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VERBAL MYSTIFICATION: DISCURSIVE CYNICISM*

SUMMARY. The author relating the issues of ecolinguistics and language norms to the phenomenon of the discursive cynicism points out a certain paradox. The analysis of the texts that belong to different communicative and functional spheres has revealed that discursive cynicism, being a mode of a natural behavior, is determined both culturally and epistemologically, i.e. this phenomenon is caused by social imperfections of certain periods.

KEY WORDS. Discursive cynicism, ecolinguistics, language norms, verbal mystification, natural behavior, semantic intersection

Considering the issues of ecolinguistics, it is impossible to overlook those of linguistic norms and conventional prescription, imposed by the society. The issues most controversial are as follows: (1) how far such forms of verbal threatening as foul words, invectives, discursive play, and improper puns are admissible by the society?; (2) what role does the ratio of the explicit and the implicit play in the degree of this admission?. In this article we shall scrutinize one of the forms that constitute the category of the comic: discursive cynicism.

“Cynicism” here is regarded in its initial sense, that was assigned to it by the philosophers of Hellenism [1]. «Cynicism» is viewed as one of the behavioral and discursive dominants of an individual who comes from the elite, and who due to social, political, professional or any other reasons has grown disappointed in his (or her) youthful ideals, and not having an opportunity to “take arms against” social imperfections physically, expresses his or her disappointment verbally. In this sort of self-expression complicated semantic play, based upon “poetics of the human body” [2] dominates. Later notion of “cynicism” as a complete negligence of other individuals’ concerns and values is not the subject of research here. It is possible to assume that these two concepts of “cynicism” could be regarded as a dichotomy. Hellenistic cynicism initially was linked to the idea of natural behavior, to the opposition of nature and culture; these components of meaning are not to be found in the later concept. For to define the parameters of analyses we shall attract Fowler’s table on the type of the comic [3]. For each text, out of eight types of the comic (*humour, wit, satire, sarcasm, invective, irony, сарказм, invective, cynicism, the sardonic*) three most frequent types are chosen. Fowler’s functional

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parameters are of great help when we want to point out all the cases of “semantic intersections” [4], that come out as a result of discursive cynicism.

The two texts are chosen for the analysis:

- 1) a personal letter (A. Pushkin's letter to P. Vyazemsky)
- 2) a poem of a faked author (Kozma Prutkov)

These two texts will be considered as (1) an example of discursive cynicism (2) from the point of the “*semantic intersection as an explosion of the sense(meaning)*” theory, that Yu. Lotman has foregrounded in his book “Culture and Explosion” (1992).

Yu. Lotman links semantic intersection and a further explosion of the sense (meaning) with metaphorization. In his book he writes:

«Any semantic space only metaphorically can be viewed as two-dimensional with definitely outlined borders. It would be more close to truth to imagine a certain block of sense whose borders are shaped out of the multitude of individual uses. ...The intersections of semantic spaces that bring forth a new sense are always linked to an individual mind. When these intersections spread over the whole sphere of a certain language it results in the appearance of the so-called language metaphors. The latter belong to a common store of a language community. At the other pole it is possible to trace artistic metaphors. Here the semantic space is also ambiguous: cliché-metaphors, common for certain literary periods or movements, metaphors that gradually lose their trivial character and acquire individual features, which illustrate various degrees of semantic intersection. In this case the uttermost metaphor is that of a completely novel character, viewed by the adherers of a traditional sense as illegal and insulting their sense of reason; this shocking metaphor comes always as a result of an artistic effort —» [5]. To a great extent the semantic intersection is caused by the structural, functional and semiotic parameters of the insanity masque in a belle-lettres text, that Yu. Lotman described in his book “Culture and Explosion”:

«Binary opposition of a fool and an insane could be regarded as two semantic pairs: a fool/an intelligent and an intelligent/an insane. Together they make one ternary structure: a fool- an intelligent — an insane. ...A third element of this system is an insane behavior, the behavior of a mad person. Its distinctive feature is that an insane person obtains an additional liberty in violating interdictions. It leads to unpredictability of his actions. The latter, being destructive as a behavioral constant, unexpectedly turns out to be highly effective in the utterly conflicting situations (65)». Yu. Lotman remarks that «unpredictability of actions is effective due to its ability to disarm an adversary [6].... We shall analyse the two texts making use of these parameters of the semantic intersection theory.

А.С. Пушкин ИЗ ПИСЬМА К ВЯЗЕМСКОМУ	A. Pouchkine An extract from the letter to Vyazemsky
<p><i>В глуши, измучась жизнью постной, Изнемогая животом, Я не парю — сижу орлом И болен праздностью поносной.</i></p> <p><i>Бумаги берегу запас, Натугу вдохновенья чуждый, Хожу я редко на Парнас, И только за большою нуждой.</i></p> <p><i>Но твой затейливый навоз Приятно мне щекотит нос: Хвостова он напоминает, Отца зубастых голубей, И дух мой снова позоывает Ко испражненью прежних дней.</i></p> <p><i>Благодарствую, душа моя, и целую тебя в твою поэтическую <—> — с тех пор как я в Михайловском, я толь- ко два раза так хохотал; при разборе новой пиитики басен и при посвящении <—> твоего...</i></p> <p><i>Поздравляю, тебя, моя радость, с романтической трагедией, в ней же первая персона Борис Годунов! Трагедия моя кончена; я перечел ее вслух, один, и бил в ладоши и кричал, ай да Пушкин, ай да сукин сын! ... Жуковский говорит, что царь меня простит за трагедию — навряд, мой милый. Хоть она и в хорошем духе писана, да никак не могу упрятать всех моих ушей под колпак юродивого. Торчат! ... (7 ноября 1825) [7]</i></p>	<p><i>In the solitude of an exile Having pain in my stomach I do not soar in the skies- I squat as an eagle Being ill with an idleness of diarrhea I save a pile of paper, Hostile to any effort of inspiration I am a rare visitor of Parnassus, If not for a great necessity Your bizarre manure, however, For me is pleasant to inhale: It evokes Khvostov in my mind, The father of sharp-toothed doves And it calls again my spirit To relieve itself as long ago I thank you, my dear friend, and I kiss your poetic <—> — since I have settled in Mikhailovaskoye, only twice I laughed so heartily, when I was analysing a new “poetics” of fables and when your <—> had been sanctified...</i></p> <p><i>I congratulate you, my joy, on my romantic tragedy; it is Boris Godunov who is the first personage there! I have accomplished my tragedy; being alone, I reread it aloud and clapped my hands shouting: Good boy, Pouchkine! Good boy, son of a bitch! ... Zhukovsky sais that the tsar is likely to forgive me for the sake of this tragedy — unlikely, my dear heart. Though it is written in a proper way, I fail to hide the whole of my ears under the bell-cap of the God’s fool. They are up-prick! (7th of November 1825) (translated by the author)</i></p>

According to its functional and communicative properties this text is a personal letter of the poet who, being exiled to Michailovskoye, his family estate, has a very limited liberty to act. A. Pushkin responds to the letter of P.A. Vyasemsky, his close friend, that began as follows:

П.А. Вяземский (текст-оригинал)	P. Vyasemsky (translation)
<p>Ты сам Хвостова подражатель, Красот его любостыжатель, Вот мой, его, твой, наш навоз... http://az.lib.ru/h/hwostow_d_i/ text_0070.shtml</p>	<p>You yourself imitate Khvostov /and borrow his verbal gorgeousness (16^h October 1825) Here is my, his, your, our manure ... (translated by the author)</p>

The count Dmitry Khvostov whose name is mentioned in both letters, was the author of the fable "The Two Doves", to the line of which " *he (the dove) has hardy managed to gnaw off the knots by his teeth*" [8] Pushkin refers in the verse "The father of sharp-toothed doves". O.L. Dovgy in his research "Triton goes up: Khvostov in the writings by Pushkin" remarked that Khvostov often detested Puchkin's cynicism [9].

Considering this text as a realization of a discursive cynicism and other types of the comic (wit and irony), it is possible to notice that the parameter AUDIENCE is characterized by the communicative deviation (see table 1):

Table 1

**Types of the comic in A. Pushkin's letter to P. Vyasemsky
(the 7th ноября 1925 г.)**

Type of the comic	Motive or Aim	Province	Method or means	Audience
<i>wit</i>	<i>revelation</i>	<i>Words and ideas</i>	<i>Surprise</i>	<i>Intellectual</i>
<i>irony</i>	<i>exclusiveness</i>	<i>Statements of facts</i>	<i>mystification</i>	<i>An inner circle</i>
<i>cynicism</i>	<i>Self-justification</i>	<i>morals</i>	<i>Exposure of nakedness</i>	<i>The respectable</i>

Both the addressers and the addressees of these letters belong to the elite of the society and intellectuals (the target audience for wit and irony). Yet, however, it is doubtful that they thought of themselves as of the respectable audience, who could be shocked by a cynic utterance or behavior. Yet, we can assume that the main type of the comic in text 1 is discursive cynicism. Such features as the general poetics of the body (bottom), the description of nature calls, nomination of excrements, conceptual metaphor *the source sphere of excrements as the target sphere of "chef — d'oeuvres"* serve as an evidence of it. Furthermore, the employment of vulgarisms (see omissions in the text) and substandard expressions, of which the phrase "Good boy, Pouchkine! Good boy, son of a bitch!" became a cliché, could be regarded as cynicism. To this the ironic combination of the lexemes that belong to different stylistic registers from the elevated to the vulgar could be added. (e.g. your poetic < >). All these means are aimed at shocking the respectable. It is unlikely that Pushkin's intention was to bewilder his close friend, P.Vyasemsky who, taking into account his letter, was of the same level of cynicism. Yet, however, it is possible to define the respectable audience that could be shocked by the means of Pushkin's personal letter. His situation of an exiled poet can be treated as the discursive context for his personal correspondence. That context included such component as close watch of which postal censorship was a part. Even Sergei L. Pushkin, the father of the poet, had agreed to play an ignoble role of an informer and a postal censor. Therefore it is possible to assume that in this letter all parameters of *wit, irony, and cynicism* are interlinked that resulted in a semantic intersection and cultural explosion described in the book

by Yu. Lotman. At the semiotic level we should point out *the bell-cap of a God's fool*. (Pushkin's letter*). We have already noticed that in Russia up to the political and cultural reforms of Peter the Great "laugh-making (causing)", predominantly of a manipulative character was accepted exclusively from the figure of a God's Fool (Yurodivy) [10]. The latter was treated as an incarnation of a spiritual asceticism. The behaviour of God's fools was remarkable for their disposition of a blissful joy and for their *unpredictability of actions* (Yu. Lotman) characteristic for the insane. The society, for the sake of truth, permitted a God's fool to provoke the laugh of a crowd [11]. Undoubtedly, Pushkin never accepted the schema of a God's fool, he only tried on virtually his bell-cap, that gave him a certain freedom of self-expression and allowed shocking the respectable without any definite danger of being persecuted. From the viewpoint of pragmatic measurement of a semiosis (Ch. Morris) the bell - cap of Pushkin, under which the poet failed to hide the whole of his ears, has a manipulative power. Herewith, the up-prick ears (not cuddled!) turn up as a symbol of unsubsordination.

Kosma Prutkov

My Portrait

The original	Translation
Когда в толпе ты встретишь человека, Который наг; Чей лоб мрачней туманного Казбека, Неровен шаг; Кого власы подняты в беспорядке; Кто, вопия, Всегда дрожит в нервическом припадке,- Знай: это я! Кого язвят со злостью вечно новой, Из рода в род; С кого толпа венец его лавровый Безумно рвет; Кто ни пред кем спины не клонит гибкой,- Знай: это я!.. В моих устах спокойная улыбка, В груди — змея! [12]	When in the mob you run into a man Who is naked, Who is in a heavier gloom than the cloudy mountain of Kazbeck Whose gait is uneven Whose hair is up entangled in a mess Who is trembling in a nervous fit,- You should know : It's me! A man, forever marred with malice and spite; Whose crown of laurels is torn off by a crazy crowd; Whose lithe back is never bent, - You should know : It's me! My smile is calm, My bosom gives shelter to a serpent. (translated by the author)

The second case of verbal mystification is associated with the category the author. Self-Portrait of Kuzma Petrovich Prutkov has come as a collective effort of Count Alexei Tolstoy Konstatinovich (1817-1875), brothers Alexey Mikhailovich Zhemchuzhnikov (1821-1908), Vladimir Mikhailovich Zhemchuzhnikov (1830-1884) and Alexander's Zhemchuzhnikov (1826-1896), and Peter P. Ershov (1815-1869). Satirical oeuvres of Kozma Petrovich Prutkov (poems, aphorisms, literary parody) of the 1850-1860s were published in the journals the «Contemporary» (Sovremennik) and the «Spark» (ISKRA), as well as in several other publications. This literary mask of the «wise madman» allowed its creators teetering on the brink of what was permitted, introducing readers to the existing order through the sensations

* I fail to hide the whole of my ears under the bell-cap of the God's fool. They are up-prick!

such as «it is bad in front of me, even worse in the back — as if I am sitting in a cold puddle» (Aphorisms).

Semantically, the “Self-Portrait” falls into two parts. The category of the recipient, in addition to the category of the author connects both parts — the entire text of the poem is an appeal to the reader. Second-person pronoun “you” and verbs in the present tense of the second person and in the imperative (meet, know) indicate the desire to establish trust in the communicative pair of “poet — the reader.” The difference appears at the denotatum and significative features, as well as at the level of the textual category of “point of view”.

Actually, the first part demonstrates the external signs of a madman: *«a man who is naked, gloomy, whose gate is uneven, whose hair is up entangled in a mess, who is trembling in a nervous fit»*.

In fact, the authors, listing these symptoms, offer terms and conditions that help the poet to find freedom of expression, that is, the mask of a madman or a bell-cap of a Fool.

In the second part it is the crowd that is labeled by the insane behavior, meanwhile the poet takes on the features of timelessness, universality and persistence (*A man, forever marred with malice and spite; / Whose crown of laurels is torn off by a crazy crowd; / Whose lithe back is never bent.*). The two concluding lines (*My smile is calm, / My bosom gives shelter to a serpent.*) link both parts of the portrait. Here it is possible to observe the semantic opposition of explicit goodness and implicit sarcasm. The “calm smile” sign appears as the symbol of an explicit goodness, and the “serpent” — as a symbol of the implicit sarcasm. If we consider this text as an expression of the comic types, the sardonic should be regarded as a completion to the invective and cynicism. Together they form the semantic intersection of the poem.

Table 2

**Types of the comic and semantic intersections in “My Portrait”
by Kosma Prutkov**

Type of the comic	Motive or Aim	Province	Method or means	Audience
<i>invective</i>	<i>discredit</i>	<i>misconduct</i>	<i>Direct statement</i>	<i>The public</i>
<i>The sardonic</i>	<i>Self-relief</i>	<i>adversity</i>	<i>Pessimism</i>	<i>The self</i>
<i>cynicism</i>	<i><u>Self-justification</u></i>	<i>morals</i>	<i>Exposure of nakedness</i>	<i>The respectable</i>

According to the aim or motive, the semantic intersection rests upon discrediting of the crowd, self-relief and self-justification. The province is adversity and morals. The parameter “fraud” is implicit. According to its method and means, direct statement and exposure of nakedness step forward while the parameter “pessimism” could be traced only in the assessment of “malice and spite”. The audience is presented by the public, the respectable and by the self.

CONCLUSIONS:

Discursive cynicism can be viewed as a multidimensional phenomenon, the semantic intersection of which is predetermined by the intersection of the discursive parameters of the following types of the comic: invective, irony, wit, cynicism and the sardonic.

In every case the semantic intersection rests upon "poetics of the body (bottom), semiotic figures of the insane, the shift of the point of view as well as upon different virtual masks, that are the components of the three textual categories: these of the author, the personage and the addressee.

Relating the issues of ecolinguistics and language norms to the phenomenon of the discursive cynicism we should point out a certain paradox. The analysis of the texts that belong to different communicative and functional spheres has revealed that discursive cynicism, being a mode of a natural behavior, is determined both culturally and epistemologically, i.e. this phenomenon is caused by social imperfections of certain periods.

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