

DOINA BUTIURCĂ

***THE CONCEPTUAL
METAPHOR AND THE
CULTURAL SUBSTRATE***

PARIS 2011

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Coordination and editing: Silviana Cupcic

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I. LANGUAGE OF THE HAND IN THE INDO-EUROPEAN IDIOMS

0. The premises of our study allowed us to remark that at least two types of relationships can be established between language and cultural pattern: 1. logical relations always based on the dialectic of correlation and/or opposition and 2. analogical relations.

Idioms having parts of the human body as a referent are an illustration of the idea that the human alter-ego has risen above his primary meaning, that of man as an entity. From the linguistic point of view these homogenous structures take us, diachronically and diastratically, from a prototypical "semantic denominator" to variable realizations scattered in the field of culture, mentalities and behaviour. They are loaded with ethics, religion, politics, economy, with the dynamic of history itself, etc. The subjective implications of body language, understood as a *sine qua non* condition in the formation of the individual on the scale of his ontological evolution are provided primarily by the human spirit and are strongly related to the concept of culture. Moreover, a modality to enhance the concept from individual entities to collective entities and, implicitly, a manner of approaching the personality from the perspective of the dynamics of manifestation and of cultural anthropology becomes functional. The language "of the hand" sets the vastest boundaries of manifestation of the dynamics of personality and of the implication into manifestation and to a less extent sets levels (conscious, subconscious), compartments (affective, cognitive, volitive) - these being part of the language of the "head", respectively of the "heart".

From among the words that named parts of the "body" - in the Graeko-Latin antiquity - we take into consideration the Latin *manus*, a very productive lexeme as far as phrases are concerned, omnipresent through its semantics and vitality in most European languages. It is an element designating notions pertaining both to the common vocabulary and to biology, morals, army, authorities, mentalities, etc., being linked to material values, on the one hand, and to culture, on the other hand. The differences visible already in Latin are at the linguistic level, they are differences of representation and conceptualization: *manus* in the phrases "*per manus tractus, servatur*" (Caesar) - "saved by being pulled by the hand" and "*traditae per manus religiones*" (Titus Livius) - "beliefs transmitted from father to son" have not only different stylistic codes: *manus* appears in two contexts that do not have the same referent, do not

foc" 'swears so badly that his mouth catches fire' (Iorgu Iordan 1975: 48-49) etc.

In his propensity to know and understand the world exhaustively, the man extended the representation classes – thanks to the analogy – from the emotional dimension of his being, to the cognitive and volitional spheres, to the will of manifestation in history etc. In ancient Rome the fingers expressed will, they are involved in symbolic acts with a predominantly social character: "tollere digitum" means for Cicero "a ridica degetul" 'to lift a finger' at auctions or when voting. In comparison with the other, especially in the context of a direct confrontation, the fight goes on till one of the combatants "ridică degetul" – 'lifts a finger'. On this conceptual ground the Latin language creates the expression of recognition of defeat: "pugnare ad digitum". There are meanings that extend through a series of correspondences in culture and mentality.

Conclusion

The assertion that somatic metaphors are common in most Indo-European languages is widely accepted. In his propensity to know and understand the world exhaustively, man extends the representational classes of the hand from the socio-human external coordinate, to the inner dimension of his being. Man measures with 'tools' he can find (finger, elbow, hand, step) not only the physical space, but also the spiritual universe – according to a cognitive binary model. Diachronically, the formation of the cognitive meaning represents a complex process based on equivalence.

The formation of man's world view – in a pre-theoretical stage of the analogies – should be correlated with the study of etymologies (according to Plato 'the language of the gods'). The occultation of this dimension seems to be the most disturbing contradiction of the human spirit.

The book THE CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR AND THE CULTURAL SUBSTRATE by Doina Butiurca is a scientific treatise on a current topic, which increases the research interest of scientists worldwide. The book will appeal to both specialists in the humanistic fields and medical specialists. Written in a clear style the book would attract any person who wants to broaden his cultural background.

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