

“MANIFESTO IN FAVOR OF A MULTILINGUAL SCIENCE”

It is clear that during each period in which relationships are established between different peoples, a language is eventually imposed. Generally it is the language of the conqueror or the economically dominant power. There exists a first level of communication, either at a colloquial or service level, and there is no doubt that English fulfills this function today; but it is a simplified English with limited vocabulary. This level of communication simplifies and impoverishes the language, a situation that is beginning to be lamented amongst English intellectuals, who denounce the limited understanding of grammar, syntax and ability to express concepts that is evident in many articles that are published in English by non-native English speakers.

In the fields of natural and technical sciences, English has been imposed as the official means of communication. There are two reasons for this. First – a scientific domination of the United States, and more importantly second – the fact that the majority of the vocabulary in the natural sciences derives from Latin or Greek and, consequently, are more similar in all European languages. On the other hand these sciences have a meta-language and formulae whose meaning is understood by everyone: Cu signifies copper to scientists throughout the world, irrespective of the language that they speak. A specific equation is written the same way in all languages. However, in the fields of Human and Social Sciences, in which the subtleties of thought can only be expressed by drawing upon a wide understanding of words and their synonyms, the individual can only really express him or herself adequately by having a sound understanding of the grammar and the concepts being expressed.

The labour of the administrators of European science in reducing all scientific communication to a scientific language is creating a rapid deterioration of the Human and Social Sciences. In the first place, it is depriving all of those individuals whose first language is different from English, from the possibility of being able to express themselves correctly and clearly; this causes the impoverishment of expression to which I have already referred. In second place, in our society, the quality of expression is associated with the capacity of thought. Consequently, someone who expresses him or herself in a limited way is considered to be less valid. This impacts directly upon all of those who are obliged to express themselves in a language that is not their own, particularly when obtaining resources to undertake research is dependant upon it. In third place, the documents and the majority of publications in one country are in the language of that country. That the Germans, for example, should write about the history or any other aspect of the social life of Germany in English is pointless, when the overwhelming majority of people who read about it will be Germans. There will be works that will merit translation into another language, which is what has occurred up until now. It is natural that a foreigner who researches into the history, society of Germany, or the thoughts of its scholars, would wish to publish his or her works not only in their own language but also in German, but that is a personal choice.

While, on the one hand, a knowledge of languages is being developed, on the other, the “scientific monolingualism” to which we refer is being created. While linguistic pluralism is defended by the European Parliament, the same politicians, who reserve this right for themselves which we consider to be fundamental, seek to impose monolingualism in the scientific environment. Since they control the economic resources that are destined to develop scientific research, they manoeuvre their own countrymen into a position of inferiority, given that the prestige of a language does not depend upon the number of people that speak it, so much as the prestige of what is

published in the language. And the prestige of a language is directly reflected in the political and economic power of the country that sees it as its own.

Systems of computer-based translation have been making a notable improvement recently, enabling anyone to avail themselves of automatic translations of any language into their own. This makes it even more unnecessary to oblige people to express themselves in any language apart from their own. European culture has developed in a multi-lingual world, with some languages contributing more than others in the development of certain sciences. The loss of this plurality will produce a notable impoverishment. It will be necessary for future generations of researchers to retain the capacity to analyze documents in various languages and to express themselves in that which is most familiar to them. The most relevant scientists are those who have the capacity to know other languages and the idiosyncracies of other nations, and who have been capable of learning directly from the documents and the literature created by others.

Consequently we demand:

That while there will always be a language of verbal communication, currently English in many quarters, in the scientific field the liberty to express oneself in one's own language should be maintained, since it is a guarantee of an accurate expression of one's own thoughts.

That the scientific administrators of the European Union should not impose a single language when applying for scientific Project funding, a practice that puts at a disadvantage all of those for whom that language is their Mother tongue.

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His research has been published in six languages (German, Catalan, Castilian, English, Italian and Portuguese), and in 15 countries (Germany, Argentina, Austria, Argentina, Brasil, Spain, USA, France, Holland, Hungary, the UK, Israel, Italy, Portugal and Switzerland).

English version:

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