

The Spanish linguist Lorenzo Hervás on the eve of the discovery of Indo-European

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1. E. Coseriu has repeatedly called attention to L. Hervás. Beginning by pointing out the importance of the exiled Jesuit in the classification of Rumanian (COSERIU 1975/76, 1976), he has corrected afterwards the information on him (COSERIU 1978a), very often erroneous in even reliable books, and has initiated on the substratum (1978b) the appreciation of Hervás's contributions to linguistic theory.

We will attempt to follow one of the proposals of Coseriu: «examinar con detención sus contribuciones al establecimiento de varias familias lingüísticas» (1978a: 36), concentrating now on his ideas on the Indo-European group, which only later was recognized as a unity.

Coseriu (1978a: 38 f.) has indicated the first of the causes for the ignorance about Hervás: his encyclopedic work in Italian is fairly rare in the libraries¹. A second reason is that the big work on the languages of the world by Adelung and Vater, *Mithridates* (1806/17), made full use of Hervás, completing his information in the excellent German libraries and superseding his work.

Hervás was not a linguist by profession. As he arrived in Italy as an exile, and afterwards (1774) established himself in Cesena, he turned, in the freer Italian environment, into a scholar of universal curiosity. If not in his Italian redaction, I was able to follow his development in the Spanish works which he published later: the *Historia de la vida del hombre* (1789/99) corresponds to the seven first volumes of the *Idea dell'Universo*, *El*

¹ I have never seen a copy of *Idea dell'Universo*. Coseriu ordered a xerox copy of the five last volumes for the Romanic Seminar in Tübingen; it was taken at the Munich Library. The Real Academia Española in Madrid possesses in its Library vol. XVII-XIX of the Italian work with a different title page. Volume XVII was published as Microédition Hachette (71.5047).

hombre físico o anatomía humana físico-filosófica (1800) to volume VIII, the *Viage estático al mundo planetario* (1793/94) to volumes IX and X. The *Storia della Terra*, which occupies volumes XI-XVI of the *Idea dell' Universo*, was not expanded, as the other volumes, in a Spanish edition. As for the five volumes on linguistics (XVII-XXI) the first one was developed in the six non-completed volumes of the *Catálogo de las lenguas* (1800/1805).

After examining the work of Hervás, we would agree with his first biographer F. Caballero (1868:87) in considering the linguistic section «la más interesante, la que más ha extendido la fama del autor, la que sobrevivirá... Aquí se halla concentrado el genio de Hervás, mostrándose hombre de grandes concepciones, de voluntad y fuerza para ejecutarlas, de talento industrioso...»

For the rest, although Lorenzo Hervás was attracted by the scientific development of his age (s. GRANJEL 1955), he remained faithful to the origins, and later, on the invitation of the Counsellor of Castile Tomás Bernard (s. GONZÁLEZ RUIZ 1954:37 ff.), wrote a reactionary plea against the French Revolution, *Causas de la Revolución en Francia*, which after long delay appeared in Madrid in 1807; cf. HERRERO 1973.

But notwithstanding his conservative position, undoubtedly Hervás was, from his youth, more interested in modern knowledge than in the traditional studies. He says (cf. ZARCO 1936:10) that in his youth on an academic occasion he clashed with «uno de los mayores sabios de la Universidad» of Alcalá, who «le puso más de cuarenta silogismos». And his biographer Father E. Portillo (quoted by GONZÁLEZ RUIZ 1954:17) tells us that his companions in theological studies «tenían [a Hervás] poco menos que por nulo».

2. We will now try to present from Hervás's different linguistic volumes his ideas on the languages which now are classified as Indo-European.

2.1. Hervás never arrived at formulating a clear arrangement of the languages of India. He believed that the Mogul invasion had obscured the older languages (1784:118). On one hand he says that Hindustani, which we may take as representative of the Aryan languages, is the old language of the country (1784:123), but on the other he had already considered as primitive the language of Deccan, i.e., some of the Dravidian languages (1784:120), which he believed related to Malay. He looked, taking as a basis his information about languages of the Philippines, for Malay connections not only in the Maldive islands and in the Dravidian languages, but even in an Aryan dialect such as Marathi (1784:122).

Later on² in the Roman Congregation of Propaganda Fide Hervás heard of the «Samscrudonic» language (1785:93 ff.), and in the numeral he pointed

² Coseriu has rightly pointed out that the Italian volumes such as they appeared do not represent the successive development of Hervás's studies; he believes, on

out similarities amongst Hindustani, Persian and Greek (1786:130). In his personal information from a companion native of Goa, the Abate Pinto, he discovered again some etymologies which are for us Indo-European: *dana* ~ Lat. *donum*, *dantu* ~ Lat. *dens*, etc. (1785:104 and N° XXI), but the Aryan loans in Anaryan languages (ibid. N° XXIII) prevented him from discovering the outer limits of Indo-European. Neither the collection of Lord's prayers permitted him (1787b:140 ff.) to make any progress.

Afterwards Hervás gained better information. In his Spanish *Catálogo* (1801:120 ff.) he speaks of «mi amigo el erudito carmelita Fr. Paulino de San Bartolomé», author of the oldest European grammar of Sanscrit. Hervás learned that «la gramática de los brahmanes puede ponerse en la clase de las bellas ciencias: jamás el análisis y la síntesis se emplearon más fácilmente» (1801:127 f.). He puts together the conjugation of 'to be': *asmi* ~ εἰμί, *asi* ~ εἶς, etc., but did not go beyond that. He knows of an Academy (without doubt the Asiatic Society) in Calcutta (1801:180), but so far as we know he never took notice of W. Jones's famous memoir of 1788.

Based on previous sources Hervás corrected his information and acknowledged the Indo-Aryan origin of the gipsies and their language (1802:308, 311, 319).

2.2. Less clear was his idea of Iranian languages. The «Old Persian», i. e., what now is called Avestic, was, according to him, connected with Armenian, but rather through loan words brought by Armenian immigrants. Again in the Roman Propaganda Fide Hervás gained some acknowledge about the translation, thirty years before, by the French academician Anquetil du Perron, of the *Avesta* (1785:95).

But, misled by the strong changes in the modern Persian grammar, Hervás believed (1784:119, 124) that the New Persian, which was spoken at the Mogul court, was a descendant of Tartarian-Mongolian. He compared 11 words of Old and New Persian and found them different (1785:96 f.), which confirmed him in his idea. Against Anquetil he wrongly defended

the basis of the progress on Rumanian information, that volumes 1785 and 1786 «wurden konzipiert, und im grossen und ganzen auch geschrieben, vor dem Catalogo» (1975/76: 117, cf. 1976:395 f.). We accept also with COSERIU 1976:396 that «das Vocabolario [1787 a] und das Saggio [1787 b] die reifsten unter diesen Werken... sind». But we know (ZARCO 1936:15) that Hervás had first planned the publication of his encyclopedia in Spanish, and only later, as he found this project unattainable, started the Italian edition. We have then to suppose a huge collection of materials, such as Coseriu has imagined: perhaps volume 1786 before 1785, and both before 1784; the two later developed, 1787 a and b, «waren schon 1784 in Vorbereitung» (1975/76:171). In his Italian volumes Hervás put abstracts and notices in order without much time to reread the text and under the pressure of printing. Cf. for instance HERVÁS 1786:171: «Non permettendo la pronta stampa di questo tomo, che farsi dee dopo 15 giorni, che io aspetti la risposta [di un mio Amico Letterato Irlandese], ho fatto delle riflessioni...».

the non-relationship of Zend (Avestic) to Pehlvi (Middle Iranian) (1801: 350), although he was right in opposing Anquetil who believed in the relationship between Persian and Georgian. Later on he correctly found Pehlvi related to Hindustani (1801: 369 n.).

He discovered similarities of Persian with Germanic (1785: 102, 1802: 55), comparable numerals in New Persian, Hindustani and Greek (1786: 130 f.), similar personal pronouns in Persian and Greek (1787a: 76), and even the parallel conjugation of Persian *emi* ~ Gr. εἰμι, *est* ~ ἐστί, etc. (1787a: 27), but in this last case he puts together the Turkish conjugation, and in the others he hints at the presence of Teutons in Persia or of Greeks in India (cf. 1785: 90-92).

2.3. On Armenian he limits himself to denying the connection with Egyptian or Hebrew, that some orientalist had proposed, and from his colleague Alvaro Vigil accepts that it had some words in common with languages of India (1784: 126, 132). He separates again with the Jesuit A. Kircher, Armenian from Semitic, and he opposes any Turkish relationship (1801: 335).

2.4. Hervás passes on to the languages of Europe and calls Illyrian the mother tongue of Slavic (1784: 158). In our judgement he mixes up dialects and languages, and so he speaks of Russian (or Moscovian), Arkhangelian, Siberian, Cossack, Ukrainian, Polish, Lusatian (Sorbian), Moravian, Bohemian and Slavonian (Southern languages). Later he enlarged the list with Winedo-Luneburgian (Polabian), Serbian, Bulgarian, etc. (1787b: 82). His study of the Lord's prayers improved his comparative study of the whole family.

Hervás did not discover any special relationship between Slavic and Germanic.

At first Hervás included Lithuanian with Slavic, believing it very akin to Polish (1784: 159 f.), and putting it together with Curlandic (Latvian). Then he took notice of the Old Prussians and their relationship to Lithuanians and Latvians (1785: 107), but formed with them a Sarmatian group. In his collection of the Lord's prayers he rightly put several dialects of the family, which he considered «Scythian-Illyrian» (1787b: 163 ff., s. further, § 3). He did not include the Baltic family in his unfinished *Catálogo*.

2.5. Hervás began with a mistake in the Germanic languages: he believed the Goths, together with Huns, Getae and Alanians, «Scythian», i. e. Finnic-Ugrian (1784: 165). But as soon as he studied new materials, he corrected his error and recognized Gothic as a Germanic language (1785: 71 f.). Numerals (1786: 122 f.) and the Lord's prayers (1787b: 187) would confirm it.

Again he committed mistakes with Gothic. Boasting of «sapere lo Spagnolo più puro, perche nato, ed allevato, nel regno di Toledo» (1785:104 f.), he maintains that nothing has remained of Gothic in the Spanish language³. He knows of Crimean Gothic from the notices of Busbecq, but even then (1785:106) he thinks of the Scythian connections of Gothic, and even in Swedish place names he finds traces of Scythes⁴.

He gathered a good documentation in the Germanic family, and also used the information from a Scandinavian friend, Don Lorenzo Thyulen. He recognized the different Germanic languages (1784:168 f.), believing that Icelandic is Danish, which later he corrected, considering it as an isolated and conservative Scandinavian dialect (1785:70 f.).

He accepted the Biblical interpretations according to which the Teutons would be the progeny of Gomer, the firstborn to Japheth (1784:169). *Cimbrian* (supposedly from Gomer!) had been a current name for the Old Norse (1787a: 25). In his *Catálogo* (1802:25 ff.) he examined the classical information about the Germanic peoples.

2.6. He finds Greek surrounded in Antiquity by Illyrians and Scythians (1784:167). It has to be noticed that Hervás accepted from the scholarly tradition, like Rask later, a vague use of these names, which he tended finally to distinguish in their ancient and modern meaning.

Although he praises the Old Greek language, he thinks that, like all others, ought to have been a literary and a vulgar language at the same time (1784:167). He opposes the traditional connection between Greek and Hebrew, and he points out that, although their «artificio», i. e., grammar and structure, is very different, some related words could be communicated by commerce.

At first Hervás did not distinguish Albanian from Greek (1784:168), although he knew of small Albanian districts in Sicily and Calabria. He recognized the Greek, Latin and Turkish elements in this language (1785:109). In the *Catálogo* (1802:10, 352 ff.) he would rightly separate Epirotic or Albanian from Greek and propose an Illyrian origin (now using the term in its ancient meaning).

2.7. Hervás comments on the Celtic opposing the Celtomania which then dominated in Britain and France. He accepts that Celtic was primitively spoken in most of Europe, but he contradicts ideas which had been formulated in England, putting Basque with Breton, Welsh, Cornish and Irish, as a branch of Celtic (1784:170 f.).

³ Later on HERVÁS 1802:86 would admit that Suevians left some linguistic traces in Galicia, and therefrom came «las pocas [palabras] llamadas góticas que hay en la española». He is very negative on the list of Gothic-Spanish words given by the historian Mariana.

⁴ Scythian meant for him the Finnic-Ugrian family of languages, to which he rightly attributed Lapponian (1784:163).

Hervás, in a very representative example of his method, asked his friend José de Beovide to write a short Basque grammar and in comparing it with the Irish one which his friend Charles O'Connor wrote for him, proved that the structure of both languages was different. He completed the proof asking Beovide to check the Celtic words in the *Collectanea etymologica* by Leibniz, and just two words were found common to both languages: W. *arth* ~ Bsq. (*h*)*artz* 'bear', and the romance and English *tripe*, which is found in fact in Celtic languages as a modern loan (Corominas). Hervás leans also on the fact that Leibniz wrote against the Celticity of Basque (1784:174, cf. also ARENS 1976:137 f.).

Against the Celtomaniacs who believed Celtic to be the source of Greek and Latin words, Hervás (1784:172) saw Basque as the giver of many words to Latin. Hervás followed here, very uncritically, an old scholarly Basque tradition, which had found its most developed form in what we could call «Cantabromania» of the Jesuit M. de Larramendi. It is for this reason that Hervás resisted the idea of finding Celtic elements in Spain. At first he supposed at most some Celtic colony in Spain (1784:179). Later on (1787b:41 f.) he admitted Celtic elements in Galicia and Portugal, and he even explained somewhat fantastically the word *Lusitania* as 'di erba paese' (Ir. *lus* 'plant, grass'). This connection of Ireland with Spain helped Hervás in supporting the ideas of Colonel Charles Vallancey, who wrote on Ireland and knew of tradition on the coming of the Sons of Miled from Spain.

Hervás was misled by his notion of mother tongue, the «lingue matrici», born for ever at the Babelic confusion (s. 1787b:9 ff.). He would not imagine that Ir. *tir* and Lat. *terra* were genealogically related, and not a loan, from Celtic into Latin, as Celtomaniacs believed, or the other way, as he reacted (1784:173). Basque was another element of confusion: for Hervás Bsq. *urre* 'gold' was the source of Lat. *aurum* and even of W. *aur*, etc. (in fact a Latin loan in insular Celtic).

He believed Breton to be a survival of Gaulish (1784:174). Welsh seemed to him the most pure form of Celtic. As for the group of Irish, Manx and Scottish Gaelic he was misled by his friend Vallancey, who believed that in Irish there existed a Phoenician component, separating it from the other Celtic languages.

With more documentation Hervás recognized that Irish cannot be separated from Welsh and Breton (1786:126 f.), and finally he would say (1787a:18) that the Irish tongue is «quasi pura celtica», although he still admits (187a:25) that it has some Phoenician elements. Hervás undoubtedly, in the last volume of his *Catálogo*, is the first to point out the Celtic family of Indo-European.

The comparison of Irish with Berber (1878a:127 f.) and with Punic, just as the comparisons which British scholars had made of Celtic with Hebrew (HERVÁS 1784:199 did not accept them), is to be considered within the still vexed question of the «substratum» in the British Isles and primitive Europe.

On the material of the Lord's prayers (1787b:203 f.) Hervás rightly classifies these languages in «Celtico-Irlandesi» and «Celtico-Britoni», with the only mistake of putting Cornish amongst the first ones⁵.

2.8. On the Italic languages Hervás begins by polemizing against the British authors who believed the Umbrian and other aboriginal peoples to be Celtic (1784:178). Here again in his reaction, the influence of Larramendi misleads him: he believes that both Latin and Spanish had taken much from Basque (1784:200 ff.). Nonsensical lists of Italian names come mostly from Larramendi. So for instance (1784:212 f.) *Oscan*, *Opscus*, *Opikos* from Bsq. *ots* 'noise', the name *Sabelli* from Bsq. *sabel* 'belly', *Hernici* of Latium in connection with mount (*H*)*ernio* in Guipúzcoa, etc.

More positive is that Hervás understood the necessity of considering the older monuments of the Latin language, such as the fragments of the sacral laws of Numa and the rostral Columna (1784:182, 184 f.), and later he knew of Lanzi's studies of the Arval song (1787a: 117).

But his prejudice prevented Hervás from accepting Latin as one of the mother tongues: it is only (1784:183) a mixture of Etruscan, Greek, Celtic and Cantabrian, i. e. Basque, which was the common substratum of Italy and Spain.

We will not comment on Hervás ideas about Romance languages, since Coseriu (1978/76:124 ff.) has presented the essentials.

On Etruscan Hervás, faithful to his method of personal inquiry, consulted a member of Etruscan Academy of Cortona and deduced that the mysterious language was not a mother tongue but a mixture of Celtic, Basque and... Tartarian (1784:235).

3. In his Italian work Hervás makes a final list of six mother languages which we would consider Indo-European: Indian and Armenian, omitting Iranian, in Asia; in Europe: Slavic, Greek, Teutonic and Celtic, disregarding Latin (1787b: 33 ff.). Baltic is recognized as Scythian-Illyrian (1787b: 82), i. e. something between Finnic and Slavic, but «la sintassi (1787b: 164) mi sembra piuttosto Illirica, che non Scitica». In the Spanish redaction (1802: 10) he adds in Europe Albanian as a mother tongue, and Gipsy, recognized as Indo-Aryan. He also catalogued in Europe three other mother tongues, Scythian (Finnic-Ugrian), Tartarian (Turkish) and Basque, which we consider non-Indo-European.

At the end Hervás tried to put his results in a historical perspective, and considered (1804a: 16 f.) three nations native in Europe: the descendants of three of the sons of Japheth, Gomer, Javan and Tubal, whose

⁵ Hervás thought at first (1784:178) that the Zimbrian language of Val-Cimbra in Tirol, was a Celtic remnant in Italy, but he sought out more information and he knew soon (1785:72) that it was «teutonico antico con alcune voci celtiche». Later on he would state that it was a remnant left by the ancient Cimbri. See the recent paper on this dialect by W. MED 1979.

languages are respectively Celtic⁶ Greek or Ionic, and Basque. The famous chapter 10 of *Genesis* with the speculations of Josephus, Saint Jerome, etc. are still his basis.

So, incongruous as this may seem to us, it represents some kind of historical perspective, with the hypothesis of invasions from Asia. Because the three primitive European linguistic stocks are opposed to the «newcomers», the «advenedizos», as Hervás says, again using a term of Larramendi. Hervás devoted a whole volume (1802) to the newcomers in Europe: Teutons, Slavs, Scythians and Turks, plus the Gipsies.

Of our Indo-Europeans, Celts and Greeks, according to Hervás, belong to the indigenous in Europe, whereas Teutons and Slavs are newcomers.

But in examining the early history of Europe Hervás tried many deductions from onomastics. He rightly saw that the Slavs came later to the land of the original Illyrians (1802:338), and thought that the Albanians would be the Illyrian descent (1802:343). But he continued to believe, even in putting them as indigenous, that the Celts brought words from the East, not from an earlier mother tongue, but from Greek and Hindustani (1804b:344 ff.).

In the lengthy last volumes of the *Catálogo* the pages devoted to the Celts deserve more attention than the Cantabrian theories. Hervás distinguishes (1804a:156 ff., 180 ff., 196 ff., 201 ff.) an older Celtic invasion of Spain and, from there, of Ireland, and a later one of France (1805:49 ff., 75 ff.), with their expansion to Central and East Europe and to Asia Minor. This is a correction of some still current ideas of identifying Continental Celtic and Gaulish.

The *Catálogo* remained incomplete. The biographer Zarco (1936:54) speaks of four further volumes: Latin, Italic, Etruscan, the languages of Africa, other themes which are outlined in the Italian volumes were not considered again.

4. We cannot comment here on the numerous questions where the diligence and fabulous scholarship of Hervás attained to Indo-European etymologies and comparisons in a measure larger than could be expected from his theoretical principles. With his ingenuity, which Coseriu (1978a: n. 4) calls «su excepcional perspicacia (casi un talento natural)» to discover linguistic affinities, he achieved many discoveries. But the six propositions at which he arrives in his last Italian volume (1787b: 9 ff.) are really false. He believes literally in the confusion of languages in the Tower of Babel, and therein found the basis of the unity of languages, and of their differentiation in precisely the original number of mother languages. With his idea of mother tongues he did not go beyond the «family» (Romance,

⁶ Children of Gomer are now the Celts and no more, like above, 2.5, the Cimbri or Teutons. COSERIU 1978a:48 has pointed out the way in which Hervás continually corrected his opinions without particular explanations.

Teutonic, at most Finnic-Ugrian or Semitic or Malay-Polynesian), but his taxonomy did not pursue longer and less clear linguistic units. Moreover his time perspective, like that which was still usual half a century later, was too short: the Biblical chronology put very narrow limits to linguistic change.

Unfortunately there is no place here to present some of Hervás's numerous discoveries. A list of them would include good ideas on expressive words («Elementarverwandtschaft» of Schuchardt; «voces naturales» of García de Diego); on phonetics (of which he had also the experience of the teaching of deaf-mutes), with some hints of historical phonetics; on the non-connection of elaborated grammar of the language and higher culture of the people; on the cultural interpretation of loan words; not to speak of the recognition of many linguistic families in all continents.

Perhaps Hervás's approach to Indo-European is one of the less favourable elements by which to judge him. Where tradition and scholarship were too heavy, he was anxious to conciliate Saint Jerome with Scaliger and with Leibniz. On America or Oceania, where the authorities were not so imposing, he could be more original.

On the whole, the peremptory distinction in modern science weighs against Hervás: he belongs to the so-called pre-scientific era. If Hervás's achievements are compared with those of his immediate successors, they appear, just as Diderichsen (1976: 144) said of one of the founders of Indo-European linguistics, Rasmus Rask, as still «non-historical». Rask, nearly half a century younger than Hervás, was like him still predominantly interested in the classification of languages and the origin and migrations of the peoples who spoke them. The history of science has left Hervás far away, farther than Rask, of course, but Hervás, partly through his work, partly through the use which Adelung and Vater made of it, belongs to the scholars from whom Rask and Bopp and Grimm learned in establishing modern historical linguistics⁷.

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⁷ Cf. DIDERICHSEN 1976:148: «Nahezu alle die methodischen Prinzipien, die man Rask, Bopp und Grimm zugeschrieben hat, sind von Grammatikern und Etymologen geäußert worden, deren Werke sie mit ziemlicher Sicherheit gekannt haben».

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