

G. MANNOURY

Amsterdam

DIDACTIC PROBLEMS IN SIGNIFICS

I

Inasmuch as significs (and concept analysis in general) aims at a better understanding in group life and social intercourse, it fulfils an educational task and needs has to deal with didactic problems and difficulties, didactics being the technics of education.

Now all education is self-education, as well with regard to the child and the pubescent as to the adult, and therefore can but indirectly be influenced upon. Not by compulsion, but by incitation, not by instruction but by suggestion, not by appeal to reason but by appeal to the adaptive and imitative instincts of the human species.

It follows that the educational and didactic problems in significs bear upon the relation of the subconscious to the conscient and are of a psycho-analytical and psycho-linguistic character. What means that the difficulties to surmount in solving these problems arise from the insufficiency of our knowledge of the „vertical” interaction of the different layers of our psychical structure (the polarpsychical phenomena) and from the inaptitude of our linguistic means to preserve that knowledge and to transfer it to others.

To begin with let us turn our attention to the latter evil and ask whether language is in want of enrichment or of retrenchment. Or of both perhaps?

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The inaptitude of language for the expression of polarpsychological relations springs mainly from two oppositional sources: deficiency and abundance. Deficiency with regard to the lack of a workable terminology for the clear and concise formulation of general and fundamental ideas, abundance of vague and ambiguous turns of

speech that can easily be used to *conceal* our real aims and purposes and to *suggest* the ideas and conceptions we think furthering to same. And the didactic task with respect to these defects is a twofold one: the unmasking of the deceiving use of the so abundant suggestive means of understanding on the one hand and the filling up of the gaps of language in the field of general principles and fundamental concepts on the other. An analytical and a synthetical task.

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These theses probably need but little argumentative elucidation. As to the formulation of fundamental principles, every philosophical treatise and every textbook of science, of ethics, of logic and of grammar struggles with its problems. It is far more easy to give an operational definition of a macrophenomenon like a spectrum or a chemical reaction, a behavior or an obligation, a mode of reasoning or a mode of expression than to erect a barrier between likeness and unlikeness, between uniting and separating, between future and past, between the I and the It, and in most cases these barriers (without whom all macroindications become as useless as a precision balance aboard a rolling vessel) are taken for granted. What perhaps is the wisest part to take, on the sole condition however of looking backward as need be.

And the abundance we spoke of? Is it worth while to look for instances? There hardly is an item in our lexicons or a "wordgrasp" in our newspapers but is affected and infected with a chameleontic changeableness of „colour", i.e. of positive or negative valuation. Chameleontic also in that sense, that these vaguely suggestive terms very easily take the „colour" of the surrounding medium: most of us speak the valuating idiom of our special group and understand but very imperfectly that of another. And the Esperanto to remedy *this* sort of polyglotism is yet to be invented!

But there is worse: the flexibility and ambiguity of language is not only an *impedement* for mutual understanding, it makes us almost defenceless against deception and concealment by others *and by ourselves*. It so readily makes us believe to be what we *wish* to be and makes us expect what friend or foe *suggests* us to expect. *Mundus vult decipi...*

II

Have we been too pessimistic? Certainly so if we have given the impression, the flexibility and suppleness of language to be an evil *in itself*, an evil that would be and could be cured by the

exclusive use of a rigid, exact, a-emotional and a-volitional terminology, a terminology of facts-and-ciphers.

Far from that, we almost would affirm the contrary: without that suppleness, that emotionality, that directness of language no real understanding can be brought about, and a pure „facts-and-ciphers-terminology“ (supposing it for a moment to be possible) would only reach the most superficial layers of our mind and be unable to move it out of its reposeful inertness. No, what needs is not the *choice* between emotion and indication, between feeling and knowing, between art and science, but the *equilibrium* of these opposite tendencies of our mind, of the ideological and the mathematical forms of thought, of general ideas and particular observations, of the extreme poles of life.

And even that equilibrium is not indefinitely and unrestrictedly desirable; its surpassing and breaking down may at times be as necessary and as wholesome as a thunderstorm in hot weather. But again at a sole condition: that it never be altogether lost out of view, that the storm does not annihilate the vital elements of social life.

Is that desideratum realizable and maintainable? And may significant analysis and synthesis contribute to that end? Let us try to detail.

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Analysis

Testing of words by acts and of acts by words. Tracing the historical and biological roots of linguistic customs. Estimating the range of extensibility of linguistic means. Registering the correlation of group-premisses and group-behavior. Transforming „coloured“ statements by complementary coloured terms. Translating causality by finality and vice versa.

Those are the *technics* of significant analysis. What for its *results*? Not the results obtained but the results obtainable in length of time?

Significant analysis is one of the facets of concept analysis and concept analysis is one of the facets of the art and science of social intercourse. Symbolic logic is another. And the wireless. And the E.N.I.A.C. And the ballpoint.

The technics of that art and science have developed stormingly in our age. Mankind has become no wiser for it, but surely more powerful in a way. Though not unreservedly in a beneficent way. The technical development in question undoubtedly has benefitted enlightenment and masseducation, but in no less degree it has facili-

tated the practice of deceitful and demagogic manipulations. Will significal technics act in this way or in that? If it acts at all?

The technical progress of mankind seems to follow its *own* ways. We venture no prophecies. . . .

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Synthesis.

Physical laws are expressed in terms of yes or no, psychological laws in terms of more or less. Physical laws deal with events, psychological laws deal with sensations. Physical laws speak of now-and-here, be it in Newtonian, in Einsteinian or in Heisenbergian terms, psychological laws speak of associations and dissociations, of expectations and remembrances. Physical laws concern the It, psychological laws concern the I. Is there a barrier? Not a verbal, but an operational barrier? And if so, is that barrier surmountable?

Intrinsic unity of scientific and ideologic terminology has been striven after in different ways. By the construction of different metalanguages. Microphysical and micropsychological languages, macrophysical and macropsychological languages. But the endgoal is till yet not in sight. We have sought for a psychological foundation of physics, of mathematics, of logic, of grammar. But the I and the It are till yet not reconciliated in a satisfactory manner. The negotiations of peace have but begun, and they are most painful negotiations.

For the solving of its problems is not a mere question of technics, not even of significal technics. It requires more than terminological constructions. Even more than a mutual understanding of heteroglotic groups. *It requires the enrichment of our knowledge of man.*

An immense task. A task for many generations to come.