

Introductory Note

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In the autumn of 2014, a new Japanese translation of Eugenio Coseriu's early masterpiece *Sincronía, diacronía e historia. El problema del cambio lingüístico* (1958), was published in the prestigious collection Iwanami Library of Classics (Tokyo), under the title *Gengo henka to iu mondai. Kyōjitai, tsūjitai, rekishi* [*The problem of linguistic change. Synchrony, diachrony, history*]. The first Japanese translation, by Katsuhiko Tanaka (b. 1934) and Takashi Kamei (1912-1995), had appeared at Kronos Publishing House in 1981, playing a crucial role in the dissemination of Coseriu's theory in Japan, even though its circulation was relatively limited and bore all the marks of a *niche* publication. As Kronos subsequently closed down, Katsuhiko Tanaka felt that the text risked to be lost forever, buried in dusty storage facilities of university libraries or forgotten on the shelves of private book collections, and ageing prematurely due to a style that was already somewhat archaic in 1981, as it reflected the idiosyncrasies of the venerable Takashi Kamei. Tanaka therefore took it upon himself to make a new, modern version, in a reader-friendly format: with a fluent contemporary style, small-sized, conveniently priced and included in a most renowned collection – the Iwanami Library of Classics –, whose high cultural standing and financial stability would ensure the survival of the text 'forever', that is for as long as the Japanese language still has readers somewhere in the world.

Katsuhiko Tanaka, with his unfaltering commitment to furthering Coseriu's legacy and his exemplary achievement

beyond (or in spite of) any personal weaknesses that old age may bring, embodies a lesson on how to deal with the ultimate challenge that Coseriu's theoretical framework, "Integral Linguistics", faces in today's world: the danger of falling into oblivion. It is not that Coseriu's name may fade away from the history of linguistic thought, but that it may end up being just that: another name on a growing list of long-gone historical figures, a label devoid of substance – the substance that is the actual content of his wide-ranging and in many ways revolutionary contributions to the understanding of language and speech. The danger that not only the empirical human being, but also his outstanding work may end up utterly, finally, irrevocably *dead*. In order to avert this risk, the research interests and results of those scholars who, in many countries around the world, continue to use and develop Coseriu's theoretical framework need to be recorded in a more systematic form, one that allows for easier access to each individual work and increased mutual awareness. A felicitous coagulation of all individual efforts into a 'school' or a 'trend', such as the one that existed and was recognized in the 1970s and 1980s, when Coseriu had numerous direct disciples in his years of professorship at Tübingen University, can perhaps no longer occur, but better knowledge of ongoing investigations and a durable record of their results will definitely contribute to overcoming the current fragmentation of this relatively small (post-)Coserian community of scholars.

It is with a sense of urgency akin to K. Tanaka's that we, the editorial team of the journal "Concordia Discors vs Discordia Concors" and myself, embarked on a project subordinated to this goal. Thus, the year 2021, which marks the centenary of Eugenio Coseriu's birth, presented itself as an opportunity to host a collection of critical analyses, interpretations, applications and original developments on Coserian themes in two dedicated issues

(no. 15 and 16) of the journal.

The contributions included in issue no. 15 examine the epistemological foundations of Integral Linguistics, open up some theoretical and contrastive perspectives on the integral study of particular languages, and advance new proposals for the study of text / discourse starting from Coserian bases. The current issue, no. 16, complements the former, with several contributions focusing more specifically on the functional perspective in the study of languages and on the relation between what Coseriu called “functional language” and the architecture of language varieties, and others exploring the organization and evolution of idiomatic structures through comparative and contrastive approaches. Last but not least, the peculiar functioning of linguistic devices at the level of text / discourse is also addressed.

It is our hope that, taken together, these two issues will not only bring Coserian researchers from different continents closer to one another, but will also appeal to a much wider audience from the fields of comparative and contrastive disciplines in general, including literary and cultural studies, as Coseriu’s work rightfully deserves.

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