

# **A Matter of Principle concerning Integral Linguistics: Man as a Cultural Being**

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**Abstract:** Integral linguistics resides on an inner, fundamental truth that has to be revealed and justified. The leap from intuition to reflexivity is subtly designated by Eugenio Coseriu in terms of “grain of truth” (which implies knowing and understanding a theory from within, in order for researchers to be able to emphasize its strong points, its sustainable cores of knowledge, and, at the same time, its weak points). All disciplinary fields are governed by the limits of their concept, therefore contemplating them needs to be done on philosophical grounds. In this respect, we revisit Coseriu’s doctrine regarding linguistics as a science that states man as its central point of reference. We aim to discuss one of the most challenging ideas Coseriu developed in this respect, namely that human consciousness emerges through language and unfolds intuitive knowledge, as opposed to the biological perspectives that derive consciousness from instincts, perceptions or sensory representations.

**Keywords:** language, integral linguistics, intuitive knowledge, meaning, humanistic science.

## **1. Preliminary Remarks**

As a counterpart to the numerous reductionist theories that place linguistics in the field of exact sciences, the Romanian linguist Eugeniu Coseriu’s position sets another course of affairs: the accuracy of linguistics as a humanistic discipline (i.e. which regards man and his activity of language) is given precisely by the understanding of its object of study as a free and finalist activity in respect to the biological level. The exact sciences are able, to some extent, to determine what the physical and the biological

conditions that made human language possible are, but they do not tend to explain how the spiritual dimension or creativity works and language breaks out freely in man. The expansion of consciousness that led to the creation of meanings represents the pivotal point of human cultural development, the ontological leap from nature to culture, by virtue of which man creates his entire spiritual universe, through which he detaches himself from the biological level of his existence. The subject matter of linguistics must therefore be circumscribed by establishing clear investigative criteria and judiciously setting research objectives according to this philosophical frame.

On this account, the ‘grain of truth’ as the core of scientific theories can be understood by valuing the concept of tradition, which embraces two dimensions throughout Coseriu’s work. Firstly, the concept of tradition is applicable to the investigation of language by implicitly rejecting dogmas and prejudices in the fields of research. We agree that the grain of truth, as the nucleus for the intuition/reflexivity ratio, represents a relative truth, susceptible to changes. If we take language as an object of study for linguistics, the identification of language as an object requires capturing the essence of the object, as far as possible, “in all its necessary connections” (Coseriu 1992a: 11), i.e. basic identity conditions and defining traits, as well as in all connections through which an explanatory theory regarding the object can be developed. Thus situated, language as a cultural fact goes beyond the naturalistic-biological perspective, in so far as the biological level provides the necessary, but far from sufficient conditions for man’s development as a cultural being. Moreover, by extension, the explanation of language as a cultural, inner, free, and finalist activity is absolutely necessary.

At the same time, the tradition in linguistic science means assuming a justified knowledge of the object, by circumscribing,

if possible, the entire developments and mutations in thought that have strengthened the conceptual foundation of theories about language. In this second dimension, tradition encompasses the assumption of a line of thought (philosophical, scientific) whose intuitions on the realities inherent in the sphere of language developed even since the golden age of the ancient Greek philosophy. Eugeniu Coseriu's integral doctrine, in its philosophical background, is the sum of a coherent interpretation by reference to a plethora of philosophers and theorists of language, adopting an intellectual lineage from Greek antiquity to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. See, in this respect, Coseriu (1977). The Romanian linguist evokes, in each of his inaugural speeches, the visionary works of: Husserl (the concept of 'original science'; Aristotle, Croce, William James (the recognition of the universal in the particular); Leibniz and Hegel (the intuitive and reflexive/justified knowledge); Vico (justified delineation of cultural objects, semantic universals as unitary objects); Kant (the world of freedom and finality); Humboldt (the distinction of *energeia* as creative activity / *ergon* as product of this activity, the distinction between form and substance applied to language); Blaga (the distinction between 'plasticizing' metaphor / 'revealing' metaphor and the concept of 'mystery' as creative activity). Inspired by the philosophical work of Plato, Augustine, Wittgenstein, or Cassirer, Coseriu set the foundation of linguistics as a cultural science. Borcilă (2016: 19-27) explores several crucial cores in Coseriu's work: (1) the foundation and the legitimate epistemological status of linguistics among humanistic disciplines; (2) the reconstruction of linguistics, starting from a radical reversal of the perspective of the investigation in this discipline; (3) the redefinition both in extension and comprehension of the object of this discipline as 'the signifying function' and 'the linguistic competence'; (4) stating the

objectives and the fundamental domains of investigation of the linguistic science. Coseriu's contributions encompass solutions to some crucial problematic areas of the discipline thus re-founded, by clearly pinpointing the differences in conception in relation to other current trends in linguistics, such as structuralism and generative grammar.

Given these preliminary remarks, in this study we aim to discuss Coseriu's view on language as a unitary object of linguistic research and specific human cultural activity (in fact, language is the basis for all cultural facts). In this respect, we sketch out an overview of man as a biological and cultural being, briefly revisiting the problem of intuitive knowledge, in order to emphasize the major role of integral linguistics in providing philosophical grounds and humanistic cultural outcomes in the research of language. For a comprehensive reading on this subject matter, see Tămăianu-Morita (2002), Vilcu C. (2010) and Oancea & Obrocea (2019).

## **2. Man and the Cultural Level of his Existence**

Linguistics as a humanistic, cultural science states man at its central point of reference, therefore a philosophical-anthropological approach could bring light on the question "What is a human being?". This question has generated many controversies over time and, more than often, crises in knowledge. In this respect, see also Zaner (1966: 55-68), who proposes, on Platonic bases, a phenomenological anthropology, namely "a *logos* of the *phenomenon of anthropos*, which has its source and its «subject matter» in the concerned questing for the being of man-in-quest of himself" (Zaner 1966: 68); in other words, Zaner searches the essence of man in man's "ontological priority" (Zaner 1966: 64) for examining and scrutinizing himself and the conditions of his existence.

In this section, we provide our own perspective on man regarding his biological apparatus and his cultural consciousness, loosely based on Aristotle (1935: 8-203, 208-277 and 281-307). A mere critical examination of reality shows that there are two distinct dimensions in which it can be perceived by humans: a concrete one, perceptible by the senses (we can call it the material dimension), and an abstract one, which is not perceptible by the senses (we can call it cultural dimension). These two dimensions separate in man two totally distinct levels: the biological (somatic and sensory) level and the cultural level.

The biological level represents the expression of the physical life in itself, or, in other words, the material dimension of the being. As substantial relational expression (cells and sensitive analyzers operate on purely biophysical bases), the body forms the level of concrete-material life.

The cultural level, on the other hand, refers to an abstract or immaterial manifestation, reflecting the ontological leap from the level of purely biological, instinctual life to an elevated hypostasis of the human being, which engages another type of being, totally different from the sensory one. Any abstract expression always refers to a form of human manifestation which is not perceptible by the senses, being related to the world of ideas, that is, the level of abstract-notional, significant (meaningful) life.

Even though these two different channels of perception (the sensory level and the intuitive level) are radically different as ways of manifestation and working mechanism, nevertheless they work in relational complementarity. In this sense, the first condition of the human newborn is to rise from his own scattering into a conscious unit with self-worth, i.e. to achieve the great leap from the relatively chaotic stage of somatic-sensory life to the cosmos of psychological, spiritual life.

The sensory level of man as a biological being presupposes the concrete and instinctual experience of the contact that he faces with the inner or outer biophysical reality through the intercession of his five senses. This process generates a lot of experiences such as: pain, hunger, thirst etc. The conjugated complex of the five senses) is the singular and exclusive expression of superior animals and of the human child from its unconscious phase to the formation of language. Once language is mastered, the sensations become shaped by meanings. The sensory amount produced from all sensations arising from the intercession of these five senses forms the perceptive channel of a physical nature, i.e. the first system of relating to reality. The level of manifestation is expressed to the same extent, with the inherent peculiarities, by all the superior animals that are endowed with a sensory apparatus similar to the human one. The importance of the sensory system lies in its phenomenal assimilation of reality through the five wavelengths of sensory responses. This process highlights the great difference between the vegetal life and the core of the sensory adapted life.

Basically, the sensory system is the maximum extension of organic development as a result of the contact between the multi-perceptual sensory apparatus and the range of specific qualities located in the extremely polymorphic area of nature. The level of the sensory system viewed in isolation, as presented in the newborn child, represents the phenomenon of sensory emancipation from the somatic biological level, although with its further remaining completely shackled in itself (the unconscious self). The five senses, just like fine instrumental strings, vibrate permanently under the influence of the natural environment. Their perceptible echoes are imprinted on the immense repositories of unconscious memory. Various iterations of these relationships, starting from the earliest days of existence, create skills and

fundamental patterns of human behavior. Any person's gestures and idiosyncrasies are generated within the framework of the strict individual experience, from a mixture of sensitive or motor responses.

The process of transforming this organic order into a spiritual one, to man fully developed as human being, involves a necessary modeling, a continuous education. Walking, speaking, various other practices, everyday conduct are the result of a complex combination of an automatic and uncontrollable component, confined to the sensitive design, and a conscious and free component, confined to the spirit. In man, the only occasion when the sensory system bears the burden of causality and reacts completely in isolation, without the presence of the spirit, is the period between birth and the emergence of language, i.e. until man becomes linguistically conscious. From this moment on, another existential level of being is activated, i.e. the spirit, which provides man freedom and the means to escape his biological chains of causality. In this respect, Martínez del Castillo (2004: 131-133) rejects all the linguistic theories that are rooted on biological bases for explaining the human activity of language.

On the other hand, the meaningful level of man as a cultural being represents the framework of the conscious and free living in a cultural environment, the form of manifestation of the conscious self. Due to the fact that, in the case of the spirit, verbal stimuli replace the material ones, language is the second system of relating to reality (in fact, of constructing a semiotic, symbolic reality), which has become primordial for man. Through language, the subject has an inner experience of conscious invoice, which fulfills through ideas. This is the essential reason why the emergence of the human spirit is closely and exclusively linked to language.

In spirit, man takes full control over his reactions. This control consists in the possibility of filtering his responses even to the point that they would be radically changed. In this regard, one can talk about a spirit-appropriateness to exercise a conscious differentiation in relation to each sensory response, with noticeable effects on several behavioral patterns: totally unchanged conscious deployment (normal reflex); conscious postponement (delayed reflex); adaptive conscious change (modified reflex); conscious, total and definitive cancellation (cancelled reflex).

In this way, man masters the unique ability to respond completely differently to any stimulus coming from the external or the internal physical-organic world. The possibility to respond in a completely different way than natural impulses would require, by freely replacing, changing, or cancelling according to spiritual principles, constitutes the basis of man's cultural consciousness.

Through language, the human being detaches itself from the automatic shackles of his inner and outer materiality and moves onto the space of abstractions, of ideas, settling the edifice of consciousness, the seat of universal human values (such as the Platonic notions of 'truth', 'good', and 'beauty'). The abstract content of our world is built at the level of the spirit, underpinning the never ending expansion of culture. The spirit makes it possible for the human being to transcend both the restricted, immediate space and the empirical momentary experiences, granting complete access to conscious memory, to imaginative contemplation towards the future, to knowledge. Thus, human being decants its values by permanently relating to a leap between concrete and abstract, reality and meta-reality, things and signs, sensory multiplicity and conceptual unity, and, last but not least, accidental facts and intuitive essence. Man, as the sum of the universal values created, primarily, in his mind, becomes a



historical being, engaging his intention, will, and retrospection in creative, free, finalist, and responsible activities.

We can summarize the features of both the biological and the cultural level of man in the following table:

<b>BIOLOGICAL LEVEL</b>	<b>CULTURAL LEVEL</b>
Physiological processes are determined by concrete relationships (e.g. direct-sensory perception of a sunset)	Psychological processes are determined by abstract relationships (e.g. indirect-intuitive perception, through notional mediation, of a sunset)
Concrete psychological resonance determined by the sensory contact of the human being with his inner nature and with the external environment, through the five senses (visual apparatus, hearing, tactile and painful receptors, olfactory and taste apparatus)	Abstract psychological resonance developed from the intuitive creation of the human being's inner essence and essence of the external environment through language (= words and gestures in their capacity of abstract conventional signs)
From any contact between man and his inner or outer nature, three types of reflex reactions/responses result: (1) unconscious perceptual contact reaction (feeling); (2) unconscious affective response reaction (emotion); (3) unconscious motor response reaction (action)	The conceptual levels of language determine within the human nervous system three specific fundamental manifestations: (1) conscious perceptual contact reaction (thinking); (2) conscious affective response reaction (feeling); (3) conscious motor response reaction (will)
The interweaving of these three fundamental types of reflex	Thinking, feeling, and will produce the entire spectrum of

trigger the range of all life experiences in biological frame	the specific cultural experience of human consciousness
Sensory level implies natural expression innate, instinctual, automatic, uncontrollable by itself, limited spatially temporally, governed by sensory multiplicity (through segmentations operated at the level of the senses)	The semantic level implies educationally developed, conscious, and free-creative expression, which is adjustable by virtue of its own mechanisms, discarding space and time, acquiring inner conceptual spiritual unity
Natural-hereditary basis that is exercised effectively and automatically since birth (= the absolutely conditioned nature of manifestation of the senses, triggering causal behavior)	Cultural basis, which is exercised potentially only through language (= formation of the spirit with the help of signs in the human linguistic environment)
Automatic experiences through concrete contact, governed by senses	Free creative manifestation through abstract contact, in which man is able to generate contents and representations that are not linked with senses

*Table 1.* Features of the Biological and the Cultural Level of Man

It is worth remembering, in this sense, the qualitative distinction that Aristotle makes between simple noises and meaningful sounds (1962: 117), and, on another level, the idea that the function and the medium shape the organ, thus finality shapes causality in the sense that human beings are driven by intentionality, projective stances, meaningful/conceptual purposes (all these interpretations are extrapolated from Aristotle 1935: 8-203). In this respect, if we compare, for example, the birdsong to

the human song, we can see that, while birds sing instinctively, man does it consciously, creatively, intentionally, symbolically. Coseriu (1986: 21-23, 53-59, 136-137) clearly states that human language radically differs from the animal language, as the latter does not emerge in the way of a symbolic projective activity; on the contrary, the animal language functions only as a signaling mode for the immediate needs of the animals, thus a causal stimuli-response system: “en efecto, el lenguaje animal corresponde, según parece, a una excitación física o fisiológica, a una reacción vital de carácter elemental, y que no implica ninguna operación simbolizante” (Coseriu 1986: 23). Moreover, the act of animal communication fails in granting a dimension of alterity, since “en realidad, no se «comunica» nada, sino que el animal ajusta sureacción a otra reacción” (Coseriu 1991: 15), which is entirely linked to a biological pattern of instinctual behavior. The basis of man’s creative and cognitive subjectivity is language. Extrapolating, language as the first cultural manifestation can be defined as the inner activity of man, in which human thought finds its formative truth. Knowledge, on the other hand, is the combined effort of the will, reason and intuition to transcend the stage of multiplicity of phenomena that governs the sensitive world. If the senses operate as physical or biological incentives, the basis of true knowledge will be language, in which meanings are potential models of conceptual unity and synergic functionality of semantic (symbolic) substance in necessary correlation with material signs.

The philosophical humanistic perspective opened by the generation of thinkers from Antiquity places man and human values above all else, at the center of the universe and focusing in particular on the free manifestation of the human personality as a creative individuality. Confidence in the creative possibilities of man places him as a subject, as a supreme value, as an end in itself, not as a means or instrument. The relationship between

subject and object, along with that between subject and subject, constantly shape the mental creative efforts of man, the perpetual spiritual energy through which man enters the competition of self-exceeding his primary biological condition. If, in animals, the whole sensory system acts as a vital principle, leading to instinctive innate behavior, which is based on purely sensory stimuli (conditioned reflexes), in humans, the sensitive system is intertwined with his consciousness. The latter represents the ability to know, to reason, to abstract, to manifest his creative freedom and the power of intuition – all reflected in the subjectivity of being who constantly attempts to shape the world through meanings. The symbolic form is the essential element in this imaginary configuration, which is for Cassirer the explanatory medium of significant mutations, operated in the horizon of linguistic representations. Cassirer argues that symbols give cultural specificity in direct relation to the concept and the problem of the meaningful sense of humanity:

No longer in a mere physical universe, man lives in a symbolic universe. Language, myth, art, and religion are parts of this universe. They are the varied threads which weave the symbolic net, the tangled web of human experience. All human progress in thought and experience refines upon and strengthens this net. No longer can man confront reality immediately; he cannot see it, as it were, face to face. Physical reality seems to recede in proportion as man's symbolic activity advances. Instead of dealing with the things themselves man is in a sense constantly conversing with himself. He has so enveloped himself in linguistic forms, in artistic images, in mythical symbols or religious rites that he cannot see or know anything except by the interposition of this artificial medium. His situation is the same in the theoretical as in the practical sphere. Even here man does not live in a world of hard facts, or according to his immediate needs and desires. He lives rather in the midst of

imaginary emotions, in hopes and fears, in illusions and disillusionings, in his fantasies and dreams. «What disturbs and alarms man», said Epictetus, «are not the things, but his opinions and fancies about the things». (Cassirer 1953: 43)

The ‘symbolic forms’ of culture also express in an exemplary way the destiny which has been reserved for man in his permanently reassumed creative acts. We clearly understand the extent of the German philosopher’s conception regarding culture and man as a cultural being. In this equation, the spiritual energy of man is projected in forms shifting between the possibilities of sense given in/through language and the major cultural endeavors (science, philosophy, art, religion), oriented towards understanding things, knowledge, interpretation, creativity, and faith. The so-called leap from nature to culture is to be rendered, in fact, as a primordial knowledge encapsulated in meanings. After all, culture is the sum of all phenomena that relate, first of all, to semantic contents of our consciousness, not to biological factors. As a basis for culture, language is constituted as a revelatory tension between alterity and radical creativity, in fields shaped by semantic finality. Transcending the boundaries of our biological roots operates upon the effectiveness and possibilities of human knowledge. Culture is created through revelatory transfiguration and constant transcending the horizon of the experiential world in the pursuit for creativity and major cultural achievements.

### **3. Language as Inner Activity of Man**

If we discard the ways in which language is treated like a mere object or instrument enacted for communication and perlocutionary purposes, it will appear clearer that its semantic and creative dimension grasps the core of language as inner and

primary activity of man. This in fact explains what Humboldt called the internal form of language, which stands for the level of substance in the language (= meanings, content of thought, ideas), i.e. the basic structuring of the world through language in a community of speakers. The worldview comprises two aspects: (1) the principle by which languages develop in their semantic structure; (2) the conceptualization of the world by each community of speakers (concepts are intuitive captures, irreducible syntheses between sound and idea). If the shape of the language means that the articulated sound is brought to the peak of the expression of thought, the substance of the language can be defined only by reference to other substances (other visions, ideas, etc.). Humboldt states that we cannot speak of a substance as a product, but rather of a permanent production, “something that eternally produces itself, where the laws of production are determined, but the scope and even to some extent, the nature of the product remain totally unspecified.” (1988: 58)

According to Coseriu’s doctrine (1986: 68), which postulates to say things how they are (“la tarea de todacienciaes la de «decir las cosas como son». Porello, la condición básica de la actividad científicaes la objetividad: la adecuación al correspondiente objeto”), language is conceived as an intuitive, semantic activity. Linguistic competence must be clearly differentiated from the biological faculty of speaking. The latter is theorized in Saussure (1995: 25-26). Intuition, as the primary moment of knowledge, implies not only the perception of the real as a cosmos of objects, but also the possibility of grasping essences of these objects. As products of a creative act, objects do not, by themselves, have an autonomous existence, independent of human subjectivity. Taking into account the distinction Aristotle made between matter and form, objects possess both an external dimension (*hylé*, materiality) and an internal one (*morphé*, shape). Only the

material aspect is given autonomously in relation to subjectivity; the object, however, is always the product (result) of a formative act, whereby materiality becomes the support of a form. Thus, what appears like an external configuration is not the product of the creative activity of language, but only its material vector.

The original science of speakers is an accumulation of intuitive skills, whereby the given world is recreated in consciousness, by meanings, i.e. by intuitive-eidetic contents, which are subsequently projected in the form of a virtual reality, essential for the cultural plane of human condition. Intuitive competences are primary steps of knowledge, the only original objective sources of knowledge, on which theoretical (logical, mathematical, philosophical), artistic, or religious knowledge is based. Within the subject-object relationship, the formless totality that exceeds human consciousness is created by segments of essence. At the level of the subject-subject relationship, these essences become cultural values assumed within the tradition of creating in a certain historically determined linguistic community. In Coseriu's terms: "El hablar, incluso el hablar creador, está dirigido a otros sujetos: la palabra creada está destinada desde el comienzo a valer tanto para el sujeto creador como para los demás sujetos que comparten la misma tradición histórica" (1985: 48-49). Viewed from this point, language is creation of meanings with the recognition of the universal plane (essence) on an individual level (particular facts). *Mutatis mutandis*, linguistic science, whose object of investigation is language, implies the same relationship between universality and particular facts, the same recognition of essence in the concrete facts brought under investigation.

In this respect, it is of great interest to emphasize the relationship between subjectivity and objectivity, which shapes not only the entire methodological apparatus of linguistics as a

humanistic science, but also defines the activity of language as such. According to various definitions, objectivity operationalizes everything that exists, in material shape, outside the human consciousness (matter as such, natural entities and elements, physical or biological phenomena). In this respect, we can conclude with no difficulty that objectivity is a convention, more or less arbitrary, due to our impossibility to perceive and understand what is beyond our consciousness if language did not exist. It is only through our own linguistic subjectivity and semantic creativity, i.e. through our own content of consciousness shared with other speakers that we manage to intellectually perceive anything (or, more adequately said, everything outside our consciousness makes sense for us precisely in the process linguistic internalization). By naming things as objects or phenomena, human beings tear apart the formless reality, creating their own conscious reality through language (through meanings or concepts). In fact, human beings use meanings as anchors to reach and fill the void of nonlinguistic medium. This process takes place in a linguistically formatted, symbolic, cultural environment. The void outside human consciousness is filled in and made intelligible through concepts that establish a vast construct with cultural value, specific and relevant strictly according to human language, thinking, understanding, and creativity. Ever since Greek Antiquity, the titans of the philosophy of language have questioned, in various ways, the relationship between our imaginative and intellectual dimension of language and the raw, formless material universe. To understand the importance of human language and cultural environment, it is worthy to keep in mind, among others, the Platonic dichotomy sensitive/intelligible realm (Plato 1991: 187-213). The sensitive world perceptible through senses and the intelligible world, which is created in the intellect through concepts, is methodologically



separated by a fundamental difference in functionality. For instance, the duality of physical sun (outer consciousness) / conceptual sun (inner consciousness) is revelatory to show how the mind conceptualizes an entire cosmos of ideas in which the symbolic, semantic schemes of things are informed, stored, conveyed in significant structures that transcend the accidental levels of physical or biological phenomena. Man recreates nature in a significant cosmos of conceptual values. The inner sun gives significant substance to the external one, validates its establishment as a natural object in the physical world. In the absence of human consciousness, the physical sun would remain a formless thing, without meaning or conceptual background. Of course, validation is done in, through and for our consciousness as such, in an approach of cognitive enlightenment through the formless void of matter.

Moreover, language can be defined by taking into account two dimensions. The first dimension is projected by the virtual meanings as considered in their primary capacity of pure ideas, objective as such, located before the possibility of establishing such relationships as existence/nonexistence, truth/falseness, creative/noncreative and having as their sole function increate linguistic, cultural, positive values. Conceptualizing nonexistence, for instance, implies the necessary interference with existence (to fulfill its signifying function, 'nothing' is conceptualized as 'something', being wrapped from within language into meaningful patterns such as substance, unity, essence of being, and designed by reference to categories (space, temporality, relationship, quality, etc.). In this way, nonexistence is considered infinite, eternal, absolute, transcendent, etc., i.e. it receives a sum of traits by virtue of signifying function. The second dimension of language is the activity of combining the units of meaning (virtual meanings), and claims the intuition of such polarities as

existence/nonexistence or truth/falseness. This second dimension of language fulfills the designative function, in such forms as logical judgment, theoretical justification, persuasion, etc.

By transcending the linguistic perspectives that are rooted in biological frames, Coseriu summarizes the main philosophical strings defining man as a cultural being. Given this approach, it is Coseriu's crucial endeavor to state, throughout his entire work, that language projects the energy of human consciousness in forms that grasp possibilities of creating sense and culture (science, philosophy, art, and religion altogether). After all, culture is primarily based on semantic (spiritual) contents. Culture is constituted as a meaningful tension in fields that are governed by semantic, creative, and subjective values, giving the effectiveness and the possibilities of human knowledge. Man is constantly transfiguring the empirical data (i.e. the horizon of the experiential world) so he could impose sense and order in the universe.

Coseriu became famous for linking cultural endeavors to some conditions deeply rooted in the human being, but which still remain outside the physiological level. The perpetual dynamics of creation are shaped not so much by reason in the classical sense, but especially by the internal configuration of the intuitive structures that lead to the design of a vision upon the world. The Coserian conception of language implies its understanding as a cultural object belonging to the human universe, and, therefore, definable in relation to the dimension of freedom (not 'necessity') and that of the intention of the human subject, the creator of its own language (i.e., in this second sense, language is not subject to causal determinations, but is justified only on the basis of the significant intention of the speaker). This distinction (language/'things') in terms of the reality of the facts as such obviously corresponds to a difference of perspective in terms of

science. Coseriu states clearly a separation of the sciences of culture from the natural sciences (in a broad sense):

(...) a los intentos declarados o no declarados del positivismo viejo y nuevo de reducir toda ciencia a ciencia física, hay que oponer la fundamental diversidad entre los hechos naturales y los hechos culturales y, por lo tanto, entre las ciencias físicas y las ciencias humanas. (Coseriu 1978: 193)

The world of culture is a world of man and, to the extent that man assumes it, it is an inner world, a world of its own, language being, in this sense, a cultural activity, a creative activity of cultural values (meanings). Thus, since man is the subject of this activity, Coseriu argues that meaning (as a value created in/through the linguistic act) must not be understood as a natural object, external to human consciousness, but, on the contrary, as the primary basis of human traits, due to the fact that man ‘as a human being’ exists only in a universe of meaning, in a significant universe:

El lenguaje puede definirse como el primer aparecer – como nacimiento – de lo humano y como apertura de las posibilidades propias del hombre. En efecto, el lenguaje es el primer presentarse de la conciencia humana como tal (puesto que no hay conciencia vacía y puesto que sólo mediante su objetivación la conciencia se deslinda a sí misma, al reconocerse como otra cosa que «el mundo»)." (Coseriu 1991: 64)

That is precisely the reason why “una concepción realmente positiva (y no «positivista») acerca del lenguaje debe advertir y recordar constantemente que el lenguaje pertenece al dominio de la libertad y de la finalidad y que, por consiguiente, los hechos lingüísticos no pueden interpretarse y explicarse en términos causales. (Coseriu 1978: 194)

Language as a significant act constitutes the fundamental possibility for the human being to exist in a cultural horizon, in which culture is primarily constructed in/through the creative and the meaningful effort of man. If the architecture of the given world is a material one, in which objects are chained by relationships of necessity and causality, human architecture is, according to Coseriu, a significant architecture (of freedom and intention) and must be accordingly understood:

La comprensión del hombre (...) debe comenzar por la comprensión del lenguaje, puesto que lo humano comienza precisamente por el lenguaje. (...) el lenguaje determina en primer lugar al hombre como tal y lo hace a ser como hombre. (...) el lenguaje (...) es la función por excelencia de la humanidad (del «ser hombre»); pero es sólo el primer escalón de lo humano y sólo posibilita escalones ulteriores, con los cuales, sin embargo, no se identifica. (1991: 63)

It becomes clear why the so-called problem of linguistic change, among other theoretical issues, can be solved, from this angle, as an internal determination, as an internal dynamism of language; linguistic innovation cannot be understood outside the linguistic tradition as such, but precisely as a new fact, 'innovative' in relation to tradition. If or when assumed, the innovation could become, in turn, tradition. Linguistic tradition implies the assumption of the entire cultural-historical background of a community of speakers in its own historical development. In the case of linguistic contacts, other communities of speakers may provide sources of innovations so that tradition underwent changes to the extent that 'foreign' beliefs, values, or worldviews were assimilated and, in time, were no longer felt, as in the early stages of their adoption, as innovations, but subsumed as facts of tradition by the current generations. Such mutations are not,

however, mutations of substance, as they concern only the stylistic adaptation as dynamic collective factor. This is one more reason to consider language and worldview categories as human-specific structures, from which all cultural figments are impregnated and recalled to delineate man's leap beyond the concrete world of sensations into the cultural environment. Consciousness is inseparable from language in the way meanings function as primary formative acts of cultural creation.

#### **4. An Overview of Coseriu's Meta-Theoretical Confrontations with the Emergent Structural and Generative Trends in the Science of Language**

The primacy of Coseriu's approach on linguistics as a humanistic science is noticeable when confronting at the level of the basic concepts on which Saussure and Chomsky relied their linguistic conceptions. Saussure and Chomsky are, of course, two major contributors who made a significant breakthrough in the field of contemporary linguistics. Nevertheless, the contribution of integral linguistics appears clearer, from the very first moment of a comparative approach, to the extent that Coseriu made a huge turning point regarding language. The main coordinate that enables us to perceive Coseriu's conceptual frame transcended structural linguistics aims the object of research. In order to grasp a fit object of research, Saussure proposed two basic antinomies: *langue*/*parole* and *synchrony*/*diachrony*. Therefore, the Swiss linguist argues that the object of linguistic research is '*langue*', understood as a system of signs in which the unities are delineated exclusively on a differential principle. As a social product, *langue* is just a sum of imprints stored in each brain (1995: 30). Being conceived as external to and independent from the individual, the linguistic system is also static, synchronic, and immutable by its own nature. Linguistic change takes place only at the level of

parole and is causally determined by events that lack internal coherence and are isolated from the system (1995: 25/30).

According to Saussure, several diachronic events may influence the system of langue, but he clearly states that the system has no effective role in producing the diachronic facts of language. In this respect, Coseriu (1978) argues that the structural linguistics has several inaccurate prerequisites, among which we state the following: the object of linguistic research is reduced to the idiomatic competence, which leads to a partial notion of language; langue is superposed on a state of langue, the latter being understood as a methodological synchronic projection; langue is reduced to a closed, autarchic system. Moreover, the confusion between the object and the effective research leads to opposing the descriptive study (which is necessarily synchronic) to the reality of the object being investigated (which is essentially historical). Tracing the roots of Durkheimian sociology at the core of Saussure's conception opens the road for situating language in the brain of the mass, as a social product. This misconception leads to consider language only as an abstract and logic device, a result of deductions made by researchers for their own purposes.

Under these circumstances, Coseriu argues that the linguistic change should not be accounted (as the entire Saussurean tradition does) as an external fact to language. Rather, it should be considered as an essential aspect of language, as emphasizing the existence of language through the effective reality of speaking. Moreover, the dynamics of languages should be interpreted from a historical perspective, because it is history that provides explanatory means for systematization and development of language. In Coseriu's view, the connection between evolution and continuity serves to conceive language as an historical object. In this process, the static and the dynamic dimensions are not to be opposed, as they are two moments of the same phenomenon:

Un objeto histórico es tal solo si es, al mismo tiempo, permanencia y sucesión. (...) La lengua se hace, pero su hacerse es un «hacerse histórico», y no cotidiano: es un hacerse en un marco de permanencia y continuidad. (1978: 283)

In the matter of simultaneity and succession at Saussure, see also Peñalver Simo (1970: 230). A development on lexical-semantic bases of the structural analysis is made in Coseriu (1981). An extensive debate on Saussure's contribution for integral linguistics is made in Coseriu (2004: 11-16).

Regarding the definition of language as object of linguistic research, the basic principles of generative grammar derive from Chomsky's distinction between 'competence' and 'performance'. Unlike Saussure, who conceives language as a 'system of signs', for Chomsky (2002: 13; 49-60), language is an entire (finite or infinite) set of sentences, a dynamic system governed by rules and logical procedures. For Chomsky, the competence is the intuitive knowledge that the speaker expresses in relation to his own language and, therefore, constitutes the primal object of linguistic research (Chomsky 1978: 9-11). Within the linguistic competence, a distinction is made between the phonetic component and the semantic component, from this point of view any phrase being eligible for a double structural description (Chomsky 1978: 16-18). A generative linguist may propose an interpretation for the deep structure of a sentence and a phonic representation for the surface structure. On the other hand, performance is the deployment of language in concrete discursive contexts. Symmetrically, the distinction of 'grammaticalness/adequacy' establishes the rules of the sentence at the level of competence and performance. Adequacy is a notion that goes beyond grammaticalness, as sentences can be grammatically correct

without fulfilling the condition of adequacy and comprehensibility. Coseriu adopts a rather different perspective, at least regarding two issues. Firstly, the binomial grammaticalness/adequacy cannot be related to that of competence/performance, due to several reasons: on one hand, both grammaticalness and adequacy are parts of the original science of the speakers, hence they pertain to the linguistic competence; on the other hand, both grammaticalness and adequacy apply to the performance of language, i.e. to the various contexts in which language is utilized. Secondly, although generative grammar is based on Humboldt's conception, the distinction between what is universal and what is historical-traditional in relationship to the ideal speaker's competence is clearly discarded. Coseriu argues that Chomsky did not make a clear distinction between a particular language and the individual language activity, i.e. between the specificity of historical languages and the individual intuitive activity of each native speaker. Another misconception is the confusion between intuition as speaker's primal knowledge and the reflexive knowledge involved in the scientific research:

la lingüística es un saber sobre un saber, un saber reflexivo que tiene un saber intuitivo o técnico como objeto. El primer cometido de la lingüística consiste, por tanto, en formular expresamente el saber lingüístico; el segundo cometido es justificarlo (Coseriu1992b: 252).

For an extensive debate on generative grammar, language regarded as result of instincts, and the integral solution to Chomsky's viewpoint, see Martínez del Castillo (2006) and Vîlcu D. (2019).



Nevertheless, the most challenging turn in defining language that integral linguistics brought to light is the concept of *energeia*. This concept enables a whole different conception regarding language as intuitive activity of creating contents of consciousness (i.e. meanings), on the basis of an imperceptible a priori synthesis. The essential role of Coseriu's integral linguistics is having proposed a definition of language as a unitary object of research. Symmetrically, in a post-Kantian and neo-Humboldtian perspective in the science of language, the fact that Coseriu considered its essence in terms of unity and synthesis is the most significant contribution that was ever brought in this field. Coseriu opposes this conception to the dualist conceptions, which proved useless to convey any unitary and coherent explanation to linguistic facts. The integral linguistics pinpoints that the act of speaking is totally different from what Saussure and Chomsky named parole or performance, i.e. a mere actualization of the linguistic system. For Coseriu, the act of speaking as a creative activity conveys language unity and, therefore, language is a whole in which parole and langue are inseparable and constitute two sequences of the same phenomenon.

The results of this foundational endeavor served to construct a contemporary theory of language. In this analytical development, the first axis Coseriu developed is that of the signifying function and the synergy of linguistic levels: the universal level, the historical level, and the individual level. Corresponding to these three levels of linguistic activity Coseriu defines three types of linguistic competence. At this point of the definition in extension of the object of study, the contribution of integral linguistics is decisive. Thus, by defining very precisely three types of linguistic competence: elocutional competence, idiomatic competence, and expressive competence (= universal speech technique, historical idiomatic technique, and the technique of sense articulation), by a

(re)foundation of the conception of idiomatic competence, as well as by defining the type of semantic content corresponding to each competence: designation (universal), signified/meaning (idiomatic), sense (individual), the integral science of language provides a strong conceptual and methodological foundation not only for linguistic research, but also for achieving a unifying perspective on man as a cultural being.

## **5. Concluding Remarks**

In this study, we proposed a preliminary descriptive model in order to put in contrast the biological features of man with his cultural traits, pointing out the primacy of language (and especially meaning construction through language) in the creation of culture. We later on focused on some of the philosophical-theoretical concepts that were, to an overwhelming extent, prerequisites and, at the same time, constant benchmarks in the construction of the project of integral linguistics. Coseriu's legacy, in this respect, is tremendous, as it values the understanding of language as a specific human cultural creative activity, rising conceptual and methodological-applicative counterparts to reductionist theories that regard language as a mere communication tool, an instinctive and preconceived device governed by logical rules and procedures, or as a static system, externally imposed to human consciousness. In order to grasp the primacy of a humanistic perspective in the science of language, as defined by Coseriu, we briefly revisited the Structural and the Generativist trends in their emergence point, focusing on Coseriu's own meta-theoretical confrontations with these trends as they existed at the time, namely Saussure's and Chomsky's basic theoretical principles and methods of research.

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