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Опыт лингвоаксиологического анализа

рассказов П.Г. Вудхауза

Шибалина А.В. "Опыт лингвоаксиологического анализа рассказов П.Г. Вудхауза"

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**Linguoaxiological Analysis
Of Stories By P.G. Wodehouse
(A Case Study)**

Шибалина А.В. "Опыт лингвоаксиологического анализа рассказов П.Г. Вудхауза"

Diploma Paper

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Introduction

This study focuses on linguoaxiological analysis. As can be derived from the title, we are basing the analysis specifically on the stories written by Pelham Grenville Wodehouse. The works of this author give us the key to the object our research, English humour. Firstly, we would like to explain why we consider English humour so essential to this study.

Humour is the topic of general interest, it has been examined for many years, but a clear definition of humour still remains to be found. Some of the critical minds say that “to analyse humour is the death of laughter”, but they, being guilty of analysing humour themselves, have to specify: “Luckily, it is an exercise chiefly undertaken by the serious-minded who have nothing to lose”¹.

Humour appeals to everyone, and English humour is usually seen as a peculiar form of it. Humour is deeply rooted in the culture of a certain nation; that is why, in order to understand English humour, we must examine the English culture.

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If we look deeper into the subject, we will see that those theories, which have been put forward through the years are of subjective and personal character for the most part, and rarely deal with linguistic aspects of the material provided, concentrating on the conceptual side.

For instance, when it comes to examining particular works of Wodehouse, Owen Dudley Edwards gives much consideration to the development of the relationship between Jeeves and Wooster, and virtually none to the way it is phrased. Similarly, Simon Critchley, despite mentioning some linguistically based theories, focuses on cultural aspects of humour, stating that it is “context-specific”².

“Encyclopaedia Britannica” defines humour as follows: humour is “the sense within us which sets up a kindly contemplation of the incongruities of life,

¹ Cazalet-Keir T. *Homage to Wodehouse*. – London: Barry & Jenkins, 1973, p. 192

² Critchley S. *On Humour*. – London and New York: Routledge, 2002, p. 67

and the expression of that sense in art”³. The “kindly contemplation of the incongruities of life” implies the existence of an attitude towards an object. It is natural to assume that the values held by a person predetermine this attitude. Therefore, in order to understand humour of a nation, it is imperative to understand the character of this nation, and the level of values must be taken into account.

Values are the subject of “value theory”⁴ – axiology – which, in its modern form, is relatively recent (the term itself was first used in 1902⁵). Humour is revealed through language, and linguistic axiology studies how values are expressed. English humour has not been thoroughly studied from that point of view, and linguistic axiology is going to be the basis of our approach. In order to comprehend humour, it is necessary to examine it from both linguistic and axiological points of view.

We have chosen stories by Pelham Grenville Wodehouse as our material, because he is widely considered as an authentic representative of English humour and English national character. One cannot gain a thorough understanding of either without examining the personal plane. It is, therefore, necessary to apply to disciplines which study man – psychology, anthropology, culturology.

Without using the knowledge of the humanities, it is impossible to penetrate such a complex culturological phenomenon as English humour. The overview of English humour pertaining to the English character and the humanities is going to be given in the first and second chapters of the present work.

The values of a human being, as has already been mentioned, are expressed with the help of semiotics and its signs. Consequently, in the third chapter we are going to turn to branches of science which observe the relation between culture and language – cognitive linguistics and linguistic axiology.

³ Encyclopaedia Britannica Online: Humour

⁴ The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy. 2d Edition. General Ed. Robert Audi. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p.949

⁵ Новая философская энциклопедия: В 4 т. Ин-т философии РАН, Нац. общ.-научн. фонд; Предс. научно-ред. совета В.С. Степин – М.: Мысль, 2010, т. I, стр. 62

In the practical part of our research (Part II) we will give the description of our methodology and apply it to the stories by P.G. Wodehouse. By the end of our study, we hope to determine the degree of linguistic and culturological presence in a text of English humour and their correlation.

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Part I

Chapter 1

English humour as a culturological phenomenon

In this chapter we are going to study English humour and its relation to the English character. Before we familiarize ourselves with a particular type of humour (that of the English), we should examine humour in general. For that purpose, we turn to its researchers.

Alison Ross states that humour is “something that makes a person laugh or smile”⁶. She has to specify, however: “it is simplistic to say that humour is just for a laugh. There may be a target – a person, an institution or a set of beliefs – where the underlying purpose is deadly serious”⁷. The context is crucial for determining whether an individual finds something amusing or not. One of the theories Alison Ross mentions is the “incongruity theory”, which focuses on surprising the audience and undergoes these stages:

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1. a conflict between what is expected and what actually occurs;
2. the conflict is caused by an ambiguity at some level of language;
3. the punch line is surprising, as it is not the expected interpretation, but it resolves the conflict⁸.

She is not the only one who mentions this theory, so we can say that it is significant in our case. Simon Critchley includes it in his list of humour theories, which looks thus:

1. The superiority theory, represented by Plato, Aristotle, Quintillian; stating that we laugh from feelings of superiority over other people.

⁶ Ross A. The Language of Humour. – London; New York: Routledge, 1999, p.1

⁷ Ibid., p.2

⁸ Ibid., p.8

2. The relief theory which emerges in the nineteenth century in the work of Herbert Spencer and maintains that laughter can be explained as a “release of pent-up nervous energy”.

3. The incongruity theory, which we discussed above⁹.

We should also consider Mister Critchley’s definition of humour which, in essence, mirrors the incongruity theory. “Humour is produced by a disjunction between the way things are and the way they are represented in the joke, between expectation and actuality”¹⁰. He also says that “true humour” is “self-mockery. The object of laughter is the subject who laughs”¹¹. This statement is indispensable to us, because this principle is one of the bases of the English humour.

Richard Usborne, who carried out an extensive work on Wodehouse, also mentions it. He says that self-derogatory sense is typical for the English and talks about the first person singular being one of the main elements of English humour: “If ‘He slipped on a banana skin’ is funny, ‘I slipped on a banana skin’ is conceivably funny and charming”¹².

Most studies, as Mister Critchley claims, tell us that humour is universal¹³. This statement is superficial, though, and we shall compare the definitions of humour in Russia and England to gain perspective on the matter.

The Ozhegov dictionary defines humour thus: “understanding of comic, the ability to see and show something funny, indulgently-mocking attitude towards something”¹⁴. The use of the word “understanding” in this case suggests that humour is somewhat rationalized.

We are going to quote “Encyclopaedia Britannica” once again: “Humour may be defined as the sense within us which sets up a kindly contemplation of the

⁹ Critchley S., op. cit., pp.2-3

¹⁰ Ibid., p.1

¹¹ Ibid., p.14

¹² Usborne R. Wodehouse at Work: A Study of the Books and Characters of P.G. Wodehouse Across Nearly Sixty Years – London: Herbert Jenkins, 1961, p.162

¹³ Critchley, op. cit., p. 2

¹⁴ “Юмор – понимание комического, умение видеть и показывать смешное, снисходительно-насмешливое отношение к чему-л.” - Ожегов С.И. Словарь русского языка. / Под ред. Н.Ю. Шведовой. Москва: “Советская Энциклопедия”, 1973, стр. 911

incongruities of life... The element of kindness is essential to humour: there must not only be perception of the peculiarities, the contrasts and the shortcomings which lend to any character or circumstance an incongruous aspect, but there must be a tolerance and acceptance of them”¹⁵. Based on this definition, we can assume that humour is within the English (“the sense within us”).

Besides that, the crucial element of this type of humour seems to be kindness. We are led to believe that the English live in their own world which they do not want to change. This, in our opinion, makes them tolerant towards the worlds of others, and they have calm attitude towards their own weaknesses. Therefore, they are not used to interfering with other people’s lives, while acting bizarrely themselves.

Now that we have looked at the English definition, we should not entirely dismiss the Russian one: humour finds its place in every culture. There is a very curious word in it which we ought to emphasize: “attitude”. Indeed, humour is an attitude towards something, and in the case of the English – towards everything.

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John Boynton Priestley, a famous English writer, backs up that statement by saying that “it is”, indeed, “everywhere”, but “a traveller in a hurry might well be excused for not noticing that it is here at all”¹⁶. He also states that English humour is “curiously private and domestic”, that it is “part of the atmosphere of the place, a hazy light on things... it is not something that can be picked up with the language, but something that must be given time to filter through”¹⁷.

This is where we can connect the humour we have been talking about with reality. Mister French in his book on Wodehouse says that “all comedy refines, selects and exaggerates. Motives and appetites of the world are real enough”¹⁸. Thus, it is natural to assume that there is nothing to be invented, everything English humour needs is the real world. Wodehouse, as an Englishman, takes things as they come and has common sense, which helps him create reality in

¹⁵ Encyclopaedia Britannica Online: Humour

¹⁶ Priestley J.B. English Humour – London; New York; Toronto: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1930, p. 5

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ French R. P.G. Wodehouse. – Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1966, p. 8

fictitious books. Sir Pelham Grenville “retains a hold on our sense of reality”, agrees Owen Dudley Edwards and gives an example: “It is realism to make Jeeves more intelligent than Bertie”¹⁹.

At the same time the brilliant mind of Wodehouse was able to create “a world of gentleness” (which, as we had the opportunity to see, is essential to English humour in general) “and simplicity where everything solemn and threatening is seen to be hopelessly funny”²⁰. Once again, we notice that the humour of Wodehouse, an Englishman, is painless and kind. All seriousness is reduced to absurdity; and this is what Mister Waugh calls the “great English joke”²¹, attributing the tendency towards nonsense to the English national character. “Mr. Wodehouse’s vineyard is that little subversive corner in nearly every Englishman’s heart where he keeps his sense of the ridiculous”²².

After considering all those statements about humour being “within” the English, and in “nearly every Englishman’s heart”, we should talk about the English. Their humour is of personal nature; therefore, it is deeply rooted in the national character. “The social context is important for the creation and reception of humour”, says Alison Ross; humour “is often dependent on particular cultures and attitudes”²³. Humour is localized and “is usually context-specific”, agrees Simon Critchley and adds that it is a “form of cultural insider-knowledge”²⁴.

The humour of character is what is sufficient in our case. Mister Priestley quotes a certain Mister Santanyana, who meditates upon the English character: “What governs the Englishman is his inner atmosphere, the weather of his soul... The Englishman establishes a sort of satisfaction and equilibrium in his inner man, and from that citadel of rightness he easily measures the value to be in one of his surliest moods and somewhat out of temper with his countrymen”²⁵. This kind of behaviour is completely justified, and it should not surprise us anymore.

¹⁹ Edwards O.D. P.G.Wodehouse: A Critical and Historical Essay. – London: Brian & O’Keeffe, 1977, p.15

²⁰ Cazalet-Keir T. Homage to Wodehouse – London: Barry & Jenkins, 1973, p. 428

²¹ Ibid., p. 421

²² Ibid., p. 428

²³ Ross A., op. cit., p.2

²⁴ Critchley S., op. cit., p.67

²⁵ Priestley J.B., op. cit., 9

Mister Priestley's book "English humour" opens with a chapter on English character, which is hardly coincidental. English humour could indeed be regarded as an expression of the English character. Priestley emphasizes that the English are "a humourous race", though "it has not occurred to"²⁶ foreigners, because their humour "is not quite like any other", it is "purely English"²⁷, thus, it is not quite understood by an outsider. Kate Fox agrees with Priestley, stating that "there is such a thing as 'Englishness'"²⁸. Interestingly enough, Priestley also remarks: "though we may not have gaiety, passion or logic, we have humour"²⁹. This statement is a proof that English humour is not necessarily funny.

Notably, the protagonist of Wodehouse's "Jeeves and Wooster" series Bertie Wooster, according to Richard Usborne, "hardly ever tries to be funny"³⁰. There is no need to be, for the humour, as we know, is within him. Usborne actually compares the author and the character, maintaining that they are "twin souls"³¹. It is no wonder, for both of them are stereotypically and profoundly English.

The English lead highly ritualized lives; the rituals are inviolable and cannot be destroyed. Laughing at rituals (and, consequently, your own values) makes life bearable. The English regard themselves as a part of these rituals; therefore, English humour equals self-ironic attitude.

It is impossible to compile an exhaustive list of English character traits, but there are some closely interconnected distinguishable features which, at this point, can be enumerated. They are:

- humour;
- tolerance and kindness;
- self-irony;

²⁶ Priestley J.B., op. cit., p. 9

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Fox K. Watching the English: The Hidden Rules of English Behaviour. - London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2004, p. 2

²⁹ Priestley J.B., op. cit., pp. 10-11

³⁰ Usborne R., op. cit., p.159

³¹ Usborne R., op. cit., p. 181

- rituals and conservatism;
- understatement

The latter is widely acknowledged to be an inalienable part of the English worldview. George Mikes says that “it is a way of life”³²; and Kate Fox maintains that understatement “is a form of irony”, “a subtle form of humour”, which is not “obviously funny”³³.

English humour, in turn, has its own defining characteristics. If we attempt to summarize our knowledge on the subject, after the thorough analysis of critical literature, we can say that the humour is:

- kind;
- warm;
- light-hearted;
- not necessarily funny;

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but

- humourous;
- bizarre:

examples can be found in the field of linguistics, among other things.

The richness of the English language, which allows one to express themselves freely, has to be one of the reasons for the love of lexical stylistic means the English have – puns, double meanings, etc. “All this... rhyming and joking is uniquely and gloriously English”³⁴;

- self-derogatory (the ‘I’ humour);
- tolerant;
- subtle;
- reduces everything serious to absurdity;

³² Fox K., op. cit., p. 66

³³ Ibid., pp. 66-67

³⁴ Ibid., p. 225

➤ equals attitude;

➤ omnipresent;

➤ personal;

thus,

➤ is rooted in the English character

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Chapter 2

Cultural life as the subject of study

English humour, as we have established, is not a genre, but a complex culturological phenomenon and is rooted in the English character; therefore, it is necessary to gain perspective on man as a subject of study. The methods in which a human being is examined nowadays are diverse and linked with the progress of scientific cognition and the way it is applied to different areas of social practice. The fact that human became the centre of modern science is linked with new interrelation among the disciplines studying nature and society, since it is man who merges nature and history. We are going to give an overview of the humanities immediately connected with the study of man: anthropology, psychology, culturology and axiology.

1. Anthropology

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Anthropology is the study of humanity (from the Greek word “anthropos” – “human being”). It is concerned with man’s character and the way it has been changing in history. Anthropological knowledge was being accumulated gradually, using the experience of biology and medical science; and theories of anthropology were closely linked with philosophy.

The term “anthropology” was first used by Aristotle while studying spirituality of man. The questions of human anatomy and the place of man in the world, the customs of different tribes and peoples were the object of study of many Roman and Greek scientists.

Scholars of Western Europe had two points of view regarding anthropology: as a science of human anatomy and as that of human spiritual nature. At the beginning of the 19th century anthropology was not a separate science, and there was no clear definition of the term. However, scientists were concerned with many anthropological issues – such as the origins of humankind, races and their

distinctions. Naturalists, doctors, students of progressive views were interested in natural science, anthropology in particular.

Modern anthropology dates back to the middle of the 19th century. Since then and up to this date anthropology is considered as basic science of man in many countries. Such vision of it implies that it consists of physical anthropology and social (or cultural) anthropology, also known as ethnography.

The status of anthropology in the system of biological knowledge changed significantly in the 20th century. For example, medical anthropology, which uses the advancement of biological science when dealing with human organism, became a separate discipline. The typology of higher nervous activity is the basis for such disciplines as psychology (which we are going to discuss later), medical science and pedagogics. Psychological and physiological studies of neural peculiarities of human organism helped the cognition of personality features. The main aim of applied anthropology is to reveal how primary properties of man are interconnected.

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Essentially, anthropology is a branch of natural science. It studies the origins and evolution of man's physical structure. It is concerned with the way human organism changes in time and space. Seeing that a human's life is inevitably connected with social environment, anthropology has to deal with the area of social and historical natural laws. This is what is specific to anthropology and it is what makes it distinct from other biological disciplines – its immediate relation to historical science: archaeology, ethnography, history itself.

One of the branches of anthropology – linguistic anthropology – studies language in the light of anthropology. Anthropology's aim, in relation to language, is "to coordinate knowledge about language from the viewpoint of man"³⁵. It is the study of man as a "cultured animal in possession of language"³⁶. Language is regarded as a set of habits acquired by a human being; and it is a part of culture,

³⁵ Hymes D. *Language in Culture and Society: A Reader in Linguistics and Anthropology*. - NY: Harper and Row, 1964, p. xxiii

³⁶ Landar H. *Language and Culture*. - NY: Oxford University Press, 1966, p. 130

which is structured. Values exist in any culture, and those which last, reflect the cultural identity of a people better.

Sapir considers the significance of linguistics to anthropology and culture history. He says that attempts to study a culture thoroughly without knowing its language are “amateurish”³⁷. “No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached”³⁸. This statement is also known as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis.

To summarize, anthropology studies man not only as a product of biological evolution (*homo sapiens*), but also as a subject and an object of historical process – as individuality. A human is regarded as the basic productive force of society, the subject of cognition. If we take all of this into account, it becomes clear that in the process of our study we need to use the accumulated knowledge of this discipline, as well as of the following humanities.

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Any social and cultural phenomenon has a psychological aspect to it, as social patterns are revealed through people, whose actions are determined by their consciousness and will. Psychology (from the Greek word “psyche” – “soul”) is not just the study of soul, as was believed earlier. It has become a genuine science, which examines the origins and development of human and animal psyche. Psychological science was first mentioned more than 2000 years ago when Aristotle wrote the treatise “On the Soul”; but psychology was not a separate science at the time, merely a part of philosophy. Aristotle thought psychology to be the science of the soul: anything that could not be understood was explained by its existence.

³⁷ Landar H., op. cit., p. 222

³⁸ Sapir, E. The Status of Linguistics as a Science. (1929) In: E. Sapir: Culture, Language and Personality (ed. D. G. Mandelbaum). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1958, p. 69

The term “scientific psychology” was first used in the 17th century by Christian Wolff who examined personality³⁹. Natural sciences were developing rapidly; because of that, a new branch of psychological study, which deals with consciousness, arose. In the second half of the 19th century psychology was declared an independent science. In the beginning of the 20th century behaviourism was founded by John Watson; it examined humans’ behaviour and their reactions to external stimuli.

General patterns of human and animal psyche are the object of modern psychology. At the present point in time, psychology studies the inner psychic world of which a human might be or might not be aware. Therefore, it is evident that the object of psychology would change at every stage of its examination.

Scientists have made a transition from the initial object, which was the soul, to psyche. Different psychological schools would emerge during the process, including behaviourism, Gestalt psychology, psychoanalysis, analytical psychology, etc. Psychology notably studies the adaptive function of human and animal psyche in the conditions of the modern life and cognitive processes at every stage of psychic development.

One of the major branches of psychological science is social psychology which examines a human being’s relationship with society. This branch links general psychology with sociology. The object of social psychology is principally personality and its psychic peculiarities; the way people interact and how they perceive each other. Psychological characteristic of social groups is of significance to social psychology. According to scientists, personality has not been examined entirely, and the branch is being further developed.

Social psychology and ethnography are merged into ethnopsychology – a separate branch of psychology which examines psychological features of different ethnic groups and nations. It also includes psychological anthropology.

The tradition of studying psychology of ethnic groups originates from the works of Wilhelm Wundt who regarded a nation as an ethnic community.

³⁹ Петровский А.В., Ярошевский М.Г. Теоретическая психология, М.: «Академия», 2003 г., стр. 104

According to Wundt⁴⁰, the chief method of examining psychology of ethnic groups must be research of myths, customs and language, because the structure of ethnic groups' psychology is comprised of them. Ethnic characteristics are accumulated to a certain extent in the historic experience of a nation, and the adoption of this experience through immediate environment is the paramount part of the process of socialization.

There are two sides to psychological anthropology (which is part of ethnopsychology):

1. psychic constitution (or mentality) includes national, or ethnic, character, temperament, traditions and customs;
2. emotional sphere which consists of national, or ethnic, emotions.

National character is of paramount importance to this study. It is an element of psychic constitution and can be seen as a fixation of typical features which are revealed clearer when one considers not merely a person, but the whole group. Scientists are usually more or less unanimous when assigning peculiarities to a certain nation.

However, one cannot treat a characteristic as belonging solely to a particular nation, claiming, for instance, that one nation is hard-working, and another, communicative. Therefore, we should not consider a set of peculiarities, but the extent to which they manifest themselves and the character of this manifestation. It is understandable, consequently, that the following are reflected in literature: English humour (though the sense of humour is not inherent in the English alone) or Italian emotional expansiveness (though the Spanish are emotional, as well), etc.

The relative stability of the national character's features, despite inevitable changes of social environment, can be accounted for by the inertia ensured by intergenerational transfer of experience.

⁴⁰ Андреева Г.М. Социальная психология: учебник для высших учебных заведений. – 5-е изд., испр. и доп. – М.: Аспект Пресс, 2007, стр. 16

3. Culturology

Culture is habitually shared by people and envelops various areas of life. English humour involves the English culture. It is a way of being and behaving, and its primary aim is to make existence bearable.

The word “culture” originates from the Latin word which means “to cultivate”. Fred Jandt gives the following definition of culture: “Sum total of ways of living, including behavioral norms, linguistic expression, styles of communication, patterns of thinking, and beliefs and values of a group large enough to be self-sustaining transmitted over the course of generations”⁴¹.

The fact that people associate themselves with a particular culture (because of their nationality or location) gives rise to cultural identity. The notion of a cultural icon is also of interest to us⁴². It is a special symbol that tends to be idealized in a culture. In our case, England’s icons would be: gardens, tea, Winnie the Pooh, etc. Sometimes the increasing popularity of these icons is perceived as cultural hegemony – the fear of the predominant influence of one culture over another. In actual fact, the values of a culture are being transmitted.

3a. Field trip

We undertook a trip to the United Kingdom as a part of our culturological research in February-June 2010. Before that we had been working solely with theoretical material – books, articles and other secondary information – and the study had lacked primary sources, namely the English themselves. The main aim we pursued was to get as much immediate communication with the source of the humour as possible. We mostly used the method of participant observation⁴³; part of this was keeping a diary of the observations, writing down real-life situations which could prove relevant to our study.

⁴¹ Jandt F.E. An Introduction to Intercultural Communication. Identities in a Global Community. – London: Sage, 2010, p. G-4

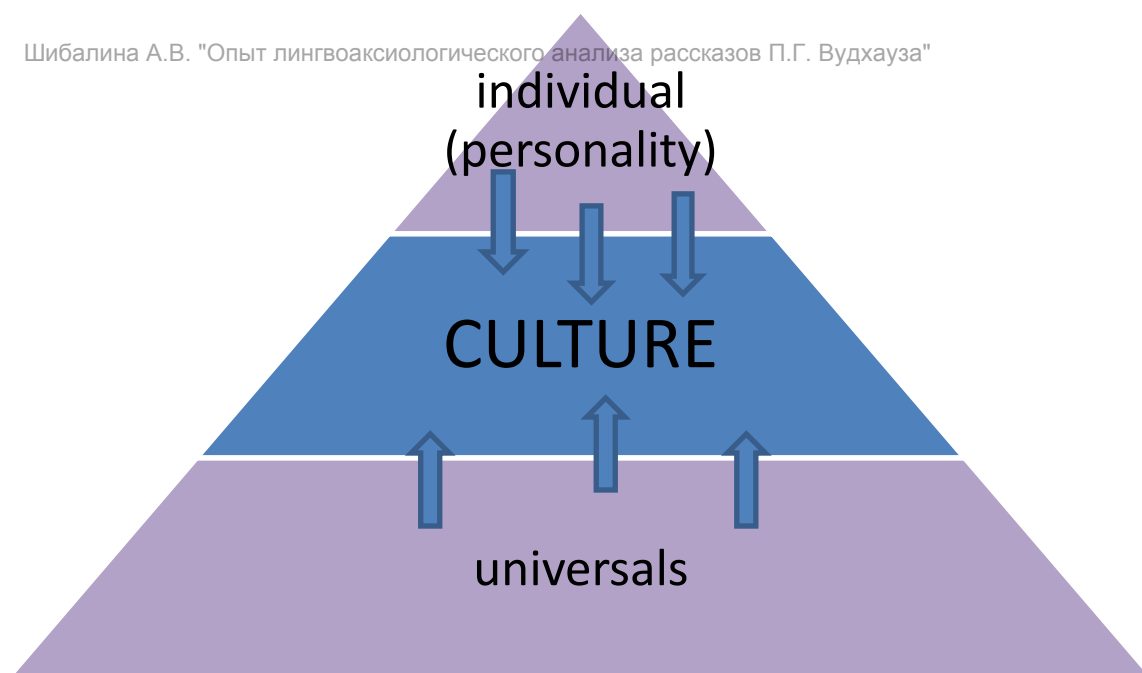
⁴² Ibid., p. 267

⁴³ Jandt F.E., op. cit., p. 356 and Fox K., op. cit., p. 3

The people's reactions and habits would express their attitude which, as has already been stressed, is at the core of the English character. Just as important is the expression of values in the language: the limited range of concepts of the English humour is reflected in everyday speech.

When communicating with the English we would often tell them about our work and then be able to discuss the humour in more detail, making the conversation less personal, which would help them share their ideas more freely. However, sometimes we deemed it necessary to withhold this information, in order to get a more accurate perception of the observed. We would constantly keep in mind the points we had already made before the trip and verify their validity.

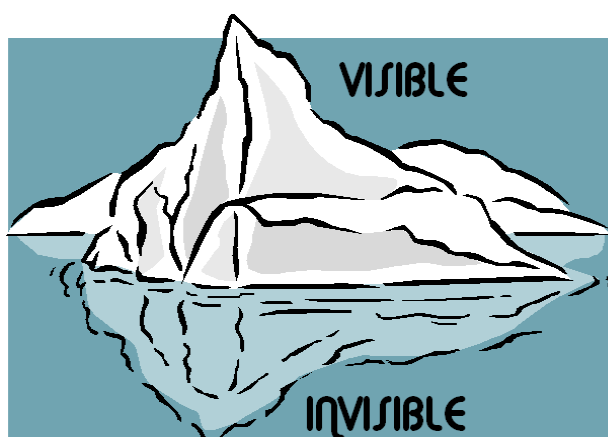
We tried to be as objective as possible, while getting the insider knowledge of the culture, aware that culture is complex and consists of different elements which could be represented as a pyramid:



A culture is mainly influenced by two aspects: individual culture and cultural universals. Individual culture is the culture of a given person, their personality. Universals are the norms which are widely acknowledged and accepted: facial expressions; value of family; religion – and commandments in

particular, such as “do not kill”. The universals inevitably link culturology with axiology – the science of value – because they reflect one’s values. It is also evident at this point that religion is closely connected with ethics, axiology and culture; many value systems are based on it. We are concerned with the culture itself and individual culture which we have to distinctly separate from each other.

Another metaphor that might be considered in our case is that of culture as an iceberg. A culture is divided into objective (institutionalized) and subjective culture:



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Objective culture is what is visible to everyone: it encompasses food, clothes, music, language, etc. Subjective culture, on the other hand, cannot be seen: opinions, expectations, beliefs, attitude, values. In culturology, values are seen as “a central organizing belief or belief system that shapes a person’s goals and motivations”. “An attitude is an outgrowth of a value”⁴⁵.

At the same time, subjective culture concerns one’s own personal language, their verbal and non-verbal behavior. As has already been mentioned, the values shared by members of a given culture are transmitted by symbols (language). Culture is the product of past behaviour of a group and its members, so-called

⁴⁴ Intercultural Training and the Iceberg Model / Kwintessential Ltd - <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/cultural-services/articles/intercultural-iceberg-model.html>

⁴⁵ Jandt F.E., op. cit., p. 187

historical dimension⁴⁶, which we can link to rituals. British culture overall is individualistic⁴⁷, which makes them tolerant towards a person's worldview.

There are problems which one encounters being a member of an out-group or an in-group⁴⁸. As a member of an out-group (the Russians), I had no opportunity to see the English culture in detail, as an insider. If you are in an out-group, you see the culture more objectively but you do not know it as well as they do. If you are in the in-group, you are subjective. When you are transferred into the in-group, you are at a risk of misunderstanding the culture and developing stereotypes, which are always evaluative, hence subjective.

One of the modules I chose was Introduction to Cross-Cultural Studies which was helpful for me on the personal level as well as on the scientific one. It helped me see my own role and attitude towards the English clearer, and be more objective when in the in-group itself.

We had to conduct a field study for the college during the studying process. We chose a cultural group as our primary source of information. The topic I devised concerned cultural adaptation of the British on an international campus. This allowed me to conduct the interviews on a professional basis with someone who shared my studying environment background.

This particular work is concerned with the English humour as the humour of a certain nation, the English; we are drawing a general conclusion, stating that it refers to this specific group of people. However, we should take into account the fact that humour works on many levels, the first of which – the indistinct one – would be the personal level. According to Hofstede, the British culture is the third most individualistic culture in the world, after the United States of America and Australia⁴⁹. It is an important factor, which has to be considered by us, especially on the interpersonal level we have when communicating with the English immediately: we should clearly see whether the behaviour (verbal or non-verbal) is

⁴⁶ Jandt F.E., op. cit., p. 163

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 202

⁴⁸ Jandt F.E., op. cit., p. 39

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 166

the expression of personal or national humour. As we are not concerned with the former, we are going to disregard it in the process of analyzing the episodes.

4. Axiology

English humour is a cultural phenomenon and it reflects the worldview of the English. As has already been established, English humour equals attitude which is expressed with the help of semiotics and its signs. The objects of English humour are numerous, but not inexhaustible. As with any culture, these objects must be those of importance to the people living in the cultural environment. If we determine what the objects are, we arrive at the level of values, which are omnipresent and immaterial.

Alexander Ivin in his book “Axiology” defines the term thus: “Philosophy of value... is a branch of philosophy which is concerned with studying positive, neutral or negative significance of any objects, disregarding their existential and qualitative characteristics”⁵⁰. He also states that the foremost goal of axiology is to define the general notion of value without concentrating on the way it is applied.

The issue of value in its broad sense (such ethical questions as “What is good?” and “What is bad?”) has always concerned philosophers: they have addressed it directly since antiquity. The main meaning of the word value is “the amount of money that something is worth”⁵¹; and the original meaning was, in fact, directly correlated with economics, especially in the works of the 18th-century economist Adam Smith, who coined the term “exchange value”⁵².

In 1902 the term “axiology” was arguably first used by Paul Lapie⁵³, and in 1904 it was used to denote one of the branches of philosophy by Eduard von Hartman, who also was the first to mention it in a title: “Outline of Axiology” (1909)⁵⁴. In 1926 “General Theory of Value” by Ralph Barton Perry was published, where he defined value as “any object of any interest”⁵⁵. He also determined that there were

⁵⁰ Ивин А.А. Аксиология. – М.: Выш. школа, 2006, стр. 3

⁵¹ Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English. 3rd ed. with new words supplement. – London: 2001, p. 1586

⁵² Encyclopaedia Britannica Online: Adam Smith

⁵³ Новая философская энциклопедия, оп. cit., т. I, стр. 62

⁵⁴ Ibid., т. I, стр. 65

⁵⁵ Perry R.B. General Theory of Value. – Cambridge, Massachusetts Harvard University Press, 1950, pp. 115-117

eight “realms of value”⁵⁶: morality, religion, art, science, economics, politics, law and custom. As we can see, Perry includes almost all the spheres of life which employ value. The modern definition of axiology would particularly emphasize two of those: ethics (which equals morality in Perry’s system)⁵⁷ and aesthetics (art)⁵⁸.

If we examine axiology – the value science – as a separate discipline, with aspiration to actually categorise values, it is evident that it dates back to the 19th century. Unfortunately, there has been a lot of discrepancy among the scholars of axiology, and there is no clear system to be drawn. However, we are going to try and give an outline of the main views on the matter.

By the 19th century “value” was being used not only in economic sense, but in a wider sense as well and spread by philosophers, the most notorious of who was Friedrich Nietzsche who promoted interest towards the topic. Nietzsche brought forth the notion of revaluation of values in the title of his book: “The Will to Power: The Revaluation of All Values”.

A German philosopher Windelband refers to Rudolph Hermann Lotze, a philosopher and logician, as the founder of axiology: “Since Lotze decidedly stated the significance of the idea of value and made it the main principle of logic and metaphysics, various approaches to examining value theory as a new form of philosophical science have been developing”⁵⁹. He states that values are not created by a subject (as Kant suggested) but they get “revealed” through them. Franz Brentano presented the public with three classes of psychological phenomena:

- thinking;
- judging;
- feeling or willing⁶⁰

The latter, for instance, is responsible for the feelings of pleasure or displeasure, on which value assertions are based. Brentano discusses attitude in terms

⁵⁶ Perry R.B., op. cit., p. viii

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 669-672, 698

⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 560-563

⁵⁹ Windelband W. Geschichte der Philosophie. In: Digitale Bibliothek, Band 3, p.6797

⁶⁰ Brentano Studien XI, 2004/05. Herausgeber: W.Baumgartner. Verlag J.H.Röll GmbH, 2006, pp. 20-22

of love and hate: if you love or hate a person, it predetermines your attitude towards them. The meaning of “love” and “hate”, according to Brentano⁶¹, is wider than in the conceptual use of the word. “Love” might encompass any positive feeling; “hate”, any negative one.

The beginning of the 20th century was marked by values becoming one of the dominant ideas in the European philosophy. Axiology of this era is regarded as a mixture of formal axiology – the study of general laws guiding relations of values – and material axiology – the study of the structure and hierarchy of empirical values. Formal axiology has been interspersed with some of the axiological axioms, for example: the existence of a negative value is a negative value in itself; a value cannot be positive and negative at the same time; “the law of specific correlation of values” (out of two values, one of them must be bigger than the other).

Material axiology corresponds with the hierarchy of basic classes of values. Eduard von Hartman puts forward the value sequence (which partly coincides with the hierarchy suggested as early as Plato, in “Phileb”):

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pleasure – appropriateness – beauty – morality – religiosity⁶²

Max Scheler was the one who provided us with the deepest interpretation of material axiology. He classifies values in the following way:

- hedonic or sensory values;
- life values (the opposition of “noble”-“low”; values of vitality, health, etc.);
- spiritual values (the opposition of “beautiful”-“ugly” and all the aesthetical values; “just”-“unjust”, i.e. ethical values);
- values of holiness (the highest category which is present only in “absolute objects”, and all other values are its symbols)⁶³

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Новая философская энциклопедия, op. cit., т. I, стр. 65

William Stern divides values into those of goal-setting and those of goal-realizing nature. The goal-setting values hierarchy is that of “persons” of various degrees. According to Stern, the “metaphysical fundamental factor is that the world consists entirely of centres to which various realities belong”. The intersection and fusion of these realities eventually culminate in the reality of “Allwirklichkeit” which is defined as “fullness of existence”⁶⁴.

Overall, a values situation implies the existence of three components:

- the subject (who evaluates);
- the object (which is being evaluated);
- the relation between the two (the evaluation).

All three are already encompassed in the notion “values situation”, so there has been no argument among philosophers about that. The discrepancy, therefore, concerns the relative status of the components in the situation and the ontological position of the values. The different opinions could be merged into four groups.

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1. Subjectivists state that values are situated mainly in the subject evaluating the situation and that a particular thing is of value because it is desired.
2. Subject-objectivists try to find the middle ground between objectivism and subjectivism and mostly say that values are subjective but their significance goes beyond the subjective.
3. The founding of objectivistic axiology is attributed to Max Scheler. It is the direct opposite of the axiology of subjectivists. The theory states that there is a realm of values which exists independently of a subject, making him the recipient of said values. Nicolai Hartman develops the idea of the realm⁶⁵ and says that values are not formal, shapeless images, but material structures which are open to objects, attitudes and people⁶⁶. Objectivists say that a thing is desired because it has value.

⁶³ Scheler M., *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik*. Max Scheler Gesammelte Werke. – Bonn: Bouvier, 1973. Bd. II. pp. 116-123

⁶⁴ Stern W., *Theorie und Wirklichkeit als metaphysisches Problem* (1932). Schopenhauer Jahrbuch, p. 35

⁶⁵ Гартман Н. *Этика* / Пер. с нем. А.Б.Глаголева под ред. Ю.С.Медведева, Д.В.Скляднева. – СПб.: Фонд Университет: Владимир Даль, 2002, стр. 294-296

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, стр. 198-207

4. The philosopher of the Baden School of Neo-Kantians Heinrich Rickert thinks that the mere expansion of reality in order to include values cannot lead to the comprehension of their significance. Values are neither in the area of an object, nor in that of a subject, essentially they are not real: “The reality of values is neither physical or psychic. Their essence is in their significance, not in their existence”⁶⁷. They are, however, objective and can be studied by theoretical sciences.

The views on value depend on a philosophical school, but the value itself, which is valuable for its own sake (the “intrinsic value”) and the value which is valuable as a means to something else (the “extrinsic/instrumental value”) are what is usually being studied. Therefore, the question of what is intrinsically good arises; and here we, once again, encounter different opinions. The aforementioned Ralph Perry (a subjectivist), along with George Edward Moore (an objectivist), William David Ross and Max Scheler maintain that there is “any number of intrinsically good things”⁶⁸, which, in our case, is being narrowed down.

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Despite the discrepancy in their views on value, both objectivists and subjectivists are cognitive in their approach: the value is being ascribed on a logical level, as a statement of fact. Whereas noncognitive theories maintain that value is ascribed when a feeling is expressed.

Nowadays there is The Institute for Formal and Applied Axiology, which pursues the idea of regarding value with mathematical precision⁶⁹. Their aim is to give rational basis to the value system; the Institute was founded in honour of Robert Hartman, a logician and philosopher. Hartman’s theory states that there are two elements to our actions: that of a factual nature, which can be objectively seen – and that of an intangible nature, which can be felt, but not easily identified⁷⁰. The latter are values, which are usually thought of as subjective, belonging to a particular

⁶⁷ Rickert H. Kulturwissenschaft und Naturwissenschaft. 2. Auflage. – Tübingen: Mohr, 1910, p. 89

⁶⁸ Encyclopaedia Britannica Online: Axiology

⁶⁹ Robert S. Hartman Institute - <http://www.hartmaninstitute.org/>

⁷⁰ Ibid.

person. In our work we are going, in a similar manner, to use the opposition of attitude and fact.

During World War II Dr Hartman felt a particular need to “organize “good” as effectively as the Nazis organized “evil””, to bring “order to moral decisions”⁷¹. He devised an axiological system, creating a frame of reference for everyday life. The Institute claim that the science of formal axiology provides us with objective knowledge. As has already been mentioned, Robert Hartman, in search of precise basis for his scientific theory, turned to mathematics, which is believed to have brought order to the value world.

It is safe to say that Dr Hartman has probably come closest to making axiology an exact science.

4a. Ethics

Ethics, along with aesthetics, is a part of modern axiology. The notion that the concept of value is closely linked to ethical issues is supported by the fact that Robert Hartman was very interested in both, and his work “Knowledge of Good”⁷² simultaneously examines questions of philosophical and axiological nature.

Ethics is defined by “Encyclopaedia Britannica” as a “branch of philosophy that seeks to determine the correct application of moral notions such as good and bad and right and wrong or a theory of the application or nature of such notions”⁷³; it helps a person decide when faced with a choice. Apart from axiology, ethics are also considered to be a part of the following:

- religion (which also gives rise to many ethical principles);
- economics;
- politics, laws;
- medicine (medical ethics).

⁷¹ Robert S. Hartman Institute

⁷² Hartman R.S. The Knowledge of Good. Critique of Axiological Reason. Editors Arthur R.Ellis and Rem B. Edward. - NY: Rodopi B.V., 2002

⁷³ Encyclopaedia Britannica Online: Ethics

Ethical theories tend to reflect the culture in which they were produced⁷⁴. Peace is considered the fundamental human value by many; people have the right to live at peace with themselves and their surroundings (which we find curiously interconnected with that “little subversive corner in nearly every Englishman’s heart”). Truth, one of the central concepts in ethical theory, is perceived differently in different cultures; it is socially constructed. Ethics is closely linked with the notion of Kant’s categorical imperative⁷⁵ which states that we should act in a way we wish everyone else would act.

Sadek Sulaiman says that ethical awareness originates from the human experience, and the moral imperative is the bedrock of human survival. Ethical values are imprinted in the universal experience of humankind⁷⁶.

One of the main issues which ethics has to confront is that of fundamental subjectivity: what is right for one person might not be right for another. However, the basic framework for a given society is created unintentionally throughout the society’s development. It is fixed in its unwritten code; and is reflected in literary works which have each other as the frame of reference.

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The fact that man became the centre of modern science is linked with new interrelation among the disciplines studying nature and society, since it is man who merges nature and history. The overview of aforementioned disciplines has clearly shown their interdependence. Culturology and anthropology, for example, both follow generational patterns, which are the result of humans’ development through the ages. Anthropological groups of people are directly correlated with group psychology which is concerned with national character in particular. Values are an integral part of each of the disciplines, as has been plainly shown, and are of the utmost importance to those studying man.

⁷⁴ Jandt F.E., op. cit., p. 46

⁷⁵ Kant I. Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals. 3rd Edition, Translated by James W. Ellington. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing – 1993, p. 30

⁷⁶ Sulaiman S.J. The Origin and Essence of Ethics: The Religious vs. the Universal. - http://www.alhewar.com/sadek_sulaiman_origin_and_essence_of_ethics.htm

Chapter 3

Culture and language

Values define the inner world of a person, and peculiarities of national mentality are revealed through language. The theory of linguistic relativity (the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis)⁷⁷ states that linguistic characteristics and cultural norms influence each other; culture is controlled by and controls language. “Human beings”, according to Sapir, “do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society”⁷⁸. Language provides the conceptual categories that influence how a speaker’s perceptions are encoded. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis is challenged by Noam Chomsky who argues that language structures are universal and that cultural differences in language are superficial. Noam Chomsky regards linguistics as part of cognitive psychology and is one of the founders of cognitive science⁷⁹.

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The figure of Lev Vygotsky, the Soviet psychologist and the founder of cultural-historical psychology, is worth mentioning in our case. He scrupulously examined the relation between thinking and speech and the way it develops⁸⁰.

1. Cognitive linguistics

Cognitive linguistics is a branch of linguistics, and language as a cognitive mechanism is the object of it. Language is seen as a system of signs, which take part in representing and transforming information. This system acts simultaneously as an external and internal object for the subject, that is, it is formed independently from the subject, but it is also adopted by the subject. The cognitive structures by themselves are not the only thing that matters; cognitive linguistics is also concerned with the actual implementation of these structures as signs.

⁷⁷ Jandt F.E., op. cit., p. 130

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 131

⁷⁹ Landar H., op. cit. pp. 107-110

⁸⁰ Выготский Л.С. Мышление и речь. – М.: Лабиринт, 2008

Cognitive linguistics examines the way speech is produced and understood and how the linguistic knowledge is linked with the processing of information (otherwise called “cognition”). “Cognitive linguistics goes beyond the visible structure of language and investigates the considerably more complex backstage operations of cognition that create grammar, conceptualization, discourse, and thought itself”⁸¹. The theoretical insights of cognitive linguistics are based on extensive empirical observation in multiple contexts, and on experimental work in psychology and neuroscience.

Cognitive linguistics appeared quite recently, and is generally thought to have originated in the 1980s. Its emergence was caused by a new understanding of language and the emphasis on its psychic, mental aspect. In cognitive linguistics, language is regarded as a cognitive phenomenon; it forms, organises and transmits information and provides us with the way of its representation. Language maintains communication, during which knowledge is being transferred. All these peculiarities gave rise to the new branch of linguistic science.

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Cognitive linguistics, unlike other cognitive disciplines, is concerned with the structures and processes of a person as a homo loquens: a systemic description of the way a human being adopts the language and the structure of these mechanisms. The main aim of cognitive linguistics is to explain the linguistic ability and the knowledge of language as an internal cognitive pattern.

As a part of theoretical and applied linguistics, cognitive linguistics is linked with examining cognition in its linguistic aspects and the way they are revealed on one hand, and with analysing the cognitive aspects of lexical and grammatical phenomena on the other. In that sense it examines how linguistic knowledge is represented in a human’s mind and is close to cognitive psychology when considering, for example, verbal memory and a person’s vocabulary.

Being a new branch of science, cognitive linguistics is studied by many linguists who develop it by putting forward various theories. The relation of

⁸¹ Fauconnier G. Cognitive Linguistics. - Encyclopedia of Cognitive Science - http://fias.uni-frankfurt.de/~triesch/courses/cogs1/readings/Cognitive_linguistics, p. 10

grammar to cognition, for example, is scrupulously examined by Leonard Talmy⁸² who considers the way grammar restricts conceptual categories; and the Professor of cognitive linguistics George Lakoff regards metaphor as a cognitive construct⁸³.

Another prominent linguist in the sphere is Ronald Langacker who talks about the construct of profiling: for example, the word “hypotenuse” triggers an image of a triangle with this particular part profiled. However, without the rest of the triangle, the hypotenuse ceases to be a hypotenuse⁸⁴.

Cognitive linguistics states that when we study language we study the way it is used. When a person communicates their intentions, they, without realizing it, use their background knowledge and show their cultural values. Language helps us form meaning in certain contexts, employing our cognitive resources.

2. Linguistic axiology

One of the branches of linguoanthropology – linguistic axiology – originates from classic and cognitive semantics, and emphasizes the need to study values in the light of language. We have already established that values are a complex interdisciplinary category and they should be regarded from different points of view, with many sciences taken into account⁸⁵.

Wilhelm von Humboldt, who contributed to linguistics substantially, writes: “The mental individuality of a people and the shape of its language are so intimately fused with one another, that if one were given, the other would have to be completely derivable from it”⁸⁶. His idea of a nation’s mentality in its language caused linguistic axiology to concentrate on studying the features of linguistic conception of reality in general, and the reflection of separate notions – values – in the language. The psychological difference in humans’ perception and its relevance

⁸² Fauconnier G., op. cit., p. 3

⁸³ Ibid., p. 5

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 4

⁸⁵ Краткий словарь когнитивных терминов / Кубрякова Е.С., Демьянков В.З., Панкрац Ю.Г., Лузина Л.Г. – М.: Филол. ф-т МГУ им. М.В.Ломоносова, 1996, стр. 53

⁸⁶ Humboldt W. von. On Language: On the Diversity of Human Language Construction and its Influence on the Mental Development of the Human Species. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 46

to language is also emphasized by Humboldt: “No one when he uses a word has in mind exactly the same thing that another has, and the difference, however tiny, sends its tremors throughout language”⁸⁷.

In the 20th century a new scientific approach was formed – linguistic culturology, which deals with the relationship between language and culture. Here, knowledge gained with the help of other sciences is actively used, and the number of issues under study is vast: linguistic culturology examines language and culture, their complex structure and interdependence from different points of view.

The category of value is of significance not only to all the aforementioned disciplines, but to linguoculturology as well. Linguoaxiology, among other things, is aimed at explanation of national mentality in connection with the language and is linked with achieving the necessary level of intercultural competence.

A Polish linguist Krzeszowski states: “Words have a tendency to be axiologically loaded with ‘good’ or ‘bad’ connotations in proportion to the degree of the human factor associated with them”⁸⁸. That is, a metaphoric sentence would have more meaning to it than a non-metaphoric one. In the same way, belles-lettres style, being the most figurative of all, bears the most axiological meaning.

The applicable importance of linguoaxiology is evident, but it is underdeveloped as a science and there are still many issues to be considered. No basic units of axiology have been put forward, there is no unequivocal definition of value (neither in linguistics, nor in axiology, as we have already ascertained), and the methods of examining the way values manifest themselves in language are unsystematized.

Due to the need to develop linguoaxiology, in the practical part of our research we are going to suggest the methods of linguoaxiological analysis using texts written in English. The texts we have chosen are representative of English humour and, consequently, the English character which is revealed through

⁸⁷ Jandt F.E., op. cit., p. 135

⁸⁸ Kiełtyka R. Axiological Bias in Semantics. - *Studia Anglica Resoviensia* 5. Zeszytynaukowe Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego, Seria Filologiczna. Zeszyt 51/2008 http://www.univ.rzeszow.pl/wfil/ifa/usa5/sar_v5_03.pdf - p. 36

language. The quantity of theoretical material studied is sufficient to have the conception of English humour as a culturological phenomenon; of humanities dealing with the study of man and their interconnection; and of the interaction between language and culture.

Now we can proceed to the immediate analysis of our material.

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Part II

Chapter 1

Linguistic axiology: our methodology

Values are immaterial and omnipresent, and they are expressed with the help of semiotics and its signs. A person's values determine their attitude towards an object; they could also be aimed at the person themselves. In the case of the English, the attitude equals positive self-irony, which is revealed through language. This is where we make a distinction between fact and attitude; it is an opposition we are going to base our analysis on.

Linguoaxiology is aimed at finding this attitude in a text; the attitude can be expressed directly, or it can be diffused. For example, in publicistic literature it is more evident: you are given a fact and then a commentary to it. In belles-lettres style, as a rule, the difference is less obvious, and the attitude can be expressed in a roundabout way – through images or verbose descriptions. The English are the subject of our study; their interpretation of what is proper and what is not predetermines how a certain situation is going to be evaluated and addressed. Therefore, it is important to have deep knowledge of their culture in order to understand what underlies their attitude and behaviour.

At this point, we should explain some of the concepts and methods used in our analysis.

1. Axiological gestalt

The significance of a certain piece of information in a text, as we have established, is brought out linguistically. The thought is being saturated with the help of various linguistic means – for example, contrast, hyperbole, metaphor. However, when it comes to such an object as English humour (which we regard as a culturological phenomenon), it is diffused and can be present on a different level – other than linguistic – throughout a text. We are going to call our axiological

patterns “gestalts”, adopting the term from psychology. In order to see the gestalt in English humour, we have to address other levels presented in a text – culturological, anthropological, etc. We require knowledge of the people’s culture, traditions, views. All these extralinguistic factors must be taken into account when examining a text of English humour.

The texts are regarded by us as stable structures which can be studied in order to gain better understanding of the given culture, which can be done by concentrating on the pivotal elements present in a text.

2. Culturological scale

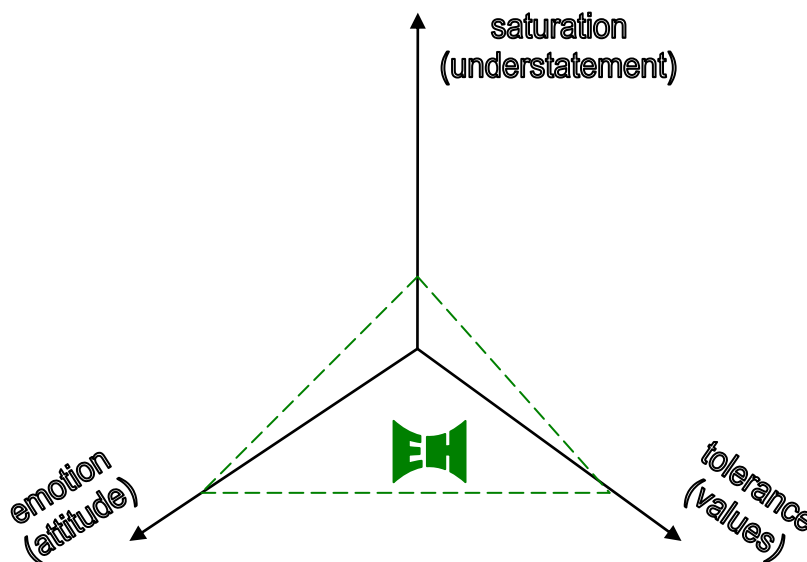
As English humour is not a stylistic device or a genre, but a culturological phenomenon, the scale which we are going to present is culturological. The English are conservative and highly ritualized. For them, everything in the world is constant, permanent and cannot be destroyed. English humour is the irony of rituals one can gently mock. The English regard themselves as a part of the ritual, and that is why English humour equals self-irony. The irony is expressed through language; the English language is diverse and so are the means of expressing the attitude.

On the one side of the culturological scale there is cynicism, and on the other seriousness, because the ritual itself contains the idea of seriousness. If we go from one side of the scale to the other, we encounter many intermediate shades of attitude: sarcasm, irony, self-irony. Here, on the junction of irony and self-irony, English humour is born. As has been already mentioned, the English have a tendency towards absurdity. We can draw the conclusion that they want to bring irony closer to complete nonsense in order to make life bearable.



3. Axiological fork

We can assume that there are three main aspects to humour: emotion, saturation and tolerance. In order to make our point clearer, we will depict them by drawing this diagram (where “EH” stands for “English humour”):



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The three axes represent the aspects. In order to see the gestalt of English humour, we need to mark each of the axes with a value corresponding with it. We can do that, using our knowledge of the cultural background of the English. Emotion implies one's attitude: it can be closer to the positive (kind) or negative (hostile) extremity. Saturation deals with the level of understatement and how the attitude is expressed in the language: subtle – straightforward. Tolerance depends on the way an individual regards their own (and other people's) values; whether one can make them an object of humour. The latter can be regarded as self-irony, depending on its extent. In the case of the English, the variation is nearer to the positive, subtle and self-ironic extremities.

4. Types of axiological writing

The way the English think is essentially axiological. They tend to express their attitude towards a situation or a person, to evaluate whether they are good or

bad, proper or improper. The spread of this description in speech varies: the character of the speech can be quite straightforward and precise, or it can become more elaborate and diffused. The former could be contained in a single phrase; the latter, in a paragraph or more. A text is always comprised of different kinds of assessments which are conveyed verbally. They are expressed, among other things, through what the author says, or with the help of aphoristic utterances. For the purposes of this work, we are going to name the first type of axiological writing “laconic”, and the second one “verbose”.

5. Background and foregrounding

We are going to use Geoffrey Leech’s conception of background and foregrounding in our study. Leech puts forward the theory of “deviation”. A feature which deviates from the norm becomes “foregrounded” in the reader’s mind. The deviations should not be regarded separately, but together, as a pattern, which forms a certain “figure” against a “background”, to which it is opposed. The background is formed by “the patterns of normal language”⁸⁹.

⁸⁹ Leech G. *Style in Fiction: A Linguistic Introduction to English Fictional Prose*. – London, New York: Longman, 1987, p.18

Chapter 2

The analysis of the material

1. Pelham Grenville Wodehouse and his characters

Wodehouse is widely considered one of the representatives of English humour and worldview. Simon Critchley, for example, links Wodehouse to the humour which is aimed at social rituals, and “simply toys with existing social hierarchies in a charming but quite benign way”⁹⁰. Sir Pelham Grenville’s English heritage, upbringing and education are reflected in his works, which include fiction (most notably, “Jeeves and Wooster” series), plays and musicals.

One of the fundamental character traits of Wodehouse which left its mark on his life and works was his absolute lack of political interest. During World War II, he was taken prisoner by the Germans who tricked him into making a series of broadcasts for America, which, he believed, would show his courage in the face of distress. Unfortunately, he was misunderstood by the English, and this led to accusations of cooperation with the Nazis and treason.

George Orwell was one of those who defended Wodehouse’s honour and published an essay convincing the readers of his innocence⁹¹. Orwell quotes Wodehouse to prove his point: “I never was interested in politics”⁹². He also speaks about Harry Flannery who interviewed Wodehouse prior to the actual broadcasts. Flannery says that Wodehouse is “completely without political sense” and that the Nazis realized it. They promised him release from the camp if he wrote the broadcasts. Goebbel’s assistant Plack thought that Pelham Grenville Wodehouse always “made fun of the English” and “he was still living in the period about which he wrote and had no conception of Nazism and all it meant. Wodehouse was his own Bertie Wooster”⁹³.

⁹⁰ Critchley S., op. cit., p. 11

⁹¹ Orwell G. In Defence of P. G. Wodehouse / Critical Essays. – London: Secker and Warburg, 1946

⁹² Ibid., p. 166

⁹³ Ibid., p. 159

As if to agree with this, Wodehouse himself states that he has “always been modestly proud of being an Englishman”⁹⁴. As has already been mentioned, Mr Osborne compares Bertie and the author and calls them “twin souls”⁹⁵ (which is partly due to both of them being profoundly English). Apparently, Wodehouse himself is aware of the connection, and in the very beginning of the first broadcast⁹⁶ quotes Bertie (“as Bertie Wooster would say”). Moreover, we encounter typical Wooster words and phrases throughout the speech: for example, “old sport” and “a pretty nasty shock”.

Wodehouse actually talks about the advantages and disadvantages of the internment in his usual humorous manner. He says, for example, that it “keeps you out of the saloons and gives you time to catch up on your reading. You also get a lot of sleep”. As a stereotypical Englishman, he describes his experience of packing for the term in prison thus: “My idea had been to have a cold bath and a change and a bite to eat, and then to light a cigarette and sit down and muse for a while, making notes of what to take with me...”.

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One of the things included in the list was the complete works of William Shakespeare, which influenced his own stories: “I am happy to say that I am now crammed with Shakespeare to the brim”. He packed “tobacco, pencils... biscuits, a pair of trousers... and a sock or two”, but forgot his passport; which, once again, proves his detachment from the world surrounding him.

Wodehouse is not anti-British or anti-upper class. Orwell describes his attitude to the class system as “a mild facetiousness covering an unthinking acceptance”⁹⁷. Wodehouse himself admits: “I had never fully realized what class distinctions were”. This influences Bertie and Jeeves’s relationship and, consequently, the humour of the whole situation: Mr Wooster is utterly dependent on Jeeves, and “the servant ought not to be superior to the master”.

⁹⁴ Orwell G., op. cit., p. 157

⁹⁵ Osborne R., op. cit., p. 181

⁹⁶ P.G. Wodehouse and the Berlin Broadcasts - <http://www.pgwodehousebooks.com/berlin.htm>. Here and till the end of this section of the work for Wodehouse’s quotes see: P.G. Wodehouse and the Berlin Broadcasts

⁹⁷ Orwell G., op. cit., p. 164

One of the characteristic features of Wodehouse's works is his use of clichés, which is vividly described by Usborne: "Wodehouse paddles his glass-bottomed canoe serenely over a millpond surface of other writers' clichés. He chooses clichés of words, situations and attitudes as a material with which to make many of his verbal jokes and moral jokes"⁹⁸. This probably predetermines Bertie's love of references, which we encounter constantly while reading the stories. Edwards calls it "a great delight in the mock-heroic, especially in famous quotations"⁹⁹.

The reader usually comes across at least four layers of speech in Wodehouse's works:

- Bertie's speech as the narrator;
- Bertie's speech as the character;
- Jeeves's speech;
- speech of other characters

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The contrast between these layers is what makes the narration expressive; all of them contribute to the comic effect when opposed to each other. Bertie is usually the one who expresses attitude, and Jeeves (and other characters) is needed as a part of the background in order to make Bertie's speech more lively, and his attitude more dramatic.

Jeeves's speech, compared with Bertie's, is quite inexpressive and often consists of neutral (and more or less formal) elements. It often has a shade of loftiness to it, which enhances the contrast. French observes that Jeeves, unlike Bertie, is entirely dependent on his master, because, without the opposition, Jeeves "will be a shadow of himself, almost a parody. His function is to bring out the fullness of the great comic figure who is" Bertie Wooster¹⁰⁰.

⁹⁸ Usborne R., op. cit., p. 20

⁹⁹ Edwards O.D., op. cit., p. 19

¹⁰⁰ French R., op. cit., p. 302

That is why we put forward the fact-attitude opposition, which manifests itself in the relationship between the two protagonists. Jeeves is the one who takes action, and Bertie is the one who evaluates. It is directly correlated with the “fact-value” distinction in axiology: “‘fact’ symbolizes objectivity and ‘value’ suggests subjectivity”¹⁰¹. Making Bertie the narrator and using the first person singular gives Wodehouse the advantage of emphasizing self-irony, typical characteristic of English humour.

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¹⁰¹ Encyclopaedia Britannica Online: Axiology

2. Analysing the episodes

Episode 1

*“The Indian Summer of an Uncle”*¹⁰²

'Well, Jeeves,' I said, and there was censure in the eyes. 'So I gather everything is nicely settled?'

'Yes, sir. His lordship formally announced the engagement between the sweet and cheese courses, sir.'

'He did, did he?'

'Yes, sir.'

I eyed the man sternly.

'You do not appear to be aware of that, Jeeves,' I said, in a cold, level voice, 'but this binge has depreciated your stock very considerably. I have always been accustomed to look upon you as a counsellor without equal. I have, so to speak, hung upon your lips. And now see what you have done. All this is the direct consequence of your scheme, based on the psychology of the individual. I should have thought, Jeeves, that, knowing the woman – meeting her socially, as you might say, over the afternoon cup of tea – you might have ascertained that she was Uncle George's barmaid.'

'I did, sir.'

'What!'

'I was aware of the fact, sir.'

'Then you must have known what would happen if she came to lunch and met him.'

'Yes, sir.'

'Well, I'm dashed!'

'If I might explain, sir. The young man Smethurst, who is greatly attached to the young person, is an intimate friend of mine. He applied to me some little while back in the hope that I might be able to do something to ensure that the young

¹⁰² Wodehouse P.G. *Very Good, Jeeves!* – London: Penguin Books, 1957, pp. 215-238

person followed the dictates of her heart and refrained from permit herself to be lured by gold and the glamour of his lordship's position. There will now be no obstacle to their union.'

'I see. "Little acts of unremembered kindness," what?'

'Precisely, sir.'

'And how about Uncle George? You've landed him pretty nicely in the cart.'

'No, sir, if I may take the liberty of opposing your view. I fancy that Mrs Wilberforce should make an ideal mate for his lordship. If there was a defect in his lordship's mode of life, it was that he was a little unduly attached to the pleasures of the table –'

'Ate like a pig, you mean?'

'I would not have ventured to put it in quite that way, sir, but the expression does meet the facts of the case. He was also inclined to drink rather more than his medical adviser would have approved of. Elderly bachelors who are wealthy and without occupation tend somewhat frequently to fall into this error, sir. The future Lady Yaxley will check this. Indeed, I overheard her ladyship saying as much as I brought in the fish. She was commenting on a certain puffiness of the face which had been absent in his lordship's appearance in the earlier days of their acquaintanceship, and she observed that his lordship needed looking after. I fancy, sir, that you will find the union will turn out an extremely satisfactory one.'

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It was – what's the word I want? - it was plausible, of course, but still I shook the onion.

'But, Jeeves!'

'Sir?'

'She *is*, as you remarked not long ago, definitely of the people.'

He looked at me in a reproachful sort of way.

'Sturdy lower-middle-class stock, sir.'

'H'm!'

'Sir?'

'I said "H'm!", Jeeves.'

'Besides, sir, remembering what the poet Tennyson said: "Kind hearts are more than coronets".'

'And which of us is going to tell Aunt Agatha that?'

'If I might make the suggestion, sir, I would advise that we omitted to communicate with Mrs Spencer Gregson in any way. I have your suitcase practically packed. It would be a matter of but a few minutes to bring the car round from the garage –'

'And off to the horizon to where men are men?'

'Precisely, sir.'

'Jeeves,' I said. 'I'm not sure that even now I can altogether see eye to eye with you regarding your recent activities. You think you have scattered light and sweetness on every side. I am not so sure. However, with this latest suggestion you have rung the bell. I examine it narrowly and I find no flaw in it. It is the goods. I'll get the car at once.'

'Very good, sir.'

'Remember what the poet Shakespeare said, Jeeves.'

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'What was that, sir?'

' "Exit hurriedly, pursued by a bear." You'll find it in one of his plays. I remember drawing a picture of it on the side of the page, when I was at school.'

This is an extract from the story "The Indian Summer of an Uncle". It was published in 1930, and is one of P.G. Wodehouse's last short stories, before he started writing novels.

The plot of the story can be summarized as follows. Bertie's relative, Uncle George, visits him one day to announce his intention of marrying a young waitress, Miss Platt. When Uncle George leaves, Mr Wooster is worried about Aunt Agatha's reaction to the news and decides to go away. At this moment the bell rings to notify them of Aunt Agatha's arrival. It is clear that she disapproves of Uncle George's choice: the waitress is "the proletariat", as Bertie puts it. The young aristocrat, as usual, wants Jeeves to help, but his aunt is against it, for Jeeves

is in no social position to do it. She turns down Bertie's suggestions, as well, and forces him to offer the girl money.

Mr Wooster visits her house and meets a woman there, who, he decides, is Miss Platt's aunt. The woman is waiting for a doctor and, thinking that Bertie is him, asks him to examine her spine. It takes some time for Bertie to realize what is happening, and after the misunderstanding is cleared, he introduces himself. Miss Platt, however, is ill and asleep. Bertie cannot bring himself to offer the woman money and leaves.

Aunt Agatha, of course, is not satisfied with Bertram's actions, or rather, lack of them. Jeeves walks into the room, saying that he heard Mr Wooster calling. Bertie seizes the chance and asks the gentleman's gentleman to help. Jeeves suggests Uncle George meets Miss Platt's aunt at their flat. The aunt, Mrs Wilberforce, comes and it transpires that she used to be a waitress at the Criterion. Uncle George previously told them that he met the love of his life there. Bertie realizes that this is probably Mrs Wilberforce, and when Uncle George arrives, his fears are confirmed. Later he receives a call from Aunt Agatha who tells him the news: Uncle George is going to be married – not to Miss Platt, but to her aunt.

The extract we have chosen is the last scene of the story, where Bertie confronts Jeeves, thinking that Jeeves made a mistake suggesting the aunt and the uncle should meet each other. Here, we are looking for the points of saturation which indicate the figure of self-irony; self-irony is regarded by us as the basic feature of English humour.

We examine irony not only as a linguistic concept, but as an axiological and psychological trait, which could indicate the attitude and emphasize what is important to the author. Our goal is to see whether the ironic attitude actually complies with the English system of values, and look for a tendency: how the irony presents itself, how it varies, and what means are used to highlight it.

In this particular extract, Bertie is trying to be aloof and cold, using formal vocabulary and phrases: “censure”, “you do not appear to be aware of that”, “depreciated your stock very considerably”, “ascertained”. However, we come

across a couple of informal words, which make us think that he cannot stay entirely cold, the word “binge” standing out noticeably against the formal background.

The very beginning is of interest to us: “Well, Jeeves, I said, and there was censure in the eyes. 'So I gather everything is nicely settled?'”. Besides the formal “censure”, we also see “the eyes”, which encompasses an unusual use of the article. It is almost as if Bertie is trying to be as objective as possible, choosing “the” instead of conventional and much more personal “my”. He probably does not want to associate with “censure” too closely.

At the same time Bertie is voicing Jeeves's attitude towards the situation, or rather, what he perceives as Jeeves's attitude. He could even be mocking it at this point, which borders on sarcasm, although he is avoiding direct accusation. As if to compensate this unusually harsh reaction from Bertie, Jeeves announces Uncle George's engagement, which is a serious matter, but in a sweet way, or should we say, “sweet course” way.

The remark about Jeeves knowing the woman - “meeting her socially, as you might say, over the afternoon cup of tea” has the curious insertion of the phrase “as you might say”, which could be considered from different points of view. Bertie seems to think it adds importance to his statement. He might be over-appreciating the fact because it is not that valuable at all. On the other hand, tea as a ritual is very significant. The English, being highly ritualistic, value their traditions, and Bertie could be gently laughing at it (which is evidently self-ironic, as Bertie is an Englishman): if Jeeves met her over a cup of tea, than he must know her well.

Here we encounter verbose axiological writing. Bertie is upset with Jeeves's actions and disapproves of them, considering what the gentleman's gentleman did improper. He expresses this attitude, starting with the words “You do not appear to be aware of that...”. He uses a whole paragraph in order to convey a simple message of disapproval, which he understates. Bertie seems to take the matter seriously, probably feeling betrayed by Jeeves. He is being tolerant, however, and is not treating Jeeves unkindly.

When Mr Wooster realizes that Jeeves knew about Mrs Wilberforce being “Uncle George's barmaid”, he stops being as formal, and his long, complicated, sentences become shorter and more emotional; his speech, more natural and colloquial. We come across typical Bertie phrases: “I'm dashed” and the spoken “...what?” at the end of sentences. Wodehouse continues the line of Jeeves's character, which is quite steady. Jeeves does not change his behaviour, and remains neutral or formal throughout the whole scene: his speech brings Bertie's into contrast.

Mr Wooster quotes Wordsworth – “little acts of unremembered kindness”¹⁰³ – previously quoted earlier in the story by Jeeves at his request. An attentive reader would notice that one of Bertie's invariable features is quoting works of literature, often inaccurately. In the context of all the books he is quoting throughout the series the ironic effect is accumulated. It is probable that Bertie realizes his mistakes, but he keeps quoting his favourite authors and is not embarrassed by the fact that the quotations are imprecise. This could be regarded as an example of self-ironic attitude: Bertie is being tolerant towards his own imperfections.

We encounter an obvious use of contrast when Jeeves says that “his lordship” “was a little unduly attached to the pleasures of the table”, which in itself is a perfect example of understatement, such an important characteristic of the English. We consider understatement as one of the fundamental axiological characteristics of English humour, as was mentioned earlier in this work. Jeeves understates Uncle George's food habits. Bertie, on the other hand, is being suddenly straightforward, and strikes with: “Ate like a pig, you mean?”

The contrast is created by linguistic means: while Jeeves is being neutral, Bertie uses colloquial phrases. However, before long we encounter an instance of Bertie's understatement: “It was – what's the word I want? - it was plausible”; and the reader is left with the strong feeling that that was not the word he wanted.

¹⁰³ “His little, nameless, unremembered, acts / Of kindness and of love”. Wordsworth W. “The Tintern Abbey”. - <http://www.blupete.com/Literature/Poetry/WordsworthTinternAbbey.htm>

The whole story addresses one of the most important issues of the English society – class-consciousness which we consider to be the main axiological topic. Jeeves is being very tolerant throughout, and the same cannot be said about Bertie, who once called Miss Platt “the proletariat” and says that she is “definitely of the people” in this particular extract. He was corrected by Jeeves on both occasions, and here the reader sees Jeeves expressing strong attitude towards the fact: “He looked at me in a reproachful sort of way”.

It is true that we are merely following Bertie's perception, but at the same time this is what we always do, and we almost never see Jeeves being as outwardly expressive as that. Therefore, we could assume that the relationship among classes is an outstanding issue, and Jeeves could signify tolerance towards the lower class, being actually inferior to Bertie.

This author's remark is the only clear indication of Jeeves's attitude, and is an example of the laconic axiological writing. Jeeves is being straightforward in his behaviour and his reproach is saturated. He regards Bertie's neglect of the lower class with disfavor, and it is close to the “hostile” extremity on our axiological fork. The class issue is not to be laughed at and is taken seriously by Jeeves.

Bertie is trying to stay neutral (he once states that his uncle can marry whoever he chooses, and it does not really matter to him), but he still cannot bring himself to see eye to eye with “lower-middle-class”. Although his attitude is not very clear. He answers with the eloquent “H'm!”. It is probable that, being an Englishman and valuing tolerance, he does not wish to express his intolerance towards the lower class; and declines to do so the second time, when Jeeves asks him again: “I said “H'm!”, Jeeves”. If we follow this hypothesis, we can say that this is laconic axiological writing, and Bertie understates his feelings towards the issue, unlike Jeeves. However, when it comes to the value axis, he also takes the matter seriously.

The relationship among classes is a complicated subject to discuss, even for Bertie and Jeeves who communicate on a daily basis. Once again, we are

considering the “tolerance” axis of the axiological fork. Despite all Bertie's benevolence, it is difficult for them to talk about the lower class, and Mr Wooster does not express his attitude clearly. He is not able to renounce his ways as an aristocrat, which is an indicator of conservatism, as well. It is not easy for Bertie to be entirely tolerant when it comes to such an intricate issue, and the conversation is not light-hearted; they have to find the middle ground, and correct each other's expressions.

As if to prove his point about being tolerant and kind, Jeeves goes on to quote Tennyson's poem: “Kind hearts are more than coronets”¹⁰⁴. Quoting classic English poetry is one of Wodehouse's habits, which probably indicates his loving and respecting attitude as an Englishman towards their own heritage, and their conservatism. Besides, proverbs and memorable phrases like this reflect a nation's character.

When Bertie gives his final estimate of Jeeves's actions, he ironically calls them “recent activities”. This estimation is more characteristic of verbose axiological writing than of laconic. Bertie even repeats that he is not sure twice, despite it being relatively short. He understates his attitude; he does not say that he dislikes Jeeves's actions, but uses a much more milder “not sure”. He is also being tolerant and does not elaborate on the issue in question. It is evident that Mr Wooster does not entirely approve of what Jeeves did, probably because it was done quietly, without Bertie's sanction.

Again, Bertram attempts to characterize Jeeves's attitude: “You think you have scattered light and sweetness”. Those are the qualities that matter to him (and Wodehouse himself as well), he practically says that this is what Jeeves aimed at and thought best. Bertie is “not so sure” that Jeeves managed to do it, but softens, reacting to Jeeves's suggestion to run away from Aunt Agatha.

Once again, we see Bertie's use of colloquial phrases: “rung the bell”, “it is the goods”. He repeats that he likes the idea three times in succession, over-

¹⁰⁴ “Kind hearts are more than coronets, / And simple faith than Norman blood”. Tennyson A. Lady Clara Vere de Vere. – Encyclopaedia Britannica Online: Lady Clara Vere de Vere

emphasizing it. Moreover, between the two colloquial phrases there is another one: “I examine it narrowly and I find no flaw in it”, which sounds pretentious and gives us an image of Bertie as a thorough scientist, and it is not so; we could assume that Mr Wooster is absolutely aware of the fact himself and is being self-ironic.

This is another example when an idiom, which stands out in the terms of style (“no flaw”), changes the whole shade of speech. The contrast of stylistically diverse phrases in the same context causes a humorous effect: the reader is amused by the fact that after colloquial words, phrases typical of another style emerge. Bertie is trying to seem a serious-minded person, but we have already heard his “rung the bell” and know that this formal style is not representative of him.

The story ends with Bertie quoting Shakespeare. However, he does not quote one of his characters, but his stage directions (“The Winter's Tale”¹⁰⁵), adding the word “hurriedly”, which originally was not there: “Exit hurriedly, pursued by a bear”. Bertie is reciting this bit, as if it has some deeper meaning when it does not have one, as it is a stage direction, not a meaningful phrase of a distinguished character. He could have chosen some serious fragment from a play, but he decides on the stage direction instead.

As if it was not enough, he remarks that he drew a picture of it at school. This image becomes bizarre when, in our mind's eye, we see Aunt Agatha, stepping heavily, chasing Bertie out of the room, roaring. Here Wodehouse intersperses his story with a hidden extended metaphor. Based on that, we could assume that the whole situation (possibly subconsciously) is regarded by Bertie as funny. “Can you believe I'm doing this?” one imagines him thinking. This, again, indicates the self-ironic attitude we are looking for.

Bertie wants everyone to be happy – he is a kind person – but here he is somewhat diverted out of fear of his aunt, whom he dares not to confront, not only

¹⁰⁵ Shakespeare W. Complete Works / Ed. with a Glossary by W.J. Craige, M.A. Trinity College, Dublin – London: Oxford University Press, 1966, p. 337

because she is intimidating, but also of her status. This indicates the respectful attitude towards status, which was important at the time, and is, again, linked to the topic of the story – class-consciousness. Despite the fact that Bertie disapproves of Jeeves's actions, he refrains from direct confrontation and is trying to understand why Jeeves did what he did. At the same time he is being honest throughout and does not keep his attitude to himself. In expressing the attitude (and, in a way, commenting on it) he is self-ironic.

Self-irony, as we have already seen, is not only expressed in particular phrases (“meeting her socially, as you might say, over the afternoon cup of tea”, “I examine it narrowly and I find no flaw in it”), but also at the level of the text as a whole, comprised of the discourse of the story (starting with the main topic – class), proceeding with the relationship between Bertie and Jeeves, augmented with Mr Wooster's ironic phrases. The reader's knowledge of the characters, his acquaintance with them throughout the whole series also adds to the humour. Therefore, irony is being accumulated, adopting different shades.

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In Bertie's case, the presence of formal vocabulary indicates his disappointment. The less emotion he is expressing, the angrier he feels. Here we encounter bitter irony boarding on sarcasm which is not typical of Bertie, who is the quintessence of self-irony. Although you can barely call that anger, for he cannot be angry for long. It is not one of his inherent qualities, and when he is trying to show his anger, it seems pretentious; and that contrast adds to the humour of the stories. The real Bertie manifests himself by mixing formal and colloquial phrases. The linguistic contrast – colloquial phrases and lofty idioms – is combined with extralinguistic contrast: Bertie assumes a quality which is not characteristic of him.

In the end, what matters to Bertie, is his uncle's well-being. Although he does not agree with Jeeves on that occasion, he lets it go and accepts the consequences of Jeeves's actions quite quickly, which shows us his tolerance and overall lighthearted attitude towards life. He also likes comfort, and runs away, when a conflict is imminent; he prefers not to argue with his aunt.

In this particular excerpt we come across general self-ironic atmosphere. Although it is a bit dark, for once or twice Bertie's humour borders on sarcasm, and on one occasion he is being strikingly straightforward (“Ate like a pig, you mean?”). When we compare it to another, much earlier episode, we will see that this fragment is not as genial as the one written at the beginning of the series.

However, Bertie still tends to understate what he says, as does Jeeves, who, as usual, provides the neutral background. It is the background that puts forward the irony, as well as any other digression from the neutral style. As if to compensate the hints of sarcasm, Wodehouse ends with an image of a bear pursuing a character, using an extended metaphor, and the reader vividly sees Aunt Agatha running after Bertie.

We could say that the main features of this excerpt are kindness, tolerance, conservatism, understatement – which are typical of English humour and the English character. The irony manifests itself on many levels, and in order to express it, the author uses linguistic and extralinguistic means: a mixture of styles, contrast; addresses English literature and rituals. By using them, Wodehouse paints a vivid picture of reality. With a couple of exceptions, this fragment is generally self-ironic.

Episode 2

“Leave it to Jeeves”¹⁰⁶

Corky was glaring at the picture, and making a sort of dry, sucking noise with his mouth. He seemed completely overwrought.

And then suddenly he began to laugh in a wild way.

'Corky, old man!' I said, massaging him tenderly. I feared the poor blighter was hysterical.

He began to stagger about all over the floor.

¹⁰⁶ Wodehouse P.G. My Man Jeeves. – London: Everyman, 2006, pp. 9-31

'He's right! The man's absolutely right! Jeeves, you're a life-saver! You've hit on the greatest idea of the age! Report at the office on Monday! Start at the bottom of the business! I'll buy the business if I feel like it. I know the man who runs the comic section of the *Sunday Star*. He'll eat this thing. He was telling me only the other day how hard it was to get a good new series. He'll give me anything I ask for a real winner like this. I've got a gold-mine. Where's my hat? I've got an income for life! Where's that confounded hat? Lend me a fiver, Bertie. I want to take a taxi down to Park Row!'

Jeeves smiled paternally. Or, rather, he had a kind of paternal muscular spasm about the mouth, which is the nearest he ever gets to smiling.

'If I might make the suggestion, Mr. Corcoran – for a title of the series which you have in mind – “The Adventures of Baby Blobbs.”’

Corky and I looked at the picture, then at each other in an awed way. Jeeves was right. There could be no other title.

'Jeeves,' I said. It was a few weeks later, and I had just finished looking at the comic section of the *Sunday Star*. 'I'm an optimist. I always have been. The older I get, the more I agree with Shakespeare and those poet Johnnies about it always being darkest before the dawn and there's a silver lining and what you lose on the swings you make up on the roundabouts. Look at Mr. Corcoran, for instance. There was a fellow, one would have said, clear up to the eyebrows in the soup. To all appearances he had got it right in the neck. Yet look at him now. Have you seen these pictures?'

'I took the liberty of glancing at them before bringing them to you, sir. Extremely diverting.'

'They have made a big hit, you know.'

'I anticipated it, sir.'

I leaned back against the pillows.

'You know, Jeeves, you're a genius. You ought to be drawing a commission on these things.'

'I have nothing to complain of in that respect, sir. Mr. Corcoran has been most

generous. I am putting out the brown suit, sir.'

'No, I think I'll wear the blue with the faint red stripe.'

'Not the blue with the faint red stripe, sir.'

'But I rather fancy myself in it.'

'Not the blue with the faint red stripe, sir.'

'Oh, all right, have it your own way.'

'Very good, sir. Thank you, sir.'

Of course, I know it's as bad as being hen-pecked; but then Jeeves is always right. You've got to consider that, you know. What?

This excerpt is taken from one of the early stories by P.G. Wodehouse, which was rewritten and reprinted in 1925 and given a different title – “The Artistic Career of Corky”). In choosing it for analysis, we might learn how the tone of Wodehouse’s humour changed through the years.

We hope to see the figure of self-irony – a gentle version of irony – presenting itself at such an early stage in the series development as this. In our case, the figure is regarded not only from the linguistic point of view, but also from the axiological one. Our aim is to discover the tendency Wodehousian humour follows, to determine how exactly the character of irony varies in his stories. We are also going to consider the values which underlie certain lines of behaviour the characters pursue.

The plot of this story could be summarized as follows. Bertie’s friend, an artist, Bruce Corcoran – or “Corky” – does not earn much. His main source of income is his uncle, Alexander Worple, who has a business in selling jute and is an ornithologist. He has written two books on American birds. Corky comes to Bertie to introduce his fiancée Miss Muriel Singer and ask advice. Corky is convinced that Mr Worple would not approve of him taking a serious step – being engaged – without consulting his uncle. Bertie thinks that they should introduce Miss Singer to Mr Worple without him realizing that Corky knows her. Jeeves suggests that

someone should publish a book on birds under her name, dedicate it to Mr Worples and make references to him throughout.

After the book is published, Bertie meets Muriel Singer in a restaurant and learns that she is married – not to Corky, but to his uncle. When Mr Wooster visits the artist, Corky is painting a picture of his uncle and Muriel's baby. A month passes, and Corky asks Bertie to come and be there when Mr Worples examines the portrait. The uncle does not like it and gives his nephew an ultimatum: either Corky stops painting and starts working for him, or he does not give his nephew an allowance. Jeeves, however, finds the portrait humorous and advises Corky to work in that direction. The artist submits the drawing to the comic section of the *Sunday Star*, and it proves to be a success.

The extract we have chosen concerns the dénouement of the story and is situated at the very end of it. Besides the dénouement itself, we also encounter a typical Wodehousian epilogue where Jeeves and Wooster discuss the recent events.

The story is told in the first person singular, which is characteristic of Wodehouse's stories, and gives us the subjective perception of Bertie's, his interpretation of other people's attitude. In the first paragraph of the extract he says Corky "was glaring at the picture" and "seemed completely overwrought". These are the emotions Bertie attributes to the character. The word "glaring" expresses strong feelings and the description of Corky's reaction makes the reader, following Bertie's perception, think that the artist is "completely overwrought".

Mr Wooster addresses his friend with "old man" and calls him "poor blighter", both typical of his speech. His concern for his friends – something he takes seriously – is plainly shown. He chooses a very strong word – "feared" – when talking about Corky's being "hysterical". It is obvious that Bertie cares about his friend and wishes him well. However, Mr Wooster seems to have misinterpreted Corky, who is ready to take Jeeves's advice and feels confident about it ("I've got an income for life!").

In Corky's reply we see a definite example of self-ironic attitude: "You've hit on the greatest idea of the age!" Using the superlative degree of "great", he

overstates the fact: even if he will be a successful comic artist, this is not “the greatest idea of the age”, and he understands that. It also shows us the change in his psychological state: he thought he would have to work for his uncle and stop drawing, and now he is certain he will not have to do it.

A lot of his speech is comprised of short, expressive, exclamatory sentences which tell the reader how optimistic he feels. The expression of his emotions at this stage is an example of verbose axiological writing. It takes him a whole paragraph to convey what he is feeling: “the greatest idea”, “a real winner”, “a gold-mine”. There is also a contextual contrast here, which contributes to the irony. Corky talks at length about being rich and then asks Bertie to lend him “a fiver”.

Jeeves’s reaction, as described by Bertie, is also ironic, but it is not self-ironic. Jeeves is an element of the neutral background in Wodehouse’s stories, and brings out the eccentric character of Bertie’s. As has already been discussed, Jeeves is usually opposed to Bertie in the same way as fact is opposed to attitude. Here, however, he smiles, an expression of attitude not typical of him. Perhaps, this is one of the reasons Bertie has to paraphrase himself: “he had a kind of paternal muscular spasm... which is the nearest he ever gets to smiling”. This attitude of Bertie’s towards Jeeves expressing his emotions is ironic, and we cannot say that this form of irony is kind, mostly because of the word “spasm”, which is a colourful metaphor for smiling – and at the same time not a flattering one.

The epilogue starts with a series of English idioms from “Shakespeare and those poet Johnnies” which sank into the language and became an inalienable part of it. Idioms are expressive and they indisputably reflect a nation’s character. This argument is supported by the fact that many of these phrases seem to have lost their source. Bertie lists the following idioms: “darkest before the dawn”, “a silver lining” and “what you lose on the swings you make up on the roundabouts”. The first one is a proverb of an unknown origin; however, thought to be authored by English theologian and historian Thomas Fuller in the 17th century¹⁰⁷. The phrase

¹⁰⁷ “It is always darkest just before the day dawneth”. Fuller T. - <http://www.bibleornot.org/its-it-is-always-darkest-before-the-dawn>

“silver lining” appears in John Milton's “Comus” (1634)¹⁰⁸; and “swings and roundabouts” has been coined by Patrick Chalmers in 1912¹⁰⁹. Nevertheless, all three of them are widely used by native speakers nowadays, and their origin is not taken into account. These are the phrases that come to Bertie’s mind as an Englishman.

Bertie relates them to the current situation of Corky’s and gives a definition of his own: “clear up to the eyebrows in the soup”. The phrase consists of two different idioms: “to be in the soup” (to be in trouble) and “to be up to your eyebrows in something” (to be busy). Bertie is a stereotypical and quintessential Englishman created by Wodehouse; he has all the typical qualities the English have. Wodehouse is mocking the way an English person expresses their attitude and feelings: with words.

Bertie is also being very expressive and overemphasizes the uncomfortable situation his friend was in, adding the word “right” into the spoken and fixed idiom “get it in the neck”. These two descriptions given by Bertie are an example of verbose axiological writing. The syntax and verbal structure tell us that he feels relieved at this point, and shows us his kind attitude towards the matter. He is also being direct here, so his speech is saturated.

The story ends with the discussion of clothes, which is going to become a part of Wodehousian plot. Here we encounter the clash of Bertie’s eccentricity on one hand, and Jeeves’s conservatism and respect for tradition on the other. Both qualities are typical of an English person, but in these characters they are hyperbolized to the point of absurdity. The conflict between eccentricity and conservatism adds to the self-ironic feel of the piece.

In the last paragraph Wodehouse gives the reader the opportunity to see what the relationship between Jeeves and Wooster is based on; and what Bertie’s

¹⁰⁸ “Was I deceived, or did a sable cloud / Turn forth her silver lining on the night?”. Milton J. Comus / Milton’s Comus with Introduction and Notes by William Bell, M.A. Professor of Philosophy and Logic, Government College. – London: Macmillan and Co and New York, 1891, p. 220

¹⁰⁹ “What’s lost upon the roundabouts we pulls up on the swings. / An’ losses on the roundabouts means profits on the swings!”. Chalmers P. Roundabouts and Swings. - <http://oldpoetry.com/opoem/99197-Patrick-R-Chalmers-Roundabouts-and-Swings>

attitude towards Jeeves is like. Despite the fact that Bertie feels “hen-pecked”, he allows Jeeves to treat him that way because he trusts his judgement, still. The friendship between Jeeves and Wooster is an essential part of the series, and the title of it only proves the point.

In saying that he is “being hen-pecked”, Bertie is being self-ironic and compares his status to that of a man, who “is always being told what to do by his wife, and is afraid to disagree with her”¹¹⁰; and Mr Wooster does not mind that because “Jeeves is always right”. Bertie regards the whole situation with kind tolerance, and is happy with the way things are.

In this extract we encounter many features typical of the English: kindness, self-irony, conservatism (respect for tradition) clashing with eccentricity. The fragment is filled with irony – and self-irony – which are created with the help of linguistic (contrast, styles) and extralinguistic (context, behaviour) means.

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Episode 3

“The Aunt and the Sluggard”¹¹¹

"You'll come along, won't you, Bertie, and have a drink at the flat?"

I had a feeling that this wasn't in the contract, but there wasn't anything to be done. It seemed brutal to leave the poor chap alone with the woman, so I went along.

Right from the start, from the moment we stepped into the taxi, the feeling began to grow that something was about to break loose. A massive silence prevailed in the corner where the aunt sat, and, though Rocky, balancing himself on the little seat in front, did his best to supply dialogue, we weren't a chatty party.

¹¹⁰ Longman, op. cit., p. 668

¹¹¹ Wodehouse P.G. Carry on, Jeeves. / Вудхауз П.Г. Так держать, Дживз. На англ. яз. – М.: Юпитер-Интер, 2006, стр. 88-115

I had a glimpse of Jeeves as we went into the flat, sitting in his lair, and I wished I could have called to him to rally round. Something told me that I was about to need him.

The stuff was on the table in the sitting-room. Rocky took up the decanter.

"Say when, Bertie."

"Stop!" barked the aunt, and he dropped it.

I caught Rocky's eye as he stooped to pick up the ruins. It was the eye of one who sees it coming.

"Leave it there, Rockmetteller!" said Aunt Isabel; and Rocky left it there.

"The time has come to speak," she said. "I cannot stand idly by and see a young man going to perdition!"

Poor old Rocky gave a sort of gurgle, a kind of sound rather like the whisky had made running out of the decanter on to my carpet.

"Eh?" he said, blinking.

The aunt proceeded.

"The fault," she said, "was mine. I had not then seen the light. But now my eyes are open. I see the hideous mistake I have made. I shudder at the thought of the wrong I did you, Rockmetteller, by urging you into contact with this wicked city."

I saw Rocky grope feebly for the table. His fingers touched it, and a look of relief came into the poor chappie's face. I understood his feelings.

"But when I wrote you that letter, Rockmetteller, instructing you to go to the city and live its life, I had not had the privilege of hearing Mr Mundy speak on the subject of New York."

"Jimmy Mundy!" I cried.

You know how it is sometimes when everything seems all mixed up and you suddenly get a clue. When she mentioned Jimmy Mundy I began to understand more or less what had happened. I'd seen it happen before. I remember, back in England, the man I had before Jeeves sneaked off to a meeting on his evening out and came back and denounced me in front of a crowd of chappies I was giving a bit of supper to as a useless blot on the fabric of Society.

The aunt gave me a withering up and down.

"Yes; Jimmy Mundy!" she said. "I am surprised at a man of your stamp having heard of him. There is no music, there are no drunken, dancing men, no shameless, flaunting women at his meetings: so for you they would have no attraction. But for others, less dead in sin, he has his message. He has come to save New York from itself; to force it - in his picturesque phrase - to hit the trail. It was three days ago, Rockmetteller, that I first heard him. It was an accident that took me to his meeting. How often in this life a mere accident may shape our whole future!

"You had been called away by that telephone message from Mr Belasco; so you could not take me to the Hippodrome, as we had arranged. I asked your manservant, Jeeves, to take me there. The man has very little intelligence. He seems to have misunderstood me. I am thankful that he did. He took me to what I subsequently learned was Madison Square Garden, where Mr Mundy is holding his meetings. He escorted me to a seat and then left me. And it was not till the meeting had begun that I discovered the mistake which had been made. My seat was in the middle of a row. I could not leave without inconveniencing a great many people, so I remained."

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She gulped.

"Rockmetteller, I have never been so thankful for anything else. Mr Mundy was wonderful! He was like some prophet of old, scouring the sins of the people. He leaped about in a frenzy of inspiration till I feared he would do himself an injury. Sometimes he expressed himself in a somewhat odd manner, but every word carried conviction. He showed me New York in its true colours. He showed me the vanity and wickedness of sitting in gilded haunts of vice, eating lobster when decent people should be in bed.

"He said that the tango and the fox-trot were devices of the devil to drag people down into the Bottomless Pit. He said that there was more sin in ten minutes with a negro banjo orchestra than in all the ancient revels of Nineveh and Babylon. And when he stood on one leg and pointed right at where I was sitting and shouted «This means you!» I could have sunk through the floor. I came away a changed woman. Surely you must have noticed the change in me, Rockmetteller? You must

have seen that I was no longer the careless, thoughtless person who had urged you to dance in those places of wickedness?"

Rocky was holding on to the table as if it was his only friend.

"Yes," he stammered; "I - I thought something was wrong."

"Wrong? Something was right! Everything was right! Rockmetteller, it is not too late for you to be saved. You have only sipped of the evil cup. You have not drained it. It will be hard at first, but you will find that you can do it if you fight with a stout heart against the glamour and fascination of this dreadful city. Won't you, for my sake, try, Rockmetteller? Won't you go to the country tomorrow and begin the struggle? Little by little, if you use your will -"

I can't help thinking it must have been that word "will" that roused dear old Rocky like a trumpet call. It must have brought home to him the realization that a miracle had come off and saved him from being cut out of Aunt Isabel's. At any rate, as she said it he perked up, let go of the table, and faced her with gleaming eyes.

"Do you want me to go to the country, Aunt Isabel?"

"Yes."

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"To live in the country?"

"Yes, Rockmetteller."

"Stay in the country all the time? Never come to New York?"

"Yes, Rockmetteller; I mean just that. It is the only way. Only there can you be safe from temptation. Will you do it, Rockmetteller? Will you - for my sake?"

Rocky grabbed the table again. He seemed to draw a lot of encouragement from that table.

"I will!" he said.

This is an episode from the story called "The Aunt and the Sluggard" by P.G. Wodehouse, which was written in 1925 and is one of his earliest works. Nevertheless, even at that early stage Wodehouse already provides the story with features typical of English humour.

The plot of the story can be summarized as follows. Bertie Wooster, a young English aristocrat, is living in New York, and one morning is visited by his friend, Rockmetteller Todd (or “Rocky”). Rocky is a dreamy person, and he spends most of his time “in a sort of trance” watching worms on Long Island. In order to earn his living he writes poems, which does not happen more often than three times a month. Rocky has an aunt, after whom he was named.

Miss Isabel Rockmetteller is yet another in a long line of aunts Wodehouse so generously supplies his reader with. Here we can see Wodehouse's biography reflected in his work: we know that he spent many of his school holidays with one aunt or another, while barely seeing his parents. Miss Rockmetteller is even compared to Bertie's own Aunt Agatha: “She had a good deal of Aunt Agatha about her”, Bertie says. Aunts seem to add to the general ironic atmosphere, particularly by their attitude towards themselves which is in contrast with the actual state of affairs: they often consider themselves more important than they really are.

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Rocky tells Bertie that he had received a letter from his aunt. In the letter she tells her nephew that she has found a way of giving him an allowance. Allegedly being an invalid, she cannot visit New York, which has been her life-long dream. She wants him to explore the city and write her letters describing his experience. Rocky, being the reclusive person he is, is terrified of the prospect. At this point Jeeves suggests that he should explore New York himself and take notes, which then will be turned into letters from Rocky.

Jeeves's letters prove to be so eloquent that Miss Rockmetteller suddenly finds new energy and comes to the city in order to see everything herself. She thinks that Bertie's flat is in fact Rocky's, because that was the address they used for Rocky's correspondence. She does not seem to like Bertie at all and wants him out of the flat as soon as possible.

It may be that Rocky and his aunt are opposed to Bertie as Americans. “You're English, aren't you?” asks Miss Rockmetteller, and the contrast works to bring forward the elements of English character. Bertie cannot let his friend down,

and so he leaves to live in a hotel. Some time passes, and he receives a call from Rocky who tells him that the aunt has stopped his allowance now she is in New York, and that she makes him live the life he hates.

“The loss of Jeeves” is something that Bertie can hardly bear, but when he recovers he starts going out again. Once Rocky approaches him and asks him to join him and his aunt, and later come with them to the flat. Miss Rockmetteller eventually admits her mistake and begs Rocky to go to the country. She says that she heard Mr Mundy talk about New York and its destructive influence: Jeeves was supposed to take her to the Hippodrome, but must “have misunderstood” her. Rocky cannot believe his luck and happily gives in to Miss Rockmetteller's request.

This is a typical Wodehousian plot, with a problem arising at the very beginning and suddenly being resolved by Jeeves without Bertie's knowledge. The unexpected twists of the plot are part of the ironic atmosphere and add to the general humorous spirit of Wodehouse's work. The story is not one of those rare occasions when Jeeves is the narrator; and we can confidently say that the main layer of the narration is Bertie's speech.

In this particular episode, however, we do not hear Bertie's speech – as a narrator or the character – as much as usual; and Jeeves does not talk at all, which is characteristic of that part of a Wodehousian story. We are mainly reading Bertie's account of the dialogue between Rocky and his aunt. Despite that, Bertie is still present, expressing his attitude, supplying the story with various remarks and sharing his thoughts and feelings.

Bertie is faithful to himself in using redundant expressions, understating the situation: “sort of”, “kind of”, “rather like”, “a bit of”. This kind of understatement and roundabout phrasing is typical of English humour in general and the way the English express themselves in particular, especially if it concerns emotions or other people. An English person I talked to during my trip when asked if meeting people helped her deal with international environment, instantly rephrased it: “Yeah, I mean, I don't know “helpful”, it's nice to meet people from different places”. She

prefers to say “it's nice” instead of “helpful”, because “helpful” seems to her to be too strong a word. They would also use such indefinite phrases as “not really that much a problem” which are also part of the habit of understating what they say.

At the beginning of the extract Bertie says: “I had a feeling that this wasn't in the contract, but there wasn't anything to be done”, which could be regarded as an example of laconic axiological writing. Mr Wooster shows kindness and tolerance at the same time, and his reaction once again signifies how important his friends are to him. There is not a moment's hesitation, and he cannot decline Rocky's request.

There is another character's speech present indirectly, reproduced by Miss Rockmetteller: that of Jimmy Mundy. In fact, his words contribute the most expression to Aunt Isabel's language, which in itself is mainly neutral, especially compared with the mixed style of Bertie's. The parts of her speech which seem to stand out are biblical references, no doubt intended to add to her feeling as if she had had a divine revelation. We encounter such clichés as “to see the light” or “dead in sin”; she also compares Jimmy Mundy to a “prophet of old, scouring the sins of the people”.

Other colourful and, in general, more original metaphors (“gilded haunts of vice”) and similes (fox-trot and tango being “devices of the devil”), we can assume, belong to Jimmy Mundy. The former, however, appears to be a cliché itself, as it is mentioned in many separate works, such as an essay on Dostoevsky¹¹² and many articles, one of which appears in the “New-York Mirror” journal. The biblical character of Miss Rockmetteller's speech reaches its climax in one vivid image of Rocky sipping “of the evil cup”. There is also contrast between more or less trivial subject matter and the colourful, lofty style which adds to the humorous atmosphere.

On the other hand, one of Bertie's images develops throughout the whole episode, which adds considerably to its dynamics, and helps to bind the extract together. We are talking about a table which is first mentioned at the moment when

¹¹² Frank J., Dostoevsky's Discovery of “Fantastic Realism”, <http://www.jstor.org/pss/127257>

Aunt Isabel declares her sudden hatred of New York. Rocky is a quiet person who does not talk much, and barely speaks in this particular passage; it would be natural to assume that his manipulations with the table serve the purpose of conveying his emotions to us, substituting (and sometimes adding attitude to) his direct speech.

When he is faced with the shock of his aunt's unexpected change of opinion, he does not say a word, but gropes “feebly for the table”. After Miss Rockmetteller talks at length about the wickedness of the city, Rocky is mentioned “holding on to the table as if it was his only friend”. The animation of such an object as a table is absurd, but quite natural for Bertie's narration, and this lightheartedness is one of the many features of English humour present in Wodehouse's stories.

When Rocky finally realizes that he is not going to be cut out of the will, he allows himself to “let go of the table”, probably finding his strength again. That does not last long, however, and he grabs “the table again. He seemed to draw a lot of encouragement from the table”. This last remark is at the very end of the extract and is the point of saturation, the high note on which Bertie chooses to finish the story's main plot (there is also a traditional epilogue to the story after that, but it is of no importance to the plot itself). The remarks about Rocky and the table might be a kind of friendly mockery on the part of Bertie.

Besides that original image we encounter many familiar established phrases of Bertie's, characteristic of his own style: “poor chap/chappie”, “to rally round” (which, as usual, refers to Jeeves), “stuff”, etc. These colloquial expressions stand out against relatively neutral background. Bertie's speech is, as a rule, verbose and full of complicated long sentences; but in this particular extract he is very short-spoken, compared to his usual pleonastic self.

He tends to be repetitive, rephrasing the same thought over and over again. In this instance, not a lot of his sentences are actually complicated. It is as if Bertie is trying to retreat into the background and let the story speak for itself, which helps him tone his habitual verbosity down a little, but still does not keep him from commenting on what is happening and expressing his attitude.

There are examples of play upon words, namely, when Bertie describes the way Rocky looks at him: “It was the eye of one who sees it coming”. We also encounter his original similes: he compares Rocky's “gurgle” to the “sound rather like the whisky had made running out of the decanter”. This simile could actually be important in terms of the reality in which Wodehouse's characters live. This is the image that comes to Bertie's mind at once, this is part of his being. Once Bertie repeats what Aunt Isabel has said: ““Leave it there, Rockmetteller!” ... and Rocky left it there”. It adds to the awkwardness of Rocky himself and his relationship with his aunt in general.

Bertie even remembers another episode of his life: “I'd seen it happen before”. His self-irony is clearly expressed in that little reminiscence, for he does not mind sharing with us the fact that he was called “a useless blot on the fabric of Society”. He probably even enjoyed such a colourful description of himself, which stands out in that particular passage.

As if trying to emphasize the irony, and bring Bertie's attitude into contrast with others', Wodehouse makes Bertie instantly turn to the laconic description of Aunt Isabel's attitude, which is not flattering at all: “The aunt gave me a withering up and down”. This is also laconic axiological writing. Despite the fact that it is Bertie's perception we are following, one can be quite sure that the perception, in this case, is accurate. Aunt Isabel is not being kind or tolerant, and refuses to endure light-hearted presence of Bertie's. She also cannot be bothered with understating her attitude towards him. It is probably due to the difference between the English and the American mentality, and the way they express attitude.

Bertie's self-ironic attitude at one point evidently refers to the whole group: “we weren't a chatty party”, he remarks. Even Aunt Isabel, despite being less expressive than Bertie, sometimes shows her ironic attitude as well. As has already been mentioned, being an aunt, she pretends to be much more important than she actually is. Jeeves, in her own words, “escorted” her “to the seat”, not unlike a member of a royal family.

Thus, even in a short extract of a Wodehousian story there are typical features of English humour, such as understatement, play upon words, the habit of expressing oneself indirectly, and the general atmosphere of lighthearted self-irony. The way Bertie behaves in the situation, letting Rocky use his flat without a murmur, is also characteristic of the kindness of the English character, and probably rituals which run through the lives of the English: Rocky is his friend and has to be treated like one. It is part of the Wooster code, as a person and as an Englishman. Conservatism is another feature brought out: when Bertie's usual way of life is disrupted and he is deprived of Jeeves, he actually feels lost, though not for long.

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Conclusions

We have been studying English humour under the assumption that it is not merely a stylistic device or a genre, but a complex phenomenon which is many-sided and, therefore, should be regarded from different points of view. Many factors responsible for its revelation need to be taken into account. English language is diverse, but it is not sufficient on its own: there is a culturological aspect to a text, not only the linguistic one.

English humour as a culturological phenomenon is not clearly structured. However, it is not a chaotic combination of different features, either. To prove it, we have used several concepts in the analysis of our material.

We have come to the conclusion that English humour can be defined as subtle positive self-irony, a gentle attitude towards one's own weaknesses. The way a person feels depends on their worldview. In other words, their attitude is predetermined by their values which are the result of a particular cultural environment; a given culture conditions the values of the people living in it. Thus, English humour, being a part of the English culture, is a culturological phenomenon, and can be studied in order to gain deeper understanding of the culture. The values and are expressed with the help of language. This is the essence of what we call a linguoaxiological analysis.

The linguistic means used in texts are diverse, but essentially everything amounts to the use of contrast; the incongruity between what the reader expects and what actually occurs helps create humorous atmosphere. The contrast can be of linguistic nature (for example, periphrasis, clash of styles, etc.) or it can be achieved by using situational humour which depends on the context. It is not unusual to encounter both types simultaneously, and in that case the humour is more saturated.

Each of the two aspects revealing English humour – linguistic and cultural – has its own degree of prominence in a text. When one reads texts about the

culturological phenomenon of English humour, language is the foregrounded element. Nevertheless, the readers cannot understand what is revealed through language if they do not examine the background. Everything – customs, views, traditions – revolves around the object which is the essence of values; and language revolves around the customs and traditions.

To fully understand the character of English humour – which brings us to understanding of the character of the English themselves – one has to part language and culture, to examine what functional role each of them performs: what is foregrounded and what is in the background.

The science of linguoaxiology is in the process of development. As has already been established, no common methodology has been drawn, and that complicates studies like ours. We have made an attempt to conduct proper linguoaxiological analysis and introduce certain ways of approaching a text. If the methodology existed, our analysis could be extended and amplified.

Therefore, we are adhering to the opinion that further research in the area of linguoaxiology should be undertaken. This would bring the reader even closer to a given culture; which would be not in the least extent due to the reader's understanding of the culture's phenomena, such as English humour.

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