

On the Philosophical-Scientific Edifice of Coserian Linguistic Theory. An Epistemological Analysis of “Logicism and Antilogicism in Grammar”*

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Abstract: Despite conceiving epistemological principles as the most important element in a science and strongly defending the indissolubility between the linguistic and philosophical dimensions of theorization, Eugenio Coseriu expressed a great number of his epistemological convictions only as mere comments scattered across different writings. For this reason, it is not always easy to realize which aspects of his linguistic thinking, which argumentation procedures and which key categorizations and concepts in his linguistic theorization originated from issues of a philosophical nature – especially as far as philosophy of linguistics is specifically concerned. In this respect, the present paper aims to identify the

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philosophical-scientific foundations underlying “Logicismo y antilogicismo en la gramática” (“Logicism and Antilogicism in Grammar”). In doing so, I intend to show that this work is not a mere linguistic study, but an essential approach to unravel the epistemological principles around which the whole philosophical-scientific edifice of Coserian linguistic theory is structured.

Keywords: philosophy of linguistics, Eugenio Coseriu, linguistic theory, hermeneutics, “Logicism and Antilogicism in Grammar”

1. Introduction

Despite not having ever succeeded in writing any *Lessons in Philosophy of Linguistics* as such, Eugenio Coseriu conceived epistemological principles as the most important element in a science.⁷ There undoubtedly lies the reason why, on the one hand, he even asserted – citing Amado Alonso – that “when it comes to knowing, what matters is the scientific quality of knowledge, apart from whether it leads us to a yes or a no” (Coseriu 1953[1977]: 262; my translation), and on the other hand, he bitterly complained in a contribution to a volume on *Latin American and Caribbean Linguistics* – translated into Spanish as “Panorama de la lingüística latinoamericana (1840-1965)” (“Panorama of Latin American Linguistics (1840-1965)”) – about the little interest in these issues shown by Latin American and Brazilian linguistics through the following words:

theoretical and critical discussions are relatively rare in I Am [Ibero America]: facts and opinions are discussed on the basis of theories already there, *but unusually not theories as such and their epistemological foundations* (Coseriu 1968: 36; my italics).

⁷See López Serena (2009), now collected with slight modifications in López Serena (2019a, chap. 2).

As for the reasons which might have led the Romanian linguist to prefer expressing his epistemological convictions as comments scattered across nearly all of his writings instead of choosing to articulate them in a single monograph, my guess (see López Serena (2009 and 2019a, chap. 2) is that his choice largely has to do with the ancillary status inevitably assigned to philosophy of linguistics. This relates to its nature as a second-level theorization with regard to theory of language (see § 3.1 below), general linguistics, or historical linguistics, as well as discourse or text linguistics, all of them established by Coseriu as distinct parts of his *integral linguistics* (see Copceag 1981, Loureda 2007).

The purpose behind my decision to dedicate that 2009 work to Coseriu's philosophical-scientific thinking was precisely to make it easier for contemporary readers to access Coserian epistemological principles, which had been almost neglected until then due to their dispersed exposition. Another three recent publications of mine (López Serena 2019a, chap. 3; 2019b; forthcoming) aim to highlight the role of meeting point between philosophy and linguistics that Coseriu's writings play so often as one of the idiosyncratic characteristics of his scientific thinking.

In fact, Coseriu sees such a close interconnection between the linguistic and philosophical spheres that he even stated once, against those who defended "the autonomy of linguistics with respect to philosophy, "that" such an autonomy is impossible, and seeking it is *per se* a contradiction in terms" (Coseriu 1988³: 199; my translation).

Totally at odds with those whom this author describes as "(people) craving for an *improper autonomy*" vis-à-vis philosophy (Coseriu 1988³: 217, No. 63; my translation, my italics), his own

linguistic works repeatedly refer to what he calls “philosophy of language problems.” As he himself points out, these problems

are treated [...] particularly in *Forma y sustancia (Form and Substance)*, in *Logicismo y antilogicismo (Logicism and Antilogicism)*, in “Determinación y entorno” (“Determination and Environment”), and in *Sincronía, diacronía e historia (Synchrony, Diachrony and History)*... (Cosieriu 1968: 50).

Given the indissoluble connection between the linguistic and philosophical dimensions of theorization which characterized his approach to language, my intention in López Serena (2019a, chap. 3; 2019b; forthcoming) was to check which aspects of Cosieriu’s linguistic thinking, which argumentation procedures, and which key categorizations and concepts in his linguistic theorization originated from issues of a philosophical nature, especially in what specifically concerns philosophy of linguistics rather than philosophy of language.

For that purpose, I analyzed two of the works to which he actually referred his readers in this regard: *Sincronía, diacronía e historia (Synchrony, Diachrony, and History)* and *Forma y sustancia en los sonidos del lenguaje (Form and Substance in the Sounds of Language)*. Along these same research lines, my contribution to this monographic journal issue focuses on identifying the philosophical-scientific foundations underlying “Logicism and Antilogicism in Grammar”.

The same as when I examined *Synchrony, Diachrony, and History* together with “Form and Substance in the Sounds of Language”, my goal in this new approach consists in showing that none of these works are mere(ly) linguistic studies; instead, they constitute essential approaches to unravel the epistemological

principles around which the whole philosophical-scientific edifice of Coserian linguistic theory is structured.

Nevertheless, unlike what was done in those previous works, where the analysis of each specific publication authored by Coseriu took place after a detailed explanation of the philosophical-scientific foundations underlying his thinking, things will now be done the other way around. Seeking to make it as clear as possible that epistemological issues do not receive explicit attention in most of Coseriu's works, what follows in § 2 will help me outline the fundamental characteristics of the content provided through "Logicism and Antilogicism in Grammar", laying special emphasis on the parts where this article refers to some philosophical-scientific issue, and leaving for the end (§ 3) the explanation of the place that corresponds to such issues within the philosophical-scientific edifice of Coserian linguistic theory.

A distinction will be drawn as follows between logicist mistakes (see § 2.1) and antilogicist mistakes (see also § 2.2) in this respect.

2. Logicist and Antilogicist Mistakes in "Logicism and Antilogicism in Grammar"

"Logicism and Antilogicism in Grammar," one of his shortest – but by no means less dense – articles, allowed Eugenio Coseriu to review the mistakes caused by certain *logicist* and *antilogicist* positions when linguistically approaching a number of specific grammatical issues. As he actually stresses in the conclusions drawn from this work,

'logicism' and 'antilogicism' are not organized doctrines or individual positions of one scholar or another, neither can anyone think of labeling a particular scholar as entirely 'logicist' or entirely 'antilogicist' (...). These are generic

positions, of common mistakes that affect linguistic and grammatical studies. Such errors are hinted at even in highly valuable works, which precisely makes it advisable both to identify them and to remove them (Coseriu 1956[1967]: 259; my translation).

In accordance with the distinction already mentioned above (see § 1) that Coseriu himself drew between historical linguistics, general linguistics, and theory of language (see López Serena forthcoming), this article represents a contribution which takes the third of these contexts as its object of analysis. By doing so, “Logicism and Antilogicism in Grammar” becomes a metatheoretical – and accordingly philosophical-scientific – approach. As explained by its actual author, “[t]he purpose of defining the concepts underpinning grammar, and particularly verbal and grammatical categories, belongs to the section of linguistic theory which has been traditionally referred to as ‘logical grammar’ or ‘general grammar’” (Coseriu 1956[1967]: 235; my translation).

The discussion about how such concepts are defined goes beyond the boundaries of linguistic theory, though, or expressed differently, it has a metatheoretical nature – to which must be added another factor which likewise justifies the philosophical stance adopted in this paper. As highlighted in § 1, for Coseriu, theory of language cannot be separated from philosophy; hence why, even if we decided to see “Logicism and Antilogicism” as a linguistic theory work, it should not come as a surprise for us to check that the arguments presented in various points of that article are either completely philosophical or epistemological or philosophical-scientific.

As denounced by Coseriu, logical or general grammar– the purpose of which consists in defining the concepts and categories

required to undertake the grammatical description of any language –has committed serious mistakes throughout history “precisely due to its ‘logicism’ and to its aspirations to reach a misconceived generality” (Coseriu 1956[1967]: 235; my translation). In view of the above, the Romanian linguist deems it “necessary (...) to try and identify the essential errors of linguistic logicism, thus seeking to specify how they can be removed without repeating the antilogicist errors” (Coseriu 1956[1967]: 238; my translation).

The objective pursued with the present article relates neither to the errors of logicism nor to those of antilogicist, its focus being placed instead on Coseriu’s decision to resort to arguments of a philosophical-scientific nature in this work about logicist and antilogicist errors.

For this reason, the following subsections will only succinctly outline the specific logicist and antilogicist mistakes that aroused the interest of the author to whose thinking this volume is dedicated. After that, I will highlight the extent to which the rationale behind the analysis of those errors, and their consideration, precisely, as errors, is built on issues associated with philosophy of linguistics, the understanding of which may be hindered by the fact that such philosophical issues are not exhaustively expounded in the specific work at hand.

2.1. Logicist Errors

The first logicist error highlighted by Coseriu lies “in the consideration of language as an object of a logical nature; or rather as a product of logical thinking” (Coseriu 1956[1967]: 238; my translation) or, to put it in another way, “the identification between meaning and logic” (Coseriu 1956[1967]: 239; my translation).

According to Coseriu, this mistake can be solved by clearly distinguishing language, which “as such, is simply *semantic*

logos: meaningful expression, in which there is neither truth nor falseness, since the latter only arise in affirmation and negation, in the *apophantic logos*” (Coseriu 1956[1967]: 238-239; my translation) from the apophantic logos which consequently happens after language and is not identical to it. From a philosophical-scientific standpoint, and in relation to the hermeneutic conception of linguistics which characterizes Coseriu, what calls our attention is the fact that the consideration below serves as the basis to stress the inconsistency of this denounced confusion:

- (1) *addressing the problemat the finality level, the one inherent to language (since the latter constitutes an expression of freedom)*, the mistake lies in the confusion between the purpose belonging to the object essence – to linguistic activity itself, regardless of any subsequent determinations – which is also the significant finality, and the ancillary kind of purpose typically associated with one act or another. This second finality does not belong to the essence of the language object; instead it identifies with the purpose of the linguistic subject within a specific act and, despite the possibility of it being logical, this finality may be esthetic or practical as well (Coseriu 1956[1967]: 239; my translation; my italics)⁸.

For readers not familiar with the principles of the philosophy of hermeneutic science, the idea that the problem has to be

⁸ The citations of philosophical-scientific relevance will be systematically listed through these pages – as in this case – thus making it easier to refer to them in the final section of this article (§ 3), focused on their contextualization within the framework of the philosophical-scientific edifice of Coserian linguistic theory.

considered from the finality perspective – because this is the typical level of language – along with the accompanying argument that such a statement derives from viewing language as an expression of freedom, will either sound trivial or make this passage more difficult to understand. Hence the need to read it, as will be done in § 3 later on, in the light of a thorough knowledge about the complete philosophical-scientific edifice of Coserian linguistic theory.

The second logicist error about which Coseriu warns us

is the placement of ‘logicity’ (=semanticity) in the ‘system,’ in abstract language, for instance, by attributing certain categorial meanings to specific ‘forms’ and assuming that the same meaning is always going to correspond to the same form, or that the value simply verified as the most frequent one will be the constant value of the form considered (Coseriu 1956[1967]: 242; my translation).

Coseriu illustrates this mistake as follows:

It is what happens when an attempt is made to attribute the adjectival value to a form like *blanco* [white], not in some specific use, but “in the Spanish language,” or when it is stated that, if *blanco* [white] is a noun in a specific utilization, that would somehow be “contrary to logic” (Coseriu 1956[1967]: 242; my translation).

We will not stop to consider this particular mistake because, during its examination, Coseriu does not mention any of the philosophical-scientific principles that are crucial in his thinking. However, curiously enough, he does make a statement that will surely be of interest to analyze the notion of traditionality which underlies the currently fashionable approach to discursive

traditions. Indeed, for Coseriu, making this second logicist mistake

implies being unaware that a “language” is not an autonomous reality, but one structured on the basis of speaking and that the “norm” is not a fixed, immutable system, but a mere average, since the senses that it comprises are traditional, and “many traditions exist” (J. Dewey, *Logic. The Theory of Inquiry*) (Coseriu 1956[1967]: 243; my translation).

The same holds true for the third of the logicist errors that he denounces – confusing “the logical” (=semantic) and the ontological spheres, i.e. the meanings and the signified things” (Coseriu 1956[1967]: 244; my translation). In relation to this mistake, the only outstanding consideration made is an extremely brief reference to the need to distinguish between subject of study (or study matter) and object of study (or study object), albeit not in these terms, but in those of the opposition between *Wirklichkeit* and *reale Wirklichkeit*. In this regard, he refers back to the Spanish translation of Husserl (1922[1993]): “we must not confuse thought reality (*Wirklichkeit*) with natural reality (*reale Wirklichkeit*)” (Coseriu 1956[1967]: 245; my translation).

Lastly, following Coseriu,

[to] the three already mentioned mistakes is often added another: trying to find the same categories – the same “logical thinking” – in every language. This error materializes, in the theoretical field, in the proposal for an “ideal logical language”, of which historical languages would be more or less imperfect copies,(...) and, at times, as the identification of that “ideal language” with a specific historical language, e.g. Greek or Latin.(...) And in the practical field, the same

errors become visible in the application of the categories present in one language to other languages which own different categories (Coseriu 1956[1967]: 245; my translation).

2.2. *Antilogicist Errors*

For the purposes of this work, the reasoning used to refute antilogicist errors, to which Coseriu pays attention after having examined the logicist ones, is far more substantial. Firstly, Coseriu stresses how

[to] the logicist error of considering language as a result of logical thinking, extreme antilogicism opposes (...) the mistake of regarding it as “illogical,” “contrary to logic,” “away from rational thinking” (Coseriu 1956[1967]: 246; my translation).

Once more, Coseriu only refers to this in passing when he mentions the key epistemological distinction between subject of study or study matter (i.e. phenomic reality) and object of study (i.e. theoretical-methodological construction). He does so by stating that “language is not ‘illogical,’ but only prior to logical thinking”; in other words, it constitutes a “*semantic logos* which presents subsequent determinations in speech acts.” Hence why, “apart from semantic, it is additionally *fantastic* (poetry), *apophantic* (logical expression) or *pragmatic* (practical expression)” (Coseriu 1956[1967]: 246; original italics; see § 2.1). In connection with this he adds the following:

- (2) *semanticity* is the constant and defining feature of language; however, *pure semanticity* never occurs in practice and is only separated for research-related

reasons (Coseriu 1956[1967]: 247; my translation; original italics).

Expressed differently, Coseriu's distinction between pure (or primary) semanticity and secondary semanticities – the latter being subordinated to poetic, logical or pragmatic purposes – highlights that, at the level of the subject of study or specific reality, semanticity always appears in association with one of these secondary semanticities. Despite the above, methodologically speaking, the linguist must postulate a pure semanticity detached from those subsequent purposes. However, when doing that, the linguist needs to be aware that (s)he is abstracting – and therefore building – an object of study which has ontologically stopped belonging to the phenomic reality that exists prior to research and is independent from it.

Even though the construction of objects of study makes it necessary to create entities which exclusively exist in methodological terms, for Coseriu, already in relation to a second antilogicist error – that of disregarding verbal categories, describing them as mere conventions – it deserves to be highlighted that the verbal categories with which grammar works “are not conventions, but speaking realities” (Coseriu 1956[1967]: 247). In his opinion,

- (3) [e]stablishing a verbal category does not depend on a mere arbitrary decision, such as, for example, determining the date on which the Middle Ages ‘begin.’ The Middle Age limits do not exist before and independently from our decision, since this is a concept established through a convention, at the research process level. Instead, verbal categories are realities of language which exist independently from our decision to separate them and to define them (Coseriu 1956[1967]: 247; my translation).

As will be seen in § 3, the determination according to which verbal categories match speaking realities which must be checked within the very reality of linguistic use appeals to another of the philosophical-scientific principles most deeply rooted in Coseriu: the need to adapt to object reality. Before reaching that moment, it is necessary for us to stop at an epistemological passage still framed within this second antilogicist error: that of relegating verbal categories to the status of examples of theoretical-methodological arbitrariness.

My interest in this passage has to do with the fact that it emphasizes a differentiation of levels which is essential in philosophy of science: the distinction between the level of reality (language in the case of our discipline); the level corresponding to the discipline which undertakes the study of such reality (on this occasion, linguistics, which naturally includes the context of grammar, the one explicitly mentioned by Coseriu in the article under study here); and the level of metatheoretical or philosophical-scientific reflection. It reads like this:

- (4) The separation of verbal categories is not analogous to the distinction drawn, for example, between morphology and syntax either. Distinctions of the latter kind find themselves on another level: they refer to grammar, not to language. Morphology and syntax do not exist prior to the formal definition by means of which these concepts are structured; they are not speaking realities, but schemata of that *speaking about speaking* which grammar is – in other words, schemes of a *metalanguage*. The discussions about this do not belong to linguistic theory (theory of *language*), but to theory of *linguistics*; they are actually epistemological discussions. And they often turn out to be pointless,

since a metalanguage may assume different structures depending on the objects of study, and it may even become what has been decided that it should be, provided that it stays coherent and proves exhaustive concerning the aims that it pursues (Coseriu 1956[1967]: 248; my translation; original italics).

A fourth antilogicist error detected by Coseriu consists in the identification of categories “with the formal schemes into which they materialize” (Coseriu 1956[1967]: 249). In his approach, Coseriu once again claims that language essentially has to do with a meaning finality (see § 2.1). However, on this occasion, despite doing it in a footnote, he does briefly mention the epistemological consequences derived from this verification:

- (5) *The fact that language finds itself at the finality level simultaneously implies the impossibility to interpret it in causalist terms, i.e. as (physical) stimuli and (physical) reactions (“responses”)* (Coseriu 1956[1967]: 250, n. 39; my translation; my italics).

And he also makes this warning:

- (6) It is true that meaning cannot be “observed,” that it does not have the same objectivity as (physical) things and (physical) events. However, this by no means implies that it can be ignored or interpreted in physicist terms. Quite the opposite, it implies that meaning lies at another research level where external observation turns out to be completely improper and inadequate. Indeed, language simultaneously belongs to nature and to the mind, to the world and to the interiority of conscience, and what we can “observe” is not *language*, but *mere*

language, or expressed differently, the physical aspect of language (...) (Coseriu 1956[1967]: 251; original italics; my translation).

One of the antilogicist errors that Coseriu sees as “one of the strangest corollaries which antilogicism deduces from the alleged alogicity of language” (Coseriu 1956[1967]: 252) once more refers to the confusion between the theory of language sphere and that associated with theory of linguistics, which was brought up when dealing with citation number 4 above. Coseriu quotes the following statement by Karl Vossler in this regard:

Only logic knows about hierarchically organized concepts and can attest either a restriction or an extension of concepts. However, language is not logical and can consequently not undergo a logical treatment. Language does not have any concepts, but intuitions, each one of which has its individuality and a momentary value – and wants to be judged by itself. It will be immediately possible to coordinate the actual observations and conclusions to highlight what is similar and common. However, a scientific disposition will never be found; looking for it would be useless (Vossler [1904]1929: 52, after Coseriu 1956[1967]: 252; my translation).

In his comment, Coseriu adduces the following:

- (7) Vossler confuses here the level of language and that of linguistics and establishes an impossible opposition between language on one side, and logic and science on another, as if they were things situated at the same level: the “scientific disposition” is not to be found in language, but in linguistics. Every science is logical for

its status as a *science*, and not for being the science of a *logical object* (...). Even the study of an “irrational” object – if it is a study and not contemplation – necessarily has a rational nature. Even admitting that language may not have “concepts” (...), this does not mean that linguistics will not have them either (Coseriu 1956[1967]: 252-253; my translation; original italics).

Apart from denouncing the confusion between the theory of language and theory of linguistics spheres in some antilogicist approaches, Coseriu also deems it essential to avoid the confusion between theory of language and historical or descriptive linguistics, as well as between linguistic theory, general linguistics, and historical or descriptive linguistics, all of them issues which, for reasons of space,⁹ will be left aside from these pages, where our attention will exclusively focus on a final passage of “Logicism and Antilogicism.”

According to Coseriu, the “second antilogicist error¹⁰ is not a trivial one, since it points at the truth that the linguistic language is not a conventional language, a simple code, like artificial languages” (Coseriu 1956[1967]: 254); it has an “essentially historical” nature (Coseriu 1956[1967]: 255). In fact, from his point of view,

- (8) the logicist error concealed an important intuition too: precisely that of the “objectivity” (or rather, “intersubjectivity”) of meaning (Coseriu 1956[1967]: 255).

⁹ About this, see López Serena (forthcoming).

¹⁰ It is the mistake of “thinking that we cannot reasonably ask ourselves what a particular meaning mode is (verb, noun, etc.), precisely because those values cannot be permanently attributed to the same forms” (Coseriu 1956[1967]: 253).

3. Epistemological Contextualization

Reading “Logicism and Antilogicism in Grammar” from a philosophical-scientific perspective allows us to identify the presence of some of the epistemological foundations underpinning the articulation of the hermeneutic conception of linguistics as a human science which underlies all Coserian approaches both to language and to language science.

An attempt will be made below to highlight the place that these foundations occupy in the philosophical-scientific edifice of Coserian linguistic theory.

3.1. The Distinction between Subject of Study and Object of Study and between the Levels of Phenomic Reality, of Linguistics, and of Philosophy of Linguistic Science

The first point which deserves to be addressed for its general scope is the one that has to do with the actual awareness systematically shown by Coseriu in relation to the fact that some issues concern philosophy of science and others have to do with linguistics. Or, as he expresses in citation number 7, referring to the mistake made by Vossler precisely because he did not respect that distinction, the awareness about the existence of a language level (associated with linguistics) and a linguistics level (the analysis of which would correspond to philosophy of linguistics).

As can be seen in Figure 1, inspired by the distinction between first- and second-order types of knowledge advocated by Díez and Moulines (1999), linguistics is the branch of knowledge that studies language, whereas philosophy of linguistics or specifically linguistic epistemology is the philosophy branch entrusted with examining the scientific investigation of language and its product, scientific knowledge about language. Hence why

philosophy of linguistics necessarily stands at a higher – and accordingly different – abstraction level than that of linguistics:

	SCIENCE IN GENERAL	LINGUISTICS
Level 2: PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE	<i>being able to explain the foundations underlying the construction of theories</i>	<i>being able to explain the foundations underlying the construction of specifically linguistic theories</i>
Level 1: SCIENCE	<i>being able to theorize</i>	<i>being able to theorize on linguistic phenomena</i>
Level 0: SUBJECT OF STUDY	<i>being able to satisfactorily perform a specific activity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>being able to speak in general</i> • <i>being able to speak at least one language</i> • <i>being able to speak in different types of circumstances and using various types of discourses</i>

Table 1. The Three Knowledge Levels for the Distinction between Subject of Study, Science, and Philosophy of Science (López Serena 2019a: 15)

The differentiations contained in Figure 1 become essential to draw a distinction not only between the level of linguistics and that of philosophy of linguistics but also between subject of study and object of study.

Despite not using the terms subject of study (or study *matter*) and *object* of study in “Logicism and Antilogicism,” Coseriu does take advantage of the concepts comprising these terms in his

argumentation; hence the distinction made in citation number 2 of § 2.2 between *semanticity* as “a constant and defining feature of language” – a feature which consequently belongs to the subject of study– and *pure semanticity*, which “occurs in practice and is only separated for research-related reasons”; or expressed differently, it does not form part of the phenomic reality or matter, but of the science level, which builds this notion of pure semanticity as an object of study.

In parallel, the passage offered as citation number 4 allows us to check that the distinction between the theoretical level and the metatheoretical level of reflection is also present in his thinking (levels 1 and 2 in Figure 1). The “speaking about speaking” which Coseriu identifies in that citation both with grammar and with language creation would belong to the theoretical or scientific level. Grammar forms part of the domain of what he himself refers to – in that citation too – as “theory of *language*,” a context which Coseriu differentiates – even terminologically – from the metatheoretical one, for which he uses – again in that same citation – the expression “theory of *linguistics*.”

3.2. The Principle of Adaptation to the Subject of Study and the Maxims of the Philosophy of Hermeneutic Science

The distinction between subject of study and object of study which is systematically made in “Logicism and Antilogicism” does not prevent Coseriu from denying that the entities postulated at the level of linguistic science, i.e. at the level of which the object of study forms part, are conventional or resulting from arbitrary decisions (see citation number 3 in § 2.2). Quite the opposite, in his view, they must be established in such a way that they correspond to language realities, in other words, to what is effectively attested in matter or phenomic reality. This approach has to do with one of the fundamental premises of the philosophy

of science that Coseriu adheres to, according to which, as he himself expresses in a publication written after “Logicism and Antilogicism,”

[i]f a conception of science and the corresponding method force us to ignore precisely the essential and defining features of an object [= subject of study], *we must opt for the object* [= subject of study] (Coseriu 1981: 118; my translation; my italics; the clarifications in square brackets are also mine).

In fact, Coseriu’s decision to choose philosophical-scientific convictions of a hermeneutic nature has to do with his commitment to respect the ontology that is typical of language reality.

As I already explained elsewhere (López Serena 2019a: chap. 1), the term *hermeneutics*— whose Greek etymon refers to the action of translating, interpreting or making something intelligible — arises, in the history of human sciences, with regard to textual interpretation, above all of the Holy Scriptures, but also of some legal documents.

Special attention must be paid in this respect to Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), the first scholar to propose a general theory of interpretation, following which textual hermeneutics consisted in a combination between the knowledge of the most relevant linguistic and historical facts and the ability to mentally reconstruct the shaping of the text in question.

Based on Schleiermacher, and through the figures of J. G. Droysen (1808-1884) and, especially, Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911), a conviction became widespread according to which the type of knowledge involved in interpretation was radically different from the one typical of natural sciences.

In order to set that contrast, Dilthey coined the terms of the well-known opposition between *Verstehen* (understanding) and *Erklären* (explanation). The latter, linked to observation, constitutes the task inherent to natural sciences, whereas the former – understanding or *Verstehen* – is characteristic of human sciences or of those related to the spirit (*Geisteswissenschaften*), insofar as our knowledge about historical, social, and cultural events – the context specific to *Geisteswissenschaften* – necessarily entails the concurrence of interpretation.

In its attempt to defend the existence of a specific type of knowledge for *Geisteswissenschaften* which differs from that of natural sciences, hermeneutics confronts the methodological monism typically associated with positivist epistemology, which advocates a methodological unification of sciences based on three key postulates:

- i) the (same) scientific method can be applied in all the fields of knowledge on which we wish to obtain the best and most justified possible information;
- ii) this unitary scientific method ideally matches the paradigm of physical sciences;
- iii) bearing this in mind, causal explanations must be provided for facts from any scientific field.

As opposed to this methodological monism typically linked to the philosophy of positivist science, hermeneutic epistemology stresses the need to draw a clear-cut separation between human sciences and natural sciences for the reasons listed in Figure 2 below:

THERE ARE FOUR BASIC REASONS FOR WHICH IT BECOMES NECESSARY TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN HUMAN SCIENCES AND NATURAL SCIENCES:	
(i)	<p>the evidently <i>uneven nature of their respective objects of study</i>. Thus, while human phenomena have an essentially normative (social) status– the rules of which it is perfectly possible to violate – natural laws are necessary. The counterexamples in them are not conceived as violations of rules, but as a refutation of the laws themselves. Therefore, this opposition arguably relies on:</p> <p>a) the universal character of natural phenomena (α) subject to <i>causality</i> and <i>necessity</i> laws (β) and which can consequently be subject to <i>prediction</i>,</p> <p>in contrast to</p> <p>b) the socio-historical or normative status of human condition, which prioritizes (α) the <i>freedom</i> or self-determination to abide by or violate the rules (β) and <i>finalist explanations</i>, rather than causalist ones;</p>
(ii)	<p>the <i>different relationship between researcher and research object</i> in one and the other type of science: independent in natural sciences and coincident in the human ones, where human beings simultaneously act as the researchers and the subjects of study or research;</p>
(iii)	<p>the <i>different procedure (epistemic act)</i> required to achieve knowledge: <i>observation</i> in natural sciences and <i>intuition</i> when it comes to human sciences;</p>
(iv)	<p>the <i>certainty</i> of linguistic knowledge as opposed to the uncertainty regarding knowledge which characterizes natural sciences.</p>

Table 2. Factors which Determine the Opposition between Natural Sciences and Human Sciences (López Serena 2019a: 24)

Therefore, according to those who defend the hermeneutic position, the different nature of the subjects and objects of study associated with natural sciences and human sciences, as well as the different relationship that the researcher establishes with those objects in both types of sciences, necessarily means that a dissimilar kind of explanation will also (have to) be used in each one of these contexts. Thus, whereas the establishment of the *causal* relationship existing between two physical facts makes it necessary to resort to external *observation*, when it comes to human actions, the relationships – of *finality* rather than causal – which link such actions to the reasons underlying their implementation are internally – directly – experienced, insofar as the understanding of other people’s actions is based on similar own actions.

In the light of the considerations above, it finally becomes intelligible why, in the citation highlighted as number 1 in § 2.1, Coseriu considers “the problem” that he is dealing with in that moment “at the finality level– i.e. the one inherent to language (since the latter constitutes an expression of freedom).” It is not easy to detect what Coseriu exactly means with ‘freedom’ and ‘finality,’ unless we take into account that, in his conception of linguistics as a human science (and from the perspective of philosophy of hermeneutic science, as shown in item (i) of Figure 2), the socio-historical or normative status of everything that relates to human sciences forces us to recognize that (α) *freedom* or self-determination prevail in this context; and that (β) it becomes necessary to use *finalist* explanations, instead of causalist ones. This last idea, the rejection of the causalist approach, also appears in “Logicism and Antilogicism” – as shown in citation 5 of section § 2.2., which contained the following statement – : “The fact that language lies at the finality level implies at the same time the impossibility to interpret it in causalist terms.”

The social ontology of language prevents the epistemic act of approaching certain aspects of language from relying on observation – as it happens in natural sciences. For that reason, Coseriu points out in the citation identified with number 6 that “meaning cannot ‘be observed,’ that it does not have the same type of objectivity that is typical of physical things and events,” but also that “this by no means implies that it can be ignored or interpreted in physicist terms”; instead, it “implies that meaning lies at another research level where external observation turns out to be entirely improper or inadequate.” López Serena (2019a: 27-28) reminds us that in many of his works (see, for example, Itkonen 2003), Esa Itkonen assumes the tripartite division established by Popper – as reflected in Figure 3 – between the “worlds” (i) of physical states and facts; (ii) of psychological states and facts; and (iii) of social concepts and norms, after which Itkonen also stresses that, as opposed to observation, which concerns the first of these three worlds, the investigation about the world of social concepts and rules requires the participation of intuition.

ONTOLOGICAL LEVELS	EPISTEMIC ACTS
w-1: world of physical states and facts	observation
w-2: world of psychological states and facts	introspection
w-3: world of social concepts and norms	intuition

Table 3. Popper’s Three Ontological Levels and the Three Types of Epistemic Acts Distinguished by Itkonen (López Serena 2019a: 28)

Despite not considering the world of social concepts and norms in relation to language in citation number 6 extracted from “Logicism and Antilogism,” Coseriu does take into account worlds 1 and 2 from Figure 3, by stating that “language simultaneously belongs to nature and to the mind, to the world

and to the interiority of conscience, and what we can “observe” is not *language*, but *mere language*, or expressed differently, the physical aspect of language^(...)” (Coseriu 1956[1967]: 251; original italics; my translation).

All the same, the social status of language acquires relevance in the passage identified as number 10 – the last one from the work examined here considered worthy of analysis – once again concerning the issue of meaning, with respect to which citation number 6 already warned that it cannot be subject to observation. Citation number 10 refers to the “‘objectivity’ (or rather, ‘intersubjectivity’) of meaning,” something which of course cannot possibly be said about the world of psychological states and facts, or with regard to the world of the “interiority of conscience” about which Coseriu spoke in citation number 6. Instead, it obligatorily derives from the social nature of language, insofar as only social objects –and not mental ones, which are by definition individual, and thus subjective –can be the object of intersubjective knowledge.

4. Final Considerations

The metatheoretical analysis of “Logicism and Antilogicism” carried out through the preceding pages has served to confirm that Coseriu usually expressed his epistemological convictions as comments scattered across his writings (see § 1). Very often, this way of doing things does not even imply that such epistemological convictions were made explicit, at least in footnotes; and this can represent an insurmountable obstacle for anyone who approaches this author’s work without enough philosophical-scientific knowledge. As highlighted in the introduction of this new approach to Coserian linguistic-philosophical thinking, this idiosyncratic characteristic of his publications led me to consider the need to dedicate a whole series

of works to make it easier for contemporary readers to access Coserian epistemological principles. After all, due to their dispersed exposition, those principles have been generally neglected in the very few works within the field of contemporary linguistics that still deal with the Romanian scholar's contributions. These pages will in principle also prove difficult for readers who are familiar neither with Coseriu's linguistic-philosophical edifice nor with the foundations of philosophy of hermeneutic science. Hence my advice, if possible, to read this paper in the light of the bibliographic references that have been provided in its different sections. As a matter of fact, the number of references has been deliberately kept low precisely to ensure that they will prove really useful for everyone interested in broadening their knowledge about this domain.

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