

LOCAL ANTHROPOGENIES - LINGUISTICS

LOGICS OF TEN INDO-EUROPEAN LANGUAGES

9. DANISH AND THE IN-BETWEEN-TWO WORLDS

Han bygger sin sats op af nogle faa simple motiver, der bestandig varieres, saa at rigdommen mere ligger i modulationerne end i det tematiske indhold.

He builds his (musical) phrase on a few rare motifs, which constantly vary <themselves>, so much that the richness consists more in the modulations than in the thematic content (Johannes Hohlenberg, Sören Kierkegaard).

Occupying a very long peninsula that points towards the Great North and having its capital, Copenhagen, on the last bank of the last island adjoining the Scandinavian peninsula, which points to the South, feeling in your back the huge cultural block of Germany that cuts you from the Mediterranean, is something completely different than living in the Netherlands, a couple of equal steps from England, Germany, and France.

You live Denmark like a bridge. At such latitude, for several months of the year, the light does not completely create day or night, - no midnight sun, but no midday sun either; this is where the enchantment lies. And on the other hand, for less than 100 kilometres of land frontiers with the Schleswig-Holstein, this peninsula and its escort of 500 islands accounts for 7000 kilometres of sea front, where sea, land, and light convert one into the other. The weather (vejr) is no object for conversation like in England, because, as the inhabitants say, it is too versatile (omskifteligt) and (lunefuldt). This accounts for many in-betweens: geographical, geological, meteorological, and cultural. Shakespeare could not set Hamlet and Ophelia elsewhere.

9A. The language

In as much as the language of Spinoza and Van Eyck is scraping and almost eructed, Andersen's and Kierkegaard's enjoys phonemes devoid of exterior asperity and without internal

massiveness either, a sort of iridescent and fluid bubble that almost rotates upon itself, with a post-palatal tangent (velar).

9A1. Phonosemics

The first condition required to obtain this smooth and firm sphericity between body and world is to let go of the opposition, which is too discontinuous, between muffled and sound occlusive: p/b, t/d, k/g. And practicing, as with Chinese, the opposition between aspirated occlusive (puffed), pH, tH, kH, written p, t, k, and the non aspirated occlusive (not puffed), p, t, k, written b, d, g, in the manner of pinyin, of which we will keep the convention here. Indeed, the oppositions pH/p, tH/t, kH, k can be emitted, while maintaining the medio or post-palatal sphere. The party is similar for the muted and sonorous fricative, where the only remaining couple is the couple f/v, because the couples s/z, ch/j would be too distended, apart from the fact that both 'z' and 'j' are too emphatic. Similarly to the 'sonorous English th', where the tip of the tongue touches the upper teeth, hence still protrusive, corresponds here a 'th' where this tip touches the lower teeth, the middle of the tongue joining the palate. And the counterpart of the Dutch 'GH' practices less the scraping than the post-palatal roundness.

Of course, no 'I dark', too turned to the back. No Italian 'r', too rolled to the front. But an 'r' that could be Parisian if, instead of having a guttural pronunciation at the back, confirmed the post-palatal gargle. Hence, this consonantal system, that is well symbolized by 'sk' and '-sk', is placed in a way that avoids any irreversible evasion to the outside but also any irreversible entrance within. Curvy filing, where sounds slide without jolting, top-bottom and front-back, spherically.

Vowels follow the same post-palate rotation between body and world. For this, they blur the gap between opened and closed, and their global referential is indicated by the intermediate sound between 'a' and 'o', currently noted 'â' (still written 'aa' in our epigraph since 1940). It is the 'ao' or 'oa' that is powerfully activated and supported by the toast 'skål', experience of sufficient phonic sufficiency that is sufficiently interesting to have gone around the world, and that is written 'skoal' in English. The other vowels confirm this privileged position, such as the medio-palatal similar to the French 'oe' of 'jeune' and 'jeûne', written Ø. Of course, no nasal vowels, which are too inward, so much so that in foreign names, the nasalization is assumed by the half consonant 'ng', which brings back nasalization towards the soft palate; 'restaurant' and 'annonce' are pronounced 'restorang' and 'annongsj'. The half-vowel 'w' (written 'v'), which is frequent at the end of a syllable ('hav', the sea), is inexistent at the beginning of a word or a syllable, where it would produce a phonic projection that the system refuses; there is no chapter 'W' in the Danish dictionary. Amongst this velar sphericity, we even expect a sound that crosses vowel and consonant, and it is the fusion 'o'='r', phonetically written.

The rest concords with this basic cooing. (1) The accent largely depends on inflexions in height, and not solely in intensity (vs. Dutch). (2) The length of syllables is distinctive (which is not the case in Italian): the opposition between 'at tale' (speaking) and 'at tælle' (counting) is done as much using '-/.' than using 'a/æ'. (3) Short words vary very much according to their position: 'j' (written 'jeg') is said 'yai', 'ya', 'yè', 'yï'. (4) Inversely, monosyllables such as 'og' and 'at' are almost confused at times.

The jig-sawing (external and obviously internal curve) appears when one reads a text whose spelling testifies of the more ancient states of the language. Hence, the written 'd' is not pronounced after a consonant and is released in a 'th on the bottom teeth' after a vowel. To the English 'word' (word, speech) corresponds a written 'ord', which is pronounced 'or'. The 'g' of the '-ig' adjective finals also disappears. The prefix 'af' is said 'aw', and the preposition 'til' (towards) opens between 'té' and 'ti'.

All this phonetic party culminates in the 'stØd' ('stö', blow). It is a stop of the family of the German Knacklaut. However, while the German Knacklaut comes before the sound according to the explosive party (affricative) of German, the 'stØd' presents the opposite order: (1) the sound is immediately firmly engaged, (2) the laryngeal tension is such that the larynx shuts for an instant, interrupting the sound, (3) since the nervous tension of the shutting cannot last, the larynx reopens, letting through a weak, dying sound. This party, which is very rare elsewhere (we will mention the cockney 'wa/er' for 'water'), is basal in Copenhagen Danish, where it conjugates the post-palatal firmness at the beginning and the post-palatal ductility at the end. The 'stØd' of a word, justified by etymology, sometimes has a distinctive role, like in 've/d' (knowing) versus 'ved' (with), but it is so rare that it is nowhere to be found in writing. Its role is therefore existential, and it is not so badly portrayed by phoneticians when they jot down ('), (?) or (/). It can even support the sense. The capital, 'Port of Merchants' is probably magnified by its final stÝd: KÝbenhaw/n'. And 'man/' (man), written 'mand', forms a couple with 'kveni' (woman), written 'kvinde'.

9A2. Syntax

The syntax then widens this rotatory party by being permutational, and the indication of the possible places of the functions in the phrase occupies an important part of grammars, again like in Chinese. In French, the permutations of 'Marquise / vos beaux yeux / me font / mourir / d'amour', 'd'amour / me font / Marquise...', 'Mourir / marquise...' only arouse passion in the Oulipo group. Here, it is the basic exercise of enunciation. The suite 'word placed in front of the verb (privileged) + verb + subject' is frequent and the subordinate clauses maintain the same structure as the main clauses, like with English, because the nesting disposition (subject + complement + verb) that they have in Dutch or in German would render them massive or coalescent and not interchangeable. Hence, we did not need to modify anything of our epigraph to make it into a main clause, whereas it was in fact a subordinate clause introduced by the 'at'.

However, despite some sound and syntax similarities, Danish is not Chinese. It is an Indo-European language, and there is therefore a more or less rich morphology. What can be done with it? Develop cases that are made more useful that the position of words is variable? Yes, somewhat, like the genitive in '-s': 'Hvilken stol der er Oles?' (What chair that is of Ole?). Yet, all things considered, Danish is not very fortuitous. It is that many cases, like in German and in Russian particularly, would create a coalescence of the phrase that would be the opposite of its transmutational party. Hence the refusal of participial adverbials ('by doing this'), that are very coalescent, and the constant use of conjunction participial clauses ('when he does this'), creating sufficiently individualised members to remain permutable in the phrase.

Then, once again, what good is a morphology? Well, it is particularly useful to endow some terms (particularly concrete ones) with singularising and bifurcating characteristics,

signalling their capacity to transform. Let us remember the essence. (1) Merging genres: no masculine or feminine form, but a 'common gender' opposing the neutral form. (2) A very descriptive regime of the determination and vagueness of the noun: (a) Whether the noun is alone or comes with its adjective, its vagueness is marked by an 'outer antecedent article' that is phonically discreet 'en' or 'et' whether the gender is common or neutral: '*en historie*' = a story, '*et blad*' = a sheet. (b) At the opposite, the determination is marked by the same '-en' and '-et' according to gender, or 'ne' in the plural form, but functioning as 'terminal inner articles' hence intimaes, if the noun is isolated: '*nattergalen*' = '*the* nightingale, '*ordet*' = '*the* speech, *the* word, '*pigerne*' = '*the* girls. (c) Finally, if the determination concerns a noun preceded by an adjective, it works with an 'outer antecedent sign' that is so intense that it has the demonstrative form 'den' or 'det' according to the gender: '*det gode humØr*' = 'the good mood'.

The rest is in keeping. (3) Metaphony plurals. (4) Adverbs with or without '-t' depending whether they determine a verb or an adjective. (5) Names of days that take a '-s' when they are in the past form. (6) A diminutive for the singular (lille), a diminutive of the plural (små). (7) Tenses of the verb disfavouring the active: one sole ending (-r) for all the persons of the present tense; on the other hand, favour to the passive, underlying spontaneous modifications: not only does it have a syntactic form (with an auxiliary), but morphologic (without auxiliary), which is in '-s'; deponents and semi-deponents flourish. (8) The forms vary according to the perfective or imperfective of the preterit. (9) No subjunctive, which is too mentalistic.

9A3. Semantics

The semics marries the transmutational party of the syntax, often presenting its objects like interfaces. The reflector of a bicycle is said '*katteØji*' (cat's eye). A porthole '*koØji*' (cow's eye). An egg yoke '*æggeblommi*' (plum of the egg). 'Blive' is both 'staying' and 'becoming', since the present also expresses the future, except when it is close. 'Som' is used both as a relative and a comparative conjunction. Some alternations are mimetic: 'op', if we climb, 'oppe' if we stay up high; 'den stol' (that chair), 'denne stol' (this chair). A large number of monemes (significant units) are monosyllabic, again like Chinese.

These fragmentations of the phrase mean that a Danish text, unless it is abstract, presents few immediate graspable graphic packages (even less than an Italian text). This is a new way of transforming the reader and the writer in potential transmuters. It is even because of this fractioning that the spelling *must* be etymological. Without graphic ballast, the text would be too volatile.

However, nowhere does the mutational party seem more at ease than in logical particles. Elsewhere, the negation is usually expressed by relatively neat sounds: 'no, not <non...passum>, not <non...punctum>, no, no, não, neen, nein, niet, neen, niëtt, dënn'. Here, it is rendered by 'ikke', said 'igg;' (K is not exhaled but is softer than in French), which is very cooed in frequencies. Similarly, the conjunction of coordination enounces with a 'og', pronounced by an 'auw' that is as swivelling as it is aggregative. It is even more frequent that the actions imply the situation of the actors: 'the others are working = 'de andre sidder< are sitting down> og arbejder <work> ; ...listen = står <are standing> og hØrer <listen> ; ...visit = går <walk> og ser< watch>'.

Still, the double disjunction is the most noteworthy. In Romanic languages, it is carried out using equal designator: 'or else... or rather', 'either... or', as the Latin already used: 'sive... sive'; the Buridan donkey, born in Artois, died of hunger between two exact same equidistant bales of hay. Germanic languages, less legal, are not such great believers of precision and justice, and (except for Dutch, whose realism knows no other than the simple 'of') they vary the two designators: 'neither... or', in English; 'entweder (ein-de-weder, one of two)...oder', in German. In Danish, it is: 'enten...eller', where 'enten' comes from 'en ting' (a thing), and where 'eller' has some similarities to 'ellers' (differently). The sliding phonation of the two terms confirms the grasping that is more mutational than it is adversative. As for the simple disjunction, also rendered by 'eller', it is symptomatically rare. ‘

9B. Cultural consonances

On many occasions, in addition to Kierkegaard, we will have recognised Andersen. Not really a novelist, not a teller either, if it is true that, in a tale, the voice and the body of the teller work to the principle. But simply a Danish speaker in the full sense, hence sufficiently available that, on this phonically spherical and syntactically transmutational language, the designators and the designated, according to their interfaces, should trigger their metamorphoses, their adventures. Its title is *Eventyr*, and not 'fortællinger' ('tales' in English).

What is a princess? The most sensitive of beings. Where is sensitivity more acute than in the skin, especially when this interface par excellence (outside-within, perceiving-perceived) grasps the thinner of objects, a garden pea, through the most opaque of interfaces, a mattress? The true princess is hence she whose skin perceives a single garden pea under dozens of mattresses. Who can fall in love with such sensitivity? A prince. And who knows such criteria? An old princess, a queen. This is the *Prindsessen paa Aerten* (Princess and the Pea). Andersen concludes: 'Se, det var en rigtig historie' (see, this was a correct tale). Of a linguistic, psychological, social correctness that implies humour, this relativization of both the speaker and the interlocutor, which differs from irony. Propp's outlines are a long way away. In a Russian fairy tale, the wind blows on the nowhere of the undifferentiated plain, giving free reign to rigid 'functions' and 'suites of functions'. Amongst Denmark's hundreds of islands, where the site and current weather (vejr) endlessly change, every time in a singular manner, the *Eventyr* activate concrete metamorphoses, not unmoveable abstract functions.

If *Den lille Havfrue* (haw/frouj), the Little Mermaid, is the exemplary 'eventyr', it is because it offers the interface of the major elements: water and air, the depth and the elevation, the mortal and the immortal souls, the fish and the mammal, the tail that is not split and the legs that are split (not without acute pain), the sex-immersion and the bust-emergence, according to the illustration of Pedersen. 'Overflade og dyb går i ét' (surface and depth go in one), says poet Marianne Larsen. The fluid transmutation even penetrates the phrasing. In the original publications, the sentence of Andersen is long, the mutations taking the form of short limbs, where designators and designated, to be transformable, are devoid of any trinket. Which is not the case if, like we sometimes find in our translations, 'det var Sommer' (it was summer) becomes 'we were in the middle of summer'; if (the wheat stood yellow) becomes 'the wheat

shook its ears of a magnificent yellow'; if the 'being with (med) the king and the queen' becomes 'being in their presence'.

Philosophical, Kierkegaard thematizes what his contemporary Andersen implies. Named 'church-garden', hence 'cemetery', cooed 'Kikjgå', he could hardly adhere to the totalising views of German speaker Hegel. In a very Danish manner, the collection of his first works is entitled *Enten-Eller, A Thing-Or then (differently)*, rendered falsely adversative-exclusive by *Or else... or else*, and even more by *Alternative* or *Dilemma*, abstract substantives that totalise in the French manner what must be de-totalized. For, between the aesthetic, the ethic and the religious, there is no need to prioritize or to assume, but to do all three, which are by no means of Pascal 'orders', but that seduce and convert each other endlessly from their innumerable interfaces. This is almost a picaresque novel: I am walking along, I see a desk, I buy it, I must take a carriage car, I do not find my money, I want to open the desk, it is closed, I break it, I see some papers, I sort them in A and B, I (...).

But then, is there anything else that makes sense in all this ('står')? Yes, 'den Enkelte'. Often translated into 'the individual' and sometimes capitalised: 'the Individual'. Yet, 'Enkelte' does not so much evoke indivisibility that in-dividuum, and is closer to 'that is only encountered once', 'one copy only', 'singular'. On the other hand, as 'den' here does not precede an adjective that fronts a substantive, it is a true demonstrative: 'this' or 'such'. We shall thereby approximately translate: 'this singular'. Ultimate message by Kierkegaard. 'It is in the 'den Enkelte' category that my ethical importance rests'. And he goes on to repeat the adjective and the adverb 'rigtig(t)' by Andersen: Var denne Categorie rigtig (if this category has been correct), var det med denne Categorie in sin Orden (if with this category it was in its own order), saae jeg her rigtigt (have I seen her correctly), forstod jeg rigtigt at det var min (did I correctly understand that she was mine), om end i inderlige Lidelser (even in the intimate suffering), om end i udvortes Opoftrelser (even in the external sacrifices) : saa staaer jeg (then I stand) og mine Skrifter med mig (and my writings stand with me).

'Den Enkelte' is never achieved in the affairs of the State or of the Church, which is the domain of 'Maengden' (*the crowd*), where electors and the elected play the poker of the insignificant majority of voices without anyone being able to flatter themselves of a true intention. It only emerges that in the musical phrase of *a human existence* where each note taken separately is both contingent and without value, but when they are all taken together, under the condition that they are seized again in an intention, they can be dazzling. To philosopher is an affair for the ears more than for the eyes. "Min Kjaere Laeser, laes om muligt høit" (My dear reader, read out loud as much as possible). Then let us say out loud:

"Gift Dig, Du vil fortryde det ; Gift Dig ikke, Du vil ogsaa fortryde det ; gift Dig eller gift Dig ikke, Du vil fortryde begge Dele ; enten Du gifter Dig, eller Du ikke gifter Dig, Du fortryder begge Dele." ('Gift dig' = 'get married' ; 'fortryde' = 'regret' ; 'ogsaa' = 'also' ; 'begge dele' = 'both parties' ; 'dig' is said 'dai<g>') :

We can *see*, or rather, we can *hear*, the theme is inessential. Kierkegaard's opinion on marriage (git Dig) is also indifferent to us as that of Pascal on the Jesuits. The only thing that matters is the suite of modulators: 'fortryde', 'ikke', 'ogsaa', 'eller', 'begge', 'enten...eller', and their humour, which is not unanimist like Andersen's either, but almost sulphurous. When he writes his ultimate thought under his own name, - since it was very appropriate to his mutational environment that he should have written much using 'pseudonyms', which in no way resemble

the 'heteronyms' of Portuguese Pessoa, - he chromatizes like Wagner, remarks Hohlenberg, who speaks on this topic of 'qualitative dialectic, toying with weightings rather than with logical articulations'. Hence, Danish, a modulating language, engendered its two greatest writers at a time when the whole of Europe was beginning to modulate. Let us specify that the Wagnerian chromaticism dissolve in the immense, whereas the Danish metamorphoses from singular to singular, like the states of the weather (vejr).

This area of language had to privilege biography, a genre that specifically testifies of the irreducibility of the 'den Enkelte' to every generality (except with Taine, Sartre and the psychoanalysts). Hohlenberg's *Sören Kierkegaard* is a sort of absolute of literary biography insofar as the theory of singular life sends back to self-confirming loops right to the martyr and the martyr-life of its theoretician. Similarly, Dreyer brought cinematographic biography to unprecedented heights in *The Passion of Joan of Ark*, before his stød modulated the soundtrack of the *Ordet* (the word) and the editing of *Gertrud*. In Danish, cinema is said 'biograf' ('bioscoop' in Dutch)

The other major contribution of the singularising naturalism was physics. We shall skip Tycho Brahe, the 1572 observer of the 'New Star' and great collector of astronomical particularities in Uraniborg. The main thing is that, since 1930, the Copenhagen school has in an unparalleled manner set out every atomic phenomenon, due to the fact that it *intrinsically* implicates its recording conditions (according to Heisenberg's wave mechanics and uncertainty principle), comprises mutual exclusions and reciprocal inclusions, and is therefore 'global', 'individual', it too 'den Enkelte'. It is Bohr's 'complementarity', that the author finally extended to biology, where he felt that there was also the intervention of determinable inclusions and exclusions between molecular, functional and topological descriptions.

The contribution of linguistics is a lot less considerable, even if Holdger Pedersen subordinated in 1903 that Indo-European languages were merely a group in a vaster family, the Nostratic languages; even if the ambient permutations favoured the systemic views of Hjelmslev, for better and for worse. But a language that is so subtle should call for excellent grammarians, and *Velkommen til Danmark*, lessons in the form of detective stories whose characters permute even the drawings that come with them, is the most consonant of language learning methods.

Very little music, but precisely 'lunefuld'. Very little painting, but Jorn, who is precisely the most metamorphic of painters. In any event, lots of architecture and design. Let us end with the 'happy together' being (hyggelig) that cultivates this naturalist grasping of singularities in constant mutations. The cutlery designed forty years or so ago by Arne Jacobsen suppresses the central weathering, the median third, that in traditional forks and spoons separate the external third destined to the world (the food) and the internal third destined to the body (the hand). This is how the western distance between the subject and the object disappears, as the cutlery becomes the interface that brings them close together. The very wide range of dimensions according to dishes is unpractical, but 'rigtig'. It is a cutlery with which one cannot scoff. For the speakers of a language in which one cannot bawl.

And, on the scale of a large city, it is the same topology of the fluid bubble between body and world embodied by the Arche de la Défense. It is a cosmic interface, skål to the Universe, conceived by Spreckelsen to close-open Colbert's perspective of Paris.

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Translated by Paula Cook

Note: This study was published by 'Le Français dans le Monde' in May 1990. The reference reader was Wim De Geest, professor at the UPSAL.