

LINGUA E STILE

Trimestrale

Anno XX, giugno 1985

2

17/197

LINGUA E STILE

Trimestrale di linguistica e critica letteraria

DIRETTORE Luigi Heilmann

COMITATO
DI DIREZIONE Dwight L. Bolinger, Boris Cazacu, André Martinet, Alberto Pasquinelli, Ezio Raimondi, Luigi Rosiello, Harald Weinrich

COMITATO
EDITORIALE Mario Alinei, Enrico Arcaini, Bruno Basile, Andrea Battistini, Alberto M. Cirese, Francesco Coco, Giorgio Graffi, Zarko Muljačić, Domenico Parisi, Eva Picardi, Annarita Puglielli, Paolo Ramat, Giorgio Sandri, Sergio Scalise, Sorin Stati, Paolo Valesio

SEGRETERIA Nicola Rainò

DIREZIONE
E REDAZIONE CILTA (Centro interfacoltà di linguistica teorica e applicata), viale Dante 15, 40125 Bologna — Tel. 34 14 44

La rivista è edita con un contributo del Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche.

I Collaboratori sono pregati di inviare alla Redazione i loro contributi in stesura dattiloscritta, conservandone una copia. Come trascrizione fonetica deve essere usato il sistema dell'Associazione Fonetica Internazionale.

I contributi proposti non dovranno di norma superare il numero massimo di 35 pagine. Per articoli i quali, per ragioni motivate, dovessero superare la lunghezza indicata, i collaboratori sono invitati a prendere previamente contatti con la Direzione.

Agli Autori è affidata la correzione delle prime bozze di stampa.

Ai Collaboratori saranno inviati gratuitamente 30 estratti per contributi alle rubriche «Saggi», «Problemi» e «Rassegne». Ai Collaboratori alla rubrica «Notizie» sarà inviata una copia del fascicolo relativo.

Le pubblicazioni per recensione o per scambio debbono essere recapitate esclusivamente alla redazione.

LINGUA E STILE

Anno XX

n. 2

aprile-giugno 1985

SOMMARIO

Saggi

- 151 Le discontinuità semantiche come strategie di definizione nell'ambito testuale e conversazionale
di *Vanda L. Zammuner* (Padova)
- 173 John Locke: idee sul linguaggio e «uso civile»
di *Alberto Cucchi* (Bologna)
- 199 Linguistic Theory and the Doctrine of Usage in George Campbell's «Philosophy of Rhetoric»
by *Thomas Frank* (Napoli)

Problemi

- 217 Locativi deittici, *Deixis am Phantasma*, sistemi di orientamento
di *Marco Mazzoleni* (Pavia)
- 247 Basic Symbolism in Boccaccio
by *R. G. Faithfull* (London)
- 259 A proposito delle varietà stilistiche del romanzo «Rites of Passage» di William Golding: problemi e proposte alternative di traduzione
di *Andrea Fabbri* (Faenza)
- 279 *Summaries*

Linguistic Theory and the Doctrine of Usage in George Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric*

by THOMAS FRANK (Napoli)

0. George Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric* continued to attract a large public of readers (or students) long after its first publication in 1776; this is attested by the twenty-five editions, sixteen of them American, listed in Alston's *A Bibliography of the English Language*. Many of these were abridgments and were clearly intended for use in schools as a textbook of composition. The last edition, before Lloyd F. Bitzer's reprint of 1963, is dated 1911. Alston defines Campbell's treatise «a wide-ranging enquiry of fundamental importance» and a close reading of the book certainly bears out this contention. In the present paper I shall only be concerned with the strictly linguistic aspects of Campbell's work, not with the wider philosophical implications of his ideas, which have attracted some attention in recent years¹. Nevertheless, before examining Campbell's view of language, something ought to be said about the intellectual background of his work on rhetoric.

1. Campbell, who was born in 1719, studied in his native Aberdeen and in Edinburgh, was appointed Principal of Marischal College in 1759, became a Doctor of Divinity in 1764 and Professor of Divinity at Marischal in 1771. The original conception of his *Philosophy* goes back to 1750, as he himself tells us, and the bulk of the book

Il seguente articolo è stato presentato come relazione al III Congresso Internazionale di linguistica storica inglese, tenutosi a Sheffield nei giorni 27-30 marzo 1983.

¹ The strictly rhetorical aspects and the philosophical foundations of Campbell's theory are dealt with in La Russo, who rejects the idea that Campbell's theory is in any way revolutionary, Cohen and Mohrmann, who are particularly concerned with the debt *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* owes to contemporary philosophy and psychological theory, especially associationism, and in Dolph, who relates Campbell's ideas to 18th century theories of taste.

was first read as a series of papers to a private literary society (the Philosophical Society of Aberdeen) nearly twenty years before their publication in book form in 1776. Campbell belongs to the so-called «common-sense» school of Scottish philosophy, which had its natural home in Aberdeen and the Philosophical Society of that city, and its moving spirit in Thomas Reid (1710-1796). As one modern scholar puts it (Grave, 1960: 1), although at first it «gravitated in a distant orbit round Hume», the philosophy of common sense arose as an «answer to Hume», not only because these philosophers were opposed to Hume's scepticism, but also because they believed that his system contradicted the authority of common sense. The object of their enquiries is the operation of the human mind. As Campbell himself says in his *Preface*: «It is his [i.e., the author's] purpose in this work on the one hand, to exhibit, he does not say, a correct map, but a tolerable sketch of the human mind; and, aided by the lights which the Poet and the Orator so amply furnish, to disclose its secret movements, tracing its principal channels of perception and action, as near as possible, to their source; and, on the one hand, from the science of human nature, to ascertain with greater precision, the radical principles of that art, whose object it is, by the use of language, to operate on the soul of the hearer in the way of informing, convincing, pleasing, moving, or persuading» (Campbell, 1850: V). Linguistic analysis, i.e. the study of how we use language in order to inform, convince, persuade, etc. our interlocutors, is therefore closely linked, indeed made dependant upon, a study of human nature, or as we might perhaps today prefer to put it, of psychology.

Campbell was not the only member of the Scottish enlightenment to interest himself in linguistic problems. Already in 1761 Adam Smith had published his *Considerations concerning the First Formation of Languages and the Different Genius of Original and Compound Languages* contained in the second edition of his *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (Narr, 1970: 9-10), but perhaps more to the point, Hugh Blair published his *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (delivered during his tenure of the chair of that title at the University of Edinburgh) in 1783, and James Beattie, a member of Campbell's Aberdeen circle, published his *Theory of Language*, in 1788. Both of these works cover much of the same ground as Campbell's *Philosophy*. Nor should we forget the publication of Lord Monboddo's massive volumes *Of the Origin and Progress of Language*, published between 1773 and 1792, the early volumes of which, at any rate, are concerned with problems similar to those treated by Campbell. South of the Border, in addition to Lowth's highly influential *A Short Introduction to English Grammar* (1762), frequently mentioned by Campbell, works like Joseph Priestley's *A Course of Lectures on the Theory of*

Language and Universal Grammar (1762) and above all James Harris's *Hermes; or a Philosophical Inquiry Concerning Language and Universal Grammar* (1751) had treated of general questions of linguistic theory.

2. Campbell, as has already been mentioned, emphasizes the close connection between language and a science of human nature, psychology seen in associatoinist terms. «Grammar too» – he affirms in his *Introduction* – «in its general principles, has a close connexion with the understanding and the theory of the associations of ideas» (Campbell, 1850: XIII). Though this might lead us to infer that he is broadly sympathetic to the school of «rational» or «universal» grammarians, quite the opposite is the case. What is universal is human nature and logic. «The art of the logician» – he affirms – «is accordingly, in some sense, universal; the art of the grammarian is always particular and local... In propriety there cannot be such a thing as an universal grammar, unless there were such a thing as an universal language. The term hath sometimes, indeed, been applied to a collection of observations on similar analogues that have been discovered in all tongues, ancient and modern, known to the authors of such collections» (Campbell, 1850: 34). This point is reinforced in Book II of *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, where Campbell, criticizing Swift's animadversions on the deficiencies of English grammar², observes: «Some notion he possibly had of grammar in the abstract, an universal archetype by which the particular grammar of all different tongues ought to be regulated... I acknowledge myself to be entirely ignorant of this ideal grammar; nor can I form a conjecture where its laws are to be learnt» (Campbell, 1850: 140). This seems to be an almost wilful misunderstanding of the principles underlying the theory of rational grammar, as expounded either in France by Messieurs de Port-Royal, in Italy by Tommaso Campanella or in England by Wilkins, or more to the point and closer to Campbell, by Harris, to whose work he makes frequent references in his treatise. The author of *Hermes* speaks of «GRAMMAR UNIVERSAL; that Grammar, which without regarding the several Idioms of particular Languages, only respects those Principles, that are essential to them all» (Harris, 1751: 11), which he considers a kind of applied logic (*ibid.*, p. 6). Campbell's friend Beattie writes that «The knowledge of it [i.e., universal or philosophical grammar] will not only illustrate what we may already have learned of the grammatical art; but also, by tracing that matter to its first elements, will give us more comprehensive views of it that can be obtained from any particular grammar; and at

² Cfr. Swift 1957 (1712): «Our Language is extremely imperfect... in many Instances it offends against every Part of Grammar».

the same time make us better judges of the nature and extent of human language, and of the connection, that obtains between our words and thoughts. Considered as resulting from, and as founded in the faculties and circumstances of human beings, the principles of grammar form an important, and very curious part of the philosophy of the human mind» (Beattie, 1788: 105-106). Such statements are typical of the universalist theory of grammar rather than original. Campbell's rejection of this doctrine may in part be due to the empirical stance of his philosophy, based as it is on the assumption that the processes whereby we arrive at such a grammar are inductive, and, as we would say today, corpus-based; that universal grammar means the lowest common denominator of all known human languages, rather than, as was assumed by the universalists, on the mechanisms underlying human thought. But in part his refusal to acknowledge the validity of universal grammar is no doubt due also to his very narrow definition of the term grammar, which to him is, to use a Chomskyan terminology, a purely surface phenomenon. Grammar is merely the lowest and most mechanical part of our speech faculties. He observes: «Now, if it be by the sense or soul of the discourse that rhetoric holds of logic, or the art of thinking and reasoning, it is by the expression or body of the discourse that she holds of grammar, or the art of conveying our thoughts in the words of a particular language» (Campbell, 1850: 34) and later on in the same chapter he writes: «The highest aim of the former [i.e., eloquence] is the lowest aim of the latter; where grammar ends eloquence begins» (Campbell, 1850: 35).

In this linear conception of the structure of language, an entirely subordinate position is assigned to grammar, which is seen as a value-free category, as opposed to the value-charged category of «eloquence», interpreted in its widest sense as the most effective use of language in a given context. Grammar as such is therefore devoid of any cognitive power, it is a mere means to an end. «The end of every grammar is to convey the knowledge of that language of which it is the grammar» (Campbell, 1850: 190). The observance of the rules of grammar, however defined and however arrived at, is the necessary but not sufficient condition for effective expression: correctness does not guarantee effectiveness or stylistic excellence, but the latter presupposes the former. As Campbell himself puts it: «Grammatical purity, in every tongue, greatly conduceth to perspicuity, but it will by no means secure it» (Campbell, 1850: 217).

Such a rejection of the universalist principle does indeed seem curious on the part of a philosopher who, as we have seen, tries to relate his view of language and rhetoric to a philosophy of the human mind, or in other words, to psychology. But this apparent contradiction is resolved in Book III of his treatise, in which he is no longer

concerned with the purely grammatical aspects of language, which are treated in Book II, but with rhetoric proper. In discussing word order in different languages, after a spate of examples taken especially from various translations of the Bible, his position becomes quite clear: grammar is mere custom or convention, and is therefore local and particular, whereas what he calls rhetoric is related to a *natural* and therefore universal order. In Campbell's own words: «the learned reader . . . will be enabled to deduce, with as much certainty as the nature of the question admits, that the arrangement which I call rhetorical, as contributing to vivacity and animation, is in the strictest sense of the word . . . a natural arrangement; that the principle which leads to it operates similarly on every people, and every language . . . that, on the contrary, the more common, and what for distinction's sake I call the grammatical order, is in a great measure, an arrangement of convention, and differs considerably in different languages» (Campbell, 1850: 365).

One would be tempted to say, to use a traditional dichotomy, that grammar is particular because it is form, and that what is universal is contents, but Campbell identifies the universal element with rhetoric, which is concerned with «vivacity» and «animation». Rhetoric is of course not to be identified in any way with some sort of disreputable sleight of hand, with a method of convincing hearers by means of appropriate words that black is white or viceversa. Nevertheless, persuasion *is* one of the functions of discourse, as the author makes clear already in the first chapter of his treatise. Logic is concerned solely with «the eviction of truth» (Campbell, 1850: 33), but for Campbell this «eviction of truth» is by no means the only function of language, for «eloquence not only considers the subject, but also the speaker and the hearers, and both the subject and the speaker for the sake of the hearers, or rather for the sake of the effect intended to be produced in them» (*ibidem*). To put it somewhat differently, language is not to be considered solely in so far as it satisfies the truth-conditions of classical logic, and some room has to be found in his general scheme (or may we say «general semantics»?) for the persuasive and performative functions of language. As one recent linguist has put it: «The inadequacy of truth-conditional semantics as a total theory, not only of utterance-meaning, but also of sentence-meaning, derives ultimately from its restriction to propositional content and its inability to handle the phenomenon of subjectivity» (Lyons, 1981: 240). To what extent it would be fair to say that Campbell in some way anticipates, however vaguely, the concept of the illocutionary force of utterances as one of the parameters for determining their meaning, may be a moot point. Campbell certainly assigns to rhetoric more than a marginal function in language. The gloss I put upon it is this: logic is

concerned with truth-conditions (or the «propositional meaning») of utterances, but these by no means exhaust the meaning functions of discourse, of which eloquence, or rhetoric, is in Campbell's view an integral part, or in other words a universal. Logic and grammar are by no means coterminous, as at least implicitly they appear to be to the rational grammarians, for whom grammar is a sort of applied logic, a relationship in which the former is entirely contained within and subordinate to the latter. Campbell certainly does not deny that there are certain universal principles that operate in all languages, what he denies is that their proper sphere is grammar.

Campbell compares the grammarian to a mason and the orator to an architect: the work of the latter is dependant on that of the former, but the architect adds the element of design (or «taste») to the merely mechanical skill of the mason, with this difference: that whereas the architect may well be incapable of actually carrying out the work of the mason, on which the execution of his designs depends, the orator has to have a practical mastery of the rules of grammar, which are *conditio sine qua non* of his art. On a subsequent page, Campbell distinguishes between grammar and verbal criticism. The former is compared to the work of those who codify – the term he uses is «compile a digest» – the laws of the country, whereas the province of the latter is to expose – Campbell does not use the term «repress» – all abuses and illegal practices found in the state. The task of the grammarian is to clear the decks for the orator to be able to operate; Campbell's real interest is in the art of the latter, rhetoric, the grammarian is a mere hewer of wood and drawer of water in comparison with the nobler art of the orator, or as we might perhaps prefer to say, the student of style³.

3. Oratory – the effective use of language – rests on what Campbell calls «purity». Nevertheless, it would I think be a mistake to label the author of *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* a «purist» in a derogatory sense, as W. F. Bryan did in an article a couple of generations ago, or to concentrate on the merely normative aspects of Campbell's observations, as Leonard did in his book on the doctrine of correctness in the 18th century. Purity rests on the application of three principles

³ Cfr. «Now, as the grammatical art hath its completion in syntax, the oratorical, as far as the body or expression is concerned in style. Syntax regards only the composition of many words into one sentence; style, at the same time that it attends to this, regards further the composition of many sentences into one discourse» (Campbell, 1850: 35) – a formulation in terms of «sentence grammar» vs. «discourse grammar» although this would hardly satisfy the modern theorist of stylistics as a definition of his discipline.

with which few of us would wish to quarrel. I have already referred to the passage in which Campbell defines the grammarian not as a lawgiver, but a codifier of the common law. Among the many passages in which he acknowledges the supremacy of use, the following is perhaps the most explicit. After quoting Horace's well-known and often cited lines on use («*Usus/Quem penes arbitrium est, et jus et norma loquendi*»), he writes: «It is not the business of grammar, as some critics seem preposterously to imagine, to give law to the fashions which regulate our speech. On the contrary, from its conformity to these, and from that alone, it derives all of its authority and value. For, what is the grammar of any language? It is no other than a collection of general observations methodically digested, and comprising all the modes previously and independently established, by which the significations, derivations, and combinations of words in that language are ascertained. It is of no consequence here to what causes originally these modes of fashions owe their existence, to imitation, to reflection, to affectation, or to caprice; they no sooner obtain and become general, than they are laws of the language, and the grammarian's only business is to note, collect and methodize them» (Campbell, 1850: 139-140). As has already been pointed out, grammar is to Campbell an inductive, empirical science, although the little phrase about «modes previously and independently established» allows us to glimpse certain general categories not inductively arrived at by means of an examination of the data, but into which the data are fitted. In other words, Campbell here seems to be admitting that certain grammatical concepts – for example, time, plurality or modality, to choose just three –, though they may not be actually present in any one language, exist prior to their concrete manifestation in a grammatical system, presumably because they form part of the way we conceptualize the world, and it is these categories that have to be matched up with the facts of grammar. This is surely the basic dilemma of all extreme forms of empiricism: the impossibility of constructing a viable conceptual framework from a mere examination of the sense data. But Campbell, who was a practical man and a firm believer in common sense (in the ordinary language as well as in the philosophical sense of the term) does not pursue the subject, but passes on. In this way, universal grammar, boldly thrown out of the window, timidly peeps in through the back door. A detailed account of the epistemological status of these previously and independently established modes would take us far beyond the scope of the present paper.

However, having established that use is the only arbiter of correctness, Campbell at once realizes that this principle begs more questions than it answers. Is use always and everywhere the same, independently of whoever uses language in a given context? Clearly not:

even though today we may be more aware of and disposed to accept the multifaceted nature of language than a late 18th century philosopher and theologian, clearly no one could be so simple-minded as to suppose that an appeal to use provides an unequivocal answer not only to such questions as «what are the forms», but also «what are the most adequate forms» of a particular language, and Campbell, who was very far from simple-minded, rejects without hesitation any version of the doctrine of «whatever is, is right».

His criteria for purity are certainly not original: much of what he says can be found in Vaugelas's *Remarques sur la Langue Française*, which Campbell frequently refers to, and to whom usage is not merely king but tyrant. Use, according to Campbell, is to be judged, in accordance with three criteria: it must be reputable, national and present use. Reputable use is much more than general use. Campbell rejects Vaugelas's identification of good use with the language of the court, or at any rate limits it to questions of pronunciation, and roundly comes out in favour of the «authors of reputation», a reputation which rests not only on the quality of their ideas, but also on the «talent of communicating knowledge». Though we may have different opinions about individual authors, most men will agree on the authors who enjoy the highest reputation. Taste for him is not a question of personal preference, but an objectively verifiable quality, and in this Campbell is very much a child of his century; and in fact the principles of good use⁴ are the same everywhere, based as they are «even in France, [not on] a deference to power, but to wisdom» (Campbell, 1850: 143-144). Little need be said about his defence of national use, except that he is not only largely and understandably concerned with excluding local or regional varieties of speech in favour of a national standard which «is found current, especially in the upper and middle ranks, over the whole British empire»⁵ (Campbell, 1850: 145), but also of «professional dialects», precisely because they have only a limited currency.

⁴ Cfr. «Ce sont des maximes à ne changera mais qui pourront servir à la posterité de mesme qu'à ceux qui vivent aujourd'huy, quand on changera quelque chose de l'Usage que j'ay remarqué, se sera encore selon ces memes Remarques que l'on parlera que l'on écrira autrement, pour ce regard, que les Reigles que ne portent. Il sera tousiours vray aussi, que les Reigles que ie donne pour la netteté du langage ou du stile subsisteront, sans jamais recevoir changement. Outre qu'en la costruction Grammatical les changements y sont beaucoup moins frequens qu'aux mots aux phrases» (Vaugelas, 1934 (1647): o iij, verso).

⁵ Presumably when Campbell wrote, the term «British Empire» included the territory of the thirteen colonies that declared their independence in the very year of the publication of *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*. Noah Webster, writing in 1789, was certainly of the opinion that America ought to have her own standard, or rather «national language».

Perhaps the most interesting section in this part of his treatise is that on present use. In this he takes a clear stand in favour of «the language as it is» and against any attempt to revive or sanction obsolete forms, both against those who argue from etymology and from the principles of analogy. Though his remarks may seem self-evident to us today – but perhaps less so to those self-proclaimed guardians of linguistic purity who from time to time favour the newspapers with their strictures – they were no doubt salutary in the 18th century: they are eminently sensible. If meaning is conventional, and Campbell shows throughout his book that he accepts the implications of the essentially arbitrary nature of the linguistic sign, then there is no point in dishing up the history of words in order to find out how they are to be used today. As to the general principle of analogy, so often invoked in 18th century writings on language, this applies only in cases where there is a genuine conflict of forms in present-day use. To give an example of the kind of reasoning Campbell objects to: Lowth (1792: 75) gives the forms of the verb *sit* as *sat*, *sitten* and observes in a note that «analogy plainly requires *sitten* . . . But it is now almost wholly disused, the form of the Past Tense *sat*, having taken its place». He adds «Dr. Middleton hath with great propriety restored the true Participle». For Campbell, instead of «great propriety» this is a case of a useless archaism, for he says «If you will replace what hath been long since expunged from the language, and extirpate what is firmly rooted, undoubtedly you yourself become an innovator» (Campbell, 1850: 149). For him any conflict between use and analogy must perforce resolve itself in favour of use.

His criterion of present use tries to steer a middle course between obsolescence and arbitrary novelty: to put it very simply, don't be the last to abandon an obsolete form, but don't be the first to use a new one. What he fails to account for is how words or forms become obsolete and how new words attain the sanction of reputable present use. In other words, while Campbell is forced to admit that language changes – otherwise, how could words and forms become obsolete? – he has no theory of language change, and this failure to account for how language changes, as opposed to merely recording it, is surely due to his failure to take into consideration the social and historical pressures language is subject to, to the recognition that, today's standard usage may have been yesterday's local or substandard form. He is in favour of retaining dual forms where they are semantically functional: for example, he cites the use of *on* and *in* with the verb *to found*, the former representing the literal use («the house was founded on a rock»), the latter the metaphorical sense («they maintained that dominion is founded in grace», Campbell, 1850: 154), and in general prefers maximising differences rather than merging them, but

he does not realize that a semantic split is often due to the presence of two forms in the language, and the consequent realignment in areas of meaning, rather than the other way round.

Let me cite two well-known examples of how the rise of new forms can crystallize two potentially «different» meanings of the «same» word, or to put it in another way, how on the one hand polysemy can favour the rise of differentiated forms, and on the other how these different forms undoubtedly lead to two originally related meanings growing further apart. The modern forms *person* and *parson* both derive from an Old French form *persone* and ultimately from Latin *persōna*. Until the 17th century both forms in *e* and in *a* (but very probably representing a pronunciation in [ɑ]) were current in both senses, but it was only from the second half of the 17th century onwards that *person* (probably with a reversion to the original pronunciation, or rather *er* = [3:]) became exclusively attached to the sense of «being», «individual», etc., whereas *parson* retained its more restricted sense of «priest». Their different spelling and pronunciation today (the last quotation of *parson* spelled with a letter «e» given in the OED is dated 1625) have undoubtedly contributed to making, the two distinct senses of the undifferentiated word stand out more clearly, so that very few speakers of English today can be aware of the fact that originally they were the «same word». Similar considerations apply to *flour/flower*. One wonders how many speakers of English today (none but professional philologists surely!) realize that these two forms too represent the «same word». In Johnson's *Dictionary* in 1755 *flower* is the only form given, and although the spelling *flour* predominates throughout the 18th century in the sense of «wheat», the last quotation of this sense in the OED with the spelling *flower* is dated 1809. The origin of *flour* = «wheat» is the metaphorical expression «flower (best part of) wheat». The modern spelling difference, as well as the abbreviation *flower of wheat* → *flower* → *flour* has undoubtedly contributed to obscuring the metaphorical origin of the word. Our instinct is probably to treat *flower/flour* as homophones like for example *hare/hair*, rather than one as an extension of, or arising out of the other. Historical accident has thus created two words out of one.

In language change there is clearly an *interaction* between signifier and signified, not a one-way traffic. Campbell is primarily concerned with the state of the language as he finds it, and although, unlike Swift, he has little faith in the possibility of fixing and ascertaining the language once and for all, he *is* interested in laying down the criteria of purity that underlie, but do not on their own constitute effective communication⁶. Apart from the antiquarians earlier on in the

⁶ Cfr. Bitzer (1963: xxxvi-xxxviii).

century, few 18th century students of language had any genuine interest in the history of language, and above all, not merely in the mechanisms of linguistic change, but in the interplay between the internal, purely linguistic, and external, social factors that trigger off these changes. No doubt Campbell, although he does not mention the *Preface* to the *Dictionary*, would have subscribed to Johnson's well-known, plaintive remarks on the instability of language and the vanity of those who hope to put a stop to it⁷.

4. On the question of «present use» Campbell is firmly within the tradition. But he realized that even his three criteria of «reputable», «national» and «present» use do not provide an adequate guide in all questions of linguistic purity, on which any effective theory of rhetoric must rest. He therefore lays down a series of canons to resolve any thorny questions of use. His basic criterion is that where usage, as above defined, indisputably sanctions a particular form or meaning, it is supreme; where interpretation may vary, the canons may help. To use a legal metaphor, he inverts the basic principles of English jurisprudence: to him the common law («use») at all relevant points overrides statute law (the «canons»), and not viceversa. His canons are interesting because they incidentally reveal his view of how language functions, or ought to function. Basically, he subscribes to a common-sense – or should we say naive – view of the nature of the linguistic sign, which he sees as being linked in a one-to-one, specular relationship to the thing designated. There are passages in which we find an almost Baconian insistence on «things and not words», which recurs in so much 17th century writing on language⁸. For example,

⁷ Cf. «Those who have been persuaded to think well of my design, will require that it should fix our language, and put a stop to those alterations which time and chance have hitherto been suffered to make in it without opposition. With this consequence I will confess I flattered myself for a while; but now begin to fear that I have indulged expectation which neither reason nor experience justify. When we see men grow old and die at a certain time one after another, from century to century, we laugh at the elixir that promises to prolong life to a thousand years; and with equal justice may the lexicographer be derided, who being able to produce no example of a nation that has preserved their words and phrases from mutation, shall imagine that his dictionary can embalm language, and secure it from corruption and decay, that it is in his power to change sublunary nature, and clear the world at once from folly, vanity, and affectation» (Johnson, V, 1825: 46-47). Johnson's sonorous prose merely echoes a commonplace that goes back to Horace and that we find, among others, also in Pope's *Essay on Criticism*:

«Our sons their Fathers' failing Language see,
And such as Chaucer is, shall Dryden be» ll.482-83.

⁸ Apart from Bacon's own observations on words as the «idols of the market place» in *The Advancement of Learning*, cfr. «great part of our time which is now required to the Learning of words, might then be employed in the study of things» (Wilkins, 1694: 106) or «it [the design of the *Essay*] being as much to be preferred as

in a passage in polemic against scholastic logic and a priori knowledge as opposed to the inductive logic of empirical science, he refers disparagingly to those who «use mere words without knowledge, an empty show of science without the reality» (Campbell, 1850: 272). But elsewhere he seems to show an awareness that language is more than a mere nomenclature, that words are not only the signs of things, but that the internal structure of language itself confers meaning on words. «Hence the words and names themselves, by customary vicinity, contract in the fancy a relation additional to that which they derive purely from being symbols of related things». Further, this tendency is strengthened by the structure of language itself (Campbell, 1850: 259).

This would seem to suggest that though the primary meaning function of words is to stand for things, i.e. entities in the extra-linguistic universe, some of their meaning at least is given by the way *words* (not things) interrelate to one another, to their collocation within a given lexical area: shall we say, something in the nature of Saussure's famous chessboard image, in which each move of one of the pieces alters the whole «state of the game», or value, to use Saussure's own term, of each individual linguistic (lexical or grammatical) item, even though admittedly the great Swiss linguist in the passage in question (Saussure, 1960: 88-89) is concerned with successive synchronic stages of the language, rather than the internal structure of the lexicon as such. It is not quite clear whether Campbell is here thinking of the lexical structure of a particular language, of the incommensurability between two different linguistic systems (e.g. English *eat* means something different from German *essen*, which is opposed to *fressen*, used normally with non-human subjects, whereas *essen* is used with *human* subjects, just as Italian *carne* does not really correspond to English *meat*, which is opposed to *flesh*, whereas there is no corresponding opposition in Italian), or whether he is thinking of a more general phenomenon, such as the linear structure of certain concepts (say the whole range from *huge* to *tiny*), or certain binary oppositions, which seem to be characteristics found in a great many genetically unrelated languages. But on the whole he rejects any idea of language generating meaning as opposed to merely standing for or representing our experience of the extra-linguistic universe. Excessive attention given to the medium, to words, distracts from the attention

things are better than *words*» (Wilkins, 1668: A₂ recto). Among others one could cite in this connection are Petty 1648 and Sprat's well-known remarks on «so many *things* in an almost equal number of *words*» (Sprat, 1667: 113).

we ought to give to the thing signified, for «It ought to be remembered *that* whatever application we must give to the words is, in fact, so much deducted from what we owe to the sentiments» (Campbell, 1850: 221). Language is like a pane of glass through which we perceive an object, so that «if the medium through which we look at any object be perfectly transparent, our whole attention is fixed on the object; we are scarcely sensible that there is a medium which intervenes, and can hardly be said to perceive it» (*ibid.*). Attention ought not to be given to words as independently existing entities and the place they occupy in the linguistic structure, but to the object they designate. Indeterminacy of meaning and ambiguity are to be avoided as far as possible, and in this Campbell is in line with the mainstream of 17th century writing on language from Bacon to Wilkins and to some extent also Locke. Consequently Campbell prefers «strictly univocal» forms to polysemic expressions (Canon the first), a corollary of which is that he prefers in all cases sanctioned by good use the maximum differentiation of forms, e.g. *exceeding* and *exceedingly*, rather than the former used both as adjective and adverb (a fairly common 18th century usage, or *hidden* and *gotten* as participles of *hide* and *get*, rather than *hid* (common in the 18th century, but archaic today) and *got* (the common British form today as opposed to the common American form *gotten*). Or again he prefers *ye* as the nom. pl. 2nd person pronoun in opposition to the accusative (really oblique) case *you*. He is also in favour of simplicity (Canon the fourth) «in which I include etymology when manifest» (Campbell, 1850: 158), i.e. transparent rather than opaque signs. Where neither of these criteria, nor analogy or harmony of sound provide an adequate answer, recourse to «ancient usage» is invoked. Three factors militate against linguistic purity. These three categories, derived from Quintilian, whom he quotes in a note, are barbarisms, solecisms and improprieties.

Barbarisms are related to his theory of «present» use, for they are violations of his criterion that words should be neither obsolete nor new-fangled, although it must be said that in the practical application of these he is by no means a hide-bound conservative or passionately attached to forms that common usage has discarded. In addition to obsolescence and innovation, he mentions the formation of new lexical items from existing words, stems or roots, though he takes a firm stand against the merely fashionable and against jargon or slang. Where these formations are analogical and necessary he is willing to accept them, e.g. *continental* (first recorded use in the OED 1760), *sentimental* (OED, 1749) or *originality* (OED Supplement, 1742); one wonders how the language could ever have done without them. But where the formations are merely capricious (e.g. *martyrized* instead of *martyred*, or *connexity* for *connexion*) or harsh-sounding he rejects

them. It is not my intention here to enter into particulars; many of his strictures seem undoubtedly justified, but others relate to what were clearly at the time nothing but passing fashions. In other cases his judgment seems less sure, but it is hindsight rather than the nature of the formation that enables us to make such an affirmation: after all what need was there for a pair like *continuous/continual* until the two became clearly differentiated, so that, at least to some extent, the signifier determines the signified, rather than viceversa: but such a concept would certainly be alien to Campbell's view of language.

His concern with analogy in this section is of some interest, for he attempts to identify certain syntactic patterns present in English, but in fact at times his strictures are wrong-headed, since he rejects formation like *saint-author* or *belly-sense* (the latter not because it is a «low» word, but because of its syntactic structure), both called «monsters», or *mirror-writing*, for the formation of these words is surely perfectly in line with the historical development of English syntax.

His second category solecism consists, as he says, of a transgression of the syntactic rules of the language, «though» — he observes — «the nature of solecism, ought perhaps to be distinguished by the softer name of *inaccuracy*» (Campbell, 1850: 181). He acknowledges that the works of Lowth and Priestley contain abundant examples of the kind of «inaccuracy» he has in mind, and though in some of the many examples he cites there may be an element of personal caprice or prejudice, on the whole it is fair to say that he is concerned with what one could roughly call «loose constructions», which at times create ambiguity, but at others are simply examples of «bad writing», for even as linguists we must surely allow ourselves the occasional value judgment and admit that some people write better than others!

If barbarism is, as he says, an offence against etymology (Campbell, 1850: 190) and solecism against syntax, impropriety offends against lexicography. He is concerned both with impropriety in single words and in phrases. Again, there is no need to go into the details here: some of them are undoubtedly of interest to the student of 18th century English, either of the semantic shifts that were taking place, and are therefore felt to be «improprieties», or simply of the prejudices or «gut reactions» current during that period, whereas others are concerned with a loose use of language. For example, he objects to Swift's phrase «The first project was to shorten discourse by cutting polysyllables into one», observing that one can cut one thing into two or more, but that two or more cannot be cut into one. What he really means is that Swift should have written «reducing polysyllables to monosyllables», or something of the kind. But more interesting are his very brief remarks on impropriety that is due to incompatibility

(the term is his, not mine), for the criterion of incompatibility is objective, testable, not subject to personal prejudice or preference: in other words it can be formalized. Let us look at one of his examples, again from Swift: «I have not wilfully committed the least mistake» on which he observes «The words used are incompatible. A wrong wilfully committed is no mistake» (Campbell, 1850: 203), which we might roughly formalize thus: wilful → + purpose, mistake → + wrong — purpose. Campbell's remarks here are tantalizingly brief, but unless I am reading too much into them, they allow us to glimpse a timid attempt to base his canons of linguistic purity on a formal semantics rather than on purely subjective criteria of «taste» or «linguistic intuition».

The fact that Campbell so frequently takes Swift as the target of his strictures is surely significant, for Swift's language — think of *The Tale of a Tub* — is often highly idiosyncratic and «deviant» according to the common norms of usage. To what extent this is due to conscious choice as opposed to natural exuberance is hardly the point at issue here. Campbell, as has been pointed out, belonged to the school of common sense philosophers, and indeed common sense informs much of his writing on language: he is very close to the Augustan ideals of transparency, coherence and logic and consequently deviance from these tends to be stigmatized and linguistic creativity, in the literary rather than in the Chomskyian sense, to be frowned upon. Swift's phrase «I had like to have gotten one or two broken heads for my impertinence» elicits the predictable, common sense rejoinder «How many heads was he possessed of» (Campbell, 1850: 22), but this kind of metonymic transfer (once or twice → one or two (broken heads)) is surely common enough in 18th century poetic diction. To take a well-known example that springs to mind, Gray's «The plowman homeward plods his weary way» for «wearily plods homeward» surely is not so very different from Swift's «one or two broken heads», though the latter is certainly far more striking and original than Gray's somewhat faded and conventional epithet.

5. To conclude I should like to add a few remarks on Campbell's attitude to the problem of ambiguity. There is no need here to dwell on the almost central position that ambiguity holds in many contemporary theories of language (Chomsky's phrase «flying planes can be dangerous» has become a minor classic), seen not as a defect of style, as is largely the case in traditional rhetoric, but as part of the way language works, at least on the level of sentence grammar. Not unpredictably Campbell has no use for ambiguity, which he treats together with obscurity in the chapter dealing with perspicuity, which, quoting Quintilian, he calls «the first and foremost» quality of

style: «whatever be the ultimate intention of the orator, to inform, to convince, to please, to move, or to persuade still he must speak so as to be understood, or he speaks to no purpose. If he do not propose to convey certain sentiments into the minds of his hearers, by the aid of signs intelligible to them, he may as well declaim before them in an unknown tongue» (Campbell, 1850: 216). Perspicuity, that quality that ensures that what we say is understood by our interlocutors, seen as a *conditio sine qua non* of all effective discourse, is, as it were, the link between the strictly grammatical (or linguistic) part and the more peculiarly rhetorical section of Campbell's treatise. There is no sign here of what we might call the «poetics of ambiguity», so dear to many contemporary literary theorists, and in this Campbell is very much the child not only of the Scottish enlightenment, but also of neo-classical literary theory, with its ideals of clarity and transparency. That indeterminacy of meaning may in any way be an attribute of the linguistic sign as such, rather than a causal transgression of a norm, is an idea entirely alien to Campbell and the whole tradition from which *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* derives. He treats ambiguity as a special case of «double meaning» and as such to be avoided (his main treatment of «double meaning» comes under the heading of «obscurity»). His main concern is strictly grammatical rather than lexical, i.e. with faulty reference, and much of his discussion and a great many of his examples centre on the use of pronouns and anaphora in general, though he is also concerned with the referential functions of adjectives. As also elsewhere, here too many of Campbell's examples are convincing and clearly show him to be an attentive and meticulous reader of the many authors or translators he quotes.

Although his treatment of metaphor comes, naturally, in the more strictly rhetorical part of his work, it is perhaps worth mentioning here that his attitude to metaphor is once again founded on the principle of common sense, rather than a deep awareness of metaphor either as a purely linguistic phenomenon or of its function in poetry, or in literary texts in general. To him metaphor is legitimate if it «serves to add light to the expression» (Campbell, 1850: 266), but he decidedly rejects anything we might call «thinking in metaphors», since in that case «the words [i.e. of the author] are not the immediate signs of his thought; they are at best but the signs of the signs of his thought» (*ibid.*), an attitude reminiscent of certain criticisms by Dryden of «Elizabethan fustian». Campbell looks back to the ideals and aesthetics of the Augustan age, ideals which in the last quarter of the 18th century were clearly beginning to break down, but he does not seem to show any awareness of this.

Conclusion. Campbell's remarks on language are by no means de-

void of interest, for though he is no grammarian, he deals in usage and like the grammarians (his main authorities are Lowth and Priestley) he cites an abundance of examples from contemporary and near-contemporary authors of forms he finds objectionable, and in many cases his objections do indeed seem valid, or at any rate give us an insight into his conception of the way the English language functions, but he seldom falls back on a sterile list of errors made even by the most approved authors, which can be such an irritating feature of many of the prescriptive grammarians of the second half of the eighteenth century.

REFERENCES

- Alston, R. C. (1965), *A Bibliography of the English Language*, Leeds, E. J. Arnold & Sons.
- Arnauld, A. and C. Lancelot (1660), *Grammaire Generale et Raisonnée contenant les fondemens de l'art de parler . . .*, Paris, Chez Pierre Le Petit (Repr. Menston, Scolar Press Facsimile, 1967).
- Bacon, F. (1605), *The Advancement of Learning*. (In *The Works of Francis Bacon* ed. by J. Spedding, R. L. Ellis and D. D. Heath, 14 vol., London, Longman, 1857-74).
- Beattie, J. (1788), *The Theory of Language*, London, A. Strahan (Repr. Menston, Scolar Press Facsimile, 1968).
- Bitzer, Ll. F. (see Campbell, 1850).
- Blair, H. (1783), *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, 2 vol., London, W. Strahan, T. Cadell (Repr. ed. by Harold F. Harding, Carbondale; Southern University Press, 1965).
- Bryan, W. F. (1926), *A Late Eighteenth-Century Purist*, «Studies in Philology», 23: 358-370.
- Burnet, J. (Lord Monboddo) (1773-92), *Of the Origin and Progress of Language*, 6 vol., Edinburgh, W. Creech and London, T. Cadell (Repr. Menston, Scolar Press Facsimile, 1967).
- Campanella, T. (1638), *Philosophiae Rationalis . . . Grammaticalium Libros Tres*, in *Tutte le opere di Campanella*, ed. L. Firpo, Verona, Mondadori, 1954.
- Campbell, G. (1850) (1776), *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, London: W. Tegg (This edition is the basis of the repr. ed. with an introduction by Lloyd F. Bitzer, Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Press, 1963).
- Cohen, H. (1968), *William Leechman's Anticipation of Campbell*, «Western Speech», 32: 92-99.
- Dolph, Ph. (1968), *Taste and the "Philosophy of Rhetoric"*, «Western Speech», 32: 104-113.
- Grave, S. A. (1960), *The Scottish Philosophy of Common Sense*, Oxford, Clarendon Press.
- Harris, J. (1751), *Hermes: or, a Philosophical Inquiry concerning Language and Universal Grammar*, London, H. Woodfall for J. Nourse and P. Vaillant (Repr. Menston, Scolar Press Facsimile, 1969).
- Horace (Q. Horati Flacci), *Ars Poetica*, in *Opera* ed. by Edward C. Wickham & H. W. Garrod, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1901.
- Johnson, S. (1755), *Dictionary of the English Language*, London, printed by

- W. Strahan for J. and Knapton (Preface in *Works*, ed. by R. Lynam, London, 1825).
- La Russo, D. A. (1968), *Root or Branch? A Re-examination of Campbell's "Rhetoric"*, «Western Speech», 32: 85-91.
- Leonard, S. A. (1962) (1929¹), *The Doctrine of Correctness in English Usage 1700-1800*, New York, Russell & Russell.
- Locke, J. (1690), *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Critical ed. by J. W. Yolton, London, Dent, 1964.
- Lowth, R. (1762), *A Short Introduction to English Grammar*, London, J. Hughs for A. Millar and R. and J. Dodsley (Repr. Menston, Scolar Press Facsimile, 1967).
- Mohrmann, G. P. (1968), *George Campbell: the Psychological Background*, «Western Speech», 32: 99-104.
- Petty, W. (1648), *The Advice of W. P. to Mr. Samuel Hartlib for the Advancement of some Particular Parts of Learning*, London.
- Pope, A. (1711), *An Essay on Criticism*, in *The Poems of Alexander Pope*, ed. by John Butt, London, Methuen, 1963.
- Priestley, J. (1762), *A Course of Lectures on the Theory of Language and Universal Grammar*, Warrington, W. Eyres (Repr. Menston, Scolar Press Facsimile, 1970).
- de Saussure, F. (1960), *Course in General Linguistics*, translated from the French by Wade Baskin, London, Peter Owen.
- Smith, A. (1761), *A Dissertation on the Origin of Languages*, Facsimile ed. with an introduction by G. Narr, Tübingen (Tübinger Beiträge zur Linguistik), 1970.
- Sprat, Th. (1667), *A History of the Royal Society of London*, London, J. R. for J. Martyn.
- Swift, J. (1712), *A Proposal for Correcting, Improving and Ascertaining the English Tongue*, in vol. 4 of *The Prose Writings of Swift*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1957.
- Vaugelas, C. Favre de (1647), *Remarques sur la Langue Française*, Facsimile ed. by J. Streicher, Paris, Droz, 1934.
- Webster, N. (1789), *Dissertation of the English Language*, Boston, Isaiah Thomas and Company (Repr. Menston, Scolar Press Facsimile, 1967).
- Wilkins, J. (1668), *An Essay towards a Real Character and a Philosophical Language*, London, S. Gellibrand (Repr. Menston, Scolar Press Facsimile, 1968).
- (1694) (1641¹): *Mercury: or the Secret and Swift Messenger*, London, Rich. Baldwin.

Locativi deittici, *Deixis am Phantasma*, sistemi di orientamento

di MARCO MAZZOLENI (Pavia)

«El mundo era tan reciente, que muchas cosas carecían de nombre, y para mencionarlas había que señalarlas con el dedo».

(García Márquez, 1967: 9)

0. *Introduzione*

Questo articolo ha lo scopo di descrivere alcuni dei principî sottostanti all'uso dei termini locativi deittici (o passibili anche di uso deittico) in riferimento a situazioni spaziali esterne al campo percettivo del parlante al momento dell'enunciazione. Ho cioè tentato di specificare le caratteristiche del fenomeno psicologico-linguistico chiamato da Bühler (1934) «*Deixis am Phantasma*», e di applicare la rete di categorie così ottenuta ai tipi di testo nei quali il fenomeno citato (limitatamente al suo aspetto spaziale) ricorre più facilmente: descrizioni di camere, appartamenti, paesaggi e percorsi urbani. Per questo scopo ho preso in esame, nella seconda parte, una serie di ricerche di diversi autori, originariamente non connesse (o connesse solo debolmente), che alla luce delle categorie bühleriane hanno assunto secondo me un aspetto globalmente più organico. Il filo rosso che corre attraverso la seconda parte è quindi nelle mani di Bühler (1934: 173-200), e le osservazioni di Bühler hanno dato origine anche alla prima ed alla terza parte.

Nella prima parte ho raccolto alcune osservazioni, in gran parte condivise nella letteratura ed in piccola parte originali, sulle caratteristiche dello spazio percettivo umano. Ciò mi è sembrato opportuno in quanto la possibilità psicologica della *Deixis am Phantasma*, come sottolinea lo stesso Bühler (1934: 173-192), esiste grazie alla proiezione dell'immagine tattile del corpo del parlante in un luogo esterno al suo campo percettivo al momento dell'enunciazione, e la struttura dell'immagine tattile del corpo informa la struttura dello spazio percettivo umano.