

LINES OF PAST AND FUTURE EVOLUTION OF THE SPANISH LANGUAGE

It is surprising in our times, already at the endings of the XXth. century, that people which is supposed to be intelligent and responsible, when asked on the health of a language, are only able to answer in statistical terms: if the number of its speakers has increased, if the number of that language's foreign students has grown, if the number of rules protecting it in bilingual communities has augmented, if the number of books published in it every year is now higher... the health of the language is good. It does not matter at all if from three hundred million speakers, for instance, two hundred and ninety are total or functional illiterates and have enough with a terminological capital from five hundred to thousand terms to build their limited and confused conceptual reality; it does not matter if they use words in an irreflexive way, as labels to be stuck to objects according to an immutable habit; it does not matter the shallowness of the published books, the degree reached by the foreign students, the unstoppable decadent tendency which many times rules disguise, because according to the official point of view everything is a question of numbers and proportions: the health of a language depends on the noise it is able of doing.

We are not using here the concept *health* in a hazardous way. Health is the state of an organism's creative harmony; it is, in fact, what determines the organism to be an organism and not a conflictive sum of elements; and in a dynamic world, where all stagnation results in death, health is an evolutionary reality... or better, it is the very reason of evolution: its cause, its end and its soul. A language is healthy when it evolves. But evolution is not every kind of change, nor every disordered expansion, nor every numerical profusion; it is transformation directed to a higher level of organisation. Not *noise*, but *music*. And because the language is primarily the expressive instrument of consciousness, inevitably, it is forced to follow its destinies.

Now, how does consciousness evolve?, what are its lines of progress?, what the consequences of its advance? On one side, consciousness grows in intensity; on the other, in extension. An increasing of the perceptive, discriminative, relational capacity, of the preoccupation for the precision and exactness in grasping, a sense of the beauty and harmony and force ensouled in the elements that conform reality and in its organic whole are, in broad lines, the immediate effects of the first process; a shifting of its awareness' and preoccupation's primordial focus from the outer space to the inner one, from concrete and particular to the general and abstract, from the physical actualities to the emotional, aesthetic, intellectual and spiritual ones, with an awakening of the former capacities to the lights and intensities of the new dimensions constitutes the second of the processes. To this twofold movement, the language answers developing the necessary tools to be capable of embodying and vehiculating the new capacities, meanings, preoccupations, and to be able of naming, specifying and objectifying the landscapes of the new dimensions it tries to captivate. Therefore, a language evolves the more it becomes capable of naming the Reality -not merely the physical reality, but the Integral Reality, with all the set of its dimensions- with cognoscitive minuteness, evocative force, beauty, and convincing and shaping power; a language progresses the more it adapts its terminological capital, its structures and rhythms to this demanding task.

When we speak of consciousness' evolution, we have always to take into account two facts: first, that it is not linear, but cyclic, according to the rhythms of the cultural and historical periods; second, that it takes place, asymmetrically but interrelationately, in two different dimensions: the individual and the collective ones. The same happens with language: in the beginnings of history, we have highly evolved languages, capable of entering with incomparable accuracy and capacity of evocation the highest spiritual actualities and the subtlest psychological processes, as Sanskrit and Pali; we have tongues deeply intellectualised, as Greek and Latin; or languages of a vast and intuitive richness, as classical Chinese, whose true conceptual reaching hardly can be understood by the scholars of our age. Some of these languages inseminated others, were recasted in them, or fragmented giving a wide brood, when the cultures of which they were instruments collapsed, so that new tongues could begin their own vital cycles along paths according to the new historical periods. On the other side, we have the Spanish of Borges, the English of Faulkner, the French of Anatole France, the Portuguese of Fernando Pessoa, the German of Rilke, or the Russian of Turgueniev coexisting with rushing and degrading linguistic currents. From the point of view of language's evolution it is important to remember these two factors because a language will be more evolutionary, on one side, the more capacity of assimilation of its mother-tongues' achievements it has and, on the other, the more a critical mass of speakers approaches the expressive possibilities of its great masters.

The case of the Spanish is that of one of the southoccidental medieval tongues borne from Latin's decomposition. In its origins, it constitutes the last phase of its mother-tongue's involutive process; it is a popular tongue, simplified in its structure, useful only to face the world of quotidian and external actualities, dissociated from philosophy -for which there are already Latin, Greek and Arab-, and unworthy of leaving written testimony... but endowed with a powerful, unexpected vitality. Latin has given to it its substance and the most part of its patrimonial terminological capital. Greek will powerfully contribute to build its philosophic, abstract dimension. Arab has left in it the profoundest footprint the Europeans tongues received from it; but, as Spanish will be the vehicle of a Christian culture, the conceptual universe of the intellectualised Arab, in spite of being so lavish and subtle as it is, will not fructify in the Spanish language and the words derived from this mother-tongue will refer to vital actualities specially or originally related with the Muslims: names of professions, tools, etc. Gothic and Hebrew scarcely left in it a hint of their presence on the Peninsula. The contact with the Amerindian tongues enriched Spanish very little, apart from some words the most of them useful only to refer to actualities proper to those disappeared cultures; later, Latin America will be a great generator of terms and expressions, but if it is true that these add variety and local flavour to the Hispanic language, they do not make it deeper and vaster, they do not conquer for Spanish new fields and dimensions of experience, they do not fill its philosophical and spiritual insufficiencies, but remain on the level of the outmost vitality and hardly have any application outside their native contexts. Spanish will receive also inputs from the rest of the Peninsula's languages that grew with it and with which it coexists: Galician, Catalan, Basque and Portuguese. Other European languages made presents to it: French with part of its military vocabulary, Dutch with its maritime terminology, English with the technical one... And finally, a so distant tongue as Sanskrit is has made itself present in Spanish with a handful of words, the most of them vehicled by the Romany of the gypsies, process which says very little in favour of our culture at the moment of

understanding, assimilating and taking advantage of the expressive possibilities of a language as evolved as ancient India's Sanskrit.

The result of all this is a tongue which lacks the phonetical richness of Russian, the flexibility of English, the musicality of Italian, the combining possibilities of the highly intellectualised languages as Sanskrit, Greek or German... but a tongue of clear sonority, distinct phonemes, orthography in a great extent faithful to the pronunciation, in all of which something transpires of the Spanish tendency to the concrete and the actual; a tongue whose rhythm is conditioned by the polysyllabism of its words and the preference for the stressing of the penultimate syllable; a tongue capable of short and middle periods but which has to be in some way forced in its nature for the manifestation of long or dense sequences of thought, that in other languages, more supple or with more combining capacity, can be expressed in a more compact manner, making easier the philosophic reflection and the lofty speculative flights; a language in principle apt for every level of expression but which undoubtedly has given its best fruits in the fields of poetry and narrative; a language, finally, whose general orientation seems to be that of outer actualities.

In the past evolution of Spanish it is interesting to distinguish three fundamental moments: the second half of the XIIIth. century in which, due to the cultural efforts of the Wise King, Spanish becomes at last a literary and scientific language; the end of the XVth. century, with the publication of Nebrija's grammar, the first one of the modern tongues; and the Golden Century (from the half of the XVIth. century up to the half of the XVIIth.) in which, on one side, the Spanish is borne to mystic and, on the other, it reaches a development that allows it to become the vehicle of one of the most brilliant burstings of universal literature.

Alfonso X of Castile, the Wise King, found himself in the twofold necessity of creating a national consciousness and making culture independent from the church, taking it away from the ecclesiastical Latin sphere. For both functions the Castilian language was going to serve him well -a language that on the contrary of Latin, the church's tongue, could be a meeting point for all the Jewish, Islamic and Christian subjects of the Monarch. It is a moment of great transcendence for Spanish because its definitive access to the state of cult language means, on one side, an open door to religious conciliation and, on the other, an attempt in democratising culture or, seen from other angle, the official sanction given to the fact that part of that mass which spoke an illiterate hybrid jargon has risen at last to a higher level of consciousness. We can see here one of the consequences -or, teleologically contemplated, one of the reasons- of the historical cycles: an apparent involutive and disintegrating movement of the high cultural values serves to the aim of recovering from ignorance a vast human mass for which those had become unattainable. Each time the level of the elite and that of the mass overcome a critical distance, it becomes necessary the sinking of the elite's world, whose fragments turn into seeds which, spread in the popular slime, will await the propitious season to give their harvests. Without this cyclic becoming, it would not be possible an evolution of mankind, but only the ascent of the few towards unpredictable states among vast barbarous masses avoided, massacred or enslaved by the firsts. The vital cycle of the languages reflects this fact perfectly.

In the efforts of Alfonso X the Wise for elevating the Castilian language, it plays a definitive role the Translators' School of Toledo, founded by the King. Translation is

not only one of the main paths through which a language finds access to the achievements of higher cultures but, when the translator tries to be faithful to the spirit of the text as well as to its literal sense, it poses serious challenges to the language and their overcoming is always a gain for it. Creation of new terminology; development of rhythms and structures which, without betraying the spirit of own language, make it more capable of housing the spirit of the other one; exploration of new expressive ways and, finally, access to new imaginative, sonorous or conceptual worlds -these are the prizes that crown the translator's triumph. In this important moment of its formative process, Spanish explored for the first time in a cult and rigorous way its derivative, generating and assimilative possibilities, it tested the degree of dependence or independence it would establish, over all, regarding to Latin, and it did all these in the loose circumstances peculiar to its youth.

This moment of greater flexibility had to be followed by other of fixing, which came with the Renaissance. A grammar is always a gesture of self-consciousness of the language: the tongue trying to tell to itself how it is and, in its seeking for general rules that make it explainable, telling at last to itself how it must be for a greater understanding and uniformity in human communication. Explicitly or implicitly, in every grammar there is a normative tendency. And, as in the rest of the fields of life, the norm plays here a twofold role: on one side, it organises the elements in disorder; but, on the other, it can become a too rigid structure which frustrates the lofty flights of the spirit towards higher states of manifestation. This has happened and tends to happen specially in those languages, as Spanish, which have the good or bad fortune of living under the weight of an Academy watching over their "purity".

Nebrija's grammar had the value of helping to fix the Castilian language, developing criteria for the choice between the diverse phonetical and orthographical variants of different words, offering perspectives for the regulation of a syntax independent from Latin... and all this when Spain was on the verge of its imperial leap and a still loose Spanish tongue was about of being spoken in vast territories of four continents. Now, from the evolutionary point of view, this normative endeavour belongs yet to a lower stage; a grammar will be more self-conscious and valuable the more it moves away from it and faces with wide and piercing spirit the understanding of the secret flexible rules -not those of the historical development, nor the human compromises assumed for the clarity and uniformity in communication- that govern the language in its evolution to the expressive Ideal. The biblical myths of the Logos or Divine Verb, the primordial language of humanity, unified and with a metaphysical correspondence between word and referent, and the Tower of Babel with the separation of the human tongues, do not express but three different moments in the involutive arch of language: the word as sound-embodiment of the Divine Force, with all its creative potential; the word as sound-body and diaphanous expression of a transcendent and human reality, with all its evocative and cognoscitive power; and, finally, the word as deformation, as a construction of the ignorance starting from the diffused memory of an ancient truth. The true grammar would discover for us the ways by which our present ignorant tongues can rise again to the Divine Verb, that is, to the supreme expressive faculty of an Integral Consciousness, but without loosing the countless vital and cultural achievements which means the diversity in manifestation. Therefore, in cultures with a metaphysical perspective of language, as the Hebrew and the Indian ones, cultures which have tried to turn language not only into a useful tool for the expression of the ultimate truths but into a permanent vehicle of Truth, the great philologists have come

from the field of the mystic. Inevitably, if man must conquer new dimensions of consciousness without falling silent for ever, language has to accompany him and the future linguists will be probably yogis... or, if this word is too much for a part of our readers, let's change it for "students and adepts of the psychology of the depths".

After the third of the formative moments we have distinguished, Spanish has already reached its state of full maturity. On one side, our great writers enrich it with new terminology, new rhythms and structures, making it obedient to the *conceptist* and *culteranist* plays, subtly intellectualised, of a Quevedo or a Góngora; to the vital and passionate explosions of a Lope or a Calderón; or to the vast imaginative worlds and the variety of tones of Cervantes; on the other side, our mystics win it for the expression, generally symbolic, of their ineffable experience. It is interesting to note that, differently from Sanskrit, the mystic Spanish does not develop a highly specialised and discriminative terminology. Be it because of the tendency towards concrete, physical things of the national temperament, or because of the need of binding themselves -or pretend to do so- to the orthodoxy of the Catholic church, or because of the rigidity of the language, or by the combination in one or other measure of all these reasons, our mystics choose in general to load with new transcendent meanings words whose referential world is that of the external and vital realities, rising them in this way to a higher level of content. Anyway, this proposition is offered here but as a suggestive intuition which would be desirable to corroborate or contradict by a deep research on the works of our mystic poets, specially San Juan de la Cruz, the most speculative one of all of them.

Much long this journey through history may have been, it was indispensable to explore the lines of past evolution of the Spanish language to understand which will be the paths of its future evolution. In the first place, it was necessary to understand in what sense the language is a progressive reality and how this is seen from the perspective of a cyclic and still not finished evolution of human consciousness. We have here a possibility of advancing from each of the two terms of the relation: a progress in the individual or collective consciousness will determine a linguistic advancing; but also a preoccupation for the development of the language will lead to the possession of new conceptual dimensions giving as a result a step forward, even though limited, in the evolution of consciousness. Something of the necessity of transcending the limitations laid down by an inherited language can be felt in the two great literary experiments of Joyce: *Ulyses* and, over all, *Finnegan's Wake*, whose Spanish emulation is the undigestible novel of Julián Ríos *Larva*. There is in them an attempt to find new expressive formulas by the deconstruction and reconstruction of words, by the artificial generation of new terminology, or by the systematic violation of the traditional linguistic structures, with a spirit similar to that of the biologist who divides and recombines molecules because of mere scientific curiosity; like these last experiments, those of Joyce and Ríos have no other interest for the evolution of the language but being mere laboratory shows... among other reasons, because their result is too artful and subjective.

Certain, true masters of the Spanish language as Valle Inclán and Borges could also seem, from a certain point of view, subjective and artful; but in this case, what provokes such impression is not the creation of a synthetic idiolect, useless for life and the product of the fruitless mental lucubration of a single individual, but the distance between the linguistic skill of these two great artists and the limited expressive

possibilities of the majority of Spanish-speaking people. Borges is a classicist and powerfully intellectualised literary consciousness spreading towards the past to retake themes, words and images which are many times beyond the margins of common use; Valle Inclán is an intuitive and fruitfully creative consciousness projecting itself to the future through the bold avenues of language's renovation, finding out achieved rhythms and vocabulary, and leaving behind many times the intelligence of his reader. However, none of them, much sophisticated their language may seem, outrages the evolutionary spirit of Spanish; on the contrary, from a deep identification with it both win a new expressive power for the Spanish tongue... making themselves, by this very reason, sadly incomprehensible for many people.

We have said above that the evolution of a language depends partly on the existence of a critical mass of its speakers whose linguistic skill approaches that of the great masters of the tongue. In effect, this mass is the only one which can prevent that the distance between the language of a cult elite and the common one becomes irretrievable. This fact is not only a theme worthy for the literature of fantasy: due to very different factors from those which lead to it in the past in languages as Latin, and are provoking it in our days in languages as Tamil, it is a possibility less distant of what it may seem. A false political language, intricated and void of content, a provoking and unreflective publicitary language, a sorrowfully shallow literary and journalistic language, constitute powerful degrading currents which lead but to the creation of a conceptual universe based on mere slogans and shared by a vast collectivity of scarcely individualised minds. Education, as it is conceived presently and in our nation, does not help to revert this trend, and the linguistic degradation which accompanies the present collective banalization cannot but accelerate it. One can turn to the classics of Science Fiction to get a representation of the world that such currents, overflowed and freed to themselves, would eventually produce.

And, nevertheless, only education can lead to the creation of such a critical mass, but a permanent and not only a school and university education; an education consisting not in an indigestible accumulation of data, rules and classifications, but which means the initiation to language as a creative instrument; an education helping to be conscious of the physical, vital, mental and suprainlectual dimensions of the linguistic universe; helping to awaken to the aesthetic, evocative, cognoscitive, formative possibilities of each linguistic unity; an education meant to convert each speaker into a creator and recreator of his language, being fully conscious that this is not a completed reality but a living one projected to the future through the evolutionary lines determined by its own and peculiar spirit.

If a change in the concept of education is indispensable for the creation of a critical mass of speakers truly skilful, translation can constitute, as it did in the past, an important factor for the future evolution of the Spanish language. For its intellectualisation, Spanish had to conquer, fundamentally, the Greek and Latin conceptual worlds, task which undertook by the translation of the classics; for its suprainlectualisation, one of the paths for Spanish, the exogenous path, would be the translation of those works in which can be perceived a suprainlectual or "overhead" inspiration. The Vedas and other works gushed from the same spiritual source of inspiration would help, no doubt, if they were not translated with a mere academic perspective and spirit and by individuals incapable of rising beyond the mental horizon, which is what has come to pass until now in the best of the cases. But if the difficulties

posed by these mystic works of old are in many cases practically unsurmountable, this does not happen with other great literary achievements of this century. The pressure of a new consciousness in universal literature is a concrete and feasible fact for the sensible critic; there is not only a preoccupation for imagining, painting, describing this new consciousness, but even at times, in the most unexpected fields of literature, this speaks through the inspired author giving to us a glimpse of his Vision of things:

The pilgrim has no interest in the gods, nor in any earthly thing. He makes no effort to contact them, and they ignore him if they see him at all, small, elusive waveform that he is. He watches their enormous bodies rise and fall in the tidal drifts of sun and moon, breaching through the ionosphere in aquatic sprays of electric fire, like whales in a burning sea -has written A. A. Attanasio, one of the great masters of present epic novel, in his book "The Dragon and the Unicorn", carried by his own intuition of the gods.

Now, besides the doors that can be open by the process of translation in forcing the language to the conquest of new horizons, the future evolution of language will also pass without doubt through a recovering of the formulae of the past: archaic or disused forms or ancient phonetic variants of a word will revive to embody new meanings or simply contribute to the beauty there where their sound or their rhythm or their exotic flavour make it advisable; and there where the spirit of the language allows it and the artist of the language sees the occult possibilities, those ancient formulae will give new linguistic brood. Because, for an intense and vast consciousness, variety and multiplicity are not a problem, do not mean a chaos as to that one which moves between narrower horizons; it is able of intuiting its secret order and distil the best from it in honour of the most powerful, beautiful and wisest expression.

We have called forth the image of the artist of the language; perhaps we could use it to sum up, describing his nature, all those other lines of progress which shall follow the Spanish to recreate itself, because it will be in him where the new tongue takes an initial form. How will this artist of language be, this new Dante which could renew the language by the pressure of his higher consciousness and with a methodology purely endogenous? How will he be this Alchemiologist, this true alchemist of the word? Not only will he open the ancient Castilian mines; the Alchemiologist will also thoroughly explore the Greek and Latin mines to extract from them the precious metal which still can enrich us; he will deepen in the knowledge of the inner dynamic of his language; he will fully know its formative and generating processes, the means by which it is capable of assimilating part of the expressive capital of other languages either stamping in it its own seal and character, something of its own nature and atmosphere and transforming it into an apparently indigenous product, or allowing it to preserve its own diverse, even exotic taste. The Alchemiologist will be able of distinguishing the different levels of consciousness implicit in the development and coinage of new expressive possibilities and will choose the paths of progress leading the language to the richest and expressively mightiest domains of consciousness. He will deepen in the knowledge of the language itself, of its living and progressive nature; he will even turn to other languages, either belonging to the family of his own tongue, or to distant and diverse groups, in order to manage with them easily, to discover in them their own formative and evolutionary processes, to understand their expressive possibilities, and to find out up to which point these can be found in his own language

in a more or less veiled or latent way, or are applicable to it. The Alchemiologist will conquer for the Spanish as much of the flexibility of the English as his own matter allows to him; as much of the combinatory possibilities of the Greek as it serves to a perfecting of its expression; as much of Sanskrit terminology as it contributes to the specification of its mystic and psychological universe... The Alchemiologist will deepen in the meaning of words, in their ethimology and historical ballast, and in the implications of its referential reality with the rest of universal realities. And all that he will do it not with an ambitious intention for leaving in the language the stamp of his own individuality, but as a language-lover capable of nullifying himself so that its spirit possesses and uses him as a particular instrument in the evolutionary adventure of language.

These are the men and the steps that the Spanish, and the rest of the languages of mankind, expect in order to initiate the new movement of transformation -a transformation destined to convert them into appropriate tools of the New Consciousness which awaits the human being as the most brilliant promise of the future.