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Rhetoric in Hume and Smith

5.1 The First Formation of Language

Language is a universal tie between the people, and it was also the main common interest and link between David Hume and Adam Smith. It was in 1958 that John M. Lothian, of Aberdeen University, bought in a book sale in Aberdeenshire two volumes of manuscript lessons "Notice of Dr Smith's Rhetorick Lectures", which turned out to be Adam Smith's lessons on rhetoric and literature of 1948–1951. Smith began delivering public lectures in Edinburgh in 1748, sponsored by the Philosophical Society of Edinburgh under the patronage of Lord Kames, partly at the instigation of Hume's neighbour, patron and friend, Henry Home. The initial lectures were well received and subscribed, so he continued lecturing for two years, adding a series on jurisprudence and perhaps on the history of natural science. It was during this period, that Smith met Hume for the first time, as the antiquarian George Chalmers said in his notes after Smith's death. He said that it was probably in the autumn of 1749, in the first lectures by Smith after Hume's return to Scotland from Vienna and Turin in the autumn.[1]

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[1] See Rasmussen (2017).

Smith would have been eager to meet Hume, given his familiarity with Hume's works and that they had several mutual friends who could have facilitated a meeting, including Henry Home and James Oswald of Dunnikier. It is possible that Hume attended some of Smith's lectures as some of the lectures were, as W. R. Scott suggests, hosted by the Edinburgh Philosophical Society, since Hume was an active member of the society and would soon become one of its two secretaries.

This reputation led to Smith becoming the tutor of the Duke of Buccleuch from 1764. Apparently, during his two-year sojourn in France in 1764–1766 he continued to deliver his lectures on rhetoric and belles-lettres in private classes.[2] These lectures were delivered in the context of traditional Classical Rhetoric and they followed the legacy of Addison's and Edmund Burke's works.[3] According to his coetaneous, Adam Smith's knowledge of Greek and Latin literature was not common among his contemporaries.[4] Hisrhetoric lectures were not published until 1963 as "Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres Delivered in the University of Glasgow by Adam Smith, Reported by a Student in 1762-63".[5]

Adam Smith's "Considerations concerning the first formation of Languages, and the different genius of original and compounded Languages" was originally part of his University Lectures on Rhetoric, a work of which Smith was, according to Dugald Stewart, proud: "It is an essay of great ingenuity, and on which the author himself set a high value."[6] In 1761, Smith had published an extended version of his lecture on the origins of language in a short-lived review called the Philological Miscellany. His theory of morals and the discussion of the process of sympathetic exchange on which it was based presupposed a certain theory of language. Inequalities emerge from the unequal ability of the members of the commercial society to use rhetoric and attract

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[2]Phillipson (2010, 127) and Ortmann and Walraevens (2015).
[3]Addison (1854) and Burke (1909 [1757]). See Dascal (2006) and Skinner (1983).
[4]Rae (1895, 23), see Vivenza (2001).
[5]Smith (1983).
[6]Stewart (1810, 44), in Smith (1980).

sympathy from others.[7] But also Smith underlines the ethical character of economic agents.[8]

The theory of language he had presented to his Edinburgh and Glasgow students had been designed to show that language was essentially a vehicle for communication created many centuries ago. It then addressed Rousseau's objection that "not even our new grammarians" (he has Condillac in mind) could convince him that all the complexities of modern grammar could be explained in naturalistic terms. Smith was against this idea. Smith may have not read Condillac's work but he must have known of it and he refers his Considerations to Rousseau's *Discourse* in which he takes up issues raised by Condillac.[9]

As in philosophy, morals and economics, Smith was trying to provide in this juvenile lecture a new view of the Rhetorical art. Smith opposed the description of speech proffered by Hobbes, Locke, Hume. All these fought against Descartes' innate concept of knowledge, based on an objective reality that leads to creating a general idea, an operation of the mind. According to Hobbes, the use of language consists of transferring our mental speech to a verbal one.[10] Thought is, therefore, discursive. "Real" or "false" are attributes of language, not of things. A man who wants to find the truth must use definitions. Belief is to base our own arguments on those of others, within the definitions of language. Then, the arguments of authority are only faith put in men. Names were first used as signs that help us to remember. Hobbes' philosophy of language implicitly denies that linguistic expressions refer to anything real.[11]

But Hobbes' theory does not make the simple element of the particular idea clear. In this vein, Locke tries to clarify that the function of language is to externalize an individual world.[12] The words only make sense for the person using them to the degree that their mind finds the corresponding idea present. Words are arbitrary sounds, that are used as signs

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[7]Herzog (2013).

[8]Walraevens (2010).

[9]Condillac (1746) and Rousseau (1754). See Land (1977).

[10]Hobbes (1989).

[11]Abizadeh (2015, 15).

[12]Locke (1690).

of ideas that are in the mind of the speaker. They are communicated because they excite the same ideas in the hearer, due to tacit consent as to their meaning. This thesis makes it difficult to explain learning: the first language is impossible because communication requires the identification of names and ideas between the speakers. Besides, if we can only use words that, in the mind of everyone, have corresponding ideas, how do we explain the use of words that name objects or experiences unknown to the other?[13] Locke talks about names—nouns and adjectives—and his semantic reflections on verbs are incidental and circumstantial. Communication is possible by means of a chimera of a direct relationship between language and reality. In some sense, it is not in contradiction with the theory of Berkeley, in which impressions are the way in which the Creator communicates with man.[14]

Along these lines, David Hume clarifies that habit leads us to connect an idea to a word.[15] Hume's theory of language challenged the identification of Cartesians of the general idea with an objective reality, general operation of the mind. Words only refer to ideas and they mean nothing except for the ideas that are in the mind of the user. Thought can only operate through language. Hearing a certain sound suggests the idea to us by association. Hume follows Locke and Berkeley and praises the latter especially for asserting that any general idea is a particular idea assigned to a certain term, which gives it a more extensive meaning and leads to it evoking other similar objects. When we observe many objects and we find that they have similarities, we apply the same name to all of them, even if we find differences between them.[16]

These theories would then be followed by expressionist literary movements, which considered that nouns do not exist but are only a symbol in adjectival or verbal form of non-existent nouns. In Spain, this was the basis for the ultraism poetics, led by Cansinos Assens. We take ideas, impressions of "things"—colours, shapes, etc.—to form general ideas

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[13]De Bustos (2000, 98–102).
[14]Berkeley (1732).
[15]Hume (1964d).
[16]See Trincado (2015).

and, if we are consistent, also the idea of a noun or "thing" is a general idea that comes from impressions of colour or touch.

Against these theories, Adam Smith's linguistic explicitly rejects Berkeley's philosophy and starts by discussing nouns before going on to conduct an analysis of the process of abstraction. According to Smith, talking about the first formation of language or about our capacity to express feelings means investigating the way in which man understands the world and the capacity of the human mind to create concepts. This ability is, in nature, intuitive and it later operates through mechanisms such as comparison, classification and abstraction. He concludes that we perceive and acquire knowledge intuitively. But for Smith words are not simple labels for things: the word does not only convey the object, but the situation that creates some memories from that which it names. This does not mean that we have inborn ideas, but that, as we have previously explained, our perception is a global whole with self-organizing tendencies.[17]

So, nouns are the first words created due to an intuitive knowledge of substance. The savage would name the thing from his intuitive knowledge of it and, later, he would assign some name to the ideas of the thing. Smith says that human language is more imperfect than that of nature. It is a representation of visible and tangible objects and feelings, a flat system without perspective. But the language of reality is a language with Substance. This language of reality is not learned by the sense of tact or sight, which create flat figures, but thanks to a different sense that the perspective of time creates. As we have already cited, Smith shows this idea through the example of a blind person who gradually begins to see. Through observation, this person manages to see objects as they are, after the initial confusion caused by the distorting perspective of inexperience. Thanks to what the author calls an "instinctive unknown principle", the previously blind could read the language of reality, which human language ex post may never equal.

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[17]For a reassessment of this theory, see Epstein (1988).

> When the young gentleman said that the objects which he saw touched his eyes, he certainly could not mean that they pressed upon or resisted his eyes; for the objects of sight never act upon the organ in any way that resembles pressure or resistance… When the young gentleman was just beginning to understand the strong and distinct perspective of Nature, the faint and feeble perspective of Painting made no impression upon him, and the picture appeared to him what it really was, a plain surface bedaubed with different colours… yet he could not have been thus imposed upon by so imperfect an imitation, if the great principles of Vision had not beforehand been deeply impressed upon his mind, and if he had not, either by the association of ideas, or by some other unknown principle, been strongly determined to expect certain tangible objects in consequence of the visible ones which had been presented to him.[18]

Primitive men would first name the objects around them, thanks to their intuitive understanding of substance, and would then associate ideas to classify objects of the same type in terms of quality, kind, number and relationship. To qualify them further, it would be necessary to resort to prepositions and adjectives. To create these nouns, in any case, some sense of a noun was necessary along with an aptitude to identify their different characteristics. Touch and sight were not enough to come to this conclusion, as the idea of substance, of something connected with itself for a necessary connection, is needed. This is obviously a critique of Locke, for whom the present sensation must be a feeling of tact or refer to an object of touch. If the object stops being touched and the ideas became a nominal essence in the mind, this knowledge ceases to be real. The idea of space is for Locke artificial and complex, created by spaces that are simple ideas. Without it, the process of intuitive knowledge will not begin, and this is necessary to create the subsequent derivative knowledge.

But for Smith, the very fact that we know or express something that refers to another thing shows that the process of understanding and language are created via intuitions. Adjectives would be concrete before abstract (black before blackness), but any adjective assumes a comparison

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[18]Smith (1980, 159–161), Of the External Senses, 65–70.

(between black and not black) and therefore an abstraction and a complex process of ordering and clarifying. Gender (which implies using different words to qualify the same noun) and number (first with a variation of the word, then with specific words such as "much", "little" …) would be created in the same way. Comparison and generalization are needed to build prepositions. They are expressions of the situation and true relationship between things, for example, the fruit of the tree. The first verbs would refer to external things in the present—to sound an alarm regarding an approaching animal, for example, they will say "it is coming!" Then time would be expressed. The impersonal verb, which expresses action as opposed to non-action, would be the first to be created (for example, "it is raining").

From there, language progresses like the construction of machines. It becomes more and more elementary. The first person to write would have used a character for every word or unit of sense, but as the system became more complex, a simpler "mutation" would take place, with a greater chance of survival. Letters would have been created and with their variants come words. When two nations unite, the one adopting the language of the other never completely loses its own language but instead, we see the proliferation of mixtures, languages losing their initial complexity. For that reason, modern analytic languages are more prolix, less agreeable to the ear and more rigid in their conventions for word arrangement than the former synthetic ones. In the case of machines, this simplicity is something positive. When language is simpler it shows less variation, and this makes it more difficult to arrange the sounds in diverse ways since the order will be almost given. This makes language more prolix. More words will be necessary to express what was previously expressed by one, even though linguistic beauty, according to Smith, depends on brevity. This deleterious effect of language construction is, however, the same as the deleterious effects that the division of labour have on the perspicuity of the workforce. Markets and the spectator promote beneficial orders not only in economics, but also in language and morality.[19]

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[19]Otteson (2002a).

Although Evensky asserts that institutionalized education was very important for Smith,[20] knowledge is for Smith intuitive in the WN, academic education being only a way of counteracting the harmful effects of the division of labour.[21] Labourers, according to Smith, become stupid and ignorant when they become specialized. The worker's dexterity at his trade seems "to be acquired at the expense of his intellectual, social and martial virtues".[22] So, the evolution of the division of labour, the same as the evolution of language, creates an apparent contradiction as it is the source of dexterity and knowledge in the market but, at the same time, it is the source of ignorance, simplicity and lack of depth.[23] In this sense, language, reason and economics evolve along the same lines, due to their common political and moral value. But, contrary to progressivists such as Hugh Blair,[24] for Smith language, and therefore reason, does not progress in a linear way, as happens with the evolution of specialization. For Smith, markets are no a-historical phenomena. They are not only spaces of negative liberty, connected to individual autonomy and political self-government.[25]

This relating of language with economics was widespread in Smith's days: that is the case with Condillac and Destutt, and Turgot's comparison of money and words in his "Étymologie" for the Encyclopédie.[26] In his *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (LRBL) Smith relates languages to specialization and markets.[27] And, as Jermolowicz says, this could have led to his outlining and preparing the Scottish public for the later reception of the Wealth of Nations.[28]

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[20]Evensky (1993, 395–412).

[21]Deaño (1993, 25).

[22]Smith (1937, 734–735).

[23]See Rosenberg (1965) and Otteson (2002a).

[24]See Eddy (2011).

[25]Herzog (2016).

[26]See Foucault (1970, 84). Cremaschi (1984, 1988, 2002) studies analogies and metaphors in Smith's theory.

[27]Yeager (1998).

[28]Jermolowicz (2004, 204).

5.2   Rhetoric and the Theories of Language

In Smith's day, rhetoric was an important hobby for nobles who selected their children's tutors based on the teacher's reputation, and undoubtedly Adam Smith became famous due to his lessons on rhetoric. Adam Smith's lectures implied a clear transition from the well-established academic tradition of formal rhetoric to the most practical and creative vision of rhetoric, Smith being a defender of naturalness as opposed to bombastic rhetoric. In addition to having constructed a theory of literary criticism,[29] in these lessons Smith made rhetoric a general theory of communication and, in this sense, it was the basis for the other sciences of human behaviour and of the conscience of the other and the desire to exchange.[30]

Berry places Smith's theory within the Organic School[31] and, although Jermołowicz believes there is some merit in Smith's Lectures,[32] Purcell argues that the Lectures do not represent a new and innovative theory of rhetoric.[33] This unrecognized scholarship is due to the fact that these scholars do not look at the whole picture: as we have said, Smith's theory is part of his system for understanding the social world on the basis of a natural tendency to act based on the conscience of the other. He wanted to construct a complete "science of man",[34] with TMS describing humanity in general, and WN exploring the possibilities of a virtuous "commercial society".[35] Jeffrey Young explains how Smith intended TMS, WN, and his other major works to work as a system.[36] And many scholars attempt to reconcile Smith's views by careful analyses of TMS and WN.[37] But the LRBL are also part of the system.

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[29]Purcell, 198.

[30]Howell (1969), McCloskey (1985), and Hurtado (2006).

[31]Berry (1974).

[32]Jermołowicz (2004).

[33]Purcell (2009).

[34]Ross (2004, 51).

[35]Griswold (1999) and Otteson (2002b).

[36]Young (1997).

[37]Heilbroner (1982), West (1969), Morrow (1928), Rosenberg (1960), and Cropsey (1975).

Smith stresses that rhetoric is about "perspicuity" as a communicator and he then changes the place of communication from the speaker to the spectator. The formation of language, therefore, is an exceptional part of the system. It deals with the construction of the principal tool of communication, a human construction that, on occasions, as in other cases such as morality, law and economics, can be a source of alienation.[38]

As Smith says, the desire to be believed, the desire to persuade and direct other people is the instinct on which the faculty of speech is founded.[39] Language and style are the verbal manifestation of the natural power of the mind and it is based on powers common to all men.[40] Smith shows the importance of the spectator in language. Words change their meaning depending on the moment and the audience.[41] Smith understood that different circumstances required different discourses.[42] The speaker and the audience, as Grice says, are in the habit of coordinating their actions to facilitate the process of transmission of information from one to another, which is called "the principle of linguistic cooperation" and when this is violated, the audience can extract the conclusion that the speaker does not have a real intention of communicating with them.[43] Sincerity and context shape propriety and audiences look to the fit between speech and character to feel moral trustworthiness.[44]

For Smith, rationality itself is a type of language. Therefore, it adapts to temperament and the historical age, but people also adapt to language, and their reason is perverted by the perversions of language. Jacob Viner highlights in Smith the limits of human rationality, as is the

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[38]Lamb (1973).

[39]Smith (1976b: 586–587, VII: IV).

[40]Bevilazqua (1966, 1968). See also McCloskey (1994), Plank (1992), and Otteson (2002a) draw parallels between the early essay "Considerations concerning the First Formation of Languages" and the WN and TMS (see also Carrión 2017).

[41]Smith (1983, 25–26, 96).

[42]See Putnam (1975) and Ortmann and Walraevens (2015).

[43]Grice (1989).

[44]Kapust and Schwarze (2016).

case in his tolerance for "inconsistencies".[45] In LRBL Smith does not speak about the problem of uncertainty or ambiguity of definitions,[46] but in his *Lectures on Jurisprudence* he discusses the contractual obligations, retarded by ambiguity. The spoken language, being more direct, is freer from ambiguities.[47] However, constructions of reason and of science differ from those of language, which refer to the linguistic world and appeal to individual pride.

> The beauty of poetry is a matter of such nicety, that a young beginner can scarce ever be certain that he has attained it. Nothing delights him so much, therefore, as the favourable judgments of his friends and of the public; and nothing mortifies him so severely as the contrary.[48]

As Holthoon says, the coinciding of our feelings with those of the other, the sympathy that Smith speaks about, is a pleasant experience even when these feelings are of pain. It is the pleasure of understanding human nature, something related in Smithian theory of admiration and curiosity about scientific systems.[49] The Theory of Moral Sentiments is influenced by the drama and sentimental novels of his time, where Smith thought the description of the feelings of love, pity, piety or complacency provoked in the spectator to be more revealing of moral sentiments than any philosophy or essay.

Nevertheless, for Smith morality is not only discursive, since there is some property of moral judgment that does not depend on speech, an intuitive moral law.[50] Speech is only an exact expression of the "man within the breast", who becomes admirable through the property of actions.[51] In Smith's idea, thought is before language and it can be expressed without language, as the mime artist makes evident in his

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[45]Viner (1928, 138).

[46]Brown (1994).

[47]Smith (1978).

[48]Smith (1976a: 245, III: II).

[49]Holthoon (1993, 45).

[50]Christie (1987).

[51]For language, see Levy (1997), Otteson (2002a, b), and Dascal (2006).

pantomime, which is a different language.[52] Things for us are "sensations that create in us" or a latent content. Already in 1814, Schubert with his "Symbol of dreams" distinguished between the conscious language of a word and the unconscious language of the soul, which is also expressed in the dreams.

This does not mean that we have inborn ideas, rationalistic or naturalistic. Chomsky assumed a set of "innate ideas" that the child possesses for the acquisition of the linguistic competence.[53] In contrast, for Smith, language consists of a symbolic particular relation between the elements of conscience that relate words to sensations, images or categories thanks to conscious attention—and, Sapir will say, also to elements located in the hearing centres of the brain.[54] According to Smith, therefore, the name only tries to represent reality as well as possible, with two aims: to be understood and that the language is assimilated fluently. Both things make up its beauty. The rest is something that is incomprehensible to a person who does not share the same relations of ideas.

Language then is only a means of communication, not an end. The phenomenalism conclusion that we live inside language implies treating as an object what is a being, an existence developed in the course of time. This that leads man to feel only within some learned concepts. Language as culture is the experiences and realities that a group of people have decided to choose as words for the common reality—for example, in a jungle they will probably distinguish many types of plants or insects, while a person from an industrialized nation does not know how to distinguish one species from another.

In this way, Smith also opposed Hume's theory. For Smith, it is not true that words are simply labels for things: they are a conceptual and sensitive device. Wittgenstein said that there is an indefinite repertoire of language games, from reporting stories up to giving orders or insulting. Many of his "games" are reactive. But it is true that although language is acquired, on occasion, through external correction, it is not

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[52]Nowadays this is proved by Sapir (1995, 225).
[53]Chomsky (1989).
[54]Sapir, Edward, in Velasco (1995, 221).

possible that repression would play a role the first time an expression is captured—what would it repress? In this sense, Smith creates a path to Bergson's subsequent intuitive theory of language. Bergson argued in *Matter and Memory* that memory collects and preserves all aspects of existence that are never erased, although the body, and especially the brain, is the medium that allows us to recover the mnemonic data, bringing out memories with perceptions or more freely in dreams.[55] For Bergson, the words embodied in reality, which man feels as fluid are one of the most flexible forms of communication. However, the word lived externally is alienating, and it loses all its communicative ability. It turns into a form of repression of individuality,

> We do not lack communication. On the contrary, we have too much of it. We lack creation. We lack resistance to the present. The creation of concepts calls for a future form, for a new earth and people that do not yet exist.[56]

Creation, in this context, can only take place within concern for and faith in reality: "But only in love, only in a love overshadowed by illusion, does a person create, that is, only in unconditional belief in perfection and righteousness".[57]

5.3   The Literary Critique

After proposing his philosophical theory, in 1757, Hume published *Four Dissertations,* which contained two essays on aesthetic theory. In the reviews of his work, these essays were well received. For example, the *Literary Magazine* said about *On Tragedy* that "what the author adds of himself is very beautiful" and that "Hume's fourth essay on the norm of taste is very elegant and entertaining". Richard Hurd answered Hume

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[55]Bergson (1911).
[56]Deleuze and Guattari (1993, 110).
[57]Nietzsche (1974).

in some letters published in 1757; Alexander Gerard critically discussed *Of the Standard of Taste* in *Essay on Taste* (1759); likewise, Archibald Alisan in *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste* (1790). However, the definitive criticism was published twenty years later in the work of George Campbell, *Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1776) and then Dugald Stewart (1810).[58]

Several essays by Hume dealt with topics such as taste, cultural refinement, eloquence, essay writing and the aesthetic pleasure derived from tragedy. In the eighteenth century, these subjects were usually treated in books on rhetoric, which presented the principles of how to write and speak well. Hume's contribution was his theory of taste.

In the eighteenth century, the word "taste" referred to a mental faculty that allows people to appreciate and critically judge aesthetic objects. Theorists described the instinctive mental mechanism of this faculty, and how we refine our judgments of this type. The expression "delicacy of taste", which Hume will refer to, is a refinement of a faculty, which allows man to feel more subtle ranges of experiences. Hume named a first essay of the first volume of EMPL after this expression, "Of the Delicacy of Taste and Pasion". He argued that the cultivation of the liberal arts is the secret to happiness. The essay recommends "a serious attention to the sciences and liberal arts".[59] The person of refined taste can "place his happiness on such objects chiefly as depend upon himself" since "we are pretty much masters of what books we shall read, what diversions we shall partake of and what company we shall keep", so they are more likely to find happiness than those who desire immense fame and fortune. Besides, "a delicacy of taste is favourable to love and friendship, by confining our choice to few people thereby creating deeper, more meaningful relationships with those select few". In *An Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (1725), Francis Hutcheson described the mechanism of taste as an internal sense of beauty that produces pleasure when objects are presented to us "Uniform as well as varied". It includes objects in nature, artistic

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[58]Hurd (1757), Gerard (1759), Alison (1790), Campbell (1776), and Stewart (1810).
[59]EMPL 170.

representations and even mathematical theorems. Hume criticizes Hutcheson, although he does not discuss the psychological details of the mechanism of taste and does not specify, like Hutcheson, any good criterion of beauty. Hume also describes the delicacy of taste as a delicacy of passion and refinement of the faculties that make a person have a greater and more subtle range of experiences. A taste cultivated for the arts, Hume says, improves our ability to feel tender passions, while making us incapable of more violent emotions—as a counterexample of these ideas, cultivated taste and love of music and art by Nazis have been presented.

"The standard of Taste" by Hume was originally published in 1757, as a fourth dissertation and was then included as essay 26 of Moral, Political and Literary, Part 1 (1758). And it contradicts Hume's previous ideas. Although the standard of taste is subjective, a function of how the object reaches the mind that seeks for beauty in it, Hume concludes that there is an established, universal standard that one who observes the object with care and accuracy will know how to read. There is a uniform sense of artistic taste like that of moral judgement.[60] Specific objects communicate a natural feeling of beauty. If man is not able to perceive it in the masterpiece, it is because of haste and anxiety.[61] The first observation of a work of arts is always accompanied by a certain anxiety and haste of thought that disorients the genuine feeling of beauty. However, a man who has no element of comparison is not qualified to pronounce any opinion with respect to an object presented to him. Only the comparison gives us an estimate of the merit of praise or blame. We can refine our sense of artistic beauty; however, our judgments in this regard differ by the different characters of different men; and by the customs of age and country.

As Marchán Fiz says, Hume makes a mental pirouette that proclaims the factual universality of taste.[62] In principle, beauty is not a quality of things, but exists only in the mind that contemplates it, that does

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[60]Elósegui (1992, 51–59).
[61]Hume (1964c, 275), Of the Standard of Taste: XXIII.
[62]Marchán Fiz (1996, 31–32).

not have to render accounts to anything. But the diversity and relativity of taste does not prevent recognition of a refined, delicate game of the imagination. Any disagreement with that refined sense is projected on the screen of universality. The universality of taste is conquered through the exercise of an art, the frequent observation of various kinds of beauty and the comparison between a wide range of art works belonging to different times and peoples that show us the feelings common to human nature. Taste, which participates in the creative powers of the imagination, is not a static mode but a process that evolves as a rejection of authority and prejudices, especially religious, which are obstacles to it.

As far as literary taste is concerned, according to Hume, the paradoxical, difficult and surprising adds an appearance of depth. Ornamental language is more beautiful than the simple kind, which is presented more strongly in the imagination.

> Nothing can please persons of taste, but nature drawn with all her graces and ornaments, *la belle nature*; or if we copy low life, the strokes must be strong and remarkable, and must convey a lively image to the mind.[63]

The same is true of orators and philosophers.

> If his language be not elegant, his observations uncommon, his sense strong and masculine, he will in vain boast his nature and simplicity. He may be correct; but he never will be agreeable. (ibid.)

This, in short, is due to the fact that for Hume, language is a relation of ideas within words, an individual image. However, Hume appeals to moderation and to approaching nature as a language pattern. Impressionable and vacuous readers are carried away by the ornament, which they believe is more difficult than the simplicity of language.

> On the other hand, productions, which are merely surprising, without being natural, can never give any lasting entertainment to the mind… Too much ornament is a fault in every kind of production. (ibid.)

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[63]Hume (1964): Of Simplicity and Refinement in Writing: XX: 24.

Excesses, both in simplicity and in refinement, should be avoided, but the midpoint is not fixed and admits of a considerable range. We must, however, guard more against the excesses of refinement than those of simplicity, especially in the compositions where actions and passions are expressed, and not so much in those that consist of reflections and observations. For instance, in the case of history, the standard of taste implies that "the first Quality of an Historian is to be true and impartial; the next to be interesting".[64] He proposed as a model the concise manner of the ancient Historians, rather than the prolix tedious style of modern ones.[65]

Conversely, Adam Smith asserts that the beauty of language comes from its simplicity and properties, that is to say, from the ability to communicate the mind of the author and to create empathy of feelings. In 1756 in his letter to the *Edinburgh Review* Smith compares English and French authors, claiming that the excessive imagination of the former makes the reader confused, while the latter wrote with elegance and propriety.[66] He suggests that while England occupied the preeminent position in learning in the past, France does so in the present, and Scotland was in a position to do so in the future.[67] Afterwards, when Smith was writing the WN, political and social changes were happening in England and Scotland that factored into Smith's three-year delay in finishing the book.[68]

Smith assumes that simplicity is the richest expression of represented reality. For Smith, the main point about language is veracity. The author is the origin of the language and the meaning is pre-linguistic (immanent in the text), awaiting the empathic reader to restore the original meaning. Thus, Smith's theory is opposed to the critique of the twentieth century, which questions whether the meaning is present in the text or constructed by the process of reading. The expression "death of

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[64]David Hume to William Mure of Caldwell, October 1754, in HL I, 193.

[65]David Hume to the abbé le Blanc, 12 September 1754, in HL I, 193.

[66]"A Letter to the authors of the Edinburgh Review", *The Edinburgh Review* from July 1775 to January 1756, 63–79, in Smith (1982, 243–244).

[67]See Lomonaco (2002).

[68]Ortmann and Walraevens (2015).

the author" hints that authorship cannot be used to provide a starting point for interpretation. For these authors, the wealth of the text can be explained independently of the consciousness of the author. Every reader creates the work by reading it, and language is read inside the language itself.

Against this idea, Smith uses the principle "intention of the author", which takes us away from subjectivity: the writer does not want to express "anything" that the reader wants to hear, but rather his feelings and thoughts in the most accurate and exact way, within the context in which he writes. Here, Smith reaffirms his idea that moral approbation depends on the coincidence of feelings of the spectator with the motives of the agent and the gratitude of the affected person. If the reader understands another meaning it is a failure of the writer, a perversion of language or an absence of location of the reader. Language, therefore, is only a mediating instrument for feelings, not an image that appeals to "any me" who gets involved in it, which is valid providing that someone receives suggestive impulses.

Nevertheless, as Ricoeur said after, the idea of "intention of the author" does not have to mean the spiritual world of the author that preceded the genesis of the text[69]; it is not a question of using the text as a means between different psyches, not to return to life some shades of the past. To interpret is to explicate a sort of being-in-the world which unfolds in front of the text, not of the author. It is not the world lived by the writer to which we must transport ourselves, but what the text wants, that is to say, we must get into its sense and to the direction of thought that it opens. The reader takes the decision of remaining in the "place of the text" and in the "isolation" of this place: the text does not have an external, but an internal sense, it does not intend to be self-transcended.[70]

Smith goes beyond the typical idea of his time that a piece of work must have unity of time and space, proposing instead unity of inter-est: all the circumstances must relate to the principal fact directly or

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[69]Ricoeur (1981).

[70]Givone (1990, 195–196).

indirectly.[71] Nothing must have an opposite meaning. There are three things that a good writer does: (1) He/She has complete knowledge of the topics. (2) He/She properly arranges all the parts of the topic. (3) He/She describes the ideas in the most proper and expressive way.

The most important thing with a piece of work is that the author is knowledgeable about what he is dealing with: a person who knows the topic will arrange it naturally. In the case of oratory, this implies that the speaker must appear to be very involved in the matter and to offer their arguments in a friendly, non-dictatorial form, from the propositions to the demonstrations. In addition, it is advisable to excite the passions of pity and indignation, the second being more lasting than the first. In brief, the author must show that he is affected by a moral reality different from the moment of the speech. If he shows in an agreeable way that he is affected by the miseries of others, he will make others feel melancholic or beautiful feelings. The pleasure will come from the coinciding of feelings with the author and with the imagined subject of speech, which produces pity. This empathy will follow the same mechanisms as moral feelings.

The order of words is also a core element in speech: it must be the one that makes the meaning most intelligible, free of parenthesis and superfluous words, accurate and not using overly long sentences. This is especially true for didactic language or the language of historians. The order of words must, therefore, be the one that naturally comes to the mind and best expresses the sense. The most interesting element of the sentence must be placed first, the second next, and so on. When the feeling of the person who speaks is clear, simple and ingenious, and the passion that he possesses and try to communicate to the listener through empathy is expressed in a simple and suitable way, the expression has all the force and beauty that the language can provide. The expression should always be suited to the mind of the author.

Actually, the notes of rhetoric start by describing the style and language of Quintilian, whose most important ingredient was the property of language, calling everything by its name, looking at the language of

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[71]Marshall (1986, 167–192) and Frazer (2010, 95–111).

objects, free of ambiguities. Smith places special emphasis on the notion of an articulated chain, a continuous sequence of relationships conducive to the understanding of the relation of cause–effect. The orator arranges the whole story into a connected narration. And there are two key narrators in Smith's texts: the "we", all inclusive first person plural—the voice of a reasonable man, and the more authoritative narrator, impersonal, that corrects the judgements of the common experience narrator.[72]

According to Smith, if one's purpose is to relate facts, the Narrative or Historical style ought to be chosen.[73] If one wishes to prove a proposition, then one should choose Didactic or Rhetorical discourse. With Didactic proof, the speaker treats his subject impartially, weighing the pros and cons. Rhetorical proof is designed to be a persuasive device. Smith divides this into Aristotelian and Socratic. In the first, the speaker states his main point and justifies it. In the Socratic, the speaker initially hides his point, leading the reader along his path of reasoning towards a conclusion. The latter method is the most engaging manner to persuade.[74]

Language must be a continuum for the imagination to follow it without interruption. A great fault with a sentence is that sense seems to have been concluded when it has not: the mind in suspense gives many advantages in terms of attention and understanding. Language can communicate our thoughts and feelings through the skill of predicting its effect on the person listening to us, just as we act based on an imaginary projection of the other person's feelings.

Smith replaces the old explanation of figures of speech and thought, motifs, subdivisions of the speech, characters of style, etc., with his philosophical and all-inclusive explanation of the beauty of a system. Thus, his theory is anti-rhetorical because Smith wanted to show that language is a system that describes feelings to other human beings, based on empathy. The aim of language is communication, and Smith

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[72]Griswold (1999, 49–50), Brown (1994, 28), and Valihora (2016).

[73]See Ortmann and Walraevens (2014).

[74]Smith (1983), LRBL, 146–147.

criticizes the reverence for words that are not in normal use or are presented unusually. So, he is against the notion that you must write in the way that another ancient or modern author wrote: you must write as you are or you think. A man is pleasant company if he naturally expresses his feelings, so that we can agree with them and with the sole purpose of expressing them.

Smith offers Shaftesbury as a counter-example.[75] Nowadays critics coincide in the fact that there is a curious affectation about Shaftesbury's style—a falsetto note—which, notwithstanding all his efforts to please, is often irritating to the reader.[76] According to Adam Smith, Shaftesbury had a preconceived idea of beauty of style, abstracted from his character, and he tried to regulate his character with that idea. Smith says that this author was a man without self-control, a weak person, always in a state of disorder or in danger of falling into disorder. And this habit of the body, he says, is usually linked with a similar one of the mind. Abstract and deep thoughts exhausted him, and love and ambition were too violent for him to work on them. He preferred the imaginative arts, entertainment, because he got tired when he reasoned, as in the natural philosophy or mathematical thought. Due to his weakness, he found it easy to be content with the rules he had established for himself. In this case, therefore, the relations of ideas took place only with an accepted or admired system by the writer, and not with his current feelings, which, according to Smith, is what readers want to identify with. For Smith, all styles are agreeable if they express the character of the author with propriety and self-command.[77]

Smith supports minimalist language. Objects, he says: (1) Need to be described so that they excite a single emotion. (2) The description must be short and not tedious, enhancing the vivacity of the thing described. (3) Need to include curious and beautiful circumstances that help us feel the emotion.

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[75]Shaftesbury (2001).
[76]Fowler and Mitchell (1911, 764, 765).
[77]See McKenna (2006).

Although communication starts with describing external objects, the contemplation of which makes all men equal and whose description is provided through the parts that compose them, it later expresses internal feelings. The curiosity and inability to share these internal feelings if not through expression makes them the most interesting element of communication. This description is more difficult than that of external objects: they do not have parts that affect our senses. For example, a good historian who shows the agents or spectators the effects of the historical moment reported provokes our interest through the empathic feelings they create in us. Tragedy is beautiful because it makes us feel with other people's grave and profound feelings.[78]

Only the causes that excite curiosity must be reported, the ones that impress and help to explain the feelings aroused by the circumstances. Nevertheless, the poetical method connects facts with circumstances that are not their causes. Poets were the first historians. They told the most surprising facts, such as mythological ones or the adventures of gods and military campaigns. They used a language of surprise, describing the memorable actions in a way that entertained and impressed. A good work of art can last forever because it provokes feelings that are imperishable, even if the specific style in which the work was composed does not last.[79] Habits affect beauty and it will be difficult to sympathize with an art to which we are not accustomed.[80]

According to the Ancient rhetoricians, a certain metric was by nature adapted for each type of writing, as it was naturally expressive of the character, feeling or passion that had to prevail in it. They said that one type of metric was appropriate for serious works and another for entertaining works, and that they could not be exchanged without us falling into the greatest absence of correction. But the experience of modern times, Smith says, seems to contradict this principle. Habit has made a nation associate the ideas of gravity, sublimity and seriousness with one metric while another is connected with the idea of the festive, light and

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[78]Costelloe (2013, 46–47).

[79]Smith (1976a, 351, V: I).

[80]Smith (1976a, 351–352, V: I).

comical.[81] Language, Smith says, must be an appropriate and a natural way of expressing feelings but it does not add or remove anything of the beauty of expression. Therefore, beauty is based on property, and aesthetics is focused on correspondence, relation and affinity.

The excessively adorned style is arbitrary. Nevertheless, poetical communication needs elegance of expression, and Smith says, "I dislike that homely stile which some think fit to call the language of nature and simplicity".[82] Exaggeration can communicate a histrionic feeling. For example, comedy uses unexpected incongruities, such as the aggrandizement of small things or the contraction of large ones. The basis for something ridiculous is founded on contradiction. Another contradiction: there is no better way of ridiculing a stupid object than to make someone express the greatest admiration for it. However, any metaphor that is not appropriate is burlesque. For example, according to Smith two metaphors must not be put together: it is something that Shakespeare did, and people admired him because nobody worried about what he wanted to say. They were amazed at his pompous sounds as if he were a "man of system". Smith knew Shakespeare's work as part of his mental furniture; however, it is to be said that he cites him from memory with some mistakes probably because he was not so fond of his works.[83] In any case, any critique is somehow superfluous, provided that, as Smith says, you will learn more about poetry by reading from a good poem than by reading thousands of volumes of criticism. In the same way, Burke felt sad for those who are habitually devoted to finding imperfection in others: "By hating vices too much, they come to love men too little".[84]

As previously mentioned, Smith's theory is similar to the theory subsequently presented by Bergson. The words embodied in reality and that the man feels as fluid and grateful realities when they are uttered are one of the most flexible forms of communication. But the word

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[81]Smith (1976a, 353, V: I).

[82]Smith (1983, 230), The bee or Literary weekly intelligence, for Wednesday, May 11, 1791, Appendix 1.

[83]Swyre (2013).

[84]Burke (1909, 303).

lived in externality is alienating, as happened with Shaftesbury's writing. Therefore, "the quality of beauty" is what communicates continuity, which immerses us in the sensation and makes us forget our social self, being immersed in the discourse or the text in the present. The objective of art is to lull the active or resistant powers of our personality to lead us to a condition of perfect docility in which we create the idea that is suggested to us, in empathy with the expressed feeling, as in a condition of hypnosis. The art of the writer consists of making us forget that he using words.[85]

5.4   The Invention of Imitation

According to Hume, men try to imitate nature in art, but they find, annoyingly, that nature always orders things in a more beautiful way, with forms that are more alive. We admire a work of art when it most resembles the nature it imitates. When we look at it, not only do we admire the feeling of it being a means to an end, but we admire the beauty of the mind that has created it, managing to come close to the perfection of nature. Conversely, Smith criticizes Hume saying that in imitative arts we cannot stand it when they trick us with an illusion of reality. We prefer exclusive objects that do not have an exact reflection in nature, of which they will always be mere imitators. According to Smith, what we want is to share an original feeling in the mind of the author, which is surprising precisely because we have never observed it in nature. Smith makes a defence of non-naturalistic art: in the twentieth century one might even extend it to abstract art, offering an exclusivity that has not been seen before.

> A good looking-glass represents the objects which are set before it with much more truth and vivacity than either Statuary or Painting. But, though the science of optics may explain to the understanding, the looking-glass itself does not at all demonstrate to the eye how this effect is brought about…. In all looking-glasses the effects are produced by the same means, applied exactly in the same manner. In every different statue and picture the effects are produced, though by similar, yet not by the

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[85]Bergson (1963).

same means; and those means too are applied in a different manner in each. Every good statue and picture are a fresh wonder, which at the same time carries, in some measure, its own explication along with it.[86]

With this, Smith does not move away from the tendencies of his time, such as *La Querelle* of the seventeenth century (the quarrel between the Ancient and the Moderns). They still valued the creations of art considering the imitative scale but also began to consider the beginning of the *Inventio*. The Ancients supported the merits of the ancient authors and contended that a writer could do no better than imitate them. On the other side were the Moderns, with Perrault and Fontanelle, who argued that modern scholarship allowed modern man to surpass the ancients in knowledge.[87] The Inventions of Modern Times are evidence of the Moderns' superiority. On one side, authority was under attack, on the other, the idea of Progress. According to moderns, art should not only provide pleasure but unleash a whole range of psychic emotions. Although it still imitates, it no longer pursues the perfection of the imitation of the ancients or of nature, but the perfection of the effect, that is, to make affection spring, and artificial passions emerge. The weakening of the imitative principle goes hand in hand with the idea of art as a representation of freedom or "free play of faculties," which retains but also alters the perceived images. Modern aesthetics is constructed in such a way that now the artist imitates nature insofar as it is recognized as a "creative" principle by analogy with himself.[88]

5.5   Theatre

As Stradella comments, when Hume considers men as "mirrors to one another", it is an invitation to watch the show of humanity on the stage of life.[89] Hume regards human nature as exhibited in the space of

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[86]Smith (1780, 14), Of the Imitative Arts, I: 10.

[87]Perrault (1687) and Fontanelle (1688).

[88]Marchán (1996, 22–29).

[89]Stradella (2010).

spectacle. By the time Hume enters the philosophical scene, the stage metaphor is a common literary device of moral criticism. The figure of the *theatrum mundi* served literature and philosophy.

In this context, Hume and Smith talk about the theatrical art and, also in this, Smith contradicts Hume's explanation of the beauty of a stage play. In *Of Tragedy*, Hume shows that the vision or, at least, imagination of a strong passion, that arises from a great loss or gain, affects the spectator. When we represent a play, we like it to convey feelings of indignation and compassion. By sympathy, it gives some touches of the same passion, and serves as a momentary entertainment. It makes time pass faster and is an aid to the oppression under which men commonly work when left entirely to their own thoughts and meditations. The mind is uncomfortable when it is in absolute rest and tranquillity and to distract attention from itself it tends to move. The spectator needs a break from his habit and it pleases him to undo his mental structure.[90]

However, there is a problem. The same object of affliction that pleases in a tragedy, even if it cures indolence, should cause pain. Hume supports Fontenelle's theory in this regard, that pleasure and pain do not differ very much in the cause, so that pleasure, taken too far, is painful; and pain that paces itself is pleasure. So, there is an agreeable sorrow, which consists of limited pain. However, on watching a play, we are aware that what is being represented is false and this makes us happy, creating pleasure or reducing the distress of watching the play. We are sorry for the misfortune of the hero, but we immediately feel better knowing that everything is fiction. Hume adds that the difficulty is in the fact that we take pleasure in the historical harangues of Cicero even though we think that what they tell us is true. The effect comes from the same eloquence with which the melancholic scene appears. It is the admiration of the mind that has unfolded these talents which, with the strength and beauty of expression, produces pleasure for us. In the case of a tragedy, imitation is what gives greater pleasure.

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[90]Hume (1764c, 259), Of Tragedy: XXII.

Here Hume is arguing that there is a relation between the aesthetic and moral evaluations of a work of art. Moral goodness can be a reason to consider a good work aesthetically (although not every moral flaw is an aesthetic flaw, as is the case with speculative errors of the pagan system). For example, religious superstitions reduce the aesthetic value if they are not consistent with the natural limits of vice or virtue. This moderate moralism of Hume can be distinguished from radical autonomism, which would state that morality and aesthetics are independent and the moral position of a work of art should not be considered when evaluating it. Richard Posner, in "Against Ethical Criticism", says: "The aesthetic outlook is a moral outlook, one that stresses the values of openness, detachment, hedonism, curiosity, tolerance, the cultivation of the self, and the preservation of a private sphere—in short, the values of liberal individualism".[91]

But for Smith, the admiration of a play comes less from the pleasure that it brings to us than from the fact that the actors manage for a moment to be the centre of attention and draw all eyes to them. It also depends on the fact that when we see a play we have subtle feelings, and we also feel some pride at having been able to understand the mind of the author. The effect of a stage play, for example, is greater when we already know the plot, as we can then concentrate more on the underlying feelings. What an actor does reverberates in the admiration of others, because it adds value to the work itself. A person watching a play alone does not admire it in the same way as a person watching it with the public clapping. Once more, here Smith reaffirms his idea that moral approbation depends on persuasion, on our desire to share our feelings and on the gratitude of the affected person. In this sense, Smith is conscious of the old problem of Rhetoric: of the relationship between form, content and audience. In the last analysis, this entails, as in the case of ethics, jurisprudence and economics, giving importance to the spectator.[92]

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[91]Posner (1997, 2).

[92]Griswold (1999, 41).

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