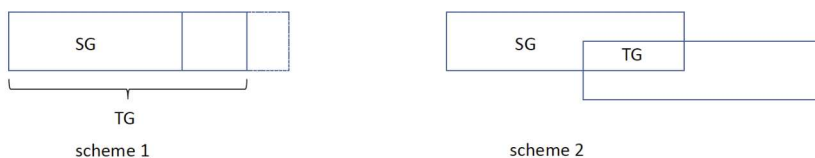


Fig. 10.1: Two models of describing the relationship between structural and Transformational Grammar

As for the critical aspects, Coseriu comments basically on the following points ([104a] (1975), 75):

- the lack of differentiation between language as a universal and language as a historical-particular phenomenon,
- the lack of differentiation between language-internal and language-external facts,
- the limitation of the representation of language to the syntagmatic axis, without taking into account the paradigmatic axis,
- the arbitrary method and analytical procedures.

I will comment only briefly on these points. The first aspect here has been stressed repeatedly in several chapters of this book. Coseriu always insists on the importance of the particular structuration of languages as historically grown entities. Even if languages are built on universal grounds and share a common universality, they have developed particular characteristics that are not derived from this common universality, i. e., there is no finite number of universal features from which particular languages select their individual sets of features. Rather, there is an infinite number of language-particular features from which universal principles can be derived. However, these will not be discovered by looking at some imaginary universal grammar, but rather by a fine-grained study of each language. “Transformational” (and, in general, generative) grammar is not a grammar of particular languages but rather a grammar of the universal level.

The second aspect is closely related to the first: if there is no clear distinction of a particular language as an internally structured entity but rather a universal view of “language in general”, language-specific structures are not identified as such but are related to general, and referential principles, e. g., tense in a particular language should not be considered a language-specific category but as a language-specific realisation of a universal dimension. This also relates to the role of logical principles that I have referred to in several other contexts (chapters 1, 7): for Coseriu, language is prior to logic, and not the other way round. And language is prior to the things it describes: it is not that the world is already there and then language enters the scene in order to classify the world:

‘The world is not [there] before language as an already formed world, it is only formed through language. We only come to the “things” through and via language (among other things, language makes no distinction between existence and inexistence, which, on the other hand, is fundamental for the knowledge of the world).’ ([104a] (1975), 32)⁶

⁶ “die Welt ist nicht vor der Sprache als schon gestaltete Welt, sie wird erst durch die Sprache gestaltet. Zu den ‘Sachen’ kommen wir erst durch und über die Sprache (u. a. macht die Sprache

The third aspect refers to the lack of an account of paradigmatic oppositions in Transformational (and in Generative) Grammar. As in the case of phonology and semantics, Coseriu defends a “structural syntax” (see chapter 6). Finally, the fourth aspect relates to a fundamentally different conception of science: as we have already seen in the first chapter, he rejects the unitary idea that science must depart from hypotheses that have to be “verified” or “falsified”. In his view, this might be true for natural science, but not for cultural facts such as language, where the act of verification refers not to an arbitrary theory but to the object itself:

‘we use [...] *verify* in the older and, as we believe, more adequate sense for our purposes, in both positive and negative terms. To *verify* means for us to compare the theory with the necessary reality of the object and thereby to confirm or refute it’ ([104a] (1975), 19)⁷

10.4 No continuation

After the early 1970s, Coseriu did not continue to comment on the evolution of Generative Grammar in his writing. Apart from Rohrer’s aforementioned dissertation, another disciple, Harald Weydt, published a critical book on the work of Noam Chomsky in 1975, but Coseriu himself only sporadically referred to Chomsky. In an interview with Nicolae Saramandu in 1993 (Saramandu 1996), Coseriu very harshly criticises Chomsky (cf. also Vîrban 2017, 153):

‘As for Chomsky, I judge him negatively. In general. Moreover, Chomsky is, in reality, not a theoretician of language, and even less a philosopher of language’ (Saramandu 1996, 143)⁸

And even more:

‘Humanity can even be wrong for tens of years, but one can foresee that, at a certain moment, Chomsky will be completely abandoned’ (Saramandu 1996, 148)⁹

keinen Unterschied zwischen Existenz und Inexistenz, der hingegen für die Erkenntnis der Welt grundlegend ist)”.
 7 “wir verwenden [...] *verifizieren* im älteren und, wie wir glauben, für unsere Zwecke adäquateren Sinne sowohl in positiver als auch in negativer Hinsicht. *Verifizieren* bedeutet für uns, die Theorie mit der notwendigen Wirklichkeit des Objekts zu vergleichen und sie dadurch zu bestätigen oder zu widerlegen”.

8 “Pe Chomsky, în general, îl judec negativ. În general. Mai întâi, Chomsky nu e, în realitate, un teoretician al limbajului, cu atât mai puțin un filosof al limbajului”.

9 “Omenirea poate și greși timp de zeci de ani, însă se poate prevedea că, la un moment dat, Chomsky va fi părăsit cu totul”.

In a comment that runs to several pages, Coseriu criticises not only the epistemological principles and the general ideas of a universal Generative Grammar but also the limitations of Chomsky's linguistics: there is the merit of having recovered the study of syntax, but at the same time the lack of an interest in many aspects such as variational linguistics (sociolinguistics, stylistics and dialectology), as well as historical linguistics, makes Chomsky appear as a 'very, very limited linguist' ('un lingvist foarte, foarte limitat', *ibid.*, p. 144).

In *DSs*, I asked him why he did not renew his criticism and why he did not comment on more recent work by Chomsky or other Generativists:

JK: But it has been said over and over again that Coseriu is critical of Chomsky, but he is referring to the early Chomsky. And, as we know, the late Chomsky or the later phases are in part totally different.

C: Actually, I only ever discussed the "current" Chomsky. You can't criticise someone at a certain point in time about something you don't know yet. If Chomsky later did this or that differently, then the criticism was probably justified; for if he renounces to certain things himself, it is probably because he finds them wrong or unacceptable. What I also criticise is Chomsky's whole attitude, the idea that language can be simulated and that the study of language is mainly about that. Moreover, also when admitting errors or when referring to new work that was still in print, Chomsky did not take the right path. A different one maybe, but still a wrong one in my opinion, and one that could also be criticised. But at a certain point you get tired and say it's not worth it, because he will give that up tomorrow and say that it is already outdated and no longer true. And all Chomskyans will say, yes, indeed, it's very different, Chomsky just said so. Then they will also say: "There don't exist any transformations at all." It used to be said that you could only work properly with transformations. Now the word transformationalist isn't even used anymore because Chomsky does not use it anymore. In fact, one can do without transformations. But the problem is not whether you can live with or without transformations. The problem is whether the transformations belong to the reality of the language.' (*DSs*, 241–242).¹⁰

10 "JK: Aber es wird immer wieder gesagt, Coseriu kritisiert Chomsky, aber er bezieht sich auf den frühen Chomsky. Und der späte Chomsky oder die späteren Phasen sind ja zum Teil ganz anders.

C: Eigentlich habe ich immer nur den jeweils "aktuellen" Chomsky diskutiert. Man kann ja nicht zu einem bestimmten Zeitpunkt einen späteren kritisieren, den man noch nicht kennt. Wenn Chomsky dies oder jenes später anders gemacht hat, dann war die Kritik wohl berechtigt; denn wenn er selbst auf bestimmte Dinge verzichtet, dann wahrscheinlich, weil er feststellt, daß es falsch oder unannehmbar ist. Was ich sonst kritisiere, ist die ganze Haltung von Chomsky, die Idee, daß man Sprache simulieren kann und daß es bei der Sprachbetrachtung vor allem darum geht. Außerdem hat Chomsky beim Aufgeben der Fehler oder wenn er sich auf neue Arbeiten bezog, die sich noch im Druck befanden, nicht den richtigen Weg eingeschlagen. Zwar einen anderen, aber für mich wieder einen falschen, und den könnte man auch kritisieren. Aber man wird ab einem bestimmten Zeitpunkt müde und sagt, es lohnt sich nicht, denn er wird das morgen auch aufgeben und sagen, das sei schon überholt, das stimmt nicht mehr. Und alle Chomskianer werden sagen, ja, tatsächlich, es ist völlig anders, Chomsky hat es soeben gesagt. Sie werden dann auch sagen:

This interview is probably the last more or less exhaustive comment on Chomsky that we have, and Coseriu states clearly that he did not follow intensely the later evolution of Generative Grammar. Of course, he was aware of the Principle and Parameters theory (and comments on it briefly in the Romanian interview), but he did not dedicate any lectures to its main propositions, and neither did he do so when Minimalism was launched in the 1990s. He had already rejected the basic assumptions, and this was enough for him, even if he was continually confronted with generative thought, this mainly in the context of the faculty at Tübingen, where formal linguistics had gained a presence in several departments.

10.5 Chomsky and tradition

Chomsky, like Coseriu, repeatedly refers to the tradition of linguistic and philosophical thought and seeks to find sources for his own conception of language in the tradition of western philosophy. For Chomsky, this traditionalisation comes more a posteriori than a priori, and whereas Coseriu forms his own conception on the ground of tradition, Chomsky searches for reflections of his own thought in earlier thinkers; Descartes, Humboldt and Saussure, for example, are said to be predecessors of this or that aspect of his work. Coseriu strongly criticises this attitude, claiming that Chomsky's interest is not really an understanding of the tradition but rather a projection of his own ideas.

This is in line with Aarsleff's well-known criticism (cited by Coseriu) of Chomsky's *Cartesian Linguistics* and Aarsleff's general judgment about Chomsky's relationship with the history of linguistic thought:

I do not see that anything at all useful can be salvaged from Chomsky's version of the history of linguistics. That version is fundamentally false from beginning to end – because the scholarship is poor, because the texts have not been read, because the arguments have not been understood, because the secondary literature that might have been helpful has been left aside or unread, even when referred to. (Aarsleff 1970, 583)

Several authors have claimed that Aarsleff misunderstood Chomsky's view, but in fact he showed rather clearly that Chomsky did not really reconstruct the prehis-

“Transformationen, die gibt es überhaupt nicht.” Vorher hieß es, nur mit Transformationen könne man richtig arbeiten. Jetzt wird nicht einmal mehr das Wort Transformationalist verwendet, weil Chomsky es nicht mehr tut. Man kann in der Tat ohne Transformationen auskommen. Aber das Problem ist nicht, ob man ohne oder mit Transformationen auskommen kann. Das Problem ist, ob die Transformationen zur Realität der Sprache gehören”.

tory of universal grammar but rather cherry-picked a few notions from the work of Descartes in order to justify his own views. A similar example of the rejection of Chomsky's attitude towards history is Coseriu's recently published criticism in the *History of Romance Linguistics*, which we referred to in chapter 7, of Chomsky's comments on the Port Royal Grammar. Coseriu is in general sceptical towards both the complete rejection of, and also the enthusiastic opinions about, the *Grammaire générale* of Port-Royal, and he directly refers to Chomsky in this context:

'The uncritically enthusiastic opinions are again based on the confusion of theory and description, but this time by reducing the description to the theory, i. e. by reducing the grammar of particular languages to the so-called universal grammar, or also – especially in the case of Chomsky – they are based on misinterpretation and ignorance of the *Grammaire générale* itself and its ideological and historical contexts.

One cannot share these radical judgements if one strictly separates grammatical theory and grammatical method (a grammatical model of description) from grammatical description in a particular language, because grammatical theory and grammatical method can only be general, only "universal", while grammatical description can only be historically concrete and based on a single language, i. e. it must be "particular". There is no theory and method of the particular language and no general, "universal" description, unless the latter is limited to essential, i. e. rationally necessary, or to empirical, i. e. empirically established, "universals". A universal grammar is to be regarded as a theory and method separate from the description. As theory and method, it can be debatable like any theory; however, it cannot be rejected in principle and in advance. As a description, on the other hand, to the extent that it claims – apart from the section about universals – to be a universally valid description of language, it is wrong in principle and must therefore be rejected as a matter of principle, because the description of the class "language" cannot replace the individual description of a particular language. This also applies to the *Grammaire générale*. [...]

It is no special merit of the *Grammaire générale* to have already anticipated the errors of certain modern directions of linguistics. Quite the contrary.' ([443] (2021), 313)¹¹

11 "Die unkritisch begeisterten Meinungen beruhen wiederum auf der Verwechslung von Theorie und Beschreibung, diesmal aber unter Reduzierung der Beschreibung auf die Theorie, d. h. der einzelsprachlichen Grammatik und auf die sogenannte Universalgrammatik oder auch – so besonders im Falle von Chomsky – auf Hineininterpretieren und auf Unkenntnis der *Grammaire générale* selbst und ihrer ideologischen und historischen Zusammenhänge.

Die ausgesprochen radikalen Urteile kann man eben nicht teilen, wenn man grammatische Theorie und grammatische Methode (ein grammatisches Beschreibungsmodell) und grammatische einzelsprachliche Beschreibung streng trennt, denn die grammatische Theorie und die grammatische Methode können nur allgemein, nur "universell", sein, die grammatische Beschreibung hingegen nur einzelsprachlich, historisch-konkret, d. h. "partikulär" sein. Es gibt keine einzelsprachlich-bezogene Theorie und Methode und keine allgemein-sprachliche, "universelle" Beschreibung, es sein denn, dass sich diese auf wesentliche, d. h. rational notwendige oder auf empirische, also empirisch festgestellte, "Universalien" beschränkt. Eine Universalgrammatik ist als

This long quotation again allows us to see an argumentative principle we find frequently in Coseriu's work, as well as, once more, his overall rejection of theories that do not highlight the level of the particular language.

As in other cases mentioned throughout this book, Coseriu repeatedly identifies two (or more) different and opposing principles, and raises the criticism that the main misunderstanding in the history of linguistics (or in the history of human thought in general) consists of the tendency to reduce these principles to a single one. The objective of any adequate account of a phenomenon must be to clearly identify the value and the place of the principles operating therein. This was the case in the discussion of correction and exemplarity (chapter 2) as well as in the case of the difference between "pragmatics" and grammar or, in general, the distinction of the three levels of language. In the criticism of the *Grammaire générale*, with reference to Chomsky, Coseriu's claim would be that the grammar of a particular language cannot be reduced to universal grammar, and vice-versa. The general argumentation scheme can be represented as follows:

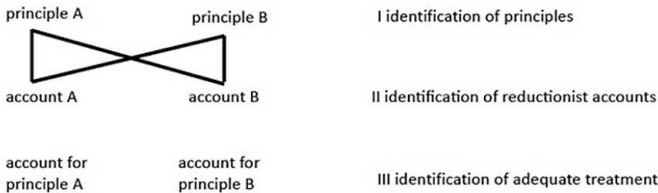


Fig. 10.2: Coseriu's criticism of argumentational reductionism.

In this specific case, he claims that both the *Grammaire générale* and Chomsky's different models of Generative Grammar reduce two levels, the universal and the historical one, to one single level, in the belief that a "general" grammar is valid as an instrument for the description of particular languages. The opposite

Theorie und Methode getrennt von der Beschreibung zu betrachten. Als Theorie und Methode kann sie wie jede Theorie diskutierbar sein; sie kann aber nicht grundsätzlich und im Voraus abgelehnt werden. Als Beschreibung hingegen ist sie in dem Maß, in dem sie – abgesehen von der Universalien-Sektion – den Anspruch erhebt, eine allgemeingültige Sprachbeschreibung zu sein, prinzipiell falsch und muss deshalb grundsätzlich abgelehnt werden, denn die Beschreibung der Klasse "Sprache" kann nicht die individuelle, einzelsprachliche Beschreibung ersetzen. Dies gilt auch für die *Grammaire générale*. [...]

Es ist kein besonderes Verdienst der *Grammaire générale*, die Irrtümer gewisser moderner Richtungen der Sprachwissenschaft schon vorweggenommen zu haben. Ganz im Gegenteil".

would be to ignore the generalities and to believe in an atomistic perspective that nothing other than the language-particular description exists. The solution – the third step in the scheme and the result of dialectic analysis – is an adequate discipline for both dimensions and a clear assignment of the place these disciplines should occupy.

Coseriu's criticism of Chomsky's historical misunderstandings also refers to Saussure and Humboldt ([104a] (1975), 74). Chomsky first considers Saussure to be an ally for his mentalistic position and for the distinction between competence and performance in his 1964 *Current Issues in Linguistic Theory*; he then criticises Saussure a few years later in *Language and Mind*, talking about the "impoverished and thoroughly inadequate conception of language expressed by Whitney and Saussure" (Chomsky 1968, 18). As Harris put it:

Chomsky's primary interest in the history of linguistics was in any case limited to a trawl for selected items of evidence in support of his own agenda. (Harris 2001, 168)

As for Humboldt, Coseriu's disciple Harald Weydt (1976, 56) convincingly showed that Chomsky's claim that "[t]he idea that a language is based on a system of rules determining the interpretation of its infinitely many sentences [...] was expressed with reasonable clarity by Wilhelm von Humboldt in his famous but rarely studied introduction to general linguistics" (Chomsky 1965, V) is itself based on a misunderstanding and that Humboldt never said anything of the sort. The comment about a "famous but rarely studied" text is a construction of a historical gap between Humboldt and Chomsky, as Weydt shows, and it makes Chomsky appear to be the person who recovers an important idea raised a long time ago but forgotten by linguistics. Yet as Coseriu showed in his lectures on Humboldt and the tradition of linguistics, there is a clear line of continuity of Humboldt's thought. Weydt also shows that Humboldt's "inner form", contrary to Chomsky's claim, bears no relation to the latter's "deep structure", and nor does Humboldt's "Erzeugung" or *energeia* have much to do with Chomsky's notion of "creativity".

10.6 Conclusions

Coseriu's relationship with Chomsky's work, and in general with Generative Grammar, is a very problematic one. His comments here are not without emotion, and are marked by his conviction that several aspects proposed by Chomsky are erroneous and that most of the aspects that are not erroneous can be found in Coseriu's own writing, without ever having been taken into consideration by generativists. His hostile attitude towards generativism was part of the "linguistic wars"

from the 1960s onwards, and Coseriu had good arguments for rejecting the generative approach, its reduction to universalism, its artificialism, and its biologism. Maybe a more empathetic attitude would have helped to reduce the number of his adversaries, and some of Coseriu's disciples tried to build bridges between both approaches. Coseriu could not accept the basic idea of studying grammar by departing only from a universalist point of view and by considering "theoretical linguistics" to be a natural science rather than a cultural one. Of course, there were other reasons, such as Chomsky's incorporation of earlier philosophers and traditions, his reduction of linguistics to a limited aspect of language, his artificial terminology, and even the way in which he was almost blindly admired by his followers. But here we can also see some parallelisms, these sometimes compatible, sometimes not. For both men, it was important to defend the notion of linguistics as a theory-based discipline and to reject all kinds of impressionism and reduction to positivistic descriptionism. Both defend a systematic view of language, in Chomsky's case with the aim of establishing a top-down universal system, and for Coseriu towards discovering from the bottom-up the language-specific system and type. As far as incompatible parallelisms are concerned, these relate to attitudes towards their respective conceptions of language: Coseriu, like Chomsky, considered "his" theory to be "the" theory tout court. Moreover, both were in the habit of considering themselves to be the ones who should have the final word on all possible issues, both were the undoubted leaders of their schools, and both were possessed of an unusually impressive intellectual capacity. But only one person can have the last word, just as there can only be one absolute leader. And since both defended from the very beginning a set of wholly opposed views, there was no way of reconciliation, only the coexistence of different linguistic empires.

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Chapter 11

Aesthetics

11.1 Introduction

For many readers, this chapter is probably the most unexpected one in the book. Why should I talk about aesthetics? Will it be about the aesthetics of a linguistic explanation or rather about the artistic creation by means of language? Isn't the aesthetic aspect of language precisely what separates literary studies from linguistics, since for a linguist the instruction manual of a washing machine or a simple recipe can be as interesting as a Shakespeare sonnet?

Coseriu had a very special relationship with aesthetics. He might not be widely known for his ideas about art and aesthetics in a general sense, but he did refer frequently to literature in his writing, above all in his studies on text linguistics and in his well-known 'Thesis about language and poetry' ([70] (1975); see also chapter 1). But there are further reasons for including a chapter on aesthetics here, far more than the simple fact that Coseriu admired literature, particularly poetry.

The reason why I entitle this chapter "Aesthetics" is twofold: first, aesthetics in a narrow sense is one of the main foci of Coseriu's interest in his final years in Italy and the first years in Uruguay. Second, there are several works on aesthetics in a wider sense in Coseriu's oeuvre: writing on the theory of art and on specific artistic manifestations in the early periods, and writing on poetic language as the extreme manifestation of linguistic expression, as well as more generally remarks on literature, throughout his life.

The chapter will be divided into three parts: the first deals with the way towards Coseriu's 1949 dissertation on aesthetics, the second turns to what Coseriu on several occasions called "the problem of art", and the third focuses on poetry and literature, discussing, finally, whether there is a relationship between Coseriu's thoughts on aesthetics and his general theory of language.

11.2 Dissertation on Aesthetics

When Coseriu arrived at Montevideo in 1950 after the years of study he spent in Romania and Italy, he felt an enormous liberation: having dreamt as a child of becoming a professor in Germany, he now arrived at a point of his life when he felt free to dedicate himself to research and teaching in the field of linguistics. In *DSs*, he states:

‘With my appointment at the Instituto de Profesores and at the Faculty of Humanities, my life goal, more or less consciously pursued, is achieved. I can now – finally! – work freely and without restrictions in my own field and I no longer need to make any more concessions: no need any more to accept humiliating conditions just to continue living and surviving. I can devote myself exclusively to my studies. Step by step, I am giving up all the rest (journalism, translations, art criticism, also writing poems and essays) and I become a specialist, even though, hopefully and due to my varied earlier experience, not a narrow specialist without a wider view. [...] You can also verify this in my publications, where almost everything not or not directly related to linguistics is prior to 1951.’ (*DSs*, 103–104)¹



Fig. 11.1: Coseriu in Montevideo (passport photo, on the left, and in his office, on the right), © Coseriu Archive Tübingen.

His childhood and youth were marked by ideological extremes and by a search for identity. With a fascist background in Romania, he shifted during the final years in Italy, at least apparently, towards Marxism, under the influence of his second the-

¹ “Mit der Ernennung am Instituto de Profesores und an der Facultad de Humanidades ist auch mein mehr oder weniger bewußt verfolgtes Lebensziel erreicht. Ich kann jetzt – endlich! – auf meinem eigenen Gebiet frei und ohne Einschränkung arbeiten und brauche keine Konzessionen mehr zu machen, muß mich nicht mehr demütigenden Bedingungen fügen, nur um weiterleben und überleben zu können. Ich kann mich ausschließlich dem Studium widmen. All das übrige (Journalismus, Übersetzen, Kunstkritik, auch das Verfassen von Gedichten und Essays) gebe ich allmählich auf und werde zu einem Fachmann, wenn auch, hoffe ich – dank meiner vielseitigen früheren Erfahrung – nicht zu einem “Fachidioten”. Wenn ich jetzt noch Übersetzungen mache, sind es Übersetzungen, die ich für den Unterricht brauche. Wenn ich jetzt noch Landkarten zeichne (wie diejenigen, die in der *Geografía lingüística* erscheinen) sind es Sprachkarten, die ich im Unterricht oder in Publikationen verwende, und ihre Vergrößerung (zum Aufstellen im Departamento de Lingüística) gebe ich anderen in Auftrag. Wenn ich noch zeichne oder ein Gedicht, einen Essay schreibe, so nebenbei und weil es mir Spaß macht. Ich lese weiterhin sehr viel und besichtige Kunstausstellungen, aber nicht mehr, um darüber für eine Zeitung zu schreiben. Sie können es auch bei meinen Publikationen feststellen, wo fast alles, was nicht oder nicht unmittelbar die Linguistik betrifft, zu der Zeit vor 1951 gehört”.

sis supervisor, Antonio Banfi. Once he arrived in Montevideo, he started a new life, one which was ideologically independent and with a clear focus on linguistics. But it would be too simple to attribute his earlier literary activities merely to the category “sins of the youth”. These activities form part of his life, part of becoming an adult and the part of his “Lehr- und Wanderjahre” (Elizaincín 2021), and as such should not be ignored, since they will continue to play a certain role for Coseriu himself and also in the reception of his work.

Coseriu grew up as a talented, knowledge-hungry and rather restless child, one who was fortunate in the teachers he had; his father taught him Russian literature and opened his mind to the work of Tolstoy, Pushkin and Gogol. Coseriu wrote patriotic poems and short stories, and some of his early creative work was published here and there in journals, to the point that the influential literary critic George Călinescu mentioned the ‘all too young Bessarabian Eugen Coseriu, turbulent, but easily orientable in all branches of culture’² in his monumental *Istoria literaturii române*, ‘History of Romanian Literature’, (1941, 883). Coseriu had published several poems and essays on literature in Călinescu’s *Jurnalul literar*, the most important Romanian journal of literature at the time, in 1939 and 1940. He even participated in the editorial process of the journal, and he also published poems and essays in other journals, such as *Însemnări ieșene*, *Viața Basarabiei*, *Cuget Moldovenesc* or *Itinerar*.

Literature was his favoured means of expression during his years as a student in Iași, where he became involved in the fascist Romanian movement of the Garda de Fier (see chapter 12).

The move to Italy marked the first new beginning, but it was still literature which, along with languages, interested him. After some years in Rome he moved to Milan, where he worked as a journalist at the publishing house of a newspaper. Dino Buzzati, who would subsequently earn fame as a writer, was a colleague here. Between 1946 and 1950, he published short stories in newspapers (twelve short stories were later published in the anthology *La stagione delle piogge* ‘The rainy season’, Tübingen 1988). He also met other writers, such as Quasimodo and Calvino, and among his friends he counted the painters Sassu, Lilloni, Morelli, Vernizzi and Meloni: Coseriu, then, became part of Milan’s artistic scene. And it was here that he wrote his second thesis, after the first one in Rome on Slavic folklore, this time on aesthetics in Romania: “L’evoluzione delle idee estetiche in Romania” – ‘The evolution of aesthetic ideas in Romania’. It is a surprising work,

2 “tânărul basarabean Eugen Coșeriu, turbulent, dar lesne orientabil în toate ramurile culturii”; in *DSs*, Coseriu reminds of this quote and explains that “turbulent” must be understood here in the sense of ‘turbid, not purified’ (“trübe, nicht geläutert”; *DSs* 49).

Tab. 11.1: A poem published in 1940 in *Cuget moldovenesc*.**Voia ta**

*Ce mai putem vorbi, prietene acum –
Când nici porumbi, nici corbi nu ne trec prin suflet?
Gândul ni-i uitat, obosit de umblet...
Brațe ridici și-ndată se sting ca un fum.
E greu să ne creștem viața din călimări,
După ce am lăsat-o-n soare să se ofilească,
Și totuși mâinile, vorbele noastre de iască
Tot mai nădăjduiesc târzi mângâieri.
Rar de tot și grav ne sună bătăile-n poartă.
Dintr-odată toate ușile larg se deschid;
Neîndrăzneță privirea i se strecoară timid;
Deșert brăzdat de tăceri de apă moartă.*

Your will

What more is there to say now, my friend –
When neither doves, nor ravens stir our souls?
Our thought is forgotten, tired of wandering...
Arms are raised and anon vanish like smoke.
It's hard to nourish life with inkwells,
After we left it in the sun to wilt/wither,
And yet our hands, our poisoned words
Still long for tardy caresses.
Too seldom and heavy do the knocks at our gate
sound.
Suddenly, all the doors swing wide open;
Their meek glance slips away timidly;
Desert furrowed by the silence of dead water.
(Translation: Alina-Viorela Prelipcean)

and it requires some explanation. It is difficult from our current perspective to reconstruct its whole genesis, but Coseriu himself indicates a few details in the foreword and in a later comment in *DSs*, where he states that he had originally wanted to write about the evolution of aesthetic thought in England but that he changed the subject for reasons of feasibility:

‘Originally, I had worked about the English Aesthetics in the 18th century and I had written quite a lot about this, but time was too scarce and so I chose a topic that was easier for me’ (*DSs*, 74)³

He notes that in contrast to England, there were only a small number of authors in Romania to be considered, which made things far less complicated. However, in the 1949 foreword, the explanation is different: Here, Coseriu claims that the social and political evolution of Romania at the time made it necessary to completely re-write the original manuscript.

‘Initiated in 1945, this study had to suffer during its elaboration radical modifications, not only in its details, but also in its attitude, both due to the deepening of the research and because of the new facts that had arisen in the meantime. Indeed, with the advent of popular democracy and the consequent emergence of a new art – a reflection and corollary of a new reality –, in

³ “Ich hatte mich zunächst mit der englischen Ästhetik des 18. Jahrhunderts beschäftigt und ziemlich viel dazu geschrieben, aber die Zeit war zu knapp, und ich wählte dann ein für mich leichteres Thema.”



Fig. 11.2: Theatre season ticket at the Teatro Mediolanum in Milan, 1948.

Romania there also arose a new aesthetics, which is increasingly broadening and deepening, through philosophical and scientific research and artistic, critical and pedagogical practice. For the first time in the history of Romania, aesthetics officially becomes not only a philosophical and cultural issue, but also a political one: a matter of the State.’ (1949, 3)⁴

What were these new facts? In 1945, political changes and the rise of communism in Romania marked a clear turning point. We don’t know if he had really written a previous, different version of the thesis, if so, the manuscript seems to be lost. But now he sought to describe aesthetic ideas in their social context, as a reflection of the ‘real social history of the society’; he opposed the dominant yet uninteresting traditional aesthetics of the bourgeoisie and its “*mentalità superata*” to the ‘new reality’ of the popular aesthetics of the current times, where “*tutto il popolo*” and all social classes participate in artistic creativity. He also postulated that art should be ‘useful’ (p. 155: “*l’arte deve, quindi, essere utile*”). And the reference to Marxism is not a superficial one. In *DSs*, he mentions the ‘false Marxists who quote Marx and Lenin at the beginning of their work and then talk about something completely different’ (*DSs*, 247). Coseriu’s thesis is not of that kind; it is not just a concession to a historical-materialistic interpretation of the facts. Throughout

4 “Iniziato nel 1945, questo studio ha dovuto subire, durante l’elaborazione, radicali modifiche, non solo nei particolari ma anche nell’impostazione, sia per l’approfondimento della ricerca, sia a causa dei nuovi fatti sopravvenuti nel frattempo. Infatti, con l’avvento della democrazia popolare e col conseguente sorgere di una nuova arte – riflesso e corollario di una nuova realtà –, è sorta in Romania anche una nuova estetica, che si sta sempre più allargando e approfondendo, attraverso la ricerca filosofica e scientifica e la pratica artistica, critica e pedagogica. Per la prima volta nella storia della Romania, l’estetica diventa ufficialmente un problema non solo filosofico e culturale ma anche politico, un problema di Stato”.

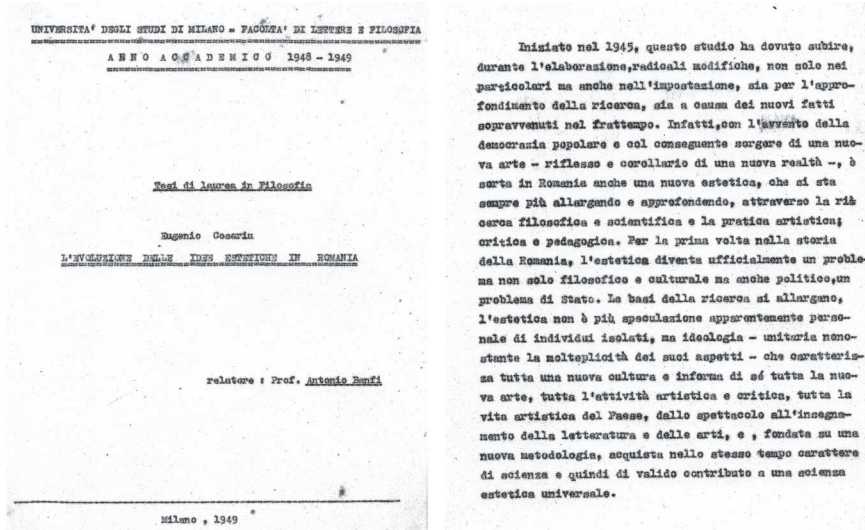


Fig. 11.3: Frontpage and first page of the Introduction to Coseriu's 1949 thesis on aesthetics.

the whole work, the idea of the 'new era' of Romanian aesthetics dominates and the whole text constructs a teleologic pathway that almost automatically led to the end of the traditional society and the implementation of a socialist view: this seems to be his profound conviction, at least in this text. To take another example, from the beginning of the first part, on the 'bourgeois epoch' between 1840 and 1944:

'Romanian aesthetics, as an ideological superstructure, depends on the reality of Romanian art and this, in turn, on social reality; thus, in the final analysis, aesthetic ideology itself reflects the structural reality of the relations between the forces of production, i. e. class relations.' ([5b] (1949), 31)⁵

How is this compatible with his insistence in the non-utilitarian essence of art, in his belief in individuality, in creativity, and his rejection of collective creation? Had Coseriu really become a Marxist during his years in Milan?

The answer is both yes and no. His 1949 thesis is a strange exception in the larger body of his oeuvre. If we look at other works from the same period, we

5 "L'estetica romena, in quanto sovrastruttura ideologica, dipende dalla realtà dell'arte romena e questa, a sua volta, dalla realtà sociale; quindi, in ultima analisi, la stessa ideologia estetica rispecchia la realtà strutturale dei rapporti fra le forze di produzione, cioè le relazioni di classe".



Fig. 11.4: Coseriu in Milan in 1948, © Coseriu Archive Tübingen.

see a far more distant and neutral position; for example, in two short papers he presented at the Sodalizio Glottologico Milanese about “Lingua e regime in Romania” (‘Language and regime in Romania’, [6] (1950)) and about “Glottologia e marxismo” (‘Linguistics and Marxism’, [7] (1950)), where the principles of Marxist linguistics are presented and analysed in a purely informative way.

It seems difficult to reconstruct the reasons for Coseriu’s attitude to Marxism in this thesis. It is clear that he never again defended Marxist ideas, and indeed was a harsh critic of Marxist ideology. Politically, he would define himself, ‘squaring the circle’, as a ‘social-progressive-liberal conservative’ (DSs, 28), stating that this has always been his position.⁶ “Always” must probably be interpreted here as “from the 1950s, from the Montevideo period onwards”: that is, once he had achieved his intellectual independence. The main two reasons for the Marxist episode can probably be found in the influence of his supervisor at the time, Antonio Banfi (1886–1957), and, even more importantly, in his attempt to re-establish links to Romania and its actual political ideology in order to be able to return to the country. Banfi was a politically active Marxist, and Coseriu considered him to be a genius (even years later, in 1997, when Coseriu had been politically defining himself a conservative for a long time). Banfi had studied in Italy and in Germany before WWI,

⁶ “Was schließlich meine – ebenfalls nur grundsätzliche und nicht konkret-engagierte – sozialpolitische Einstellung betrifft, so bin ich ein “Sozial-progressivliberal-Konservativer”, und ich bin es, glaube ich, immer geblieben, wenn Sie damit etwas anfangen können. Das können Sie natürlich, wenn Sie wollen, auch als Quadratur des Kreises ansehen”.



Fig. 11.5: Coseriu's supervisor Antonio Banfi (1886 – 1957), © <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Antoniobanfi01.jpg> (source: <https://www.senato.it/leg/01/BGT/Schede/Attsen/00009183.htm>; creative commons, source: [senato.it](https://www.senato.it)).

and he introduced the ideas of current German phenomenology into Italy. In 1932, he became a professor of the history of philosophy in Milan. Towards the end of Mussolini's dictatorship, he took part in the *resistenza*, and after the War, in 1948, he was elected as a senator for the communist party. His interest in aesthetics is reflected in several publications, among others, and as early as 1924, *Il principio trascendentale dell'autonomia dell'arte*, and in 1947, *La vita dell'arte*. Banfi proposes a liberation of philosophy in Italy, against the neo-hegelian paradigms dominant in Croce's and Gentile's work on aesthetics and on pedagogy. For Coseriu, Banfi's view must have represented almost the complete opposite of the views that he had been confronted with in former times, and it is interesting to observe how he switches back to Croce and to Gentile in his later works. However, he continued to have great respect for Banfi, and he would dedicate his preferred book, *Lezioni di linguistica generale* ([88a] (1973)), to the memory of his thesis supervisors Banfi and Maver as well as to Pagliaro: a communist, a liberal and a fascist, due not to their varied political affiliations but rather to their scholarly contributions (*DSs*, 77). Coseriu even criticised Banfi's political commitment, as well as that of Pagliaro, considering it to mainly express the desire of public recognition. We might note that Pagliaro used to teach the course *History and doctrine of fascism*, which could hardly have been further removed from the work and orientation of Banfi.

Coseriu never published this thesis, nor indeed any journal article on the same lines. We will never know if he really believed in what he wrote, and if he genuinely adopted an enthusiastic attitude towards an ideology to which he was opposed both before and after – or if he somehow felt obliged to adopt this position. In *DSs*, he confesses:

‘A testimony I am ashamed of today is my philosophical dissertation in which I overdid it with the scepticism towards Romanian values and where I made more than a few concessions to a vulgar Marxist aesthetics. This work – even if it was accepted by the University of Milan with the highest grade – should be re-written entirely.’ (*DSS*, 28)⁷

In a footnote about his relationship to contemporary linguistics and his distance with respect to Chomsky, Coseriu states: ‘I never adapted my way of thinking to the environment for sociological reasons or due to other aberrations of that kind.’ ([116] (1977), 359).⁸ His thesis on Romanian aesthetics is, perhaps, an exception.

In *DSs*, Coseriu contextualises his political evolution and his relationship to nationalism. He considers himself to be politically rather inactive, someone who never joined a party and never voted. And he distinguishes three kinds of nationalism, associating these with his own evolution (see chapter 12). The first of these, coinciding with first period of his own evolution, involved his ignorance while still in Romania; it would subsequently be of some considerable shame to him, and he would later state that in Italy he passed from the second and then finally to the third period, not without ‘dangerous, unreflected and – as I would say today – opportunist fluctuations to the left in a time when I still thought about going back to Romania’ (*DSs*, 28)⁹. So, the most reasonable explanation for the Marxist thesis is thus probably not so much a concession to his supervisor Banfi, but rather to the political situation in Romania and a kind of adaptation to the prevailing political ideology (which was perhaps used as a means of overwriting his own political past in the country of his birth). There seem to have been plans to return, something that indeed only happened some twenty years later, in 1968 (see chapter 7).

In the context of the late Italian years and his contact with Antonio Banfi, a further manuscript must be mentioned: Coseriu’s translation of Lucian Blaga’s *Artă și valoare* (‘Art and value’) into Italian, a text with highly relevant ideas for Coseriu’s own thought and the idea of the ‘luciferic character of humans’ as a motor of creativity. In a paper from 1996, he mentions that he had translated

7 “Ein Zeugnis dessen, weswegen ich mich heute schäme, ist meine philosophische Dissertation, in der ich es mit dem Skeptizismus gegenüber den rumänischen Werten allzu sehr übertrieben und einer vulgärmarxistischen Ästhetik mehr als ein paar Konzessionen gemacht habe. Diese Arbeit – obwohl sie von der Universität Mailand mit der Höchstnote angenommen wurde – müsste eigentlich im ganzen umgeschrieben werden”.

8 “nunca he adaptado mi modo de pensar al ambiente, por razones sociológicas u otras aberraciones por el estilo”.

9 “nicht ohne gefährliche, nicht durchdachte und, wie ich heute meine, opportunistische Schwankungen nach links, in der Zeit, als ich mit dem Gedanken spielte, doch nach Rumänien zurückzukehren”.

the text into Italian in 1946 as part of a joint project with his Romanian friend Mircea Popescu. While Popescu translated another book, Blaga's *Orizont și stil*, which was published by Minuziano in Milan in 1946 in the same collection where Banfi published his *La vita dell'arte* a year later, Coseriu's translation of *Arte e valore* remained unpublished (and was only printed much later, in 1996). In *DSs*, Coseriu explains that Banfi has been asked to write an introduction to the translation (Vasilescu 1981) and that due to a lack of time he wrote it in a single night. However, as Coseriu recalls, the introduction brought Blaga's thought to the fore:

‘He wrote the introduction the same night, and it was as if he had been reading this philosopher all his life, yet he didn't know him at all, and all the contexts, all the connections were excellently presented – this introduction is in part better than the book.’ (*DSs*, 77).¹⁰

Blaga is seen from a rather critical perspective in the 1949 thesis; his patriotic inaugural discourse in the Romanian Academy in 1937 is commented on cynically ([5b] (1949), 29) and his thoughts on aesthetics are seen as a reactionary view of the pre-socialist period. Coseriu corrects this in later contributions ([325] (1997), see also Borcilă 1997), and it seems contradictory that Coseriu translated Blaga and that Banfi commented on his work just a few years before the rather distant statements in the thesis. This political back and forth did not affect Coseriu's positive attitude towards Banfi. Due to Banfi, Coseriu became familiar with Husserl's work and with other writings of the Berlin and Marburg schools. He was to be strongly influenced by Phenomenology and the idea of searching for the path “zu den Sachen selbst”, ‘towards the things themselves’, this conforming to his basic epistemological principles. And even if, after the claims of a collective spirit in his thesis, he would thereafter always consider *creativity*, one of the universals of human action, as an individual phenomenon (referring thus to the individualist views of Luigi Stefanini or Giovanni Gentile). But he would also recognise that, in a Hegelian sense, the individual might create in the spirit of the collective and that a well-understood link between the individual and the collective is crucial for the propagation of individual impulses within a community.

¹⁰ “Er hat in derselben Nacht die Einführung geschrieben, und sie war so, als ob er sein ganzes Leben diesen Philosophen gelesen hätte, dabei kannte er ihn überhaupt nicht, und alle Kontexte, alle Zusammenhänge waren hervorragend dargestellt – diese Einführung ist z.T. besser als das Buch”.

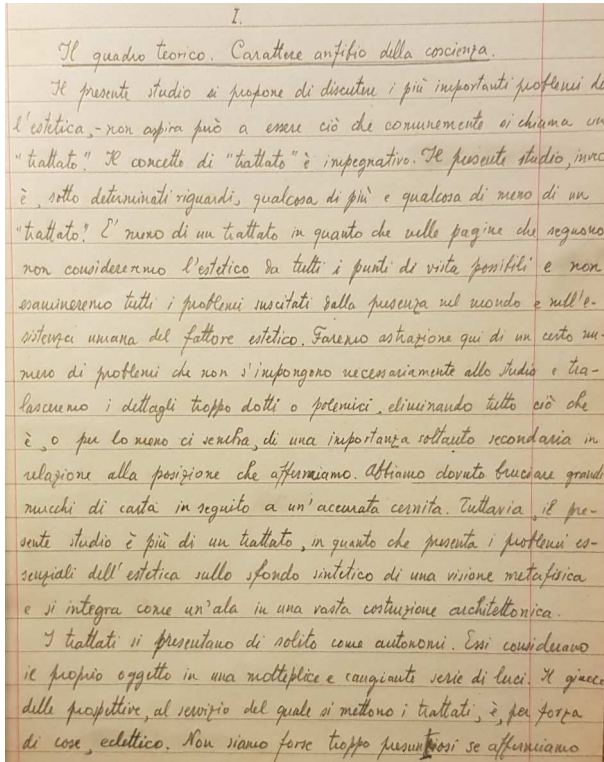


Fig. 11.6: Coseriu's translation of Lucian Blaga's *Arte e valore*, manuscript from 1946, © Coseriu Archive Tübingen.

11.3 Montevideo and 'The problem of art'

As noted above, Coseriu's arrival in Montevideo in 1950 was an ending point for the previous fluctuations. He wanted to be a linguist, yet among his luggage were numerous paintings, and he organised several art exhibitions and wrote about art in a number of newspapers. In June 1950, he appeared in public in Uruguay as "the art critic Eugenio Coseriu" who organised an exhibition of contemporary Italian paintings in the *Sociedad Amigos del Arte*.

In September, he organised an exhibition with works by the Uruguayan sculptor Ounanián, and in November he presented '17 contemporary Italian artists' at the National Commission of Fine Arts (*Comisión Nacional de Bellas Artes*). Indeed, he appeared as an authority, and even if the catalogue of the exhibition admits a 'partly personal criterion of selection' (the paintings were produced by his Italian



Fig. 11.7: Note about the inauguration of an exposition of Italian painters organised by Coseriu, *El Diario*, Montevideo, November 21st, 1950.

friends), the works themselves were divided in categories representative of the different contemporary art movements in Italy.

In the first months after the arrival in Montevideo, he had still not been granted any sort of position at the university, and thus he sought out alternative ways of satisfying the very basic financial needs of his life. Art became a means of survival: he wrote translations, and he sold paintings for his friends, receiving a commission on these sales. Apart from organising exhibitions, he worked as an art critic (with a part-time job at *El Debate*, earning some 100 dollars per month). In this way, he became part of the cultural scene in Uruguay's capital, as a cultural manager and a journalist, prior to assuming his new role at the university.

Aesthetics would become also part of a second job, alongside his work at the university: he taught at the Instituto de Profesores Artigas, a higher education institute for the training of high school teachers. There, he not only taught linguistics, Vulgar Latin and the history of the Spanish language, but was also responsible for a course on aesthetics. Thus, in an institution without easy access to books and didactic materials, he prepared an exhaustive didactic programme and a compre-

Acuarelas de Raimondi

Esta segunda exposición de Aldo Raimondi, organizada por el Sr. José Pedro Arzú en el salón Moretti, no justificaría más que una simple mención, y en ningún caso una discusión crítica, si no fuera porque nos ofrece motivo para hacer algunas observaciones de orden un poco más general sobre la acuarela como género pictórico, y sobre la esencia del arte. En efecto, constituye la obra de Raimondi la prueba más evidente de que la técnica es en pintura, como en las demás artes, un elemento más bien secundario y frío, falso de



2. — "Il Colosseo"

comunicativa estética, si no aparece como corolario de una genérica visión original e inédita, de un mundo personal, o, para decirlo con un término diltheyiano ya bastante vulgarizado, de una particular y única "Weltanschauung". La "Weltanschauung" personal — es decir una peculiar visión y concepción del mundo (o de un mundo imaginario, fantástico, organizado sobre nuevas y genúinas coordenadas espirituales) le falta totalmente a Raimondi. Por esto su obra, a pesar de su magnífico oficio, no nos produce ese "aumento cognoscitivo", esa satisfacción de agregar un capítulo más a nuestro conocimiento del mundo y esa inquietud de hallarnos frente a un mundo desconocido, recién creado, que constituyen el sentimiento estético y, al mismo tiempo, la prueba incontestable de la existencia del arte: es que la técnica es, justamente en la obra de arte, ese aspecto de artesanía, que puede suscitar admiración y hasta asombro, pero que nos deja indiferentes estéticamente.

Raimondi es profesor de acuarela, es titular de la cátedra respectiva en la Academia de Breara, de Milán; es, indudablemente, un gran profec-



5. — "Monte San Salvatore"

tor de acuarela; más: es un excelente acuarelista. Su conocimiento de la técnica particular de este difícil género pictórico es perfecta; su dominio de los valores propios de esa técnica, total y casi insuperable. Raimondi es uno de los pocos acuarelistas que "pueden hacer cualquier cosa" con la acuarela: lograr volúmenes y masas, tonos y matices, espacio y perspectiva. Cualquier cosa, menos el arte; porque Raimondi es su gran acuarelista pero un pintor menor. Su dominio de la materia es indiscutible, pero su obra es casi toda materia y casi nada espíritu: Raimondi puede esmerar a cualquiera la acuarela y a nadie la pintura.

Consideremos sus obras. Muchas veces quedaremos asombrados frente a sus extraordinarias posibilidades y realizaciones técnicas, pero no sentiremos ninguna emoción verdaderamente estética. Diremos "¡qué bien hecho!", pero no "¡qué hermoso!"; "¡qué linda acuarela!", pero no "¡qué obra de arte!"; "¡qué sabiduría, qué oficio!", pero no "¡qué arte!". Diremos "¡qué maestro de la acuarela!", pero no "¡qué artista!". Pues sus acuarelas, desde el punto de vista de la visión artística, son casi siempre distracciones de un gusto más bien banal y disonante, simples fotografías coloreadas — hábilmente, óptimamente coloreadas, pero nada más que esto. Sus temas son los comunes temas oleográficos, temas naturalísticos "standards", parecidos a los de los pintores que trabajan "a pedido" o "en serie". Lindos rincones de naturaleza, pero lindos justamente por su aspecto de naturaleza, no por la visión artística: lindos



3. — "Bosque de Madresivas", Punta del Este.

en la naturaleza, no en el arte. Y cada ninguna intuición feliz, ninguna inquietud: trabajos óptimos, metódicos, perfectos, pero no obras. Algunas acuarelas se elevan a un nivel un poco superior, por el rigor de su planteo y la disciplina de la realización ("Monte San Salvatore", n.5; "Poesía del Sassolungo", n.13; "Bosque de madresivas", n.20; "Playa Brava", n.21; "Galline", n.23), pero no alcanzan el terreno de los valores absolutos, en que el arte ya no se juzga más por su perfección genérica, sino como arte sin determinaciones y aditivos. Y parece que ni miran a ello, conformándose su autor con ser nada más que un maestro de la acuarela, lo que a nosotros nos parece verdaderamente poco.

Sólo algunas pocas veces el planteo pictórico aparece más acertado; la ejecución, más libre y suelta; el gusto compositivo y colorístico, más vivo y eficiente: así en la linda miniatura "Cane che dorme" (n.2), en el "Colosseo" (n.12) y en el "Interno del Duomo di Milano", que son las cosas mejores de esta exposición.

Tres obras notables pueden parecer pocas para un maestro de tanto prestigio, pero alcanzan para suscitarnos el ejemplo de que hemos sido, quizás, demasiado severos en nuestro juicio; tal vez sea Raimondi un artista "en potencia", latente bajo la férrea capa de su técnica, encerrado en la prisión inercial de su oficio. Debería "coger la libertad".

E. G.

Fig. 11.8: Art criticism by Coseriu in the Montevideo newspaper *El Debate*, January 11th, 1951.

hensive anthology with three volumes of "texts about aesthetics" in Spanish. Many of these texts are translations especially prepared by him and some of his more advanced students for the collection. The anthology was mimeographed for the stu-

dents in Montevideo, and much later, in the 1990s, Coseriu announced that the anthology would soon be published in Spain (but this has in fact never happened).

Programa de un curso práctico de ESTÉTICA

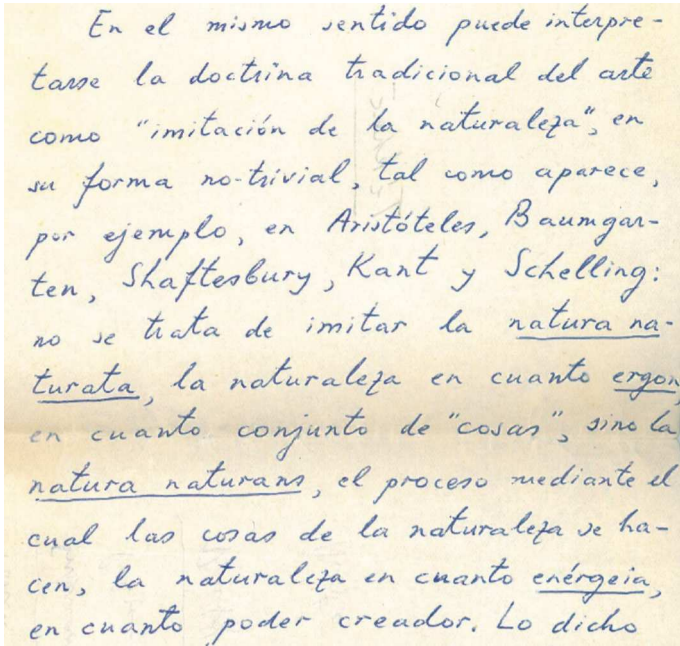
I - Desarrollo histórico de las ideas estéticas.

1. Introducción: posición ambigua, límites y dificultades de la Estética - La Estética como filosofía y como teoría y ciencia del arte - La estética actual en Italia, Francia, Alemania, Inglaterra. (Lectura : GEIGER, Los problemas de la estética, Introducción).
2. Las ideas estéticas en la Antigüedad : lo bello y su estructura.
 - PLATÓN - El problema de lo bello (Hippias mayor) - La doctrina de la reminiscencia (Menandro) - El arte como mimesis (República, X y VI).
 - ARISTÓTELES - El arte como mimesis y catarsis (Poética).
 - PLOTINO - Lo bello como iluminación y comunión con lo divino. La estructura de lo bello (Enéadas, I, 6) - La belleza inteligible (Enéadas, V, 8).

Fig. 11.9: Extract from the "course on aesthetics".

The programme and the anthology both reveal Coseriu's deep knowledge of the history of aesthetics (he used to proudly present the section on aesthetics in his private library at his home as the "most complete in the world"). The authors mentioned range from ancient Greece to contemporary writing, and the anthology includes both chronological and thematic classifications. The basic method consists of reading original texts, identifying continuities and innovations, and critically commenting on the respective contributions of these works. Coseriu taught aesthetics for several years, but as far as we can judge, there was no continuation of this activity after the Montevideo period apart from mentions to the history of aesthetics that appear in the *History of the Philosophy of Language* (chapter 8).

Apart from teaching at the university, he also gave public lectures about aesthetics and art in the early years in Montevideo (without making a difference between both already in his 1949 thesis). In the Coseriu Archive, there are several manuscripts on this field from that time. A title that appears on various manuscripts and notes is "El problema del arte", 'The problem of art'. It is probable that he wanted to write a more exhaustive article or a book on this issue. The two most extensively developed versions (although many of the notes are merely



En el mismo sentido puede interpretarse la doctrina tradicional del arte como "imitación de la naturaleza", en su forma no-trivial, tal como aparece, por ejemplo, en Aristóteles, Baumgarten, Shaftesbury, Kant y Schelling: no se trata de imitar la natura naturata, la naturaleza en cuanto ergon, en cuanto conjunto de "cosas", sino la natura naturans, el proceso mediante el cual las cosas de la naturaleza se hacen, la naturaleza en cuanto energeia, en cuanto poder creador. Lo dicho

Fig. 11.10: Manuscript on "ars" and "techné", © Coseriu Archive Tübingen.

fragments) are preserved in the manuscript section A23 of the Coseriu Archive. Both texts, which remain unpublished¹¹, are handwritten and without a date; they were probably written during the first Montevideo years. The two texts are identical in part, but also bear significant differences. Common to both is the focus on 'what art really is' ("¿Qué es el arte?"), the 'philosophical problem of art' ("el problema filosófico del arte"), and both start with a rhetorical question: 'isn't it a presumption to ask again what art is, after it has been asked so many times and so many answers have been given?' ("¿No será presunción querer plantear nuevamente el problema del arte, después de que se ha planteado tantas veces y se han dado tantas respuestas?"). But, Coseriu claims, this is just 'the very philosophical attitude' ("la actitud filosófica misma"), and is not a matter of pride but rather one of method or even of humility. And there is a certain dissatisfaction in all the answers that have been given thus far. He enumerates here a series of such

¹¹ In 2021, Marija Nolic, an M.A. student from Zurich, transcribed one of the manuscripts; it will soon be published in the journal *Energeia*.

answers: art has no utilitarian aims, it produces new objects, it is expressive, it creates structures, it creates beauty, it is a product of fantasy, it imitates nature, etc.

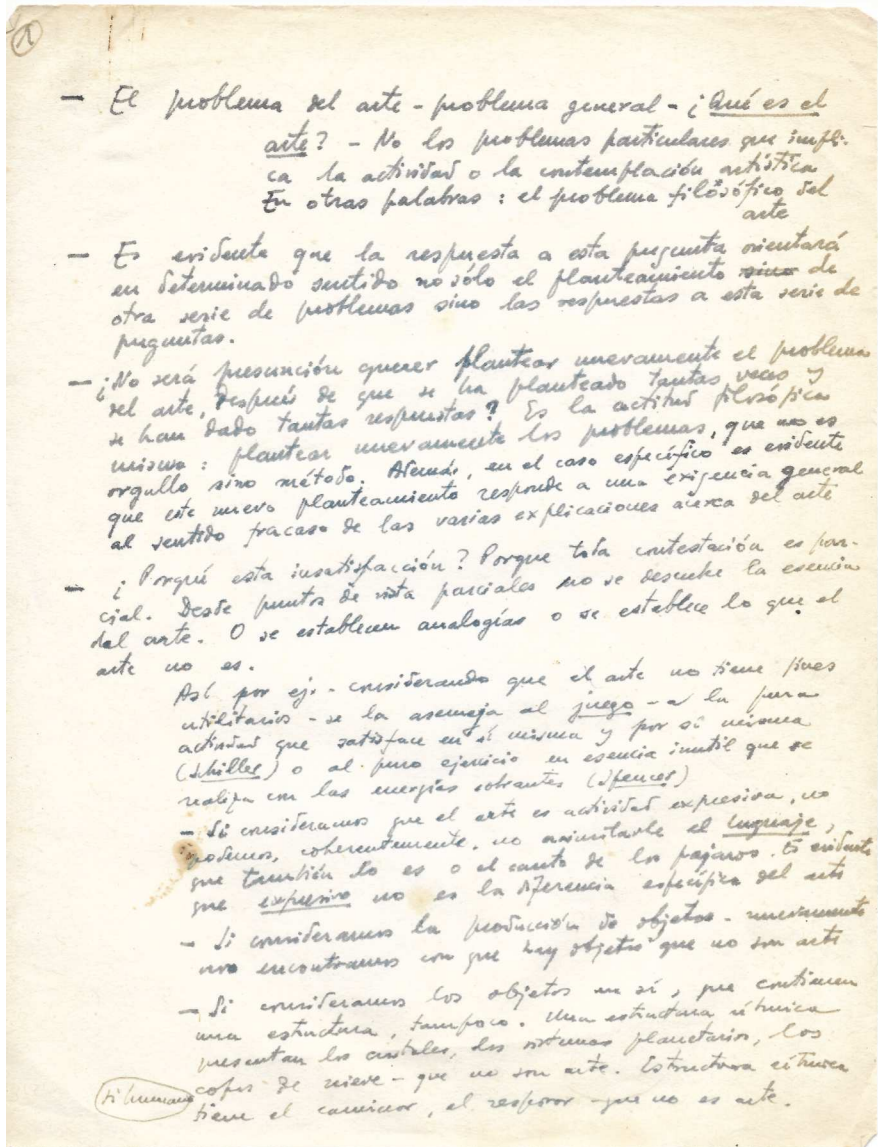


Fig. 11.11: Manuscript *El problema del arte*, p. 1, © Coseriu Archive Tübingen.

All of these “explanations” are rejected as unsatisfactory: they do not identify the *differentia specifica* of art and they are not able to capture its essence. Several authors are cited, some of them part of the aforementioned anthology of texts on aesthetics, and they serve as a background for the current discussion: Plotin, Leibniz, Hegel, Baumgarten, Shaftesbury, Cassirer, Croce, Banfi, Marx...

After a discussion of the specific human characteristics of art (in contrast to aesthetically perceived creations of nature), a first and provisional answer is given: intuitively, we all know what art is. In this context, he quotes the initial sentence of Croce’s *Breviario di Estetica* (“L’arte è ciò che tutti sanno che cosa sia” ‘Art is what everyone knows it is’; Croce 1913), and Coseriu calls this statement an ‘intelligent joke’. This intuition is not a real answer, but the intuitive knowledge opens up the way to the discovery of what the essence of art really is. Art is first identified as typically human (neither divine nor animal). Divine creation is nature, whereas art is a kind of ‘nature created by humans’. Humans – Coseriu refers here to Existentialism – are conscious of the fact that their existence is an existence towards death, and that their existence is an existence in community with others.

Here, Coseriu arrives at the central point: “El arte es la no aceptación de la muerte”, ‘art is the non-acceptance of death’. As in the Horacian *non omnis moriar*, ‘I objectivise myself outside of myself. The subject dies, but the object remains’. And the fact of remaining is not given in the object itself, but by others: “permanencia en los otros”, ‘remaining within others’. This means that the object of art must be an unedited object and that this fact must be recognised by others in the act of contemplation. In one of the manuscripts, art is compared to love and to religion: in all three cases, the individual delivers himself entirely to others in an act of complete confidence.

‘The essence of love is to assume as mine the pain of another person, the anguish of the other, to feel defined by this anguish.’ (*El problema del arte*, Ms. ArCos A23–128, 29)¹²

Art is contrary to love, but also essentially identical to it, in that its objective is the solidarity with a ‘you’ or with other human beings. But art is more ascetic and more generous than love. It is close to religion, but religion, unlike love, has a subjective and not an objectivised delivery. Love is like an act of faith in another person. Art is the ascetical and generous delivery of the subject into an object.

The text discusses further the relationship between art and society – with reference to Banfi – claiming (quite in contrast to the 1949 thesis) that the sociology of

12 “La esencia del amor es asumir como propio el dolor de otro, la angustia ajena, sentirse definido por esa misma angustia”.

art is interesting but rather a marginal historical phenomenon, and is independent from the essence of art itself. The essay ends with reflections on art and ethics and on the value of art (with indirect reference to Blaga): in order to determine the value of art (as a universal value) several steps are proposed, starting with vision or contemplation and the affirmation of beauty, and continuing with a rational analysis of the impressionistic or intuitive initial stage.

The text also contains a general scheme of 'vital activities' (Fig. 11.12).

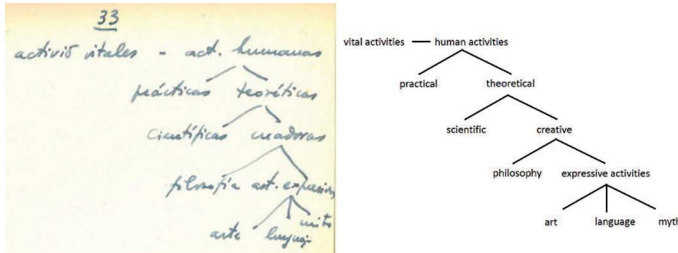


Fig. 11.12: *El problema del arte*, p. 41: General scheme of 'vital activities', © Coseriu Archive Tübingen.

There are several other texts and notes about this issue in the Coseriu Archive. In some ways we might say that this area of interest represents a completely independent aspect of his activity in the early Montevideo years, and that there is no real connection to his linguistics thought.

However, we could also see in these reflections "the whole Coseriu" in a nutshell: his way of thinking, of categorising, of arguing. The approach is like that of his later writing: it is not the case that a partial aspect is discussed; rather, the initial point is a statement that all previous treatments of the issue are unsatisfactory. This is the 'philosophical attitude' that begins not from some or other marginal questions, but which seeks to establish the problem anew in its full dimension. It considers the real identification of issues more important than their solution. It postulates a unitarian view of the whole issue at stake and aims to move from this total view to the appropriate bifurcations, and not the other way round. It rejects analogies that only illuminate partialities without identifying the essence, and it claims that at the beginning of a scientific analysis there is an intuitive knowledge of the object which must then be further analysed. And not only are these general epistemological principles present here; there are also concrete allusions to language theory and to linguistic concepts, such as the Aristotelian-Humboldtian difference between *energeia* and *ergon*, which is applied to nature and to art in another fragment, the idea of alterity he had adopted from Pagliaro, and the general attempt to associate human activities with universal

principles that allow us to see all these activities in the context of a universal system. All these aspects show that Coseriu's unpublished thoughts on aesthetics and art are closely related to his linguistic theory; we could indeed go further and say that both are developments that stem from a single common philosophical ground.

In addition, Coseriu would continue to pay special attention to the particular characteristics of artistic creation through language, especially poetry. We will address this in the following section.

11.4 Language and poetry – and literature in general

For Coseriu, literature is one of the most important means of accessing languages. He used to insist on the inclusion of literary subjects in exams on linguistics, and he enjoyed illustrating the history of a language with examples from literature. Even after the Montevideo period, he repeatedly taught courses on literature: on language, poetry and style, on Machiavelli's prose, on Mistral's *Mirèio*, on Old Occitan or Old Portuguese lyrics, on Camões' *Os Lusíadas*, as well as on modern Catalan texts. Moreover, as we have seen (chapter 3), his explanation of the dimensions of the "individual level" of "sense" is exemplified with literature: he shows, for instance, how a linguistic analysis of Cervantes' *Don Quixote* allows for the reconstruction of its literary sense. Why use literature in text linguistics? Because literature best shows the possibilities of language and thus offers the finest examples for text linguistics.

In several works he defines the essence of literature, and as in the previously mentioned text on art, his procedure is similar: he states that linguists generally face problems in defining what literature is and that attempts here to identify the difference between literary and other texts generally fail (cf. [257] 1991). He criticises Jakobson's notion of a *poetic function* because he neither considers it as a separate linguistic function nor agrees with a basically formal definition of that function: there are non-literary texts that correspond to Jakobson's definition (including his own examples) as well as literary texts that don't. He also criticises statements made by Teun van Dijk that sought to define what literature is through highlighting secondary, accidental characteristics.

In several works, Coseriu refers to the relationship between language and poetry (as early as in [405] (2009), a text originating in 1964, and also very clearly in his 'Thesis on language and poetry' first presented in 1968 at a symposium in Germany and then re-published several times in different languages).

Poetry, taken in a broad sense to include literary prose, is said to be essentially identical to language. The idea of such an identification of poetry with language is adopted from Vico via Croce and can also be found in Humboldt.

Coseriu defends the idea that poetry is, in Croce's sense, the "absolute language" and that all other manifestations of language (colloquial language, scientific language, etc.) are but reductions. In line with the Prague school's idea of a deautomated language in poetry, he postulates that poetry is simply language without limits: anything is possible in poetry, in poetry the plain functionality of language becomes manifest. At the same time, language is more than poetry because it is always directed to another subject, while poetry is not. This is quite clearly analysed in the comparison between 'information' and 'literature' in [257] (1990). The goals of the two are fundamentally different:

'while in information the purpose is external, to convey knowledge about something with an object, in a literary work the purpose is the work itself: the purpose of *The Iliad* is *The Iliad*, not some external purpose, not something instrumental.' ([257] (1990), 193)¹³

The "sense" of a text is its particular individuality; and in the case of literature, as in art in general, the product is a way of achieving eternity through the re-creation of the individual work of others.

Coseriu repeatedly referred to these ideas and made them part of the principles that we have seen in chapter 1. Yet almost all of his work on art and aesthetics remains unpublished, and only from time to time does he refer to his knowledge in this field in the published texts. It will be an interesting task to study Coseriu's writings in this field in detail. This might even allow us to shed light on what at first sight seems quite contradictory: his early excursion into the field of a Marxist approach to aesthetics. The impression given by his writing before and after this, as well as his own statements on the matter, lead us to think that it was a rather exceptional chapter in his life and work, owing to special circumstances. Be that as it may, we should not ignore the importance of his work in this field and its relation to the overall conception of his theory.

11.5 Works by Eugenio Coseriu cited in this chapter

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(1949): Lucian Blaga, *Arte e valore*, Italian translation by Eugenio Coseriu, unpublished.

¹³ "mientras en la información la finalidad es exterior, es transmitir un conocimiento acerca de algo con un objeto, en la obra literaria la finalidad es la obra misma: la finalidad de *La Iliada* es *La Iliada*, no alguna finalidad exterior, no algo instrumental".

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- [405] (2009): “Sprache und Dichtung”, edited by Christophe Gérard, *Energiea* 1, 118–127.

11.6 Further reading and works cited in this chapter

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Chapter 12

Epilogue

12.1 A few personal remarks to conclude...

Throughout this book I have mentioned from time to time facts that derive from my personal contact with Eugenio Coseriu, from 1984 until his death in 2002. In this final chapter, I feel that there is more to say about Coseriu from a personal point of view. This is not to achieve any kind of synthesis of his private life with his activity as a scholar (in fact I am not very familiar with his private life outside the academic world, which in many ways constituted his family), but rather to mention a few experiences which might make it easier to understand, at least from this personal perspective, who Coseriu really was.

I am considered to be his last disciple. This is partly true, but partly not. His real last disciple was also in fact one of his first at Tübingen University, Reinhard Meisterfeld, who defended his thesis on “Nominal aspect” (Meisterfeld 1998) in 1997, a real masterwork. Meisterfeld had been one of Coseriu’s earliest followers when the latter arrived in Tübingen in 1963, and due to a series of personal circumstances was only able to complete his dissertation in 1998.

The second reason why I am only partly his last disciple is that my principal supervisor was Brigitte Schlieben-Lange, Coseriu’s successor at Tübingen, who, through encouragement by Coseriu, kindly accepted me as an assistant after Coseriu’s retirement. As Brigitte herself was a disciple of Coseriu, there was a certain harmony between my “doctoral father” and my “doctoral mother” (who was, simultaneously, his “doctoral daughter”), and in some ways, although I admired (as did Brigitte) and continue to admire Coseriu’s genius, I felt personally closer to her, on the one hand because of the lesser distance of age, and on the other hand because I felt personally more attached to her, a progressive 1968 sociolinguist, than to the much older and rather paternal Coseriu.

I first met Coseriu in my first year of studies, immediately after arriving in Tübingen in October 1984. For some he was indeed the main reason to study in Tübingen. This was not true in my case. Having grown up in Stuttgart, Tübingen was simply the closest “traditional” university, and as such seemed a good choice. On the first day of my studies, some more senior students distributed information about the professors. Of Coseriu it was said: “eine Koryphäe” – ‘a luminary’. And ‘difficult to follow’. That sounded attractive. I attended his courses from the first semester onwards, and looking now at my notes from that time, I realise

that I was far from understanding the true dimensions of his scholarship. I was, however, fascinated, and this fascination was the beginning of my life as a linguist.

It would be rather laborious to reconstruct my entire relationship with Coseriu over the following years; instead I will highlight just a small number of key experiences and explain how it I came to be one of his most confident and dedicated followers.

The first time I met Coseriu was during the first course I attended. I was sitting in room 036 in the “Brechtbau”, as the students had re-baptised what was officially called the *Neuphilologikum*, the room where I would go on to listen to him regularly for years thereafter, and where I would myself teach twenty years later when I became a professor at Tübingen.

Coseriu came in, followed by a group of assistants, disciples, doctoral students and lecturers who outnumbered the not very large group of attendees already in the room. It looked like a doctor’s visit in the hospital, and his appearance demanded respect and his presence exuded a sensation of authority: this almost bald, tall, suit-wearing man in his early sixties was a real “Herr Professor” as I had imagined, and I felt privileged to be a student in that room. He started to speak slowly, with an accent, not really a Romanian one but obviously Romanic, with rolled ‘r’s and the absence of glottal stops. This particular course on language change was in German, and on later occasions I also heard him teach in Spanish, French, Italian, Portuguese, and Romanian. The sentences were pronounced with interruptions, in that he suffered from a kind of hiccup that made him cut his speech frequently, with short breaks sometimes coming in the middle of the sentence, and sometimes with no breaks at all. The audience very soon split into two groups: those who focused on the hiccup, the breaks, the slow way of speaking and the accent, the kind of students who would typically abandon the course after a couple of lectures; meanwhile, others felt that these long, slow sentences were perfectly formed, part of a programme, a coherent and incredibly well-structured kind of intellectual building. Heinrich Weber, who had transcribed and published several of Coseriu’s courses in book form, stated in an interview:

‘Coseriu used to speak so slowly that you could almost take everything down. His German was always somewhat cumbersome and not at all without accent. But behind the weaknesses of expression there was a conceptual clarity that was actually admirable. It is therefore no coincidence that many of Coseriu’s lectures were copied and published by his students.’ (Heinrich Weber in <https://coseriu.ch/interviews-en/>)¹

¹ “Coseriu hat so langsam vorgetragen, dass man fast alles gut mitschreiben konnte. Sein Deutsch war immer etwas umständlich und überhaupt nicht akzentfrei. Aber hinter den Schwächen des Ausdrucks lag eine begriffliche Klarheit, die eigentlich bewundernswert war. Es ist deswegen

As his disciple Heidi Aschenberg (2002, 13) wrote: ‘his lecture style, rather brittle, resists all levity.’²

I once attended in parallel in the same semester two courses on the French 16th century, one by Coseriu and the other one by Hans Helmut Christmann. The one by Coseriu had a much slower rhythm and a much smaller audience than the other. Christmann tended to be very didactic and to illustrate historical points with lots of literary examples, and he was very popular with students. By contrast, Coseriu’s course was presented more slowly, yet of a greater density, less didactic but at the same time enormously inspiring for those who accepted the intellectual challenge of following his complex process of formulating ideas. I quote again Heidi Aschenberg:

‘The manuscript usually only lists keywords, the rest has to be found during the lecture itself. Often it seems as if the thought is still searching for the word, a linguistically precarious statement. Or, linguistically less precarious, the listeners witness the gradual construction of thought during speech. Coseriu works on the text during the lecture, the listeners are required to collaborate, to travel the path in the opposite direction, so to speak.’ (Aschenberg 2002, 13)³

After one of the first lectures, I wrote into my diary: τὰ ὄντα ὡς ἔστιν λέγειν, ‘Say the things as they are’. The idea of saying things as they are attracted me greatly. Of course, all the scholars at Tübingen had the same aims in mind, but only Coseriu dared to do so in a teaching programme, and he somehow managed to transmit the confidence that he had the authority to fulfil what he promised.

As time passed, I had occasion to move closer to the “inner circle”, and became friends with some of the more immediate followers. In 1985, I spent some time in Mexico, and on September 19th I experienced the major earthquake there. On returning to Tübingen I had my first direct meeting with Coseriu, in his office. A Mexican colleague had asked me to deliver a message from her and other linguistic colleagues in Mexico saying that they were fine following the earthquake. Coseriu proceeded to take a sheet of paper and to spontaneously draw a perfect plan of the

auch kein Zufall, dass viele Vorlesungen Coserius von seinen Schülern nachgeschrieben und publiziert wurden”.

2 “sein Vorlesungsstil, eher spröde, widersetzt sich aller Leichtfertigkeit”.

3 “das Manuskript verzeichnet in der Regel bloß Stichworte, das Übrige muß während des Vortrags selbst gefunden werden. Oft scheint es, als suche der Gedanke noch das Wort, eine linguistisch allerdings prekäre Aussage. Oder, linguistics weniger prekär, die Hörer wohnen der allmählichen Verfertigung des Gedankens beim Reden bei. Coseriu arbeitet während des Vortrags am Text, die Hörer sind gehalten, mitzuarbeiten, den Weg sozusagen in umgekehrter Richtung zurückzulegen”.

city centre (I had just returned after several months living there and would have done much worse) and he asked me to show him the areas which had suffered the worst damage. This was one of my first direct encounters with his incredible memory and his systematic thought. “This man is a genius”, I said to myself.

But that genius had a selective perception. I participated in almost all his classes, but I felt that I was not really an individual for him, just one of the students there, part of the anonymous mass. Then, one day I gave a presentation in one of his Spanish seminars; it was about Menéndez Pidal’s “Sevilla frente a Madrid” and the broader discussion on the Andalusism of American Spanish. I did not think that I was well-prepared, since I had only written the paper the previous day. But to my surprise I was allowed to deliver it in its entirety without interruption (Coseriu used to interrupt presentations and frequently ended them himself, sometimes passing judgement at the end: ‘the essential information has been given’ in a passive construction that left open the exact reference to the agent). After the class, he asked me to come to his office. This was a complete turning-point in my academic career: Coseriu apologised for not being able to offer me a job at that moment (I had not even passed the initial exams) and he proposed me as a candidate for a grant from the German Academic Studies Foundation (“Studienstiftung des Deutschen Volkes”). I was awarded the grant, and from that moment I became part of the “inner circle”. Coseriu left no doubt that my future career would be that of an academic linguist, and to this end he supported me by all possible means. I have wondered many times if this was a momentary decision, or whether he had in fact noticed me previously. I have no answer to this, but I do know, through his own statements, that this was for him the normal way to “discover” his followers, as he said in an interview in 1991: ‘when I saw someone I was interested in I called her or him, I talked to her or him’; that is, he picked out those people he was interested in and sought to open up a path for them within the profession. Being part of the “inner circle” also meant that I was able to participate in all the events and meetings that he organised with invited linguists, and this was how I personally met scholars such as Juan M. Lope Blanch, Haim Rosen, V. V. Ivanov, Marius Sala and several others as a young student.

During my final written examination, Coseriu came into the room where I was writing a text about Nebrija and the Spanish language in the Siglo de Oro in order to tell me that there had been a coup d’état in Russia (it was the 21st of August 1991); he told me all the details about what had happened, not realising that for me at that moment Nebrija was more important than Gorbachev. Coseriu had an interest in politics and followed the news closely, especially events concerning changes in the countries of the Warsaw Pact, and I interpreted his intrusion during my exam not as a lack of empathy but rather as a demonstration of confidence.



Fig. 12.1: Coseriu in 1988 with the Russian linguist V. V. Ivanov, with a group of disciples behind, © Coseriu Archive Tübingen.

After my exams I became a research assistant at Tübingen due to Coseriu's intervention, despite the fact that he had already retired by that time. Retirement did not prevent him from working in the faculty every day; my office was right next door to his, and we had intensive contact, often having lunch together or discussing various issues. Sometimes he asked me to assist him in the process of writing texts in German or Spanish. As Jürgen Trabant (²2015) pointed out, he always needed an active and constructive listener when formulating his texts: he tended to dictate his works while someone else wrote them down. Sometimes he closed his eyes and spoke slowly, word after word, the whole text already formed in his incredible memory, and only from time to time did he ask if one or another option sounded better. The result was a perfectly constructed written text, but underlying it was the echo of the spoken voice. I am not sure if this echo can objectively be said to be present in those texts, or if it is just a priming effect for those who have his voice in mind, but there are probably some markers on the surface of the texts that derive from this process of production. Trabant used to call this the "acroamatic" side of the texts, claiming that 'the acroamatic aspect of these texts is an essential reason for their intensity' (Trabant ²2015, XVII).

In 1993, I left Tübingen and worked in Paderborn for six years, while finishing my PhD on contemporary Galician under the supervision of Brigitte Schlieben-Lange and Coseriu in Tübingen. He was quite enthusiastic about that study, but I remember that during the defence he did what he always did with his disciples: he said I had quoted him a lot but that I had forgotten to mention an important contribution on linguistic interference ([121] (1977)). I was rather ashamed about this at the time, because he had mentioned that paper several times and I had never read it, mainly because I thought it was about a very specific issue not directly relevant to my study (this sometimes happens with Coseriu's titles: they seem very specific but in fact hide whole theories). The truth, though, is that Coseriu's

paper *Sprachliche Interferenz bei Hochgebildeten* ('Linguistic interference among highly educated individuals') included a theory of linguistic interference and as such I definitely should have known it. Indeed, when I finally read it after the defence, I was enormously surprised to find an argumentation and categorisation very similar to the one I had developed in my own thesis: a distinction between interference affecting the system and interference affecting the norm, as well as what I had called transposition, hypercorrection, overlap and differentiation, with very similar concepts but with different terms (see chapter 4). So I felt that what Coseriu used to say about his disciples was true, that his theory could be enlarged and applied to new fields and that some of the new paths could almost be foreseen from the perspective of the already-established system (only that in this case they had already been formulated explicitly).

Just after I had left Tübingen, the idea arose with my Spanish colleague Adolfo Murguía to produce a book of conversations with Coseriu. We finally managed to find a week in summer 1994, and armed with a magnetophone and a great many packets of cigarettes, we spent a whole week listening to eternal monologues (the term "conversations" was flexible) in which Coseriu explained his life and work. But this was not enough, and we repeated the experience during another extremely hot and humid week in Coseriu's house in Kirchentellinsfurt the following year. The result was the book that is frequently cited in these pages (*DSs*), published in 1997 with the only title that seemed remotely possible, "Die Sachen sagen, wie sie sind", 'To say things as they are', according to Coseriu's motto. The book has subsequently been translated into other languages (Romanian, Spanish and Portuguese).



Fig. 12.2: At Coseriu's home in 1996 during the interviews for *DSs*, © Johannes Kabatek.

A student made the initial transcriptions of the texts and I then prepared a written version, organising the transcripts into various chapters, trying to find a style that avoided repetitions and markers of too-evident orality but that still echoed the spoken voice. One of the most striking features of these texts was that on certain occasions Coseriu repeated almost the same text in interviews from the two years. This was not due to a failing memory, indeed, quite the opposite: he had a very systematic way of thinking and his thoughts were organised into coherent and well-developed “subchapters” of a larger “book” (a book that was partly written and published, partly written and unpublished, and partly still to be written but drafted out in his mind). Touching on a specific topic, then, led him to select the corresponding chapter and “read” what he had already prepared about it. He preferred this “elaborate” discourse to a more spontaneous one, and I think that he did not like to improvise very much. This seems to be in contradiction to the aforementioned allusion to Kleist’s ‘gradual construction of thought during speech’ made by Heidi Aschenberg. However, I think there were three possible steps of the formulation of thoughts in Coseriu’s life: the apparently spontaneous ones (based on his memory), the lecture-style formulation based on notes and, finally, the completely formulated texts, with important variation between languages. In his written texts in German, his style is sometimes quite heavy:

‘Coseriu’s style, which corresponds to his procedure of argumentation, often seems cumbersome, lengthy and complicated to us today. The many “on the one hand – on the other hand”, “and indeed”, “in part”, “in some respects”, “yes, but”, “that is”, “even if...” probably correspond to his great model Hegel.’ (Dietrich in Coseriu [443] (2021), 14)⁴

However, behind the whole continuum of possible ways of formulation there is always one organised systematic whole.

When the book of the interviews was about to be published, some doubts remained in my mind about proper names that he had mentioned and about several other details that I wanted to verify. It was at this point that Coseriu started to revise the whole text, sometimes inserting long paragraphs and trying to explain exhaustively what in his opinion was still not very clear. Those who read that book might recognise these corrected sections, since the conceptions therein have a clearly written form and differ from the other parts, marked as these are by the aforementioned “echoes of orality”. Coseriu worked day and night on the cor-

4 “Coserius Stil, der seiner Vorgehensweise in der Argumentation entspricht, erscheint uns heute oft umständlich, langatmig und kompliziert. Die vielen ‘einerseits – andererseits’, ‘und zwar’, ‘zum Teil’, ‘in gewisser Hinsicht’, ‘ja, aber’, ‘das heißt’, ‘wenn auch’ – entsprechend wohl seinem großen Vorbild Hegel”.

rections. Since I lived in another city, he would send me faxes, and I sometimes received pages with his comments late in the night and again very early the next morning, and he repeatedly noted that he had found no time to sleep because he wanted to finish a chapter. The result was no longer simply a book of conversations but rather a kind of personal testament, with important comments on his work, plus some mitigating explanations when the oral version was too direct or offensive ('x was an idiot' was changed to 'I never agreed with x's thought'). There are whole chapters that were corrected exhaustively, such as a dialogue with me on correction and exemplarity, a text which Coseriu would later publish independently as 'A dialogue with a disciple about language policies and ethics' ([318] (1997)) and in which we found ourselves in disagreement as to our own views on the minority situations of Romanian in Moldova and of Galician in Galicia (see also chapter 5). One of the sections he added in a written text was on his opinions about nationalism. This perhaps merits particular attention, since it has a certain biographical importance, on the one hand for the linguist himself, and on the other hand for the perception of him by others, and even for the reception of his work in a number of places.

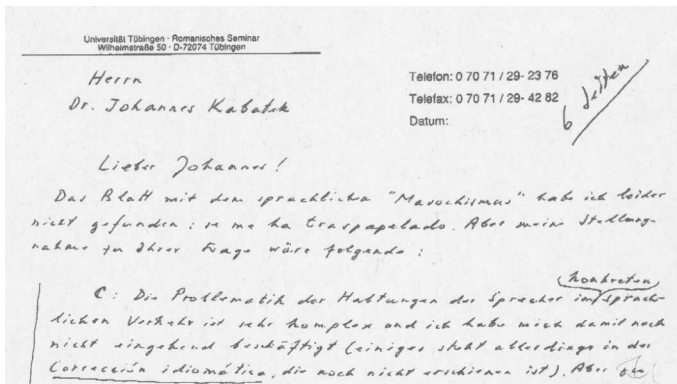


Fig. 12.3: Extract of a fax sent to me during the editing process of *DSs*, © Johannes Kabatek.

Coseriu had been an active member of the fascist Garda de Fier when he was a student in Iași. This is an undeniable biographical fact (as we can infer from the letters in the Coseriu Archive), one that led to a certain rejection of Coseriu as a linguist, such as in the world of pragmatics and text linguistics (see chapter 3). One of his disciples once told me that he thought Coseriu had always been a fascist, and that Coseriu had criticised his work because he considered this disciple to be on the political left. Coseriu's fascist attitude, he said, was also obvious in his authoritarianism, and this had never changed. I could not agree with such a view. I was

also a “leftist”, as was my thesis supervisor Brigitte Schlieben-Lange; Coseriu knew this and yet he treated us with high regard. Was he an authoritarian person? Yes, without doubt, but I never felt he imposed his authority without justification, and he showed great respect for other opinions when he considered them convincing. He was a politically interested person, an attentive reader of *Der Spiegel* and a well-informed citizen. I have no doubt he was a democrat, even if a conservative one who signed, together with other conservative professors from the faculty a manifesto against the 1968 student disturbance of academic events. Within the divided faculty in Tübingen in 1968 he was clearly on the conservative side, in line with colleagues such as Joseph Ratzinger and against the progressive ones like Ernst Bloch.

However, I believe it is true that he was ashamed for his youth, as he also was for his Marxist period in Milan. When Coseriu arrived in Italy, he cut contacts with his fascist friends from Iași and he began a new life. This would occur for a second time when he left Italy after his thesis on aesthetics supervised by Banfi, a work with a clearly Marxist approach. I only ever heard Coseriu speak of “shame” with respect to these two periods in his life. And I think that when he moved to Montevideo, he felt an ideological liberation, and from that moment onwards he could define himself as a ‘social-progressive-liberal conservative’, even if this constitutes ‘squaring the circle’, as he himself observed (see chapter 11). It is also true that he never stopped being a patriot or even a ‘nationalist’, and this is probably where we found ourselves to be in dispute to some extent. In *DSs*, he distinguishes different kinds of nationalism, and he confesses that he had passed through them all at different times. The first kind would be the ‘naïve and unreflected, primitive nationalism’ in which one’s own nation is thought to be better than all others, but without having any knowledge of these others. As he says:

‘It was Italy that very quickly and definitely (which perhaps means that there were already signs of overcoming it) healed me from the first form of nationalism—which sometimes led me to make unreflective statements and gestures that I later bitterly regretted.’ (*DSs*, 28)⁵

He characterises a second kind of nationalism as a ‘reflected, tactical nationalism’ that is aware of the values of others; and third kind, a ‘critical dynamic nationalism’, with scepticism and a critical view also towards the values and advantages of

5 “Von der ersten Form des Nationalismus – die mich bisweilen zu unreflektierten Äußerungen und Gesten verleitet hat, die ich nachher bitter bereut habe – hat mich Italien geheilt, und zwar in sehr kurzer Zeit und endgültig, was vielleicht bedeutet, daß Ansätze der Überwindung schon da waren”.

one's own nation. He adds that he never abandoned this third form, despite effectively becoming a person without a nation-home, that is, a citizen of the world.



Fig. 12.4: Coseriu in Rome. Piazza del Popolo, summer 1941, © Coseriu Archive Tübingen.

To me personally, this third kind of nationalism was also not convincing, and perhaps it is due to my own condition as a German born twenty years after the Nazi catastrophe that any kind of nationalism seems problematic. In Catalonia, in the Basque country, and in Galicia, I was frequently confronted with the idea of a “positive, defensive” nationalism, but I always felt a certain mistrust of those ideas. However, to sum up this section, I must say that I only knew Coseriu in his final years, and it is difficult if not impossible for me to judge his past. The important question for me would be if there is any reflection of fascism or Marxism in his linguistic or philosophical work, and this is of course a relevant question, one that I have reflected on frequently, not only in itself but also in the context of discussions of Heidegger or – a strikingly different case that I once discussed with Ottmar Ette – Hans Robert Jauss. Maybe I was too close to Coseriu to see all the many

facets of his character; but I firmly believe that he became an independent thinker from 1950 onwards, without any attachment to political extremes, and maybe even more independent due to his own personal experiences.

The book of interviews (*DSs*) published in 1997 has become one of the main reference texts on Coseriu's life and work. It contains a chapter on "the unpublished manuscripts" that documented exhaustively for the first time the enormous amount of unpublished work Coseriu had at his home (Kabatek 2002a). Most of these manuscripts were written during the first years in Montevideo, such as the very extensive manuscripts on correction (see chapter 2) and the theory of proper names (see chapter 3). Others were collections of texts that served as the basis for lecture series and courses, such as the History of Romance linguistics (see chapter 7) and the History of the Philosophy of Language (see chapter 8). Apart from these large manuscripts, there were shorter texts on a variety of issues in Romance or general linguistics, as well as short notes that he called "idee varie" – annotations of an idea that sometimes, when he was asked about what lay behind the idea, turned out to be related to almost completely developed argumentations that could have been the initial point of a whole study. Coseriu had too many ideas and not enough time to work on them, and thus he left many of them in one of these unfinished categories, identified as such. This is why, together with Brigitte Schlieben-Lange, we had the idea, after the publication of *DSs*, of launching a project to make a "backup copy of the hard disk", as we used to say ironically about the knowledge hidden in Coseriu's mind. A project for the classification of the unpublished work and the publishing of the "big" manuscripts was approved by the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* (German Research Council) in 1998, and it was possible to achieve a complete classification of the manuscripts and the publication of several volumes of unpublished manuscripts (see coseriu.com and now coseriu.ch). However, it was not possible for Coseriu, due to a series of circumstances, to comment on his "idee varie", nor on the larger, previously unpublished works. At this stage Brigitte Schlieben-Lange became seriously ill, and Coseriu had almost no time, since he was travelling widely giving lectures and receiving doctorates honoris causa or other distinctions around the world. Brigitte Schlieben-Lange, his successor in Tübingen, passed away in 2000. Shortly after that, it was Coseriu who became seriously ill. He died in 2002. Before his passing, he had entrusted me officially to take care of his intellectual legacy.

The person that Brigitte Schlieben-Lange and I had employed as part of the DFG-project was Reinhard Meisterfeld, that early disciple from the 1960s mentioned above, who after many years in Portugal had returned to Germany, where he finished his PhD on number and nominal aspect in 1997. We were initially sceptical about this choice, but Coseriu insisted and felt confident with Meisterfeld, which was an important prerequisite for the collaboration. The choice was indeed an excellent one, since Meisterfeld was not only the closest person to Co-

seriu in the latter years of his life (he even lived in a small flat in his house), he also became the heart of what later would be the Coseriu Archive at Tübingen, dedicating his life to the publication of Coseriu's previously unpublished works and to the Archive itself. He died in 2017, leaving unfinished the monumental publication of Coseriu's *History of Romance Linguistics*, latterly completed by Wolf Dietrich (see chapter 7).

When Coseriu died, there was no one in Tübingen apart from Meisterfeld to oversee his legacy; there were of course some of his former disciples and colleagues, like Heinrich Weber, Jean-Pierre Durafour, Adolfo Murguía and Heinrich Kohring, but none of these had a departmental position that would have allowed them to establish a research centre or archives dedicated to Coseriu. In this context, it is important to mention Peter Koch, who had never been a direct disciple of Coseriu but who had come to occupy the second chair of Romance Linguistics a few years before, succeeding Hans Helmut Christmann. Koch felt a strong respect for Coseriu and his work, and his own conceptions had built on Coseriu's theory (see chapter 3). After Brigitte Schlieben-Lange's passing, Koch took over the direction of the Coseriu project together with me.

In 2004, I was appointed full professor at Tübingen (as the successor to Brigitte Schlieben-Lange) and I began negotiations as to the possibility of setting up the "Coseriu Archive". I received strong support from the President of the University, Eberhard Schaich, an erudite and perspicacious person, and a neighbour of Coseriu's in Kirchentellinsfurt, who knew of Coseriu's worldwide reputation since everywhere he travelled the name of the linguist appeared to be well-known.



Fig. 12.5: The Dean of Faculty, Hans Joachim Knape, inaugurating the Coseriu Archive, June 24th, 2005 (left); with Reinhard Meisterfeld (right) and Óscar Loureda (centre) in the recently inaugurated Archive (right), © Johannes Kabatek.

In June 2005, the Archive was finally inaugurated. The classified manuscripts were made available in a room at the Faculty of Modern Philologies in Tübingen, with Coseriu's library in the basement. The classification had already been completed

some years prior to this as part of the DFG-project, with the help of several student assistants and two colleagues from Madrid who had come to Tübingen several times to work with Coseriu, the hispanist José Polo and the Latinist Benjamín García Hernández. With all the duties of a chair at a department with lots of students and with my own research projects, I hardly had time to dedicate to the Archive, but we tried to maintain a continual process of digitising the published work as well as the manuscripts, and we began classifying the books in the library. I created the website *coseriu.com* (now also hosted at Zurich under *coseriu.ch*) with basic information about Coseriu and access to digitised work; Meisterfeld continued preparing texts for publication, and we revised numerous translations of Coseriu's work into several languages before they were published in order to monitor the coherence of theory and terminology.

The Archive was also a place to work for those visiting scholars who wanted to work on Coseriu. One of the first of these was Óscar Loureda Lamas, who came as a young researcher from A Coruña and worked on the Spanish edition of Coseriu's book on Text Linguistics with a grant from the Alexander-von-Humboldt foundation. There had been a previous translation of this work by Ana Agud, but Loureda substantially revised and exhaustively commented on the text, and the subsequent publication became a success in Spain and Latin America, going through several editions. Other guests included Christophe Gérard, from France, who worked on discourse traditions, María Eugenia Vázquez Laslop, from Mexico, who worked on legal texts, and Hugo Ramírez Sierra, from Colombia, who worked on literary discourses. Jörn Albrecht, Hansbert Bertsch and Wolf Dietrich used the Archive for the preparation of their important editions of Coseriu's texts on language philosophy, Vulgar Latin and the history of Romance linguistics. Others, like Marius Nagy and Cristian Bota, came in order to see the original manuscripts and to publish their own related texts.

In 2007 Christophe Gérard and Régis Missire organised a conference on Coseriu in Aix-en-Provence, and this would be the first of a series of biennial conferences held at different locations (Cluj, Romania 2009, Almería, Spain, 2011, Udine, Italy, 2013, Potsdam, Germany 2015, Lima, Peru 2017, Cádiz, Spain 2020, Zurich, Switzerland (the centenary of Coseriu's birth) 2021). Although there was no official Coseriu foundation or society, nor any continuous funding, these conferences worked quite well, with different foci that showed the plurality of approaches and fields that could be related to Coseriu's work.

In 2009 I launched the open-access online journal *Energeia* (<https://energeia-online.org/>), a journal on linguistics, the history of linguistics and language philosophy, the central fields of Coseriu's activity. *Energeia* is published annually and includes papers, reviews, interviews and texts from the Archive. The final number before I moved to Zurich was an interesting attempt to use the journal as a discus-

sion platform, with a still-relevant discussion on causality in linguistics. It included contributions by noted scholars as well as a discussion forum where the various authors could comment on the other contributions. Unfortunately, the publication of *Energeia* was delayed for some years after 2013.

In that year I moved to Zurich. There were many reasons for this, basically personal ones, but also professional: a number of advantages, such as a reduced teaching load, fewer students, and a lower burden of administrative duties, all promised more academic freedom. Some called me a renegade, but I never abandoned my care of Coseriu's legacy, to which I felt and continue to feel deeply committed, without considering it an exclusive duty of my academic life. In Zurich, I launched a project on the publication of the large collection of letters written to Coseriu, obtaining generous funding over several years from the Swiss National Science Foundation; I dedicated seminars to Coseriu, and in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2021, we organised a major conference. We set up a website with all the worldwide events dedicated to Coseriu's centenary, published a large number of video interviews about Coseriu with disciples and other colleagues, and re-launched *Energeia* (<https://energeia-online.org/>). All this would not have been possible without the collaboration of various people within the project. One of the most dedicated promoters of Coseriu's legacy is Cristina Bleortu, who first came to Zurich as a visiting scholar in 2014 and afterwards worked there as a post-doc in the SNFS-project on Coseriu's correspondence, this after defending her PhD in Zurich. She was the main person responsible of the interview project, with some 90 interviews (<https://coseriu.ch/interviews-en/>), and of the re-launch of *Energeia* on the OJS platform. Together with her, we published several sections of Coseriu's correspondence. Her enormous energy and capacity for work is a guarantee of the future of scholarly dedication to the work of Coseriu.

Linguistics in the 21st century is going in new directions, and Coseriu's work definitely seems to have passed into the realms of the history of linguistics: what remains is a name, some concepts and terms, and a couple of labels. For many linguists, there is no time to look at old-fashioned ideas that seem far removed from current theories, methods and technical possibilities. Linguistics has become experimental, quantitative, computational. This book has been an attempt to show that, apart from such current developments, there are at least three reasons for not forgetting Coseriu and his work.

The first is set out in chapter 7, a general claim for a historical consciousness: only those who are familiar with the past will be in a position to say something new. In the case of Coseriu, it is his philosophical attitude, his ways of always looking for the essential issues in the different branches of linguistics, that render his work so fresh and inspiring, even today. Linguistics sometimes loses itself in debates that tend to have little direct contact to the essential issues at hand: we dis-

cuss the perfect design of an experiment or the perfect algorithm for this or that calculation, but sometimes the discussion becomes very distant from what is in fact the object of the discussion itself. Models do indeed have to work, but they will not tell us anything about human language unless they really are linked to linguistic facts. Coseriu had the advantage and the disadvantage of not sharing or being moved by momentaneous fashions; rather than some or other current tendency, his referent was always language and languages, and in the arising dialogue his partners were Aristotle and Hegel just as importantly as his contemporary colleagues. This makes Coseriu somehow timeless.

The second reason is the openness of Coseriu's thought. In chapter 2 we have presented the distinction between system and norm and the idea that the system is a "system of possibilities". This conception of system and norm may in a certain way be applied to Coseriu's own conception of language: he offers a systematic and coherent concept building which allows for further development *within* this system of thought. This means that there are points in the system that can be inferred from the explicitly mentioned parts, and there are possibilities of the system that are part of what we could call the "normal realisation" of Coseriu's system. We should perhaps not exaggerate this analogy, which of course is applicable to any theoretical 'building' in a general sense. But it is interesting to see how a close knowledge of Coseriu's theory sometimes leads to parallel elaborations, a good indication of the coherence and logic that serves as the basis of his thought.

The third reason is the appealing nature of Coseriu's voice (I have noted several times Trabant's claim that Coseriu's writings are marked by orality, and indeed I have talked about "echoes of the spoken voice" in his writing). This voice talks to us from the standpoint of a clearly ordered and exhaustively grounded system, and as such is a classic of its kind, to be rediscovered again and again. In recent years and in several places, terms such as "post-coserianism" or "neo-coserianism" have appeared, these generally limited to certain aspects of Coseriu's theory such as variational linguistics (Octavio de Toledo 2018, 118), without taking into account the whole Coserian universe. There are several branches of linguistics and language philosophy, and several places in the world, where Coseriu's thought still has an influence and where the work it has inspired continues. But maybe there is something much more important than a "post-school" with a particular label. My own life has been a permanent rediscovery of Coseriu's work in different contexts. And I am not the only one. Brigitte Schlieben-Lange used to say: when you are trying to understand a problem in linguistics and you don't feel that you are seeing the issue clearly, just ask whether Coseriu wrote anything about it (and in many cases, of course, he had done). This might not resolve your issue directly, but it will help you to put your own thoughts in order, making it far easier to tackle the problem. I know that she was absolutely right in this respect. Coseriu

won't resolve our problems, but he will help us to clarify our thoughts. Those who discover this will appreciate it greatly. And if this book is understood as an invitation to enter the rich universe of Coseriu's thought by reading some of his works, it will have accomplished its objectives.

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12.3 Further reading and works cited in this chapter

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Chapter 13

Biographical data

July 27th, 1921	Born in Mihăileni, Bessarabia (Romania)
1926 – 1931	Elementary school in Mihăileni
1931 – 1939	Lyceum (Liceu Ion Creangă) in Bălți
1939 – 1940	Studies (modern philology and law) at the University of Iași (Romania)
1940 – 1944	Romance and Slavic studies at the University of Rome
1943	Study visit to Zagreb (Croatia)
1944	<i>Laurea in lettere</i> at the University of Rome (with a thesis on the subject <i>Su gli influssi della poesia epica francese medievale sulla poesia epica popolare degli Slavi meridionali</i>)
1944	Studies of philosophy at the University of Padua
1945	Studies of philosophy at the University of Milan
1945 – 1949	Newspaper editor among others at the daily <i>Corriere Lombardo</i>
1949	Laurea in filosofia (with a thesis on the subject <i>L'evoluzione delle idee estetiche in Romania</i>)
1947 – 1950	Lecturer of Romanian at the University of Milan; collaborator of the <i>Enciclopedia Hoepli</i>
1951 – 1963	Professor of General and Indo-European Linguistics at the Universidad de la República (Montevideo, Uruguay); head of the linguistic research institute (Departamento de Lingüística); simultaneously Professor of Linguistics (general, Romance and Spanish) at the Instituto de Profesores Artigas, Montevideo
December 1960 – February 1961	Visiting Professor of General Linguistics at the University of Coimbra (Portugal)
November 1961 – February 1962	Visiting Professor of Romance Philology at the University of Bonn (Germany)
May 1962 – February 1963	Visiting Professor of Romance Philology at the University of Frankfurt/Main
as of May 1963	Professor of Romance Philology at the University of Tübingen
as of 1966	Professor of Romance Philology and General Linguistics at the University of Tübingen
1972 – 1973 and 1977 – 1978	Professeur associé at the University of Strasbourg (France)
September 7th, 2002	Death in Tübingen
2005	Opening of the Coseriu Archive in Tübingen

Chapter 14

References

This list of references is divided into three parts: publications by Eugenio Coseriu (14.1), publications about Coseriu (14.2) and further readings (14.3).

14.1 Works by Eugenio Coseriu

The initial numbers in brackets in the following list are the ones indicated throughout this book. Most of the publications are downloadable and have the same numbers at <https://coseriu.ch/eugenio-coseriu-work/>, where a more complete and continuously updated list can be found. They coincide with the traditional numeration offered for the first time in 1981: the list is based on the catalogue published by Jens Lüdtke and Manfred Ringmacher in the festschrift *Logos Semantikos. Studia linguistica in honorem Eugenio Coseriu 1921–1981*, coordinated by Horst Geckeler, Brigitte Schlieben-Lange, Jürgen Trabant and Harald Weydt, 5 vols., Berlin/New York/Madrid 1981. Further additions, up to 1987, are adopted from the list prepared by Jörn Albrecht in the homage *Energeia und Ergon. Sprachliche Variation – Sprachgeschichte – Sprachtypologie, Studia in honorem Eugenio Coseriu*, coordinated by Jörn Albrecht, Jens Lüdtke and Harald Thun, 3 vols., Tübingen 1988. It was updated including publications until 1997 by Johannes Kabatek in coordination with Eugenio Coseriu. The actualization of the list up to the present was made by Cristina Bleorțu and Johannes Kabatek (with the kind help of Eugenia Bojoga, Cristinel Munteanu, Eugen Munteanu, Emma Tămăianu-Morita, Adrian Turculeț and Klaas Willems).

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